

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Ernest Dumas
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
June 4, 2009
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 Web site at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

Transcript Methodology

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

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

- Em dashes separate 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.

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Ernest Dumas on June 4, 2009, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: First thing is, I have to take care of some business here at the front end.

Ernest Dumas: Okay.

SL: Um—we are at the Ernie and Elaine Dumas residence in Little Rock, Arkansas. Today's date is June thi . . .

ED: Fourth.

SL: . . . fourth, already, two thousand and nine. Uh—um—my name is Scott Lunsford, and I'm gonna to be interviewing Ernie Dumas. And—um—Ernie, [*ED coughs*] we're gonna—um—um—I have to ask you if it's okay that we're videotaping this interview and that it reside in the archives of the Special Collections unit, Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville campus.

ED: That's fine with me.

SL: Great, thank you. Um—so we're gonna start with—uh—where and when you were born.

ED: I was born—uh—December 13, 1937, a—at El Dorado in Union County.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And my daddy was Joseph Clifton Dumas.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And my momma was Berta Canady Dumas.

SL: And what was your—what is your full name?

ED: Ernest Clifton Dumas.

SL: Okay—um . . .

ED: And I was the second. I have an elderly—a elder brother who was—uh—William Wayne Dumas. Who lives in—at Columbia, Missouri, now.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: He was about two and a half years older than I was.

SL: And—um—uh—you were actually born in El Dorado then.

[00:01:28] ED: Born in El Dorado but—uh—we lived in—outside El Dorado about eight miles—uh—uh—northeast of El Dorado—uh—toward the town of Calion—we lived on a place called Champagnolle Road—*C-H-A-M-P-A-G-N-O-L-L-E*—that's a kind of a French word and . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . I guess maybe appropriate 'cause the Dumases were—were originally French—they were French Huguenots, came over about 1700 from southern France. So I—I—so I guess some Frenchmen settled it in Champagnolle—I don't know what it

means, but it's a—it's a French word—but—it was near the Ouachita River. It's—we were about two miles above the Ouachita River. It's a little country road—uh—dirt road. It was never—never paved as long as we lived there.

[00:02:66] SL: Uh-huh. And—um—what was it that your—uh—uh—father did for a living?

ED: Uh—my daddy was—uh—he was a—uh—I—I guess a truck driver. Uh—early on he had—uh—he—he hauled oil back during the oil boom—um—and—uh—then that didn't turn out too well. And—uh—uh—I—I could tell that story, but—uh—but then he started hauling logs, and that was most of his life he—uh—he hauled logs.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: For—sometimes he was kind of an independent contractor. Sometimes he hauled logs for the Anthonys . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . who were big—uh—big—uh—uh—woodsmen in south Arkansas . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . and so he hauled logs for the—for the—for the Anthony brothers' mills. But usually he bought his—he bought—uh—bought logs—bought timber from people who owned—uh—pine

timber, and—and he harvested it and hauled it to the mills. He always had him an old—old truck—an old International or—or—or Chevrolet truck that he owned, and—uh—usually had one employee. Uh—he had—uh—this black guy who lived over in the woods behind us. He drove the mules. The mules would—uh—would pull the, you know—they'd cut the logs in the woods and—and—uh—uh—use the mules to load the—the logs onto the truck, and he'd haul them to the mill. That was his—that was his life.

[00:03:41] SL: Now was that was that same [*ED clears throat*]*—is that the—um—relations to Beryl Anthony?*

ED: Beryl Anthony was the—the elder Beryl Anthony—uh—the father of the—of the former congressman . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . uh—was the guy he dealt with most often. And—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . we used to drive in with him on Saturday mornings to Beryl Anthony's mansion, and—and Beryl would come out and pay him his cash for the week. So, and that's—uh—Berly, his son was Berly—uh—we called him—it's *B-E-R-Y-L*, and at school we called him Beryly, and he later became a, of course, a congressman.

SL: Uh-huh. So were you—we'll—we'll get back to that. Uh—what

about the oil—uh—side of it? You said there's a story there that . . .

[00:04:24] ED: Well, yeah—well, my daddy—uh—uh—he and a couple of other guys hauled oil. Uh—I don't know exactly how that worked, but I—I'm sure they—he didn't have an oil truck. He wouldn't have been able to afford to buy an oil truck. But they hauled oil. I'm quite—I don't know, maybe five or six months for this—some company that had—uh—uh—uh—uh—oil interests. And—uh—but they never—he never got paid—and he and the other guys never got paid for their—uh—uh—for their work. So eventually they went into town and hired a lawyer at El Dorado to—to represent them, and they sued—uh—they sued this company and—and won a judgment.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And the court said, "Yeah, you have to pay these guys for hauling your oil." And—uh—so—but they never got a dime of it. The lawyer kept all the money. He said, "Well, that's—that's my fee. It comes out—uh—it comes out exactly what my fee would've been." So they never collected a dime. So my daddy hated lawyers the rest of his life, and he would never hear of it that either of his sons might study to be lawyers. He would not—that—that's what a lawyer was . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . was a crook to my daddy. [00:05:32] So—uh—he had two great prejudices in life—one lawyers, and the other one was Chrysler Motors. He would've—I think—probably been happy if Chrysler had gone down the drain, if he were still alive. He once bought a Chrysler car, and it—and he never got it home. [*SL laughs*] It—it played out on him before—before [*laughs*] he could get it home. So, you know, Chrysler was worthless, so—and—and lawyers were worthless, and oil people were worthless, so . . .

SL: Well—um—how far did his education go?

ED: . . . he went to about the sixth grade . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . although he was very literate, and he read a lot, and—uh—and—uh—was smart and very—I think very accomplished, but—uh—he never got past about the sixth grade. But not many people did down there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:16] ED: Not many people went to school beyond—uh—fifth or sixth grade. And he was the eldest of about ten—uh—ten kids, and so I suspect he had to—uh—go to work—uh—and I guess at a fairly early age. My granddaddy—they lived—my granddaddy

and—uh—and grandma lived—uh—about—down the road. We lived in a rural area, and there was just a—a few houses down there—and there were all of them—uh—all the neighbors—uh—for several miles around were all—uh—kin. A lot of intermarriage, I think. The Armers and the Crains and the Dumases, that's all there were lived down there, and the Perdues, and they were all related. So my granddaddy lived about—uh—two or three hundred yards below us. And—and he gave my daddy—deeded him some land when—when he got married—and—uh—and my granddaddy had farmed some and been a carpenter, and the two of them came up and built—built our house—uh—that we lived in all the time I was down there.

[00:07:17] SL: So your Granddaddy [*ED clears throat*] Dumas was a farmer and—and carpenter or . . .

ED: Well, he started off as a farmer and farmed some land along there, but it was not—it was probably not very good farming. I don't know, but he wasn't doing too well. So he—he became a carpenter, and that's basically what he did . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . most of his life—was a—was a carpenter. And cabinet maker—although he was a pretty rough cabinet—he made some cabinets for us. And they were serviceable, but not—uh—not—

not very stylish. But—uh—uh—in our house he was probably not a great carpenter but he did—it was sturdy.

SL: We'd call 'em primitives.

ED: Yeah, yeah. Primitive, that's a good word for it, he would've liked that.

[00:07:59] SL: Um—so—um—uh—I assume that he probably built his own house, too.

ED: I think he did. I think he built his own hou—I'm sure he did. I never did hear, but it was—uh—uh—probably built—uh—the—the—the next brother with my daddy—we lived in one house, and then about—uh—uh—a hundred yards down the hill from us was my uncle Fred and his wife Martha, and then about fifty yards below them was my uncle—my—my Granddaddy Will and—and his wife—uh—Ilda—Mimmie as we called her.

SL: Mh-hmm. Uh—so that sounds like quite a—a family community. Um—I mean, if your dad was one of ten, that's lots of aunts and uncles. Are they—they . . .

[00:08:45] ED: Yeah, they were scattered out. Several of them died earlier on, but they—uh—there were—there were 'bout six that survived to adulthood, and—and they were kind of scattered around the county. They were—uh—uh—some of them in—couple of them ran service stations in El Dorado, and—and a

couple sisters lived in Norphlet, Arkansas, which is one of the oil towns in that area.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: None of them ever had any oil wealth. The—the oil—wherever they drilled for oil, they always tried to avoid any—any Dumas's land. [*SL laughs*] They didn't—there was a—part of the strategy was, "Don't drill on any Dumas land." [*SL laughs*] So they'd drill all around us, and everybody got—made a little money except the Dumases—and so [*laughs*] . . .

SL: It was just the luck of the draw, you think?

ED: Yeah, I guess it was the luck of the draw. Not—maybe—I don't know whether it was a conspiracy or not—but—they drilled on our land once and hit a dry hole . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . back there, so . . .

[00:09:37] SL: Um—so—uh—but it was impossible not to be aware of the oil industry in and about . . .

ED: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . El Dorado. I mean, it drove everything, didn't it?

ED: It did. It drove everything, and—uh—and, of course, we benefited, I guess, in—in ways. I mean, the—the—the oil wealth kind of spread out and everybody—uh—everybody, to some

extent, benefited from the—from the oil wells. But not—we didn't do it directly.

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, give me a description of the—of the house that you grew up in.

ED: Well, it was—it was a—a frame house. We—and my daddy gradually built onto it. There was a little front porch. Uh—we had—uh—a living room and a dining room and a kitchen. Pretty good-size living room, as I recall. And then two bedrooms. My brother and I had one bedroom, and my dad and mom the other. Uh—and at the outset, we didn't have electricity, and we didn't have—uh—gas or telephone. We had none of those kind of things. And we—our water was from a well, and if we did—if we needed to keep things cool, there was little—across the road there was a little spring.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:10:54] ED: Uh—and my daddy kind of made a little well in that spring. So you'd take the milk and the butter you churned—you churn the milk and make some butter [*coughs*], and you'd keep it over in the—in the well—in the spring. It would keep it cool—not for very long, but—uh—so that's where we kept stuff for a while. And then later we got—uh—we got an old icebox. Went into town and bought one of those—a true icebox. You'd have to

go into town and get a big block—a hundred pound block of ice and put it there in—in the top part of it. And that would kind of keep things cool. So we did that for a while until we got—uh—uh—got gas. We had—sometime in here—that's the [19]40s—they came out and put a butane tank—uh—you know, propane.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

ED: And—uh—so we had—uh—we had so—we had some natural gas then. I think probably when I was seven or eight is when we got some gas. Later on we got—uh—the big—uh—change was electricity.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And we got electricity—uh—sometime in latter part of the—of—of World War II. We got electricity. And then a telephone. Time I went to high school, we'd gotten a telephone.

[00:12:12] SL: Um—well, now what—let's talk about your mom.

What—what was her—uh—[*ED coughs*]*—*what was her maiden name?

ED: Her name was Canady—Berta—*B-E-R-T-A*—Canady—*C-A-N-A-D-Y*. And I—it was probably a bastardized vers—used—probably used to be Kennedy when it was—uh—uh—over in the old country. But—uh—it was Canady. And she—she grew up—she was the—uh—next to youngest of about ten or twelve kids.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: A number of the—them died. They—they—they grew up on—uh—on the Strong Highway—between—they were—lived—uh—south of El Dorado toward the Louisiana border.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: Uh—between El Dorado and Junction City in the little town of Strong.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: Uh—her daddy wa—was a farmer, and—uh—that's all he ever did was farmed. And she was the, as I say, the next to the youngest of that—that group. And she actually went to sch—went to school all the way through and—uh—and went to high school, and graduated from high school and got her teaching certificate. I suppose she probably passed a teacher test or something. In those days, you didn't need a college degree or— or even a high school diploma in order to teach. You had to pass a test.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And—uh—to—to—to be able to get a certificate to teach. So she taught and had—uh—one of her—I think her second or third teaching job was at the Champagnolle School. It was a little one-room school—uh—uh—about a—about a mile from where we

[unclear word] ultimately lived. So she was teaching there in that—she was the teacher in that school and—and living with—uh—uh—renting a room from—uh—from a—a friend of my daddy's. And—uh—and that's where she met my father, and—uh—they were married.

[00:14:06] SL: Um—so you—there was a—uh—school building out in—was it an actual community called—uh—Champagnolle or . . .

ED: Well, that was the name of the road . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . and I don't think there was ever a—there was a—originally there was a—there was a community—a little—actually a town—which was, I think, the county seat before El Dorado, before the oil boom.

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: But it was on down below. It was—the Champagnolle Road leaves El Dorado and—and goes down to—uh—to the town of Calion on the—uh—on the Ouachita River.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:41] ED: And—uh—so Champagnolle Landing used to be a—a—a tall hill right above the Ouachita River, and that was the county seat for a while. And that was the community of Champagnolle, and it was probably on the map in those days—

and it—it may still show up on some maps. But—uh—but we lived about—uh—five or six miles back toward town from there on the Champagnolle Road, so there was nothing in our neighborhood. No—no stores—uh—not—it was—it was completely rural—there were just a—a house, except for our little strip, three houses in a row. There'd be a house about every—uh—uh—half mile or so.

SL: So you ended up going to school in the—in the same school building that your mom . . .

ED: No, no . . .

SL: . . . taught . . .

ED: That—that—uh—I never saw that school building . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . by the time I came along—uh—that school had cl—I think the school closed about the last—my—uh—when my mother married my daddy . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . that school closed, and that might've been responsible—they might not have been able to get a teacher. Typically, it was what happened at a lot of those little schools, they—they couldn't get a teacher, and they'd just—they just close.

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: And—uh—consolidate. So when I started to school—uh—we were—there was a—there was a—a school on the—on—on the highway—uh—uh—between El Dorado and—and Hampton and Fordyce. I forgot, is that highway—that's not Highway 82—that's Highway 67—167.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:16:07] ED: There was Quinn School—*Q-U-I-N-N*—and it sat on a high bluff above the highway [raises hand upward]. And there were actually two brick buildings, and apparently back in the [19]20s, it was a flourishing—uh—school district, and they won the state basketball championship. But by the time I was there, it was the two big buildings and a huge campus but nobody there. There were twenty-four of us in the school district. The total enrollment was twenty-four and—and—uh—my brother and I made up 1/12 of the enrollment, [*SL laughs*] and probably about—uh—50 percent of the average daily attendance—I don't know. [00:16:40] But it was [*coughs*]*—but my—there—there—the—the Quinn School had two people. There'd be Mr. and Mrs. Hargett. And Mr. [Johnny] Hargett was the superintendent and the principal and the disciplinarian and the bus driver and the guy who stoked the furn—got the heat going in the morning and kept the grounds up and—uh—whatever. Mrs. [Mary] Hargett*

was the teacher. And all the classes were in one room, and you'd be—uh—uh—first grade—there'd be a first-grade row, a second-grade row, a third-grade row, fourth-grade, fifth-grade, and then maybe a grade—and a row over here of anybody else . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

RM: . . . that beyond that. If anybody went to school that long. And then, if—if anybody needed to go beyond that—past the sixth grade—and if—Mr. Hargett would take them in the other room and—and teach them. But while I was there, I don't think anybody—uh—went beyond that. Uh—but in 1946 and [19]48 we had—we had initiated—uh—acts—Arkansas Education Association sponsored things to—to consolidate all school districts with fewer than three-hundred and fifty—uh—students. And it failed in 1946, when I would've been, I guess, in about the—uh—third grade or something like that.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:04] ED: But then—uh—in another—and it was on the ballot again in [19]48, and it passed that time. But right before that, I think Mr. and Mrs. Hargett—uh—decided to seek their fortune elsewhere. And I don't know whether they couldn't get a replacement for them or whatever, but they decided to—to

consolidate and—and—and close the school, and we all went into—uh—to El Dorado after that. I remember going to—they had a big meeting in the school one night to tell everybody. [Unclear word]—we all drove in to—to—to the Quinn School and where they had somebody from El Dorado—the superintendent or some—from El Dorado there to explain what was going to happen, and, "You'll be going—the buses will come out and get you, and your kids will be safe, and bring you into El"—where—everybody was terrified. You know, we have to go into El Dorado . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

ED: . . . all those kids would beat us up and stuff. It was kind of—uh—we—we didn't know whether we could compete in El Dorado or not. So it's pretty daunting. But I remember Victor Davis, my best friend Victor Davis, and his daddy was a pretty illiterate old fellow. [00:19:07] And I was—we were in the auditorium and—and—uh—we had a big auditorium there in that—in that old school. And our—and so Victor Davis's daddy stood up and asked, "What about that tition? What about the tition?" And the guy—the superintendent from El Dorado was mystified—kept saying, "What do you—what do you—what are you saying?" "The tition. The tition." And finally somebody recognized that

he was talking about tuition . . .

SL: Oh.

ED: . . . wanted to know whether we'd have to pay tuition to go into . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

ED: . . . El Dorado. And he said, "No, no, no. You—you—you go free just like you do here." [*SL laughs*] So—so we added in. So after that, the bus came out and got us, and we went—uh—went to school in El Dorado. Probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

[00:19:51] SL: Um—so how many grades did you go through in the—in the one-room school?

ED: At Quinn? Uh—five grades there, and then after that into El Dorado. My brother would have been in the seventh grade, I guess.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:06] SL: Uh-huh. Well, do you feel like you—I mean, apparently you learned . . .

ED: Well, we did all right.

SL: . . . all right.

ED: Well, there are some advantages to that, you know. One, you have small class sizes . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . which I've always think is an important thing [*unclear word*] in the primary grades. But the—I guess looking back on it, the good part about it was, if you were in the first grade and teacher started off with you in the morning, and she'd come over and stand in front of the first-grade row, would kind of give you your lessons—you know, whatever you do with first graders. And we, you know, spend thirty minutes I guess with us or for—and then move to the second grade. And she'd get the book and whatever the second graders—she'd teach the second grade and then the third. So all day long you got to hear the lessons for everybody. So you could get to hear the fifth graders' lessons as well. So it was an opportunity to really learn—I learned a lot. So there was probably some benefits to it, but I wouldn't recommend it as a educat—modern educational strategy, I think [*unclear words*] . . .

[00:21:08] SL: Was there a particular subject that you kinda latched onto early in that environment or . . .

ED: No. But my mother, once she married, she gave up teaching. And she was occasionally a substitute teacher, or quite frequently she was a teacher at the school. But she taught us to read and write at home, and so by the time we start in first

grade, we were reading and writing very well. And she also taught my son to read and write, and he was reading and writing by the time he was three. So there was some advantage to that. But, no, I don't remember any courses in—at least in—at Quinn they're all run together. I don't know what we—I guess we had math and probably didn't have any science. I don't know—I don't remember much about it.

[00:21:53] SL: So when your mom quit teaching, then she just kind of ran the house?

ED: She was a homemaker after that, altogether—and . . .

SL: And you just had one brother?

ED: . . . one brother, yes.

SL: Uh-huh. And so how was life at home? I mean, did you have a set of chores that you and your brother were responsible for every day and night or . . .

ED: Well, we did some chores. I don't remember what they were. We'd have to—we were getting to the point we're milking the cow. My brother milked the cow. I wasn't—I was never old enough to milk the cow. We'd always have a cow. And that's where we got our milk. Milk the cow, keep the milk in the . . .

SL: Spring.

ED: . . . in the spring across the road—later in the refrigerator.

But—and occasionally have to churn—I hated making butter 'cause you have to churn. You had—we had this old churn on the back porch. And put that milk in there, and it'd just—your arms would be about to drop off churning to make that butter. But outdoors, we didn't have many chores, 'cause we didn't have—well, we had an old lawn—we had an old lawnmower. These things you push that has this little blade . . .

SL: Yeah, uh-huh.

ED: . . . you had to push [*unclears words*]. So we'd have to, you know, mow the grass occasionally. Then it was [ED edit: wasn't] grass. It's mainly just weeds, but—slop the hogs. We'd have some . . .

SL: You had hogs?

ED: . . . hogs. We had to feed the hogs and stuff like that . . .

[00:23:21] SL: Did you have hog day whenever you'd slaughter the hog?

ED: They would, yeah, in the fall, and then when things got chilly—probably November, they'd have—I didn't participate in that, it was too gruesome, I couldn't participate in that. But we had chickens also. We, you know, grew our chickens and raised our own eggs and, you know, were very fond of the chickens. My brother named all the chickens. [*SL laughs*] It was—that was

the terrible thing about my brother. [*SL laughs*] He—my brother was a historian—that's what he—he is a historian. And—but he knew the names of all the presidents early on and the names of their wives. So he named all the hens—there was a Martha Washington, Dolley Madison—James Madison's—Abigail Adams . . .

SL: Adams. Uh-huh.

[00:24:15] ED: . . . so you had a hen, it was Abigail, and Martha. Well, I mean, then—and then he couldn't eat them then. You couldn't eat [*SL laughs*] Dolley and Martha, so my brother has never touched chicken. He will not to this day eat chicken. Now he says that's not the reason, but that's the reason he doesn't like chicken [*SL laughs*]*—is the—they were—they would go out and wring the necks of Martha Washington . . .*

SL: Was that . . .

ED: . . . and he was—it was terrifying to him.

SL: . . . your mom did that, I guess.

ED: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: Prepared all the food and . . .

ED: She prepared all the food, yeah.

SL: And you didn't participate in the hog killin'. You probably witnessed it once or . . .

ED: I witnessed it, and then I—and I left. I didn't want to see anything—any of that stuff. It was too bloody . . .

SL: What about . . .

ED: . . . hog squealing and so forth . . .

SL: . . . oh, yeah . . .

ED: . . . it was terrible.

[00:25:03] SL: Well—and they used every part of the hog.

ED: They'll use—yeah, well, I don't remember how much they used, but they used—made sausage and cured the bacon. We had a little smokehouse out there, and we smoked the hams—the bacon.

SL: So were—you know, I'm tryin' to imagine all the family living around you. Was there kind of a—a cooperative—a sustenance cooperative . . .

ED: Well, to some extent. We grew—we had—always had a little vegetable garden, and plus, we had—my daddy grew a lot of potatoes. So we had—one thing he could grow was potatoes. So we had a lot of potatoes, and then we'd put them—we had a little house out there—a little dark house you'd put all the potatoes in. And it would last on into the winter. And then we shared, too. My grandfather grew a little stuff, and he would share. So we'd all kind of share food like that. And the other

neighbors as well. [*Clears throat*] And the neighbors toward town, were the Welches—they were the interlopers. They were not related to any of us, [*SL laughs*] but we accepted them. Even though they were not related. Now they—the Welches grew—they had a lot of—they grew a lot of produce up there and so—that they couldn't use. So everybody shared [*unclear words*].

[00:26:31] SL: Well, did you have any responsibility at all for gardening or prepping the . . .

ED: No, except you'd have to go out and hoe to keep the—get the weeds out of the garden, you know, the weeds were always—and the onions and tomatoes and stuff. So you'd have to—I guess that was one of my biggest chores, I guess, in the summertime—is—my daddy—we had to go out and hoe everything. I hated hoeing and tryin' to get the—and peache—we grew—we had a little orchard, we grew peaches and pears that were about the consistency of a baseball. [*SL laughs*] [*unclear words*] they were delicious, but they—just—couldn't eat them—they were just hard as rocks. But—so we had pear trees and peaches and a few apples, never did have much luck with apples, but we did well with peaches.

[00:27:21] SL: Well, what about—are there any conversations that

you can recall with your father or your mother that really stuck with you all these years—is there—or any events with either one of them that . . .

ED: Pretty boring. I had—it was a pretty boring childhood. My daddy worked all the time. He got up early in the morning and got out and started his old truck and went and got Dock Davis, who was the old black guy who ran the team. He'd go get Dock, and they'd go and get the mules and go to the woods and haul logs. And I would occasionally—I loved to ride with my daddy to—in the truck. I loved to—that old International truck, and we'd get the logs and load them up. I loved to be in the woods with him—and he would—one of the my daddy's jobs was takin' an ax—and, of course, the woods were full of poison oak. All—you'd go in this big pine forest, and the pine trees would be covered with poison oak. [00:28:33] But my daddy would take the ax—he'd go and grab a hold of the thing and chop it and pull the stuff off so Dock wouldn't get—Dock was kind of allergic to poison oak, but my daddy apparently never was—poison oak never affected him, so he'd cut poison oak off trees. I thought it would—I inherited that, but it turned out I didn't, [*SL laughs*] so I learned quickly to stay away from poison oak. But—so I'd ride with Daddy to the woods and to the mill . . .

SL: Still, [ED clears throat] that's very dangerous work—the logging and hauling the . . .

ED: Yes, it was dangerous work, and—you kn—and I remember my daddy escaped with his life several times. Down at Champagnolle Hill there was a—he was a—used to be hauling to the mill at Calion. And there was a—there was this steep hill going down to this old gravel—going down to—to the river at Champagnolle Landing. And he had a load of logs going down that hill once and toward the end of his life—this was toward the end of his career. And the road was very rough and rutted, and so the truck kind of went out of control and went off into this deep ravine. And all the logs came through the cab [moves hand from body toward camera] and just crushed the cab, but he apparently had been able to fall forward, and all the logs went above him. So it took him a while to get it out, but when they got down there, he crawled out unscathed from all these logs. Destroyed his truck and everything else, but he had several escapes like that. But he never got hurt.

[00:30:17] SL: Now what was the black partner's—helper's name, Dock . . .

ED: Dock. Dock Davis. That was his—there was a black family, lived over in the woods, kind of an extended black family, the Davis

family. And Dock, all his life he's worked with my daddy. I guess it's the only job he ever had, whatever my dad did, Dock was always with him. And then there was a little kid, Willie, who was Dock's nephew—he had—Dock had two sisters, Martha and Mary. And Martha and Mary were—washed clothes, so they would make the rounds, and 'course, you didn't have washing machines or anything. So they would come by our place once a week—and I forg—maybe Wednesday. And Martha or Mary—usually it was Martha—and we had this great big, black pot, and they would build a fire in the chicken yard and build a fire under that—boil—you have to draw water out of the well and fill the—they'd boil the water, and they'd cook the clothes, I guess, in the water and then . . .

[00:31:32] SL: They use lime?

ED: I don't know. They just used some lye soap. Use them big old—great big old bars of soap and washed the clothes and then rinse them and hang them out on the line and . . .

SL: So they were like a rolling laundry service.

ED: Yeah, they were a rolling laundry service for the community.

[00:31:52] And one of them's son was Willie Davis, who was my only playmate for many years. Willie would—he came over on whatever day, and we'd—in the summertime we'd play. And, of

course, the fall I had to go to school, and—but Willie came with me anyway 'cause—you know, blacks they didn't—there was a black schoolhouse over in the woods, but apparently they never could get a teacher, and I never saw it operate—anyway—Willie never went to school—nobody—blacks down there in the rural areas didn't go to school in those days.

[00:32:25] SL: So was the Davis homestead—I mean, was it a—on your-all's property, or . . .

ED: No, we didn't have much property. We only had about ten or twelve acres in—along the road. And—but they lived—it was probably about—probably close to a mile to their house. You had to go up the road [moves hand toward camera] and another little side road back up into the woods. They lived back in the woods. They had a couple of little houses back in there. That was the only African American families in that neighborhood. Out on that road, now later—no, there were some others up the road—the Wiley family. Marshall Wiley, he occasionally did a little work for my daddy, when Dock was sick or something, but he was kind of lazy and liked to drink. [SL laughs] He'd always have some whiskey with him, and he'd be drunk by noon. But—so my daddy didn't like to hire Marshall very much, but Dock was a reliable guy. My daddy loved Dock Davis.

[00:33:28] SL: So—and then—what about your mom? Do you remember ever—I mean, she—being a teacher, that had to be a huge plus for you . . .

ED: It was. She was very bright . . .

SL: . . . and your brother.

ED: . . . and she was—I guess it would be fair to say that she was emotionally—I don't know whether unstable or not. But she was depressed and nervous and kind of tended toward paranoia, but she lived to be ninety-six years old. She died about three years ago. Very literate—read a great deal—she was very bright and was a good writer, she used to write—I remember she wrote—she would write pieces for the—we were—they were Baptists—we was in the little Baptist church over there. And she would get the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine—they put out this little paper—news magazine here in Little Rock. And she would write a—write articles for them. I don't know what—I wish I could find one or two. But she'd write one, and it'd appear in the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine. And I gather there would probably be—maybe a little bit different from the accepted beliefs. I'm not sure what it was—but then she got the notion that everybody disagreed with her and were unhappy with—she was writing this thing—would write this article. And so she was convinced that

all of the elders in the church were against her because she wrote this article, and so my daddy would—my grandfather was one of the elders in the chu—deacon as we called them—deacon . . .

SL: Yes, uh-huh.

ED: . . . he was a deacon, and he would come up and talk to her about it and—but so she'd be very upset about it and wouldn't—didn't want to go to church and would just—she was in terrible shape over it. But then about two years would pass, and she'd write another one [*SL laughs*] and get herself into the same kind of predicament and feeling that everybody was against her and so forth. But I want to, sometime I want to go back to the—see if I can—I'm sure they have an archive someplace there at the *Arkansas Baptist*—see what it was there she wrote. At the time I just remember being upset about—my momma was so upset. [*Clears throat*] But that was her life.

[00:36:03] SL: So was she healthy—I mean . . .

ED: She was—no, she was a very sickly child apparently. And they were always afraid that Berta was going die. They were very pro—her parents were very protective of Berta: "She's sickly. Don't bother Berta." She missed a lot of school, because she was sick. But—and she always—she was sick her whole life but

lived to be ninety-six. And when she was at the end, she was—until the last three or four months, she was as sharp as anybody. Great memory. Read books until she lost her eyesight and—but very thoughtful. She hated war. My mother was a—she was kind of a liberal in a way, although she always hated war. And didn't want us—didn't want my brother, I either, to go into the Army, but we both had to. But she was very upset—she was—thought we were going to get killed.

[00:37:08] SL: Did she lose family in the wars?

ED: She did—well, they didn't—she lost a couple of brothers. Not to war, but in—after the—right after the end of World War I, you had the great flu epidemic . . .

SL: Yes.

ED: . . . and they were up at Camp Robinson and the flu—this . . .

SL: Went right through.

ED: . . . this terrible pandemic swept the country—and, of course, it was particularly devastating at Camp Robinson, and so they died. She had brothers who died at Camp Robinson during that period. But I remember she was—her mother was a Harrison—Annielee Harrison. And so she—I remember her talking about her grandfather who had fought in the Civil War. Everybody on both sides of the family were Confederate soldiers. But she had

a—her Harrison grandfather—she said she talked to him about the war. And he fought in many battles in the Civil War, but he said—she said he told her that he never shot anybody. He always aimed [*laughs*] over their heads. So I kind of like to think that my great-great-grandfather threw the Civil War for the Union. [*SL laughs*] He shot over their heads . . .

SL: He tried to scare them.

[00:38:39] ED: Yeah. [*Laughter*] Well, I guess—maybe he was just throwing the war, I don't know—so the Union could win. Maybe he was sympathetic to the Union—and I don't know—probably not . . .

SL: Well, it could've been more of a religious . . .

ED: . . . could've been . . .

SL: . . . commandment.

ED: . . . and, of course, my mother might of heard what she wanted to hear, she didn't want to like the idea that her forbearers were killing people. And so maybe she heard what she wanted to hear.

[00:39:01] SL: Well, now did you tell me that your mother was blind in one eye?

ED: She was blind in one eye. We never figured out how she became bli—but she was always—from—blind in one eye. And in

the latter years, when she was about ninety, I took her to an ophthalmologist here, and he said that she had this covering over that eye, and he thought there was probably a blow. She probably suffered some blow as a child. And it caused her—and he thought he could remove that, and she could see. She didn't want to do it, but I talked her into doing it. So she had this—went through the surgery, and—and she never—and they took it off, and it was a catastrophe, and she had a lot of additional problems after that but—so . . .

SL: That's too bad.

ED: . . . but she still never saw out of that eye.

SL: I wonder—maybe she had an unfortunate experience young . . .

ED: Probably, she was . . .

SL: . . . and that may have made her frightened.

ED: . . . and there were a lot of disease in those days. There were always—after the turn of the century a lot of disease. And it could of been some disease that—or probably some blow or some accident—she fell or something. But then who knows. She never knew what it was.

[00:40:20] SL: So let's—let's walk me through a typical summer day there when you were growing up. What was your day like?

ED: Well, we'd probably—we would probably during a summer day—

just about every day we would go—go down to the creek and go swimmin', my brother and I. And the Lawton boys lived down—and the Armers. There was a little—about three quarters of a mile below our house there was a little—that spring I talked about became a creek and wound its way around through the woods. And there was a big swimming hole—there was—it was ice cold. It was just terribly, brutally cold, 'cause it all was spring fed. And it was a very snaky place—there was always water moccasins and copperheads around there. But big wide place [moves both hands to the side], and so we'd go down there and swim in this big, wide place. You could—it had the big, big bluff you could dive off into the water. So we'd go down there and swim, and that was just about every day durin' the summer for many years. Usually with the dogs—we always had a dog. My earliest memories are of dogs. You didn't have any playmates particularly, so your dog was your only playmate usually. We always had some big old . . .

[00:41:43] SL: You have—do you remember any of the names of the dogs you had?

ED: Oh, yeah. We had—for the longest—the only one that survived very long was Tim. They wouldn't survive very long out in the country, 'cause, you know, they'd get snake bit or something

and—or living on an old country road, they're not accustomed to vehicles. So when a car comes down the road—particularly a strange-sounding car. One, we had an old dog named Tim, and Tim had a particular hatred of the internal combustion engine. [SL laughs] And so he'd just—aggravate him—particular when one would come down the road with a particular irritating noise, like a motorcycle or a Cushman motor scooter. It just got to him. I remember sittin' one day at the table, and I hear this strange sound—it's a motor scooter—I think it's a Cushman motor scooter or somethin' coming down the road. It's an old sandy road, and I see Tim headin' out the gate and heading toward the road. And he and the motorcycle met out there in the middle of the road, and the motorcycle headed off down the ravine. And Tim was—had crushed his back, and his . . .

SL: Oh.

ED: . . . both hind legs were crushed. And so I gathered Tim up, and we put him in his yard—thought he was going to die, but he laid there for months. [SL laughs] And Tim survived and eventually got on his feet and could walk again. And—but he never did have the—never could go after—I think he alway—when you hear a motorcycle out there, you could tell Tim wanted a rematch. [SL laughs] But he never could chase a motorcycle.

He couldn't get out to the road in time to meet him. But Tim was my favorite dog, I guess. And he lived probably six or seven years.

[00:43:35] SL: Uh-huh. So were there ever any tragedies that befell the kids that you, out there at the swimmin' hole? Anybody get snake bit or . . .

ED: No, none of us ever got snake bit. And we were—went through all the typical childhood diseases, of course . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . the measles and mumps and whooping cough and all of those kinds of things. And—but no bad accidents. I fell off the porch once and broke my arm—off the feed house porch. We had a little feedhouse where we kept all the feed for the hogs and the kerosene for the lamps. We kept a big kerosene—coal oil—we called it coal oil. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: Big drum out there—that's where we—before we had electricity—we lit the—used kerosene for the lamps to the house to read by, so we kept kerosene out there. But I stepped off the porch and fell once and broke my arm. And that's my only . . .

SL: Ouch.

ED: Had a few other little accidents over time, but . . .

[00:44:47] SL: Did your mom cook outside the house, or did she always cook in the house?

ED: No, we always cooked inside. We had a woodstove for years. And then we had—once we got butane, we got a gas stove. So we al—cooked everything inside.

SL: What about the meals? Were y'all expected to be seated at a certain time? Was lunch always at a certain time and dinner?

ED: Not a certain time, but whenever—dinner was whenever Daddy got home. [00:45:21] Our special was ham—was Spam. Spam was the . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . big delicacy, [*SL laughs*] and I had Spam all the time I was going to school. Spam for lunch every day . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . had a Spam sandwich and a peanut butter sandwich. That's what we had. And occasionally bologna. We could have a fried bologna sandwich, but my mother would fry up some Spam, and that's what we'd have for lunch. In my—in the lunch kit. And on Sunday, it was meals. Sometimes we'd have chicken, but we usually didn't, because my brother wouldn't eat the chicken but [*SL laughs*]*—ham or something. But it was—and she would cook vegetables. She would overcook all the vegetables. She*

would cook beans and everything until they were just virtually the [SL laughs] consistency of jelly. But she believed in over—overcooking everything. Everything. She didn't—she cooked everything a long, long time.

[00:46:16] SL: What about fish or any—did y'all hunt at all?

ED: Hunted a little bit. Hunted squirrels, and I killed a few squirrels. But I couldn't stand the taste of squirrel, so my daddy would—we'd fry the squirrels, but my daddy would eat them. But my brother—neither my brother or I or my momma would eat squirrels or rabbits. But he'd have to eat all the squirrels and rabbits. But we fished—we caught—we'd go down—at night frequently and set out little hooks on this little creek and catch—there'd be a few little catfish in the big holes of that little creek. And go down there and run—spend the night sometime and run your lines every now and then and catch—get a few little fish—and we'd—but that was spotty eating. We didn't—that was a lot of work to—for one—maybe one meal . . .

SL: So the creek must have been a pretty good size creek. I mean, di—you actually ran the lines in a boat, or . . .

ED: No, no, no.

SL: No.

ED: No, there was no boat. The creek was—would—the swimming

hole would've probably been as wide as this room [looks up toward the ceiling and raises both hands slightly]. Well, it'd be a little bit—the swimming hole would be a little bigger than this room—these two rooms combined maybe, and the creek—that was extremely wide place in the creek. [00:47:40] But the creek typically would be four or five feet wide and very snaky, so we would just kind of set a pole on the bank and drive it—the pole into the ground. Or—and, you know—tie—you know, a line at the end with worms or crickets or something. And so you'd run—every couple of hours you'd get up, and you'd go down the creek and—with a carbide lamp. We had a little—you had these little lantern that you put on your cap [moves both hands toward head] . . .

SL: Sure.

ED: . . . and you'd fill it with—full of carbide and in the top compartment, you'd put—with water in there. And then it creates this little gas, and you have a little spark on there that lights the carbide that—and so we'd go down to the creek, and you'd see—you could tell if the—if the pole was kind of jiggling, you had a fish on there or a snake or an eel. [00:48:41] And so occasionally we'd go frog gigging . . .

SL: I was gonna ask you about the frog gigging with the headlamps.

ED: Yeah. But that's so dangerous—there's a lot—you see more snakes—and go down at night—'course, with your carbide lamp, [*coughs*] you wade down the creek with your—in your boots—and you'd spot the frog, and of course, you'd mesmerize him with your carbide lamp, and you'd just freeze him in his tracks. He'd couldn't—he'd just be in a catatonic state, and you'd go gig him. Snakes you could—you know—you had your snake eyes sometimes, and you'd just have to get out of the creek then—you didn't want to—giggin' snakes, although I giggered a snake or two once. But—that's scary business . . .

SL: It is scary business.

ED: . . . yeah.

SL: So the frog legs were a good alternative to the chicken, I would guess . . .

[00:49:33] ED: Yeah, but I didn't—frog legs—my daddy—again, my daddy ate all of that stuff [*SL laughs*] except the fi—we ate the fish, but my daddy ate the frog legs, and he'd—ate the squirrel and the rabbits, but—and the ducks. We'd occasionally go down—go duck hunting on the creek, too. But that was rare you could . . .

SL: Well, y'all were . . .

ED: . . . get close enough to a duck . . .

SL: . . . y'all were within a couple miles of the Ouachita right?

ED: Yeah, three or four miles from the Ouachita River . . .

SL: So you never harvested anything outta the Ouachita?

ED: Well—it's—fishing on the Ouachita was—you know, you'd have to have a boat.

SL: Yeah.

ED: We didn't have a boat. [00:50:10] We occasionally went fishing on the—with my daddy on Moro Creek which was over in the next county. In Calhoun County near Hampton, and so that was a bigger cre—a much—it was actually a small river, and so we'd go fishing on the Moro, but you—that way you'd just walk up and down the banks and fish. You could catch smallmouth bass. And typically what you'd catch is a gar or a grinnell though—and then you'd have to—you know—if you got hi—you didn't want to get him in—you'd try to get him off the line . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . you didn't want to deal with one of those things when you got him out. But we'd go over there and catch some good—that's—if you really want to catch some fish, you went on the Moro, but that was, you know, fifteen, twenty miles away—and . . .

[00:50:58] SL: Well, what about [*ED clears throat*] either set of

grandparents. Do you remember spending much time with either your mom or your dad's grandparents?

ED: Yes, well—of course my grandparents—the Dumas grandparents lived a short distance away, so we spent a lot of time down there. We spent the night down there a lot. I love—my grandmother, she made the best biscuits I've ever eaten. And she'd fry up bacon in the morning—'cause—and we'd go down, and we'd spend the night, and she'd get up in the morning, and she'd fix biscuits. Which made from lard, you know, she'd—all the fat from—she preserved all the fat that was cooked off the bacon and the ham and everything, and she'd put it in a big, big can. And when you got ready to make biscuits, you'd just get a big fistful of that old hog fat and work your flour into it. And I think that's the reason that my daddy and all of his brothers developed heart trouble early on and died. They—all of them died of—in their forties, fifties, and sixties of heart trouble. Congested arteries. So my guess is, is all that bacon fat . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . the biscuits and stuff probably had something to do with it.

SL: It probably did.

ED: But . . .

SL: But it tasted . . .

ED: . . . I had the same thing and I don't—I can't attribute it to the biscuits I had back when I was five and six years old, but anyway—but I loved to eat down there 'cause there were always wonderful biscuits and syrup. They made some cane syrup. There used to be a little mill down at the creek, and they would grind sugarcane down there and make some sugarcane syrup. And so we'd have that. That was probably not good for you either. I don't know—but we'd have . . .

SL: Probably actually—probably was . . .

ED: . . . might've been. But, anyway, you'd have biscuits and sausage and eggs, and then maybe have your biscuit and smear some of that butter on it—homemade butter, and then cover it with sugarcane syrup. So that was a great breakfast.

SL: I'm gettin' hungry.

ED: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, sounds good. Well, did you—did they ever . . .

[00:53:16] ED: Let me talk about my grandfather on the other side . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: The Canadys. Sam Canady. Sam and Annielee Canady, and they lived in—where my mother grew up on the old Strong Highway. And he was a farmer. He eventually farmed as much

as four hundred acres. And they had an old dogtrot house—and you know—dogtrot house is an old unpainted house. And it had a—with a breezeway down the middle and a huge front porch. It was never painted. And the walls were one thickness. I mean, the outside wall was the inside wall, so that you could sit in the living room—if you called it a living room—it was a living room and bedroom. [00:54:02] And you could see through the cracks in the wall. And you could see daylight there. And so he would—and 'course—both grandparents' house, the well was right beside the porch, and you could draw the water out of the well. And they'd have a little landing there, and you'd keep the well bucket there and—with freshwater in it, and always a gourd that—which was a dipper. You'd have a gourd dipper. And that's—that was both places—that's where the water came from. But he grew watermel—he grew sweet potatoes and watermelons. And he must've been the most prolific watermelon grower in the world because every time we'd go down there in the summer, the front porch would be covered with watermelons. And that big, wide breezeway would be—watermelons on both sides. It would just be a little area to walk through, and it'd be full of watermelons. And I guess he couldn't sell them down at Strong. He couldn't get rid of all his

watermelons. So when we'd come home, he'd go out and get the trunk of the old Ford and fill the trunk full of watermelons. He had to get rid of them some way. So we'd have watermelon—all summer long, we'd have watermelons from . . .

SL: That sounds great . . .

ED: . . . it was wonderful. Sweet watermelons. [00:55:21] But he farmed a lot all those years, and he was very proud to be a landowner. He owned some land, but—and he leased some land [*unclear word*] as well, but something terrible happened. He—times were bad during the Depression, and he was in debt and couldn't pay his taxes on the land. So he was several years in arrears, and they were about to forc—*you know*—they declared his land delinquent, and it was going to be sold. So his eldest son, Ollie, went down and paid all the back taxes but then had the title transferred to his name, and my grandfather never got over it. He never would farm any of that land ever again. He wouldn't keep up the house. But my Uncle Ollie thought he was—said he was doing it as favor 'cause he was going to take care of them. They could live in the house forever. Farm the land as he always did, but he was going to see to it that the land was paid up. And so he did that. But my grandfather never had anything to do with him again—with his son. [00:56:34] Never

would farm any of the land. He went over and leased some land farther away to grow his watermelons for the rest of his life and never had anything to do with that land again. As I say, he wouldn't keep up the property or fix anything around the place or what—but he just resented—he was no longer a landowner, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

ED: I guess that was a big thing to him, but it was . . .

SL: He couldn't see the . . .

ED: . . . he was unhappy, yeah . . .

SL: . . . better his son than . . .

ED: . . . yeah.

SL: . . . someone we didn't—that they didn't know.

