

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

University of Arkansas  
1 East Center  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
(479) 575-6829

**Arkansas Memories**

Susan Morrison  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
July 20, 2021  
Beaver, 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 <https://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

## Transcript Methodology

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

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

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

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

### **Citation Information**

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed Susan Morrison on July 20, 2021, at the Morrison residence in Beaver, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, so we're rolling, right?

Camera One?: We are good to go.

Bruce Perry: We are rolling.

SL: Okay, Susan Morrison. [*Laughs*] We're here at your residence in Beaver, Arkansas.

Susan Morrison: My residence? [*Laughs*]

SL: Yes.

SM: "We're here at my" . . .

SL: And—um—today's date is the s—the twentieth of July, 2021, and you've agreed to a Pryor Center interview.

SM: That's right.

SL: And if you have any second thoughts right now, you should let me know, and we'll just go eat. [*Laughter*] So you're okay with what we're doing here.

SM: Uh-huh.

SL: I appreciate that.

SM: I'm good with that.

SL: This is just kind of a formality that they recommend . . .

SM: I get that.

SL: . . . when you're doing oral histories.

SM: I'm gonna need my water with me.

SL: Okay. Where is that at?

SM: Um—just this way.

SL: That's—go ahead. That's go—right. You can get up and go do it. Come right back. [00:00:51] All right. So—um—I like to—uh—start the interview with where and when you were born.

SM: I was born in San Diego, California, at Mercy Hospital, April 29, 1942, during a blackout with a Japanese submarine off the coast . . .

BP: Let me stop. Uh—I'm gettin' a huge amount of noise from somewhere.

SM: The fan above you.

BP: I think I'm . . .

SM: Yeah. The fans. Well, there we are. And now we don't have any air moving. [*Laughs*]

SL: Okay. So you were born in San Diego, California, 1942, during a blackout.

SM: During a blackout.

SL: I'm assuming—uh—some kind of—uh—fear of submarine—Japanese attack . . .

SM: The jap—nope, the Japanese subs were off the coast of

California. They were down in San Diego. And—um—we know all about this because I'm acutely dyslexic. But it doesn't run in my family. [*Clears throat*] We were trying to find out possibly why. And—uh—my sister, who's the family historian—I was asking her. And—um—my mother said that every time she came out from under the ether, it was really spooky because it was a blackout, and the nuns were all carrying flashlights in their pockets, and they wore white, and they looked like ghosts.

SL: Oh my gosh.

[00:02:30] SM: But what she was saying was she went in and out from the ether. They gave her too much ether and damaged my brain. And that's why I'm dyslexic. And now it's beginning to affect my eyes. Yeah. So we know.

SL: In—in the womb.

SM: Huh?

SL: In the womb. I mean, you come out and . . .

SM: Well, as I was being born. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. It—yeah. Um—yeah. Deprivation of oxygen. I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is. It's a drug.

SL: Right.

SM: So whatever was happening, it was drugging me at the time.

Yeah.

[00:03:04] SL: So what were your—do you know what your father and mother were doing while you were in sa—how long were you in San Diego?

SM: Well, Dad was—um—Dad went to the University of Arkansas. And his degree is in civil engineering. But when World War II started, they had to go to cali—all the civil engineers were told they could not—they couldn't join the army, they couldn't join any of the armed forces, they had to go to California and build airplanes. And that's what Dad did. He went to California and built airplanes. He was an engineer, so he was engineering airplanes. And at that time, he worked for Consolidated.

SL: And your mom was housewife?

SM: Mrs. George F. Douglas.

SL: Mrs. George F. Douglas.

SM: Absolutely. It was the era. She was my dad's wife, and that was her job.

SL: Uh-huh.

SM: To ha—you know, to have his children and to be his partner. And—and she was. She was his partner in his home and in the mors—and in ev—as his success went on, she—she was the one who—um—made sure that all the details were taken care of.

Everything that needed to be done was done. She was very good at what she did. And she was very good at public relations. She got along with people. She knew how to do that.

SL: So you come by that honest.

SM: [*Laughs*] She got along with people better than I do.

[*Laughter*] Being an artist, that's a kind of a different kind of a temperament. I get along with most people very well. 'Cause I like people.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah.

[00:04:53] SL: Well, do you remember much about San Diego?

Di . . .

SM: I don—no. Uh—they left San Diego when I was like a baby.

SL: Okay.

SM: And moved to DeKalb.

SL: Moved to . . .

SM: Illinois. And Dad was still doin' airplanes, so they had some kind of facility goin' there. And then he moved back to los—when he moved back to California, he moved to Los Angeles, and we lived at 6410 West 81st Street in Westchester.

SL: Westchester.

SM: Yes, in Westchester.

SL: Okay, I know where that is.

SM: Yeah, you know where that is.

SL: Yeah. So—um—and you were, what, five, six, seven years old?

SM: I was about two and a half . . .

SL: Going back to LA?

SM: . . . three years old when we moved back. Yeah.

SL: Wow, so that was pretty quick.

SM: Yeah, it was very quick. Dad wasn't there very long.

SL: Uh-huh.

SM: Um—and when he went back, he went to work for—um—oh, he was still with Consolidated.

SL: Back in Illinois?

SM: Yeah.

[00:05:56] SM: And so did you guys land in Illinois for a while or . . .

SM: No, no, no. No. We went back to California, and he stayed with Consolidated in California.

SL: Okay. So you were kinda raised, then, in Westminster?

SM: Westchester.

SL: Westchester.

SM: I was raised in Westchester.

SL: Okay.

SM: Yes. Um—we moved back and forth, but I was raised in

Westchester. I—we went from 81st Street—we went from 81st Street to—um—71st Street to Arizona Avenue. And that was the big house.

SL: The big house.

SM: The big house, yeah.

SL: And you probably remember most of that house.

SM: I remember all the houses.

[00:06:36] SL: Well, talk to me about the housing—uh—post-World War II.

SM: Well—um—well, this was post-World War II, and the house that we lived in on eighty—it's really interesting how the neighborhoods worked. Um—on 81st Street it was—all the guys were—it was—they were all in kind of the same business, and so everybody there—and these are neighborhoods. Everybody knew everybody. And the kids—you were put out the door at about eight o'clock in the morning after breakfast in the summertime, and you came back in for lunch and a nap, and then you were put back out the door and had to be home by dark. And so we played up and down the street. We had covered—we took our—our—our little—uh—wagons and made 'em into covered wagons and, you know, and did all kinds of stuff. We had—we were pioneers. We did pioneers a lot. [SL

*laughs*] We liked being pioneers. It was really cool. Yeah. We did stuff like that. And—um—all the parents up and down the street of all the kids just kinda—every once in a while somebody'd look out the front window and make sure everything was okay. That was it. That was it. And you came home in time for dinner.

[00:07:46] SL: You know, that sounds a lot like Mount Sequoyah in Fayetteville, Arkansas . . .

SM: Sure.

SL: . . . in the summer.

SM: Sure. It was the same thing.

SL: Uh—also, the neighborhood provided a network for all the mothers to keep everyone updated on what their kids were doing.

SM: Yeah. Everybody knew what was goin' on. I mean, everybody knew what was goin' on. [*SL laughs*] And then we moved to 71st Street and—em—[*laughs*] the thing I remember about that, and this really tells what—who I am. Um—it was all construction. They were building all these houses. It was all construction. Just a minute.

[Recording stopped]

[00:08:21] SL: Okay.

SM: Anyway.

SL: So we're talkin' about 71st Street?

SM: Seventy—71st Street was—in the first place, it was a busy street. It had a line down the middle, which meant there was a lot of traffic on it. In the second place, when they were building our home—um—so Dad had—had—had bought a house that they were building, okay. And so we'd go and visit to see it being built. And I loved it. I would go exploring.

SL: Of course.

SM: And then I wouldn't come back in time.

SL: Mh-hmm.

SM: And they'd have to wait on me and wait on me. And finally Dad got mad, and he left me there so I would learn a lesson. I didn't learn a lesson, I just did some more explorin' and came back and waited. I knew he'd come. [*Laughs*] Didn't scare me. I wasn't afraid to be alone. I wasn't afraid to explore. I wasn't afraid to do those things. They didn't frighten me at all.

[00:09:13] SL: So how old were you now?

SM: I was, at that time, about six, seven.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Eight.

SL: That's pretty early to turn you loose.

SM: Yeah. Yeah. Well, it was back then.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I mean—um—we—Sepulveda Boulevard was maybe four blocks away, and—uh—Saturday morning—uh—I would take my little sister, and we'd go to the—we'd go to the—the theater on Sepulveda Boulevard to watch the Roy Rogers serials and stuff. And I remember I got into big trouble one time 'cause on the way back, there was a vacant lot, and the kids were playin' fort or something, and we started playin' fort and forgot, and s—I scared Mom and Dad to death. But what were they doing havin' and eight-year-old responsible for a four-year-old?

SL: Right.

SM: But people did that back then.

SL: Mh-hmm.

SM: That wa—it was just done.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:10:10] SM: You have to understand. And my mom and dad were raised in families much earlier, and my mother was raised in the country. So children were left alone all the time, and they had to fend for themselves. And so my generation—it was perfectly all right with my parents and for the parents of that generation for children to do that. We weren't the only ones

that had walked there. You know, all the kids had gotten there one way or the other, but not very many were driven there. You know, you walked. That's what you did.

SL: So . . .

SM: And it was safe.

[00:10:47] SL: Around the house, did you help your mom in any way? [*SM laughs*] Were you . . .

SM: Well . . .

SL: . . . given any kind of . . .

SM: . . . when we were growin' up, when we lived at 71st Street, Mom was still doin' all the work. And it got real clear real fast that I didn't belong in a kitchen unless I was cleanin' it, so that was what I did. I helped after we ate, and I would clean stuff up and do things like that. But Mom and Karen did the cooking. I mean, I was just—I wasn't any good at it. And I'm sure it was the dyslexia. I mean, a half a cup could be a cup. I didn't—things would flip on me, so I didn't—I—you know, and Mother literally—I had to memorize flash cards to learn my times tables well enough to get out of the sixth grade. I just memorized them. I memorized what they looked like and that's when I started learning how to cope with what was wrong with me. When I learned to write, when it—first grade and they—then it

was first grade. And the teacher did this, and I did that. And I did mirror writing, and it looked just fine to me. It looked just fine because I saw her writing the same way. [00:12:11] So I had to learn everything is a symbol so that I could straighten it out, and that's what I did. And much later when I did my show at the bank after—the big show at the bank, my dad was walkin' around with the governor and all these disting—you know, all these distinguished people, and I'm like—and he says—and I'm standing there, and he says, "Well, once she learned how to write, after that I figured she could do just about anything." I was terribly embarrassed. But it was a compliment because he knew how hard it was for me to write.

SL: Right.

SM: Yeah. He got it. He got it.

[00:12:47] SL: So I forgot to ask what your mother's name was.

SM: Georgia. George and Georgia.

SL: Georgia, and her maiden name?

SM: Bollenbacher.

SL: Bollenbacher.

SM: Bollenbacher.

SL: And did you know any of the Bollenbachers?

SM: I knew—okay, yeah, my grandfather. And his brother. I knew

his brother barely. His—when they came from sh—they came from Germany, but Grandfather was—grandmother—Great-grandma Bollenbacher was pregnant with Grandpa Bollenbacher, and his brother was older. And during World War II the—when the—when they put the Germans in deterrment camps here, his brother had to go, but he didn't because he was a naturalized citizen because he was born in the country. And I remember how important that was to everybody, the fact that Grandpa didn't have to do that and how horrible it was that his brother did.

SL: Do you know what camp his brother went to?

SM: He was somewhere in Missouri.

SL: In Missouri?

SM: Yeah, he was in Missouri.

SL: Wow.

SM: Yeah.

[00:14:05] SL: So talking with your—did you get to visit with your—  
I guess he would be your great uncle or . . .

SM: I don't remember.

SL: You don't remember?

SM: I—no. Grandpa—I remember my grandfather. I don't remember him from when I was a child. I remember him

because later I came and lived with my aunt for—twice.

SL: Did he . . .

SM: And I came to know him then. I guess back then, the women all hung out, and the men all hung out, and you didn't—and I didn't have any interaction, particularly, with my grandfather. Uncle Stuckey, my cousins who lived down in my great-grandmother's house, I had interaction with him 'cause he played honky-tonk piano. [*SL laughs*] And he was teachin' my cousin Fred Stuckey how to do it, and I thought that was really cool. And I'd stand there in front of the fan in the summer. Honey, you got in front of a fan every chance you got. And Stuckey had the fan on him, so I'd stand there and listen to him play honky-tonk piano. And that was down in the house that was great-grandma and great-grandpa's.

[00:15:08] SL: So as far as your father's side of the family, the Douglas side, did you know any of those grandparents?

SM: No. Well, not really. His father passed long before I was born. Dad was very young when his dad died. It think he was a teenager. His mother came and lived with us when we lived at 6410, when we lived in the little house, but I was too little to really remember her. I remember ?Dugga?, the woman who babysat us, but I didn't remember Grandma.

SL: Well, it sounds like your mom and dad accommodated their families when they needed to.