ED: But they came up from Alabama. He had—he grew up in Alabama, and they were very, very poor. And after the Civil War—he was born during the Civil War, and his daddy was a soldier and then disappeared. I don't know whether he didn't come back from the war or what happened to him. [00:57:19] They never established what—and he never said what happened to his daddy but wouldn't talk about it. But they eventually—they were in desperate shape, and he and his brothers and the rest of the family heard that you could get land free in Arkansas.

So I—they came up and got some land down on the—near Strong, and that's where they grew up. But he was a tough old guy, and he had to—I remember his great mane of white hair. I thought he was a very handsome old fellow. Had a square jaw, and he was always nice to us. And he was as tough as nails, and I remember once my Uncle Joe tellin' about this. Back in, I guess, the [19]40s, he became terribly ill and, infection of something, and he fell into a coma. And he was in bad, bad shape and had been sick for—so they got a doctor to come out from Strong or El Dorado and look at him and said that he couldn't be helped—that he was near—he was breathing very hea—labored breathing—that he probably wouldn't live through the night. And so they—my Uncle Joe went back down to Strong—he was a pulpwood hauler. And he went down to Strong that night and got up early the next morning—coming—came ba—expecting to see, you know, his daddy would be dead. But as he arri—he arrives before daylight, and he look—sees the old barn down there, and he thought he sees a [*laughs*] little light in the barn. So he goes, "Somebody's down there in our barn." He goes down there, and it's Mr. Canady—he's got a lantern, and he's milkin' the cows. [*SL laughs*] So he wasn't so near death after . . .

SL: He made it through the night and got [*laughs*] . . .

ED: . . . he made it through the night, and he had got up to milk the cows. [*Laughter*] So that's my favorite story about my granddaddy.

SL: Wow.

Trey Marley: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[00:59:17] SL: I just—I think— isn't it unusual that so many relatives all lived in one area like that. It would seem like to me that it would—it's almost like a clan of—you know, it looks like you all would look out for each other, and you knew everybody and . . .

[00:59:47] ED: Well, it's strange nowadays certainly because such a mobile society. Everybody scatters and—but in those days, it wasn't much mobility.

SL: Yeah.

ED: And if you were uneducated, there's not much opportunity for you to go. So everybody—you grew up and you—in the neighborhood, and you stayed there, and you did what your daddy did.

[01:00:03] SL: You learned a trade from your . . .

ED: You learned your trade or something like—and everybody kind of stayed around. So they—it had been like that for generations.

And in fact, I think probably my brother—my generation—my brother and I were the first that went to college. As far as I can tell. Although my brother did a—went back and did some research—went back, and apparently, on my mother's side, way back sometime in the 1800s, one of them had a Dr. in front of his name. I mean, that doesn't—I can't imagine any of my forbears were ever a doctor, but [*SL laughs*] or—but from our time everybody—nobody went to college and hardly nobody—almost nobody finished high school before. Well, my father's generation—some of his brothers finished high school. I think all of them finished high school, except he and his next eldest brother.

[01:00:57] SL: Well, did all of the families have some kind of motorized vehicle—a truck or a car? Is that . . .

ED: Yes, yes. By that time they did. My daddy got a truck at a very early age, and that's how he worked. And my Uncle Fred, who was the next oldest son who had lived next door to us—he was a mechanic, and that's what he did for his life. He—he worked for a pap—for a lumber company, but he—for the—one of the Anthonys had a big mill—a big operation at Urbana, Urbana-Lawson, which is a big lumber center, and they had this giant mill there. And so he was the mechanic all of his life. He

worked on all their—they had a fleet of trucks themselves hauling logs, so that was his trade and all the—and my Uncle Wallace hauled gasoline for Texaco and then eventually got him a station. And he and his brother—youngest brother, Harry, so they op—together operated a service station on Southwest Avenue in El Dorado for most of their lives. [01:02:19] So they were—everybody was always had a vehicle around. And so at a fairly early age—although we didn't have any money—I don't know how much money my daddy—could've never have made over a couple thousand dollars in a year, I suspect. But we'd always—we never had a new car, but he always had—in addition to his old truck—that he always had a used car. We'd—he'd get an old Ford or Chevrolet—as I say, he would not have a . . .

SL: A Chrysler.

ED: . . . Plymouth or a Dodge or a Chrysler—he wasn't going to have anything like that. But he'd—an old Ford or Chevrolet and we'd—every four or five years go in and get a—trade-in for a five-year-old Chevy or something. And so my brother, when we were in high school, he got my brother—'cause my brother was having to—he was an athlete. My brother played football and baseball. And so we got my brother an old—about a [19]37—I've forgotten whether it was a Ford or Chevy, some kind of old

piece of junk. [SL laughs] And he worked on it all the time, he and my—Roderick Morgan, who was a friend of my daddy's, who lived a couple of miles away. And they were always havin' to work on my brother's old car to keep it running. And then when I was in high school—when I got a job at the *El Dorado Daily News*—when I was in high school. And so I needed—I couldn't ride the bus back and forth after I got a job—I couldn't ride the bus anymore. So I had to have conveyance to get back and forth the eight miles from town out there, so my daddy helped me buy an old Ford. We bought a—I think about a forty, [19]48 Ford or [19]49 Ford or something along in there, so we always had cars around, and that was true of all of them. All of them there—all loved motors—vehicles.

[01:04:28] SL: So everybody drove . . .

ED: Everybody drove . . .

SL: . . . everybody knew how to drive and . . .

ED: . . . everybody drove. My mother didn't learn—my mother didn't know how to drive—couldn't drive and although in the latter years, she—my—her parents were—got it to be in bad health, and they were living—that was about ten or twelve miles away to—by back roads. You had to go through all of these old back roads through Lawson and Urbana and over to their house—over

on—near Strong. And she was desperate to get over there so she could spend—and so in the summertime—when out of school—my daddy was working. I would ride with her. And my daddy taught her a little bit how to drive . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and got her—she couldn't—obviously could never use a stick shift—she never could coordinate the clutch and all of [*SL laughs*] that. [01:05:25] And she just could not get the car running. If she did, it would stop. And first place she stopped, it would go dead, and she couldn't—you know, it was just a nightmare . . .

SL: Couldn't . . .

ED: . . . so he eventually got a car with automatic transmission—an old Ford—an automatic transmission, which made it easier for her. So she could guide the thing—you could turn the ignition, and she could guide it to some extent [*SL laughs*]. She was blind in one eye but—and had a tendency, I think, to start thinkin' about other things, and her mind would drift—and—but I was al—so I stayed with her to—she never could remember where to turn. After many, many years [*SL laughs*] and a pla—a route that should be as familiar as the back of her hand.

[01:06:07] She never could remember where you turn left or

right at any—at this cross—crossroads. So I would ride with her and say, "Ma, you left—take a left here [points left with left hand]." Or, "Go straight." And also, I'd be there—I'd sit close to her so that—she would kind of drift to the edge of the road. I'd grab the wheel and kind of straighten it up a little bit. Or if a car was coming I'd kind of—and the road was narrow—I'd kind of help maneuver it over, so they could pass or something—and so that was—we—she was the only one in the family that never really learned how to drive. Now after my daddy died and—in 1967, we were in Little Rock, and we moved her to Little Rock. And she—and bought her a house down the street from us—about four or five blocks from us. And she wanted to bring my daddy's car up. So we brought her car up, and I went down to the War Memorial parking lot and taught her how to back up and turn and stop, and we went all over the Hillcrest neighborhood. Went to the Kroger store, and all the—and the Pulaski Heights Baptist Church—and the parking lot there and taught her to drive. And so that's what she di—until the last four or five years of her life. We had to take the car away from her but—'cause she kept running into signs and so forth . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . in the Kroger lot and skinning it up so—but she drove all

those—she had her little routes from her house—it was about four blocks to Kroger and about seven or eight blocks up to the church.

SL: Yeah.

ED: So she could drive a few places—and—after that.

[01:07:53] SL: Let's talk a little bit about church in the—role of the church in your household growing up. Was grace always said at the dinner table?

ED: No, not at our house—occasionally—my mother would get it that we should say grace, and my daddy wasn't keen on it. But—so occasionally. But at the bigger gatherings—bigger family gatherings, somebody would always say grace. And—but it wasn't—at our household, it wasn't common. [01:08:30] My mother was very, very religious. And all of her family, except her daddy—her—Sam Canady, her daddy, was an atheist. [*SL laughs*] And it always distressed my mother that her daddy was an atheist, but he wasn't going to have any—he never would go to church—wouldn't have anything to do with it. Didn't keep them from going to church. Their momma was a little—Knowles Chapel Baptist Church, which was about a half mile down the road from their house and where their—her parents are buried, and most of her relatives are buried there, so they'd go down to

the church, but he would not go. And—but my mother was always distressed about that, but he wasn't going to have any part of that. Religious was just a bunch of hooley to him, and he wasn't going to have any part of it. But . . .

SL: So did you all go to church every Sunday?

ED: We did. We went to the Union Baptist Church and . . .

SL: Was that there in the community or . . .

ED: It was about five or six miles. It was two or three different roads you had to get to the Union Baptist Church. [01:09:39] And so that's where we went to church. Until probably about 1948 or [19]45 [ED edit: 1949]—I think it was probably owing to some of my mother's troubles—imagined troubles—with the church over her beliefs or something—the stuff that she had written for the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine. It finally just got the best of her, so she decided we're takin' us into El Dorado. So we transferred into—my daddy was always happy to make her happy—so we went into El Dorado to church. She kind of—my daddy was the strong man in the family, and—but she kind of was—I think, made the critical decisions, and my daddy always went along. For example, when they closed Quinn School.

SL: Yeah.

ED: When they closed Quinn School, she—we had to decide whether we were going into El Dorado. El Dorado wanted us—they wanted us to go to school in there. [01:10:44] There was another little school district called the Union School District, which was over near where our church was. And it was a pretty good-sized rural school, and it, in fact, it stayed in existence until about two years ago—the latest round of school consolidation abolished the old Union School. And so they wanted us to go there. They'd obviously needed numbers, and so they paid a visit to us and wanted us to—my brother and I—to go to school there. We were right on the cusp, I guess, of the district; we could've gone either way. And they would come get us, and you know, they would run a bus to get us as well, and I think my daddy probably wanted us to go there 'cause it was a little school, and he was, you know—big city—he'd had some tr—you know . . .

SL: Trouble.

ED: . . . lawyers and all of those kind of evil people . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and big cities and stuff. I don't think he trusted the city and . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . so—and probably it was kind of scary to him, but I think it was my mother's decision: No, we would go into El Dorado to go to school. And then we would go to church in El Dorado after that. We would—we transferred up there. [01:11:52] 'Cause I remember—'cause back when my—shortly before my mother died—in the last closing weeks, she became kind of delusional and she—I became my daddy in the last couple of months of her life, I was her [ED edit: my] daddy . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . I was her husband, and so she would rebuke me from time to time. And she—I rem—one of the last conversations I had with her. We were sittin' there talkin'. She was at a nursing home. And she said something. She says, "You always blamed me for the boys, didn't you?" And I said, "What are you talking about?" And it was clear that she—that he didn't think we should go to school in town, and he thought we were unhappy in there or something in El Dorado. Something—maybe something had happened—and something in El Dorado. But she was lecturing me then—that I had—that Clifton had blamed her for something. I don't know what it was all about, but—so she made a lot of those kind of decisions, and he always went along with them. Where we were going to school, where we were

going to church, and so forth.

[01:13:04] SL: So was that Sunday school as well?

ED: Sunday school as well.

SL: And weren't churches kind of the community buildings for small communities back then?

ED: Well, to some extent. But out there, there was, you know, there were probably some community things, but we lived quite a ways—that church basically was for people on the East Main Road—out that side of town, and we were the—probably went the farthest. There was other people—I don't know where the—our immediate neighbors. My—except the Dumases went to—and the Armers all went to the Union Baptist Church over there.

There was a little Eben—there was a little Methodist church that had about—it's still there. And it's—it has—last I heard, it had six members, and it had services once a month. There were a few people that went to Ebenezer Methodist Church. It was a little closer to us.

SL: Yeah.

ED: And a few people went into—went down to Calion or something to a church down there—but everybody went to church, and it was a central place for everybody.

[01:14:22] SL: So you said your mother was very religious. Did she

keep a Bible at home, and did you ever have to study—have lessons with her, Biblewise?

ED: Well, not much, not much. I mean, we had a Bible there, and she would read the Bible a lot, but she'd—and I don't recall her making us read the Bible, but we, you know, we went to church. And, of course, at Sunday school, you'd have to—you'd have these—you'd have to memorize all of the verses of the Bible. I remember we used to have these little drills in Sunday school where you'd all stand—all of you stand there with your little Bibles in a row, and they'd say, "Leviticus 3:16!" And, "Go!" And they'd [moves hands as if paging through a book]—and so you'd have to—everybody would see who could find Leviticus 3:16 first, and then you'd step forward, and you'd read the verse, and you won. And so I was very good at that. I was—always won all those competitions. [01:15:25] I'd step forward, like I had all—Deuteronomy and Levit—I had all those—Ezekiel, I and II James—you know—you could—all those memorized, so I could get the—quicker than anybody else. But—so [SL laughs] that's mostly about all I remember. I remember once Bill Gaddy—there's a guy that, Bill Gaddy, who's—William D. Gaddy—who's former head of the socia—Employment Security Division—big in the David Pryor administration. He was one of his—part of his

[Pryor's] cabinet. And he still lives here in town. And, he was in the same church. They lived over on East Main. They lived in—actually lived in El Dorado, but they came out to the little church. And his daddy and his granddaddy, they were all big in that church, and Bill Gaddy tells a story that I got him in terrible—that I was kind of a devilish kid. I don't remember that. I always thought [*SL laughs*] I was a Little Lord Fauntleroy. [*SL laughs*]. I was a sweet little guy. But he says that in Sunday school one day that the teacher was out of the room for a second, and that I had this idea of escaping—crawling out the window and escaping and going out and playing . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and that I had taught him and got him to do it and got him to crawl out the window, [*SL laughs*] and then the Sunday school teacher came back in. And, anyway, he got a terrible whipping as a result of it, and he says, one of the worst whippings he got. He got terrible whipping as a result, and it was all my fault. [01:17:03] And I don't remember that, but he keeps telling that story. I told that story at my mother's funeral. I gave a little eulogy at her funeral down there. Said, "You know, my momma didn't whip me for those kind of things. That she was always very gentle with me. She didn't whip me." My brother then got

up and said, "Well"—confirmed what he'd suspected all along. He got some terrible whippings, [*SL laughs*] and he always got whipped when we—the two of us got into something, and my brother would get the whipping. And I was just . . .

SL: You were perfect.

ED: . . . this skinny little kid, and I was always kind of sickly. My brother was big athletic guy, and so he was always to blame. He got . . .

SL: What . . .

ED: . . . he got the whippings.

[01:17:42] SL: What was the disciplining like both at home and in the school? I mean, you mentioned that the superintendent and the maintenance guy and the bus driver—was he—he was in charge . . .

ED: He was a disciplinarian. Mr. Hargett was the disciplinarian and sometimes the teacher—that—would—but at home we would get—my mother would just go out and cut a switch . . .

SL: Yes.

ED: . . . and I don't recall my daddy—my daddy probably just kind of used his hand to whack me across the butt—but I don't—my mother would get a little switch. But it was never very—my brother says that she really put some—raised some whelps on

him but . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . but I don't remember that much about it. [01:18:37] But at school, you'd get—they'd have a little paddle at school, and they'd get—there was an official paddle that was used to paddle kids in school. I don't recall ever getting paddled at school, but my brother did. He got paddled once—and—but there were two—he got paddled lightly, and all the girls got paddled—one person paddled—all the whole class got in trouble once, [*SL laughs*] and they're—all of them were going to get paddled, so one took the girls in one room and paddled them, and the boys were paddled in the next. And the teacher paddled the boys, and she couldn't stand it, so she just gave them little light taps, and they came out laughing. And the girls came out crying, and so it was not even-handed justice at Quinn School. [*SL laughs*]

[01:19:32] SL: Well, so is there anything else about the country life out there that still resonates with you today? Any—is there . . .

ED: Well . . .

SL: . . . something that you feel like you—you must have gotten something out of that that still shapes you or stuck with you.

ED: Well, I think it was a placid life. The quiet. And, you know, I still miss it at night. I'd love to go back and—go back and, you

know, for example, going fishing and camping out and sta—to recall the stillness at night and the crickets and all the night sounds and the noises. It was always so, so peaceful at night, and I guess this is probably part of my makeup—there was a—there was just this peacefulness about country life. It was hard in many ways, but it was still kind of peaceful. And I think that was . . .

[01:20:47] SL: When you got electricity out there did that—did you also get a radio?

ED: We got a radio. That's right. Even before we got electricity—even before we got electricity, we had a radio with a battery operated radio and—but—and we would listen to—sit around the radio at night and listen to—you could hear—you know, the radio stations in Del Rio, Texas, where they sold, you know, the prayer—your prayer cloths and autographed pictures of Jesus and all of those things. And WOAI at San Antonio, and we used to listen to *Lum and Abner* and—on the radio. And, what was the other? The black guys?

SL: *Amos 'n' Andy*?

ED: *Amos 'n' Andy*. I loved *Amos 'n' Andy*. My daddy loved *Amos 'n' Andy*. And I remember hearing the—listening to the fight—used to—heavyweight boxing championship fights. We heard Joe

Louis and Billy Conn. I heard—tuned in to hear—I remember hearing Joe Louis knock out Billy Conn. It—knocked him out every time—twice, I think [*SL laughs*—I think he fought Billy Conn twice. Billy Conn was the great white hope, you know, and so everybody was pulling for Billy Conn to beat this black guy. But Joe Louis knocked them all out—but so I remember hearing a couple of—had to get home and listen to the fight.

SL: Uh-huh. And . . .

ED: I was probably—I don't know—I was probably pulling for Billy Conn. I hope not, but I don't know. [*Coughs*]

SL: So . . .

ED: Joe Louis was one of my great heroes. But who knows who I was pulling for then.

[01:22:37] SL: And what about telephone?

ED: Well, we got a telephone, and I—I'm thinking it was about when I'm in the eighth or ninth grade. We were—I'm in junior high school in El Dorado when we get a telephone, and I was—it was an eight-party line. And, 'course, you just—you know, the phone would ring at all hours. You know, your ring would—might be three rings . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . and three long rings and a short ring, whatever the code

was. But you'd be talkin', and you could hear people picking up and breathing—you know, everybody along the lines listening in . . .

SL: Everybody knew everyone's business.

ED: . . . everybody knew what's going on. [*SL laughs*] And so you had all . . .

[01:23:16] SL: Well, did you actually dial on the telephone, or did you just pick it up and ask someone to connect you to . . .

ED: I think at the—I think we all—I think when we got the phone, I think—we were then—I think it was a dial phone.

SL: Okay.

ED: I think we were at that time. I don't—it might've been a period when—before we had—when you had to call up and ring up somebody. I—I've used those old phones, but I think, maybe, we—we started off with a dial phone. Pretty sure we did.

SL: Well . . .

[01:23:53] ED: Then later we got television, of course, after that. That co—much longer. I was in high school when we got—we actually got a television, but we—the first television was—Alto and Roney Long got television. And we would go over—they lived about two miles away. And we would—they would have—great thing—they'd invite us—we'd go over and watch television

at their house. And they had this great big old set [moves both hands outward], and we'd go watch—I forgot whether *Lucy and Desi* were on or not—but whether that was . . .

SL: Well, let's see . . .

ED: . . . then we later got our own television set, but years later.

SL: Ed Sullivan, maybe.

ED: Ed Sullivan, yeah.

SL: Who else? There was the—oh, who was the other guy that was so famous? Well, anyway—so—but that was in the [19]50s then, right?

ED: Mh-hmm, yeah.

SL: When that came along. What about the relationship with the black families and the—I mean, was there much Klan activity that you were aware of out there?

[01:25:14] ED: I wasn't aware of any Klan activity At that point—now later on I when I got in—well after—high school, I guess—began—the White Citi—the Citizens' Council because by that time in the [19]50s, you'd had the—[19]54 deci—*Brown v. Board of Education* decision. My senior year in high school—that decision came down in the summer of—before my senior year in high school. But we didn't think too much about it. I don't recall its having much impact, much discussion about it. My mother

felt like that—I guess you could call her ?coming in on?
integration—she felt that the blacks were aggrieved. And that—
and it was—that it was wrong. My daddy never really talked
about it, and I don't recall there being much discussion about it
by the time I—of course, in high school, it was—everything was
segregated still. [01:26:20] I graduated in [19]55, so my—it
was—it would've been three years later, I guess, before you had
the first—the Central High case, and I was in college by that
time. But the blacks obviously out there that didn't have
education—didn't have any schools . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . you know, they were required to—you know, I guess you
had compulsory attendance laws even then, but they didn't
provide—no effort to provide education for blacks, in rural areas
anyway. In the city, you had a school system—a black school
system in the city of El Dorado. It was terribly inferior. I mean,
it was ramshackle buildings, although they did in nineteen—I
think about 1954, they built a new black high school in El
Dorado—probably in hopes that they would—them not have to
integrate. Maybe that's—my hunch is that's why it was done . . .

SL: Trying to improve . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . the separate but equal.

[01:27:19] ED: Yeah, make it separate but equal and avoid that. So I—it came along about that time. But the—you know, it was terribly inferior. And in—but rural areas—there'd be a—little black schools here and there, but I—but they were not functional schools. So—but in our neighborhoods there were—there weren't many on Champagnolle Road. There were a few blacks—a couple of black families lived up the road about two or three miles, and then the Davis family back in the woods back there. And I guess probably some at Calion, which was a little mill town on the banks of the Ouachita River. And there you had—you had a quite famous black area called Jelly Roll.

SL: Yeah.

ED: And the guy [Charles Thomas], who owned that big mill—who inherited that big lumber mill down there later wrote a book about it. He was a sociologist at Washington University [at Saint Louis]. And wrote a book called *Jelly Roll*[: *A Black Neighborhood in a Southern Mill Town*], and it was kind of a sociologic—logical treatise on the lives and conditions of the people in that neighborhood. [01:28:28] So we had to drive—if—when my daddy would haul to the mill at Calion, we'd have to haul the logs through the heart of that neighborhood, and it

was—it really looked kind of like something like, you know, South Africa, Soweto or something, the slums. It was a terrible, terrible place. And so this guy, when he inherited the mill, you know, he tried to do something to improve the lives of those people. But there wasn't any socio—social contact other than, you know, work and so forth. Except they came and—to our house and did the laundry. And Daddy and Dock were inseparable. I guess he—Dock—was probably my daddy's closest friend for life. They were [pauses]—I don't know, he probably paid him half what he made. Probably—Dock probably made about what Daddy did . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . he probably didn't make much money. But I'm sure Dock didn't make much either.

[01:29:35] SL: So in the town, in El Dorado, did you see any "Colored" versus "White" signs? You know, colored water fountains, colored . . .

ED: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I mean, if you went to the county courthouse you would have a—the—they would have a—the water fountain, it would say "Colored." Over here, there'd be way off in the corner . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . would be this inferior—even an inferior water fountain. And it would be coming out of the wall—those things did in those days. But it would—that would be—everything was labeled that way. And there was no, of course, there was no integration in the stores. You never saw blacks in the stores. Never—obviously never a black clerk or employee in any place.

[01:30:33] There was total separation, and the blacks all lived in the southeastern part of town. All together—those neighborhoods. So there was complete separation. And it really was a—in the high school—when I went to work at the *El Dorado Daily News*, that's when I first discovered all this raci—this overt racism and all—The White Citizens' Council and [pauses] the—there was an active—some active White Citizens' Council people in that—in fact, one of them worked for our newspaper. Was in advertising. He—his wife was a big—of our advertising director—was obv—active in the Citizens' Council in that area . . .

SL: What . . .

ED: . . . and maybe the Klan, too. I don't know whether there was any distinction between them at the time, but . . .

[01:31:34] SL: Yeah, uh-huh. Did you get—pick up on any of that stuff from the teachers in the school system?

ED: No. No, I never recall any—anything about it in high school. I mean, it—race, it's odd to think about, but there was just no consciousness of it. It—that was the way things were, and there was really not much consciousness of it at the time. And in the fifty [ED edit: [19]50s]—and in college is when you became really conscious of it. It's an embarrassment to say that you just really went through all of your life and then never—as I can recall—I don't remember even ever thinking about it. And the injustice and the horror of it. But I don't think I did. I can't—I have no recollection of ever having discussions with—in the family or until obviously [19]57, [19]58—then—a discussion of it then but—in the family. But before that, I just don't recall any of it. And, of course, my family members, they were all segregationists, obviously, and probably a lot of them still are, but that's inherited culture and that's—they couldn't—I don't think many of them changed . . .

[01:33:12] SL: Yeah. Well, you've mentioned that your brother was an athlete. So I'm—I can imagine his time being spent, you know, on the play fields. What about you—what did you do outside of school?

ED: Well, we played a lot, too. My brother and I both—and one or two neighbors—this little boy lived up the road a couple of miles

named Johnny Welch. And so we would come down—and we played a lot of baseball. Just the two of us, my brother and I. And after we started [school] in El Dorado, and he started to play in football [*coughs*—and—fairly early and baseball—and we were big fans of major-league baseball out there. Wat—followed the newspaper, the *El Dorado Daily News*, and so my brother was a big St. Louis Cardinal fan . . .

SL: I was going to say.

ED: . . . and Stan Musial. And—so we would—we both had—got gloves, and we made a—my dad had an old wood lathe, and so we made a bat out of some—I don't know what it was made of—hickory 'cause it seemed like it weighed a ton. It must've been a fifty-ounce bat, but we made a bat out of a lathe. And so we would stand in front of the feedhouse out there, and that's what—and we would—one of us would pitch, and the other would bat. And that's how we—I wasn't much of a pitcher. I was pretty good. I had some talent, but I was just skinny and weak. And my brother was big and strong. He was about six three and was—he was an end in high school, and he was a baseball player. And played for the American Legion in semipro ball. And powerful hitter; he could hit it over the wall at the baseball—at the professional baseball park—at—we had professional baseball

at El Dorado in those days. We had a Cotton States League [team] and . . .

[01:35:25] SL: Wow, I was not aware of that.

ED: Yeah, it used to be—Hot Springs Bathers and the El Dorado Oilers. And Helena—there was a—the Helena—Helena had a baseball team, and Greenville, Mississippi, and Greenwood, Mississippi, and Natchez and so forth. And so we'd—that was the big sport, to go into town and see the El Dorado Oilers play. But we played a lot out at the house. And we would—in fact, we tore down my daddy's garage door with the baseball hitting against it. Finally just shattered it, and he had to build a new door. [*SL laughs*] But that's what we did. We played out—played baseball every day, all summer long into spring. We'd go swimming, and we'd play—the two of us—played baseball, and we'd—you'd—or if Johnny Welch were down, we'd have one outfielder. And the pitcher and then the batter. And it became wor—what we'd call workup. And, you know, I'd pitch, my brother would hit it cross the road into the woods [points] and Johnny would go fetch it, and then my brother would round the races [ED edit: bases] [*SL laughs*]*—but—round the bases. But, eventually, he'd fly out or hit it back to me, and I would be able to touch—he'd have—you'd have to make all the bases . . .*

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . first, second, third, home. And so—and then we'd play workup, and then if he made an out, then I'd go in and bat, and he'd go to the outfield, and Johnny Welch would come in and pitch. And so that's what we did. I think that's what we did most of the time. And then we'd go swimming.

[01:36:52] SL: So when you got to El Dorado, did you participate in any organized sports?

ED: No, no, no, my brother did, but I just . . .

SL: So you went to work.

ED: I went to work when I was a senior. My senior year there—that September, I went to work at the *El Dorado Daily News*, but . . .

SL: Well, until then would you just head back home after . . .

ED: Yeah, I would just catch the bus and go back home, and so we had some other act—kind of athletic activities. My brother and I—we would—you made up a lot of games down there. And one of our games was persimmons. Our place was covered with persimmon trees. And we found out that you could take—if you'd take these green persimmons—and they're very, very hard . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and they were—and you'd—there's a little husk at the top of

them, a little crown. And if you twisted off that crown, you had a virtually perfectly round, hard green persimmon. So—but if you went and cut yourself a big, long switch, maybe six or eight feet long—was very limber. [01:38:05] And then you'd cut off all the little twigs off of it and sharpen it on the end, and then you could take that persimmon and stick your—the end of that long switch into it . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . deeply embedded—way—hard—far in there as you could get it without splittin' the persimmon. And then you could take that persimmon—you could take that switch, and you could flip it like that [makes flicking motion]—hard. And you could throw that persimmon out of sight. [SL laughs] I mean, you could throw it two or three hundred yards if you got—depending on the wind and the aerodynamics of the persimmon. If you could get all of that husk off. And you could play with that for a while, you could get pretty good at that. You could aim those things pretty well. So we would have these persimmon wars. And you'd get—fill your pockets—you'd get a little sack around you and get a tow sack, and we'd fill it full of persimmons, and we'd have persimmon wars all evening. And my brother would be out, and he'd hide behind the mailbox, and I'd—one day we were [SL

laughs—I was at the—in the house. [01:39:07] My daddy had painted the house—he had painted our house. And a fresh coat of paint had been on it maybe two or three months. We had this big persimmon war, and so he'd fling that thing, and it would burst against the house [raises and opens both hands] . . .

SL: Oh, no.

ED: . . . and we had some screens on the windows and my daddy was off at work. It was in the summertime—persimmons—when the persimmons were ripe. So these things would burst against the house, but their persimmon juice was clear, so you didn't leave anything. So we'd had this battle and my—many persimmons had hit the house. And so—but it was August—so we'd go in and didn't go back out. My daddy comes in that evening—and by that time the sun has baked these persimmons' juice and that—those persimmon—those starbursts are all now black.

SL: Oh.

[01:40:02] ED: And the house is covered with all of these black things—starbursts on them. And my dad could never—he painted that place—he never could get tho—it would always . . .

SL: Leach and . . .

ED: . . . in those days, we didn't have these [primers]—the paint that

will cover these things . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . so it would—he'd paint those places and then a couple of months later, there was those black starbursts that would come out. Anyway, he gave us both the worst whipping we'd ever had. We both got—that night we got both terrible whippings over that. So we had to change our battle tactics after that [*SL laughs*] and not use the house as cover.

SL: That's . . .

ED: So we had—you had games like that in the summertimes, but persimmons were always good things to do. So you made up your games.

SL: So what about once you got to El Dorado—and El Dorado and the music scene there and radio. Did you start—do you remember any—did you have any band classes or . . .

ED: No . . .

SL: . . . music classes or . . .

[01:41:17] ED: I—my mother wanted me to take piano, and so we—somehow when I was in junior high school there—there was a teacher about a block from the junior high school, and so—who taught piano. And so—and we had an old piano in the house . . .

SL: Oh, you did?

ED: . . . we had a piano in there. My daddy could—he could play the accordion. He played the fiddle. He and a guy named Walter Bird lived over—he also lived over near the Davises. He was a white guy, and every now and then, he used to come through the woods, and they'd sit around at night and play the—both of them would play the fiddle. And my daddy had this terrible old accordion. He'd come out, and they'd play the accordion and the fiddle—and [coughs] "Eighth of January" and those kind of things—but—and he played the guitar a little bit. And my brother kind of learned to play the guitar a little bit, but I never did learn how to play any of that. I had a terrible ear for that stuff. But I took piano lessons in El Dorado for, I don't know, six or eight months. [01:42:27] And I had one skill, and that was speed. And I was always a great typist. I was—you know, my one skill in life was that I was a fast typist. I could type tremendously fast and set the Fort Slocum typing record when I was in the Army—but [coughs] . . .

SL: Really?

ED: . . . but [coughs]—so I took piano, but I never could master these things—timing—half notes, quarter notes, full notes, rests. It just didn't make any sense to me, and I never could master any of that, and she—the teacher got so frustrated. [SL laughs]

So what we did at my first recital—you know, they had—she'd give me "Flight of the Bumblebee." Where it was just—you play all of these things as fast as you can . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and that's—that was it. And so that's why she chose that 'cause I—'cause she knew it would be—everybody would be horrified by anything [*SL laughs*] that was slow 'cause I— 'cause it would all just be played fast. So that's what my recital was. So I quit after my recital, and I didn't do it anymore. But—so I was not musically inclined.

[01:43:40] SL: Well, I'm—now I'm interested in the music that was happening in your home. I just never—I just assumed that you would not have a piano in the house. Was it—were there . . .

ED: There'd been an old piano in my grandfather's house. They had an old piano down there. And so my brother learned to play a little bit by—he learned a few notes and just kind of learned to play a little bit, not very well, down at their house. And so eventually that—they moved that—when they died or at some point—moved that old piano up to our house, and it was in the living room. And I don't know whether it was tuned or not, but I couldn't pract—I couldn't make myself practice. When I was takin' lessons, I couldn't—it was too boring. I just couldn't

practice.

[01:44:37] SL: Did your mom play piano?

ED: No. She never played anything.

SL: So your father was the musician.

ED: She was—he was a kind of a musician. He loved to—he was a good fiddle player, and he didn't do it very much. He never did it unless Walter Bird came over, and you know, he'd come up out of the woods behind the house. You know, every couple of months Walter Bird would show up, and so they'd—after supper—at night and sit around and bring the kerosene lamps all in the living room and . . .

SL: Have a hootenanny.

ED: . . . have a little—kind of a hootenanny—the two of them, and there was one other guy that later came over and joined them. I don't know whether that—who that was, but somebody else—he occasionally would bring somebody else over from—maybe one of his brothers or something. I don't remember. Some—I remember some—a couple of times, it would be three people in there.

SL: And so they all would sing—would—were there . . .

ED: I don't recall much singin' . . .

SL: Uh-huh. It was more a jam thing?

ED: . . . they were just playin'. They just—they were—Daddy couldn't sing, but Walter might've sung a little bit. I don't remember.

[01:45:52] SL: What about at the church? I assume you probably had a piano at the church?

ED: Had a piano at the church, yeah . . .

SL: And did the hymns there . . .

ED: . . . played hymns at the church. Yeah, everybody would sing. So we all . . .

SL: Any? Go ahead.

ED: Yeah, that's . . .

SL: Any revival action? Did you ever have any . . .

ED: Yeah, there'd always be a revival. There'd—once a year there'd be a revival over there, and there'd be some famous preacher. They'd say this: "He's the greatest preacher, and [*SL laughs*] he's going to be here next week and preaching every night"—or something . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and so they—he'd come over. And one guy, his name was Lee. Preacher from out of state some place, and he'd preach. And he was famous for the—some hellfire and brimstone sermon he preached, and it was just terrifying [*SL laughs*] sermon about

roasting in hell for eternity. And, I mean, he'd—he could—we all went, and he was just absolutely terrifying. [*SL laughs*] He would just tell you how we're all going to go to hell—and we're just going to—and he would be very graphic about what it's going to be like. Gee, it's going to be just cooking twenty-four hours a day, and you couldn't—it was just terrifying. [*SL laughs*] So I went down and rededicated my life, you know, every chance I got . . .

SL: Absolutely.

ED: . . . yeah, yeah, yeah . . .

SL: Went down front.

ED: . . . yeah. Yeah. Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[01:47:11] SL: Any miracle healings?

ED: No, he didn't do any of—they didn't have any healings out there . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

ED: . . . and they didn't. No, no, glossolalia—no, no speaking in tongues and stuff like that at the Baptist church. But it was all traditional . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . hellfire stuff.

SL: What about traveling minstrels? Any . . .

ED: No, no traveling minstrels that I can recall. They might—they probably had some in El Dorado, I don't know.

SL: Yeah.

ED: But I don't recall much of it.

[01:47:40] SL: And as far as—did your mom ever go into town to go to the store, or was there a rolling store that would come by and service the community?

ED: Well, we used to—there used to be—there'd be a truck come—would come by occasionally with—you could—and you'd get candy and stuff that would but—and my dad briefly—my dad for a while had a lumber mill. He decided to be an entrepreneur and so he started—he and his brother-in-law, who was—worked at the refinery—MacMillan Refinery in Norphlet. And had a little extra cash—he actually made pretty good money. He was a foreman or something. And had a little extra cash so they decided to—rather than hauling logs altogether—my daddy—they would put in a mill. So we'd—my daddy bought an old engine—old Minneapolis-Moline engine and built a sawmill across the road. [01:48:43] And [*clears throat*] also got a gas pump out there. We had a gas pump installed. So we could sell a little gasoline, and Daddy could fuel his own truck. And also—we had a little place there, he made a little store out of it—could se—

sold a little candy out of there. So his outfit would come by, and we'd stock shelves there with a little candy. I don't—I bet we did—in all of its existence in five or six years—probably never sold fifty dollars worth of goods. It was just—Wayne and I ate it all. [*SL laughs*] We ate all the Milky Ways and stuff we could get. And Dock would occasionally would get a couple of candy bars on credit—and—so that's—so that truck came around to service that occasionally, but we never sold anything. But going back on the mill—get back to that in a second about the going to store in town—but we had that little lumber mill for a while, so my brother and I worked in—we were employees of the mill in the summertime and on Saturdays. And my daddy would haul—go get the logs and haul them and put them on the skidway. [01:49:50] And there was a foul-mouth old man named Mr. Major, [*SL laughs*] who was the dirtiest, most foul-mouthed old man I've ever encountered in my life. [*SL laughs*] He was the sawyer. He stood there and operated the lever, and we had a little car that goes back and forth [on a track] [swings both arms side to side]. And you had doggers—you needed two doggers . . .

SL: Yep.

ED: . . . and—on there. So my brother and I would be the doggers,

and so they'd roll the log down the skidway, and then we'd—had—you had these little clamps and the big, long levers. So my brother and I—one of—be at the end of the carriage and the—you'd clamp down on that, [moves both hands down and then up to make a claw] and it would hold—it would grab a hold of that log and hold it in place. And then, Mr. Major would pull this lever and this little—and it would go along this little railroad track, and the big old giant saw that was about this tall [extends hand to shoulder height] And it would saw that lumber back and then—and then he'd saw it—we'd saw it off, and then occasionally we'd turn it over and—turn the log over, and we'd have to dog it again . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and so that's what we did. But it—you know, and he'd take the raw lumber down to—on Strong Highway to a planing mill and sell it to them down there. But apparently he never made any money at it. So he did that for four or five years and . . .

SL: And shut it down.

ED: . . . shut it down. And that was his career as a businessman.

[01:51:23] SL: Business opportunity—so—and then what about [ED *clears throat*] shoppin' in town?

ED: Yes, we'd go into—we did all our shopping in town, and we

would—you could go to Calion, which was closer, which was about five miles. And Dan Lee Staples had a store at Calion. And—but it was a tiny little store. But you could get milk and bread and pork and beans and Vienna sausage and stuff there. But we would typically go into town on Saturday, and Daddy would get his—go to—go by Beryl Anthony's house to get his money, and then we'd go to Kroger st—or Safeway—we had a Safeway store. And we'd go to Safeway and get groceries for the week, and occasionally we—we'd have to buy—my mother made a lot of our clothes. We—she made our shirts until we got to high school, and we were obviously kind of embarrassed about havin' these homemade shirts—and made out of flour sacks and stuff. So we started buying all our clothes then . . .

SL: Is that right, they were made outta flour sacks?

ED: . . . well, you could—in those days, you could buy shorts—which was feed for the hogs, and a lot of the sacks would have—would be flower—would have patterns on them. Flowers and various kinds of patterns. And they were cotton. And so my mother would make shirts out of [ED edit: for us] us—until we got too big. You know, the little, small shirts. And she'd go to—and go to El Dorado and get some fabric sometimes and make us little shirts out of them. [01:53:10] But, you know, we were getting

kind of self-conscious. When you go into town, all those city slickers wearing their nice clothes, and . . .

SL: Yep.

ED: . . . so I don't know, I probably indicated my embarrassment or something. So we started—she stopped makin' clothes when we started in junior high school in El Dorado. So we got to go to Woolworth and, well, Samples and West Department Store, where you could get good bargains for clothes. So we started getting our clothes in El Dorado then.

[01:53:42] SL: So did busing into El Dorado—did that end up making a financial burden for the house?

ED: No, no. I do—you know, the busing, you know, they—it was—the—I don't think so. I don't think it was any additional financial burden, because, you know, they didn't have to take us into town, except when my—briefly—when I started to work at first. You know I'd have to—I'd get off work at the *Daily News* about midnight and—or eleven o'clock or something at night. And then after I'd have to get to the house. For a while my daddy would have to drive into town to pick me up and take me home. And then I'd ride the bus to school in the morning. But then he'd come get me late at night. But then I got a little—got my—bought me a little Ford and drove myself after the first three,

four, five months I think. Maybe after Christmas. Then I'd made a little money—and . . .

[01:54:45] SL: So how did you land that job?

ED: Well, my brother, as I say, was an athlete—and he took journalism in high school, his senior year. And he was a sportswriter and so—but he'd have to—he'd be playing, and he was in the—he would be playing for the Wildcats, and then he was supposed to be writing up the games. So once or twice I would cover the game for him, and I'd find it's easy. I could write, I mean, it's fun. [01:55:15] So when I was—two years later when I was a senior—and I was going to be an engineer or something. My daddy wanted me to be an engineer. Said engineers make all kind of money . . .

SL: They do. They can.

ED: . . . and so I was going to ma—be some kind of engineer. I didn't know what it was, but—so I took chemistry and solid geometry and trigonometry and all that kind of stuff, so I could be an engineer. And—but then I'd s—I took journalism as a kind of a lark—as something to be kind of fun 'cause I enjoyed doing it when my brother was there. So I had been maybe two or three weeks into the school year, and I maybe turned in one story or something. And Mrs. [Ruth] Jenkins, the—who was the

journalism teacher, came over one day, and she said, "How would you like to work for the *El Dorado Daily News*?" And I said, "Sure." And she said, "Well, they need a reporter." And said, "Why don't you go down there and see Bob Hays." And so after school was out, I walked across town to the *Daily News* and asked to see Mr. Hays [managing editor of the *El Dorado Daily News* and *Evening Times*]. And so he sat me down there at a typewriter and little table there and gave me a—I don't know, some rewrite . . .

SL: Copy to rewrite, yeah.

ED: . . . some stuff to write. [01:56:44] And so I sat down with this old copy—got a big old pencil [makes fast writing motion] out and started writing, and he came over and pulled it out and said, "No, no, no, don't do—write it on the typewriter." And I had never done—tried to compose anything on the typewriter. So I wrote some things and turned it in to him, and he looked over them, and he said, "Well, all right, can you go to work tomorrow? Just come on after school every day." [SL laughs] So that's what I did. And so I came home from school. And after school was out at three o'clock or three thirty, whenever, I'd go over there, and then I'd go to—I'd make the rounds.

This—they taught me to go to the—make the rounds—go to the

Courthouse and City Hall. I'd go to the Courthou—all the courts and get the lawsuits that were filed and the police station. And I'd get all that stuff and then maybe cover some little stuff. So that's what I did. I worked—and the rest of the—my senior year, I worked every day. And then on weekends, you'd have to work on weekends 'cause you had to do the oil news for the weekend—for the Sunday paper and do all the Sunday stuff, and so I worked all day Saturday. So I'd—usually, I'd work seven days a week. And I'd work Saturdays and Sundays. And I did all the way through that year into summer. And then when I went to Henderson State Teachers College my first three years. And so I would come home every Friday—and—afternoon, and I'd drive home, and I'd just go straight to the *Daily News*. And I'd work until midnight, and then I'd work all day Saturday and all day Sunday. And then at—either—Sunday night I'd drive back up to Arkadelphia—so I did that for five, six, seven years.

SL: So was that first little test that you did, was that the first time you'd sat behind a typewriter?

ED: Well, I'd—I had taken typing, and so I was a good typist. I could type fast, but I—but when I was doing something with my brother, you know, I'd write it out. I thought that's how—if you write it out, and then you'd . . .

SL: Then do it, yeah.

ED: . . . then you'd type it up. But—so I had to compose on the typewriter, and so I, you know, after I did that I thought, "Well, this is easy." This beats writing it out. So it worked out fine.

[01:58:55] SL: So would you actually go do reporting? I mean, you'd go to an event or . . .

ED: Yeah, I was . . .

SL: . . . and you'd come back and write it up?

ED: . . . yeah, I was the reporter. Yeah, I was—I did that. I'd cover all the sports events, I'd—like on Friday night, I'd cover the football games and all the stuff on the weekends. And all the court news. I became their regular court reporter. I did all the—of course, I wasn't there, except in the summertime, for trials. I'd cover them. But—and all the police news and whatever else there was. It wasn't a very aggressive newspaper, and they didn't go out of their way to cover things. But I—whatever it was—I did all of that. Plus, you know, you . . .

Trey Marley: Excuse me, we need break.

ED: Yeah.

TM: I need to . . .

[Tape stopped]

[01:59:47] SL: So we were—I asked yo—what I asked you was, how you came about to start working at the newspaper in El Dorado.

ED: Okay, shall I go back and talk about from the start, when Mrs. Jenkins told me to do that, or . . .

SL: Yeah. You can go ahead and do that.

ED: All right, okay.

SL: Pick it up from Mrs. Jenkins, yeah.

ED: All right. Well, I—in my senior year, I took all these science and math courses hoping to prepare myself for—to go to college and do some engineering or something of that sort. And—but also took this easy course that was going to be fun. That was journalism. And under Mrs. Mac Jenkins. And we'd been in school—I guess it was probably two weeks into the fall term. And she came up to me in the journalism class one day and asked me, "Would like to work for the *El Dorado Daily News*?" And I said, "Well, why sure." She said, "Well, go down when you get out this afternoon—go down and see Bob Hays." And so I did. I walked across town and—to see Bob Hays. He was the managing editor of the paper—been managing editor for probably forty years. And he sat me down at the desk next to him and threw me a pile of stuff and asked me to write some stories about those things. I don't remember what they were.

And I got down a big sheet of the old long yellow copy paper and—with a number two pencil and started writing. And he came over and took it away and said, "No, no, no. No, that doesn't work. You got to write it on the—turn around and write it on that old typewriter." It was an old L.C. Smith typewriter there—old beat up typewriter, probably it was fifty years old then. [*SL laughs*] And [*clears throat*] so I wrote that and found it real—well, this is easy—much easier than writing it out. And so, I wrote a few stories and handed them to him. He read them and said, "This looks good. All right, well, you can go to work tomorrow." And so that's what I did. [02:01:52] I went to work the next day, and—and I guess for the rest of the school year, I worked seven days a week. I—after school every afternoon, I would go directly to the *News Times* offices, and I'd work to ten or eleven or twelve o'clock at night. And doing the regular stuff. I mean, we had one reporter. They had one reporter there named Oleta Mitchell, and she took me around and showed me how to do everything. Took me to the courthouse and introduced me to the circuit clerk and everybody and showed me how to pull the files and look at the lawsuits and all the motions and everything else. And all the divorces. You know, we made a record of everything, of course . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . every divorce that was filed and all the damage suits. And then took me to the police station and introduced me to the desk sergeant and so forth and showed me where the files were and how you get the incident reports and the city—took me to the City Hall, and all the—whatever else was on the regular beat of a reporter. [02:03:02] Now we had two—all the Palmer papers, as we called them in those days, had—or nearly all of them in each town had two newspapers. You had a morning paper and an afternoon paper. And the idea was—and it was pretty much the same paper. They'd trade—they'd change the headline fonts, maybe from a lightface to a boldface for the afternoon paper, but otherwise everything remained the same. All the copy. And I think the reason they did that, was that so that you'd keep out competition. They were always worried about somebody—competing papers—so you had an afternoon paper and a morning paper in every town. Hot Springs, Texarkana, and El Dorado had morning and afternoon papers. So you had a somewhat separate staff. The—Mr. Hays put out the afternoon paper and J. D. Beauchamp, an old bachelor with kind of hair that was about eighteen inches long, but a wonderful old editor. An old right-wing racist but a pretty good editor. Very kind to

me. So he put out the morning paper. And so Oleta would come to work in the morning, and she'd do the reporting for the after—for the afternoon paper. And anything fresh is going to be in the paper the next morning is what I did. So that's what I did. And I did that the rest of the school year. Skipped my—I stopped doing any homework. And so my grades in all those math and science classes were not great. I just had to cram for the tests and—at the end—and so I could pass. And then the teachers were alway—I think, suspicious that I was—hadn't done any homework all year, and then I'd make good grades on the final exam. They thought I was cheating or something. But that's how I got through high school in that last year.

SL: What [*ED clears throat*] did it pay?

[02:05:00] ED: The minimum wage, but that's what the Palmer papers did. Mr. Palmer—Clyde E. Palmer was the guy that owned all the papers. He owned from Texarkana, Hope—well, he owned half interest in the *Hope Star*, but—the Hot Springs papers, Camden, Magnolia, El Dorado, and Texarkana. [*Clears throat*] He owned all those, plus little satellite weekly newspapers, like Smackover—the *Smackover Journal*. It was published at the *El Dorado News Times*. He owned that as well. And it was just a little old throwaway journal that—at

Smackover—to get a little advertising up there and a few sales. [02:05:43] So it was just money—there was no effort to really put out a good newspaper up there. In fact, I had to—on the weekends, I'd do the *Smackover Journal* stuff. I'd do a lot of stuff for the *Smackover Journal*. And as well as the *El Dorado News Times*. So that's—so it—when I went to work there, the minimum wage was seventy cents an hour. [SL laughs] And I remember the first summer that, after I went to work there, the next July, the federal minimum wage went up on July 1 to seventy-five cents an hour. It went up a nickel an hour, to seventy-five cents. So there was an AP story in the paper that week saying—I was the editor—I wrote the headline on it and put it in the paper, "The minimum wage goes up to seventy-five cents, Monday"—or whatever the July 1 was. [SL laughs] Well, that week, attached to our paychecks—near—nearly everybody there except Bob Hays made minimum wage—except for the guys in the back shop. They paid them a little more because—so they wouldn't unionize. But all of us in the newsroom, which would be the proofreaders and the two reporters and probably J. D. Beauchamp, might've made more than the minimum wage. I don't know. But Bob Hays, I know, made eighty ce—eighty dollars a week. He was the managing editor for forty years. He

ma—which is my salary—later when I went to work at the *Gazette* I was making as much as Bob Hays [*SL laughs*] at the *Democrat*—at the *News Times*. [02:07:10] So I reme—so we had that—attached to our paycheck that week was a little slip of paper. It was a little mimeograph thing, it was about that deep [moves finger and thumb to eye level] in the—he was such a cheapskate, he'd run off maybe ten copies per page [*SL laughs*] and then clip them all off . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and then staple it to your check, and your check was a little larger that week. And so there was this little note—said, "Dear Employee: In keeping with the *News Times* policy of seeing after the welfare of its employees, we are happy to this week—to—that your pay will rise to seventy-five cents an hour." As if none of us read our own paper to know that they had to do it by federal law. [*SL laughs*] So that was always—that told you about Clyde Palmer, and how he—why he was so successful in the newspaper business. He didn't pay anything. He paid—his costs were always as low as they could be, so . . .

[02:08:09] SL: It's interesting how consumed you became just almost overnight. I mean, when you—when she asked if you wanted to work at the paper—if you'd consider it—and you said

yes, did you have in mind that it would be a full-time job?

ED: No, I didn't at the time. I did not, and had—and never really intended. I was—newspaper reporting was always a kind of a— an avocation. A kind of a hobby, I guess. Doing something that's fun until I figured out what I wanted to do with my life, and when I got serious about things, I would do what I was supposed to do. But, meantime, I would do this stuff. So—but anyway, I loved it. I loved the writing, and it was easy for me. I was, as I say, a fast typist, and I wrote fast, and I could turn out—always from the first, I could turn out a huge amount of copy. And I could come in—those little court cases and knock them out—and so they were always kind of amazed. They were—they'd had students before from high school from time to time—worked there. And—but Mr. Hays and Mr. Beauchamp liked me a lot—were very nice to me and very complimentary. And I remember one day the dar—there's an old proofreader been there for many years, named Doris Tibbs. [02:09:47] She read—she was a proofreader. And she and her sister-in-law were the proofreaders. And she said—she told me one day. I had been there four or five months, and she said, "J. D. Beauchamp paid you a real nice compliment last night." And I said, "What's that?" "He said, 'The thing about Dumas is, you

don't have to tell him anything but one time, and he gets it, and he—you never have to tell him again.'" And I always wondered, "Well, what's that all about? Why should you have to tell anybody [a second time]"—later on when I was teaching journalism, I found out what he was talking about . . .

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

ED: . . . when I was teaching journalism. And you'd tell kids don't—here's the way you do this—don't put a comma in these kind of situations. And then they'd—you'd give them the paper back, and the next day they'd do the same thing all over again. So . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . nobody pays attention. I just paid attention, I guess, was what the secret was. I could type fast, and I paid attention. I was scared not to, so . . .

[02:10:47] SL: Let's see now—so what year [*ED clears throat*] was this?

ED: That would've been September 1954, and then I graduated in [19]55, but I had—as I say—I started in the public schools of El Dorado in about sixth grade, I guess. Fifth or sixth grade is when I went into El Dorado. So I spent the last six or seven years in El Dorado's public schools.

SL: What—during that senior year, what do you think the biggest story was in El Dorado?

ED: I don't remember. There were no—I don't recall any major stories. You know, usually there'd be accidents, tragedies of one sort or another, whether it was people drowning in river accidents. And I remember going down to the [Ouachita] River and when they were trying to fish bodies out of the river—be boating accidents and stuff like that. Those were the kind of the—that's the typical news in these little, small towns. You'd go to the Lions Club meeting, and somebody—the governor comes down—maybe speaks to the Lions—something occasionally like that. That was the kind of news you covered in a small town. City Council. You know, I covered all the meetings in the City Council. And covered city government news from the start. From the—maybe the second or third week. I'd—I was covering the government beat such as it was in El Dorado, Arkansas. But that's—so that was really kind of became my life. I—my—you know, as I say, I neglected my studies elsewhere in high school. And my teachers were—my other teachers, other than Mrs. Jenkins, were not too happy with me as I recall. [SL laughs] I remember, in fact, I guess, my best teacher I think was—we had a English teacher named Emma Rogers, and they called her the



great white bear. [SL laughs] And I think my—the low—my high point and the low point of my high school career came on one day within a few minutes of each other. And [SL laughs] Mrs. Rogers was teaching English, and I don't typically go in all my classes. [02:13:07] I was a bus kid. And, you know, we came in—we arrived about the time school started and clambered off the bus and went to class. And then got back on the bus and went home and had no social interaction with all the swell kids in the city. So there was kind of a separate class. It really was a kind of a class thing. So I always sat on the back row and felt inferior and out of place, and I never said anything in class. So one day, we were in English class and Mrs. Rogers—she'd given some assignment to read something or another in class. And so she was standing over by the door with her arms crossed [crosses arms], and I look up and she looks at me and says—motions with her head [flicks head upward]—and I said—me [points to own chest]—she said [nods head]—and so I get up, and I said [to myself], "Oh, what've I done?" So she goes—steps out and we go out in the hallway, and she closes the door and stands me against the wall and says, "Look, I found out that you are capable of setti—you should be setting the curve in these classes, and you just sit there like a knot on a log at the

back of the class, [*SL laughs*] and if you did anything at all, you could be setting the curve in here. But you have done nothing in this class to demonstrate that. And so I expect you to—from now on—that you are going to shine." And I sai—she said, "You understand me?" And I said, "Yes ma'am." So we go back in, and I'm really feeling pretty good. You know, I sit down and said [to myself], "I'm the smartest guy—she thinks I'm the smartest guy around here. I can do"—so I'm feeling awfully good about myself. And I said—and as I say, this is the highlight [*laughs*] of my high school career. [02:14:54] This moment. So I go back in, and I'm looking out the window thinking how swell things are [*SL laughs*] and how good I am. And about that time she says, "All right, is everybody finished?" And she says, "All right. Mr. Dumas, [*laughs*] what did the poet mean when he wrote, 'And what rough beast, its hour come round at last / Shuffles toward Bethlehem to be born?' What did the poet mean by that?" 'Course, I hadn't read anything, so I just turned beet red, and I sit there for a minute, and I said, "I don't know." [*Laughter*] 'Cause I hadn't read it. I didn't have a clue. So, anyway—so I—she just dissolved in front of me. She just [*lowers head*—and sit there and just stares at me for—it seems like a couple of minutes. [*SL laughs*] And I have all eyes

in class, I'm thinking, turning around [as if to say], "You dummy." And so, anyway, that was—and she never spoke to me again. She never called on me in [*laughs*] class again. So that was the high point and the low point of my high school, right there.

[02:15:58] SL: That's good. Well, so—man, it just seems like to me that you were really puttin' in a lot of effort. And I just can't—I know that there must've just been something about being out there in the real world and being engaged with what was going on in the community that really just flipped a switch for you.

ED: Well, it was, and I—you kn—again also it was something else [*coughs*—you know, I was, as I say, a bus kid from the country and had kept—felt kind of inferior, I guess, in the—at least in the social circumstances. And here I was out covering the news and writing things. And there'd be bylines in the paper from time to time. And it was—I was kind of somebody, I guess. And it made me feel good about myself, and I guess looking back, that's probably why it was so important. But also I just enjoyed it. It was fun. It was easy for me to do. And, you know, I—the first kind of real social interaction I had, you know, going to City Council meetings and, you know, and talkin' to the mayor and council members and the courts and all of that. And it was

just—for an old country boy—just kind of coming out. So I was thoroughly immersed into it and enjoying it and makin' money. And we'd never—you know, I probably made a lot more money that year than my daddy did with my seventy-five cen—seventy cents an hour at that point in my senior year. It became seventy-five cents after that. But that was pretty good money. And, you know, and I didn't—so I was savin' money. And I opened a bank account there in El Dorado. Had some money and able to buy a little used car—and—with my daddy's help. And so I was doin' all right . . .

SL: So your mom and dad were—were just totally supportive of what . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . what you were doing.

ED: Yeah, they—I think they both thought it was swell that I was doing that. My mother was very proud. And my daddy was, too, I think. He—my daddy would never—was not an emotional person. He never came around and gave you hugs and stuff and told you're doing great. I mean, he didn't do that, but I know he was pleased, because he didn't have any education. And he wanted Wayne and I to have an education. And he shared that with my mother. He wanted us to have an education, and so he

was kind of committed to do that. [02:18:40] My brother had already gone off to college. He'd gone to Henderson State Teachers College. The woman [Mrs. Margaret Miller] who ran Hollingsworth Feed Store at El Dorado where my daddy went to get feed and stuff for the hogs and cow and so forth—and his wife—[Governor] Francis Cherry had put his wife on the board of trustees of Henderson State Teachers College. And so we went in, and when my brother was a senior, Mrs. Hollingsworth [ED edit: Mrs. Miller] said, "Where you goin' to school?" And my brother, he didn't know—he didn't—had no—so she said, "You're going to Henderson State Teachers College." [SL laughs] So she made it possible, and so it was a struggle to pay. I mean, I don't how much it cost. It wasn't very much, but it would've been a lot of money for us, but he [Wayne] got a job workin' in the summer and made some money working for an oil company in the fields. And on—and maybe on the highways. I've forgotten. But, anyway, he got to do it—got a little work himself to help him pay his way. So he went to Henderson and played football and track at Henderson—well, he got—until he got hurt. He got injured and ended his career—damaged his knees and hip, so he didn't have a great college career. But he went there. So when it came time for me to go, Mrs. Hollingsworth [ED edit:

Mrs. Miller] wanted me to go there, too. So I didn't know, you know, I didn't—I knew there was a University of Arkansas and—but I didn't know anything about any other colleges. So my brother was up there—so—and he had a car. And so I said, "Okay, I'll go to Henderson." So that's where I went, to Henderson State Teachers College.

[02:20:34] SL: So your brother—while you were—he had gotten some work in the oil-related—oil-industry related stuff . . .

ED: I've forgotten just what he did. I think he worked for American Oil Company, but I've forgotten just what he did.

SL: So oil in the mid-[19]50s in El Dorado was still probably top—was probably king still.

ED: Yeah, it was still king. And he also got a job working for a while in an auto parts—like 555 Auto Parts Supply store, he worked there for a while and made a little money, I don't—maybe in the summer while he was in college. And he had a different job every summer, but he made a little money there.

[02:21:20] SL: What was the—one of the downsides of the oil industry, early oil industry, had to be its impact on the water, you know, the watersheds.

ED: Well, it was pretty apparent that's the downside of it. And also, I guess the upside, as far—they're not finding oil on our land or

anywhere near it—was that our little—that little creek I told you about where we swam, and where I set out lines and fished for catfish and bream, was unspoiled. But if you went on up the road, toward El Dorado or the other way around by East Main over by the Union Baptist Church, where we went to church, you'd go through these little creek valleys where the little stream ran. And it would look like a moonscape. It'd look like Dresden after [Allied] bombing. The valleys would be gray. There would be no greenery, and there would just be stumps. The trees would've rotted and all died. I mean, the whole valleys would be just—would be dead. There would be no vegetation except some kind of—occasionally some little island of some strange-looking vegetation that survived that saltwater. But then everything would be dead. There would be no life in those streams, and that was true between our—the eight miles between our house and El Dorado, and also the longer route around by East Main, you'd cross those things. And that's the way it was all over that part of the county in south Arkansas. I guess Magnolia and on up toward Camden where all those—and Stamps—where those oil fields were. They were—all of those streams were dead. And then they em—eventually emptied into the Ouachita River, which it never quite killed the Ouachita River, but it certainly—nobody

wanted to—not many people wanted to eat fish out of the Ouachita River. Some—a few people did—went and fished and ate—probably all kind of carcinogens in it. But it gradually changed. The pollution control—the state kind of toughened the pollution control laws back in the—I don't know—probably in the [19]50s and [19]60s and began to kind of clean up those things and require some . . .

SL: Accountability.

ED: . . . some treatment of that stuff. But—and things got better so that now you can—those same streams now are green again. Those—the—there is life in those streams, and those valleys have recovered. But it was many, many years. It was long after I left El Dorado that they recovered. Of course, part of the reason they recovered is they pretty much ended drilling down there. There's not much exploration in that part of the country anymore. It's moved elsewhere.

[02:24:19] SL: So the—they used saltwater for what purpose? What—how did that work? Do you know?

ED: I'm not sure. I never understood the—how the exploration worked, but they would, you know, they'd get saltwater out of those wells. There would be a lot of saltwater that came out of there, when you drilled down, there'd be—when they hit those

sands where the oil was, I mean, there'd be—they'd bring it out. And I don't know whether—it's not like the natural gas where they shoot water in, and—to break loose the shale, but it—they'd have these typically around a well. There'd be maybe a pond where this stuff would go into this pond, but it always leaked out of the pond into the creeks and streams and down everywhere. So it was ruinous. But down there nobody thought anything about it . . .

SL: Well . . .

ED: There wasn't much of a controversy about it. It was just part of our—part of the price of progress. You know, we were gettin' oil—you got to—this is the way it's got to be, and nobody, I think, thought much about it at the time—to think it could be done better. You could—you didn't have to—it didn't have to be that way.

[02:25:41] SL: [*Sighs*] All right—so your friend—your trustee friend for Henderson State College says, "Well, you should just go there," and you say, "Well, okay."

ED: Sure. I mean that suited me. And so I go to Henderson State Teachers College at Arkadelphia. It's about—there's not—it's not a long drive from El Dorado up to Arkadelphia. So I enrolled there in the fall of [19]55 [*coughs*] and had pretty much—I

didn't take science classes. I guess I was kind of over this idea of being an engineer or anything because I hadn't done too well. I guess I'd made B's in high school, but I did enough that I could make A's and B's, typically B's, in those kind of classes. But in college, I just took English classes. That's—I took the required courses for a freshman, but other than that I think in the three years I went there, I took something like, you know, every English class that was—literature class that was offered there. And I—so I had about, you know, seventy hours of—I guess, of English and not much else. A little bit of history and some Spanish. I took eighteen hours of Spanish, but—so that was pretty much my college career, just taking these English classes under Nannie Mae Roney. And I took all of her classes, literature classes—and . . .

SL: Nannie Mae Roney?

ED: . . . Nannie Mae Roney was—she was—she taught about half the English classes, I guess. [SL laughs] There were, you know, they had three or four little old ladies that taught English, and they were very good. And so I took all those English classes, and I took night class—I'd take Shakespeare at night. And they'd have for—they'd have gradua—for—it was a teachers college. And at night they had all these classes for teachers to

come back. And they were four hundred—they were graduate classes. So I would take—I ran out of other things, so I started takin' these classes that—along with these—old teachers from that area would come in and take these night classes in Shakespeare, whatever. So I started taking these night classes 'cause I ran out of English classes. Otherwise, I'd have to start takin' . . .

SL: Math and . . .

ED: . . . some science . . .

SL: . . . [*laughs*] chemistry . . .

ED: . . . or something else. So that's what I . . .

[02:28:01] SL: Well, but it sounds like that was kind of a neat college—a neat little college.

ED: It was. It was fun. And they didn't have journalism. They had had journalism, but the year I started there, the journalism teacher left. They didn't have journalism an—they didn't offer journalism class anymore. They didn't—they'd had a guy who taught journalism, and he went off and wound up at the University of Mississ—Ole Miss. So—but I got a job in—and I still needed some money, so I got job in the public relations office there, and so I—they had a little woman named Mrs. Walton who was the public relations director and wrote the little news

releases about the college. So she didn't know anything much about that. So I worked—I was—I wrote all of the pub—news releases and stuff from—for the college my freshman year.

[02:28:59] And they had a college paper and—named the Henderson *Oracle*. So my sophomore year they didn't—the two gals that were—had been editor—they graduated and they didn't—they needed somebody to edit the paper, so Clarence Hall, who later taught at [Arkansas] Tech and was a novelist, wrote *Keepers of the Feast* and a number of novels later in life—and we were kind of pals, and so we agreed to be the editors of the paper the following year. And so we were—became the co-editors of the Henderson *Oracle*—we were co-editors and the staff. [SL laughs] You know, you'd have some people who came in, they'd want to write, but they never did anything, and you couldn't depend upon them. So Clarence and I pretty much wrote the paper and a couple of guys—we'd write under their bylines as well—we'd write stuff [SL laughs] that one of them would write—an interview story. But we'd have to write it for him, put his name on it and so forth. So we did all of that. And we had a couple of photographers. Willie Allen, who was a great photographer for—later for the *Gazette*—and professionally. So he was a—he was our photographer. So we did that, and we got

twelve dollars and a half a month [*SL laughs*] for editing the college paper. So that was neat. And we got to—so I edited—I'd do the paper in the week, and it was a weekly paper. And then I'd go home on Friday and work at the *El Dorado News Times* on the weekend. So newspaper—and, again, my sophomore year, became just full time again, practically, I was putting out that little old paper, and we were writing editorials and kicking things around. And we got in a little trouble . . .

[02:30:50] SL: Uh-oh. What'd you do?

ED: Well, the [19]57 crisis came along the next fall.

SL: Yeah.

ED: So that—the school started in the fall of [19]57 my sophomore year. Had I been a sophomore? Let's see—[19]55-[19]56, [19]56. No the—my third year I guess. So we were editors—we were co-editors for two years. And so Governor Faubus called out the National Guard to stop integration at Central High School, and that all happened over the Labor Day weekend and so forth. So when we get to s—college opens about a week or so later—and Henderson by the way had been integrated. It had integrated—my freshman class was the first class that had—we had about four black students in my freshman class.

SL: So that was following *Brown v. Board* . . .

ED: That was in—the *Brown v. Board*—so that would've been in the [19]55—Fall of [19]55. [02:31:51] And they voluntarily—integrated—[Dr. McBrien,] the board of trustees, Mrs. Hollingsworth [ED edit: Mrs. Miller] among them—and decided that we would quietly integrate. And we did it without any—I don't think anything was written about it. I don't know even, it might've been something written about it. I don't remember. But there was no fanfare about it. We—it was just done, and we had four or five. And I had a guy named John Taylor in some of my classes. We became lifelong friends. And so the—that fall of [19]56—[19]57 comes along, and the first day of school—our little office was across the hall from that of the president, Dr. D. D. McBrien. And he was a big friend of ours. And Dr. McBrien, he loved to talk to Clarence and I. So he would spend—he'd come across and hang out all day long at—in our office.

SL: [Laughs] That's funny.

[02:32:47] ED: And sittin' around talking. And apparently there—he didn't have anybody else he could talk to or something. I don't know. But he'd—so he loved to come over and talk to us. And he collected—this is an aside here.

SL: Okay.

ED: He was an expert on these little aphorisms and—that are on bathroom walls. These little doggerel poems that people write on the stalls of bath . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: He collected those things and would come in and say, "You know, you need to go downstairs in Arkansas Hall [*SL laughs*] in the basement down there. They have—somebody's written"—And he'd—had written it down, and he'd read it to us. [*SL laughs*] Anyway, so that was—but he loved Clarence and I. We spent a great deal of time together hanging out there. [*SL laughs*] But he came over the first day of class and said, "This business up at Little Rock, I don't want to see anything about any of that in our paper—in this paper here. Nothing. We can't—this is a state institution, and we're dependent on the legislature and the governor. [02:33:54] We cannot—we don't want to stir this thing up. We don't want to—I don't want to see anything in the paper about any of this stuff." And so we kind of observed that, but you know, there was—we had this guy who drew some cartoons, and he drew a cartoon of stacked bayonets and stuff. And we didn't have any comment about it. But Dr. McBrien came over very upset about that. He didn't want—he didn't want to see any cartoons—maybe he didn't make it clear

that he didn't want pictures. He wanted nothing, no reference to that business up at Little Rock. And said, "Okay." And—but one day we had a—an editorial, and it really wasn't about the integration crisis, but it was about the legislature that went into special session the following January. And so we just had an editorial, just kind of blasting the legislature, and kind of generically . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . just no good. [*SL laughs*] And they're just—they were not friends of education. And so we—that thing appeared in the paper. And—as our editorial. And that—and the paper was—appeared on Friday. It was printed down at the Arkadelphia *Siftings Herald*. We'd go down on Thursday night and help them make it up and everything at the—and they had the contract for printing. This was a local daily. [02:35:23] And then they would run the presses on Saturday [ED edit: Friday] morning, and they would bring it out and deliver it. And then put it in the Student Union—we had this giant box in the Student Union. All the *Oracles* would be put in this box—and—but Mr.—Dr. McBrien had the habit of going over every Friday morning just to be sure to see what was in that paper. And he would go over there when they'd deliver it—he'd be over at the Student Union when

they delivered the paper. He'd go over there and get the first one off and stand there and read the paper. And so this thing appeared. So then he called the director of the Student Union over and said, "Get"—and they picked all of those papers up and dumped them. Got rid of them. All of them. The whole—all of them . . .

SL: Aw.

ED: . . . and so—and then he sent for us.

SL: Oh, gosh. [*Laughs*]

[02:36:12] ED: So I was—I heard about it in about noon hour, and I was fixing to head—goin' to El Dorado to go to work for the weekend. So I told Clarence, "Dr. McBrien is lookin' for us. They've sent word to some class. Dr. McBrien wants to see you." So I, you know—we got in the car and drove to El Dorado. [*Laughs*] So we got back on Monday, and the—his secretary came over and said, "Dr. McBrien was checkin' to see whether you're here." And so anyway, he comes over, and we have this titanic fight. And, well, I—it's a one-sided fight. He's yelling, and he's going to have us suspended from school. "We violated his orders. We've done grave damage to the school. The legislature—you know, we're dependent—they appropriate our money, and you've done the institution wrong and all your

students and the faculty. You can't believe how much harm you've done." [SL laughs] And so anyway this little—we had a public relations director there—his name—by that time—Walton—J. Walton Coley—little slender, little fellow. And he was kind of the sponsor of the paper. And so he hears all this racket and comes down. Well, he knew that he'd [Dr. McBrien] been lookin' for us and had called me down at El Dorado to tell me that he was—Dr. McBrien had come to see him. "Where we are—where are those guys?" So he hears all this racket, he comes down, and they get into a big fight. [02:37:43] And Mr. Coley and Dr. McBrien—and I pick up the *Arkansas Traveler* and said, "Well, Dr. McBrien, here's the *Arkansas Traveler*. They're a state institution. Look here, they've got—that's their major uni—all of this stuff. Commentaries, stories about the integration thing and editorials—and here's a guy named Charles Portis writing this hilarious column makin' fun of Orval Faubus." And he said, "I don't care that's what they do at Fayetteville. We're talkin' about this school." And so he grabs that paper, and Mr. Coley grabs it out of his hand [swings each arm back and forth]. "Well, it is relevant, Dr. McBrien. He's right, this is relevant." So they started fighting over this piece of paper and just tore it to shreds. [SL laughs] It was a wonderful scene—and as—the

two of them fighting. And so, anyway, Clarence said, "Well, screw it. I'm—you can kick me out or whatever, but I'm through with this thing. I'm not going to edit the paper under"—so he walks out, and Dr. McBrien turns to me, and I said, "Well, you know, I'm not going to do it either. If Clarence is not going to do it, I'm not going to edit the paper." So, anyways, he really faced a crisis. That would be a real state news now if . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . a paper folds at this college because of this thing, and he's using censorship. And so he can see that these things are degenerating here. So he runs out, and he calls Clarence back in. And so, anyway—so we survived that episode, [*SL laughs*] and we'd get into trouble only two or three more times in that two years. But—so that was our first little confrontation with the integration crisis . . .

[02:39:21] SL: Well, was that the first argument or big to-do thing that you had experienced in a news . . .

ED: I think it probably was—it probably, yeah. I think it was. It was the first. There'd been at El Dorado—there'd been some—at the El Dorado paper down there. You'd been the—some glimmerings of that stuff because of the—after the Supreme Court decision and the approaching integration at Central High School and all of

that. So there'd been—it was beginning to surface at El Dorado.

SL: So . . .

ED: But that was the first time I had been personally involved in any of it.

SL: . . . you—you've said that you spent three years at Henderson.

ED: Yes.

[02:40:11] SL: And did you finish your degree work there?

ED: No, I didn't. I didn't finish, and I don't know how long it would've taken me because you have all of these required courses you take. And I had just taken English classes, [*SL laughs*] and so—but Clarence Hall wanted to be a writer, and so he decided he was going to go to the Iowa Writers' school. There was a graduate program there. And so he kept saying, "Well, Dumas, you ought to take up this journalism stuff seriously. You're good at this stuff." And, "You ought to go to the university"—and so I wrote a letter to the University of Missouri and applied. And I—to my shock, they accepted me into the—you have to have all of these requirements to get—you have to—as a—you have to—you can't get into the school of journalism till you're a junior. You have to take all of this—these other—have all of these economics requirements and stuff—and—but they accepted me, and gave me a little scholarship.

They gave me six-hundred-dollars-a-year of scholarship. So I had to go . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and I was—so I left after my third year at Henderson and went—transferred to University of Missouri with great misgivings. I thought I was makin' a mistake, but I had so much invested in it, I couldn't turn around and say, "No, I don't want to do that." So I trudged off to Missouri in the fall of [19]58, I guess.

[02:41:44] SL: [Pauses] Back in El Dorado during the [19]57 crisis—what was—how'd they handle it?

ED: Well, they didn't write many editorials in the paper. Mr. Hays would write an editorial a few a times a year. Mainly they ran canned editorials from some syndicate. And they would typically be—the typical kind of stuff that went—big government, government spending—to the extent they took any kind of stand at all, it just—it was always against big government, government spending, and all very conservative editorials. And when Mr. Hays wrote one, it would be kind of a—the cheerleader editorials that small-town papers typically did. [02:42:31] And just kind of civic cheerleading for the town, and the Lions Club—what a great job the Lions Club's doing or something. And whatever

project they're on. And praising the mayor of the city for doing this or that. But there was no effort—no critical—you never read a critical editorial. I don't recall seeing any real critical editorials on state and local issues. They just—it was just ignored except for whatever the coverage the Associated Press provided—was—and I'm sure, you know, they led the paper with that kind of stuff. I mean, they didn't sweep it under the rug, but they didn't do any original reporting and certainly no commentary on it because—they might've, and of course, they would've taken the stand that you'd expect them to take, which would be against the courts and against integration. And they would've supported what Governor Faubus did. And I suspect the Texarkana paper had an editorial writer, and they editorialized seriously at Texarkana. And—but my guess is that they would've been in support of the governor, and they would not have—in that part of the state there was no—you know it was—you know, it would've been 90 percent for segregation forever . . .

SL: Pro Faubus? Yeah. [02:44:01] So you get up to Columbia?

ED: Columbia, Missouri.

SL: And you—do you go in as a junior?

ED: I go in as a junior, and I also—you know—I enrolled in the school of journalism where you get a degree. You get a Bachelor

of Journalism. [*Coughs*] And so I also enrolled in the college of arts and sciences—that I had all of this English—hours of English. And so I decided I wanted to change my major for arts to history. And—but the advisor they assigned me was a professor of kind of Victorian literature, and he said, "No, you're not going to—you're going to do this." [*SL laughs*] And so we—I had to enroll in another fifteen or eighteen hours of English. So I took—so I wound up—I don't know how many hours of English I had in college. [*Laughs*] But I had to take a lot more hour—Victorian stage and Victorian—I to—I did a lot of Victorian stuff—Victorian prose. I had to read John Ruskin and Thomas Babington Macaulay, and Thomas Carlyle, and all that dreary stuff. It was deadening stuff, but [*SL laughs*—so I had to go ahead and take a lot more of that junk, but I—so—but I got a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Journalism after—so I went five years in all.

[02:45:30] SL: So any major developments while you were in Columbia? Anything happen with your life?

ED: No. There was, you know, the race stuff kind of began to play an even bigger role than it di—actually had there because [*coughs*] there was a big movement on campus at that time against people like me that were getting scholarship aid. And—

from Southern states. So there was a movement—campus—to protest spending money on scholarships for . . .

SL: Out of state . . .

ED: . . . for out of state from the southern—from segregationist states. And there were protest marches. There were—and there were—and I had mis—different feelings about that, [*laughs*] since I was a beneficiary. I sympathized with the idea, intellectually, but I wanted my scholarship, and I valued that.

SL: Absolutely.

[02:46:33] ED: So you had some of that. But the school of journalism was fun. It was a different kind of school. It was the oldest journalism school in the country, and the largest at that time. And, they would claim, would be the best. I don't have any idea. Probably was not the best, by far. But what they did there, which made it unique, was that they put out a daily newspaper for the—for central Missouri. And that's what you did. They had a college paper, but we didn't have anything to do with the colle—but it wasn't put out by the journalism school—had nothing to do with the journalism school. So we went to work on the daily newspaper, the *Columbia Missourian*. And it was—the faculty were, you know, the editors. And the city editor was a professor of journalism, and he taught some

classes, and so we all wrote for the—so I wrote for the paper and worked on the copy desk. And did very well, and so when I graduated—to my shock—the next—in 1960 when I graduated it—had the honors program—and then they give me the award as the outstanding student journalist, so—the outstanding graduate of the school of journalism—which I was shocked. I had myself ranked down about halfway. [SL laughs] [Coughs] [02:48:05] So—and then I also worked in the public relations office there—for two years I was there. So I made a little money in the public relatio—a lot more than I made at Henderson. And I—in addition to my scholarship I had, for the public relations office, writing news releases and so forth. Plus, I was—got a little assistantship putting out a—an education section every Sunday. Which was stuff about research and stuff going on at the university and the other two colleges in town. Plus, news about public schools there in Columbia. So I was kind of the editor of that—produced that page every week. So I got another little check for that every month. So I was rollin' in money at Missouri. And going home on—at Christmas and Thanksgiving and workin' full time at the *El Dorado Daily News*. So I, you know, I've never been so rich since then [laughter] as I was in those days.

SL: So a year and a half at Columbia?

ED: Two years . . .

SL: . . . two years.

ED: . . . two years at Columbia.

SL: And you come out of there with a Bachelor of Arts . . .

ED: And Bachelor of Journalism.

SL: . . . and Bachelor of Journalism.

ED: Yeah.

[02:49:20] SL: What do you do next?

ED: Well, I was, as I said—you know, I went home for the holidays and always worked for the *News Times*. It was always a—I didn't even have to ask. I just [*SL laughs*] got into El Dorado and went on down to the *News Times* and sat down and started writing . . .

SL: Started writing.

ED: . . . and they had—always had plenty of stuff to do. And we had to punch a time clock. So one week—I did eighty-eight hours one week. Many, many times more than eighty hours a week. So we'd have to punch a time clock there at the *News Times* offices. But anyw—my senior year, I went—I ca—I went home to El Dorado for Christmas holidays and that was—we had Jim Mooty, who was an All-American halfback for the Razorbacks,

and he was from El Dorado. From the Mooty family. There were a family of football players. And two of them went to the—went to—played for the Razorbacks. So he had made All-American that season. He was a year behind me in high school, but he caught up with me, 'cause I went five years at college. And he was a senior at Fayetteville. So they had Jim Mooty Day at El Dorado honoring Jim Mooty and had a parade downtown, and so I was home, and so they had me—the paper had me write a story about it. And so I did this big story on the front page of the *News Times* about Jim Mooty Day. [02:50:54] And so the night before I was to come back from—to go back to Columbia, I get a call from A. R. Nelson, the managing editor of the *Gazette*, who is from El Dorado. And he was down visiting his momma. And he had once worked for the *El Dorado Daily News*, many years before and knew the importance of getting out of El Dorado and getting out of [laughs] the *News Times*. I'll tell you the story about that in a minute. But, [clears throat] anyway, he said he'd read my Jim Mooty story. And he said, "When are you graduating—and—Missouri?" And I said, "Well, I get out in June." And he said, "Well, would you have any interest in working at the *Gazette*?" And I said, "Sure." And he said, "Well, when are you going back?" And I said, "Well, I'm driving back

tomorrow." And he said, "Well, if you're going back through Little Rock, won't you stop off and see Bill Shelton. He's the city editor, and tell him I sent you"—so I do that. I go by the *Gazette* on the way back the next day. I stop off in Little Rock, find the *Gazette* building, and go in and up on the second floor and find Bill Shelton and walk up to this guy. And standing in front of his desk, I said, "I'm Ernie Dumas." And [*SL laughs*—he said, "Yes." He didn't know who I was . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and, anyway, I said, "Well, Mr. Nelson—I'm—El Dorado, and I'm up in Missouri—and he told me to—he was going to hire me and for me to—I think he was going to hire me, and he wanted me to come by and see you." And he said, "All right." [*SL laughs*] And so he—we went over into his little office and sat down there a minute. And then he—we talked what I could do. And so he said, "You want to be a reporter, or you want to be a copy editor?" And I said, "I don't know. Well, I guess a reporter." And he said, "Well, all right. When do you graduate?" And so he said, "Well, Nelson will talk to you about the salary and all that stuff." So Nelson called me a few days later in Missouri and said—how much I—I'd need? And I didn't have a clue. I didn't have a clue how much people made. I was makin',

you know, by that time the minimum wage had gone up probably, you know, ninety cents an hour or something. I don't know, but so whatever the minimum wage was what I was making. So he said, "Eighty—eighty dollars—we'll pay you eighty bucks." And so, "That's great." [02:53:18] So I—when—the following June, I went down to the *Gazette*—went to work. Now I was going to tell you the story about A. R. Nelson . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ED: . . . and the *El Dorado Daily News*, which is another *News Times* story. Nelson had worked there in the [19]40s. And—before he went to the *Gazette*. And he—there was another guy there named Clovis Copeland, who later was in Little Rock. And Clovis worked there as well. They were both reporters there for the *El Dorado Daily News*. And [clears throat] whatever the minimum wage was, was what they were making. Which was, you know, at that time probably, you know, thirty-five, forty cents an hour, probably.

SL: Right.

ED: But Nelson also would cover the El Dorado Oilers, the baseball team, and that was part of his—his job was to cover sports, and he would cover the Oilers. [02:54:11] But he also was the

official scorekeeper when the Oilers were playing at El Dorado. He was the official scorekeeper, and so the Cotton States League paid him. I think they paid him fifty cents a game—to—or maybe, no, they paid him two dollars to keep the score for the game—the official score. So he did that. But—so he and Mr.—he and Clovis both made twelve dollars and a half at the *Gazette*. And then with the two dollars keeping, score he was makin' fourteen dollars and a half a week. And Clovis heard about it—you know, he [Nelson] was makin' that extra two dollars. And somehow gets—tells Mr. Palmer. And so Mr. Palmer, [*SL laughs*] the owner and publisher, calls Nelson in and says [*laughter*] that, "You're—it come to my attention that you're makin' two dollars out there keeping score." And he said, "That puts you out of line with the other employees, so we're going to reduce your salary to ten dollars and a half a week here at the *Gazette*. That way your—it'll be the same as the others. And so Nelson said—just nodded—and walked over and picked up his hat. Put his hat on his head [moves hand toward head] and walked out the—put his coat on and walked out. Never came back. [*Laughs*] So that was the end of hi—that's . . .

SL: Don't blame him.

ED: . . . that may be an apocryphal story, but that's the story that

Leland DuVall later told me. That that's—Nelson told him about how that came about.

[02:55:49] SL: So at—this is 1959?

ED: Nineteen sixty—the sp—June of 1960 when I graduated. June of 1960.

SL: June of 1960, and . . .

ED: . . . and I went to work immediately. I drove down and went down to El Dorado and dumped my stuff at El Dorado and came back and went to work for the *Gazette*.

SL: Were there some other folks that got hired out of El Dorado at that time?

ED: There'd been a—there'd been several. Leroy Donald, who—and he's still with the—Leroy is still with the *Democrat-Gazette* now. But he had gone to work in about 1958 or [19]59 on the state desk of the *Gazette*. Rodney Dungan, who was a year ahead of me in school and played the opposite end from my brother in high school. And was a—he was a reporter and photographer. He was—preceded me at the *El Dorado Daily News*. He'd worked a little bit as—when he was a senior at the *El Dorado Daily News*, mainly as a photographer. But he did a little writing. So he had gone to work for the *Gazette* a couple of years earlier. And Ken Danforth, who was two years older than me and was

David Pryor's roommate at Fayetteville for—one of David's two or three hundred roommates . . .

[02:57:10] SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . that he had in college. [*SL laughs*] And so they had—Ken Danforth had gone off to North Carolina and gotten his master's degree in English. And had come back, and he went to work at the *Gazette*. I think maybe not long after I did. And he worked on the copy desk for a period of time until he got into a ruckus with the night news editor, and got himself fired or quit—it's hard to say which—what—but, anyway, they severed relations after about six or eight months. And Kenny went on to a career in *TIME* magazine and wrote a novel or two, and worked for *National Geographic*. And had a good career after that. But that was the—there might've been others that had worked at the *Gazette* but—before that. And—but I think maybe I was the last one that went through. Kenny Danforth and I were—might've been the last of the El Dorado crowd that went through the *Gazette* . . .

SL: Wouldn't that be called the El Dorado mafia?

ED: The El Dorado mafia, I guess, yeah [*SL laughs*] you've had—so there were a string of us for a while.

SL: Yeah.

ED: They were all about the same age. Leroy and Ken Danforth were two years older than I was. Rodney was—the three of them were—all three—two years older than I was.

SL: Well . . .

TM: Scott, let's change tapes.

SL: Oh, okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:58:38] SL: Well, so now you've moved into the *Gazette* and the *Gazette*—had it—it had already picked up its Pulitzer. Is that right?

ED: Yes, the *Gazette* won the Pulitzer in nineteen—1958. And so I arrived two years after—about a year, really, after the crisis had finally ebbed. And you know it went on—you had the—the year when the schools were closed . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . and by the spring of [19]60, we had already—the schools had been back in operation for that school year. That was the end of the first year back of high schools. And things were settling out a little bit. By th—by that time, you know, the *Gazette* was still—had fallen way behind in circulation. It had suffered the consequences—the economic consequences of its unpopular stand in [19]57 and [19]58 and the loss of

advertising, the loss of circulation and all the boycotts and all of that. And all the other consequences of it. You know, we were losing libel suits. I mean, everybody was suing the *Gazette* for libel and winning. This is before the s—the *Times v. Sullivan* decision, which protected newspapers' speech in these political cases. But until that point, you know, we were losing—we lost several lawsuits for my first couple of years there. So it was a—just a bad time for the *Gazette*. But it was beginning to recover. You know, there were—people getting past it, and the *Gazette* circulation was beginning to rise again. And the boycott had not been that effective. You know, a lot of the big downtown—like Blass and M. M. Cohn, and all the—they had stayed with the *Gazette*. And it was beginning to recover. But we were still—it was probably about 1964, [19]65, when the *Gazette*, again, reclaimed the lead in circulation and began to make money again. And then went—and then, of course, just surged and went far, far ahead. And became the truly—the dominant paper again for another—next twenty years or so—but . . .

[03:01:00] SL: So did all of those advertising dollars go to the *Democrat* or—what where . . .

ED: I think some went—yeah—they were much better off for a time. The—their circulation improved, but mainly I think their



advertising revenues increased. And it was—they didn't—their salaries instead—their staff was smaller, and they never had the staff the *Gazette* did. Or until toward right at the end. And didn't have the—the salaries were much higher at the *Gazette*, and the *Democrat* reporters always wanted to go to work at the de—at the *Gazette*. That was the ambition 'cause it paid much more. And it was much more prestigious and a happier place to work. [03:01:42] It—the *Gazette* was really an enjoyable place to work, and I think it probably always had been. But I don't think it was a—part of it, for people like me, was the—working for a paper with that, you know, had the reputation that stood tall—and then the school crisis—and throughout its history. So, you know, I was very proud to work at the *Gazette*. And proud of its—the editorial [stands]. We had nothing to do with the editorial page, but I was very proud to work for a newspaper that had done that. So it was a fun place to work, and I think we all had a good time. We all fussed about, you know, the salaries were—and griped about everything, but we really—everybody was proud to be working for the *Gazette*.