SM: Dad was amazing. He—his mother ran a boarding house, his dad painted steeples. He was a terrible alcoholic. He was vicious mean to his wife and his children. Thank God he died. And—*[laughs]* quite frankly. And Dad was raised in a boarding house, and he made his money delivering newspapers, you know, and contributed that money to the household. And when he got old enough to go to college, he was goin' to school, and he met my mother and fell in love with her. And they eloped to Rogers *[SL laughs]*, which was like goin' to Bowling Green or wherever it was—to Rogers and got married. And when they came back, Mother said that Grandma fainted, and Great-grandma fainted and everybody had a fit. But they had no money, so they had to live with Grandma and Grandpa. And my grandmother was not a nice woman, and she was really mean to my daddy. [00:17:04] And his generosity to her later showed his character because she was not nice to him. He would sit at the table, and she would talk about him being worthless and just going to school, you know, and blah, blah, blah. And when he became so successful, he really helped them. And then my grandma changed her mind.

SL: Oh. [*Laughs*] So there was a reconciliation . . .

SM: Yeah, of course . . .

SL: . . . from him.

SM: . . . and it came from my father. It came from my dad. I mean, Dad—my dad was a peacemaker. He believed in the best in people. He believed—and he had incredible integrity. And to have been raised by a person, a father who was so vicious, I find that astounding. But he told me once that his mother was an angel. So he—and he got his character from her. He was like she was. He was just a good person. Blessings. Yeah.

[00:18:05] SL: So you cleaned the kitchen . . .

SM: [*Laughs*] Oh, and I set the table. By the time we got to the big house, now it was fancier stuff, and mother by this time was starting to have servants in the house, and she would have—but they worked through the week, and on weekends it would be us kids and the family. And so Mom and Karen would be in the kitchen. And every Sunday—every Sunday—you sat down—you g—you dressed up, and you came to the dining room, and you sat down, and you practiced your Sunday manners so that at—so when you went out into society, you could behave yourself properly at a table. And that was what we did. And so Karen and Mom fixed the food, and Ellen by this time was old enough

to go in there and help a bit, but I set the table, and I did the flowers, and I was good at that. So and Mom always complimented me on that. Sh—Mother was real good about really encouraging me to do the things that I could do, and basically considering the things that I couldn't do things that weren't important anyway. That was who she was.

[00:19:25] SL: So are you guys hearing this conversation? Next door?

AM?: I thought you were talkin' about this conversation.

SL: Huh?

AM?: I thought you were talkin' about between you and . . .

SL: No, no, no, no.

SM: Oh, you couldn't hear them?

BP: No. I—we couldn't hear them.

SM: Oh, okay.

SL: So back to the table and arran—making, setting the table.

You're already setting a scene, you know, [*SM laughs*] as far as a frame of . . .

SM: Yeah, well, and . . .

SL: . . . reference.

SM: . . . and by the time we were in the big house, the thing to be remembered was Mother had a studio. She was an artist. She

was—this was her hobby. And she could go out to garage sales and buy canvas window shades. They were made of real canvas. And she would cut those up and let me paint on them with the paint left over on her palette because she used paper palettes.

SL: Wow. So . . .

SM: Yeah, and she used . . .

SL: So she was painting oil . . .

SM: And she.

SL: . . . or acrylic.

SM: Oh, no. No. She was allergic to oi—my mother was allergic to everything. She broke out in rashes. But she painted with acrylics. And so I could paint with her paints. So I did purple apples.

[00:20:37] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, what did she paint?

SM: Everything she painted, she didn't paint well. It was real interesting. She'd get to a certain point, and her paintings would fall apart. And I thought it was because she was busy or this or that. And later in life when she was eighty, eighty-five, and had had her stroke, she was writing thank-you notes with her left hand. And I said, "Oh, Mom, you really write well with your left hand," and she said, "Well, I guess so. I'm left handed." That's

when I found out my mother was left handed. Of course she couldn't paint. She was blocked. She was blocked. Her creative mind was blocked. It had been blocked from the time she was a little girl.

SL: 'Cause she was expected to be right handed?

SM: She was expected to use her right hand. Her mother was a school teacher. Of course she was expected. And sh—and she was—and consequently she developed that side of her brain very well, so she literally could edit—she was an editor in college. She did editing in college. Which, if you ask me [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Right.

SM: Forget it. [*Laughs*]

[00:21:44] SL: So did she mostly do landscapes or . . .

SM: She did still life.

SL: Still life.

SM: She did the flowers from her garden.

SL: Ah.

SM: That's what she liked doing. She did still life. And it was really interesting because she would do all these paintings and I—and then I'd watch 'em fall apart. I'd watch 'em fall apart on her. But her drawings were extraordinary. Her drawings were extraordinary. And that's where my talent to draw came from

was her.

SL: Drawings are—there's a precision about them that you kinda know when you're finished with the line.

SM: Yeah.

SL: But when you're doing the color and paint, you can overwork it to where it just turns to mud.

SM: Yeah. I think for her—she did her drawings in college. It was all college work. And I've—and she showed it to me later, and I was astounded by what she could do. And I was also astounded by how much it looked like what I did. 'Cause I had never seen it.

[00:22:48] SL: Now where did she go to college?

SM: U of A.

SL: Really? So both parents.

SM: Mom and Dad both went to the University of Arkansas. Dad's in the hall of fame, engineering. And Mom's sister, Katharina, went to the University of Arkansas, and her other sister Elva went to the University of Arkansas. Katherina is in the hall of fame for agriculture. She went to—she got her degree in plant pathology, and she went to Washington, DC. She was hired by the USDA, Department of Agriculture. And she isolated cotton blight.

SL: Wow.

SM: And invented the pesticide to kill it. And she was—had she been a man, she would have been most noted for what she had accomplished because it revolutionized the cotton industry. But of course, she wasn't. But she did make the hall of fame. [00:23:42] She came back to Arkansas to take care of her parents and went to work at the agri department here and worked there until she passed.

SL: Wow.

SM: Yeah. Well, till she retired. No, till she passed, because she became—she developed cancer, and sh—I think she was still working there part time when she got sick. And she was my maiden aunt. She was quiet. She was modest. You wrung out of her information about her. She was the most tolerant and kindest person I have ever known. I came and spent the summer with her when I dated my first husband. He was premed going to the University of Arkansas. She couldn't have been kinder. When I had my second child, I came back and lived—I came back—I was seven months pregnant and weighed ninety-two pounds. Dr. Mashburn had delivered my first child, and I came back and lived with her. And I had been living in south New Orleans at that time. I came back, and I lived with her till I had that baby. She never asked me anything. She

never said anything. She fed me. She loved me. She took me shopping. She did anything she could to make me happy and saved my life.

SL: In her quiet way.

SM: Yeah. [Begins to cry]

SL: A polite, careful . . .

SM: Such a powerful woman. I come from a family of powerhouses.

No matter what, quiet or loud, they were powerhouses. What I didn't realize was it was the high intellect. The intellect was amazing. My father's intellect was off the planet. And I didn't learn this until I had my children, myself, and my oldest child, at eight months, could talk. [*SL laughs*] Could walk and talk in a year and tell me he needed to potty. At two and a half, when I was back up in Arkansas, we put him in nursery school 'cause that's what Dr. Mashburn recommended. [00:26:09] He s—at two and a half, he brought down the house. We were all laughing so hard we couldn't—you know. He recited a poem that he had memorized at two and a half. A whole poem, three stanzas long. And we all just thought it was hilarious, and I thought that's what kids did. And then when I had Charlie, he was just nothing but really smart. I thought he was retarded [*laughs*], and I was livin' in New Orleans at the time, so I had

Tulane University at my disposal, so I went over there to meet with a psychologist to find out what was wrong with Charlie and how bad it was because he was two and a half and wasn't talkin'. He was just barely talkin'. What was wrong? I took Jimmy with me. And he's evaluating my children. And he goes—and Jimmy's tellin' him what to do. [*Laughs*] And he goes, "Excuse me, I think we're evaluating the wrong child." Okay. He evaluated Jim, and Jim was five years old with an IQ of 164. And Charlie was like only 150-somethin'.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oops.

SM: He was just only a genius, he wasn't super genius, you know. And the guy looks at me, and he says, "Now you have decisions you have to make about this child. You know, you can—we can start working with him right here at Tulane, and he—we can have him in college by the time he's thirteen," he said, "but you have to decide what you wanna do." And I went home, and I went, "I'm not doin' that to my child."

[00:27:42] SL: Right.

SM: Nope. And I—so the way I raised him, he was always—he was smarter than all of us, even his father who had a very high IQ. [*Laughs*] So we—I would tell him that he—what—he was really smart, he was good at book learnin', but he didn't have any

horse sense. I did. That made me smarter than him. [*SL laughs*] So he had to mind me. That's how I got my—well, you know, they're like colts. You gotta get your—get 'em where they think you can overcome them.

SL: Right.

SM: Yeah. Early. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

SM: When they're young enough that you can do it that way when they're teenagers, they still believe it.

SL: Right. Right.

SM: It works. It works really well.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Your bluff. That's the word I was looking for. Bluff.

SL: Right.

SM: Gotta get your bluff in when they're . . .

SL: Yeah. Right.

SM: . . . little. Yeah, it worked.

[00:28:32] SL: So I wanna go back to the lunch and dining table when you were growing up.

SM: Okay.

SL: And you talked about Sundays.

SM: Yeah.

SL: But before we get to Sundays, through the week were you—I'm assuming you're at school and so . . .

SM: We ate dinner at that table every night. The only difference was that mother had servants, and so the maid fixed the food and served it.

SL: Well, let's talk . . .

SM: Yeah.

SL: . . . about . . .

SM: That was the difference.

SL: . . . servants. What were they . . .

[00:29:04] SM: Well, she had various servants. It was a big house, and she was entertaining for Dad, and we had—we were on a quarter of an acre in Los Angeles. Imagine. We had a swimming pool and a tennis court. We had a full-time gardener that was a Japanese guy that was fantastic. And we had—Mother had a full-time maid. And she—but not live-in. She didn't have live-ins until later. But—and she had—actually two maids. She had the woman who cooked and did the laundry and did that sort of thing, and then she had the woman who cleaned the house. Cleaned. And they were two different people. But she was very strict with us girls. We had to clean our own room. But I didn't know how to clean a bathroom. I didn't know how to

clean a kitchen. I didn't know how to mop a floor. I didn't know how to run a vacuum. I didn't know any of those things because I never had to do it. Till I got married. It was hilarious.

[*Laughter*] And it took me a while to realize that houses didn't clean themselves. You had to clean 'em. Oh my God, you have to—I have to do this? You know.

[00:30:21] SL: Well, so the hired help, they were all Caucasian and . . .

SM: Well, no. In fact, my brother learned how to speak Spanish from one of our maids, and she was lovely. Mother preferred Mexican women for cooks and laundry. And she hired—the women who did her heavy work were always Scandinavian. Yeah.

SL: Big, strong . . .

SM: Big, strong, [*SL laughs*] get the work done fast, hardworking women. Yeah. Yeah. And she had one that I remember developed cancer, and I don't remember what kind. But ?Ollie? was her name. And when she developed that cancer, my mother took care of her. She took her for her chemo treatments and took her back home. I remember going with her a couple of times when she did it for her. I said, "Mommy, you're takin' care of her." "Of course. She took care of me."

SL: There we go.

SM: Yeah. Oh!

[00:31:25] SL: So how was—so how long did you stay in California before you came—left California for here.

SM: I left California when I was nineteen.

SL: Okay. So you went through the—all of the social and cultural things that . . .

SM: In Los Angeles, in California.

SL: . . . that a child goes through.

SM: And a lot of the kids that went to my school, their parents were producers and directors. We had a couple of kids that their parents were actors, but not many. Those kids went to Hollywood High. Not us. We were different. We—a lot of the people—you gotta understand, the kids were goin' to my high school, their parents were aerospace. I babysitted for Scotty Crossfield. My dad was aerospace. Yeah. That's what we did. Goin' to the moon was our deal. [SL laughs] Yeah. No, the—I'm not kiddin'.

SL: I know.

SM: It's a big deal. And gettin' in space was our deal. You know, these guys were—these were the guys that were goin' up in the capsules. Yeah. And they were nuts. I mean, they were crazy as loons. And next to me—the Belonds lived next to me, and

her daddy was Belond mufflers, and he owned an Indy 500 car. And they k—and he had a big garage back behind the garage where they kept it, and Donna and I used to go back there 'cause there was nobody back there. [SL laughs] We could talk. Sit in the car. And no idea what it was about, you know. I didn't ha—when you're teenagers, what do you care? Stuff isn't important to you.

SL: Right.

SM: Because boys are important. Because gettin' through school is important. I majored in dance in junior high school. I majored in dance in high school till I got to the eleventh grade, then I took a drama class, and I was so good that they put me in the school play for my senior year. And you gotta remember I was going to a school that had close to 3,000 students, and they were all—a whole lot of 'em were out of the business. So I was competing with kids that really knew what they were doin'. I was a natural. I could do it ea—it was easy for me.

[00:33:30] SL: So dyslexia didn't . . .