[03:02:32] SL: Well, let me say this, it sounds like to me it was bit of a coup for you to be able to get a job there. I mean, it was probably a fairly competitive market to . . .

ED: I think so . . .

SL: . . . to work there, and . . .

ED: . . . I mean, particularly after the [19]57 crisis the *Gazette*, you know, made a—established a reputation. It was a—it was this great southern newspaper. So we were getting like—a guy named Patrick J. Owens who—you know, Hungry Horse, Montana, and he winds up down here workin' at the *Arkansas Gazette*. Brilliant guy, great writer, great newspaperman. And here he winds up down here in Little Rock, Arkansas. So the—you had opportunity to hire a lot of people. But still, even at that, Nelson always wanted to hire Arkansas kids. I mean, that's basically what he continued to want to do. And his successor Bob Douglas. You know—they would—they basically—we always had a preference. So I don't know that it was too much of a coup. I mean, we had Leroy and all the rest of us—so . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and they needed the staff. A guy that was—I forgot the guy's name whose place I took, although Nelson had hired me before this guy left. But he left about a few months—a couple of months before I came there. Harry Ashmore had just been there, and he had just left shortly before—I think in January, and I went there in June. And so James O. Powell had arrived as the

editorial page editor by that time.

[03:04:06] SL: Also, now you've kind of stepped into some real newspaper guys. I mean . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . people that . . .

ED: I was kind of scared when I went to work there . . .

SL: . . . yeah.

ED: . . . I wasn't sure I was—you know—I'd—at Columbia we took all of those—in the library they took newspapers from all over the world, and so I decided I better go down and start readin' the *Gazette*. So I—that last semester—so that's what I did, and I said, "You know, I'm not sure I can [*SL laughs*] match these guys. These guys are awfully good. I'm—maybe the *News Times* is my speed. Maybe I out to go back down there."

[*Laughter*] But, no, it worked out fine. And Bill Shelton was the city editor and just terrified me. You know, he's—everybody—he's just the great stone face as they—some would later call him. You know, you had this kind of granite chiseled face. He was looking like he was the great stone because he was kind of chiseled. A square chin and a good looking guy. And kind of sour and unsmiling and didn't say very much. He communicated by notes. You know, you'd get a note from him. And you'd get

your carbon—you'd have to—we'd have to write carbons. Everything you wrote, you had to put a piece of carbon paper in and do a carbon. It was supposed to be for the—they'd give it to the AP. We were sharing with—it was required to share all stories with the AP. So the AP office was right across the—from the city desk. And so there was a hook there. They'd put our stories on the hook—the carbon for AP to pick them up and send it out. So Shelton occasionally wouldn't put it on the hook. He'd just take your thing and write it—just—and he'd kind of edit—"Why you keep doing this?" And [*coughs*] [*SL laughs*]*—so, you know, he'd—verb sequence. [03:06:08] You know, I had to learn verb sequence. He was a stickler for that. I never had anybody else teach about verb sequence . . .*

SL: What is that? [*ED coughs*]

ED: Sequence verbs.

SL: I'm not even sure what that is.

ED: Well [*laughs*], the first verb in the sentence will determine the . . .

SL: Determine the tense of the rest . . .

ED: . . . the tense of those afterwards . . .

SL: . . . yeah, okay . . .

ED: . . . the sequence of tenses, I guess.

SL: Okay, all right. All right.

ED: Sequence of tenses. That's what it is. Sequence of tenses, yeah. So at any rate, I had never matched the sequence of tenses. So it was great, 'cause you learned all kind of—he was a great copy editor. A. R. Nelson had been a great copy editor. And Mr. Heiskell demanded it—I mean, that was the pride of the paper, the King's English, and you had all these rules that you had to observe. [03:07:19] And we didn't have a stylebook—[unclear word] the *New York Times* has this great stylebook, big, big manual. And I have copies of the *New York Times* stylebook and—but the *Gazette* stylebook was a big folder—big old with the—all the—soiled from all [SL laughs] those hands over the years. And in it [coughs] was a lot of just old scribbled notes, typed notes—some of them yellowed, and you had to handle them very carefully or they just come apart in your hand. [SL laughs] Way back into the [19]40s, notes from Mr. Heiskell about this kind of grammatical problem and so forth and how to handle this and how you—[spelled the] names of places. This is how we're going to refer to this. And drouth is *D-R-O-U-T-H* not *D-R-O-U-G-H-T*. And [SL laughs] there were all kinds of rules like that. And Mr. Hei—a lot of them from Mr. Heiskell, a lot from Bill Shelton, a lot from A. R. Nelson over the years. And so you

had to—the first thing you do your first day on the job—you've got this big old folder, and you'd go [motions as if leafing through papers]—and it'd take you hours to go through all—read all these things. And you'd say, "I can't possibly remember all this stuff." What—and eventually somebody, many years later, kind of went through and did a little stylebook, but nobody paid any attention to it. [*SL laughs*] But anyway, so we had to memorize this stylebook. But—or you're supposed to memorize the style sheet, but we didn't. But you still learned a lot. There were great—it was a great newspaper to learn that from.

[03:08:26] SL: Did anyone kind of take you under their wing, or did they just throw you out there, and you just . . .

ED: Yes, well you sit there, and Matilda Tuohey was the only woman—female reporter. They had a rule there, no—they didn't hire female reporters. [*SL laughs*] Women were not—they didn't believe that women could—should be out there covering newspaper, working late at night and . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . you know, it's just not a—not the thing—not proper for a woman to do. Except Matilda Tuohey had gone there—gone to work there durin' the war when they couldn't find men, and so she was still there. And—Tuffy, as we called her. And so Tuffy

and I shared a desk. She was a great old gal, and Nelson never fired her. She continued to work there. Covered the Capitol for years, City Hall and so forth. But he wouldn't fire Matilda. But she kind of took care of us. She took us all under her wing. Us young reporters.

[03:09:19] SL: So what did they have you do when you first,
I mean . . .

ED: Well, I first started I was a—you know, I'd work police beat. You know, you had to have somebody on the day police and then the night police beat and on weekends. And so two nights a week I'd be—I'd relieve Joe Wirges [the regular police reporter]. He'd work Monday through Friday, and then I'd work Saturday and Sunday on the police beat. And then sometimes I'd have to work the obit—we had a—called the crap desk. And the crap desk sat right beside Bill Shelton, and you did all the crap. [*SL laughs*] You did all the obits. Came in from the funeral homes. You did all the obits plus you got the river bulletin. You had to call up and get the river bulletin every day. We had to run this little thing about the river stages. And you did all of these little notices of all the meetings that were going to be happening, these little one-sentence things . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . on all the meetings, and the calendar of events, the solunar tables, just all kind of little old pieces of junk that fit in various places in the paper. And that's what the crap desk guy did. And it was a terrible job, but you had to go—you had to do your—spend your time on the crap desk. And sometimes I'd be on the crap desk five days a week.

SL: Oh.

ED: Somebody'd be on vacation—the crap desk man—I'd be—I was the low man on the totem pole . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . so I did a lot of that—police beat. And then I'd be general assignment reporter. So I sti—I did a lot. Yeah, I even did a little—that first summer in the first few weeks, I did a little bit of political reporting. I—we all got sucked into it—we had to do a little bit of that I remember. [03:10:52] One of the first weeks on the job, I had to go down [and interview]—Bruce Bennett from El Dorado . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . who was the attorney general then. And I covered him down there. He had been the prosecuting attorney when I was at the *El Dorado Daily News*. So he was running for governor in 1960 and against Faubus in the primaries. So I had to go down

and interview Bruce Bennett at the Capitol Hotel at his campaign headquarters. I'd been there two or three weeks. I had to go see old Bruce again. This old bigot with his silver hair. And I remember going in to see him, and he said, "What are you doing down he—up here?" [SL laughs] And I said, "Well, I went to work for the *Gazette*." And he said—I remember him saying, "Ernie—I never di—I've forgotten your—your daddy's name. What's your daddy's name?" [SL laughs] And I said, "Clifton." "Clifton, that's right. Oh, yeah. How's old Clifton doin'?" He had never heard of my daddy. He didn't ever—knew my daddy's name. I said, "Well, he's doing fine." But, you know, he acted like he'd—he and my daddy were old pals and stuff. But—so I did a little bit of political reporting that first summer. Mainly the first couple of years was just a lot of that—general assignment reporting, just visiting librarians come to town, and you go interview all of those people . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and cover spot news and little tragedies of this or that, and tornadoes and a little bit of everything.

SL: Um . . .

[03:12:31] ED: And I'd occasionally have to go out the—there'd be—in those days the—when the legislature was in session, they'd

have a lot of the committee meetings and hearings down at the Hotel Marion. And—because the Capitol building at that time, it would—eventually it came all together—almost a legislative building. Now you have—most of the Capitol building is legislative rooms—committee rooms and offices and so forth. But in those days you had the two houses and about two committee rooms, and that was it. So they had a lot of hearings and stuff down at the Marion Hotel.

SL: Well they'd have hearings in the halls, right?

ED: Yeah, yeah . . .

SL: They, I mean . . .

ED: . . . everywhere. So I would—I could—even that—in 1961, again—you know, I covered a little bit of the legislature. But not a—Roy Reed and Jerol Garrison were the regular legislature reporters. Ernie Valachovic covered the Capitol. He was a great Capitol reporter. So I did a little bit of that, but it was a couple of years before I really did any serious political reporting—[19]62, I guess, before I did that—but . . .

[03:13:25] SL: You mentioned Joe Wirges. Now how do you spell that name?

ED: *W-I-R-G-E-S*. Joe Wirges. He was a legend at the *Gazette*, one of the great figures in *Gazette* history. He—Mr. Hei—the

Heiskells bought the paper in—I think about 1898, I fo—my history is probably a little off, but—and Joe went to work there not long after they acquired the paper. And Ned Heiskell and his brother, Fred, put out the paper. I think their daddy had—was the owner and maybe the publisher. But Joe went to work there—became a police reporter, and that's what he did for sixty years probably. He was a *Gazette* police reporter until he was—he died the same day that Mr. Heiskell died in 1974, somewhere li—[19]72 or [19]74 is when Mr. Heiskell died. And Joe died the same day, which was kind of appropriate. And Joe was the only one who could call Mr. Heiskell something beside "Mr. Heiskell." And Joe had this old gravelly voice, deep gravelly voice—came way down in his midsection, and it was like he's gargling. [SL laughs] And so—but he got all of these great stories. And he was—they used to have this thing on the radio that—the *Pall Mall Crime Stories*. They'd have these crime things. And they'd—a couple of them would have a Joe Wirges story on there. [03:14:55] So—but Joe covered the prisons and police. He couldn't write. He was a terrible writer. He couldn't spell. [SL laughs] And he'd come in and write all of these thing—I mean, everything he had done had to be heavily edited or rewritten. And—but, frequently, he would just call in his stories. You'd

have to take notes, and he'd dictate stuff, and then you'd have to rewrite it. But he always had the good stuff 'cause he knew all of the murderers and the criminals, and they were all kind of personal friends of his. [SL laughs] And they were confessors and so forth. They'd co—they'd come give themselves up to Joe Wirges, see. You know, if they were on the run, and they were about to get them. So he'd—they'd surrender to Joe Wirges, and [laughter] so that way they knew they wouldn't—he wouldn't get beaten. But, anyway, so he—and there are a lot of great Joe Wirges stories. We can tell some Joe Wirges stories, some of which are printable, some of which are not. Roy Reed always wants to tell these—he's got a few of these Joe Wirges stories in the book on the oral history book on the *Gazette*.

SL: Well, it's all right to repeat them. That's okay.

[03:16:00] ED: Yeah, we'll repeat one or two them, and say what Roy didn't put in the book, I guess.

SL: Yeah.



ED: One of my favorites, which I was personally involved in, was—Joe would go down in the summertime, he'd take his vacations at the penitentiary. His best friend was Lee Henslee, Captain Henslee, who was the superintendent of the Cummins Unit of the pri—of the penitentiary. And he'd go down, and they'd go

fishing. And the Arkansas River runs behind Cummins over there. So they'd go down. And Joe would stay there in the prison. He'd stay on death row [*SL laughs*] and—with [*clears throat*] his friends on death row. And then . . .

SL: Now—you—this is serious?

ED: Yeah, yeah, serious.

SL: He would actually . . .

ED: Yeah, stay on death row . . .

SL: . . . book a room on death row . . .

ED: . . . [*laughter*] yeah, death row. So he and Captain Henslee would go fish—they'd go fish during the day, and then at night, he'd come back and spend the—and stay in the prison there. So one day, he's down there for vacation, and I'm on the crap desk. And it's on a—maybe a weekend or something—and I'm o—for some reason I'm on the crap desk. And he's calls up, and he says, "Ned"—he called me Ned. [*SL laughs*] I don't know why. There was a Ned Dumas in town who owned a—was a businessman, and so Joe had me confused with Ned Dumas. [*SL laughs*] So I was always Ned, and I never disputed it. I never said—I said that's all right so [*laughter*—in fact, people around the newsroom began to call me Ned [*SL laughs*] 'cause Joe did. So he'd ca—"Ned, I got a story for you." I said, "All right." And

he said, "You ready?" You'd have to roll your paper in the typewriter, [*coughs*] and he'd say, "Cummins." He'd give you the dateline and everything. [03:17:32] And here was the story that he called in. It seems that there was a prisoner from Fort Smith, or someplace over in the Fort Smith area. He had been sentenced to prison for—on several crimes, one of one which was bigamy. He actually got prosecuted for bigamy. I don't know—that maybe the only person ever to be prosecuted for bigamy. But he was down on bigamy, including a couple of other things. So when you—new prisoner comes down, they have to give him, you know, kind of a physical, and you go through all this process. And so they couldn't give him a physical. I mean, you had to strip down, you know, [*coughs*] so, finally, they got—they forced—and the guy's—the prisoner's name was David Reginald Van Rippy. [*SL laughs*] And so they finally got David down one day in the shower and stripped his clothes off of him, so they could give him a physical. And it turns out, David Reginald Van Rippy is a woman, [*SL laughs*] and he's there on bigamy. And so Joe then gets from the prison records the name of the—of his woman who prosecuted—his second wife or first wife, whichever one it was that turned him in. And so [*laughs*] Joe calls her and says, "You know, we've—

your husband down here, David—they took his clothes off of him and to give him a physical, and Ms. Van Rippey, he's—it turns out he's a woman." He—and she said, "You're kiddin' me."

[*Laughter*] She said, "You know, I always thought there was something different about him." [*SL laughs*] But, anyway, so da—you know—so I write—and we ran a little story on the front page about David Reginald Van Rippey 'cause that was one of his stories. [*SL laughs*] [03:19:23] There was—there were a lot of other Joe Wirges stories. [*SL laughs*] As I say, Roy got one in his book. Here's one that's kind of—it may be apocryphal, I don't know. And it's kind of an R-rated story. Joe was in the—the whole newsroom used to be one big room [*extends hands outward*]. You had the city desk was up here—Bill Shelton—and then you had the copy desk over here, and you had all the reporters out there. And Joe's desk would be back on the back row of the desks back there. And so [*clears throat*—and you had in the same room—you had the society people Nell Cotnam, the dour old lady that did the women's news and so forth, sittin' there. And so Joe yells across the newsroom one night—he sa—evening. He says, "Bill, is cocksucker one word or two?"

[*Laughter*] And Bill said—everybody just—Bill said, "Joe, we don't use that word in the *Gazette*." He said, "It's all right, I'm

going to put it in quotes." [Laughter] I don't know whether that story's true, but that story has been told many, many times, and there are a lot . . .

SL: That's good.

ED: . . . of other *Gazette* stories like that, but that was Joe.

[03:20:42] SL: Well, so is there a—how—well, first of all, how many reporters were out in that room when you came on?

ED: Well, there'd be—typically we'd—there'd be maybe five or six what we call general assignment reporters, which was just—you came to work at twelve, ten o'clock in the morning or twelve thirty in the afternoon or two thirty in the afternoon, whatever the shift was. And you did just everything that came in. You just came in and sat at your desk, and then Bill Shelton would come back and give you your assignments for the day. And they may be rewriting news releases or maybe whatever. And anything that was not covered by one of the beats. And the beats were the Capitol—the Capitol building, the state government, the federal building, the federal courts, the [County] Courthouse. Typically we'd have two reporters at the Courthouse. It was a pretty big beat. The City Hall in North Little Rock. Those were the kind of the regular beats. They had reporters that did nothing else but—our North Little Rock

reporter would operated out of the City Hall. And North Little Rock had an office there, and the Capitol—you know there was the press room at the Capitol. Was—had our one or two reporters—later we had—I went out th—and joined Ernie Valachovic in 1964. So we had—and for a time—and Roy Reed had been out there with Val, too—Valachovic. So, we typically had two reporters most of the time—a good part of the time at the Capitol. It was a big beat. And so, therefore, you'd have kind of the police—and police reporter would be a beat. So we'd probably have eighteen, maybe eighteen reporters. Something like that. And then the copy desk, you'd have maybe eight or so copy editors and—who edited copy and wrote headlines and did page design. And the telegraph editor who did—handled the wire. The news from the [world]—we called him—the telegraph editor is what we called him at the *Gazette*—the wire editor or whatever—but—city editor and one—and an assistant city editor and a state desk. We'd have maybe three people on the state desk. You'd have the state editor and maybe two reporters, and a network of stringers out across the state. David Pryor was one of our stringers for a while. He was . . .

[03:23:22] SL: Up in Fayetteville?

ED: . . . while he was in law school, he was our Fayetteville stringer

for a while.

SL: He ever turn anything in worth reading?

ED: Yes. As a matter of fact, one day I was—there was people on vacation, and I was—decided to go over on the state desk. So I was on the state desk, and there was a—yeah, he was [*unclear word*]. He was a pretty good correspondent. He was a pretty good reporter. And he called up—there'd been—there was a big controversy raging—David was in the legislature as I recall at that time. And [*clears throat*] he was—there was this guy coming to speak at the university. And there was always controversy that they'd invite speakers at the university that were controversial. And legislators hated that. They thought their university should not have anybody come in to speak to students who had any ideas other than what they believed. And I remember when Muhammad Ali went up there. There was a great uproar about Muhammad Ali speaking at Fayetteville. There was a guy named Dr. Albert Ellis, who was a sexologist. He had written a book about sex. And it was quite controversial, and this was about the time of the Kin—this was after the Kinsey Report had come out. And so all that kind of stuff was going on. And this guy was come—they invited him to Fayetteville [*unclear words*] 'cause the student—maybe the Student Senate or

something—Student Government Association probably invited someone down. And I don't know who was responsible. And anyway, he was coming to the university to speak. [03:24:48] And so David covered it for us. And he called in his story from Fayetteville. And my recollection is—and so he called up and got me, and I wrote—and he gave me all the stuff and then we did the story. And Dr. Ellis had said something to the effect—told the students there—he said, "If you haven't had sex—anyone who hasn't had sex before the age of twenty-five is probably due for a life of mental anguish and instability," or something like that. "You're going to have emotional troubles if you haven't had sex [*laughter*] by the age of twenty-five." And, of course, in those days—I mean, that wouldn't be anything now—nobody would—it wouldn't even be a story, right?

SL: Right.

ED: Nobody would say any—but in those day—in 1960s that was the—get the—that kind of stuff was forbidden fruit. And so [*laughs*] as I re—I'm not sure about this, but I—my recollection is that David said, "Now, you know, I wouldn't mind if you didn't put my byline on this." [*Laughter*] 'Cause he was in the legislature. So we didn't. We typically didn't put bylines on there for stringers out there. But David, I think, wanted to make

sure that his name [*laughter*] didn't appear on this story. But people down at Camden and these fellow legislators as well, so—but he did some—quite a—he did a lot of stories for us up there.

SL: Well, was there a . . .

ED: He was a good newspaper—David Pryor was a good newspaperman, good writer.

SL: Well, I know that he went into the newspaper business in a pretty naïve effort in Camden.

ED: Yeah, to try to compete with the Hussmans . . .

SL: . . . the Palmer pap . . .

ED: . . . the Palmer papers, later Hussman papers, his son-in-law made it. But, yeah, he felt the brunt of it—the economic power that they had.

[03:26:36] SL: Well, is—was there—is there a seniority as to—I mean, you were a relatively new hire, does that mean you get more crap desks than anyone else?

ED: Yeah, at the outset, more crap desk. [*Coughs*] But Shelton thought the crap desk was important . . .

SL: Well, it se—I'm sure it was.

ED: He did. I mean, he wanted to have somebody good on the crap desk because you had all this stuff. It needed to be very accurate, and you couldn't have somebody slopping around and

getting [things wrong]—'cause the next day, Shelton's life would be miserable—people calling up, and you've got the garden club—you've got the home demonstration club at three o'clock; it's two o'clock. And everyb—so he didn't want to deal with all of those people. Or people are upset about errors in obits. And he—we had a very hard routine on obits. You had to—they had to be read very carefully and double-checked against the stuff you had to check—the telephone directory on names—be sure—'cause it—the funeral home would always, you know, maybe get names misspelled or addresses. You had to look it up in there, you had to get their addresses exactly right, and you had to get their name exactly right. And you had to get their middle initials in. Shelton was big on middle initials. You couldn't just have Ernest Dumas. It had to be Ernest C. Dumas. Except it was on my byline. You know, it was Ernest. But he, you know, he was a stickler for all of those kinds—you had to be very accurate. And he wanted that crap desk guy—had to be somebody who was very accurate. He wanted them to be—dependable—because he didn't want to have to go back and read after all—behind all of that stuff 'cause—so he didn't mind puttin' Roy Reed on the crap desk, I mean.

SL: Mh-hmm, yeah.

ED: Roy was the horse of the staff, and he didn't mind puttin'—
assigning Roy to go over to the police station and work for a
while.

[03:28:20] SL: Well, let's talk about Roy Reed for just a little bit.
How long had he been there by the time you got there?

ED: Well, Roy went to work there, I think about [19]55 or
[19]56, and he was there when I got there. And I think he was
probably on the Capitol beat with—he had been—I think for a
good while there—during the integration crisis he was at North
Little Rock, on the North Little Rock beat, and Shelton always
wanted a, you know—he later would be criticized because—
people would say, "Well, Shelton or Nelson would put these
great reporters, great writers, on North Little Rock"—of all—Bill
Whitworth who later became editor of—an editor at the *New
Yorker*—the fiction and nonfiction editor at the *New Yorker*, and
later the editor-in-chief at the *Atlantic Monthly* for a couple of
decades. One of the great . . .

SL: He just retired recently, didn't he?

ED: He's retired, and he was one of the great editors in the world.
And a great writer—and for the—and he wrote for the *New
Yorker*—some magnificent stuff at the *New Yorker*. But here he
was covering North Little Rock. Well, Shelton, I mean, he

thought that's important to—he didn't think that the Capitol beat was any more important—you should have anybody better at the Capitol beat than you should have on North Little Rock. He didn't ha—there was no hierarchy in his mind about it. He just thought whoever fits best. And Roy and Bill Whitworth wrote some wonderful stuff from North Little Rock. And to Shelton, that was just as important as covering Orval Faubus at the Capitol. [03:29:48] In fact, Ernie Valachovic was the worst writer on the staff. He was a great, great reporter, but he was not a very good writer. And we'd sit together at the Capitol, and he'd—about every ten minutes, he'd say, "How do you spell so-and-so?" And, "Oh, it doesn't look right," he'd say. So we'd do that all day long, every day . . .

SL: So that kind of sounds like an oxymoron: great reporter, terrible writer.

ED: No, it's not though. I mean, it's—a great reporter is somebody—is—that can go out and get the news, and Valachovic was good at it. He was a—he was great with people. I mean, he covered the Capitol—very hard times for the *Gazette* when the whole bureaucracy at the Capitol was hostile to the *Gazette* because Orval Faubus was [hostile]. And Ernie Valachovic just beat the crap out of everybody at the Capitol [*SL laughs*] because he was

a good reporter. I mean, he—every file clerk and secretary out there loved Ernie, and if the department head would stonewall it and wouldn't tell Roy—somebody else then there would see Ernie Vala—knew about it. So Ernie was a great reporter, and a lot of his copy had to be rewritten and refined, but he was a valuable reporter—a beat reporter. And that's what you want on one of the beats is somebody that can go get the news. He was a self-starter, and he could do that, and Ernie was a great reporter. But as I say, nobody would hire him as a writer.

[03:31:17] SL: Well, we started off talkin' about Roy Reed . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you mention at one point that he was the horse . . .

ED: Well, he was the . . .

SL: . . . tell me what that means.

ED: . . . he—I think he was the star of the staff—everybody—one, because he was a great writer. Roy was a wonderful writer, and everybody looked up to Roy. He was wise, and he was eloquent. He was just a wonderful writer. But he was also a good reporter and smart. And so he did the best stuff. You know, the day-to-day stuff, you know, Valachovic would be covering the day-to-day stuff, but Roy would write the good, thoughtful, analytical stuff for the paper that we were all so proud of. So Roy was—

you know, he—in that way he was kind of the s—we had two or three stars. Ernie Valachovic was a star of the staff for that period of time because he was such a wonderful reporter at the Capitol. And so tough. And [*clears throat*] Roy, for the reasons I mentioned. [03:32:20] And then the third was Bill Lewis, who was a general assignment reporter. He was—went to work there about the same time Roy did and stayed there until the end. And he was always nothing but a general-assignment reporter because he could cover anything. He wrote very well. He was fast. Nothing stymied him. He could cover any kind of story. And he could go out, and he'd—he could go out and interview somebody and come back, and the story would be finished in no time. And he got off work at six o'clock or maybe five o'clock. And he would always be through at five o'clock. If Shelton gave him fifteen stories to do, at five o'clock they'd be finished. So Bill Shelton worshipped Bill—I mean, many years later I interviewed Bill Shelton for this *Gazette* oral history project, and I asked him—by that time he was really gettin' way on up in years, and he didn't—his memory was—"Tell me about the great reporters." And all he could think of was Bill Lewis. "Boy, that guy, he was so fast, and he never—he always got the story done that day." I mean, rest of us sometimes—you know, I ca—I

don't have—I can't reach somebody or something—well, I'll hold this over till tomorrow. But Bill Lewis never did. He got every story out, every day, on time. Never missed an edition, he never—you know, I'd—I missed the first edition sometimes. I'd be overwhelmed with stuff from the Capitol, and I'd miss—Bill Lewis never missed an edition. So he was the ideal reporter for an editor 'cause he got—he did it, and it was always acceptable. Didn't require much editing. He was a good writer—every—his commas were all there where they were supposed to be and not—and when not supposed to be there, there was no comma. And he always had kind of flashy lead—good leads, and he was accurate. So everybody looked up to Bill Lewis. He was kind of the—he was the horse of the staff as well . . .

SL: He was total package.

ED: Yeah, he was a total package.

[03:34:26] SL: Well, I know that you came in after the [19]57 crisis, but just how—who was it that was—how many folks did they have covering the Central High crisis?

ED: During—well, the star at that time was Ray Moseley. He was the—he was a general assignment reporter. He was not stationed at the Capitol, but he covered that. And he was prolific and smart. And a good writer and really a pro all around. He

was obviously the star of the staff in 1957, [19]58. He did all the big stories. If you turn to the *Gazette* in those days, the lead story was likely to be Ray Moseley. And he went on to a great career. He was with UPI in Europe and a number of papers, the *Chicago Tribune*. And he's probably still writing. I don't know, he's probably, I don't know, he'd be up—he'd be seventy, late seventies now—probably not. But he was in Europe the last I heard. He may be in Paris or Rome or someplace. But he was a great reporter. And so Ray Moseley was doing that. Of course, Ernie Valachovic would be from the Capitol—would be the Faubus angle—covering the governor's office and all the stuff from there. [03:35:48] Jerry Dhonau was—who later was the ed—an editorial writer and editor of the editorial page at the end. He was the reporter at Central High School. He was out there every day at the scene. He covered all the movements at Central. The crowds—the—whatever happened. The National Guard and everything that happened there, and he marked the sparrow's fall out there. Everything that happened, Jerry was there. Plus you had other reporters. I mean, it—on any given day there'd probably be—half the staff probably would be covering some angle of it. And Shelton—Bill Shelton was kind of masterminding it all, moving the—all the

players here and there. But those three, Valachovic and Jerry Dhonau and Ray Moseley were the—were, I guess, the keys. They were the guys that—there every day. They had bylines every day. And Bill Lewis did a tremendous amount of work as well. And then when I went to wor—I did a little bit of stuff, even those days—were—occasionally would get thrown into some of those things, but not until [19]62 or [19]63. You know, I covered the [Little Rock] School Board for a while there in the early [19]60s. One of my early beats was covering the school board, and that was a—also a big—an important beat then because you had all the integration stuff. That was the school beat at that time was the integration stuff.

SL: Right.

ED: So that was—you know, I got into a little bit from that angle, and—covering it at the school board level.

[03:37:17] SL: Well, when was it that you started doin' the politics? When did you start coverin' politics?

ED: Well, I guess, in a big way in 1962. My—you know, I went to work there in 1960. When I went to work there, we were in the middle of a political season. And, you know, I mentioned, you know, comin'—Bruce Bennett—plus there were some ballot issues that year, like the school-closing amendment—giving

this—the governor the power to close scho—there were some initiated acts. Those kinds of things were on the ballot. So I did a little bit of that but not—but everybody did a little bit of that, and I was—probably did less than anybody else on the staff because I was new. [03:38:04] But in [19]62, for some reason, we—the [19]62 political campaign rolls around, and you got a big race for the first time—a big race for governor. Everybody thinks, "Well, maybe Orval Faubus after five terms is vulnerable." So Sid McMath makes his comeback—one of the great governors in Arkansas history, who had, you know, served two terms in [19]48 and [19]50. [Nineteen] fifty-two, ran for the senate [ED edit: governor again and lost] and then had got beat for the Senate in [19]52 [ED edit: 1954] and was kind of on the periphery of politics after that. But he decides to make a comeback in [19]62, run again. And he's still fairly young and a dynamic . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . campaigner in—one of the most impressive men I've ever known. So he runs again, and Dale Alford, who was a central figure in the [19]57 crisis, beat Brooks Hays for Congress in 1958. And he's—reapportionment throws him into Brooks Hays's di—into Wilbur Mills's district, so he's got to do something. Well,

he makes a run for governor in [19]60—in 1962 as a kind of a run against Faubus from the right, I guess, [*SL laughs*] as a segregationist. And you had a bunch of others running in [19]62. You had a guy named Vernon Whitten, a lumberman from down in Mount Holly, Arkansas—down in Union County, my stomping grounds. So he was running as kind of a moderate businessman—a boring businessman. He runs filling that slot—a boring businessman candidate. [*SL laughs*] And so then you had a couple of others, you had Kenneth Coffelt . . .

SL: Coffelt.

ED: . . . who was this old trial lawyer here. A kind of a hell-raising trial lawyer who'd—from back in the—he had been a big figure in politics in the [19]30s, and so he runs for governor in [19]62. And who else? Oh, and Dave Cox. One of my favorite politicians of all time is Dave Cox from Weiner—he's a kind of a one-eyed farmer from Weiner—rice farmer from Weiner, Arkansas . . .

SL: You want to talk about him at all?

ED: Yeah, we'll talk—yeah, we'll get to him in a minute . . .

SL: Okay. All right.

ED: . . . we'll talk a little bit about Dave. I love to talk about Dave Cox. [03:40:18] But—so they all run, and so it's a—and it's a very close race. It turns out that—and I suspect had the votes

been counted correctly, McMath would've made a runoff, and Faubus might still have won. But it's a very close race in that Democratic primary, and Faubus wins without a runoff. Barely. He gets about 50, maybe 51 percent of the vote. Sid is a distant second, but ahead of—and—but almost makes a runoff. Very close. And Dale Alford runs third, and I guess Vernon Whitten fourth, Kenneth maybe five [*coughs*]*—there were either five or six people in that race . . .*

SL: Dale Alford, now is he from . . .

ED: . . . Dale Alford's from Little Rock, and he was . . .

SL: . . . okay . . .

ED: . . . an eye doc—he was an eye doctor here . . .

SL: . . . okay . . .

ED: . . . an ophthalmologist at Little Rock. And had been on the—he'd been on the—he'd gotten on the—his daddy had been on the [Pulaski County] School Board, and he had got on the [Little Rock] School Board during the integration crisis.

SL: Okay.

ED: And [*clears throat*] his daddy was a school man from out at Jacksonville. [03:41:23] So it was a—it was an interesting race. It was a—you know, it was unusual because you had these great titans of politics—McMath and Faubus—running. And Dale

Alford, who had been a pretty effective politician himself—gotten elected twice to Congress—including [beating] the great congressman br—beating Brooks Hays in that great race and—as a write-in candidate in 1958—after the—and running as a segregationist—and the Faubus machine helped elect—get him elected then—helped him get—beat Brooks Hays. So you had those three. Those were the three central figures in that race, and so it was fun covering that race. And I, you know, I got to cover a lot of the, you know, rallies where all of them spoke. And I was assigned in that campaign—Bill Shelton assigned me to cover Sid McMath, which meant you went out, and you followed him every day. You traveled with him. And I forgot who trav—probably Roy might've traveled with Faubus that year, but I've forgotten—and somebody else would—but Shelton also told me—my assignment sheet said, "Well while you're at it, we got to do something about these other guys"—David—Dave Cox [*clears throat*] and Kenneth Coffelt and Vernon Whitten. We're not going to spend a lot of time with them, but drop off every now and then and do a little coverage—Dave Cox, see what he's doing and so forth, so we can write—at least toward the end, you can write some kind of comprehensive story about who this guy is and what he's saying and what his candidacy is all about,

and give us some flavor of it. And any kind of spot news—if you can—you might want to just drop off one day and follow him if you get a chance." And so I did that once or twice, and it was—some of the most memorable [*laughs*] days of my life were the few days I spent with Dave Cox. [03:43:10] But McMath was the central figure, and I spent most of that campaign traveling with Sid, and he was quite an impressive guy and made—one of the great speech-makers and great campaigners. And he was—you know, he was a Marine general; by that time, he was a Marine Corps Reserve general. But he would—still would go into these—real handsome fellow and tall and erect, and we would go—and he was, at that time, I guess, probably in his sixties, but we would go into a bank, and he'd go in and vault over their ba—the rails and go shake hands with everybody behind the rails. And shook every hand there and wa—you know, had his white hat on and his blue suit—light blue suit and a bright red tie—his whole rig, he wore it. And he was a hell of a campaigner. Quite impressive to do that. [03:44:12] But also an interesting thing about Sid McMath is that he was different from David Pryor—the other great politicians of the later era—of David Pryor, Dale Bumpers, and Bill Clinton, and Jim Guy Tucker. In that he couldn't—he didn't know any na—anybody's

name. You know, Bill Clinton was a legend. You know, if you met him in 1952, he remembered you in 1982, exactly. He could spot you, and I mean, he has this fantastic [memory]—and David Pryor and Dale Bumpers were the same way. They had this great magic—one of the keys to their successes is that great memory for names, and they connected with everybody. Sid did not. I was astonished to find that he didn't. And we traveled—he'd go to a town—whatever picked him up there—like we'd go to Arkadelphia, Dr. Dave Luck and Bob Riley would pick him up. And he'd say, "Who we going to meet here?" And they say, "Well, So-and-so." We'd get close to there, and he'd say, "Now who is that?" They'd say, now that's your old—he was your campaign manager in [SL laughs] [19]48 and so forth. And they'd have to identify everybody. [03:45:11] And so we'd get on the plane in the morning, and I'd meet him out at the airport, and we'd be flying off some place in this little old plane—just he and I and maybe one other person. And fly off to DeWitt or some place, and somebody'd meet him there to campaign. And so he'd—we'd get on the airplane early in the morning, about daylight, and he'd have the *Gazette*, and he'd get on the plane, and he'd sit there, and he'd read the *Gazette*. And he'd fold it back, and he'd have my story—and it'd have a byline—by Ernest

Dumas. [*SL laughs*] And he'd read the paper, and he'd turn over to the jump, and he'd read that, and he'd turn around and says, "Good story, Eddie." [*Laughter*] And so he—but I was Eddie, and it didn't make any difference how many times he was corrected. We'd go to a town, and he'd turn around, and he'd want to introduce me, "This is Eddie Dumas from the *Gazette*." And so Bob Riley, "Ernie Dumas, Ernie Dum"—"Oh yeah, yeah, okay." But the next stop, it'd be Eddie Dumas again. He never got it. And all of his staff, Irene Samuel, Pat House, and Mamie Ruth Williams and all of those women who worked so hard for him on his staff, they were all "Honey" or "Darling." He couldn't remember any of them's names. They were all just Honey and Darling, and whatever his little names for them for—of course, they—some of them—they were leaders the women's movement—it kind of pissed them off I think. But everybody loved Sid. He was a great man—great politician.

[03:46:36] SL: And what about Cox?

ED: Dave Cox. Dave Cox. Dave Cox was a—he had a rice farm at Weiner, which is a little community up in Poinsett County. And very—apparently a very successful rice farm. He had thousands of acres, very successful rice farmer. And he had about a third or fourth educa—grade education, [*coughs*] and he had—he was

one of the most hideous people you—he was [*SL laughs*] just an ugly person. [*SL laughs*] He was a—he was about my—he was about six three—about my height and must've—could not have weighed over a hundred and ten pounds, just a scarecrow of a person. And he had one eye. He had lost an eye in a hunting accident or something as a [boy]—he apparently had many accidents. He had lost part of an ear [points to face] and part of his nose, and he had lost an eye. [*SL laughs*] A number of his digits. He had lost fingers. He had—missing two or three fingers off each hand. And I talked to him about it once. I wanted to s—kind of ask him—one he had to—he was tryin' to get through a barbed-wire fence. He was huntin', and he had a shotgun and the shot—he tripped over something going through a barbed wire fence, and it shot them or something. And so he lost—he had—he lost some stuff there. [*SL laughs*] But so [*coughs*]—and he was illiterate—was not illiterate, he just never had much education. And he wasn't a very good speaker. But he was foulmouthed. But he was a principled idealist. And he ran for governor that year because he, as he told me later, "I want—when my grandkids read about Orval Faubus and fifty [ED edit: 1957]—and Central High in Little Rock—I want to be able to tell them I just didn't vote against this guy, I did everything in

my power to get him out of office. I did the ultimate thing. I ran against him." He says, "I know I'm going to get beat, but I'm just doin' this, so I can tell my kids and my grandkids that I took this stand." And he was genuine about it. I mean, it sounded like a lot of bull, but he was genuine about that.

[03:48:40] And so—and he was entirely too candid on the campaign trail. [*SL laughs*] So I—he was over at—once at, I think it was Fort Smith. There was a—Arkansas Press Association had a big meeting. Their annual convention. And all of the candidates went over and each of them got to, you know, make a two- or three-minute talk or something. And then throw open to questions for all of the editors, who would ask them questions. So one—this kid, a high school kid who—a senior in high school—and his daddy, I guess, was publisher of a news—editor of a newspaper someplace, and he was at the convention. So he asks—stands up and asks a question: "I'd like to ask each of the candidates what they—what advice they would have to somebody who is graduating from high school, and he is going out into the world. What advice do you have for us?" So McMath and Faubus, they all went through this flowery thing. Arkansas is a state you could build a border [fence] around. Arkansas, it's self sufficient, and you can get a—great colleges

here and great businesses and corporations here. You've got—it's a great life here and just lavished praise on this—what a great opportunity—land of opportunity—all the clichés. They all kind of tried to outdo each other. And Dave was down at the end of the row in an old chair. He was kind of slouched down at the end [leans to one side]. He was draped over this chair. And he didn't have a tie. He always wore a starched white shirt, but no tie. Everybody else had on their red ties. And so—and he had his old greasy hair. And he—so he looked like you could put about three spoonfuls of Wild Root Cream Oil on his hair or Vaseline on his hair every day. So he—came his turn. He was down at the end. He finally kind of hauled himself out of his chair and walked up to the microphone and straightens and says, "I'd tell them, she's a low-wage state. Get out and get out fast." [SL laughs] So that's kind of the standard for honesty and truthfulness in politics. He—I think he set the standard. [Coughs] But there were a lot of other stories like that. He—I traveled with him. [03:51:01] One day I met him on the—on White Rock on the—at the Mount Nebo Chicken Fry. Everybody gathers for the—in those days for the Mount Nebo Chicken Fry. All the candida—have two or three hours of speaking. All of the candidates speak. And so I ran into—I had—I had talked to

Dave earlier, I said, "Well, I'm going to travel with you a day or two—and I'll"—he was going to be there, so I'll drop off from McMath, and I'd follow Dave for a day or two, so I could write about him. And so he agreed to meet me the next morning at the—at the Old South Rest—[*coughs*—excuse me, the Old South Restaurant there at Russellville. [03:51:39] And so we get there before daylight and have a good plate of brea—of eggs. And so we get—he has this red Impala. And he's got his hand-painted "Dave Cox for Governor" signs on both sides of this red Impala. And he's got some—he's installed some loud speakers on top. And he's got a—in the backseat—he's got an old phonograph player on the backseat—you can play records and stuff on it. Got it hooked up—and run a microphone and so forth. [*SL laughs*] So we hike off down the highway, [*coughs*] and we go to one town—and we go to Clarksville and Russellville. He stops off and goes around the square and finds these old farmers and immediately gets in an argum—the first person he sees, he'll get in an argument with him—and—about Faubus. And these were all—and he'd say, "This is a Faubus town. Let's get out of here." So we'd go to the next town. And we get over to Fort Smith, and he said, "I've got to have a beer." [*SL laughs*] So we go to a pool hall or something in

there, and he starts drinkin' beer, and the next thing you know, he's just plowed. By suppertime, he's—you know, we'd been there a couple of hours talking; he just talks nonstop, and [*SL laughs*] so he's going to—I decided, "Well, look—I—this is pointless." So I said, "Dave—I—look, I've got to get back to Little Rock." And there's a Trailways station across the street. So I went over to the Trailways station, got a bus ticket, and got on the bus and went back to Little Rock. And I had ridden up to Mount Nebo with a photographer for the *Gazette*. And so I took a bus back to Little Rock. [03:53:09] And I got back to Little Rock about midnight and get off the bus and walk up the street to the *Gazette* and the *Gazette* newsroom. "Dumas we—where'd—we're glad to see you. We wondered where in the world you are." Said, "We've been worried about you, and we thought you're with Dave Cox." And I said, "Well, I was." And he said—well they hand me this story, and it was an AP story from Springdale. And Dave had been arrested at Springdale. [*SL laughs*] He had been going around—he had been driving around a residential neighborhood. Apparently, he drove to Springdale after I left him. He had been driving around—and playing Guy Lombardo records on his [phonograph] [*SL laughs*—you know late at night in resi—and then—then start—

get his microphone and start talkin' about Orval Faubus or something over the loud speaker. So they arrested him and took him down to the courthouse, and he tried to put his glass eye up as collateral, [*SL laughs*] and they wouldn't take it. But the next morning they—when they let him out of the tank the next day, all the reporters gathered round this candidate for governor. And he said, "These mountaineers are crazy—these people in the mountains." Said, "I'm not getting any higher than Crowley's Ridge for the [*SL laughs*] rest of this campaign." And he didn't—he never got out of—higher than Crowley's Ridge. And went back and campaigned in east Arkansas . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . and central Ark . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: But the problem with that—he got arrested on Crowley's Ridge, too. He—a few days before the election, he was campaigning in Harrisburg, which is just down the road—county seat there from Weiner—down eight or ten miles from Weiner is Harrisburg. And he was in the—going into the bank, and he was brandishing a pistol. And so they arrested him and put him in jail again. But Dave he was—was a great, great story. [03:55:00] He did— one other little Dave Cox story. He—I think it was at Mount

Nebo Chicken Fry. He was up there, and he talked about—and he would always bring up—he would bring up this thing about—everybody else tried to duck it—the integration thing. Faubus didn't want to talk about it, and the others didn't want to talk about it directly, and—except Dale Alford tried to make a little bit of race issue that Faubus was a friend of Daisy Bates or something. But—had shaken hands with L. C. Bates, the head of NAACP back in the [19]50s or something. So—but Dave wanted to talk about it. And he announced that he looked forward—
"One day we'll have black president of the United States, and I hope I am alive to see that day that we'd have a"—he didn't call him black, he used a worse name, but . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . but he looked forward—he said he looked forward to that. That would be real progress in this country. So I thought of that this last year when Barack Obama—that morning that he got elected—that too bad Dave Cox wasn't around . . .

SL: Cox isn't alive to see that.

ED: . . . to see that. 'Cause he prophesized that we would have a black president.

SL: Sounds like a really gonzo, reckless candidate that . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he was. He . . .

[03:56:27] SL: Well, okay. So Faubus gets out of the primary.

Squeaks out of the primary. You think that—who took the votes away from McMath in that?

ED: Well, it's hard to say. You know, they—I suspect it was close enough that—you know, typically what happens is out in a lot of the [counties]—there were about, you know, eight or ten or twelve, maybe more counties where the absentee vote particularly is always in flux. I mean, it can—the absentee vote is—was back in those days was easily manipulated, particularly before 1964 when you had the poll tax. It was very easy to manipulate votes because all you had to do is—I mean, you could just go down to the courthouse. Or you didn't have to go down there, you could just have the county clerk send you a book of poll-tax receipts. And some counties, like in Poinsett County there was a doctor at Tyronza who just kept a poll-tax receipt book. And when his poor customers came in—patients—you know, he'd have them—he'd fill out a poll-tax receipt for them, and he'd keep them. He'd vote them. And so you had—that was prevalent in a lot of counties. Madison County.

[03:57:56] SL: It was like—acted like a proxy.

ED: Yeah, I mean, you could—or you could just on the next—you go down on election night—and, "How many votes do you need?"

And you just—somebody is in one room. The sheriff would go in there and start filling out poll-tax receipts for, you know—people who—you'd maybe get out of the telephone directory or something. And if somebody's not in the—if they're not in the poll-tax books already, you'll fill out one and tear it out, and somebody will take it across the hall and fill out an absentee ballot for them. Fill out the absentee ballot application real quickly, and then, you know, it's about a—it's kind of a complicated process to get an absentee ballot, but you have to go through several steps to fill out this little thing saying why you're—why you can't—you're not going to be at the polling place that day. [03:58:40] And so, you know, if you—and some counties would be like—in those days, Madison County and Conway County and Perry County and Poinsett County and maybe Phillips County, their ratio of absentee votes to the overall vote would be very high, in double figures. Whereas in other counties—it might be—2 to 3 percent of the votes might be absentee votes. But in those counties it might be 12 or 13 percent of the votes would be absentee. And when you went in and started looking at them—in 1964, when Rockefeller started lookin' at the stuff—they found out it was goin' on in a—on a large scale. They were just—you know, something like maybe a

hundred absentee ballots go to one post office box in Trumann, Arkansas. And somebody would be—they'd have a hundred votes there. Somebody had a hundred votes they could deliver. They'd just fill out all of these absentee-ballot applications and poll-tax receipts—absentee-ballot applications and then fill out—get the ballots and send them in. So who knows how—to what extent that was going on. That's always been the case in Arkansas, not so much nowadays. But throughout its history, absentee ballots have always been a way to manipulate the election. [03:59:58] Going back to the Reconstruction days—and so people perfected it. It got to be a tradition in counties, you know. Conway County, it was a—and that was kind of a tradition. There'd been—that's the way things were done. So—and in the [19]62 race, I don't know, I mean, they could've—or they could—there are other ways you could do it—you can shift votes, "Well, Dale Alford's out of the race so here in this box down here we'll just switch—we'll switch Dale Alford's votes to—or McMath's"—or shift them somehow—just misreport them, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . or the ab—the main thing is the absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are always—in those kind of counties would always be

uniform. You could always say in sixty—in the [19]64 race, all the absentee ballots in those counties would go heavily for Orval Faubus—heavily against the voter registration amendment, and heavily against—and heavily for legalized gambling. All those were—nursing homes were another—nursing homes were a big source of absentee ballots. Nursing home operators would have a—there'd be an organized effort to—nursing home operators association. All the nursing home operators would be told, "Go down and make sure every one of your patients has a poll-tax receipt and get their ballot—absentee ballot application. So we need ever—we need every one of their votes in this election." So that's probably what they did. I don't know. Who's to say . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . how it went? But I suspect it was close enough that Sid might've gotten in the runoff if the legitimate votes were counted in those days.

SL: So then in [19]62, you got . . .

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

SL: Oh, okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:01:50] ED: I don't know whether any other kind of *Gazette*

[experience]—other than the politics—we co—you know, we could go on to talk about the politics of those years—when, I guess I covered that from—let's see [19]64 through Rockefeller and Bumpers and Pryor, and then—in [19]79 is when I go up, and I leave reporting and go write—start editorials—so I write editorials and then—so . . .

SL: So let's go ahead and . . .

ED: . . . so we'll finish up all of this, and then I don't know whether there's any—go back into the personal stuff. You mentioned something 'bout how we—Elaine—how we met and all of that . . .

SL: Yeah. Absolutely.

ED: . . . get the personal stuff in there at some point but . . .

SL: Uh-huh. Well, now, I mean . . .

ED: . . . so we can do it any—we can . . .

SL: . . . we can kind of do this parallelwise. I mean, you were—we really have kind of dropped off your personal life after . . .

ED: Yeah, but that's . . .

SL: . . . you start on the *Gazette* . . .

ED: . . . we can do that anytime or handle it any way you want to—come back to it after we wrap all this all up—whatever you think . . .

SL: Well . . .

ED: . . . whatever's easiest to do there—keep it flowing [*clears throat*] . . .

[04:03:01] SL: . . . let's just talk a little about Elaine right now.

When did . . .

ED: Well . . .

SL: . . . y'all meet?

ED: Elaine and I met in—at Christmas—let's see, [19]62, sixty—I guess we met in December of 1963. I had gone to the Army in 1962. They were about to—Faibus said—was about to have me drafted. [*Clears throat*] Faibus's Selective Service director was about to have me drafted, so I joined the Army . . .

[04:03:36] SL: Oh, no. Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let's talk about this [*laughter*] . . .

ED: Okay, that's another story. All right . . .

SL: Okay.

ED: . . . that's a good story 'cause it involved A. R. Nelson . . .

SL: Well, this is [19]62. This is just before you meet . . .

ED: . . . yeah, yeah. I—during that campaign of [19]62—that's the other thing that happened in that 1962 campaign. I [*laughs*]—I'm out traveling with Sid McMath, and of course, he's denouncing Orval Faibus and so forth. And the *Gazette* is editorializing and all of that. So I'm out campaigning—I'm out

on the campaign for the [ED edit: with McMath]—and I come in. And it's about August. It's right before the primary. [04:04:14] I think it may be a couple of days before the primary because in those days, we had the primary in the late summer. July and August. And then we later as—in [19]72 when Mills was to run for president, they moved to primaries back [*SL laughs*] to benefit him—moved the primaries back into the spring, and they're still there. But that time, they were in the late summer, and it was hot, and it was miserable to be out campaigning. [04:04:39] But I came in from the campaign trail one day, and A. R. Nelson—I walked in the newsroom, and he calls me into his office. Closed the door, and he said, "I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you. You're going to be drafted next month." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Yes." He said, "Well, let me tell you how it happened." He said, "I'm—I've been kind of looking after this thing." He said, "Because you know, you're 1-A status." But I—as a child—as a youngster, he dated Mary Black who [*laughs*] was a—she and [her sister]—Mary and Margaret Black ran the Union County Selective Service Office. They were the two old sisters, and they ran the office. And he had dated one of the other of them in school and remained friends over the years with her. And so apparently [*laughs*] they had made sure

that we didn't get drafted . . .

SL: Okay.

ED: There was not much of a [draft]—you know, this—we're at peacetime that time. You had the—Berlin, the airlift crisis and all of that. But—so we were more or less at peace. We had the Cold War going. But—and I think, by and large, in places like Union County, the white boys didn't get drafted much anyway. It was all the—you know, they just filled their quotas with black kids. And unfortunately that's the way things worked. And—but in addition to that, I think they just kind of made sure that Nelson's boys up at Little Rock didn't get drafted. So she said—Ms. Black called crying and said that Mr. Caroom, who was the state Selective Service director, had been down for his annual inspection of the Union County draft office. And, 'course, Selective Service director—although it's—is a patronage of the governor—it's appointment by the governor. So Mr. Caroom was a—was an appointee of Orval Faubus. [04:06:44] So he had been down for inspection. As he was leaving, she said—he was going back to Little Rock, and she said she made the mistake of saying, "Well, we have—up at Little Rock—we have three of our finest boys—we're so proud of—working there at the *Arkansas Gazette*." And she said the next day he called—Mr. Caroom

called from Little Rock saying, "Who are those—you mentioned three guys work for the *Arkansas Gazette*. Who are they?" And they [she] said, "Well, Ken Danforth, Leroy Donald, and Ernie Dumas." And he said, "Send their files to me." So they pulled our files—on all three of us—and sent them to Little Rock. And they came back, and Leroy and Ken Danforth were just over the age they were no longer drafting people. I think it was twenty-six or twenty-seven, and I was, I guess, twenty-five. So there was a little note attached to my file, and it said, "This man is to be number one in the September draft." He is to be number one on the September draft list [raises one finger up and points]. So she calls Nelson and just terribly apologetic, she's to blame and everything and what—so he said, "You might want to see if you can get into a reserve unit." So I go out to the Seymour W. Terry Armory at UALR and join the 343rd Public Information Detachment, and I go off to basic training. And so I go off to—for six months. I go off to Fort Polk, Louisiana, and then off to New York for training on Long Island at a post there. So I spent six months in [19]62, [19]63 in the Army. And came back in the summer of [19]63 and—to the *Gazette*. [04:08:44] And so—but it was that fall, I guess—getting around to Elaine. It was that fall. I was—had a couple of roommates: Doug Smith and a

guy named George Carter. And so on Christmas—they had a—the *Gazette* had a big Christma—well—I—every Friday night they had a big party at—in North Little Rock. Every single Friday night everybody, after work, everybody went over to Jerry Jones's—Jerry and Ina Claire Jones's house in North Little Rock and—and ever—most of them got drunk. And [Bill] Shelton would come over. That's the only time we ever saw Shelton—would come over and be a human being. [*SL laughs*] And he'd come over and drink and didn't get rowdy or loud, but you could actually talk to him, and he'd laugh about things. But—so we went over to this party. It was in December, and it was snowing. It was a heavy snow. And so George brought this girl over—George Carter—and a little blonde, curly haired girl. And we rode to this party together on—in my little Karmann Ghia. [ED edit: It was snowing.] And got sideswiped by a car over there 'cause they're just narrow ruts, so we had to stop and—you know, get—check everything out. But we went on to the party, and that was Elaine Kersey from Fox. And they had gone to school together at Arkansas Tech. [04:10:16] George was from Tech, and she'd gone to school there as well. So [*clears throat*] we go to this party together. And so that evening—I forgot—drop her off someplace—but—and I said, "Well, I—you

got a wonderful girlfriend." And he said, "Oh, no, she's not my girlfriend." And said, "It's just—it's totally platonic. See we just went to school together, and I think a lot of her." So [*coughs*] at any rate, she called the next—a day or two later—called the house. George wasn't there, and so I talked to her for a long while. We got along great, and then we talked a time or two afterward. And, you know, and George said—you know, I found out later that George would've liked it to have been something more than platonic. It was hi—platonic on her part, but he—but I didn't know that. And so I have carried this—all this guilt [*SL laughs*] many years. Although not enough guilt I'd undo any of it. [*Laughter*] [04:11:14] But—so, anyway—so we had—we talked several times, and so I went up asking for a date—and so she was—she used to live in—she grew up in Fox—her family, they were—but he—his—her daddy worked in North Little Rock in the shops—in the MoPac shops and—the Missouri Pacific shops over there. And he spent weekends up there in this old cabin [*coughs*] up there where—heated by woodstove and so forth. And that's where the kids were raised, and she was the eldest of five kids. And they were all sick and—all the time. But he came down, spent the week—worked in [North] Little Rock, and he lived in a few blocks from the shops over there in—near the river

in a kind of a little slum over there. But he had a little garage apartment. He lived above a garage in a little two-room place. [04:12:12] And then when Elaine had to drop out of Arkansas Tech because—after her third year—because her momma got pregnant again and—big family. So she had to make some money. So she dropped out and went to work for—at Channel 7. So she was a secretary-receptionist or something at Channel 7. So we—so she was—slept on the couch in her daddy's—that's—in her daddy's little garage apartment. So I went over there and—to pick her up, and there was a—I remember there was a window in the door [moves both hands straight up and down] of the—of this downstairs—and so—you know, I knocked on the door, and she came down the stairs—and you had this window, and I could see. And, you know, she had a smile—she looked, you know—I'd never had that feeling before. She looked like she really looked forward to spending the evening with me. So I had never had that kind of feeling before. She looked like she was really delighted she was going to be spending the evening with me before—and it's been like that for forty-five years. She's—you know, if she comes in now—she'll look like she's delighted to see me. Or in the morning—when we get up in the morning, same thing. So it was a great thing. So I wouldn't undo—I felt

bad about George Carter [*SL laughs*] later on when he said, "Well, I didn't really mean that, I"—but—so he was a little sore about it, but he got over it and got married and did well. But I've always had a little guilt about that, but [*laughs*] . . .

SL: So y'all courted for how long?

ED: So we did about six months, and we got married in about six months.

[04:13:46] SL: Uh-huh. And so—now this happened after you came back from the ar—the reserve thing?

ED: This happens, yeah. I had been back about—I came back from the Army in the summer of [19]62, and then this was the week before Christmas in—sixty—in [19]63, the summer of [19]63—and this was about six months later at Christmastime when that happened. And then we got married in June of [19]64. So we've been married forty-five years.

SL: Congratulations. That's big. The—so she continued to work at Channel 7?

ED: For a while, [*coughs*] and then she . . .

SL: Her mother had another child.

ED: Yeah, her—had the other son. Had already had the youngest son when we met. She—he was a toddler. So he was a few months, maybe six months or a year old, I guess, at that time.

So we got married then, and she went back to UALR and finished her degree and then went on to Vanderbilt and got a master's in—she taught a few years and then went back—got her—over the summers—and did a master's in library science and became a librarian. She was a librarian at Central High School for about—'bout thirty years, I guess. And taught altogether about thirty-five, thirty-six years.

[04:15:10] SL: Well that—that's good. So all right—so now we're ba—so now you're—you avoided being drafted in the Army. I still can't believe that the state Selective Service director [*ED laughs*] can determine who's going to get dra—I mean . . .

ED: Well, I guess he can. I mean, I guess he—I guess that's not ordinarily the case, but this might've been—there may have been other cases like that. I don't know. But apparently he had the power to do that, just to say or—this person will be drafted. [*Laughs*] So—and I went down and took the physical and, I guess, you know, if I could've—if I had flunked the physical, I wouldn't've gone, but I passed the physical and . . .

[04:15:54] SL: Yeah. So let's see—what's happening back home while you—are you still staying in touch with your parents at that time?

ED: Yes, I go back to see my parents. Not every weekend but quite

frequently. We spend—spent a lot of time visiting. My daddy has had a heart attack when—my last year at Missouri. And so he continued to try to work, but he had—he struggled the rest of his life from about—from—that would've been 1959, probably when he had the heart attack—until he died in sixty—he died in [19]67. And so he—at the age of sixty-six—so he struggled with it. He wouldn't—he continued to work some after that, but he had problems 'cause he had—in those days you didn't—they didn't do bypasses and . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . stents and those kinds of things, so nothing could be done for him. But he lived longer than all of his brothers. But they all died at younger ages—and they had all of—heart trouble. They all got occluded arteries and died. So he died in 1967. And [pauses]—but as I say—but he had that first heart attack when I was a senior at Missouri. [*Clears throat*] And I had been down for the—I had been down for spring break and had gone—headed back to Missouri after spring break, and he had that heart attack the day—after I left that day. You know, I didn't find out that next day that he had that heart attack and was in the hospital.

[04:17:49] SL: And your mom was holding up okay during this time?

ED: She did, yeah. She held up all right. And then when my dad died, you know, she was so dependent on him. You know, he drove everywhere, and so she tried to live there for a while, and it was—she was emotionally—and was having a tough time. And she went to Missouri to live with my brother for a while. She'd come live with us a few weeks, and then she was miserable, and then she wanted to go back home. And she'd go back down there. And so she was—and I had to go back every weekend, you know, to make sure she would get groceries and stuff there, and everything was all right. [04:18:31] But—so finally after, I guess, 1967, by [19]69, persuaded her to move to Little Rock, and so we bought a little house on Spruce Street. We lived on Ridgeway, and we bought her a house on Spruce Street. And it was a—and it turned out remarkable that the whole street were widows and little old ladies who had never gotten married. There were just a whole street of them. [*SL laughs*] And they were just—this house for sale, I bought it. She kind of liked it, and we went in and kind of fixed it up a little bit, and painted it, and it was just—it became—it was a new life for her. And she was—had more social life than she'd ever had. All of these little old ladies, and they played games together, and [*coughs*] Scrabble and checkers and Monopoly and became a part of each

other's lives. So it was a great little neighborhood. It was just a stroke . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

ED: . . . stroke of luck to have a—she got into that neighborhood. And then, of course, she learned how to drive a little bit. She could drive her—and drove those little old ladies around. You'd see them all, their eyes just barely [*SL laughs*] over the dashboard, [*moves hands in front of eyes*] and these three little old ladies driving up to the Kroger st—to the Safeway store together at about three miles an hour. [*Laughter*] So she never would . . .

SL: It was the Spruce Street gang . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah, yeah . . .

SL: . . . [*laughs*] to be reckoned with.

ED: . . . yeah, there were about—on both—the ladies—two of them and then later three sisters on one side of her. And then right after—when she moved in, the lady on the other had lost her husband. So you had five of them right together there, and they were all wonderful people . . .

SL: What a wonderful thing.

ED: . . . and great support group for each other. And so that was—so that lasted until they all died. [04:20:15] And she went out

to—she wanted to go out to Good Shepherd, which is a retirement home—and so she was out there four or five years. And that was good for her, too. She was—got a lot of good neighbors and support group out there. She continued to perfect Scrabble and all of her—all the games that she did out there. But . . .

SL: Well, that—that's a pretty good ending. Pretty good.

[04:20:44] Okay, so the [19]62 campaign—Democratic primary campaign—really was your first opportunity to sink your teeth into Arkansas politics on a statewide level. Is that . . .

ED: It was, and it was a, you know, it was a perfect campaign. And you had all these giants. You got to see politics at its worst and its best. And some of the best practitioners of it. Orval Faubus, who was great. And Sid McMath and then, of course, the—I always kind of—I always kind of loved these kind of the—kind of the crackpots and the zealots who always run. There's always—used to be—Arkansas was good about that. Most states are—southern states. Louisiana always has some crazy [SL laughs] running who's—who illuminates the campaign and frequently says . . .

SL: Sure.

ED: . . . what needs to be said. And that's what—which is what Dave

Cox did—'cause he's, you know—and David Pryor had some of them like, I remember Tuffy Chambers ran against David once—a guy named Tuffy Chambers. And David can tell you some stories about Tuffy Chambers that . . .

SL: Well, I bet you can, too.

[04:21:51] ED: I don't remember much about him. I remember Tuffy was—he was a terrible speaker, and he'd get up and get wound up and emotional, and he just become a lot [ED edit: he'd just be at a loss] of words. And he'd get his tongue twisted, and he just couldn't—and finally he'd just have to stop and go sit down, so [*laughter*] . . .

SL: He'd get all wound up and . . .

ED: Yeah, so there were a lot of those. But there was always good—Editor Weston—you had—you remember Joe Weston, Editor Joe Weston?

SL: [*Laughs*] No, I don't.

ED: Editor jo—he came along in the [19]70s. He ran against David—well, he didn't get to run against David. He ran for the—for governor in nineteen—let's see, David got elected in 1974, and this would've been 1976. He was the editor of the *Sharp Citizen* and one of the great characters in Arkansas politics. And h—Editor Weston, had gone to work. He had worked at the

National Geographic as a copy editor and so forth. The *National Geographic*. So he was quite a good writer. And somehow he settled into Sharp County [*clears throat*] with his wife and started a paper called the *Sharp Citizen*. And, 'course, they had a paper at Cave City, a little weekly paper, but he put out the *Sharp Citizen*, which was a—it was all done—it was all typewritten. It was just, I mean—it wasn't set in type like most places. And the headlines were all by hand [*makes drawing motion in the air*—you know—he'd just—on a stencil—he'd—it was all stenciled. [04:23:18] And he'd take it down here to Johnny [F.] Wells at the General Publishing Company in Little Rock, and they would secretly publish it. Johnny Wells never wanted anybody to know that he was actually publishing the *Sharp Citizen* 'cause it was libelous. I mean, it really was [*SL laughs*] a libelous paper. And it—and, in fact, they arrested him for criminal libel. And he has a place in Arkansas legal history, because when they arrested him for criminal libel and put him in jail. He was—and he was convicted—and the lawyer appealed it, and the Supreme Court struck it down and said you can't put people in jail for libel; it's a civil action. And so they struck down the criminal libel statute because of Joe Weston. But he put out this thing, and they was—it was just a scurrilous sheet. [*SL*

laughs] I mean, he'd call—like Representative John E. Miller—this saintly little guy who was a state representative. He was kind of the political boss up there, but he was a churchgoing, God-fearing, Christian man who prayed every day and wept in the House of Representatives the day Winthrop Rockefeller said, "I'll be glad when those bastards go home"—speaking of the legislators. John Miller went down and cried in the well of the house because his wonderful, saintly mother had been—her—had been libeled because John Miller [ED edit: Governor Rockefeller] was a . . .

SL: Had called him a bastard.

ED: . . . bastard. Or a son of a bitch . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . or whatever it was. But I think it was—he called them bastards. But—so he's that kind of guy—really—and so. But he called—Editor Weston—all the references to him in the *Sharp Citizen* was the "Lizard of IZARD" [*laughter*]*—*IZARD County. So Weston put out this thing, and they chased him all over the state trying to find him. And [*SL laughs*] so he had a—became a great champion of the free press. And he had a—Editor Weston, his wife—he needed a son to carry on the family name. And his wife—by that time he was in his sixties or close to seventy

probably—and she was, too. And she couldn't bear him a son, so her daughter—they kind of switched bedrooms and the daughter then—he married her. They divorced—and divorced his wife and married his daughter, and she gave—delivered a son. And then the son they named Joseph Freepress Weston.

[*Laughter*] I'd love to know what—where Freepress is now.

[04:25:46] SL: I wonder where he is now.

ED: I don't know. I might look him—I need to Google him, see if I can find him some place. But Editor Weston, considering my—he considered me his great ally. He'd come down to Little Rock—in the pressroom. And bring fresh copies of his paper to me and—but he ran for governor in 1974 on the Republican ticket. And the Republicans were in terrible shape then. They had to field a candidate of some kind because you had to for the party to remain viable and [*coughs*] as an active political party and keep its place on the ballot. But—so they had to have a candidate and everybody else—nobody's going to beat David Pryor in 1976, so Editor Weston ran. He was going to be the Republican nominee, and they had to—I mean, the Republicans were horrified. This crazy guy was going to be the Republican [*laughter*] candidate for governor, and it'd be a humiliation nationally. So they found a plumber at Pine Bluff who—at the

last second, this plumber put his name on there [the ballot]. Leon Griffith, and Leon put his name on the ballot, and so they had a candidate. And it was a tough race, and of course, nobody voted in the Republican primary, so it was pretty scary. So—but Leon Griffith barely edged out Joe Weston [*SL laughs*] to—for the Republican nomination for governor in 1976. Otherwise, David might've been overwhelmed by Editor Weston. [*SL laughs*] I don't know—might've changed his political career. I don't [know] whether he'll even remember who—he'll remember Joe Weston, yeah.

SL: Yeah, I'm sure he will.

ED: Yeah.

[04:27:20] SL: Well, so let's get back to—Rockefeller had—by [19]62, Rockefeller was already in . . .

ED: In politics.

SL: . . . politics.

ED: He started in politics—he had [*coughs*] come here in let's see, fifty—1954, [19]53 or [19]54 when he moved to Arkansas, you know, he was involved in the kind of scurrilous divorce in New York with—with Bobo Sears. And he kind of escaped to Arkansas. And he had some friends from the Army: Ed Dunaway and Frank Newell had been friends in the Army in

World War II. And they kind of sang the praises of Arkansas. And he—so he came down, he saw Petit Jean Mountain, and he moved here and acquired the top of—much of the top of Petit Jean Mountain and moved down here. And loved it and stayed. And then, of course, Governor Faubus put him as chairman of the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission.

SL: Smart move.

ED: Smart move, and he, I think, was probably instrumental in considerable eco—industrial growth in Arkansas during that period. You know, who knows whether—to what extent he was responsible, but Faubus gave him a lot of credit. Thought he was responsible. But, anyway—but he was—and [19]57 comes along and, of course, Rockefeller is—was horrified by what Faubus did in [19]57 and began to—and had kind of fallen in love with the state and immersed himself. [04:29:11] And thought of himself as kind of a savior, that he could kind of bring Arkansas out of this abyss. And began to think about ways he could do it and getting into politics. And so, you know, the family were Republicans, and he was a liberal, ultraliberal. And I still think that Winthrop Rockefeller is probably the most liberal governor in Arkansas history and probably one of the most liberal governors in any state in US history. So at any rate—so

by 1962 he had made the commitment. He was going to run for governor himself and build a Republican party and, to whatever extent he could, use the party as a way to change Arkansas. And so he didn't run in ni—he talked about—thinking about—thought about running in [19]62, but he wasn't ready to run in [19]62. But he became chairman of the Republican state committee and kind of chased the old guys out—and kind of a new Republican Party. And brought in all these young, fairly liberal people like Tom Eisele and Bob Faulkner and lot of others. And Bob Scott, and it became kind of the focus of progressivism in Arkansas—kind of a move from the Sid McMath, and that kind of faction of the Democratic Party kind of moved over to Rockefeller and the Republican Party. Which was kind of an uneasy thing in the Republican Party. You still had the old guard—the conservative—the Goldwater side of the party, which was probably dominant. But Rockefeller kind of prevailed and changed the party. So by [19]64, he was ready to run, and I think he thought it was a long shot. But it—he had to take the first step. And so that's what [19]64 was. [04:31:08] So he ran in [19]64, and there was not much in the Democratic primary. Faubus had overwhelmed McMath and Dale Alford in 1962 and looked like he could be governor forever, as far as the

Democratic Party was concerned. So in [19]64 he had a couple of very weak opponents. It was really—I can—there was a guy named Odell Dorsey ran and a guy named—from Walnut Ridge ran who got in—arrested for doing something with—sawing off parking meters or something. [*SL laughs*] So that's what the Democratic Party was used to, is these kind of crackpots. And this electrician from—named Odell Dorsey—was his principal competitor. So he had a . . .

SL: A walk.

ED: . . . he had a walk in the Democratic primary. And it was a stiff race in the general election that fall with Winthrop Rockefeller. But—and Rockefeller, as I say, was a terrible politician. He couldn't—he was a terrible speaker. He—and he didn't know much about politics, how to—retail politicking. You know, he knew that you had to spend some money, and [*SL coughs*] it was important to have a good media campaign. And he did that 'cause he did have—he had money. He didn't have much in the way of political skills, but he had money, and he used that money. And it was a pretty good—pretty close race up until the last two weeks when the cemetery—the cemetery desecration issue erupted and kind of did him in.

SL: Now what was that?

[04:32:47] ED: Well, you know, what Faubus tried to do was characterize Rockefeller—he's not one of us. I mean, he's a rich guy who grew up on the Hudson River in this vast wealth and in the lap of luxury, and he doesn't understand us. He doesn't have our—doesn't share our values up there. [*Coughs*] So—and something kind of fell into his lap towards the end. Rockefeller had—his grass farms, of course, over in Lonoke County. And so he had a Caterpillar—somebody—a contractor over there to kind of clear off some land for grass farm or cattle or something over there. And somebody called Faubus and told him—county guy over there, said, "Well, this Caterpillar knocked over a couple of tombstones in an abandoned cemetery." Somebody went out there and took a picture of it. Sure enough, it was all this shrubbery grass and weeds and everything and trees growing up all through the cemetery. But it was this tombstone had been knocked over, and you could [*coughs*—and it looked like there was some Caterpillar tracks, and there's Rockefeller. [*Laughs*] "Rockefeller, Winthrop Rockefeller had desecrated this cemetery, and that's the kind of guy he is." And so Rock—Faubus went after him on it. Had—called a press conference and had these pictures taken—some neighbor, some farmer there to tell, "Yeah, a Caterpillar went out there and knocked them over." And so

[*laughs*] that became a big issue—and, well, Rockefeller was kind of stunned by it. He wasn't—"Nobody's going to pay any attention to that." But I don't know whether they did polls or what but after a few days, they said, "Well this thing's—this thing is hurtin'." [04:34:27] So Rockefeller decided to respond to it. And they went after it. They did a big video, and they did a whole big thing. And it was about a week later, and they finally go on television—buy all this television time—with this big response to the cemetery thing. And, of course, all it did was just revive the whole thing and gave it new, fresh legs. And Faubus—that winter, Faubus told me that that's what—it was very close—his poll showed it very close, but the cemetery thing turned it around. And he said—it still might've been close, except Rockefeller made the mistake of doing this—this big, slick film and so forth on it. And it just—said it just revived the whole thing, and we were able to kind of carry it on through the election.

SL: Took the bait.

ED: Took the cemetery, and did it. And Faubus, I mean, Rockefeller later—and Tom Eisele said, "Yeah, we made a big mistake. We just—we later realized it that we should—we should've just let it—nothing we could do about it—and it would just—let it blow

over, but we over-responded to it." [04:35:34] But—so, anyway—so that was the election of [19]64. And I covered—let's see, Roy covered Faubus in that el—that campaign, and I covered Rockefeller. And I remember Roy—great—wrote this great line—he had a—Roy did a piece at the end of the election. We each did kind of a profile on the candida—a big long thing that filled up [pages], you know, had a few thousand words in it. And Roy's lead was something about, "They still come to touch the hem of his garment." And they're talkin' about how the people would come out in these little towns to see Orval Faubus, and just to touch him. Touch the hem of his garment like he was Jesus.

SL: Jesus—uh-huh.

ED: So—and I didn't write nearly as good of a piece for the [laughter]—on Rockefeller as that. So the two of us covered that campaign in the fall.

[04:36:26] SL: But surely Faubus was starting to see the writing on the wall.

ED: It was. I mean, he was—it was the closeness of that race. And then his last term, he'd had two more years [clears throat] and the last—his last term things fell apart for him. They were already beginning to fall apart. And he would later talk about it

privately that, you know, he realized that being in there so many years, that everybody got—his administration got lackadaisical. They weren't paying attention. Things began to get out of hand. People began to get greedy. You know, I think they were greedy all along—but in his last two years, they had a series of incidents. The Arkansas Loan and Thrift scandal that burst on the scene. And it was just arriving. And there was already talk about it. It really didn't burst on the scene until 1968, after—a year or so after he had left. But you had the Horse Shows Scandal, the Midnight Pay Raises, and Pensions for Pals—all of these three thi—little monikers that those of us in the press hung on these little scandals. [04:37:49] Pensions for Pals was—there was a bill passed in the [19]65 legislature—one of these little things nobody paid any attention to at all. It was about six or eight par—seven—it was actually eight paragraphs or nine paragraphs long. And it was a little—for the Quasi-Judicial Retirement System. And the quasi-judicial commissions were the Public Service Commission, the Transportation Commission, and the Workman's Compensation Commission were called quasi-judicial 'cause they acted sort of as courts. And so this is the provision to kind of correct the retirement benefits for certain people on these commissions. Nobody paid

any attention to it. It was one of the little retirement bills go through by the dozens. [04:38:38] But it turns out later, there was a guy that ran for governor in 1960 named Kenneth Sulcer who was in the House [of Representatives] at that time from Osceola, and he revealed what this was. Each one of these little sections was written for a specific person. One of them was written for William J. Smith, head of the Friday—of the Smith Friday Law Firm, the biggest law firm in Arkansas—and the law—and the Orval Faubus firm—it represented every state agency and all the school districts and everything else. And one of them—he had served on the workers comp—Workman's Compensation Commission for a few weeks in about 1944. And there was a provision in there that allowed counting his Boy Scouts service and his military service and all these various little things thrown in—and, you know, so many I don't—exaggerating—maybe two years in the Civitan Club or something—and the tail twister for the Lions Club there made him eligible for full retirement benefits under the quasi—and so each one of these was written—these sections were written for somebody that had served briefly on one of these commissions—even one of them for a week and made him eligible for retirement. Well, you couldn't tell that—who these things [were

for in the bill]—but that all broke. And they had the Midnight Pay Raises when all the—Faubus sent his purchasing director [Mack Sturgis] over to run the Highway Commission. And during the night—they cranked up the computers late at night and gave all of them—gave themselves all big raises and that—so that became the Midnight Pay Raises. [04:40:13] And the horseshoe—Horse Show Scandal was he gave a big pot of money from his governor's emergency fund for these horse fanciers, for their—little rich guys that had these show horses and so forth. And he gave them \$25,000 for their little association or something. So all of those things broke and so things were falling apart for Rock—for Faubus. And so he decided in 1966 not to run again. And he said he was tired, and I'm sure he was—but he just saw that his administration was, I think, coming to pieces as well. Plus, Rockefeller was going to run again, and this time it was going to—and he [Faubus] was likely to face some serious Democratic opposition. So he decided to bow out while the getting was good in [19]66. So he didn't run again. And so you had a pretty good field of candidates in the Democratic primary, plus Rock—Win—and then Rockefeller in the general election. So I guess that year you had Justice Jim Johnson.

SL: We'll talk about him.

[04:41:14] ED: Jim Johnson was on the Supreme Court and had made one race for governor in 1956 against Faubus and lost. He ran—Faubus was running as the moderate that year . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . and Justice Jim was the—were the hell-raisers. So he ra—he's going to run again. And Brooks Hays is going to make a comeback—Congressman Hays—and he runs again. He'd ran for governor—he'd run for governor back in the late [19]20s for governor and lost in about 1926, [19]28 along in there . . .

SL: Unbelievable.

ED: . . . somewhere along in there a couple of times. And here he is forty years later making another ra [ED edit: race]—forty—how many years is that.

SL: Yeah, that's forty.

ED: Forty years later he's making another run after a long career in Congress. [04:42:03] So—and then a guy named Sam Boyce, a prosecuting attorn—liberal labor lawyer at Newport is running—president of the Young Democrats. And Frank Holt, who is . . .

SL: Frank Holt, mh-hmm.

ED: . . . also a big name in Arkansas politics—a big political family. And he'd been on the Supreme Court for about six years. So he

runs. And both he and Justice Jim both leave the court to run for governor. There might've been another one—somebody else—maybe one or two other running. Winston G. Chandler, I think probably ran. But any rate, they run in sixty—[19]66. And Justice Jim beats Frank Holt in the runoff for that nomination. [Coughs] [04:42:54] So I think—so Rockefeller—it was a lucky stroke for Rockefeller . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . that Justice Jim [ran]—he was the perfect candidate . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . to run. He was kind of an extremist and—although a good politician. Justice Jim was a pretty clever politician—pretty smart. Much smarter than anybody gives him credit for—and progressive in some ways. You know, Jim would deny it, but he had some progressive impulses, some liberal impulses that—he would object strongly to my saying that—but he actually did.

[04:43:33] SL: Well, give me a few examples of this.

ED: Well, the Freedom of Information [Act] when he was on the Supreme Court. As the justice of the Supreme Court, he regularly [coughs]—he ruled probably more than any other member of that court for working people and labor. You know, he was not in the pocket of the insurance companies. I mean,

he was—as a justice of the Supreme Court and the Freedom of Information Act, he wrote some powerful opinions for openness in government and so forth. And he was an advocate of the severance tax and kind of progressive taxation. And, indirectly, he was kind of responsible, I think, in some ways for the severance tax passing in—a year ago in Arkansas—kind of behind the scenes. It's kind of a long story, but I think he had some role in that behind the scenes to get that rolling. [*Coughs*] So he had some progressive impulses. [04:44:32] And I, you know, I had a conversation with him recently, and I don't know how—about three or four weeks ago in which, I don't know—he probably wouldn't say—he might not say this on record, but in our conversation, he was talking about these gays, this—the gay movement—gay marriage movement, and we were talking, and he said, "You know, I'll be damned if, you know, they have [not] run a hell of a campaign. Those guys and those women have done an amazing job in this—of making—turning this issue and winning on it." And he said, "And I'll be damned if I don't find myself believing that they have a hell of a good case for their position on that." He said, "Now, I guess I'm gettin' tolerant in my old age." [*SL Laughs*] Jim would have never said that publicly—but . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . that was our conversation. He might've been pulling my leg, I don't know—just—we have a relationship that goes back. Jim and I have talked many times over the years.

SL: I wanna . . .

ED: He used to send me a necktie—he sent me a necktie for Christmas every year, but he didn't send me one this last Christmas. I guess I'm—I was out of favor, but I used to get a necktie from him every Christmas. All rolled up in a—in an envelope and stuck in there with a [*SL laughs*] Christmas card and so forth. Sometimes they have been used a few times—they have been worn a few times obviously—been—you'd see the tie-tack holes in there.

SL: He's thinkin' of you.

ED: But he's thinkin' of me.

SL: That's neat. That's neat. Do we need to stop? Is there something going on with Dwight?

Dwight Chalmers: Yeah.

SL: Okay. I wanna pause here just for a second.

ED: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:46:04] ED: Where we were—what we were talking about . . .

SL: Well, we kinda started talkin' about Rockefeller, and then we started . . .

ED: . . . and we got . . .

SL: . . . we covered the Democratic field that set . . .

ED: . . . in six—in [19]66 . . .

SL: . . . that gave Rockefeller really the perfect opponent . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah.

[04:46:19] SL: . . . in Jim Johnson. And so Rockefeller wins that election—first Republican governor since Reconstruction. Is that the way that went?

ED: Yeah, he wasn't—in the [19]66 he won—I think he won by about 60,000 votes over Jim Johnson. And became the first Republican governor since Reconstruction—since, I guess, the 1880s, I guess. Kind of when the Powell Clayton and Elisha Baxter, when all those—Joseph Brooks, when they left. So it was the first Republican governor since then. The first really serious candidate for governor—[unclear words] when he really made a serious race for governor [by a Republican]—since about 1888.

SL: Well . . .

ED: And that was—made—the next four years were quite different. They were fun—it was a great period for reporters to cover.

That—the politics of the intervening years, outside the election year—the politics of state government were fascinating and fun. It was a fun period to be a reporter at the Capitol. I was thankful for that. That I had that period. It was quite different from anything else that we've faced in Arkansas, just the dynamics of the politics of it. This strange guy who was in the governor's office, so bitterly resented by most members of the legislature. And just the bizarre politics of it all. Here was this liberal—archliberal Republican governor in this fairly conservative but kind of populist state. It was a kind of a populist aspect to Rockefeller as well. And a very conservative legislature—conservative Democratic legislature. I think he had—the Democrats dominated about probably better than 95 percent in both houses. [04:48:39] I think he might've had maybe two Republic—two or three Republicans in a one-hundred-member House, and one Republican in the Senate. Jim Caldwell of northwest Arkansas was the only Republican I think—there was one Repub—another Democrat who switched over briefly. Got crossways in his home county and switched to the Republican Party but then got defeated. But basically he had—it was thirty-four to one in the Senate. And, obviously, you can't get much done with—and—with a situation like that, unless

you're able to kind of co-opt by personal magnetism or the politics of it, or some way if you can bring people over. And, of course, he didn't have any of those things that he could—his money didn't make that much difference in the politics of the legislature. So it did with the people, but he could use that money to sell his message to the people. [04:49:40] And there was also this aspect—people voted for Rock in large numbers partly because they felt like here's this man with this vast wealth. He can't possibly be going in there to make money. And there's always this suspicion by the electorate. And it—it's a huge per—suspicion. It's not just in Arkansas—but probably more in Arkansas than elsewhere—the politicians are in it for the money. They're in it for themselves. But with Rockefeller you couldn't make that case, it—not an argument you could make this guy—maybe he could do it for personal prestige and all of that, but you couldn't say that he wanted it for the money. 'Cause he had more money than Arkansas did. But—so that was a selling point for Rockefeller. It was out there that they trusted him. That he—whatever he did—they might not agree with his politics or his ideas about civil rights and those things, but they at least—they trusted him that he would want to do right by the taxpayers. That he was not going to be out there to steal

money.

[04:50:51] SL: Now did the first—did John Paul Hammerschmidt come in at the same time?

ED: He got elected the same election. Yeah.

SL: And there was some . . .

ED: And Footsie Britt as the lieutenant governor. They ran as a kind of a tandem. And Footsie, Maur—Maurice "Fotsie" Britt, who was a war hero and a football hero at LSU and Footsie was no better—he was—handled himself a little better than Rockefeller on the stump, but he was no—he was not dynamite as a speaker. But he was also—had the same—people kind of trusted Footsie Britt. That he was a war hero, and he had lost an arm in World War II, and so there was something about that that made people—they would trust both of them.

[04:51:42] SL: You know, I thi—there was some synergy between Rockefeller and the Hammerschmidt campaigns. They—there was communication going on between there. I don't think that John Paul ever really just accepted everything that Rockefeller was doing in the way of campaigning. But the interesting thing is, that once John Paul got in there, that seat has been in the Republican Party ever since.

ED: Well, he was a remarkable in that he was one of the first to

recognize what you could do with constituent service. And he—there was—nobody was ever better at constituent service than John Paul Hammerschmidt. Anybody who had a problem with Social Security or the Veterans Administration or anything else—you know, call his office, and he would tend to it. I mean, he had a staff, and they were—that's what they did. They took care of anybody's problems. You contacted John Paul Hammerschmidt. Democrat or Republican, he would see to it that the federal government—the agencies of federal government would—did right by you. And so he was a broker for the constituent, and that was—that accumulates over time. And so within two or four years, there were so many people had been helped or had relatives or friends who had been helped, and that was a great strength of his. And he was also a very personable guy.

SL: Yeah.

[04:53:20] ED: And not so ideological—he's not as ideological as kind of the current Republican Party in that part of the state is. He was—I mean, he was conservative, but he wanted to get his share of money for Arkansas and for the—for whatever—not only for construction and capital improvements for—but for Medicaid or anything else. I mean, he was a very practical person and he

was—and he liked—you know, they members—the other members of the delegation. Senator Bumpers, Senator Pryor, they had a great relationship, and there was not any rivalry there between him and the other—the Democrats in the delegation as there has been since then. And as true in many other states. So he was just, in that respect, a hell of a politician—not having had much experience at, you know—I think he was the chairman of the Republican Party when he got elected. I believe he was . . .

SL: He was, but . . .

ED: . . . the state Republican Party chairman.

[04:54:25] SL: . . . but even with that, his victory was a surprise.

ED: It was. That's—that was the surprising thing about that election is that I think John—I think Bill Trimble [ED edit: James W. Trimble] had been the congressman from that district for I don't know, maybe twenty-five, twenty-six years. But was getting up in years. He was getting crotchety. And he had gotten—I think he got beat in the Democratic primary that year. Did he not? I think maybe David Burleson or somebody [beat him] . . .

SL: That kinda sounds right.

ED: . . . might've defeated him in the Democratic primary. And then, John Paul won in the general election. So—and also it was—that

whole district was becoming—had been reapportioned and it was—it was narrowing—since the district was growing—that's where the population growth had been. So as a result of that, it kept shrinking and became more and more of a Republican base. [04:55:27] So the outlying counties to the east and to the south, which had more Democratic votes in them, got dropped off after—in the [19]50 census, the [19]60s census—they got dropped, and they had to—they got dropped off because the other districts had to expand geol—geographically because their population was shrinking . . .

SL: [*Unclear word*] shrinking.

ED: . . . so one-man, one-vote said—meant that you had to make the district geographically smaller, and it made it geographically more homogenous for the Republicans. And it became a more and more of a Republican district. And it—and it's continued to be that way, and I think it may begin to rev—because of the Hispanics and the changing demographics it maybe kind of—but go back the other direction a little bit. It may become—over the next ten or fifteen years, more competitive for the Democrats. Not right away, but I think it's going to trend that way. But for his time, it became progressively more Republican and more conservative. And it fit his politics and his personality. [*Clears*

throat]

[04:56:40] SL: So let's see now, what were the victories for the Rockefeller administrations?