SM: Dyslexia was my friend. I spent the whole summer on the beach memorizing the whole play because that was the only way I was gonna be able to do it. So when I walked back in there, I knew everybody's part including mine. You know, stage directions

were a piece of cake. They were just tellin' me where to walk. I already knew everything else. I knew everybody's lines. If somebody couldn't remember a line, I—sst, I'd prompt 'em. [Laughter] But it was really interesting because, on the same token, I never knew quite where my locker was because I never had—wasn't able to open it, anyway, because I couldn't do the combination. And I followed my friends to their—my classes because I couldn't ever find them. Some of them I could find if I turned a certain way, but if I had to turn certain ways, I couldn't find my classes. And when I went on to Santa Monica to go to school, you drove up to the theater department, and you walked in. There you were. But I had a dance class, and I loved dance, but I never found it.

SL: [Laughs] Oh.

[00:34:49] SM: And I had an English class that I never found. So I got an incomplete when I went to that school. And I went to UCLA to study dance and to study drama, but again, I could drive right up and get out and walk in. So I studied drama with Professor Douglas, who was the leading guy. I mean, the studio sent all their students to him. And I made straight As with him. I loved it. And I—the dance—I was working with ?Kasakov Smith? and—oh, what was her name? But sh—my other dance—

the other person I worked with was Martha Graham's lead dancer. And I was her—and this was my life, okay. I'm short. Successful dancers are tall, okay? So her lead dancer was this Black girl who was probably six foot, and she was awesome. I was third lead, which meant I was really good, but I just wasn't tall enough. And that was—and so theater worked better for me. And do you notice that I'm not talking about art at all?

SL: Yeah.

[00:35:56] SM: Well, I took art at Santa Monica, and that class was easy to find, and so I went to it, and I got a C, barely, because she didn't like what I did. And I was a realist, and this was not the world of realism anymore. This was the world of abstract. And I went to UCLA, and I took them my portfolio and—to see if they would let me audit, and they basically kicked me out.

[00:36:25] And then Pablo Picasso came to their school. And I was—at this time, I was eighteen. And big hall, professors standing in the back like this [crosses arms over chest], you know, leanin' up against the wall lookin' like the gods. Every one of 'em was a man. There was no woman in the group. And I'm sittin' there. Picasso stands up. And he points to all those guys on the back wall, and he said, "Your department is a sham. You haven't"—[clears throat] Excuse me. "You haven't got an

artist in here. No talent. No gift. No work." They shrunk. And I'm goin' [widens eyes]. And then he said it. "First you must learn to draw. You must learn to draw what you see because abstract is the departure from realism, and if you are not a realist, then you are not an artist." [*SL laughs*] And I'm like [pumps arms in air and mouths "Yay"].

SL: Yeah. Of course. [*SM laughs*] Of course.

SM: I was like—you know, I just felt so good. It made me feel justified.

[00:37:41] SL: Well, his early stuff is so stunning. I mean . . .

SM: He was an amazing artist.

SL: Yeah.

SM: His—and he was dead on right. Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg. Do you know how they put themselves through the New York art institute?

SL: Realism.

SM: Impressionist paintings for the windows of Cartier's. And I know that because the guy that helped my Animal Tracks project had been president of Cartier's. He hired 'em. [*SL laughs*] Yeah. They were amazing artists. If you look at the work that really works at the—those artists were all amazing. They already knew how to do it. They were leaving it because it wasn't enough.

They wanted to do something else. I never needed to leave it.  
It was always enough.

SL: So . . .

SM: But then I work in abstract a lot.

[00:38:40] SL: Let's get back to some of your school days growing up in California, and you listed a few things that were important back then. And they were universal important things for . . .

SM: Yeah.

SL: . . . for girls, and you mentioned boys.

SM: Yeah.

SL: So how did the boys life around you evolve. I mean, did—was it—I know [*SM laughs*] that you were in kind of an . . .

SM: Oh, I . . .

SL: . . . elite group.

SM: . . . loved boys. I loved boys. I mean, I started makin' out in the seventh grade, darlin'.

SL: Yeah.

SM: But I found out real fast that—Bob Fields was the first boy I ever dated. And I found out—and I dated him. And everybody made out. You know what makin' out is? It's kissin'.

SL: Yeah.

SM: That's all it is. Everybody made out. And if you French kissed,

you were really bein'—oh, ho, ho, ho. You know. So everybody made out. And I left for the summer, and when I came back, I found out that he had dated somebody else. We had b—we were goin' steady. You went steady. I had my cross.

SL: That's right.

SM: You went steady with somebody, they gave you this big, ornate Catholic cross to wear. And I had my cross, and we were goin' steady. And I was faithful to him. Well, he wasn't to me. He started datin' another girl when we were gone. So when I got back, I found out about it, and I broke up with him.

SL: Of course.

SM: He told everybody I slept with him.

SL: Hmm.

[00:40:08] SM: That was my punishment for breakin' up with him for doin' what he wanted to do while I was gone. Boy, did I learn a lesson. And after that, I was very careful about the boys that I dated. And I didn't—our next-door neighbors were the Farris, and Alan Farr was my age. And he and I were really close, and I really loved him. I just—he was so pretty. You gotta remember, I'm an artist. The guys that I dated were good lookin'. They were pretty boys. And Alan was tall and tan and big, brown eyes. I mean, he was really pretty. And I loved him to death.

And in the end we became very good friends. And this is very interesting. He was a Mormon. Well, if you're a Mormon boy, you can't date a Gentile girl because you can't—and his dad was real big in the Temple—because you can't get married in the Temple and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So he couldn't date me. He married a Mormon girl like he was supposed to. And then I dated a Jewish boy. And I found out that you can only date Jewish boys. You can't marry a Jewish boy because in the Jewish faith, the woman determines the faith of the children. So Jewish men marry Jewish women so the children can be Jewish. Otherwise they're not gonna be, they're gonna be Gentile, and that's not good. [*Laughter*] I'm like, "What is this?" [00:41:35] So then there was this Mexican kid. Oh. He was the prettiest of all. He was just drop dead, okay. His family was very wealthy. They lived in our neighborhood. Are you kidding me? And he was the—he was just a gentleman. He was very attentive and very nice. And he realized that—and he was a gymnast, so you can imagine how he was made. He was a gymnast, and I was—and I stayed late for dance. And so the school busses are gone. Nobody ever drives their kids home, so I had to walk. He would walk me home to my house every day. But we had to stop at the Catholic church, so I had to have a scarf to put on because

he was always having to do penance because he was always—you know, the priest was mad at him all the time. [*Laughter*]  
Well, he couldn't get serious about me because we weren't wealthy enough.

SL: Hmm.

SM: He was old-wine Spanish. These are the people that owned all the big rancheros and had all the money. And had my father been wealthy enough, he could have married me. But we weren't. So I learned about prejudice real fast.

SL: Yeah.

SM: On the other—from the other point of view. Yeah. Yeah.

SL: What a neighborhood.

[00:43:02] SM: What a neighborhood. Yeah. And we all loved each other. ?Jimmy Juegenheimer? lived down the street and dated my sister. He was hilarious. We would all sit—our front lawn came down like this, and we had two big Norwegian pines on either side, and people would drive down the street, and we'd sit there and stare at them. It was a dead-end street—and watch 'em drive down and drive back. Oh, we were horrible. We thought that was really horrible. [*Laughter*] But when ?Levon Brauns? w—I'll start that later. When Vernor Von—oh?

Unknown: Real quick. Angie just said they've got only ten minutes

left of filming, and they just wanted to get a few pictures of you being interviewed and couple of head shots, and they're out of here.

SM: Okay, let's get 'em out of here.

SL: Okay.

SM: Sure, come on in.

[Recording stopped]

[00:43:47] SL: Okay, so I wanna go back to the dinner table.

SM: Okay.

SL: Okay, so your mother could cook.

SM: My sister could cook.

SL: And your older sister . . .

SM: And my younger sister.

SL: You couldn't.

SM: No.

SL: You set the table, but were—was everyone expected to be at the table at a . . .

SM: Absolutely.

SL: . . . certain hour?

SM: Two o'clock. Two o'clock. We set to the table at two.

SL: Okay. So your cot—your dinner, I would call lunch. Is that right?

SM: Yeah, but we called it dinner.

SL: Okay.

SM: We had breakfast . . .

SL: Dinner, supper?

SM: . . . dinner, supper.

SL: Okay.

SM: Well, no, we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

SL: Oh.

SM: Sunday it was dinner.

SL: Okay.

SM: For the late—yeah. And then at night—that night we'd watch TV  
and snack.

SL: That's cool.

SM: That's dinner.

[00:44:42] SL: All right, so . . .

SM: And we dressed.

SL: We dressed for dinner.

SM: We dressed for dinner.

SL: And so . . .

SM: Papa wore a suit.

SL: . . . everyone's dressed.

SM: Everyone's dressed.

SL: The table is set beautifully.

SM: Yes.

SL: It's wonderful food.

SM: Yes.

SL: Does anyone say grace?

SM: Absolutely.

SL: And is it always your father?

SM: Always my father.

SL: No one took turns?

SM: Nope. God is great, God is good, and we thank Him for our food. Amen.

SL: And that was it.

SM: That was it.

[00:45:10] SL: So you're being raised Catholic.

SM: No.

SL: No?

SM: Lutheran.

SL: Lutheran.

SM: My mother was Lutheran. My father was agnostic.

SL: Agnostic. So that's . . .

SM: We're lucky he said grace.

SL: . . . that's the brief grace, then.

SM: Yeah.

SL: Okay, so was there a Bible in the house?

SM: Of course.

SL: And . . .

SM: We all had Bibles.

SL: And . . .

SM: We went to the Lutheran church, darlin'.

SL: Well . . .

SM: Come on.

SL: Well, I mean, you know.

SM: Don't you ever listen to Garrison Keillor? [*Laughter*]

SL: I did.

SM: Of course you have a Bible in the house. You have to have a Bible in the house.

SL: Okay.

SM: It's a requirement.

SL: All right. So . . .

SM: And you go—and you go and do all of—and you go—it's hilarious. You go do all the stuff Lutheran kids do. Oh yeah. And you go to the church to do it. Absolutely.

[00:45:56] SL: So let's talk about the church.

SM: Well, our church looked like a mission. It was really pretty. It

was a Spanish look. The inside was very beautiful. It went down the side like missions do. I remember once Mother wanted to do a fundraiser. They were gonna have a bridge game that was—they were gonna play bridge and charge, you know, or something. They'd win hands or something. And the pastor wouldn't let 'em do it because it was gambling.

SL: Because of . . .

SM: Gambling.

SL: Gambling.

SM: It was gambling. You couldn't do it. And I had a terrible time because to be confirmed, I have to memorize all this stuff. Well, I couldn't memorize that stuff. So when they—I remember when they—but—for confirmation first they ha—you have to answer all these questions. And so they're askin' all these questions. And every question that asked me, I couldn't answer. They didn't care. You know, but I felt like I was a fraud [*laughs*], you know, goin', "They're gonna confirm me into this church." But I remember how important it was for me to be able to say out loud, "I renounce the devil and all of his work and all of his ways." And I meant it. I meant it.

[00:47:22] SL: I bet you did and do.

SM: Oh, absolutely. [*SL laughs*] I'm—I am—absolutely. I live

deeply in my faith. God steps into my studio with me every day that I'm there. Guides me through my life. And brought—has brought the most important people in my life to me every time.

SL: So this is—this happens because you surrendered to your faith, right? It's easy for you to do. Is that what you're telling me?

SM: No.

SL: It's not, no.

SM: No. In fact, I—the woman who first started bringing me to my faith was B.J. Baldrige. And she was—she just lived completely in her faith, and I was kinda noticin' it. I mean, we became best friends, and I was kind of noticing it. She was fifteen years older than I was. But she—every time we went to Walmart, she'd swing down to the front, swing right in, and say, "Thank you, God." And finally one day, I said, "B.J., what're you thankin' God for your parkin' place for?" She said, "Susan, I thank God for everything." "Oh." [00:48:52] And she—my mother became very ill. She was having strokes, and suddenly she wasn't my mother anymore. She was back in the past, the FBI was in the big, black cars out in front of the house again because, you know, that had happened back when I was a girl. Dad had to be protected. Us kids were protected. And she was crazy. And I went to B.J., you know, and B.J. and I walked

together every day, and I said, "I don't know what to do," and she said, "Well, you need a God box." Okay. [Laughter] Sure, B.J. This is the woman that gave me the sign that was—she literally stuck it to my computer. "Good morning, this is God. I'll be handling all of your problems today, and I don't need any help from you." [Laughter] 'Cause I'm such a—so she gave me this little thing that she'd made and little pieces of paper to put in it. And she said, "Just give your mother to God." Okay. Now by this time, I got it with her. This woman was amazing, and her relationship with God was amazing, so I got it. So on my piece of paper, I said, "Please give my mother peace of mind." Well, God was gonna teach me a lesson. And I put it all up, and I put it in my little box, and I put the lid on it. And here comes my sister Karen from California, the queen of hospitals 'cause she's sick all the time, okay. [SL laughs] And she comes in, and she says, "Now we're gonna do this, this, this, and this," and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, all these things started happening. And she took Mother to Innisfree and all, and started treatments. Within two months, my mother wasn't just having peace of mind. She was completely restored.