ED: [*Coughs*] Well, I think the one—the big victory—Rockefeller—what Rockefeller means to Arkansas history is—and he really was a transformative figure. I mean, there was no more transformative figure in Arkansas politics in the twentieth century, I think, than Winthrop Rockefeller. Although legislatively, he got very little done. He was able to pass very little significant leg—some significant legislation but because of the bizarre politics of the situation—for example, and this again illustrates why he would rank as the—as perhaps the most liberal politician in Arkansas history—is that the—our state minimum-wage law came about because of Winthrop Rockefeller in 1968, I guess. They had a special session, and he was battling with the Democrats. And so at a special session, he called for a state minimum-wage law. And the Democrats would've never—the Democrats had never proposed such a thing. And it was hard for them to vote against it, you know. Hand labor over to Rockefeller? So he called that special session and was able to pass that thing. AFL—Bill Becker, the president of the AFL-CIO, was just astounded, so—and never endorsed him as a result of

it—but they worked with him, and they got that thing passed—the minimum wage law. The Freedom of Information Act was another one. He pushed it. It was not his bill. I mean, [State Senator] Ben Allen and—was a—was the primary mover and shaker in the Senate for the Freedom of Information Act, who was a Democrat. But Rockefeller pushed it, and they could not afford to vote against it. And a lot of reservations about that kind of openness in government—in the legislature. But they passed it. So—but the major elements of his program, which was higher taxes, vast capital improvement programs for colleges and state institutions, far higher funding for public schools and free textbooks, and kindergartens and special education. All of those kinds things that he set out to do, he was not able to do. He, you know, he—in 1969, his first session of the legislature was kind of modest. He had just got elected and feeling his way, and he had a few modest reforms that he proposed. Some organizational reforms in government. They were very easy—consolidation of a couple of fiscal agencies that were needed. So he brought—got those things done, but other than that, he couldn't get much done. [04:59:47] So he waited until the [19]69 session and his re-election in [19]68. And he ran in [19]68 not announcing that he's going to run—that he's

going to raise taxes, but pretty much telegraphing, "That if I got get re-elected, we're going to move forward in this state. We're going to invest in education. We're going to r—invest in our young people." And some people might not read that as higher taxes. But your average, halfway intelligent voter—I mean, you know, how's he going to invest in education? He didn't use the word taxes. But the—Marion Crank did. You know—his opposition said, "Well, he's going to raise taxes." And he never denied that. So he runs in sixty—in [19]69—in [19]68 and gets re-elected by a smaller margin. I think 30,000 or so over Marion Crank, the kind of—the Faubus—the last remnant of the old machine—Democratic machine politics. Wins the Democratic nomination over Ted Boswell and a couple of liberals—and progressi—moderates, Frank Whitbeck and Ted Boswell. [05:00:54] He gets elected [*clears throat*] and—or gets nominated and Rockefeller beats him, so he has something of a mandate. But—so he introduces the tax program in 1969 legislature, and it was nothing like—nothing else has ever been introduced anything like tha—he—he's going to raise the personal income tax. He's going to take the top bracket—the marginal—the top marginal rate from 5 percent up to 12 percent graduated on higher incomes. I've forgotten what the top

bracket would've been, something like a hundred or two hundred thousand dollars a year. People like himself and Witt Stephens and a couple of others would've paid 12 percent marginal rate on their taxes. He would've been probably the biggest person who suffered most under his own program. Raising the corporate income tax, he's going to raise the sales tax a penny. He was going to broaden the base of the sales tax to include professional services of all kinds—doctors and lawyers and accountants and architects and all kind of services. There were going to be a sales tax on all of that. Plus cigarette taxes and alcohol tax—beer taxes and a thing called the real estate—a tax on real-estate transfers and a whole program. All together, it came out to be a 50 percent increase [in general revenues]. In all of those together, would've been a 50 percent increase in state . . .

SL: Revenue.

ED: . . . in the general revenues of the state. In one lick. And now we talk—Beebe gets a little tax increase, and it's what? Maybe 1 or 2 percent, and that's considered huge. [05:02:35] But he's going to be a fi—you can imagine a ta—his tax program today would amount to about three-billion-dollar tax increase. Three billion dollars today, if he tried the same thing. And he was going to [raise], you know—teachers' salaries, he was going to

have, you know, all kinds of improvements in the schools and the colleges. Medicaid and improve health services and all of those kinds of things. And, of course, he got nowhere. In the House of Representatives he had, I think, in the house—for the income tax, he got three votes and maybe two in the senate, something like that. That's what he got out of a hundred members of the House, maybe three votes. And I know Jim Caldwell in the Senate voted for it, and I think Morrell Gathright. He might've gotten three votes in the Senate as well for his income tax. Sales tax, the same thing. Although they were happy to vote for a sales tax for anybody else. But they were not going to vote for a sales tax or any kind of tax for Winthrop Rockefeller. So all of that went down to a massive defeat in the sixty—[19]69 legislature. And then he called them back a year later. [05:03:46] He called the legislature back into special session and said, "No, I'm serious. I want you to pass these taxes." And they defeated them all again. So that was a remarkable time. And . . .

TM: Excuse me, we need to change tapes real quick.

ED: Okay.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[05:04:02] SL: So he's . . .

ED: I really never got around to the central point you asked me about, and that is what . . .

SL: Were his victories.

ED: . . . what did he—what did Rockefeller achieve? And, I think, basically what he did was, he just destroyed the old machine, and the whole political culture was kind of destroyed in that four years. And the Democratic Party rebuilt itself and came out of that abyss as a fairly progressive party. And it kind of cleared the way for Dale Bumpers and David Pryor and Bill Clinton and Jim Guy Tucker. And I think that was the single achievement. In the state government itself, beyond his failure to enact any reforms legislatively, he was able to achieve a lot administratively. Ended a lot of corruption in state government. In the regulatory agencies. The Insurance Department had become a haven for fly-by-night operators—as securit—the same thing with securities. We had virtually no securities regis—regulation. Insurance Department was just—you know, they just rubber-stamped everybody. Anybody could come to Arkansas and set up a life-insurance company and—with no capital and start selling life policies and then take off after a year and—leaving people high and dry. [05:05:29] So that's—he

came in—he appointed John Norman Harkey, this tough leatherneck [*SL laughs*] from Batesville as the insurance commissioner, and he was—he shut down these companies right and left. Suspended insurance charters—company charters—hundreds of them. And the same thing with securities. He brought in a guy named Don Smith from Emory University, a law professor, as a securities commissioner, and he did the same thing in that era—in that area and transformed the regulation. And . . .

[05:06:07] SL: Blacks.

ED: . . . and, of course, the big thing was—I think the most significant thing was, he made it impossible—not impossible—made it difficult for anybody thereafter to use race as a political weapon, directly. They continued to do it, but more—it had to be done—or at least people sensed that it had to be done more obliquely than it had been done in the past. And that came about—although he had said all along that he was for civil rights and equal justice. Although I think he had—the [19]64 civil rights bill—Civil Rights Act—he had expressed reservations about it and said, "Well, it—we needed to do something, but that act didn't"—that was a kind of common thing in the—even among liberals in the South. Well, yeah, but this does things—you

know, we don't need to do this, but we need to do something. But he hadn't—so he had not supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964. [05:07:11] But in 1968, the big moment came when Martin Luther King was assassinated, and you had all of this turmoil in—and Atlanta, you know, the riots in the streets. You had—in downtown Little Rock—and everybody was fearful things were really getting out of hand. This thing is about to explode. And so he organized this thing. Had met all these bla—African American leaders and ministers to meet him on the Capitol grounds. And he and his wife stood on the Capitol steps and joined hands. It was a great scene that was on the front page of the *Gazette* and other newspapers around the country. This had never been seen before. This was a Southern governor holding hands and—with these black leaders—and singing "We Shall Overcome." And then he said, in his remarks after that, said, "We're—we now know what we have to do. And we have to transform government to end this discrimination and provide real opportunity for African Americans, and that's what we have to do." And he committed himself to doing that. Now he wasn't able to do that much, but he did appoint a lot of blacks to state boards and commissions—some critical boards and commissions, some of which he was not successful doing 'cause the Senate

had to confirm them and would block—he tried to appoint John Walker, the great civil rights lawyer—tried to appoint him to the State Board of Education, and [*SL clears throat*] of course, he was not confirmed by the state Senate. But those gestures made a dramatic difference, I think, in the culture of the state and its politics. And that was if anything—more than anything else, I think, was the transformative element to his four years of—as a governor and his eight years or so as a politician in Arkansas.

[05:09:11] SL: Prison reform?

ED: Prison reform was another one. He came into office—there was a big scandal. There'd been—the prisons were kind of a recurring scandal. If nothing else, just the escapes. People running away from the prisons right and left. And they were using prisoners as [laborers]—you know, all the politicians that have their deer camps, and you'd get—prisoners would go cook for deer camps, and they were on loan to all the, you know, businesses. You know, it was kind of a convict—it was an old convict-lease system—or you didn't lease them, you just got them free. And there was a lot of that kind of stuff. And people lived down—prisons would get—prisoners would make saddles for—there were some leather craftsmen down here serving life

terms. And so you'd have these state senators getting leather saddles [*claps*] made for them at the prisons. You had all that kind of corruption down there. Plus the brutality of it. So he put a prison—he brought in—first, Tom Murton, who was kind of nutty, but a genuine reformer and a courageous guy. And he came in and did a lot of stuff at the prisons. And, of course, he—eventually Rockefeller had to fire him for insubordination after about a year. But—so he transformed the prisons as well. And you had some real prison reform—had a—appointed a study commission and came back to make some recommendations about prison reform. And he got some of that actually passed in the legislature. There were—not like he would've liked—but they finally had to start spending some money on the prisons. You know, before that, the state was very proud that it operated the prisons virtually free. You didn't spend any money down there. They generated money. [05:11:12] And so they finally had to, you know, 'cause most of the guards were trusties—typically the—your murderers were your—were the prison guards and did much of the guard duty at the prisons. And they had life-and-death hold over the other inmates. So it was a brutal, brutal system, and he undid that in his four years as governor. As I said when—you know, he passed the first minimum wage—he

tried very hard to get a constitutional—a new constitution. So we had a constitutional convention, largely by his handiwork, in 1969, [19]70, we had a con—a convention that re—rewrote the con—state constitution. A very progressive constitution. It's too bad it wasn't—it didn't get ratified, but it was defeated in the election of 1970. But it was a great document. It would've been a model constitution for any state. [05:12:14] The—there were some other reforms that he did administratively. The—of course another one that he—was the death penalty. He was opposed to the death penalty. Announced that he was against the death penalty. When he ran for governor the first time [in 1964], he said, "I'm against the death penalty. I'm not going to execute anybody." It wasn't a big issue in those days, but he got elected anyway [in 1966]. And, of course, his last act as governor—shortly after his defeat in 1970, and before he left office, he commuted the sentences of those—I've forgotten—I think maybe thirteen or so, or fifteen inmates on death row, and he commuted all their sentences. And had a very eloquent statement that's been cited many times since then that, "Who am I, as a mere mortal, to say who shall live and who shall die?" And he said that he couldn't do it, "I can't do that." Said, "It's—God will make—give those punishments." So, anyway—so that—

he did that, and he was hoping that was going to be his legacy that there would never be another execution. And that he would—and he expressed the hope that other governors around the state—around the country would follow suit, and the death penalty would be ended forever. It didn't work out that way, but that was kind of his hope that that would be his lasting legacy—that he'd get other governors around the state [ED edit: nation] to do that. It'd be the end of the death penalty. [05:13:52] But any rate—but he—I think he left office feeling great failure and contracted cancer, and I have a suspicion that that's—it was the Great Depression of suffering that defeat and which he thought was a repudiation by the voters. He was elected—he was defeated so massively, two to one. And after spending a vast fortune. He spent probably ten million dollars on that campaign in [19]71—in 1970. And Dale Bumpers spent virtually nothing, and still beat him two-to-one. And that was a—he considered it, I think, a personal repudiation by the people of Arkansas, and I think he was heartbroken by that. And never recovered. And I think, you know, that's probably where the genesis of the cancer that killed him—and I think three years after he left office he was dead.

[05:14:49] SL: He just didn't have the spirit to fight it.

ED: Yeah, and he was—he was just depressed and became a recluse. And hardly went out in public after that. He was a very reclusive man after that. So I think that's probably what killed him, the election. Even though the [19]70 race was the least bitter of them all. [05:15:14] You know, Dale Bumpers never criticized him. In fact, Bumpers later acknowledged and Faub—and Rockefeller knew that Bumpers had been a supporter of his—that Bumpers had voted for him in all of his previous races. Or at least two of them. I'm not sure if—whether he voted for Crank or Bumpers [ED edit: Rockefeller] in [19]68, but I—he voted for Rockefeller against Faubus and for—and against Jim Johnson in [19]66 and [Bumpers] didn't criticize him in the campaign. And immediately afterward just co-opted the whole Rockefeller program and passed it in the [19]71. And that had to be disturbing to Rockefeller to see . . .

SL: All his stuff.

ED: . . . all of his stuff. I mean, there was nothing—there was not—these were not fresh ideas with Rockefeller. They were part of the agenda—things that needed to be done, and progressives in Arkansas recognized that they needed to be done. But he took those things and tried to pass them. And then—including reorganization of state government—and Dale Bumpers came

along and did all of that—raising income tax and he got twenty-seven votes [in the Senate] when—for the income tax. It didn't graduate as high as Rockefeller wanted to, but took it [the top marginal rate] up to 7 percent. But he passed it with twenty-seven vote—three-fourth's vote in both houses, and that had to be dismaying to Rockefeller to see, you know—"I offered these things. What was wrong when I offered them"—and this guy passes them. But maybe he got some feeling of reward seeing that recognition—that he got—Dale Bumpers could not have gotten elected and would've probably could not have passed any of these things had it not been for Rockefeller. And Dale Bumpers later acknowledged that in interviews later—he freely acknowledged that—his debt to Rockefeller for getting elected and for the—enabling him to pass these—all these progressive reforms. [05:17:13] So that now Dale Bumpers is recognized by historians as the most effective governor in Arkansas history because he passed all of these things. And a lot of it was due to Dale Bumpers's particular talent, but a lot of it had to do with the groundwork that had been laid, and by Winthrop Rockefeller.

SL: The bell had tolled.

ED: It had, yeah.

SL: And that's—you do wish that Winthrop had—could—could've

seen some of the silver lining in that . . .

ED: Yeah—you—and perhaps he did. I don't know. Who knows?

[*Coughs*] You know, his son might've known about that. But I don't know. [05:17:56] One thing we need to talk a little bit about was—we talked a little bit about Rockefeller's—his lack of political skills . . .

SL: Savvy . . .

ED: . . . and talent. Might want to talk a little bit about that—plus he had this other handicap, and that was, not only was he inarticulate, but he was a heavy drinker. And a lot of people have been heavy drinkers in Arkansas in the past. Other, you know, previous governors and politicians around the country. But we—it's not something that people wrote about. Didn't—it was not something we covered. In fact, personal lives—whether it was John F. Kennedy's liaisons with the women in the White House. Nobody wrote about them even though there were—might've been nearly common knowledge in the press corps and elsewhere. Nobody wrote about those things. We didn't write about them in Arkansas either. And that kind of changed under Rockefeller—but almost by—he almost forced it to change where it became inevitable that you had to write about it. [05:19:02] And, I guess, the turning point came in [19]68. And I was a

little part of that. He—that's one of those two special sessions he had in the summer of sixty—1968, where he passed the minimum-wage law and some prison reform and set up the mechanics of a constitutional convention. But one of those sessions—you know, he called the special session, and it would be for say, ten o'clock in the morning. And all of the legislators would assemble, and then they'd go into a joint session immediately in the House chamber. And the governor would make his address where he would kind of lay out his program and his arguments for passing these things and why there was an emergency to do them. And Rockefeller was always ill at ease. And he always had—you know, he needed a drink before he got up and made a speech. And at least a drink. So he addressed the joint session, and he stumbled through things as he always did. But afterward as one of the drills was, as a reporter, you went around and asked people wha—you know, to respond to the governor's speech. "What do you think of his speech, and can you vote for these things?" And so forth.

[05:20:18] So I went up to Clarence Bell from—Senator Clarence Bell of Parkin. He was one of the powerhouses in the Senate. He was chair of the Education Committee and a powerful man in the Senate. And an old school superintendent

at Parkin, Arkansas. And so I went up to him and asked him what he—about the governor's speech. And his remark was, "I think he had two or three drinks too many before he came here this morning." And, of course, I was writing in my notepad. I was—I had interviewed probably twenty members of the legislature. And Jerol Garrison was over on the other side, interviewing him. [05:20:69] So I went up to the governor's office then and, you know, "What am I going to do with this? And so I go up to the governor's office and go in. And Bill Conley, who is the governor's press secretary, is—sweet man—wonderful fellow. And he's coming out of the governor's office. And I said, "Bill I need to talk to the governor." And he said, "Well, he's just—he's left for the mountain. He's gone back up the mountain." And he just had—through this—I think a few minutes before, he'd had all the—Ernie Valachovic and everybody in his office, and he'd made that remark, "Those—I'll be glad when those bastards go home." And so any rate—so I had this quote, and I said to Conley, "Well, I need to talk to him." "Well, he's gone up the mountain." I said, "Well, I need to ask him about some stuff." He said, "What?" I said, "Well, Clarence Bell, this morning, said the governor had had two or three drinks too many." And he said—and I didn't—I had my

notepad in my hip pocket [reaches back to hip pocket]. You know, we had these little, narrow notepads that will fit in your [pocket]—they made them for reporters so you could stick them in your hip pocket.

SL: Yeah.

ED: And so I was holding the door open, and so he said, "I swe—I was with the governor this morning, and he had one drink. That's all he had. He had one drink." [Points with single finger] And so—and then we left, and so you know, I went on downstairs, pulled out my notepad and wrote down . . .

SL: "He had one drink."

ED: . . . Conley's quote: "He had one drink." [05:22:29] So the next morning—Conley's telling this story later—Conley's asleep the next morning, and the phone rings, and it's—I think it was Tom Eisele, who was the governor's executive secretary. It might've been Marion Burton—one of the two of them said, "Conley, you need to write a letter of resignation and be at the—and get to the Governor's Mansion, just right away." And Conley says, "Resignation? Why?" And he said, "Have you read—have you seen the *Gazette* this morning?" And Conley said, "No." And he said, "Go get the *Gazette* and read the front page and write a letter of resignation and be at the mansion at nine

o'clock." Ten o'clock or whatever. So Conley goes out in his robe, picks up the *Gazette* out there on the sidewalk and goes in and unfolds it and there—you know, Rockefeller's speech leadin' the paper, what—Rockefeller urges these reforms and all these—and down at the bottom of the page there's this three-column story, and it's by Ernest Dumas, and it's—the head says, "W. R. Had"—quote—"Two or Three Drinks Too Many"—close quote, Bell says—aide says he had only one." So—and that's the story, Conley saying he had only one drink. And so Conley's just sick, and so he writes his letter of resignation and goes out to the Governor's Mansion, and they're all gathered there. John Ward, his [Rockefeller] communications director, and probably Bob Faulkner and Eisele, and, you know, it was just all like a family gatherin' for their funeral. And they're all gathered there [coughs] in the livin' room. [05:24:27] W. R.—Rockefeller is still upstairs asleep. He liked to sleep till about noon. He stayed awake—he always stayed awake until midnight or two or three o'clock in the morning and then sleep way up in the day. That was kind of his schedule. So they waited there, waited there. Finally somebody said, "Well, Rockefeller, he has arisen." So we—they all go into the governor's—in the bedroom, and there's Rockefeller sittin' on the edge of the bed. This is according to, I

think, Conley's account [*coughs*]*—whatever. But I may have embellished it over the years. But he says—the governor's there kind of rubbing his eyes [rubs eyes], and he's in pajamas. And Eisele or John Ward—one of them goes over and hands him the Gazette—hands him Conley's resignation letter. And Rockefeller reads it, "Why is Conley resigning?" And they said, "Well"—they hand him the Gazette and this paper down—at the bottom. And he says—and he reads—he's a little dyslexic, but he kind of stumbles and he reads—finally gets it and then kind of bursts out laughing [*laughs and coughs*] and says, "I'm not going to fire Conley for this." He said, "Hell, he was with me, and he knows I had five drinks [*laughter*] if I had something like that." I don't remember what the quote was, but he said something like that. "I'm not going to fire Conley." And he just threw the letter down and forgot all about it. [*Laughs*] And, of course, he survived. He got elected after that.*

SL: Yeah.

[05:25:58] ED: And I think that was the same summer when the chairman—he had been fighting with the Game and Fish Commission. And nasty fight with the Game and Fish Commission and—which is an independent agency. And the chairman dies. Has a heart attack or something and dies all of a

sudden that summer. And when they would talk to Rockefeller about it, [*laughs*]*—*he said, "Looks like God's on my side."

Something like that—and that.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

ED: So, anyway, there was a lot of comment about that. People said, "How can he say something that cruel?" But, anyway, he apologized for it later—but—so you had all of that going on. He'd kind of stuck his foot—you'd had the Martin Luther King assassination, and he's been on the Capitol steps doing that. So everybody's—this guy is—there's no way this guy's going to get elected. He's identified himself with the civil rights movement and sang "We Shall Overcome," and the drinking thing, and all of these other things. He was dead in the water. But he survived all of that and was elected, and it was not really terribly close. I mean, he was closer than it had been. But he gets re-elected in spite of all of that. And in spite of the fact—the subtle message that he's going to raise taxes if he gets elected. So that was a quite a remarkable election for that race. You know, this liberal Republican getting elected against all these kind of odds.

[05:27:18] SL: What did the Arkansas Industrial Commission—I mean, weren't there a lot of manufacturing—small manufacturing plants hitting the state . . .

ED: There were a lot.

SL: . . . through all of this time and . . .

ED: In the [19]50s and [19]60s, you had a lot of those. And a lot of them, of course, they were not high-tech companies . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . you know, shoe factories and apparel factories. People ain't going to—all across eastern Arkansas and from Star City and Dermott and all the way up—you had—east Arkansas—little shirt factories and apparel factories. And there were a lot of them. And they provided a lot of employment. I mean, there was full employment in all of these little towns, and it was—you know, a lot of, you know, both women and men—these households in places like Star City—the women had work as well. So it was—it really raised the—again, the salaries—the wages were very low in all of these places, but they were wages. And which they hadn't—people hadn't had. So it raised the prosperity and the living standards of people in all these little small towns across the state. So it had been quite a significant growth in manufacturing, processing jobs. [05:28:41] And some food processing plants. The chicken industry had began to flourish. The Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's and all the others, there was a lot of food processing . . .

SL: Trucking.

ED: . . . yeah.

SL: So—but don't you think that there was just a general uplifting of prosperity across the state that maybe it didn't relate directly to Rockefeller, but somehow or another, I just get this sense that there was a relief from the end of the old regime and all the scandals that were hitting the front pages at the end of the Faubus administrations . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . and there were actually jobs out there where there hadn't been jobs before, and . . .

ED: Yeah, and I think he probably got a little credit for that. I think Faubus had given him credit and used to brag about his great wisdom in putting Rockefeller on the [AIDC]—or persuading him to do it. So he took credit. Rockefeller—Faubus took credit for that. But—after 1964 or [19]62, he no longer gave Rockefeller any credit . . .

[05:29:46] SL: Right.

ED: . . . but before that he had. And people—and that's how people identified him—as the guy who created all these indu—brought all these industries and jobs. So that—I mean, that inured to his benefit, I think, politically. But—and part of it, I think, was just

maybe some kind of grudging admiration for the man for standing on principles—and you saw some of that in later politicians, like Dale Bumpers who was much more liberal than the people of Arkansas, but they kind of tended to give him credit for standing up for what he believed and some of them did—or a lot of people [*laughs*] didn't but—who won't vote for anybody for—after they have any notions on issues that are different from theirs. But he—I think he benefited from that. And just in the sense—also—and maybe he was kind of the anti-politician. He was so terrible on the stump that people, I think, an element of that—they liked him for that. He's not [*SL laughs*] this slick poli—he was clearly not a slick politician. He was not a clever, slick politician. He wasn't going to—you know, he didn't tell lies. They trusted what he said was the truth, and it nearly always was to the best of his ability to express the truth. If he knew the truth. He was frank about those things. Frank about the death penalty and those kind of things. So, you know, his ideas were not in sync with the people of Arkansas, but they trusted him. And, of course—and the other thing was, obviously he had the money to sell himself to the people of Arkansas and the benefits of his administration.

[05:31:38] SL: So let's get this real—very close to—well, it's the end

of the [19]60s. What's going on with the *Gazette*?

ED: Well, the *Gazette* is prospering through the [1960s]—it's regained the advantage in the news—to the extent there was a newspaper war. It has the clear advantage and not only—it— it's—because of some admiration for—it's the tradition of the *Gazette*—but also the dynamics of the market. Evening papers were dying every place. In urban areas, it was hard to get the paper delivered out into the—in the late afternoons with the traffic and everything. It was getting harder and later to get the paper delivered and people's lifestyles were just [changing]—you had television and so forth. In the evenings, people didn't come home and read the paper like they had in the—in maybe the [19]30s and [19]40s and [19]50s. That was not—they came home and wanted to do something else. [05:32:43] So then the morning—the afternoon paper became more and more a dinosaur across the country, and the *Democrat* suffered that as well. And the advertising revenues continued to die in their—the classified advertising—they just shrank until they just had almost no classified advertising. That's the real source of income for newspapers. Classifieds, that's what's keepin' the *Arkansas Democrat* alive today is the foreclosure ads, I think. [SL laughs]

If not for foreclosure ads, they would be in real trouble at the

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. But the—so everything was working against the *Democrat* and in the *Gazette's* favor. And, you know, we had, you know—we had the bigger staff—the superior staff and the reputation and everything else. And so things were going our way. [Coughs] And we continued to expand, and of course, I was—and—I was covering the Capitol for the—you know, I went out—in [19]65, Roy Reed left the *Gazette* and went to the *New York Times*, and so Shelton sent me out to the Capitol full time. I had been coverin' the Supreme Court on a regular basis for a couple of years, but that's kind of one day a week. [05:34:14] On Mondays they hand down all their opinions, and I had been doing that and covering the legislature. [Coughs] In [19]65, I covered the legislature. And to some extent in [19]63, but in [19]65, I went and covered the legislature full time, and then later that year, I went to the Supreme Court full time after Roy went to the *New York Times*. So it was—Ernie Valachovic and I were covering the Capitol. So I began to cover state government on a regular basis. All the ins and outs, all the state agencies, fiscal agencies and Highway Department and all—in those days the—all the Capitol was there. All the state government was there on the Capitol grounds. The Highway Department was there. And now it's scattered all

over—you know, the Highway Department's out on the Benton highway. And lots of it's downtown in office buildings and scattered all over. But at that time it was easy to cover the Capitol. It was all there on the mall around the Capitol and the surrounding buildings—those office buildings around—so it was easy to cover state government then.

[05:35:20] SL: While you were covering the Capitol, tell me about how the—how effective the lobbyists were in the [19]60s and [19]70s. I mean, when did the ethics bill pass that kind of started—instead of seeing Witt Stephens or someone that had their own business in there lobbying for themselves. When did the—you know, there was all this—there's been this kind of—and there remains a controversy about the role of lobbyists in government. And I know that there was a change that happened on Capitol—in the Capitol building with the ethics . . .

ED: To some extent.

SL: . . . legislation.

[05:36:11] ED: To some extent. But lobbyists has always—going back to the early days of statehood, particularly in the—probably in the—after the, you know, the Industrial Revolution. After the—particularly after the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the growth of the railroads and the timber industry, and then

along—and then early part of the twentieth century, the growth of utilities, electric power company—the Arkansas—what became Arkansas Power & Light Company began to be so powerful. And there were—they pretty much controlled the legislature. You go back and look in the early part of the twentieth century when Governor [George] Donaghey came to power and tried to do something to break the hold of the lobbyists of railroads and the utilities. And the timber industries on the legislature. They pretty much held sway, and that was—the railroad lobbyists were legendary. They pretty much had their way. They controlled the legislature. And that continued to be the case. And so that—lobbyists were still, I think, a powerful force all the way through the, you know, through the Depression.

[05:37:29] And the Middle South Utilities and Arkansas Power & Light Company was probably that—durin' that era, from the [19]20s, from the teens through the [19]50s probably, Arkansas Power & Light Company was the dominant force in the legislature. It got everything it wanted. Anything that AP&L opposed to—basically, before the—early on it was [pauses]—I'm thinking—the Couches. And then Hamilton—C. Hamilton Moses—and they would—John McClellan, the senior US senator—his law partner would be the head of the Arkansas Power & Light

Company. I mean, he—that was the case. And before that, Joe T. Robinson was the senator, and his law partner was the head of AP&L. So—and the same thing at the legislature. It was a—they were a powerful force. And then in the late [19]40s, Witt Stephens came along in the gas industry, and he became a powerful guy. So his lobbyists—I mean, he had some lobbyists, but not the usual, kind of paid, hired lobbyists that we have now. [05:38:45] But Witt did a lot of it personally, just by telephone calls. You know, Witt would call you up and tell you what he wanted. And he had some other—people like Jack Gardner and some others—friends of his that would be out there and would tell the guys what Witt wanted done. But it was in the—probably the [19]80s you really began to [see some concern about ethics]—the [19]70s and [19]80s. Doug Brandon, as a state representative and as a state senator, tried to—and I think got some—some ethics legislation passed. Mod—very modest ethics laws passed, and then in the [19]80s, Bill Clinton tried to do more. And it's been kind of a continuing battle ever since to try to strengthen those lobbyist and disclosure laws and ethics laws. To get rid of conflict of interests but not much luck. I mean, still—we're still—have a long ways to go to get—to clean up that. It's—to curtail just a little bit the power of lobbyists at the



Capitol. Nothing else, just to make them—you know, I've always thought they ought to have a law just to—a stern law that says if you get elected to a public office, whether it's the legislature or governor or a county judge, you cannot accept a gift of any denomination, any size, of any character—you just can't do it unless it's from a relative—Christmas and birthday gifts from your relatives—or wedding anniversary. But other than that you shouldn't—even a cup of coffee—you can't—if you put a dollar denomination on it, say, well, a value of a dollar or two dollars, you know, you just got to go say, "No, nothing." And I don't see anything wrong with that. But they'll—I'd like to see a initiated act to put that on the ballot. If I had the money, I'd try to do that—to put it—just to seal it shut and say, "No." And I think it'd be a benefit to legislators. They wouldn't have to—they'd just have to say, "No, you can't buy my lunch. You can't buy me a cup of coffee. You can't do it. I'd like—I'd love it—I love you, but you can't do it. I'll go to jail, or I'll get—I get my hand slapped or I get rebuked or censured by the Ethics Commission if I do that." So—and I think it would just clear the way, and you'd be through with all of that. But I don't see anything else short of that that would do the job. But they—some efforts back in the late [19]80s. Bill Clinton tried to get a strong ethics law

passed. I think in about—about [19]89 or something, and he got defeated on it. And . . .

[05:41:28] SL: Well, so do you wanna run through—do you wanna talk about Dale Bumpers?

ED: Well, yeah. Bumpers, that was an easy election in 1970. And something of a shock, I guess. I always—I—in the [19]70 election, there were eight people running, and I was convinced at the outset that Dale Bumpers didn't have a chance 'cause he didn't have any name recognition. Nobody knew who he was. He was obviously a very polished guy and spoke very well and had a winning smile. And—but I didn't think he would get elected. And—but I remember kind of the telling point was a week—a couple of weeks before the election, my mother, I said, "Who do you think you're going to vote for?" And I thought she'd say Joe Purcell, and she said, "I think this Bumpers guy. I watched him on television, and I like him." And, you know, he wasn't saying anything, he was just saying, "If I'm [elected]—I'll bring us together. We're tired of this divisiveness, and I'll bring us together as a state." And that's about all. That was his message that he'd kind of bring us together. And—but people liked it. You know, he had a—and he was kind of amazing.

[05:42:51] I, you know, I covered him in that campaign after

he got into the general election. In the primary, I covered Faubus—in the primaries. And he told me, Faubus told me once, he said, "There's one guy." And this—or he may—he was making a speech someplace, and he said, "There was one guy in this race that voted for Rockefeller. He's a big—everybody knows he's a big Rockefeller supporter, and now he's over here running in the Democratic primary. Shouldn't be allowed to run in the Democratic primary." And I went over to him, I said afterward, "Who are you talkin' about?" And he said, "I'm not going to say." Said, "If I did, it would just give him—he's not a factor in this race, and I don't want to make him a factor in this race." And so it was obvious he was talkin' about Bumpers. And then, of course, Bumpers gets in the runoff with him, and then he's, 'course, he tries to label him as a—what do you call him? A—not a fire-breathing liberal, but, anyway, some . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . characterization of him as a leftist. But it was too late.

SL: Probably a card-burning liberal back then.

[05:44:02] ED: It was [*SL laughs*—I've forgotten what the term was, but liberal was part of it. But it was too late. He couldn't—it was too late in that two-week period to try to change peoples' attitudes about him. This was a fresh face, and people liked



Bumpers. You know, he'd just—he'd walk into a studio. I mean, he'd—at the end of a the day, he'd have to tape something. He was going to do a fifteen-minute talk and go into the Channel 7 or something and go into the little place there and set up there. And he'd sit on a stool and get a yellow legal pad down—and while they were gettin' their cameras ready and everything, he'd write down—I'd stand over and watch. He'd write down—you know, there may be eight words down a page and then they'd say—they'd point at him [points straight ahead], "Go." And he'd start talking. He was just a flawless—and ending up exactly fifteen minutes or whatever, and he'd cover all the points. And he was very good at that, and he had this great smile. He was a nice looking man, and he had great voice, wonderful voice. And he was just convincing people. Just like people were convinced that Rockefeller was honest, they were convinced that Dale Bumpers was. And so—and he—nothing worked against him. The parting of the Red Sea—it looked like that might get him into trouble, but that didn't work either. [05:45:22] You know, his—Robert Shaw of the AP went over [to Charleston, Bumper's hometown] and did a story about him. After he'd—after the first primary, and it said that—interviewed people in charge, "Who is this guy?" Had a hardware store over there, and he'd ran his

little one-man law practice in his little—out of his hardware store. And so he had this—some person said they were in his Sunday school class. Said, "He's a great Sunday school teacher." And this person said, "What he would do—like he would come to class, and he would dispute the—and he would read this Bible verse and say, 'Well, you know—God—you don't really believe God really actually parted the Red Sea—rolled back the Red Sea? Couldn't that just be symbolism for something?'" And so he threw that out, so Ro—Faubus jumped on that and said this man is not belie—he does not believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible. He do—he says God did not part the Red Sea. [05:46:21] So Bumpers kind of panicked, and he called, I think, his minister here at Little Rock—the guy who was later the bishop. Bishop Hicks, I think, Bishop Hicks. And called Bishop Hicks and see what he should do about this. And so Hicks answered the phone and said, "This is Dale Bumpers." And Hicks said, "I thought you'd never call." [*Laughter*] And so he counseled him on it, and so it—so—but it—that blew past as everything did for Dale Bumpers. Everything—every . . .

SL: Well . . .

ED: . . . every flap just went on by.

SL: . . . but isn't there—I mean, you can't really—it's just not dumb

luck that he did what he did. I mean . . .

ED: No.

SL: . . . surely there's something about his campaign that . . .

ED: Well, it . . .

SL: . . . was effective that—I mean, yes, he was a great orator. And he could do that. He could make a room listen, and he was—and you felt like you were hearing somebody that was very, very sharp and had some ideals and all that. [05:47:24] But what was it about his campaign that . . .

ED: Well, the only . . .

SL: . . . kept him alive?

ED: . . . thing about his campaign. You know, he didn't have much of a campaign organization—he di—knew very many—few people around Arkansas—a few lawyers and the two previous years, he started to run in [19]68 and backed out at the last minute and allowed Ted Boswell to—who was the liberal candidate in that race. So he—in the interim he kind of—Martin Borchert, who was the mayor of Little Rock—on the city director—and he'd come down to—somebody told him to go see Martin Borchert—and Borchert had, I don't know whether the Lions Club or Kiwanis or something. And so he said, "No, you don't need to run this year, but you need to spend the next two years gettin'

so—gettin' known." And so he goes out and makes a lot of little speeches around the state, and Martin Borchert helped him set up those things. And he meets a lot more people and he—so he's got a little bit—by [19]70, he has a little bit of an organization. He has a few friends that—in key counties like Mississippi County and other places that help him. But he doesn't really have much of an organization. And—but the one thing that he does have is the—this quality that he had in spades, which Bill Clinton was the master at. And that is to remember everybody. And he was great at meeting people. He could—he had no trouble, unlike Rockefeller, meeting people and greeting them and talking to them and looking them in the eye. And he'd go through a Walmart like a tornado. [05:48:59] He'd meet everybody in a Walmart line. He'd go through all the lines and meet every—up and down the aisles and meet everybody and made a friend of everybody. And remember their names. And I remember traveling once, and he would be—we were over at Russellville, and he was going with—some supermarket or something, and he was shaking hands. And some woman said—comes up to him, and he reaches out to shake her hand, and he said, "Mrs. Hunkapiller, what are you doing out—I met last week over at Conway?" And you could see her face just lit up, you

know, he remembered meeting her. He remembered her name, he remembered her face, and everything. And so he and Bill Clinton were the two that had—and David Pryor is good at that as well. But David—but—but—and Bill Clinton is the best I've ever known or heard of. But Dale Bumpers was awfully good at it as well. And he remem—somehow. I don't know what the knack is—what the trick is. But whether there's some kind of little thing that they've developed that they can do that. [*SL laughs*] But I couldn't do it. I can't remember my relative's name or my best friends' names.

SL: Right. Me either.

[05:50:04] ED: I have to struggle. But—so he has that knack. That was a skill, and it paid some dividends for him. But still the main thing was that little television. If he could go on television, and everybody was watching television—and those little commercials which were very simple things, there was nothing magic about it. Just Dale Bumpers lookin' you in the eye and talking for a minute. And he was very persuasive, and he was better at it than anybody else had ever been in Arkansas, at least since the advent of television. Probably Sid McMath could've done the same thing, but the tele—he was the first good campaigner for—who could use television. He was cool on

television. And that was the first person we'd seen that could do that in Arkansas. That was so—he very effectively used television. And radio as well. He had this great radio voice—it was a good voice. And then after that—that plus, you know, he was effective. He got things done as governor, and he could take unpopular stands as governor and in Congress and come back and explain it to people. And they'd say, "Well, okay, yeah, I understand that."

[05:51:19] SL: The . . .

ED: Like the prayer in the schools, you know, everybody—maybe 90 percent in the polls people thought that they ought to—government prayer in the schools would be a good thing. You know, any prayer was a good thing. Wherever you prayed, it had to be good. And he voted against the amendment that would've allowed mandatory classroom prayer. And he came home, and Republicans in [19]86 tried to make an issue of it, and he demolished it. I guess Asa Hutchinson [Republican Senate candidate in 1986] tried to do that, and, immediately, he kind of demolished that argument. They never said anything about it ever again. So he had that ability to come home and tell people, and I think there was some—some admiration for somebody that—well, you know, I'm—I don't like—I don't agree

with a lot of what he says. But, you know, he comes—he votes like he—his conscience, and he's not tryin' to please everybody, and he's not trying to go by the polls—and I—you know, at least we like to think there's that part. I'm not sure that's right, but that's what we made of it anyway—that that's how it worked. That he was able to make people believe that he trustworthy and principled, even if they didn't agree with him. And they would vote for him on that basis. I'm not sure what percentage of the population actually votes for people on that basis rather than what they—how much he agrees with them, but anyway, in his case it was very effective.

[05:52:49] SL: So he—next up is Fulbright.

ED: Fulbright in . . .

SL: . . . and Bumpers.

ED: . . . in [19]74, and Fulbright, of course, had helped him in his [19]70 campaign. Not so much openly, but people on his staff had helped him in—particularly in the general election. They hadn't done much against Faubus except kind of behind the scenes, you know. Faubus by that time was very—in a weakened condition in 1970 when he made his comeback. His machine had been—had fallen apart, and so his victory over Faubus was not—was easily foreseen after the first—after he got

in the runoff. Every—anybody who was in a runoff was probably going to beat Faubus in [19]70 and [19]74 and whenever. He couldn't recapture the magic or his organization. But Fulbright had helped him, and so that was a wrenching decision for Bumpers, but I guess he persuaded himself that Bill Fulbright's going to be defeated. Jim Johnson was thinking about running against him. Sid McMath was thinking about running for the Senate, and I think the polls showed that Fulbright was in . . .

SL: Vulnerable.

ED: . . . in—very vulnerable, was probably going to be defeated.

And Fulbright was not a great campaigner himself. He was eloquent, but, you know, he wanted to go out and deliver a lecture every place. [05:54:29] So Bumpers decided, "If somebody's going to beat him, it might as well be me." Besides, Bumpers hated the governor's office, unlike Bill Clinton or David Pryor. He didn't like that job. I mean, it was—he couldn't delegate. I mean, he had been—he'd run his own law practice in a little hardware—he wanted to run the whole state government and every decision—everything anybody did out across government. He worried about it. He worried that all these—there were all these crooks in government. That he was going to be humiliated, his kids were going to—there was going to be

scandals, and his kids were going to read about scandals. And he was—everything like that just drove him crazy. And I gathered Betty would try to counsel him—and, "You know, don't worry about these things." But he couldn't. He worried about everything. So he was desperate to get out of that office, and he would've done anything. He wanted to maintain a political career, but he was desperate to get out of that office. 'Cause he just thought every—his own staff, people out in government, he was afraid somebody was going do somethin' wrong and some—and occasionally they did—and just slightly [*SL laughs*] unethical, and it reflected on him. And he just couldn't stand it. He—apparently he was worried about people—newspaper stories—people attack him. Newspaper attack—people attack him and his opponents attack him. Just bothered him terribly. He couldn't get over it. [05:56:00] I remember when he ran for governor in nineteen—ran for re-election in [19]72. He had this guy named Mack Harbour, who was a hospital administrator up at Paragould—ran against him. Very slick guy—looked like a roller derby promoter. He wore these kind of zoot suits [*moves hands toward lapels of suit*] with ribbons [*ED edit: roping*] [*SL laughs*] around down his lapels and fancy ties and wide trouser bottoms [*laughs*] and so forth. And he was—had nice hair—he

was a nice looking man. And he was pretty sharp. And he'd made these allega—he called a press conference and said, "Dale Bumpers is takin' bribes from the horse—the dog-racing gamblers in New York. Why, he flew to Buffalo, New York, and on the ramp out there, somebody gave him a brown paper sack full of bills or something." And [*laughs*] they were makin' the—they'd make the papers, these wild allegations, and he was just distraught about it. And he checked—and he had flown to Buffalo, New York. He had flown his daughter up there for a—she had a spinal problem, and he was going up there to get treatment at Boston. And he'd flown through Buffalo or something. So he had to admit well, yes, he had gone in through Buffalo or something. So it—he'd get home, and Betty would say, "Well, Dale, forget about it. That's just craziness. Nobody's going to believe that stuff." But he couldn't sleep at night. So that's—I think that was the main reason he ran against Fulbright. [05:57:36] And he told himself that Fulbright was going to be defeated anyway. Which he probably would've been. He might well have been. But not—he wouldn't've been beaten like Rocke—like Bumpers beat him. But he might've been beaten—but I think it was a pra—he just had to get out of that office. He hated it. He couldn't leave it at work. And he

couldn't delegate too much responsibility. And he worried about everything throughout state government.

[05:58:02] SL: It was interesting, you know, Fulbright was so revered by so many . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL : . . . I mean, he was a real shining light.

ED: And it was a wrenching thing for households. I mean, I remember that. All of my—our friends, everybody—for all of us it was a wrenching thing to do. I mean, whole house—some of our—in our neighborhood, our friends—they were split down the middle. The wife would be for Bumpers, and the husband for Fulbright, and they would stick—there'd be on one side of the lawn, there'd be a Bumpers little yard sign, and on the other side, there'd be a Fulbright yard sign. And it was a—it was wrenching. Terrible arguments in households about the value of—the relative values of each man. And why Bumpers would be the better senator and why Fulbright. So, yeah, that was a strange election. It was . . .

[05:58:55] SL: So probably the next powerhouse race was probably McClellan and Pryor.

ED: That was the big one. The McClellan-Pryor race in 1978 [ED edit: 1972]. And, of course, David had run for—against

McClellan in [19]72. That was the—that were—the two big Senate races were the McClellan-Pryor race in [19]72 and then the—it was not a rematch in [19]78, but Pryor ran again. This time against the field. But, you know, the [19]72 race was another—one of the great classic races in Arkansas political history. This young kind of progressive guy backed by, you know, labor and the liberals and kind of a young Turk in the legislature. And kind of a reformer in the US House and takin' on this old seasoned veteran, John McClellan, the great conservative in the US Senate. And it was a great race. And, of course, Pryor almost won that. It was in the first primary. McClellan was in terrible shape. You know, the conventional wisdom was that the—if you got—an incumbent gets in a runoff, he's beaten 'cause that means everybody—the majority is against him, is not going to vote for him, or at least they're persuadable by somebody else. And so—and he [McClellan] got 44 percent, way below [50 percent]. And he looked—and Pryor, I think, got 42 percent. It was something like that. So he—his goose was cooked. And until, I think, maybe the week before the election. [06:00:51] And Witt Stephens gathered together a group down at the bank—at the Union Bank, I guess where it was. And a lot of the old guard—the financiers, the . . .