SL: Wow.

[00:50:52] SM: And God [*whispering in background*] said, "Thank

you very much, this is what I do." Then I knew. Then I knew. And from then on, it's just been—yeah. [*Laughs*] It's what it is. And so—but I didn't know that God had intentions for me. And right after my mother passed in 2000, I was hiring some—like I'm—okay, I'm just like my mama, okay. Not only—I mean, I'm good cleanin' a house, but I hate it. I don't like it. And so I have people clean my house. I have people do all these things for me. And so I had this woman who'd been working for me, and she had been doing a lot of things, and she was moving to California, so I needed somebody new. And so I ran an ad. And Lila shows up. I'm down in my kitchen—this is when all the kitchen was downstairs. She—[*laughs*] she comes in, and she leans up against the counter, she folds her arms, and she says, "Okay, here's the deal." [*Laughs*] She said, "I saw your ad and ignored it. And I had a dream last night, and God told me I'm supposed to come and talk to you because I'm supposed to work for you. I'm supposed to do this. And you can just kick me right out right now if you don't want to have me here after you've heard this, but that's the deal." [00:52:24] And I said, "You're hired." [*Laughter*] And she just walked into my life. Well, Lila was a—now B.J. wasn't—Lila was a Bible-bound Christian woman. So she's the one who gave me my first Bible. And she

was the one to get me to read it. And she said—and 'cause I had Bibles, but she gave me one. And all the Bibles that I had—she said, "Boy, these are really nice Bibles. Do you ever read 'em?" And I went, "No. But I have 'em." "Susan. You read 'em, and you write in 'em. You take your yellow marker, and you put things that you like, you mark things that you like in it." "Really?" "Really." And so I started doin' that. And so we would pray together, and we'd do things together. Her faith was unbelievable. She just—wow. It was—it—B.J. was amazing, but she made B.J. look like a lightweight. Her faith was so astounding. She just—she started every day with prayer. She still does. She goes up on her mountain and rings her bell and prays to God. And she prays for all of us. And she devoted her life to me for years. And when I say devoted, that's what God wanted her to do, so that's what she did. And without her, I would not be sitting here. It wouldn't have happened. She, above all others, believed in me. She believed in what I was doing and why, and she firmly believed that it was godence—God's intent that I do it. And it was his intent that she help me. [00:54:24] So she did. And for the first two years that she was with me, she was out here. And we had chickens, and we had a big garden, and we had [*unclear word*] goin' on. I mean, this

woman is busy. [*Laughs*] Oh, she's busy all the time. And she did all this stuff. And I'd go into my studio, and she would fix my breakfast and bring it in to me. And she would fix a snack and put—I never knew. I never knew. When I stopped, she—the food was there. All my meals. And when I walked out of the studio, I would go lay down and pass out for a couple of hours, and she would be gone when I woke up, and my dinner would be ready. Dinner would be prepared. All I did was draw. All I did was my work. Without that, I would've never been able to become who I became. [00:55:19] But she did something else. Lila is an artist in her own right. And when I saw her work, I was like, "Lila, you should be an artist yourself!" "No. It's not my calling." [*SL laughs*] "Lila!" "'S not my calling." "But you're so go"—"It's not my calling. Shut up." [*Laughter*] Instead, I would come—my drawings—okay. What I do is stupid, okay. It's stupid. [*SL laughs*] I do pen and ink and encaustic wax drawings in enormous size. When I say enormous size, we're talkin' 8x10 foot. We're talkin' 5x7 foot. We're talkin' 4x6 foot. These are stupid they're so big. And I'm doin' wildlife. I'm doin' animals. And they're huge. So I grid to hold 'em together. I work from photography to hold it together. And I work in abstract every day all day long. In abstract that has to come

together as part of a puzzle to make realism. That's what I do. And I work in a medium that is totally unforgiving. So I do it in pencil all the way to finished. And then I lay in the ink. And if I start layin' in the ink and I screw up, that whole time I spent on that pencil drawing is lost. I throw it away, and I don't get to start that drawing over because that drawing is that experience. Now I've gotta do that animal in another experience. So you get real careful.

SL: [*Laughs*] Real careful.

SM: Real careful. I mean, you get really careful, okay. Then I do the ink, and then from the ink, I lay in the color. I lift out the pencil and lay in the color. The process is stupid hard, and it's—and even the encaustic wax pencil that I use, which is Prisma, stains the paper.

SL: Of course.

[00:57:35] SM: So if I've made a li—if I screw that one up, I'm—can lift, but only so much—I'm in just as much trouble. So yeah. And I—but Lila—I'd get stuck. You get stuck when you're doin' stuff like this. I'd get stuck. Nobody can help me. Nobody can help me 'cause nobody does this, okay. Well, Lila is with me all the time. She sees the process. She watches it grow. So I'm stuck on something, and she'll—I'll go, "Lila, I'm stuck!" She'll

come, and she'll look at it. "Have you thought about"—this is what she says. "Have you thought about this?" How she always started, "Have you thought about?" Because usually where I am is I'm sitting at my—in my chair trying to proceed. And I can't because I don't—I can't figure out how to get my ne—how to make this next part happen. "Have you thought about?" And I hadn't thought about that. Her gift—she could see what I was doing. She understood my process, so she could say, "Have you thought about this?"

[00:58:52] SL: Have you got any of her artwork?

SM: Nope. Nothing.

SL: And what was her last name?

SM: Gullick.

SL: Gullick. And . . .

SM: Lila Gullick.

SL: . . . is she still with us or has she passed?

SM: Oh, no, she's still alive. She—and now she's Radar's Rescue. She rescues dogs. She's retired, so she rescues dogs. She does—she has her—she does crafts, and she has her cr—a lit—she lives on a little property, and she has a little craft house that she goes out and does her crafts. I don't even have that stuff because she doesn't do it for anybody else. She does it for

herself. What she does is serve. That's what she does. And her faith is unbelievable. And the only person who has more faith than her is her daughter, Rachel. And Rachel was in a terrible, terrible accident. A guy that was drunk ran up—a kids were—she and her husband were on one of these little motorcycles runnin' along a fence line, and he went up and hit 'em from behind. Shattered most of her. And she's in the hospital, and the doctor says, "She will probably not get up. Her spine is not shattered, but everything else is, and it's damaged. And you're just gonna have to be ready for the—you know, for what's gonna happen to her." And the next morning she was sitting up in bed. "Mama, my angels came last night and healed me." She bore two children after that.

SL: Wow.

[01:00:40] SM: She already had a hole in her heart. She was born with a hole in her heart. Hey! Faith. It's unbelievable. Unbelievable faith. That's how it works. And Lila brought that faith into my life and handed it to me. [01:00:58] But my older sister . . .

SL: Karen?

SM: Karen—said, "Susan. Okay, you're readin' the Bible, you're doin' all this stuff, but do you really know what's goin' on?" because

she knows me. I mean, I'm so dyslexic, what do I really know? [SL laughs] "No." "Well, you need to really learn about this." She said, "So"—and I said, "Karen, you know I can't go to a church. People just hound me, and I feel embarrassed, and blah, blah, blah," and she goes, "Okay." "I'm no good in crowds. Sorry. I just—sI'm very uneasy." And so she goes, "Okay." Unless I'm speakin' to 'em. [Laughs] And she goes, "Okay. I know what you need. You need a mentor. We have those out here." And I went, "Karen, I'm in Eureka Springs." She said, "Well, you need a mentor." Two weeks later, this guy walks into my gallery. "Hello, my name is John Turner, and my wife and I have just moved here, and we're doing Christview Ministries. And I'm a mentor." "Really?" "So if anyone is—if you know anyone that might be interested in studying with me, I will be happy to do that." I studied three years with him. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Whoa! And he taught me who Christ was, what he did. I learned how he felt about everything because this man is a scholar. He had this huge library. We studied out of four different Bibles every session. And I argued with him. And I fought with him. [01:02:49] And he made me understand everything. And it was during this time that Lila and I were down in Sedona doin' the last of the Rockies documentary, okay.

Now . . .

SL: You're in an RV or . . .

SM: Oh, we're in the big RV. She . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

SM: . . . she's driving. And . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

SM: . . . I took—yeah—and that's—and we'll talk about that, but this is about this. And we stayed in—what's that town up above Sedona? Everybody—it's a ski resort. Anyway, we stayed there. I can never think of the name, so don't—it's—never, every, okay. Not even when I'm there. Okay. We stayed up there, and we rented a car and went down to Sedona. And I decided that the Rockies didn't end in the Grand Canyon where I thought they did, they ended in Sedona where they fell apart.

SL: Okay.

[01:03:50] SM: Into those fires. And we're at the—and I wanted to go to the Catholic church there because it's built out of the side of a mountain, a bluff. So I went there, and it's a tourist area. So no, no, no. So we get in the—we get back in the car, and now we're Lucy and Ethel. [*SL laughs*] Lila just turned like to go south. Okay. And that—literally that tone of voice. "We're goin' south." "Okay, turn right right here." "Okay. Says No

Outlet, Susan." "Fine, then we'll go to the dead end." We go to the dead end. It's the parking lot for Cathedral Rock. "Well, we don't have any dollar bills or any change, so how are you gonna park here because you have to pay." "I'll go look." It was broken. [*SL laughs*] Nobody had to pay. So we go and we sit down, and we filmed the last of the Rockies documentary right there. And we talk about how this all just fell apart. Now we're through filming and we're watch—we're gettin' ready for the sunset, so we're gonna take pictures and get video, you know, to voice over and stuff. And we're talkin' about—we think we're hot? This is God's art. This is God's sculpture. This is what God does. And it's just turnin' all these beautiful colors. And about that time, Lila, who's runnin' the video—and I got my camera—she points up to Bell Rock, which is just about a quarter of a mile away, and says, "Yeah, and he just signed it." I said, "What do you mean, 'He just signed it'?" She goes, "Look." Forty stories high in blazing light is a cross. There's no shaft of light to it. It's just there. Now I was like, "I'm with the prayer warrior. I get to see this 'cause I'm with her." I'm goin', "Oh, thank you for this gift, oh"—and it's a vortex. I never believed that before, but then I knew that it was. It's a vortex. [01:05:54] So I'm there, and I come to understand something. Remember my father the

agnostic?

SL: Mh-hmm.

SL: Through all of this stuff that I had done, that niggled in the back of my head. Because my father I've admired more than anything else. And when he said something, it was so. So I believed him. So it was hard for—all the things going on around me, it was still hard for me to believe in Christ as my savior. When he put that cross up there, he said, "Guess what, Susan? I am real. You can believe in me." But I still—it was 'cause of Lila. [01:06:51] Well, now, let's fast forward a little bit. That was in m—like September. In January, we go up to—I wish I could think of the name of it. It's the wonderful place up in—close to Branson where they have all the lodges and everything. And we go up there, and I rent cabins. This is what I would do. And I would take my staff on retreat. I am a business woman. I've got my gallery. By this time Lila's in my gallery working with me. And that's because I asked her to sit the gallery for a couple of weeks, and she did 10,000 a week for two weeks, and I said, "Sorry, Edward, you can go." [Laughter] And I—and so now she's taken over a very different part of my life, but she's—we're on this retreat, and—you know the guy that's got Top of the Rock? It's that same thing, that same group. Bass Pro and

all that.

SL: Johnny.

SM: It's his big lodge. But we were staying in the cabins. Well, I would do my retreat in January. Well, you could rent a cabin for—and there was like, Lila, Cheryl, me, and Jenny. Four of us.

SL: It's not Cedar Lodge, is it?

SM: Cedar—yeah, Cedar Lodge.

SL: Okay.

SM: Yeah. Big Cedar. Big Cedar Lodge.

SL: Big . . .