SL: Kingmakers.

ED: . . . the big planters from eastern Arkansas and the big guys—and they all gathered together. And, McClellan made a little talk to them and said, "Well, boys, it looks like I'm done for. It's been a great run, but it looks like I'm going to be through. So I'm happy just to—at this point to just run out the string. I don't want you boys to spend a lot of more money on a losing effort." And this is the story I got from one of the guys who was there—later. "I don't want you boys to go out and waste your money, and so I'm willin' to just kind of run out the string and take my medicine and bow out. And so I'm happy to do that."

[06:01:55] And so Witt Stephens said, "Well, now, boys you know how much we owe John. He's done all these things for us over the years, and he's our man, and I don't think we can give up this easily. And so I propose that each one of us, we go here, and each one of us make a pledge how much money we'll give or raise to get—to turn this election around in the next ten days." And so each went around, and then Dan Portis of Lepanto would say, "Well, okay, I'll give ten thousand dollars" or something. And it went around the table; there were about a dozen of them. And they all pitched in and twenty-five thousand here, fifty thousand there, whatever. And it got—gets around to

Witt, and Witt said, "Well, I'll take up the balance, whatever it takes. The balance." And, of course, he probably—not a dime but—so anyway they went out then and turned the state upside down in the next week and pulled that election out. And—but it was a great—in a way, a victory for David Pryor because he handled himself so well and graciously the night of the defeat. And so Witt Stephens and others said, "Next time he runs, we're going to be for him." When he ran for governor, they were for him, that organization and—to Orval Faubus's great dismay in [19]74. He thought he was going to come back and here—at least that part of the old machine again, and they were gone. And Witt said, "No, we're supporting David Pryor." So . . .

[06:03:39] SL: Well I'd also heard there were two things about that race. First of all, John McClellan really ran hard—that he was really energized and came across . . .

ED: I think he did.

SL: . . . as not the old guy when—I mean, he got up there, and it was hellfire and brimstone . . .

ED: In the debate, it was.

SL: . . . and then I also—and he loved it. He loved doing it, he loved being back out there, and . . .

ED: He did. He was a fighter. And as David said, in his losing—in his

concession speech election night—he's a great fighter. And he fought a great fight, and he deserved to win.

SL: And then . . .

ED: That's right, and he did. He did get energized.

[06:04:20] SL: . . . and then the debate . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . the televised debate and apparently—I wasn't in the state at the time, but apparently David came across as nervous and not . . .

ED: He was a little nervous.

SL: . . . as together. And McClellan just came off . . .

ED: He did.

SL: . . . much better.

ED: I—David didn't do as badly as I think he thought. He did pretty well, but obviously he was a youngster. And—he wa—and probably a little nervous. And maybe a little too wooden. But—and then you came down to the end of the thing and the big argument about labor. And David had gotten some support from labor unions and had gotten quite a few contributions from labor unions. And so Rock—and this was an anti-labor sta—anti-union state, and McClellan was able to use that against him. And, of course, the phrase is always labor bosses, you know . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . you're not—management's never bosses—they're not management bosses or company bosses. But they're labor bosses, and then they're the company executives. But—so McClellan just repea—labor bosses—all this money from labor bosses. The "big labor bosses." Implied, you know, the Teamsters and everybody—the—all the thugs were down here working for David Pryor. [06:05:48] And so David made that re—famous remark that this money. "This is money from the overall pockets and cookie jars of the working people of Arkansas. This is not money from big labor bosses. This is money from the working people. And the overall pockets and the cookie jars, their savings." And, of course, McClellan was able to turn that around, and that was the most coy thing. And he said, "Well, here's five thousand dollars from the Teamsters Union in Washington DC" And he looks and says, "David those are not cookie jar nickels and dimes." And so that was kind of a telling point. He scored on that point, and I don't know whether that had—how much that had to do with the victory. But there was—the sense was, that he won the debate. That he was energized and that he won the debate. And these things—whether he did or not it became—it—that became the fact. He—

in the next few days, after all of these debates and his national debates now—you know, you'll poll things at night, and [*clears throat*] whatever their commentary says, "Well, So-and-so won the debate" or whatever, then that became the—that—that's the received wisdom; that person won the debate. Whether it was Clinton or Bob Dole or whoever. They won the—and within a week it's all settled. Everybody knows So-and-so won the debate, whether they—when they actually watched it—they might've thought the reverse. I find that myself. I say, [*claps*] "Well, that person won the debate," but then the next minute, "No they didn't, the other side" . . .

SL: Right.

ED: . . . "won the debate."

SL: I find that [*unclear word*] . . .

ED: And I say, "Well, I guess I don't know anything" . . .

SL: Yeah, right.

ED: . . . "I thought the other side—I thought the other guy won the debate."

SL: Yeah, I get that, too.

ED: But, nevertheless. But I think . . .

TM: Excuse me, we need to change tapes.

ED: . . . in that case probably McClellan did win the debate.

SL: Change tapes?

TM: Yep. [*Unclear words*]

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[06:07:49] SL: During the McClellan-Pryor race, were you assigned to one—either one of them?

ED: Yes, I was—I covered McClellan for five weeks. In that race, I did.

SL: Well, you got any stories of . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah . . .

SL: . . . bein' on the road with McClellan?

ED: . . . we can tell some stories about McClellan—some personal—you know, it was—are we taping?

TM: Yes we are. We are rolling.

ED: We're already on—we're rolling?

SL: Yes.

TM: Yes.

ED: Okay. [*Coughs*] Well, I—you know, they—that was a big race. I mean, for the *Gazette* that was a big, big race. The biggest race in a number of years in Arkansas—in that [19]72 senate race. And, you know, at the outset, you know, Ted Boswell was in the race as well. This kind of young liberal who'd made a

credible race for governor in 1968 and probably was stolen out of it. He probably made the runoff and would've probably won the runoff like Dale Bumpers did two years later against the establishment candidate—the machine candidate. But I think he was probably stolen out of that race, I think. They converted enough votes to Virginia Johnson to get her in the runoff—barely get her in the runoff ahead of Ted Boswell. So Boswell looked like a strong candidate for the Senate in [19]72 as well. And—but he really made a very poor showing. It was kind of astonishing what a poor showing he made. And, you know, Pryor just won all of the votes you thought that Ted Boswell might get, David wound up getting nearly all of those, and left—I think Boswell got, what maybe 12 or 15 [percent]—maybe less than that. I've forgotten. He got very, very small vote—which I know is disappointing. He—I think he really thought he had a serious chance to be elected. [06:09:42] But, anyway, I was assigned to cover John McClellan. And I think David—Doug Smith probably covered David Pryor. I've forgotten who covered Boswell in the first primaries. So I stayed with him—I think three weeks in the first primary and then the two-week runoff season—with McClellan. [*Clears throat*] And McClellan was very—he hadn't faced a real race since his first [successful] race.

And, you know, he made the race in—what was it, forty—[19]42, I guess, when he was first elected to the Senate. Yeah, it was 1942. And that was really about the last real race that he'd had—that he'd had some tough races before that for Congress.

SL: There's some irony there, too.

ED: Yeah.

SL: Because David's dad was a big McClellan supporter.

ED: Big McClellan supporter. [*Coughs*]

SL: In fact, I think McClellan had kind of wanted to quit in the middle of that race. He ran out of money and . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . he was depressed about it. And I think David's dad said, "No, you got to keep going." And . . .

ED: Yeah.

SL: . . . kept him goin'. But go ahead.

[06:11:01] ED: Well, so he was unaccustomed to that kind of politics [*coughs*] but—and he was getting old. [*Clears throat*] And thought he was entitled to be—to have that seat again. So—and he was very suspicious of the *Gazette*. And he assumed, I think, that the *Gazette* would be very hostile, not only editorially but in its coverage that—he had convinced himself of that. It was going to be—he was going to have a tough race—the statewide

paper would be not only editorially critical—which I don't think made a great deal of difference. But he didn't want the other side [to be negative]. [*Coughs*] So when I was assigned to cover him [*SL clears throat*—he was—I couldn't travel with him. So I had to—I had a little Karmann Ghia—little Volkswagen sedan—Karmann Ghia. So I had to chase around all over the state, and he'd be flying—and from one place to the other, and I would have to chase him in my little Karmann Ghia. And—so it was a—you know, and I just drove—I was crazy. I just, you know, I'd—I would—I was rocketing along these little old country roads that—you know, seventy-five, eighty miles an hour around these curves tryin' to get to the next place by the time he got on the plane and got there. So I was havin' to cover him like that. [*Clears throat*] So I, you know—not in the car with him or in the plane with him or anything else. I was just—and he would barely—he was barely civil to me. He [*unclear words*] talkin' to me. [06:12:44] But he came around, and as we always did before these campaigns, whether I was coverin' Faubus or McClellan or whoever, Bill Shelton [city editor of the *Gazette*] would, you know, tell me before then—he'd either write a long note about it or else he'd tell me. "Look, we're going to give this guy fair coverage. I want you to be as accurate as you possibly

can be. If he's, you know—there's always this crowdsmanship who—how many people at his rallies. And we're going to be completely fair." And so I—and I strove to be that way.

[06:13:18] And remarkably at the end of that campaign—much after that campaign was over, months, months later, he wrote a letter to Hugh Patterson of the *Gazette*. I wish I had that letter, which Hugh Patterson came down and tossed on my desk later. It was a personal letter to him. And he said, "I entered this campaign thinking that the *Gazette* was going to be against me, but I found that the *Gazette*'s coverage—it was the only newspaper that covered my campaign accurately and fairly in every way. And I—I've developed a respect for your newspaper that I had not had before—it—because I had not had any dealings—personal dealings with it." And so it was a very laudatory—in his own brusque way—of me and the paper. And he was critical of the *Democrat*, which heavily favored him. You know—and—but their covera—their reporter was kind of snippy with him. But, anyway—and so he thought that they reported him inaccurately from time to time. And—but he said, you know, his coverage in the *Gazette*, he found to be totally accurate and fair in all—in every detail. And so [*clears throat*] we covered him, and it was—and he kind of warmed up after a

week or so. He said, "You're drivin' that old car around every place?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, why don't you fly on the plane with us?" And I said, "Well, okay." [*Laughter*] So I did—I was able to travel with him. [06:14:53] And he kind of warmed up, and I remember we got—we landed some place at—some place in—around Harrison or some place. We land there on the plane, and there's no crowd to greet him. Nobody there to greet him. Not even his local person who's going to squire him around. It was just nobody there. Nobody at the airport. I mean—and so we get there, and we stay on the plane and—he and I do—where Paul Berry or whoever's traveling with him run off to try to find somebody. And they called—there's some—been mix-up. And so it's an hour before somebody arrives to— with a car to drive him around to these—wherever he was going to go there in that county. So we sat there on that plane and talked for an hour, and it was really kind of touching. He asked me did I go to college, and I said—he asked me where I went to college and all of that. And finally he said, "You know, I've just—one of my great regrets in life, and I've never gotten over that. I never got to go to college. And I think I would've been a different man if I had gone to colle"—and he almost cried. He sat there and just—and went on and on feelin' sorry for himself

because he hadn't gone to college and he always—in the Senate and other places, he felt inferior to colleagues because they all had these wonderful educations, and he never had the—you know, he got and went off—I think, maybe the Cumberland Law School or some place and got his law degree. But I didn't—I didn't know any of that. I didn't. But it was kind of touching and he just was—that's the only time he [*unclear word*]*—*he was very personal about himself. [06:16:40] You know, he lived a tragic life. He had a lot—great many tragedies in his life. Deaths in his family and his sons and the war, and of course, his personal bouts with alcoholism—and so he had a—you know, he had a lot of tragedy in his life. And personal illnesses and stuff. So I developed a little affect—some small affection for John McClellan . . .

SL: Sure.

ED: . . . as a result of that. That was the latter part of that campaign. [*Clears throat*] I still think, you know, he was not a very good senator. He was not a very good representative for—you know, he always represented the special interests. And Middle South Utilities and whoever. But he—you know—I—some grudging respect for him. I mean—and he came around in that campaign and supported the Equal Rights Amendment. And was

one of the few conservative—you know, the Southerners who supported the ERA, and he voted to refer it to the states. And the story about that was, I—and I was in his campaign headquarters and there was a [pauses]—Margaret Kolb. She was one of the leaders from the Women's Emergency Committee and one of the great liberal reformers here in Little Rock. And there she was running—helping run his campaign. She was working in his headquarters against David Pryor. [06:18:18] And so I saw her there and she—so I went up to her, and I said, "Margaret, I don't—you may not want to talk about this, but what are you doing here?" And she said, "Well, I tell you what I'm doing here." His daughter is a friend of her—went to her church. She was a member at the Pulaski Heights Baptist Church. And so they were tryin' to get—his daughter was a supporter of the EA—ERA. Like her. So they went to Washington, and she was lobbying, and her—the daughter—I think, it was daughter or daughter-in-law or something—some relationship to McClellan. And they went to McClellan's office, and McClellan asked her, he said, "Well, let me ask you something. If I support this ERA, and if I vote to send it to the states, and I endorse it, will you support me?" And she said, "Yes, I would." And he said, "It's a deal. You're going to

support me when I run for re-election." And she said, "I don't have any choice. I'd support him against anybody, because, you know, he did that, and I think I would owe him." And so she worked her heart out. Although in her heart, I'm sure she was hoping . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . David Pryor won. But I'm sure she hoped in her heart that he won. But she—that was her obligation. He made a commitment to her, and she kept it. So th—she got some—there were some people—women who supported him on that basis. 'Cause he, you know, I don't think that's what won the election for him, but it kind of softened his image with some—with a lot of people that he—when he went for the ERA.

[06:20:07] SL: I had always heard that he had just wanted to die in office . . .

ED: Oh, I think . . .

SL: . . . that he had told several constituencies that he just wanted to live out his life in office.

ED: Yeah, I think he did. And, of course, he got—I think he intended to do that but then he—you know, he announced that he was not going to run for re-election in [19]78. And then he died. And David appointed . . .

SL: Kaneaster.

ED: . . . Kaneaster Hodges [of Newport] to fill out that seat for the rest of his term.

[06:20:45] SL: Well, so you were with him election night or . . .

ED: McClellan? I don't—I was over there election night, I'm sure. I went back. I probably wrote the election story in advance and all the background and then—typically that's what you do on election night. You write all the background, and it's all in type, and then you just write the top part . . .

SL: Result.

ED: . . . of the story as the returns come in. And I—I'm sure I went over to the head—I don't remember. Probably went over the headquarters and checked in—and see what it was like over there after the first edition. And . . .

[06:21:23] SL: So was that campaign [*ED clears throat*] the last you ever got to speak or hear from McClellan personally? [*Clears throat*]

ED: Probably.

SL: Yeah.

ED: No, I was there at his—when he made the announcement that he was not going to run again. And he starts off with that—is it Ecclesiastes or whatever it is that says, "There's a time and

place for all things. A time to mourn, a time to rejoice." So he recites all of that whole thing which is what—you know, we all do when we would give things up. But—so I was there for that. But I don't know that I ever had any contact with him after that. I remember going to his funeral. And [pauses] all those old dignitaries came down from Washington for the funeral. Well, it was in [19]77, I guess. Wasn't it? Yeah.

SL: That sounds right or . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . seventy—yeah, I guess that's right.

ED: [Nineteen] seventy-six or [19]77.

SL: Yeah.

ED: Something like that.

[06:22:28] SL: So David Pryor is out of office. Fish out of water for a couple of years. Don't know . . .

ED: He moved in our neighborhood—he—when he—they . . .

SL: Ridgeway?

ED: I lived on Ridgeway at 484 Ridgeway, and he and Barbara bought a house down on the next block in the curve there—that white frame house. And they lived there about two years, and then he made his race for governor in [19]74. And so in that race, since we were kind of neighbors—I don't think—I didn't

cover—I think I covered Faubus again in that race in [19]74 in that campaign. And I'm pretty sure—I remember traveling with Faubus a lot. And he was kind of depressed. Faubus was not . . .

SL: The same guy.

ED: . . . no, he was not. He—I think he immediately recognized he was not going to win. And he went through the motions in that campaign. And he probably had some polls—that had a—saw a poll that showed he wasn't going to run again. He'd gotten about 36 percent against—in the first primary and in the runoff in 1970. And I think he thought this time with Bumpers gone he'd—he could come back in. He—and he, of course, he came to run against—as "a new man." He was the young peoples' candidate. He was not going to be—he was going to bring a fresh team in this time. It was not going to be the old crowd. Going to be a fresh team. And George Fisher drew a cartoon of him in bell-bottoms [*laughter*] and braided hair and all kinds of things.

[06:24:26] SL: Well, did you get to actually travel with him?

ED: Yeah.

SL: In . . .

ED: . . . yeah, I traveled—I traveled with him, I guess, in the [19]70

campaign and also in the [19]74 campaign as well. We spent a lot of time with him and years later after that, I'd see Faubus. And he was—by that time he was trying to, I think, trying to reposition himself a little bit in history. I mean, I think he was—he began—not long after he left office began to be troubled by his legacy, and the recognition that he was going to be in the history books and forever. And it would not be favorable that he—and he—[Alabama Governor George] Wallace, of course, came around and repented. And Orval couldn't bring himself to do that. [06:25:18] So he kind of changed the stories after that. He would—when he would talk to me about [19]57, he developed this theory that he was—he did the right thing because he forced the federal government to take responsibility for enforcing the Constitution of the United States. And it had never done that before, and he made the US—he made the federal government live up to its duties and enforce the court orders. And do—and he had to do that. I mean, that's—that—and that was his place in history. He kind of somehow came around and actually seemed to kind of believe that for a period. I mean, he actually kind of—we were sittin' at a—outside a café, in the car one day talking, and somebody had gone in to get some soda pop or a hamburger to bring out. And we were sittin'

there talkin', and he kind of comes out with that theory. And I sa—that's strange. But he had already—but even while he was still in office he was—he had kind of—had begun to kind of embellish the story a little bit. And also kind of to rationalize it, what he had done. [06:26:37] And the—and I—this is a story I've told a number of times. Roy and I was there this night, and I think it's—bear—bears telling here. Because we have this revisionist theory of history of the [19]57 crisis now that Faubus did what he did. He called out the troops genuinely to prevent violence. And that he was genuine about that. And that's why he did it. That he did not do it for political purposes. He did not do it to get re-elected and to curry favor with all of the segregationists and so forth. That he really did it as he said he did, which was because there was the potential for violence. And he wanted more time, and that's why he did it. But right after the [19]64 election against Rockefeller. He defeated Winthrop Rockefeller. And he—that was kind of the pinnacle of his career. He beat a Rockefeller. And that was the old populist in him. His dad hated the Rockefellers. His dad was a socialist. [06:27:33] And they hated the—these malefactors of great wealth. The Rockefellers and the—and all of those people. And so he—and here he was—he got to run against one, and he beat

him. And it was—and he ran a kind of populist campaign against Rockefeller. You know, durin' that campaign, he would tell all of these stories about—when growing up, he'd have to ride in the back of the wagon. They'd go into town from Greasy Creek into Combs in the back of the wagon—and to get this precious kerosene. And they'd have to go in and buy—pay a dime for a can of kerosene. And he'd have to ride back while his daddy, Sam, was guiding the horses. And Orval would ride on that back with a potato stuck in the spigot [*SL laughs*—to keep any—a drop of that precious Rockefeller coal oil from spilling. And he'd tell all of those wonderful stories about sittin' in the—in his cabin up there with the wind whistling through the walls and curdling the redeye gravy before you could get it on the biscuit and get it to his mouth. And Rockefeller, meantime, was up there living it up. And [*clears throat*] on the Hudson River. So he loved to tell those stories. [06:28:54] So when he won, he did an un—an unusual thing after the election and before he was inaugurated again. [*Coughs*] He had a party at the Governor's Mansion for all the reporters who covered that campaign. So we all went out there, and Faubus never had parties at the Mansion, particularly for the press. He never did anything like that. So we all went out there. Roy Reed and I from the *Gazette*, we had covered

that campaign. And George Douthit for the *Democrat* and whoever else. And John Robert Starr from the Associated [coughs]—excuse me—Associated Press. [06:29:32] So the evening wears on, and he tells stories about the campaign and everybody's—somebody—one reporter [Harry Pearson of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*] shows some slides and so forth. But after everybody's—late in the evening—it's ten o'clock or so. And everybody starts leaving, and we get to the door. And Roy and I were about to leave together, and Faubus said [claps], "Y'all have to get to the house? Won't you stay back, and let's talk a little bit." So—said, "Sure." So Roy—closed the door—Roy and I go back in and sit in the living room, and we sit there for a couple of hours with Faubus, talkin'. And he begins to talk about his life and some about his daddy. And he tells about—he maintains that, "I'm the most liberal politician in the South in modern times." And that he's the most progressive. The most liberal. And he makes a case for that. And so Roy would say, "What about LeRoy Collins of Florida?" And he said—well he makes a case about why he's more liberal than Orval—than LeRoy Collins or Terry Sanford or—there were a bunch of kind of New South governors from Georgia and North Carolina and Virginia—Linwood Holton in Virginia. And LeRoy Collins in Florida

and all this—he goes through all of those, and he makes out the case—there's liberal things he did. You know, he—a public employees' retirement system, and what he did to try to improve, you know, welfare grants. He kind of bragged about improving welfare. And that—and he took the old—that old snakepit of a state [mental] hospital and modernized it and built a new state hospital with modern treatment. And mental health—took it out of the Dark Ages. And he began—and you know, he related all of these things he had done. And raised, you know, raised taxes for education to try to improve education. And so he, you know, makes a credible rate [ED edit: case]—record of those kinds of things. So we get through all of that. [06:31:38] And so finally—and he makes again the statement, "So I—who in the South has had a—has a more progressive record than I have in modern times?" And so Roy says, "Well, Governor, there—you left out one thing and that's nineteen"—and Faubus said, "I tell—I know what you're going to say. What about 1957 and Central High?" And he said, "But in politics—there's one central lesson in politics, and that is, you have to trim your sails to the winds." I remember—I'll never forget that phrase. He said, "You can't get anything done unless you're in office." And so, "If I had not called out the troops to

prevent integration that day, Bruce Bennett would be governor today. And I don't know, Jim Johnson." And he said, "No, I could've beat Jim Johnson." But he said, "Bruce Bennett would've been elected governor. He was going to run in 1958, and he did." And he said, "And if I had not done that, Bruce Bennett would've been elected." You know, s—and he kind of characterized him. Bruce had this, you know, this great silver hair—fairly good speaker—and he was—and he said things people wanted to hear. He was a racist and a demagogue. And he said, "I think—he would—he would've won." And so—and he said, "Who would you rather have be governor today, me or Bruce—or the last six years—me or Bruce Bennett?" And Roy laughed and he said, "Well, governor, I guess, since you put that way, you." [*Laughter*] And I guess I—and I probably agreed—yeah, my old Union County native. I—so we agreed that—that he would—it would've been better that Orval were governor than Bruce Bennett. [06:33:31] So he had already began to kind of rationalize—you know, why he had to do—he did it for political reasons, but he had to do it in order to stay in office. And he had to—you at least have to do something to—when the voters are aroused, you have to—you can't go against the grain to that extent. That was kind of his political philosophy. And so he

had—and so he continued all the years to kind of further rationalize as best he could about his role in history. To try to refashion it some way.

[06:34:07] SL: I heard a bizarre, kind of quasi-conspiracy theory—story the other day. That he actually had a meeting with Eisenhower. That he flew to Washington DC.

ED: He did.

SL: He did do that.

ED: He did.

SL: And that . . .

ED: Not to Washington. He met him at someplace and it—he met him someplace. But it, I think, it was not in Washington . . .

SL: And this is before the . . .

ED: . . . he met him someplace. Newport [Rhode Island] . . .

SL: . . . this is before the troops were called out, is that right?

ED: No, it may have been—it might've been after [ED edit: before] the troops were called out.

SL: It was kind of a . . .

ED: . . . but . . .

SL: . . . the way that the story ran in my mind, was that he was kind of set up to do the [19]57 thing—the crisis thing.

ED: No, I don't think so. I don't think that he—I don't think that

Eisenhower—they set him up to do that. No, I don't think—it had—it was already a crisis, and so he goes to—he goes up there. [Congressman] Brooks Hays is kind of mediating. And so Brooks Hays—and I think maybe Brooks goes to the meeting with him [Eisenhower]. And Herbert Brownell, the attorney general is there. [06:35:26] And they have a discussion, and Eisenhower seems to think that they have an understanding that Faubus will withdraw the troops and let integration proceed. And there is some kind of statement to—some kind of generalized statement. My memory—I'd have to go back and check all of that out. But some kind of statement issued that seemed to imply that things had been worked out. And then he gets back, and Faubus says, "No, I'm not going to do that." And so when anybody asked him, "Well, you told Eisenhower that you would." And he made the famous statement, "Just because I said it, doesn't make it so." And that became a refrain and then in all of his subsequent campaigns, you know, people'd say, "Just because I said it doesn't make it so." So he kind of reneged on that. And he thought he'd kind of been set up and tricked there. I think he did think that. That he'd been—Herbert Brownell had—was . . .

SL: The attorney general?

ED: . . . a little too slick. They had maneuvered him into a position where he had no choice to say something. I've forgotten what Roy talked to him about that later and I—may be something in Roy's book about his account of the meeting. I've forgotten if it was at Newport Beach—or—it was not in DC but . . .

SL: Oh.

ED: . . . some kind of place where Rockefeller—Eisenhower was vacationing or something, and they met.

[06:37:08] SL: Mh-hmm. So that was happening while the crisis was . . .

ED: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . that happened while the crisis happened.

ED: . . . that was going while it was going on, yeah.

SL: I'd also heard in my interview with Bob Lamb—Bob Lamb was the liaison officer between General [Edwin A.] Walker and the governor's office at loment.

[06:37:38] ED: I think, and of course—Jim Johnson takes credit for that—for stampeding Faubus on that point. He—and you can talk to him about it if you do the interviews with him, but he kind of—and his forces organized a campaign to call the governor's office. And anonymously. And with all these rumors and tips—people are coming from Forrest City, and you got guns and

pickup trucks, and they had—they organized this thing to kind of panic Faubus. And, I think, Roy thinks maybe Faubus, maybe at least—if he wasn't aware of that, was at least suspicious that that was going on. But—'cause I don't think Roy entirely looked into it more tha—more deeply than anybody else and always thought that Faubus really wasn't that fearful. That—there had to have been some concern of violence, clearly. 'Cause there was—we have some history of that at Arkansas and Elaine and so forth and Phillips County and a lot of other areas. And so I'm sure there was some concern about that. I—you know, I'm sure he did have some concern. But you could've done that without—I mean, you could've taken care of that in other ways.

SL: Right.

ED: You could've had the National Guard enforce the peace and let—and ensure that they're going to the schools. I mean—and there was still some violence around Central High in spite of the troops. But they didn't protect the blacks. They protected the—they protected the whites. They didn't protect the blacks around there. The black photographer who was badly beaten there within the—while the National Guard looked on. So that was—I don't think that was his chief concern, but I'm sure it was some concern to him.

[06:39:32] SL: Well, let's see now. Wh—so, do you want to talk about the [19]78 . . .

ED: Yeah. The [19]78 was the other big [race]—you know, I guess there were probably three big Senate races of the century, the Hattie Caraway race in—and Huey Long in [19]32. And then the [19]72 Senate race and the [19]78 race. So David Pryor was a central figure in . . .

SL: In two of them.

ED: . . . two of the three big Senate races of the century. And, of course, McClellan had not—announced he was not running again, and then Kaneaster filled out the end of his term. And so you had three big giants who were going to obviously clash there. Three very ambitious young men, all highly successful. Ray Thornton, who had been attorney general and then had served a couple of terms in Congress from south Arkansas, David's old 4th district. And Governor Pryor and then Jim Guy Tucker, who had been a prosecutor and then attorney general and then had been elected to Wilbur Mills's seat in the House of Representatives when he stepped down in [19]76. So he'd been two years in Congress and was very popular. And obviously a very gifted politician himself. And Harvard educated and a good speaker himself and good lookin' and all the . . .

SL: Trimmin's.

ED: . . . all the attributes of a great politician. He had all the same skills that Bill Clinton and the others did. Unfortunate in his political life, as it turns out, but—in a number of ways—but so he—[19]78 is obviously the year. The Senate seats don't come open once every twenty or thirty years, and we tend to elect people for life to the Senate—or almost to life. So everybody recognized, this is it. Bill Clinton thought seriously he—this is his only chance to go to the Senate. And so he got close to running himself as a—he was the attorney general at that time. But backed out. So in which case, you would've had four titans running in that race. [06:41:55] As it was you had three. And [*clears throat*] all of them were able to raise some money. They were all talented politicians. They all had good organizations—and [*clears throat*] so it—and people had a difficult time making choices. I mean, it was not quite like Bumpers and Fulbright. It didn't get that wrenching for families. But everybody had problems. They liked all three of those guys, particularly Tucker and Pryor. And Ray Thornton had his—he had more—kind of an establishment coterie. But he also—you know, he had . . .

SL: He was related to . . .

ED: . . . he was related—he was . . .

SL: Okay.

ED: . . . Jack and Witt Stephens's nephew. [06:42:45] But beyond that, I mean, he had all of those connections working for him. But beyond that, he had a pretty good voting record. He was not a right-winger. He was a fairly progressive in Congress and as attorney general. And so a lot of people thought, "Well, here's an effective guy." [SL coughs] He could be—he's not a right-winger, and he's not an old-time Democrat like McClellan or Faubus. And so he had some very liberal supporters. Archie Schaffer, for example, who had been—he was his campaign manager—who'd been for—Dale Bumpers's campaign manager [in 1978]. So you had a lot of people like that. So it was a very close race. And down to the end. And, of course, it was almost a three-way tie. [06:43:36] Now there was a four—I think of maybe two other candidates, Foster Johnson was making his another race. Foster Johnson was this old guy from Little Rock who ran for the Senate. Whenever it came open, Foster Johnson ran. [ED edit: Johnson did not run in 1978. He ran for the Senate in 1966, 1968, and 1972.] Because the first time he ran, he'd made some signs. And they were metal signs [SL laughs] that said "Foster Johnson for US Senate." And those things would last forever. Everybody else made cardboard signs, paper

signs. Jim Johnson made some old hand-painted stencil signs on boards. But here he had metal signs, and after the [1966] campaign, he still had them. Two years later, why not use them again? I mean, you had a leg up on everybody else, you already had your campaign signs. So he had all these metal signs, including these sandwich boards. He liked to walk around with sandwich boards—with, you know, a little strap across his shoulder [pats left shoulder] with this sign in front and a sign hanging in back that said, "Foster Johnson US Senate." Good, clear, black-and-white signs. They were nicely done. And he'd walk around downtown. His knees banging against these old metal signs. [Laughter] And so he thought, you know, I—I've got a leg up already. I've got—and he ran the first time [in 1966] , and he got ninety-eight thousand votes—ran against Fulbright [in 1968]—McClellan in nineteen—when was the last— [19]62 [ED edit: 1972], I guess. And he thought that's—he starts off with 98,000 [ED edit: 91,746] votes in his pocket, and he just has to build on that, and he's already got his signs. So he ran again, and some other guy—I think there were maybe five people in that race. But [clears throat] it was a three-way race, and they were bo—and they were all three—you know, I think in that campaign, I skipped around. I'd—I would be with

Ray Thornton a week and maybe Tucker a week. And I think, maybe, I don't know whether I ever covered Pryor or not—but [coughs]—in that. I think I probably did. Maybe a week with each one of them. But—so it came out nearly three—close to 33 percent each. And David Pryor got a little over 34 percent, I think. And [coughs] Ray Thornton a third—but it was a very close third. And so it was a couple of days before we were sure who the people in the runoff were. [06:45:48] But—and it was a—and, of course, in the runoff, David Pryor won handily. Which was something of a surprise because the issues seemed to be going Jim Guy Tucker's way in the runoff. He was one—kind of the fresh face—and a little fresher than the others. And then he developed this great issue in the runoff, which was Witt's gas company over at Fort Smith. And supposedly—let me see if I can recall what the sequence was. I remember getting a vis—I got a telephone call at—one morn—this was during the runoff. Three or four days after the first election. And it was from a very prominent person now—extremely prominent in Arkansas politics. I'm still not going to give it away, but [coughs] he called me and said—it was three o'clock in the morning. And he said, "I need to talk to you." And I said, "Well, you know, have breakfast or something and"—"Right now." And I said—I looked

at my [looks down]—I said, "It's three o'clock in the morning."
And he said, "This is important." And he was in Jim Guy
Tucker's campaign. So I said, "Well, where you want to meet?"
And he said, "Meet me at—out off Cantrell." And down in the
woods there's this—in the woods there, there's this road that
went down into the woods, and it's where the Terry's—s—
brother—Mrs. [Adolphine] Terry's brother—won the Pulitzer Prize
for poetry—wrote the great history of Arkansas. His name slips
my name right now.

SL: Okay.

ED: It was Johnswood—is where he lived. And I think he died down
there. He drowned in a pond—but . . .

SL: Oh, yeah. I know who you're talkin' about.

ED: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

ED: John Gould Fletcher.

SL: Yes, yes.

[06:47:55] ED: So it was down in the woods there. So I drive down
out, you know, at three o'clock in the morning. And turn off this
little road and drive down in the woods. It's right off Cantrell—
out there where Cantrell—Highway 10 and Interstate 430
intersect . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . it's down in the woods up to the right there. So—go down in the woods, and I see this lit cigarette down [*SL laughs*—it's kind of like Deep Throat just down in the woods.

SL: Oh, my God. [*Laughs*].

ED: This lit cigarette burning down there. And so he tells me this story about how [pauses] David's treasurer for his campaign—Williams . . .

SL: Jack.

ED: . . . Jack Williams.

SL: Yeah.

ED: Old Jack Williams from Texarkana who was Pryor's treasurer of his campaign or maybe his campaign mana—I think he was his treasurer or something.

SL: That sounds right.

ED: And that his old buddy [John Pickett] was on the Public Service Commission. There were—economics teacher at Hendrix—and Pryor had appointed him to the Public Service Commission. And also Scott Stafford to the Public Service Commission. And Scott Stafford was this old friend of Jim Guy Tucker. And that Jack Williams had approached the other guy [Pickett], who—whose name right now I can't remember—on the public service

commissioner—who was—had been—were best man at his wedding or something. And they were maybe college roommates or something. And he approached him and said, "We need for you to vote to give this rate increase for Arkansas Oklahoma Gas company over there at Fort Smith." Which is Witt and Jack's gas company. "And if you'll do that, you know, they'll support David Pryor in the runoff against Jim Guy Tucker." And, of course, they're not going to support Jim Guy Tucker anyway. But—so that supposedly was the story. And that he was—the public service commissioner [Pickett] was so troubled by it. He was deeply troubled by—and that he had decided to go the prosecuting attorney about it the next morning. So he alerted me at—that this big event was going to happen. And he was like, "Well, hell that'll blow David Pryor out of the water." I mean, if that—if all of that is true and is provable. And it happened just like this guy said. [06:50:23] So I go back and get another hour or two of sleep, and then—and go to courthouse the next morning. Of course, everybody—others had gotten the tip as well. The Associated Press had already gotten the tip and had already run a story about it. They moved it over the wire that morning. So that was the story that dominated. I remember that was the blockbuster of a story on the front page.

And so Governor Pryor and Jack Williams had a press conference down at his headquarters. And I remember poor old Jack was sitting there. We grilled him for about thirty minutes, and he was perspiring so heavily. And it was a terrible ordeal [*laughs*] for Jack Williams. We—he essentially denied the story. They'd had some conversation, but it had not gone like the other guy [Pickett] said. And so—but—so that was the issue the rest of the campaign. I was—the developments on that every day. And the prosecuting attorney looking into it and all of that. So it just looked grim for [*laughs*] David Pryor. But—when the election night—'course, it didn't affect a single vote. I mean, he won big. It was just—you know, people are not going to believe that David Pryor would do anything improper. And—what—there, you know, to the extent it was true, there was some explanation for it. And it was Jack Williams's fault or whatever. That if he did anything, there was no indication that David had ever had any conversation with Witt or anybody else about it. But—and so if it were true, you know, it was altogether Jack's dealing. Anyway, so people—it didn't make any difference . . .

SL: It didn't stick.

ED: . . . to any—it didn't stick at all. Although that's all we wrote about for the rest of the campaign. That's all anybody wrote

about—it was the campaign. But it didn't stick. It didn't have any effect at all. [06:52:09] One other story I need to tell about that campaign, and I've already related it to you. And that is in the runoff. Bill Clinton was running in the same election. He was running—he was the attorney general, and he ran for governor. And he won in the—in the first primary without a runoff. He beat Joe Woodward and Frank Lady and a couple of other guys without a runoff. [ED edit: Randall Mathis and Monroe Schwartz lose.] And so he was home free. So he had had a guy named [pauses]—recall his name—the political consultant later for Clinton.

SL: Oh, Morris.

ED: Dick Morris, who was a new face at that time. Dick Morris—Morris and Dressler—they were big political consultants in New York or Washington. And he had hired Dick Morris, and Dick Morris had been down and kind of done Bill Clinton's campaign. And we didn't know any—we didn't know anything about it. We knew there was a Dick Morris advising but we didn't know anything much about this guy. [06:53:20] But, apparently, so the story goes—and you can talk to David about this and to Barbara to see how their—how well their accounts are in sync with mine—but—so David had—Bill Clinton said look, "This guy is

fabulous. He—he's a great consultant. He's sharp. He knows this business, and you need to hire him. He can win this election for you." And so I guess David did hire that—so he kind of came onto the campaign and crafted some commercials. And they were typically kind of tough kind of commercials that Dick Morris is famous for with Bill Clinton over the years. And it—but it kind of resurrected the McClellan campaign [of 1972]. So these ads criticized Jim Guy Tucker's voting record in Congress. That he voted with the liberal establishment. He voted with labor a high percentage of the time in that term. And maybe it's—might've said something about votes with the labor bosses or something. I don't remember. But, anyway, it kind of took those Congressional Quarterly analyses of the peoples' voting records. And the percentage of the time they vote with the Southern—the Southern coalition, the percentage of the time they vote with administration and all those things.

SL: Yeah.

ED: And it used those things against Jim Guy—make him as a kind of an eastern liberal—and so this—the story goes that Dick Morris and Bill Wilson, who is now a federal judge, but at that time he was a lawyer in private practice and an old friend of David Pryor's—and I think he was maybe his campaign manager.

[06:55:09] So they were sittin' in the living room of the Governor's Mansion, and these commercials play for the first time, and Barbara Pryor is off some place in the mansion in the kitchen. And she's—she sees the television—she sees these commercials coming across, and she's outraged at these commercials attacking Jim Guy Tucker [*laughter*] for his voting record in Congress. And she storms into the living room and says, "I want to know who's responsible for those outrageous commercials." And Dick Morris said, "Well, I guess that's me." And she said, "I want you out of this house [points with right hand], and we're not going to run that kind of campaign. I want you o"—and so she ordered him out of the mansion. And so you might—I've never talked to Barbara about that to see whether that's exactly what happened or not. But that's the story anyway. And so he goes back to the Marion Hotel and starts checking his bags, and [*SL laughs*] they get a hold of David someplace, and he tells him, "Well, just, you know—just [*laughter*] don't go back to the Mansion," [Pryor said,] or something like that. And I think they did kind of soften the . . .

[06:56:23] SL: Did they pull the ads? I bet they pulled the ads.

ED: I don't whether they pulled the ads. I don't remember whether they pulled the ads or not . . .

SL: I bet they did.

ED: . . . but they probably pulled some of them . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . to kind of quiet things down and settle Barbara down a little bit before [*laughs*—she might've endorsed Jim Guy Tucker if it continued but—probably not. But that was—I hope that story's true. I love that story. So I've never bothered—I've never written about it, but I've never bothered to try to . . .

SL: Confirm it.

ED: . . . to confirm it. I'd be afraid that it might not be—quite be true, and it's too good a story, [*laughter*] so . . .

SL: Well, it's told now. It's out there now. Yeah.

ED: So you can get Barbara Pryor to tell that. I did tell it once—a year or so ago in David Pryor's presence up at [Eureka Springs]—I made a speech at the Arkansas Historical Association. I was telling a lot of old stories. And I told that story, and he was back there in the audience. So he didn't . . .

SL: He probably liked it, too.

ED: . . . he didn't leap up and correct me.

SL: Yeah, he probably liked it, too. Well, okay, so . . .

ED: And Dick Morris turned out to be the thoroughgoing heel that she thought he was then. You know, he's turned out to be—and

he went on the White House with Clinton and was a political adviser for him there. And then later turned on Clinton's, but . . .

[06:57:38] SL: So we get—now we've got Bumpers and Pryor in the Senate. Got a rising star in the Governor's Mansion. The Clinton—Clinton quickly spends all of his assets—political assets—his first term in office, is that right? And folks turn on him, and a guy named Frank White . . .

ED: Yes, he . . .

SL: . . . jumps up and beats him.

ED: . . . he was—he irked some powerful groups. The bankers, the forestry industry, he—you know, he had all the timber industry [up in arms]—south Arkansas was big in the timber industry. The Anthonys and Weyerhaeuser and Georgia-Pacific and all of those—very powerful group. And so you had the big issue of clear-cutting in the national forests. And so he appointed a task force to do somethi—to look into that problem. And he appointed Steve Smith, who was a member of his staff—who was—and kind of a—not kind of a liberal, a liberal, and most liberal member of his administration—and friend. So he puts him in charge of it. And so Steve makes some remark at something about the corporate criminals who are kind of clear-

cutting in the national forests. And, of course, that outrages the timber industry, and so they all line up and work hard and help finance Frank White's campaign. [06:59:29] And Jim McDougal was on the governor's staff and kind of his—kind of a fiscal man—liaison with fiscal agencies. And so they talked about requiring banks—you know, the banks were very conservative in Arkansas. They—they'd invest all of their money in securities rather than lending money. And so McDougal had the idea that if the banks would go out and lend money, they would help develop Arkansas. And that would be—so they were going to kind of tie the investment of idle state funds [to lending]. You know, the state always had idle state money, and they'd invest it around in banks and leave it in banks that—and it—so it was a source of profit for the banks. So they were going to tie that. You had to have a certain loan ratio, or you wouldn't qualify for any of your state deposits. And so the banking industry—they were—a lot of bankers were upset about it. And Middle South and Arkansas Power & Light Company was upset because of the—he [Clinton] had made a big issue out of Grand Gulf and the—Arkansas having to pay for the development of nuclear plants in Louisiana and Mississippi and—under this system agreement that all these sister utilities had. So that was a big

issue. And his Public Service Commission, and his staff had made it a big issue. So Arkansas Power & Light Company and all of its stockholders and executives and directors in three states were upset. So all of those groups went out and worked for—and helped bankroll Frank White and then you had the—but the big thing was the car tags. He had raised car license fees and truck license fees. [07:01:19] And had made a compromise with the trucking industry to—and the shippers. Originally he was going to have a—he had to have a highway program, but he was—it was going to be heavily weighted on the big trucks—so people who did all the damage to the highways would have to pay . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . a bigger license fee based on their weight and the damage they did to the highways. But they blocked the—they had blocked that legislation. It took three-fourths votes to pass it, and he couldn't pass his—the—until he met with them, and they agreed, "Okay." So he shifted their—reduced the big increase on them and shifted it to pickup trucks and passenger cars. He wanted to raise the same amount of money, so—and then they—so—and the legislature said, "Sure, you know, if you're not going to tax the big guys very much, we'll pass it if you're just going to

tax the little guys." Their—you know, that's all right, so they passed that. They got seventy-five votes and passed that. And, of course, it boomeranged on him, and everybody started goin' to pay their—gettin' their car tags renewed—and it was always a nightmare anyway. You'd have to go down to the revenue office and stand in line for an hour and then get up to the line and find out you don't have your proof of payment of personal income tax [ED edit: property tax]—you'd have to go back home and get that and go back to the end of the line. So as ever—everybody was always in a state of frenzy at that time anyway—'cause—and then finally they get up to the head of the line and instead of paying nineteen dollars, they're going to pay thirty-eight, thirty-six dollars or something. And they may have two pickup trucks. And a pickup and maybe a couple old cars. And it was kind of based on the weight of the cars, too—somewhat.

[07:03:04] So [*clears throat*] everybody—every month one-twelfth of the electorate of Arkansas was outraged, and they blamed it all on Bill Clinton. So all of that boomeranged on him. And so he got beat in 1980 by Frank White. [*Coughs*] [*SL clears throat*] But it was probably good for him. And so he came back two years later and won handily two years later. Everybody forgave him.