SM: And we—and I—we were in a cabin, and it would be Lila, Cheryl, Jim's wife, because she was doing all my marketing and all my art stuff, Jenny, who ran my frame shop and all my operations, and me. And the first day we review the year. It's business. Why did we make money and why did we not make money, and what can we do about the fact that we didn't make money? And so we analyzed all that, and we got the charts and everything 'cause it has to be charts, and it has to be little things in color 'cause numbers don't mean anything to me. So I always [laughs] gotta have charts. [SL laughs] And we do all that. [01:08:55] And we spend a whole day on that. No, no. We spend a whole morning on it, and then in the afternoon we start

brainstormin'. And we got a Whack Pack, which is hilarious. And we do all this brainstorming. Ideas, off the wall, crazy stuff. Let's do this! Why can't we do that? We can do anything we want. Over and over and over. And then the next morning, we do it again when we're fresh. Then we stop, and we look at all our ideas, and we pick our best ones, and we turn 'em into actions. Plans. Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. This is when I announce to my staff what I will be drawing that year because we're doing Expedition stuff by this time. Of course. Lila—we're doin' the Rockies. Lila chimes up and says, "Well, I'm gonna need you to do something for Easter this year." And I went, "Lila, we do Christmas. We don't do Easter." "Well, I presold a bunch of giclées, so you gotta do Easter." [SL laughs] Only Lila could get away with that with me. And I'm goin', "What?" She says, "Yeah." [01:10:19] Well, fast forward again. Jenny and I are de—now this is how long ago this is. Jenny and I are delivering *First Light*, the pair of wolves to Buddy and Patty Garner in San Antonio to hang in their home. This is a huge piece. We had to haul it in a trailer with the van and then we got it down there and let the trailer go. And she—we get the heart hung. Now we're headed back. And I called up Lila with an attitude. "All right, Lila. I decided to do a black-maned

Roman lion to go with that cross and that rock, so you gotta find me one." And that's the tone of voice. We fight all the time. Not really, but we're just—anyway. Bitchy. [*Laughter*] Love it. So. She goes, "All right. I will." And so she calls back, and she says, "All right. Dallas Zoo has got 'em, and they're in Broken Arrow." Well it's pourin' down rain in Dallas, so forget that. We get up to Broken Arrow, and that front that was causin' all that rain has come through, and it's clear. The next morning we go out to this compound, and it's not great. I mean, the conditions weren't wonderful. Jenny, who we called Nanook of the North, got so cold she got back in the car. And I'm freezing. Tuckin' my camera underneath to keep it warm and then takin' pictures. [01:11:41] And they've got a beautiful black-maned Roman lion. He's gorgeous, but he's got like four females with him. And so if I go up to him, if I go right up to the—right up to him, he comes to me. Well, can't do that, so I gotta shoot him through two chain-link fences before he ignores me. Pretty soon they got ready to feed, and he went up on this rock, and he's listenin' 'cause they're bringin' his food to him. [*snaps five times*] Got my pictures, leave. Now fast forward. We're in the gallery. Cheryl, Jim's wife, my daughter, who's this amazing artist in her own right, was doin' all my commercial art stuff for

me. All my—everything, all my—it was—so she's back at the computer in the back of my gallery, and I've got the disk. This is back when everything was on a disk. And I take the disk in to her, you know—get your disk at Walmart. I [*laughs*] I take my disk to her, and I hand it to her, and I say, "Just go to the last photos. That's gonna be it." "Okay." I come back to the front of the gallery. Pretty soon from the back of the gallery, I hear, "Mother!" "Yes?" "You need to come back here." So I go back to the back. And she's got him on her big screen, and she says, "Mother, have you looked at this lion?" And I said, "Yeah." She said, "Look." And she points to the wound in his side. Right under his ribs. That's when I see the marks on his feet.

SL: Oh my God.

[01:13:20] SM: God intended this all along. I was supposed to do this drawing. So I did the drawing, and as I'm doing the drawing, it's coming toward Easter, so we're talkin' about the crucifixion. And for me—all I'm hearin' is that Jesus is the lamb of God, and da, da-da, da-da, and he surrendered like a lamb. And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" because I'm learning from John what he went through. "No, he didn't." And John said, "Of course he didn't." He said, "Susan, you're drawing the Lion of Judah. That is Christ. That is Christ that you're drawing, and he

is the Lion of Judah with the heart of a lion." "He saved us all." That was my line. And John came up with the scripture. Isaiah. With the stripes that wounded him, we are healed and made whole. And the drawing happened. And I learned the final lesson that I had to learn about Christ. And we put that drawing in our gallery, and it became a ministry. And we sold the original, but we have the big prints. And people would come in, and it was really fascinating. Some people would walk into the room where he was and just turn around and leave. Just pssh, they were gone. Other people would come in and—perplexed and look at him and look at him and start asking questions. So if Lila was there—and she and I were always there on the same day—one or the other of us would start answering their questions, and we simply told the truth. And you know, this is the truth. This is what happened. And Lila loved it because she said, "Everybody says that God doesn't live in this country. Are you kidding? He appeared here. Of course he's here. He never leaves. You just think he does." You know, she has her—you know, and I'm like wow. So [*laughter*] we're just—and people would write us letters and say that we—that that piece changed their lives. [01:15:28] We had people that would sit down and weep. We had just incredible—it was incredible what happened

with it. And we did it until the gallery closed. Yeah. It was very powerful. And . . .

SL: Great stuff. Great stuff there.

SM: Yeah, great stuff.

SL: I think we need to cut . . .

SM: Okay.

SL: . . . right now.

SM: Time to eat.

SL: Yeah.

[Recording stopped]

[01:15:49] SM: If you have a pride of lions—lions behave very like humans. This is what I'm gonna tell you. You have a pride of lions. Here's all the females, and here's the cubs, and here's the males. And they guard the pride. Any time one of those cubs is a male and it reaches a—and when it becomes a yearling, they drive it out of the pride, and it joins other young males, and they become marauders. Now those marauding lions attack prides, and if the males that guard the prides, which are—they're all the same cats, no new ones allowed—if they have gotten so old that they can no longer guide the pride, they kill 'em or drive them off, kill all the cubs and mount the females. Does that sound familiar? [*SL laughs*] That's what humans do. Okay. Here's

another one. Elephants. If you confine elephants in a habitat, they completely destroy it down to the mud and starve to death. We do the same thing and put concrete over it and call it civilization. We are no different than the elephants. [01:17:15] We are a male-dominant society just like those lions. And our male-dominant society is about acquiring. We acquire. We own. But just like monkeys or any animal that's confined, we soil where we live. So if we live in a—so we started out cavemen. Well, we moved from one cave to the next because the caves got nasty, and we couldn't live in 'em any longer. They made us sick. You talk about the American Indian tribes, and you talk about all these—of course. They have to move. They can't—everything's so fouled that they can't live there any longer. So they leave. So then we became farmers, and we stayed with what we did. And we instinctively are not smart enough to protect ourselves from fouling our nest. And we still aren't smart enough to protect ourselves from fouling our nest. Consequently, we have now, because of our population size, fouled our planet. And as smart as we are and as much as we have learned, the only thing we have learned is how to do is foul our nest even more with plastic, which is so convenient for us. Do we care about our planet? We don't know how. Our instincts

overcome us. Our instincts overcome us every time. We breed. That's what we do. And we are not like the other animals. Our females don't come into heat for us to breed. They can breed at any time. So what do we do? We breed and breed and breed because it's great pleasure, but it's also what we are driven to do. We are driven by our instincts to do that because that's how we prevail. [01:19:41] And why are we like this? Because we're predators. And that's what predators do. They take over. And so what happens? What happens in nature? What happens in nature is those older lions die, those younger lions are marauders—they are limited in how much they can do to survive. They are limited in what they can do to survive. Elephants are limited. All animals are limited in what they can do to survive, and so are we. We're limited. Our brains don't tell us. We argue, and we fight, and we talk about it. And we're gonna do this, and we're gonna do that, and we've gotta fix it. And we can't because we never could. Those are our instincts. And for all of our intellect and all of our beliefs and all the things we care about—it's why we fight, it's why it hasn't happened, and it's why it won't. And so what do we do? We do what we always have done. We look to the moon. We look to Mars. We look to somewhere else we can go, don't we? [01:20:58] And

we spend an enormous amount of time and money on that, and we justify it by saying, "Look at all the things we've done to help our own planet in doing this." That's not why we did it. We did it because our instincts tell us to do it, and we can't overcome our instincts. We can't overcome our instincts to breed, we can't overcome our instincts to conquer, and we can't overcome our instincts to foul our nest. Consequently we cannot overcome our instincts to leave that nest and go somewhere else.

SL: So . . .

SM: And that's . . .

SL: . . . that's a . . .

SM: . . . what . . .

SL: That's a pretty . . .

SM: That's what this is about.

[01:21:40] SL: That's a pretty dark outlook for us and the planet. I mean, we end up in space somewhere enfouling the infinite universe, but . . .

SM: And if you watch—and my husband, Kim, loves all this stuff, so we watch a lot of this stuff on TV and all these guys that are doin' all these TV shows about goin' to the other planets and travelin' space and all of this stuff. We have already got—come up with little tiny satellites we can throw up there.

SL: Yeah.

SM: So now we got all these little satellites. We are so cluttering around our planet now that it's pretty—gonna be hard to find a place to go put something pretty soon. It's what we do. It's what we do. So when these guys talk about—when—all these shows you see, they talk about going to these other planets. The first thing they talk about is what they can exploit from that planet. What minerals does it have? What's it gonna be able to do for us? How're we gonna be able to get it back here? How're we gonna be able to use it and pass it around? And what planets are gonna be inhabitable? So we're gonna go live on Mars, which is perfectly awful, because we don't have enough sense to clean up our own planet, which is wonderful. It's because of—it's our instincts. We can't overcome them.

[01:23:07] And I used to get so mad when you—this poem. I hadn't come to this conclusion when I wrote this poem. I was—I—there's poems that I've written that are so angry. And I talk about Mother Nature and how angry she is and what she does to punish us because she's—we've made her so mad. No. That's not what's going on at all. What's going on is is that we've caused this. The sins of the fathers. It's scripture, darlin'. The sins of the fathers. And when I was doing Animal Tracks in the

[19]90s, and I'm going and meeting with all these big companies, and I'm meeting with their boards of directors and their presidents, and I'm saying, "What are you gonna do?" "Well, we're gonna do this and this and this 'cause this'll make us money and this'll make—and besides that, our kids are the ones that'll fix this." The problem is existing. It's now. Why are you waiting for your kids to fix it? You're living it. You're living it right now. Pay attention. Why are you waiting on your children? Because they're not gonna fix it, either. They don't. Nobody ever fixes it. My father's generation and the generations before him, they didn't know any better. They didn't know any better. Let me tell you something. I'm seventy-nine years old, and my generation knew better. And my son's generation knew better. And his son's generation knows better. And their children know better—will know better. It makes no difference. Knowing better doesn't solve it. Isn't that fascinating?

[01:25:05] SL: Yeah. It is.

SM: It's the truth. It's simply the truth. And what happened for me when I figured all this out, what happened for me was forgiveness. As an environmentalist, I have spent a lot of time being really angry at people who do it for greed, being really angry at people who don't listen, being really angry at all this

that happens. And what I've learned is there's no reason to be angry. There's no reason to be mad at people when they only do what they do. It's not intentional. Not really. And yes, some people are evil. Some people are evil. And they do things intentionally. But that doesn't af—that doesn't—that's not how this planet got this way. This planet got this way because of all of us. Everybody. Everybody. So you're gonna be mad at everybody? [*SL laughs*] No. How do you do that? So find a way to forgive. And when I thought it through, I just went—all my studies with Gary Priest on—the animal behaviorist at the San Diego Zoological Society, all the ground he broke, all the things that I learned through him, every year being with him twice a year, three times a year, learning, learning, learning, learning. And every time he had a revolution, he'd call me, you know. "Oh, I thought of this or I thought of that." No. No. It's our fault. Of course it is. It's our fault. We're so smart. We're so smart. Why can't we figure out a way to overcome our instincts? Why have we not been able to do that? Faith? [*scoffs*] Faith has nothing to do with it, does it?

SL: No.

SM: Nothing. Faith has nothing to do with it. I'm gonna preserve this planet 'cause God wants me to? Oh, well I can show you

scripture where God says here's what I'm supposed to do to this planet. It belongs to me. It's for me to use however I want. That's what God said. Really? Pay attention. So there we are. You want me to read it?

SL: Well, only if you want to. I was just thi—I think this opens up . . .

SM: No, this is . . .

SL: Okay.

SM: Okay.

SL: Yeah.

[01:27:46] SM: "We sit smugly atop our piles of pollution, soundly scolding whomever we please, demanding that we—that they do as we say, not as we do, blithely letting our world become a boiling pot while we point our fingers at others until it boils over. And when it does we will huddle together in the midst of the storm, our hearts broken with the misery of our lies, our children caught in the trap of our irresponsibility, wondering what happened. I wonder if they will forgive us. I wonder if God will forgive us. I wonder if we're smart enough to even care." This was me beginning to understand. "I wonder if we're smart enough to even care." We're not. We're just not. We're not. Isn't that interesting?

SL: It is pretty chilling.

SM: Old, ancient Chinese curse: May you live in interesting times.

[*Laughter*] Yeah.

SL: So that's from a—is that from a Crystal Bridges brochure on a show that you . . .

SM: Yeah, this is *America's Wildlife and Wildlands: The Journeys of Susan Morrison*. And this was my Crystal Bridges—it's the Massey show. And this show was curated by Christopher—Mr. Chris Crossman, who was the founding curatorial director of the museum. He wrote the book. And he is the man who took the museum to the Louvre. Yeah. And . . .

SL: Great guy.

[01:29:40] SM: Well, an amazing, amazing person. And he was the one that said—he helped Alice say, "Guess what? American painters are masters, too." Because until Crystal Bridges said that, they weren't. The Hudson River Valley painters? Hudson River Valley masters. No American painter was called a master. Not until Crystal Bridges opened up their mouth and said it with the power of Mr. Crossman as—he just had amazing power as a curatorial director. And that's how museums get their shows is their curatorial directors. And the—I—the very notion that this guy who was doing this museum in Bentonville, Arkansas, for

heaven's sakes had the power to take a show to the Louvre. And of course, Alice has tremendous power through money, but museums don't think that way. They don't think that way. The way museums—there's a—it's political. The museums are all about their curatorial directors and their curators. And their directors, but their curatorial director is the most important member of their staff. And he was the man. And my blessing was that he curated my show. And then I got to spend an enormous amount of time with him, and he taught me so much about who I was, about what my work meant, and what that meant. Yeah. Blessings. [*Laughter*]

[01:31:31] SL: So there's one story that you told me the other day that I don't wanna drop because it just seems so fantastic to me. And of course, the more that I hear you talk about your father and his interest and job and the quality of life that he provided you as a child—it's starting to come into focus now how in the world that von Braun ended up in your home. [*SM laughs*] So tell me—tell us that story 'cause . . .

SM: Okay, well, Dad—you know, we talked about it. Dad went to California during World War II to build airplanes 'cause you had to. That's what they told him. "You gotta go do that." Well, he became a leader in the aerospace industry. He is really why

NASA happened, one of the driving forces. He was—by this—by the time they were doing NASA, he was president of engineering for Northrop Aircraft. And they were the guys that were workin' with the big rocket scientists and—I mean, von Braun—yeah, von Braun came to our house for dinner and other—and his friends. And after dinner, they'd go into the living room, you know, and sit down and have their drinks and talk. And the way the living room was set up, my sis—big sister and I could hide behind the couch and listen to 'em. They did not talk about what they did. They talked about escaping from Germany. That's what they talked about. They talked about getting over the Alps, and they talked about their parents, who couldn't travel so they had to leave 'em, and they died. They knew they would die. They knew they would freeze to death or starve. But they had to leave them because they had themselves and their children to get out of there. And that's what fascinated Karen and I. [01:33:32] Dad went on to become the senior vice president of Northrop, and he told me that he was senior vice president of personnel. He was senior vice president over executive personnel. So he told the bosses what to do. And I—and suddenly, he was retiring. And we were called out to California. And what happened was when Nixon got elected

president and then he ran for president the second—he didn't get elected. He took over. Okay. And then he ran the second term. He was California. He was a California guy. My dad attended a meeting held for the senior executives of the company. And the president of the company sat 'em all down and said, "Okay, we're all donating \$10,000 to the Nixon campaign," to which my father stood up—now, think of who he was. He was the guy that was like their boss. That guy ran the company, but he was like their boss. And he stood up, and he said, "This is against the law. This is against the law. If you do this, they're gonna catch it, and you're gonna go to jail. Besides that, it's unethical, and I refuse to do it. I will not break the law, and I will not lie for you in court when they're putting you in prison," and walked out. They retired him. And everybody else forked out the ten grand. Nixon won. And then Watergate, and then all those investigations. Well, all those Northrop donations were found out. And I had the FBI in my living room telling me that they had reviewed my account because they were going through my father's children's bank accounts to see if he had laundered money to the Nixon campaign through us. Which of course he had not.

SL: Right.

[01:36:08] SM: President of the company went—he went to prison for six months for doing that. But the lesson that we all learned from my father was, "Your integrity is the most important thing you have. And you do not lie, and you will not lie, and if someone tries to hold you to lying, then you turn your back and walk away." That's integrity. And I don't know about my sisters and my brother, but I sure learned it. [*Laughter*] But then I—Dad and I had a special, very special relationship. I was very, very close to him. My brother was born when I was eight years old. And I was a tomboy. So when Dad was lookin' for somebody to go fishin' or go to the football game or whatever, he took me. And we had a blast. I mean, we had a great time. And then my brother was born and grew up, and by the time my brother was eight, I was like, what. But he—I couldn't do that anymore because he had to spend time with his son.

SL: Well . . .

[01:37:25] SM: And that was the way it was. But I—that was cool because we still—we were just connected. My dad and I were always connected. And he was always there for me. He was always there for me. I went—once on my farm I was just—everything—it was just terrible. It had just gotten perfectly awful. My farm was wonderful, my ranch hands were wonderful,

I had a marriage that was just—and my husband came home for twenty-four hours and left to be gone another four months. And my mom and dad were there. And Dad came into my room, and I was just lost. I was just crying my heart out. And he put his arm around my shoulder, and he said, "Susan, sometimes you have to do what you have to do so that you can be happy, okay? Be happy."

SL: Hmm.

SM: Yeah. Gave me permission. Gave me permission. And I went on with my life myself. Just my life. And changed everything and moved to Eureka. [*Laughter*]

[01:38:28] SL: So the farm that you mentioned?

SM: Oh, my ranch. Yeah.

SL: Your ranch.

SM: ?*Ucha Ama*?

SL: Where was it?

SM: ?*Ucha Ama*? was the name of it. You know, I name everything.

SL: Yeah.

SM: We're in Heronswood, right. Heronswood is where we are right now—?*Ucha Ama*?, which is Cherokee for Dancing Waters.

SL: So was it in Oklahoma?

SM: It was in Oklahoma. I was just over the line. I had Flint Creek

going right through the middle of 450 acres of prime bottom. It was the old John Brown University farm. I had a big—the milk barn and the horse barn, and this beautiful two-story home. It was—and I overlooked the largest spring in the state. And I paid \$110,000 for it.

SL: [*Laughs*] Those were the days.

SM: Those were the days, darlin'.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah, and I ran—I had a stallion and seven mares, Tennessee Walkers. And I ran twenty-five head of mother cows, which meant after calving we had fifty head of cows. I knew how to work the cows. I doctored them. I took care of the cow—a lot of taking care of cows. A lot of taking care of horses. My mare that I rode I broke and trained from the time she was a baby, so she was gentle broke. And she and I were devoted to each other. Her name was Dawn. And my sons grew up there.

[01:39:48] SL: So how did you end up even wanting to do a ranch or live in the country?

SM: Well, I was in New Orleans, and I was—I grew up in LA, but we had our cabin in Crestline, and we came back to Grandma's—and I—there was something—and we would go camping. I mean, we would go two weeks in Havasu when Havasu was a wilderness.

And we'd get in our boat and go down the lake and primitive camp with our tent and everything for like two weeks during spring vacations. Easter vacation it was called then.

SL: And this is in Louisiana?

SM: In the los an—when I was in Los Angeles.

SL: Oh.

SM: When I was in Los Angeles. And Lake Havasu is on the Arizona desert.

SL: Okay.

SM: And I loved it. I loved it. And I loved bein' at the cabin. I loved our cabin up in Crestline. I just loved it. There's something about it that I loved. [01:40:46] We would go to Yosemite and feed the grizzly bears. [SL laughs] And they have pictures of me with my hand on the back of a grizzly bear cub.

SL: Not good.

SM: You know, and they—you know. Well, back then, who cared? I mean, nobody—you fed 'em. They were tame. They didn't bother anybody. They really didn't. I don't know that they don't have—I don't know that they had any more grizzly bear attacks then than they do now. A rogue bear is a rogue bear. They're gonna attack. The rest of them aren't, and they won't. I was on the Chilkoot in Alaska with the grizzlies. I spent three weeks

with 'em. Now they are there with the fisherman. They steal—  
[laughs] they steal their fish. They have all these games—they  
play and all these things they do, but they're not aggressive  
bears, and they're not there to hurt anybody. But you cross—it's  
really interesting. The river comes in from the bay, and the big  
salmon are in there, and then there's a lake, a small lake—about  
four-mile lake, and you cross over that lake and go to the other  
side. You don't get outta your boat. Those bears'll kill you. You  
hit the shore and you're dead.

SL: Yeah, I . . .

SM: Because they're hunted. Those bears are hunted. There's a  
difference.

SL: I worked in Yellowstone for the Department of Interior, and they  
always said that if you get between a bear . . .

SM: A sow and her cub.

SL: A sow and her cub. That—bad news. Or if you get between  
them and their food, their mound . . .

SM: Yep.

SL: . . . their food stash, they'll kill . . .

SM: Their food stash. That's bad news.

SL: Then you're in trouble.

[01:42:25] SM: That's people that are hikin' trails. You know, when

you're in—when we used to go do Yosemite no—you weren't on a trail. You were in your car, and the bears came up to be fed.

SL: Right.

SM: So you weren't out in their habitat. There's a difference.

SL: Yeah, we called those bear jams.

SM: Yeah, bear jams, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. Yeah. So you were at Yellowstone.

SL: Yeah, I was paid . . .

SM: We had . . .

SL: Nineteen seventy. I was paid to look for diseased white pine trees.

SM: Wow.

SL: And [*laughs*] found lots of diseased white pine trees where they shouldn't be. But they also said that they have a—the incidents there for couples that are camping out, a boy and a girl in a tent. It's the guy that gets hurt.

SM: Yep.

SL: They'll leave the girl alone.

SM: They leave the female alone.

SL: It's interesting stuff.

SM: Well, predators . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:43:19] SM: Predators know predators. Female's no threat. The male's a threat.

SL: So I got to see my share of bears out in the wild because we were . . .

SM: Boy you did, oh yeah.

SL: . . . cross—we were cross country, you know, we were . . .

SM: Oh, yeah, you were . . .

SL: . . . follow the creek beds down and [*SM laughs*] out. And what I've saw—I mean, I saw plenty of black or brown bears. But the grizzlies—their eyes were different. They look human. Their eyes were human. And I was always stunned whenever I came across one that I was close enough to see their eyes. And there was so—an intelligence about . . .

SM: Well . . .

SL: . . . them that . . .

SM: . . . they're—okay. They are—they're very like us because they're the top of the food chain where they are.

SL: Ah.

[01:44:10] SM: When you're amongst grizzly bears, no other animal is at the top of the food chain but them until we walk in with a gun.

SL: Right.

SM: And we can kill them. But we're the only ones who can. The only thing that'll kill a grizzly's another grizzly.

SL: Yeah.

SM: And they kill their sows, and they kill cubs. It's what they do. Those males kill everything.

SL: We were always told if you have to run, run downhill.

SM: Yeah, 'cause they don't do down—well, they don't . . .

SL: They throw their weight . . .

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . and they'll . . .

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . they'll topple.

SM: Yeah. They might.

SL: Yeah. They might. [*Laughs*]

SM: You'll probably fall before they do.

SL: Yeah. And they can run really fast.

SM: Oh, really fast.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

SM: Yeah. So can alligators.

SL: Well. So much for bears.

SM: [*Laughs*] But, yeah. Where were we?

[01:45:03] SL: Well, so you had this animal footprint thing or—  
didn't you? There was some kind of . . .

SM: Animal Tracks.

SL: Animal Tracks. Now tell me about—how did Animal Tracks come about?

SM: We're off our path through time. We must find our way back.

[*SL laughs*] Follow the animals. They know the way. The answer is in their tracks. Animal tracks. When I did my big gallery in Eureka in the early [19]80s, Helen Walton called me up and came to see me. Sam's business was growing, and when—and gum—they landed at the Fayetteville Airport, and the guys he was trying to hire, they'd get off the plane, and their wives would get back on the plane. [*Laughter*]

SL: Of course.

SM: Because you know, the first question when you land at the Fayetteville Airport is, "Do they have hospitals here?" you know.

SL: Right.

[01:46:07] SM: And Helen was trying to find a way to help encourage these people to come because their wives were gonna hate it. And so she called me up, and I had just done my upper floor of my gallery and my—and the entrance. It was all really pretty. And the gallery looked like somethin' outta New York. I

mean, we really did it just right. It was awesome. And she just loved it. And she knew that if she could bring these wives into that gallery and we could get together and—you know, and I'd be there, and I'd help her talk to them 'cause I do that pretty good but—and take 'em to lunch at the Victorian Sampler 'cause that was the place where you could get decent food, and it was nice, that they might wanna stay after all. And there was a couple shops starting to—most of Eureka was still boarded up. And so that's what she started doin'. And it worked. And she and I just—I don't know. My mama was all the way in California. And she was the same age, and I just loved her. I mean, you had to be some kind of stupid not to love Helen Walton. She had so many of the characteristics that I admired in my father, and so did Sam. And ultimately, they all met my parents, and they all—you know, they all just loved each other. And Helen and Sam just kind of adopted me. You know, they just like, "Well, George and Georgia are out in California. We'll keep an eye on Susan." 'Cause that's what people that do.

SL: Yeah.

[01:47:47] SM: Yeah. And so Helen decided that I needed to meet her daughters. And [*laughs*] so we met at the Post Office in Fayetteville when that was the only decent restaurant in

Fayetteville, but it was a nice one. And I met her daughters, which were Lynne, Jim's wife, and Rob's first wife and—I can't remember her name—she always remembers mine, though, that's very embarrassing—and Alice. Well, Alice and I just hit it off. I mean, we just had a lot in common, and I really liked her. I liked how bald faced and abrupt she was. It's my kinda girl. I just like that. And we just hit it off. And so Alice and I started hangin' together. And so when it was time for Helen's birthdays or anybody's birthday, we always went to the ranch and, you know, my kids and Helen and Sam and—you know. And it was—so this time it was December, and it was Helen's birthday. And we're sittin' there havin' dinner, and Sam says, "Susan, I got something I want you do for me," and I said, "I ain't doin' t-shirts. Forget it." [*SL laughs*] And he went, "No, no, no, no, no! This is different. This is something else. And so it's about the environment, and I'd really like to use your animals, and I just—and you need to talk to Bill Fields." "Okay." You know. [01:49:20] So now it's sometime in January, and Helen and I are doing these meetings for NMWA, the first meetings. They were havin' a big conference in Eureka, and Pat Fields is on the committee. And Helen says, "So did you go see Bill Fields?" and I said, "I don't even know how to find him," and Pat said, "Well,

he's my husband. I know how to find him." And so they hooked me up to go see him. [*SL laughs*] And that's how Animal Tracks started. And Bill—I went to see him, and he says, "Okay. We want to do an environmental education program. And we don't know if we wanna do calendars or date books or posters or what. And I got these guys in Canada that we really like their book, and so we'll have—we'll probably have them write it," and he hands me the book. And he says, "And we wanna use your art for the hook." And these—this is a sales and merchandising guy talkin'. Hook. My art was gonna be the hook. I thought, "Hmm. Yeah." The environmentalist in me kicked in. What an opportunity. So he says, "I'm gonna go—I gotta go to China, and I'm gonna be gone for two weeks, and I'll be back in a couple of weeks, and so I want you to bring me your concept." [*SL laughs*] [Silently says "Two weeks."]