SL: Well, and also, I think, Frank White upset quite a few people, too . . .

ED: Well, he did.

SL: . . . some of the same people that helped him get elected.

ED: Well, yeah, he kind of—he decided that the light company was wrong in all of this stuff after all [*laughs*]*—*after all [*unclear words*]. You know, Frank, he was an up—straight-up guy. Frank—whatever you say about Frank White—he didn't mince words, and he said what he felt. And there was nothing crafty about him at all. And he said what—and so he decided they're wrong. And he—so there he was talking about taking over the Arkansas Power & Light Company. And making it—making a government—and have the state run it, [*laughter*] and that way you'd get out of this—you could get out of having to pay the parent organization—Middle South Utilities—for all these power plants in Mississippi and Louisiana. And so he talked seriously about state takeover a utility, which would be the first in the land.

SL: Oops.

ED: Talk about socialism, [*coughs*] there it was. So he made some—and he made some blunders as well. I mean, he was—sometimes a too—little too frank, a little too candid. And said

things that were embarrassing—made him look foolish.

[07:04:54] SL: What's going on with the *Gazette* about now?

ED: Well, the late [19]70s, early [19]80s, the *Gazette's*—Ga—*Gazette's* prospering, and the *Democrat's*—the *Democrat*—Walter Hussman has bought the *Democrat*—from the Palmer Media Group—or the Hussman media group—and has bought the *Democrat* and has begun to try to turn it around. And he's unable to do so. And so he begins to [pauses] come up with a different strategy. He—you know, he approaches Hugh Patterson at the *Gazette* about a joint operating agreement where the two papers would merge their operations—they would remain [ED edit: retain] independent ownership, but they would have the same printing plant and the same advertising staff and so forth. They would have joint operating—reduce their operating costs, and in exchange for which, I think, he proposed doing it for, you know, ten-year con—agreement, and he would take 15 percent of the profits or something. And in retrospect, that's what they should've done. And there would now be an *Arkansas Gazette* and not an *Arkansas-Democrat Gazette*, and the Patterson family would still own the *Gazette*. But the—he—Hugh Patterson—rejected that. He didn't think that—and, you know, he looked at it as a straight businessman, and they were

failing, and they were losing money, and their circulation was down around fifty-five thousand or so. And ours was—daily, I don't know what it was, over a hundred thousand, a nearly two to one. And so he dismissed it. [07:06:45] And so as a last resort they—he, Walter Hussman, decides to make it a morning paper and compete head-on Monday—on mornings, which also looked foolish to Hugh Patterson and all of us at the *Gazette*. We always thought that was kind of a foolish thing. But, there was no hope for an afternoon paper and regardless of the economics of it. You just couldn't—the culture was that we—people were not reading afternoon papers. Had something else to do in the evenings. [07:07:18] So as a last straw—but he also—a very wise strategy as it turns out—although at the time, all of us—it all looked very stupid strategy to most of us, certainly to the owners of the *Gazette*. And that was, he would go in and give classified advertising away, free. Personal classified advertising would be free. And you could run an ad as long as you wanted for—as lengthy ad as you wanted, and you could run it every day for as long as you wanted it. You could run it for a year, and it would be free. And so—and his display advertising was about, I think, roughly 11 or 12 percent of the *Gazette* rate. And so he was—of course that—the paper began

to fatten. The classified section began to expand, and it got to be a huge classified section 'cause people would run ads forever. If they couldn't sell that old Chevy, they'd just keep on—keep it in there forever. [SL laughs] And people read the classifieds. A lot of people . . .

SL: Sure.

ED . . . that's—I just didn't know how many people. The classified was a big part of the paper for them. So more people started getting the *Democrat* because they, you know, had all these classifieds in there. You know, if you wanted to sell your car or buy your car or—it was full of that stuff. [07:08:38] And the *Gazette* began to shrink. And so that was the chief source of revenue for a paper, is the classified advertising. And so their [the *Gazette*] profits—their income began to shrink, and as it did so—the *Gazette* didn't own anything else. The Patterson's didn't have any other properties, and so the paper had to shrink as—when the revenue shrank, they had to—the paper had to shrink—the size of it. The staff, when it got to where we didn't replace reporters, and—'cause they didn't have any pot of money that they could bankroll it. So that went on, and it got to be—so the *Democrat* circulation—and the *Democrat* also began to throw the paper to every household. They called it total

market impact—so they thre—in Pulaski County, they would try to throw the paper at every—they would have these trucks go down the driveway, and they'd throw a paper in every yard [flicks right hand to the side]. And you'd drive through neighborhoods, and there'd just be *Democrats* everywhere in the mornings—everywhere.

SL: It's a war.

ED: All over the yards. Everywhere. And again—that all looked foolish and wasteful. And the people at the *Gazette*, Jim Williamson, the general manager, would put the pa—every morning he'd go down and measure the inch—the classified advertising inches in the *Democrat-Gazette*. And then—and calculate the paper costs. He knew what the paper costs were for this large paper and roughly estimate what their other operating expenditures—their payroll and costs were—and come up with this figure, and they were just losing money—huge amounts of money. And that was true. I'm sure it was tens of millions of dollars. You know, ten or fifteen, twenty million dollars they were beginning to lose.

TM: We need to—excuse me, we need to change tapes.

ED: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[07:10:26] SL: Okay, so it's all-out war . . .

ED: So we were talking about . . .

SL: . . . with the *Democrat*.

ED: . . . yeah, I'm [*clears throat*]*—yeah, I mean, he's—so it's clear that in the [19]80s that he's losing a lot of money. And—but at the same time, the Gazette is beginning—is really hurting, and the revenues are going down, down, down. And so Hugh Patterson finally decides to file an antitrust suit—a federal antitrust suit. Because it seems to be an open-and-shut case. They're giving away their product. They're selling it way below cost, and it's, you know, a classic antitrust violation. And—but—so there's a trial—and in federal court under Judge [William R.] "Bill" Overton. And [*clears throat*] it's a jury trial. [*Clears throat*] And so I think in the end the jury decides, "What's wrong with giving your product away? What's wrong with undercutting the guy and selling products cheaper?" I mean, for the average guy, I mean, he didn't see anything wrong with that. So—and so in the end, the jury came back and ruled in favor of the *Democrat*. And I think at that point—that was the last straw. [07:11:49] There was—Hugh Patterson saw no way that the *Gazette* could survive. That it could—it was still the dominant paper. It still—its revenue was considerably higher*

than the *Democrat*. Its circulation was higher. It was the—it was clearly the better paper in the newspaper contests. You know, the *Gazette* would win all the [*clears throat*] first-place awards in every—in virtually every category. And I think the *Gazette* was still held in higher regard by most newspaper readers in Arkansas. So it was still the dominant paper, but it just could not economically carry on. So he began to look around for a purchaser of the paper. And obviously not many people wanted to get into a situation—a competitive situation 'cause it was clear this guy has the resources. He's smart, and he'd—and he had actually improved—if not just economically, he had improved the paper considerably. He'd had a bigger staff, and he'd invested huge amounts of money. He was losing extraordinary amounts of money. But he was—he had all these other enterprises, all the other monopoly towns and cable television and oil and gas interests and outdoor advertising. And although he was losing money here in Little Rock, he was not hurting. And you could look down the road, and there was—he was going to prevail here. And I think that's—in the end, that's what he wanted to do. He wanted to—that's what he came to Little Rock to do. And his parents, I think, didn't—when they still controlled things, they didn't—I don't think they liked that

idea. But they [the Pattersons] agreed to buy the paper [*clears throat*]*—the Democrat*. They got it for maybe three million dollars or something, but so any rate—so they had to sell the paper, and we were—so that's when all of us began to recognize that the paper—that this was not going to go on forever. That it was an illusion that we couldn't fail. [07:13:53] So I remember I talked to Roy Reed about it—they had—several people came through town. Ingersoll came down from New Jersey. They were thinkin' about buying the paper. And then Hugh decided he didn't want these people owning the *Gazette*. And some guy from Florida, I think, was interested—had some race tracks or something—dog tracks. And Hugh Patterson, "I'm not going to have the *Gazette* owned by a dog-track owner." So I got a little concerned. So I talked to Roy Reed about it, and he said, "Well, you ought to get Gannett." Not Gannett—"You ought to get Knight Ridder. Knight Ridder would be great owners of the *Gazette*, and they've got these wonderful newspapers." [*Clears throat*] And so—and he said that Gene Roberts, his old friend that was formerly with the *New York Times*, was the editor for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which was kind of flagship of the—that and the *Miami Herald*—the flagship of the Knight Ridder chain. And he said that, "Ridder does anything—Roy Ridder does

anything that Gene Roberts wants—I mean, they worship Roy—Gene Roberts. And if Gene Roberts said you ought to buy the *Gazette*, they'd buy the *Gazette*." [07:15:15] He said—and so I just—I was going on my vacation, so I did this personal pilgrimage—kind of foolish. Here I was just—I was an editorial writer. And so I go to Philadelphia and go to the *Inquirer*, and I call Gene Roberts, and we go, and I visit with Gene Roberts. And I told him [*unclear words*], "The *Gazette's* going to be sold, and it would be great if it were Knight Ridder. And maybe you could talk to them about it." And he said, "No way. There's no way that any publicly owned corporation is going to go into a market now—in a competitive market—it doesn't make any sense. Nobody's got that kind of money for a long, drawn-out fight." And said, "The only people that might buy the paper is a, you know, family owned paper like one out on the West Coast or the Piedmont chain that owned [papers at] Winston-Salem and Raleigh and Roanoke, Virginia." And a former New York [*coughs*]—*New York Times* reporter that I knew, Jeff Gerth [ED edit: Walter Rugaber], was the publisher at one of the Greensboro—or maybe publisher of all the papers by that time. But I had known him from the [19]60s. He came down and covered for the *New York Times*—the prison thing, and I was a

stringer. And so we were friends, and I'd—we'd worked together. So he [Roberts] said, "That's the kind of chain that would do it." So I called Jeff Gerth [ED edit: Walter Rugaber], and I don't remem—at Greensboro. And, anyway, nobody obviously was going to buy the *Gazette*. So any rate, a few weeks after I get back—you know, they announce Gannett—Gannett comes down, and they buy the paper. And I remember the announcement. When the chairman [Al Neuharth] [*clears throat*] was in our newsroom and announced to great applause, said, "We've got deep pockets, and we've got pockets to compete. Nobody's going to outspend us, and we've got the resources to carry on a newspaper war, and we're going to do it. And the *Gazette's* going to prevail." [07:17:33] So none of us really liked the idea of Gannett owning—we all—we had bad impressions about Gannett. *USA Today* and that kind of journalism, so we were all a little depressed about it. We thought, well, at least, we might—may not be too happy with things, but at least the *Gazette's* going to survive in some fashion. But—and they did. They came in, and they were, you know—we got—our salaries were still way higher than the *Democrat's*—but we got big salary increases. They increased the staff, expanded the paper again, and they did some other things

that I think that were unpopular with a lot of franchise readers. They had been—kind of gussied up the paper in some ways that upset some of our readers. But, nevertheless, they came in and spent a lot of money. And both papers began to hemorrhage cash by the truckload. And that's—and that went on for five years. Both papers losing huge amounts of money until, finally, in 1991, [*clears throat*] after five years, Gannett began to—I guess, stockholders wondering, "Why are we losing so much cash down there? Why don't—why Little Rock, Arkansas?" I mean, nobody cared about Little Rock. "Why are you losing money at Little Rock, Arkansas?" And, of course, they didn't have any answer for it. So they decided then. [07:18:54] I think they called up Hussman and said, "Well—we'll buy you or you buy us." And Hussman said, "Well, you're not buying me, but I'll buy the *Gazette*." And so they sold it. They cut that deal with him. And I was, as I say, I was writing editorials at that time. I was up in the ivory tower. And I remember the rumor circulated one Friday. All over the stre—it was all over Little Rock—the streets—that the *Democrat* had bought the *Gazette*. And the AP did a little story about it—about the rumor. And the Gannett people had no comment. Just said, "No comment." And Walter Hussman said it was a—that was merely a rumor

spread by the *Gazette's* circulation department. Never did make any sense. Well, why would the *Gazette* circulation department spread a rumor about its own demise? It didn't make any sense to me. But, nevertheless, nobody would say anything. And the Gannett would [not] say anything. They didn't even allow us to write a story. They said, "No." That, "We don't report rumors." That's what the editor said. "We don't report rumors." So we didn't write anything about it for a good, long while. [07:20:05] And then finally—other [*unclear word*]. But I got a call that weekend from Bob Douglas, who was at that time former managing editor of the *Gazette*. Who at that time was the chair of the journalism department up at Fayetteville, and he was a consultant from—for Walter Hussman from time to time. In some of the libel cases, he'd—he was a consultant. And he liked Walter Hussman a lot. [*Clears throat*] And I think was kind of a confidante. So he called me and said, "That rumor—that we—yesterday—is true. The *Gazette* has been sold to Walter Hussman, and it's at the Justice Department. They have to approve it and—the sale, since it ends up in an uncompetitive situation. So—but that it is true, and I am telling you for a fact. I know for a fact that it is true." So we started this little movement there. We had Bill Alexander, who was a

congressman from east Arkansas, and he checked on it for us. And he called back, and he confirmed that he talked to the people in the justice department—said, "Yes, it's true that the *Gazette* has been sold, and it's contingent upon the approval of—the justice department has to sign off on it, and it has to be sure that there's no way the paper can survive there. Are no possible purchasers—there's no way for the paper to survive, and then they'll sign off on it." So we hit upon this device.

[07:21:29] There were about six or seven of us, Max Brantley and I, and Scott Van Laningham, who's up at Fayetteville now with the airport, and—five or six of us. And we got up this idea that we'd—the—we'd have an employee buyout. That the employees of the paper would run it. And, you know, you had—the *Kansas City Star* was an employee owned. And so if you didn't think about it—over, you know, thirty or forty seconds, it made sense. [SL laughs] That maybe we could, you know, we could at least take it over or find some way to borrow money and buy it or something. And [clears throat] Harry [pauses]—the television producer of . . .

SL: Harry Thomason?

ED: . . . Harry Thomason. One of our reporters runs into Harry Thomason at the Dallas airport. And I think it might've been

Scott Van Laningham. I've forgotten who—and they're talkin' about this thing—"The *Gazette's* not going to be sold is it? Is that true?" And he said, "Yeah." And he said, "We can't let that happen." And so he kind of—he'd throw in with us. He'd be a—he'd be an investor, and he'd kind of throw in with us. So that kind of—so we kind of threw that out there and that became a—Harry Thomason, the *Gazette* employees. And so we, for a while that, you know, got some coverage about that. And finally the *Gazette*—Max Brantley, who was the city editor, he just defied the editor. And said, "Well, just screw you. We're going to write about this thing." And he just defied him and didn't get fi—thought he might be fired, but we began to cover it and comment on it. And Max would write columns about it. And the employee—we had these big rallies and so forth. And we hired a lawyer, Walter Davidson, and I called John Norman Harkey [of Batesville] and said, "What can we do?" And he said, "Call Walter Davidson." So I called Walter Davidson. He became our attorney, for the employees—for their—such as we were.

[*Clears throat*] And so we carried that thing on for, I guess, a couple of months. [07:23:28] And I guess the Justice Department realized, "Well this is pretty frivolous, but we can't sign off a th—a prospect of a—of continuing competitive situation

there." So they wouldn't sign off on it until, finally, Davidson said he got a call—I think from Walter Smiley or somebody and—who'd been a kind of a supporter and kind of a go-between and said that—reminded that the employees—all of us could be—we could be sued by both Gannett and Hussman for this frivolous action. That we clearly had no conceivable chance of carrying this off. But we were just doing it frivolously, and it's costing them—it was damaging both companies in the millions of dollars. You know, they were—you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars each paper—every—maybe all—every week, anyway, and maybe every day. But it was obviously costing everybody a lot of money. And so we finally—we had to recognize this was, you know—it's not going anywhere. So we had a meeting on a Thursday afternoon, and we told Walter Davidson [*claps*], "Well, all right. Go ahead and tell them that, you know, we look like we can't do it." So, you know, we couldn't've raised among ourselves, you know, twenty thousand dollars, probably. [*SL laughs*] But so—I could've pitched in maybe two or three hundred.

SL: [*Laughs*] Right.

ED: But, anyway, so we notified the Justice Department later that evening—he [Davidson] called the Justice Department in

Washington and said that we're—we folded our tent. [07:25:10]
So the next morning—you know, I came to work on Friday morning. And, I told Jerry Dhonau about it, and so he wrote an editorial that day [Thursday]. He said, "Well, the end's obviously not"—just in case, he wrote an editorial—a farewell editorial. And got it in the paper the next morning. And he wrote it late in the evening, and we had that, thank goodness, we had that kind of farewell editorial thinking we might have another week or so or a month. We didn't know—but—how long these things took. But the next day, I was busy writin' an editorial for the Saturday morning paper, when the screen went dead, and everybody's screen went dead, and they shut off the power, and the computers all went dead. And they sent word, "Meeting in the newsroom at one o'clock"—or something. And so we all went down there where they—the newsroom where they announced the *Democrat* had bought the paper, and the *Gazette* was—would not be publishing anymore. And all of us were through except we could get—we'd all have severance pay. Couple of—two or three weeks of severance pay. And that would be it. [*Clears throat*] And we had until five o'clock to get our belongings out of the building, and there will be boxes downstairs if we needed to carry anything away. These folding

paper boxes. So we had—we to kind of—we had a deadline. We had to clear out by five o'clock—get our stuff out of there by late afternoon. They had security guards all around the building. You know, we all resented it, but that's the way things are done. It's not just—you know, every plant does it—you lay somebody off—you—it's instant. And so—but it seemed pretty harsh and cruel to us.

SL: Yeah.

ED: But that's the way it's always done, but . . .

[07:26:56] SL: You mentioned about being in the ivory tow—tower writing editorials. What exactly does that mean, I mean . . .

ED: Well, in 1970—at the end of late [19]78, after that Senate campaign and the election of Bill Clinton, Jerry Neil, one of our great old editorial writers at the *Gazette*, died. And so Hugh Patterson asked me if I would come up and write editorials. And I'd never thought about that, expressing an opinion. And I had taken great pains never to have express an opinion. And I wasn't sure I could write opinions. Turns out, it's not hard to do at all. [*Laughter*] It's kind of fun. But I got easier with it as time went on. But it was very difficult transition. So I didn't really want to do it. I kind of considered the Capitol as a—I had kind of a proprietary feeling about the state—I owned the ca [ED

edit: Capitol]—that was my . . .

SL: Your turf.

ED: I couldn't conceive anybody else covering state government, politics besides me. But Bob Douglas told me, "You need to do this." And so—and I did so I accepted the job and went up and write editorials. And I got a huge pay increase and nice pay increases thereafter. And I always thought my value to the paper went way down [*SL laughs*] in January 1979, but my salary went way up. [07:28:27] It wasn't a huge salary. But it was big salary for me. It was much more than I had been making. And I guess I was probably the highest paid reporter on the staff. But I—you know, I made a decent—I wound up makin' sixty thousand dollars a year by the time I quit, which was—eighty dollars a week startin' off. [*SL laughs*] So I thought I was—I mean, that was—round the country, most people would scoff at that salary in newspaper. But in Arkansas that was a good—for a newspaper guy in Arkansas that was a pretty good pay. [*Clears throat*]

[07:29:00] SL: What was the exact date that y'all got kicked out of the building there?

ED: October 18, 1991.

SL: And . . .

ED: That was a Friday—October the nine—eighteenth or ni—I'm thinking it's the eighteenth—it was a Friday afternoon. And I think that was the eighteenth.

SL: And when did Clinton announce?

ED: It was the week before or the week after—it was right about that time when he made his announcement that he was running for president. Now, we already knew. I mean, it was already clear that he was running for president. He was already getting his campaign together, and all the national media was coming to town to write about it and so—but he just hadn't made the formal announcement until about that time. And I think it was maybe the week after—two weeks after—something—it was in that—it was in the same month—it was in October of 1991 when he made his announcement. [07:29:56] And I was going to—and the story that Elaine wanted me to tell. If you want me to tell that story . . .

SL: Sure.

ED: . . . about Deborah Mathis, which is one of the early—ri—this was a few—a couple of weeks maybe before the *Gazette* closed. Deborah Mathis, who was this wonderful reporter. She was a—one of the first bla—I guess the first black television personality in Arkansas. She worked at—in the—in at Channel 7, 4, and

11—all of them. And she was a real star, a brilliant person. Great reporter, great on camera, and never went to col [ED edit: [college]—she went to Central High School. And—and also a very pretty, saucy young woman. She was a—everybody loved Deborah Mathis, and she had a sharp tongue as well. And—but she had decided she wanted to be—after all these years in television, she wanted to—in the newspaper. You know, that's what her first love was. And she wanted to write a column—opinion column. [07:30:56] So I ran into her on the street one day in downtown Little Rock and—at lunch—during the lunch hour. And she pulled over to the curb and said, "I need—I'd like to talk to you." So she called me—a few minu— and told me what she'd like to do. And I said, "Well"—I went to see Bob McCord, and so he said, "Yeah." So we hired her, and she came up and wrote a regular column for us. And occasionally editorials and became a part of our editorial board. And her office was right next to mine—hers—in that little row of editorial offices up on—in the ivory tower as we called it. It had a rarified atmosphere up there [SL laughs] in the ivory tower. We just—all these deep thoughts were going.

SL: Yeah, uh-huh.

ED: So she was next—and she was a delightful person and—but I got

a call one day, and all the national media was coming to town writing about this phenom down here that was going to run for president. [07:31:51] So I get this call from the *Washington Post*. A reporter, and he is very apologetic. This guy calls, and he said, "You know, I've got this assignment. I'm in town here and I—I've got this awful assignment I've got to write. Bill Clinton's sex life. We have all these rumors about Bill Clinton's sex life. And that he's had all these affairs, and I've—I don't want to do it, but I've got to get to the bottom of it. I've got to do something on this." And said, "I'd like to talk to you." And I said, "Well, I can't talk to you about that." I said, "I don't know anything about that. I've heard all these rumors, but I don't know anything about it. They're just rumors, and I don't want to just talk about rumors. You'd just have to chase them down. I can't help you." And he kept tellin' me he'd like to just—"I'd just like to talk, and it'll be totally off the record. And I won't even say it's a newspaperman. I won't even hint about who it was." I said, "No, I've just got nothing to tell you." And he said, "Well, let me ask you about some names." And I said, "No. No I"—and so he said, "Do you know Deborah Mathis?" And I said, "Well, yes. I know Deborah Mathis." And he said, "Do you think she had sex with Bill Clinton?" And I said, "Well, I don't have

any idea, but why don't you ask her?" I said, "She's right here. She's about two feet away." And he said, "No, that's okay." He obviously was unprepared. He hadn't steeled himself to actually ask a woman if she had sex with the governor. And he kept protesting. I said, "No. She's right here. I'll just go in the office next door and get her on the line." And he kept protesting and protesting, and I put the phone down and go to the door, and I said, "Deborah there's a reporter on—for the *Washington Post* on the line here. He wants to know whether you had sex with Bill Clinton." And, "You want to talk to him?" And she said, "Yes, I do." [SL laughs] And so I go back in and said, "I—Deborah, she will—she'll talk to you. Just a second." And he kept, "No wait. I'll just check"—and I said, "No, no. Hold on." [Laughter] So I transfer—I transferred him and hung up the phone and went next door and stood at the doorway. And he obviously was havin' trouble stammering out [laughs] this question, like I would. I'd be mortified to ask some woman . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . that question. Then—I may not now, but in—in 1991, I would have terrible time [laughs] doing that. But he finally stammered it out. And she said, "Look. If I'd had sex with Bill Clinton, nobody in this country would have to ask. There would

be a smile on Bill Clinton's face that would—he'd have a perpetual fi—smile on his face that would give it away [*SL laughs*] that he'd had sex with me." [*SL laughs*] So—and she had variations of that line after. She got quoted, I think, in *Newsweek*. Something to that extent. Something like if he'd had—if I—if I'd had sex with every man I'd ever—rumored I'd had sex with, this world would be a much happier place.

[*Laughter*] Or something like that. She had a lot of good lines about that. But—so that was our first contact with Bill Clinton's presidential campaign.

[07:34:49] SL: Well, so what happens after the *Gazette* for you?

ED: Well, the [*clears throat*—as I say, you know, all of us were fired, except that they offered jobs to—they—well the *Democrat* offered jobs to Deborah Mathis, and there were about two other—no, Gannett offered those jobs. But the *Democrat* offered jobs to only two people, I think. No, I think they may have offered—I think they did offer a job to Deborah Mathis. And Richard Allin and Charlie Allbrite—Allbright who wrote columns and had a contract. So they [Hussman] bought the *Gazette*. They owned all its liabilities as well. And so they were either going to have to pay Richard Allin and Charlie Allbright for ten years or—for the balance of their contract or whatever or buy

them out or something. So they kept them on. And so they continued to work at the paper, and they kept some people in the promotions office and the press people obviously. The *Gazette* had this great press, so they used the *Gazette's* press. And so they kept those people for a time and a few other people. But on the news staff they—nobody, except Allbright and Allin immediately. And a few of them drifted over in the next eight or ten years. A few people from the *Gazette* drifted over and went to work for them in various capacities in the newsroom. But at that time, none of us. [07:36:17] But I had—before the day that rum—the Monday after that rumor circulated back in August or whenever it was, I got a call from Bill Berry who was the provost at University of Central Arkansas and an old friend of mine. And he asked me if that rumor [about the *Gazette* sale] were true. And I said, "Well, I—you know, I understand it's true—but"—and he said, "Well, would you consider coming up and teaching at the university if that's the"—And I said, "Well, yeah, probably. That sounds good, but I'm not going to leave the *Gazette*. I'm going to be here and if it's one month, or it's six years or whatever I'm going stay here till—you know, as long as the *Gazette's* alive." So he said, "All right. Well, if something happens give us a call." So the day that the *Gazette*—when they

shut down the computer, and we had a little meeting downstairs, you know, I go back up, and I call Bill Berry and said, "Is there—that offer still around?" He said, "Yes, it is." Said, "You can go to work in January." And—at midterm that semester. So he said, "We'll have to work it out up here." And certain people don't know about that, but we'll have to work it out. And so I got my little introduction to college politics in the weeks after that. But—so, anyway, I had—I went up there to teach in January. But—so they had to work it out to—for the college of fine arts [ED edit: College of Arts and Sciences]—they had to tell that guy, the dean, that they were going to have this guy—and they had to call him and ask him to come work for them. So it was all worked out. [07:38:14] And so they had a—the chair of the Department of Communications and speech and art [ED edit: journalism] was a guy named Dr. Marvin De Boer. Who's a speech guy. And he was the acting chair. He'd been there—he'd been the former provost. He had been there for many years. So the dean called me and said, "Come up on December 13, and you'll meet the faculty and get the—see what courses you're going to teach, and you can meet the journalism faculty and whatever." So I was—that was my birthday. So I go up there on my birthday, and it's a cold, rainy day—drizzle

outside—it's cold and miserable. And I go up, and I meet the journalism faculty. There were three of them, plus the—when I—first I had to call the chairman of the department [*coughs*] first. And I called Dr. De Boer and said, "I'm—this is Ernie Dumas. I understand I'm going to be coming there to teach in January." And he said, "Yes, that's just what I was told a little while ago." But he said, "But, hell, I'm just the chairman of the department, why should anybody tell me anything?"

SL: Oh.

[07:39:22] ED: So that's when I realized [*coughs*] this is not going to be as smooth as I thought. So I go up there, and he introduces me to the faculty and—the journalism faculty—the three of them. And there was one of them, his name was Jon Bekken, and he's already been in the paper because he's—the Demo—there's been stories in the paper about him 'cause he's a Marxist. He teaches from a Marxist standpoint, and he's a member of the—he says he's a member of the IWW. I didn't know it existed, the International Workers of the World. I thought it'd died in the [19]30s . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . but he maintained he was a member of the IWW. And it turns out later he would—he recruited students to sign

cards.7:40:03] So any rate, he was one of the journalism teachers. And so we had a little meeting, and they tell me, "You're going to teach this course and going to teach editorial writing and beginning reporting and these things. And here are the textbooks that you'll be using, and here's our syllabus from the past." So Bekken said, "You want to go have lunch?" So we—Jon Bekken and I go have lunch. And he's a very charming guy and very helpful and very encouraging. And so we go have lunch, and I bought his lunch. And he tells me, he said, "I got to be some place at 1:00." So we're having lunch, and I said, "Jon, it's five minutes to 1:00 [looks down at wrist]. You said you had to be some place at 1:00." He said, "Oh, oh, oh, thanks a lot." And so I picked up the tab. I paid for his lunch, and he scurries off to this meeting. [07:40:51] And I go around the campus and get—you know, sign all the papers and stuff for to be an employee and get back home about 5:30 or so. And the phone's ringing when I walk through the door, and it's the *Democrat-Gazette* on the phone. A reporter. And says, "Is it true you're going to go to UCA and teach?" And I said, "Well, yes it is." And he said, "Can you tell me how you got hired and what your salary is and"—and I—"Well, I don't know what my salary's going to be, but, you know"—so I said, "Why?" And he said,

"Well, the Faculty Senate this afternoon voted to conduct an investigation of your circumstances of your hiring, because they didn't think you were qualified." I didn't have a mast—I didn't have a Ph.D. I didn't have a master's. I had two bachelor's degrees, but I didn't have a master's degree. And I was not suited—was not qualified to teach. And so the Faculty Senate voted unanimously to do an—and appointed a committee to investigate my hiring. And so he tells me all of that. And I said, "Well, why did they do that?" He said, "Well, there was an—one faculty member approached the committee and protested your hiring." And so I said, "Well, can you tell me who that faculty member was?" He said, "Yeah, it was Dr. Jon Bekken" And so the guy I had just had lunch with—I had just bought his lunch. So—but he convinced me of his—that he was—of his high principle because he was not going to be bought. You know, he was [*SL laughs*] going to go ahead and tell the truth even though I bought his lunch. But that was—he might've had a higher price, I don't know. But lunch and a Coke—pizza and a Coke did not buy his silence. So . . .

SL: So [*unclear words*] . . .

ED: But he and I had a great relationship after that, but . . .

[07:42:56] SL: . . . uh-huh. So you went ahead and got hired

and . . .

ED: I went ahea—yeah, I was hired and went there. And that investigation, I guess, went on for the eight years I was there. It never—far as I know, it never concluded. I don't know [*SL laughs*] what ever happened to it. But it finally—every faculty meeting they'd have a report from that committee for a while, and the college paper would write something about it after faculty senate meetings. The investigation then talked to Win Thompson and Bill Berry and talk to various ones about it—and, "We're gettin' to the bottom of it." But I never heard anything more about it, and so I don't know whatever happened [*laughs*] to it.

[07:43:30] SL: Well, I'm sure if you hadn't been able to have good classes and impart some . . .

ED: Yeah, yeah. And I enjoy teaching.

SL: . . . yeah.

ED: It was eight years, and it was kind of invigorating. It was a new phase and I—the youth—and I enjoyed teaching very much, and I enjoyed the kids. If you—I guess they're men and women—but—young men and women—but I enjoyed that a great deal. And it was—and it kind of refreshed me I think—to go up—but it was very hard—it was very—teaching is a very hard thing and

very stressful. And although it was a subject I knew easily, and I didn't have any trouble teaching it, it was very stressful. And—although I enjoyed it—and there could be stress related to something you enjoy. 'Cause you want to do it right. And I—and you know, I graded papers every night, seven days a week, 'cause I taught all these writing classes and I had them write every day. You had—the rules—you had to write something in class every day. And—or edit or write or something. And so I wound up grading papers every night. And weekends and holidays, I graded papers. [07:44:45] And felt a great deal of pressure about the teaching that I was—that I wasn't connecting. I didn't see—I didn't think I was making any progress with them. And so it was just—it was fun, but it was also a struggle. And so I had three heart surgeries in the eight or nine years I was there. I had open-heart surgery in 1994 and again in—then I had stents in about [19]96 or [19]97, and then I had a second round of bypasses in 1999 or 2000. That's when I asked the doctor, you know, why I keep doing these things. And he—"What can I do to"—and he said, "Well, change your lifestyle and get rid of the ten—any kind of tension." So Elaine said, "Well, you better retire." So I retired. [07:45:37] And I didn't retire 'cause I wasn't eligible for retirement, but I quit,

and we had a retirement ceremony. And—but I left there.

[07:45:46] But in the meantime, I had been writing—the *Gazette*—when the *Gazette* folded, Alan Leveritt, who pub—had published—a former *Gazette* employee who had been an obit writer for us many years ago and an entrepreneur, had started these magazines and a number of publications, and he was very successful. And he had this magazine called the *Arkansas Times*. And he decided to convert the *Arkansas Times*—it was a slick magazine—into a—to a weekly newspaper—tabloid newspaper. And it was struggling as a magazine, and so he thought he might make a niche in the market 'cause with the—when the *Gazette* was no longer around, they did—all of its franchise readers, they might buy the *Arkansas Times*. So he started a little weekly newspaper and made Max Brantley the editor of it and asked George Fisher to draw cartoons, and asked me if I'd write a column and Bob McCord to write a column. And Max was the editor. So—and Doug Smith, who had been an editorial writer and a good—great reporter at the *Gazette*—one of the great writers—and he went off to work over there. So it was a little taste of the old *Gazette*.

SL: Yeah.

ED: So that was kind of the franchise to say—"Well, you can get a

little bit of the *Gazette* here in the *Arkansas Times*." And he's been a success with it. You know, he got a bunch of people to invest, and they all got their money back. He paid them all back with interest in four or five years and made it profitable. And it's still a struggle and—but, you know, it's still—it's—I never thought it would survive over a year or two. I thought, "Well I'll do this thing for a while—write this little column." And so I've written a column every week since April 1992 for the *Arkansas Times*.

SL: Wow. That's a . . .

[07:47:43] ED: I'm not an employee, but I just write my little column here. Hit a key and send it down there. I've been in the building four or five times in the seventeen or eighteen years—about how long has this been—[19]92 to . . .

SL: Yeah, that's seventeen years.

ED: . . . two thousand—seventeen years it's been going.

SL: Well, let's—what about—what do you think about the future of newspapers? And—I mean, don't you think that it's all moving toward the web, and it's—there's—the days are numbered for . . .

ED: Well, it certainly looks that way. I mean, I hope not. I don't think anything could ever replace it. I—or maybe so. Maybe



there can be—you've got to have reporting—genuine reporting. And I—the democracy has to have that. And I see less and less of it now. [07:48:41] And you got all of this background noise on the Internet—all these—all the bloggers. And some of it's good, and some of it's not. And it's all got a point of view. And so everybody's getting their—people are getting their news now from a—distorted through the prism of television, radio talk shows, and these blogs that have a point of view. And so—Max Brantley has a good one, I think. I like his [*laughs*] point of view. And I'd like to—if everybody could read Max Brantley's blog, it might be a better world, but—'cause it—everybody would think like I do, I guess. But, anyway—it's disconcerting, and I don't know how it's going to work out. And I noticed Walter Hussman saying that he thinks there's a permanent future for print media. And I hope he's right. But I don't know how that it's going to work. It's—when this—we'll see when this economic downturn ends—presuming in the next year or two and things begin to improve again—we'll see whether the fortunes of newspapers recover. I'm afraid they're not. I'm afraid they're not going to recover . . .

SL: Well . . .

ED: . . . sufficiently. And I don't know what will take its place. I

hope there's some—they'll work out something that people can—there can still be the national and local reporting that I think is required for us to have a real functioning self-government. But, I'm pessimistic about it. I—smarter people than I am will figure it out, I guess—and how this can work and how the Internet—and how you can do that and still get the same stuff that you've had with newspapers.

[07:50:41] SL: You know, I think there is a stigma about the web and what's on it now. But I just have this sense that it will be the delivery of choice, and that the qualities that are found in the current newspapers will remain. I think that there's . . .

ED: They'll have to find some way to make it profitable. To earn a lot of money, so that you can afford to have—you can continue to do the reporting that you have now. And, of course, a lot of the blogs like—do a—some pretty good reporting on there that's—you know, like the *Arkansas Times* blog. I mean, it doesn't replace the newspaper. I mean, I still have to have the—I still devour the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* every day. And the *New York Times*. But that—on the Internet. But there's still a lot of great reporting on there. And sometimes more direct reporting. Although frequently reporting with Max's point of view thrown in, and I enjoy that. But they—there needs to be

some—what we used call objective reporting. It was never objective reporting, but there needs to be some genuine, independent reporting, and I think that's essential. And I don't know. I hope they can find a way to make a little money and can continue to have, you know, staff reporting—covering the news. And I hope that can be the case. I—and maybe they'll figure it out how to do that.

[07:52:22] SL: Well, it's funny how, you know, I subscribe to the *Democrat-Gazette*, and I am now getting it by e-mail with a link.

ED: Mh-hmm, yeah.

SL: To the issue, but it's, you know—and I get it on my phone.

ED: Yeah.

SL: And so it's . . .

ED: They're not making enough money off of you though, you know. They—'cause they've got to sell some advertise—I mean, they can't charge enough for it. I mean, just like newspapers can't charge enough money from subscribers. They couldn't. You know, you lose money actually for every subscriber you have. Every paper you deliver—you're losing a little bit of money. They don't make enough money off circulation to even pay the cost of circulation. Printing the paper—it doesn't even pay for the newsprint costs. So it's—there has to be some way to make

some money off advertising. In these little websites, there's a lot of advertising on them, but not enough that I can see, and I don't think they can charge enough that they can make it pay. But maybe so. I don't know. Maybe there—maybe there's the demand out there, and they just haven't tried it 'cause everybody—*New York Times* is still free, and so nobody [ED edit: everybody]—except the *Democrat-Gazette* is not free. You know, you have to pay there, but it's not like circulation.

[07:53:52] SL: Well, what else do you wanna talk about?

ED: We've about covered it. I mean, we could go on . . .

SL: Forever in politics.

ED: . . . for days and days telling newspaper stories and political stories. And political campaigns and—you know, there's a world of old stories that any reporter has. You have thousands of stories and I—one thing—you just need to have your memory jogged a little bit . . .

SL: And off you go.

ED: . . . and one comes up . . .

SL: Yeah.

ED: . . . that you haven't thought about in years. But—like talkin' about Dave Cox, or you know, we could tell David Pryor stories for forever—for a while—but . . .

[07:54:31] SL: What—oh, you know, let's do one for David. He wanted to know about the catfish hole.

ED: About the what?

SL: Catfish hole.

ED: Oh, the—no, it was . . .

SL: Or—not the catfish hole, it's the . . .

ED: . . . at Hazen.

SL: . . . let's see. I've got it written down here.

ED: I don't—I'd never—Murry's. Murry's. Murry's catfish house.

SL: Yeah, yes. Murry's catfish place.

ED: Yeah. Well that was a—Murry's—as you know, it started off at DeValls Bluff, and Murry was an old guy. He had been a riverboat op—worked on a riverboat. [*Coughs*] Black guy from the Delta. And then started this catfish place there on the banks of the White River at DeValls Bluff. And he threw up a little old, I think—originally probably maybe an old railroad car or something he'd had down there. And—or the frame of a railroad car. And it was just this ramshackle place, and he fried White River cat—catfish. So—and it became a legend. It was a great catfish. And hushpuppies and vegetables and so forth, and it was a great place to go. And it got to be one of those kind of funky places that everybody wanted to go to. You know, it was

the kind of the place you went to. And everybody would have these outings—you'd go to Murry's. And it got to be bigger and bigger. And it got to be a legend. So we had this great reporter named Mike Trimble at the *Gazette*. Mike was a kind of a lazy reporter, but he had a great eye for little details that everybody else missed. And he wouldn't be—I mean, he wouldn't do any good at the state Capitol covering state government. But—he'd be bored by all of that. But he could take any kind of story that nobody else wanted to do, and he could do a—make it—award winners. There were just—he was a great reporter. He was a good writer. Couldn't spell, but he was a great writer.

[07:56:35] So Mike went over to do a story about Murry's, and he did this big Sunday takeout. And it appeared in the *Gazette* one Sunday on front of the magazine section. Long, long story, and it went on and on about how Murry cooked his catfish and what made it so good and why it was the best food in Arkansas was at Murry's. And—but he also kind of made a day in the life of Olden Murry—was the old guy that—the operator of the catfish house. And so—you know, how he gets up at—does all of this stuff in the morning, and how he prepares for the day, and it's a pretty rigorous day. And so—but it was a funny story and delightful and everybody read it. And then Monday morning

after it appeared, Mike get—is in the newsroom of the *Gazette*, and he gets a call, and it's from Bill Shadle, who had been a reporter for the *Gazette*. And they had been seatmates, I think—they'd been—shared a telepho—shared a desk together some years before. And Bill had gone to work for the Social Security Disability Administration, and I guess he was—I don't know whether he—so he was an examiner or something for them, but Bill was an awfully smart guy. And so Bill said, "Well I read your story in the paper this morning about Murry." And he said, "Yeah." And he said, "That guy is something else." And Mike said, "Yeah." Said, "Well, he puts in a hell of a day." And Mike says, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, you know Mike, there's only one problem about that, you know. That Murry has been drawing 100 percent total and permanent disability [*SL laughs*] for something like twenty-five or thirty years." [*Laughter*] From a—he'd been in a riverboat accident. He'd been disabled, and he'd been drawing 100 percent disability. And so he said, "All of that money is illegal. Now, he's going to have to repay that." And so he said, "And this is fraud." And so, you know, [*SL laughs*] Mike was just—he was just sick about it.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

[07:58:46] ED: He thought about poor old Murry. And [*laughter*] so

Murry hired Bi—Bobby Fussell. You know Bobby Fussell?

SL: Yes, absolutely.

ED: Bobby Fussell, who'd been a—in the US attorney's office for many years. A great prosecutor and one of the great people of Arkansas that I've ever known. So Bobby was—loved Murry's catfish, so he represented him. And so they had this duel with the Social Security Administration for a couple of years. I mean, they—you know, he had to—they demanded he repay them. Of course, they cut off his benefits immediately. But then he's had to repay them all of his back pay, and he couldn't do that, of course. He had no money. And he lived—the catfish house was successful, but he probably made enough to pay his bills every week. And that was about it. And a lot of his staff, were, you know, his family at the catfish place. So [*clears throat*] we [ED edit: Fussell]—finally he told the Social Security Administration, "Well there's nothing we can do. He can't—he could never repay this thing, so just take it. The cat—Murry's catfish place is—we'll deed it to you, and you ca—the Social Security Administration can own this place. And—but there's nothing else we can do about this thing." And so they sent back—finally said, "Okay. Forget it. We're not going to demand—we'll accept that. We're not going to demand payment any longer, and we don't want the

catfish place." So the catfish place continued—Murry's continued and [*SL laughs*]*—in spite of that. [08:00:26]* So Murry wanted to celebrate, and so he invited Bobby Fussell to bring all of his friends over. So Bobby leased a big bus—one of these big, super buses. [*Clears throat*] And everybody—we all loaded on the bus one day, including Mike Trimble, and all went over to Murry's. And Murry's fed everybody catfish. And they—it was just—brought it—just groaning table loads of catfish and hushpuppies and boiled potatoes and turnip greens and boiled okra and fried okra. You know, you could have boiled okra—fried okra. Fried squash and fresh tomatoes and fried green tomatoes, and they—just all these vegetables. He poured them out on the table and then eventually came out with some—he had all of this catfish. And he came out and there, "This is a little different. Murry, is this catfish?" He said, "No, this is crappie." Well, you know—yeah, you know—you can't—that's illegal—you can't commercially harvest crappie. [*SL laughs*] And so anyway—so anyways—we had a [*SL laughs*] US attorney there, and she said [*covers face with hands*], "Oh, I'm—I knew I shouldn't've come over here." So—but they didn't prosecute him. Murry promised—said he would never—he would not [*SL laughs*] sell crappie anymore. And so—and I think that was probably just for

that occasion he had crappie.

SL: That's good.

ED: He found some crappie. But, [*coughs*] nevertheless, that was—
that's the Murry's story.

[08:02:09] SL: All right. Well, thank you. So is there anything else
we need to say?

ED: No, that's about it. You know, I'll think of stories later . . .

SL: I know.

ED: . . . I can tell, but . . .

SL: Well, we may have to do this again.

ED: We can do it again, or we can do it over dinner . . .

SL: Really, actually the next time you're in Fayetteville, you should
come to the Pryor Center.

SL: . . . see what we've got going, and . . .

ED: . . . yeah, I'd like to do that.

SL: And maybe we could get together again for a briefer session.

ED: Okay. All right, yeah. Yeah, it needs to be briefer.

SL: Pickup session. Does that sound good?

TM: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

ED: All right.

SL: All right. Well, thank you.

ED: Adios.

[08:02:43 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]