SL: Yeah.

[01:50:32] SM: So I come home, and the first thing I'm doin' is I'm lookin' at that book. And I didn't like it. But it was loaded with information. So I had to have Randy help me because remember I'm really dyslexic, so he would dig out the facts that I needed. And then I put together this idea that there would be these animals that would lead you on this quest to save the

environment. And the grizzly would tell you about the problem, and the baby tigers would go in search of the answers to the problem, and the lion would be speaking out, and the snow leopard would be words to the wise, and the leopard would be where to go for more information. But the wolf would lead you on your quest to save the environment. And I brought it all back, and I brought him the concept, and he had Chloe Ann Russell, who was their environmental officer there. And he leaned back in his chair, and he said, "I don't think we need those Canadians, do you?" [*Laughter*] I'll never forget that line. And I went, "I'm gonna be writin' this? Me?" And I immediately said, "I read this to you. You don't understand. I'm very dyslexic, and it'll look awful." And he said, "Susan, I got editors. Don't you worry about a thing." And so we started. [01:52:07] And I will never forget when we showed it to the Environmental Advisory Board, which—of which Hilary Clinton was the chairman. Chairwoman. And we presented the whole thing. And the first thing she said was—because they were using my document still, okay. No editors yet. She said, "I think if it's going to be an environmental education program, we need to have proper sentence structure." [*SL laughs*] Or something like that. And I'm like, oh, so embarrassed. And to which Bill—

"Don't worry, editors will handle all of that." "Well, in that case I really like it." [*Laughter*] So there you are. And the Environmental Advisory Board—the guy that was—Redford's organization, NRDC . . .

SL: Harrington?

SM: No, NRDC.

SL: Oh.

SM: Robert Redford's group that—they're all—it's all the legalities of the environment. They do all the suing. They do all the lawsuits. His director sat that board. And after everything settled down, he tapped on the table, and he said, "I just wanna say that this is the single most important thing to ever come out of this room." I will never forget those words coming from him because that—they were the ones—they were the only ones at that time battling for the environment. Really battling. Although the Environmental Defense Fund does a lot, too. And that came later. [01:53:57] But Animal Tracks began. That's how it began. And so we did all the posters—oh, and but one of the things I said to Bill, and this was hilarious, okay. So he's going, "We're gonna do all these millions of posters," and I said, "Time out. You have to used soy-based inks, nontoxic, soy-based inks. You have to do eight-color printing because it's fine

art. And you have to put it on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper." "Well, that cuts it down to about 15 million a year." [*Laughter*] And I'm going, "Fifteen million?" you know. I ge—25 million. It was 25 million posters. They did it. And so—and we were on our way. And I did a poster a month. I drew the animal. I wrote it. I went to meetings every week. I met with my group. Because we decided that in the morning, and he said, "Go have lunch," and I came back, and I had a team of eleven people that he had given me to do the project. And one of those people was Jack Higham. I think it was Jack Higham. Yeah, Higham. And I think it was Jack. And yeah—or maybe John. But we called him Higgin. [*SL laughs*] Magnum, P.I.?

SL: Magnum, P.I. Higgins.

SM: What was that guy's first name? I'm—was it Jack Higgin? Or John?

SL: Well, I think they just called him Higgins.

SM: Higgin. So we called him Higgin because he was just like him. [01:55:38] But he was the guy who brought Mac computers to their art department at Walmart. They were tryin' to do art on PCs . . .

SL: IBMs.

SM: . . . which at that time was just un—you know, you—there

wasn't anything. And so I was the first project they did on their brand-new Macs. And Paul Higham. Paul Higham is—Paul was his name. And he pretty much ran the project. Bill Fields ran all the sales and merchandising. He ran Paul, but Paul ran us. And I had my editors, and I had all my people. And one of my favorite stories is we were doing the paper—the one on paper. And wood. The poster on wood and paper. And I did all my research through the guy that was the fire chief for Santa Barbara County, which is the highest fire-rated county in California. In all the country. And *[laughs]* I did everything through him. So everything I said, everything that I recommended on the posters to do, he approved. Well, Women in Timber came after me. And I am so hated in Susanville of all places that if I go there, they'll blow up my motorhome and kill me *[SL laughs]*, which I just think is hilarious. But anyway, it was true. And they pitched a fit.

SL: Why?

[01:57:26] SM: Because they didn't like what I was sayin'. I was sayin' to plant trees close to your home, to let tress grow, to do all this stuff. And they're all about, no, knock 'em all down, you know, let's make money. Let's knock 'em all down. And so they came back and said if we—if people plant trees near their home

in California, they'll have fires. Well, the reason why is because at that time in California, the California legislature and the California insurance companies and the California timber industry were all in cahoots. And people had cedar shake rooves on their houses. They were tinderboxes.

SL: Right.

SM: So. Bill Fields says, "Just get a letter from him. Just get a letter from him." And this guy—this was his big opportunity, and he just laid it down. And when he did—'cause Sam has—and I was talkin' to Sam all the time, and Sam said, "Remember, Susan, just tell the truth. That's all I ask. You can say what you need to, but you tell the truth." And so I did. It was the truth. And so Bill's like—when he got the letter, he called me up, and he goes, "You gotta come down here right away. We got this letter." And so I go down there. I'm think, "Oh my god, what"—and he goes, "This is fantastic! This is it! This is exactly what—the kind of thing we're talkin' about. Those people are wrong. This—you're right. Thi—you're—Susan, this is fantastic," you know. [01:59:03] But one of the things that I did on it—one of the things that I said was that you should do recycled paper towels, recycled napkins because they're using wood pulp otherwise. Well, Procter & Gamble just went berserk. And I

mean—so they called a teleconference. And I go in for this teleconference, and I've got my editors with me, and I've got, you know, my people. I got my team. My Walmart team's with me. And they—these are their environmental officers. And they're lookin' at this dumb blonde, you know. [Laughs] Right, that's just doin' these posters with these animals on 'em. And they look at me, and they say, "We have a real problem with you recommending this because—don't you realize what gets in those vats for those paper towels that you're recommending? Rats. And those—they don't sterilize those paper towels. They don't do that. So all of that's on those towels." Well, I'd researched them, and I leaned back, and I leaned forward, and I said, "'Scuse me? Really? Well, shouldn't you have warnings on your paper towels because you don't, either. You don't sterilize them." And he went, "We'll get back to you." [Laughter] And they all left. And we marched out of there—[snaps]

SL: Yeah.

SM: You know, we were hot stuff. We just loved it. And we go back, and Bill calls me, and he goes, "Susan, you won, but we lose."

[02:00:56] SL: Uh-oh.

SM: "We can't put those—we just can't." He said, "They're one of our biggest vendors, and we cannot put that on the posters. We

just can't." And I said, "Okay. We tried." You know, all you can do is try. Well, we didn't tell Higham that we knew. So he calls a meeting, right. We go in for this meeting, and he walks in, and he's just like [hangs head] [*Laughter*] "I don't know how to tell you guys this." And we're, "Really? What?" And he says, "Well, Susan, we're gonna have to change the poster." [*Gasps*] "Really? We already knew." And I thought he was gonna just die. Here we're laughin' and carryin' on. Yeah. That's how we treated him, poor guy.

SL: Oh.

SM: But we made him go through all of that. He was just—because you had to understand, this guy had a heart that was like this big, and he was so afraid that he was gonna hurt my feelings, that I was gonna be—he was gonna upset me. The last thing he ever wanted to do was upset me. That was just so magic. But so that's what we did. [02:02:02] And those kinds of things occurred, but what happened was after all of our effort to explain everything to the customers and do all of this, the posters went into the stores and teachers from kindergarten all the way up through university level came to the store managers and said, "Give me all you got." They never made it on the floor.

SL: Wow.

SM: And we had an environmental education program that just fit this. And the reason why was because there wasn't one.

SL: Right.

SM: We've filled that void. And it became—oh, it was so celebrated. The Good Housekeeping Green Seal for environmental education—Walmart won the United Nations award for corporate excellence in the environment for win—and one of 'em was for *Animal Tracks*. And the other was their ecomarts and things like that. So it was incredibly important. [02:03:03] And then so a year's gone, and now we're puttin' out product, and Bill's saying, "You're another Beatrix Potter. We're just—stuff's flyin' out of the stores." And we're just havin' a—both—it was so much fun. We're just havin' such a great time. And we did the book. Sam said, "I want a book," so Bill said, "Sam wants a book." And I said, "Okay." So we just generally went to ?Gary Widener? . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . at Blackwood and Martin. And I said, "Gary, we need a book," you know, and he goes, "Okay. No problem." And so they—he said, "Susan, the posters are solid. Let's just take 'em and make a book out of 'em." I said, "Okay." So that's what he did. He made this great book out of the posters. And he just

did a fabulous job. [02:03:44] And Bill put 'em in the stores 'cause he's sales and merchandising. That's what he does, and they sold 80,000 in the first month, and Sam went berserk. He had a cat. He said, "What're you guys doin'?" This is educational material. We don't sell it. We give it away." They had to haul all those books back to the warehouse, and I had to go to Dallas for this two days of all these shoots for advertisements that were going out to say the books are going to be—the books are free. Teachers can come to the stores and pick 'em up. And that's what we did, and he gave away—'cause we printed 250,000, so whatever was left, he gave away all the books that were left. And then I did a book tour. Nine states. Thirty schools in two months.

SL: Wow.

[02:04:45] SM: And . . .

SL: Wow.

SM: Yeah. Or was it three. It was two months. And that's when I became educated. That's when I learned about things that were going on in the environment that I never imagined and how important Animal Tracks was. And the most telling place that we went—there were others, but this was the most telling.

Kingsport, Tennessee. And they had Monsanto and Kodak. And

this is when Kodak was rockin' film. And they were a cancer cluster.

SL: Yeah.

SM: And when we went to the school—everywhere we went, we were welcomed with open arms. The principals introduced us. We were in a big auditorium. I spoke to anywhere from 150 to 5,000 to 9,000 kids. And now I come in, and the woman who's running the office says, "You will go upstairs up to the second floor." And I go up to the second floor, and here's this group of teachers. And they said, "Our principal would not—does not approve of this, but we're doing it anyway. We'll bring the kids in and sit 'em on the floor in the hall, and you'll speak to 'em." So that's what I did. They gave me my—and I did my—and I tell this story and la ta-ta ta-ta. And this is an elementary school. And we're done, and at the end of when I'm done, I say, "So what are some things that you think you can do to help save the environment? What are your ideas?" Hands start shootin' up. "My baby sister just died of brain cancer." "Well, my baby brother died of this cancer." And that—and, "Well, and we all had"—and I'm like, "What is going on?" These children in their innocence are telling me that they're all dying. [02:06:46]

They're a cancer cluster. So I do this through the morning, and

I go to the motorhome, and I just lose it. I'm cr—but we have to do a luncheon with the teachers. I'm crying. I can't ge—it was horrible. I cannot tell you what it is like to have children look at you, and "My baby sister just died of brain cancer." My baby sister. I mean, it's horrible. It's just unbelievable to experience that. So now we go in. And they got Randy at one end and me at the other, and here's all these teachers. And the ones that are pro the factories are here [motions to the right] and the ones that are against 'em are here [motions to the left]. And they're doin' this [jabs index fingers at one another]. And they're fightin'. And finally I just went, "Stop. You people have to figure out a solution. You've got a problem. And your problem is that these guys support you." And here's what Randy said. He leaned back in his chair. He was a man of few words. And he said, "Actually, what you need to do is open an industrial park, invite in only non-polluting, environmentally responsible companies, and go to work for them, and let those people just shut down 'cause they got nobody to work for 'em." What an amazing idea. That's how you solve a problem. That's how you make it work. And you know what, they never did it.

SL: Of course not.

[02:08:27] SM: Course not. Goes back to what we talked about.

What happened was Kodak went out of business, and Monsanto does what Monsanto does. And so far as I know it's still every bit as much a cancer cluster as it ever was. I don't know. I can't bear to go back. Because you know and I know—and the more I know, you know. It's everywhere.

SL: The darker it gets.

SM: The darker it gets. And now, you know, what we're learning with all of these new things we're learning—we're learning about all these people who live on the side of the city where all the pollution is, and so they all die. And all these people over here live where it isn't. So they don't. All these people, their homes and schools are put underneath the big powerlines, so their children die, or they die, but nobody else does. So it's just, you know—it is what it is. And now here in Arkansas, we have all our power companies, who are on a grid, which is not really very smart 'cause [*laughs*] they're easy to take down, and what are they doing? Pesticides. They're putting herbicides down that are known carcinogenians, and they're getting in everybody's water. They get in their yards. They spray them next to their houses. When they came to do it here, I said no. So they cut here, but they're still doin' it up on the road. And I'm on a well. You know, it's just—who cares? And it—but that's what

happens. [02:09:59] And pollution is now so rampant that there is really no safe place. It's in our water, it's in our air, it's in our food. It's so horribly in our food. So there we are.

SL: Lunch.

SM: Lunch. Speaking of food, let's eat. [*SL laughs*]

[Recording stopped]

[02:10:19] SL: Go ahead.

SM: Rollin'?

SL: Yeah. Yeah, we should be rollin'.

SM: We need to talk about my solo exhibition at the National Museum of Women.

SL: Okay. So how—so we're talking about the animal footprints.

SM: Animal Tracks.

SL: Animal Tracks. I don't know why I keep saying footprints.

SM: Animal Tracks.

SL: Animal Tracks. And this was a massive . . .

SM: Animals don't have footprints. They have tracks.

SL: This is—[*SM laughs*]

SM: Sorry. Shall we scold him?

SL: This is a massive program that you helped spawn, generate, build, manage with the . . .

SM: It was done with my art, and my—I wrote it, and we used my

art. It was marketed through Walmart. They did all that. I did it 'cause Sam asked me to. That's how that all happened.

[02:11:19] One of the things that happened when we started the book tour was that Michael Thomas was hired. Michael Thomas was retiring and moving to Northwest Arkansas.

SL: Okay.

SM: He had been the president of Cartier's. And then he created—and kind of—he retired from that, and he had done a marketing firm in New York. And they were tryin' to get him down here. And he decided that he would come. So Walmart hired him to be my publicist. And he became my mentor. He was one of the brightest and one of the best in his business ever. He went on to do a lot of things for Fayetteville, including the library, the arboretum, all of that. He did that. That was him. [02:12:27] When I first met with him, he sat me down, and he talked to me about all the opportunities that Animal Tracks had for us and what he would be pursuing. One of the things that he did not mention was my work. What he talked about was the book tour which he was managing. He set up all of the TV shows, all the news shows, all the talk shows, radio and television, that we did. He set up any special event that I did, you know, like something besides a school. He set all that up. He set up all the schools.

He set up all of it. He coordinated with the Walmart—Walmart had green—green something. And they were the people—everyone—every store had a green—a person who was their green coordinator. So they managed everything that the stores did that was environmentally responsible and Animal Tracks. So he worked with all of them. But one of the things he did that I didn't know about was—oh, and he—every day I woke up to him calling me and telling me what my *[laughs]* schedule was for that day 'cause he knew me. "You don't need to give her anything more in advance. Give her her day," you know. And he and Helen—Helen was very deeply involved in a lot of this. Way behind the scenes, but very deeply involved. Because remember Helen and I—when I talked about the committee meeting we were doing was for the National Museum of Women? [02:14:14] Well, there's kind of an interesting story. *[Laughs]* Here we go again. I sat on the Arkansas Arts Council for four years. Governor White appointed me. Governor Clinton kept my appointment. And after about my third year, somewhere around in there, we were having a funding meeting, and I had a group of Little Rock artists come to my gallery in Eureka to meet with me. They needed exhibition space. "What? You have the Arkansas Arts Center." "But we're not allowed to exhibit there."

"Oh, come on. Come on." So I didn't believe 'em. But I called the Arts Center. "Hello, my name is Susan Morrison. I'm an Arkansas artist, and I would like to know what is required in order to apply to be—to exhibit in your arts center." "I'm sorry. It is against the policy of the Arkansas Arts Center to exhibit Arkansas artists." It's true. It's what she said. Okay. Hung up the phone. Called my chairman, and I went [*laughs*] this is what's goin' on, and she says, "All right. We're gonna nail 'em." So now it's time for the funding meeting. And I had another guy that was on the council, and he was a teacher in Conway, and I invited him to join me in helping get exhibition space in Little Rock for Arkansas artists. He wouldn't touch it. Wouldn't touch it. Okay, fine. So I did it. And so when it came time for the meeting, and we're sitting there, and he's—comes in and sits—he—they sit, you know, they sit in front of the table where you're sitting. And they—you start tellin' 'em what you're gonna be funding and what you're not. And it came time for me. [02:16:28] And I said, "Mr. Wolfe, we seem to have a problem. And I'd like you to clarify this for me." And I told him what occurred. And I said, "Now surely that isn't so." And he said, "Oh, no, absolutely it is." "What? You're the Arkansas Arts Center." "That's right. And we're here to educate the people of

Arkansas and teach them what fine art is." Or whatever. You know, and I'm like, "Oh, you s"—so we've started to banter. And finally I got mad. And I said, "Look. There is no other space in Little Rock for Arkansas artists. You need to be giving them shows." "If you think I'm gettin' in the business of Sunday-afternoon painters, you got another think comin'." I stood up and s—and he did this with his hands on the table standing over me. I stood up, met him eye to eye with my hands on the table and said, "Do you mean to tell me you cannot come up with twelve professional Arkansas artists in a row?" And he stormed out of the room. And I made headlines. "The Blonde Bitch from North Arkansas." But [*laughter*] anyway. So we cut his funding. He left. We cut his funding 10 percent to pay for that. All hell broke loose. Ultimately, he did the Arkansas decorative gallery. Do you remember that in Little Rock?

SL: I kind of remember it.

SM: And that was so Arkansas artists would have a place to be exhibited. Because they're not fine-art artists, they're decorative-art artists. Ha. That just really made me mad.

SL: [*Unclear words*]

[02:18:17] SM: So. Fast forward. [*Whispering in background*] So

Helen and I are doin' this big project, and we've got all these women coming, and there's 400 people coming to Eureka Springs. There's a big exhibit, and it's all for the National Museum of Women. They do all this stuff. And Helen and I just busted it. And Mary Springer and I—I mean, she put together—she helped put together the show. She was fantastic. She got all those people there. It was unbelievable what was goin' on in that auditorium. It was huge. Well, Helen announces the jur—the judges for the—that will make the decisions of what artist got from Arkansas, and there were three. Townsend Wolfe was one, and the other two were two other men. She was booed. Four hundred women were sitting in that artist—in that audience, all accomplished artists, and they booed her.

[02:19:09] And she turned to me, and she said, "What's wrong?" I said, "Helen, you named all men." And so she walked up, and she said, "Well, I met with Mr. Wolfe, and I met with these people, and they told me that there were no women who were qualified." She got booed again. And I walked up to her, and I said, "Helen"—and I—and—'cause we're on a stage talking in a microphone. I said, "You need to know, and every woman in this room will tell you that there are ample women in this state who are qualified, that can do this job." And she stood

there, and she said, "Then by God, they'll be doin' it." Then she got applauded. [*Laughter*] Because she was always for women's rights. Come on, potty parity. Are you kidding?

SL: Yeah.

SM: She was all over that stuff. So Here we go. [02:19:54] Fast forward. They set the committee, and the only person who was left on the committee that was a man was Townsend Wolfe. So when we're putting together all these shows and doing all this stuff, Helen's sayin' to me, "Oh, Susan, this is gonna be so wonderful. You're gonna get to be part of this women's group and go to NMWA." I went, "Not gonna happen." She said, "Of course it is." I said, "Helen, no, it isn't. Townsend sits on that committee. I won't get past the regional show." "Oh, come on." She didn't believe me. So now Helen didn't drive by this time. She had her Lincoln, and she had her driver, but if she—but she didn't like to ask him to do things for her at night. So and usually she had so much—so we took her down there. And Helen and I—and this is in Fort Smith, and this is Dennis House. This was hilarious. This huge mansion. And you're walkin' up this long driveway with all these trees flanking it. And she's lookin' at me, and she's lookin' at them. She goes, "You know how many people they gotta have living with them to keep this

place clean?" She [*laughs*] just hated it. It was so cute.

[02:21:07] So we walk on up, and we go in. And she's lookin' at—and finally she comes to me, and she says, "Where's your piece? Didn't you enter?" And I said, "Yeah." She said, "But it's not in here." I said, "Of course not. It wasn't accepted."

"Wasn't accepted?" I said, "I told you." She said, "Yeah, you

did, didn't you?" So fast forward. Wilhelmina Cole Holiday was

one of her dear friends. She was why Helen was doing all this

because they were such close friends. She's the founder of the

National Museum of Women in Washington, DC. [02:21:52] So

Michael Thomas, who is also a dear friend of Billie's, met her in

New York to show her my Animal Tracks portfolio and suggest

that this might be a wonderful show for the museum, and

wouldn't it be nice if they could do it in like, say, September, and

he's talkin' to her in April. She's all over it. They built a gallery

for me on the mezzanine of their museum, that exists today, so

that that show could come in on schedule. Because as you

know, museums at that level—those shows are scheduled out

five years in advance. And that's what happened. Now bottom

line, he—if he had taken my work and showed it to her and it

was not of the caliber to be shown in that museum, she would

have patted him on his head and sent him on his way because

that museum has standards, and she meets them no matter what, okay. [02:22:59] So my work met the standards of the museum. And I am the first Arkansas artist, the only Arkansas artist that I know of to solo there, and the first wildlife artist to ever solo there. I don't know if I'm the only one. That was a while ago. Because my work was at the caliber to be in her museum. And isn't it interesting that it wasn't until Crystal Bridges and Alice and Mr. Crossman that I could be called a master even though that is a much more highly celebrated museum. Isn't that interesting? But that's how that happened, and it's an important, important thing. [02:23:40] But the other part of this story that's so important is—the opening was unbelievable. Hilary came and all the news media came and all this wonderful stuff. And it was just fantastic, and our board was all there, and it's [*unclear word*] and all these fancy people. And I'm just like, wow, you know, this is really cool. [*Laughter*] The next day the show opened—no, that was Saturday night. Monday was the first day that children were being bused into the museum to see the exhibit. So Helen's standin' on this si— Helen. Wilhelmina's standing on this side, and Alice is on my other side. And here come all these kids. They're pointin' to the original, and next to each one was the poster. "I've got that one

and that one and that one." "I got that one 'cause I did such a pre"—"My teacher"—you know. And I turn around, and this woman, who is one of the queens of high society in New York, is crying. I said, "Billie, are you okay?" She said, "You don't understand. Children come into museums with their hands in their pockets and their heads down. These children have ownership of this art. They're just—ah." Well, Alice is standing there. If you wanna know one of the reasons why her museum behaves towards children as it does, it was that very experience. So what happens when things happen? It's just like this. And if Animal Tracks did nothing else, it changed how museums started treating children because that woman was all powerful and saw it. She saw what happened. It was the most highly visited show in the history of the museum.

SL: Whoa.

[02:25:27] SM: Why? Because it was something people wanted to come and see.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I mean, you know, it's really . . .

SL: I'm going wow.

SM: . . . it's really interesting. It's just hilarious. And it was—years ago—you know who James Hendricks is? Not the guitarist, but

the artist.

SL: N—that . . .

SM: He's an Arkansas artist.

SL: Kay.

SM: He did the moonscape for the Smithsonian. He became the head of the department of the University of Boston in Amherst.

SL: Wow.

SM: He was an amazing guy. I met him in Little Rock years ago. We did a show together in one of the galleries there. I think it was the Hyatts, quite frankly. And we were all talkin' about stuff, and he was the experienced artist. He was the one who had been around the block, and I was the new kid, you know, and there was a couple oth—we were all new kids. He wasn't. He was their anchor artist. And we were talking about art critics. And he laughed, and he said, "You want 'em to love you or hate you. Because if they're lukewarm, nobody'll come and see it. But if they love it, they wanna come and see who they love, and if they hate it, they wanna come and see who they hate." Well, the art critic for the *Washington Post* loved my art, hated what I was doing. [SL laughs] Panned me. Panned me. But couldn't resist describing my art very well. So we used excerpts [laughs] of what he said. But he didn't understand what we were trying

to do. He's—you know, he was an elitist. He was an environmental elitist, which is a mistake. If you don't take the environment to everybody, then what are you doing? You're waste . . .

SL: Right.

[02:27:19] SM: You know. It's—the elitists already know what to do. It's the general public that doesn't.

SL: Right.

SM: And that was our point. But it was really an interesting thing because people just flocked into that show. Flocked into it. And the guy that was the director of the Environmental Defense Fund came. And he literally wrote in my book, you know—he just—glowing reports, and then he had a conference that Joe Biden attended as a senator and spoke, and I got to sit and have lunch with him when he was a kid. And—for the en—and I was invited because of Animal Tracks. And we gave everybody posters. And I was so impressed with Biden at that time because he really was—I mean, I met a lot of senators, especially after I did that thing for Clinton where I did the thing for the Southern Joint Legislative Conference, the first one. I did the Arkansas piece, the—*Eden Falls*.

SL: Kay.

SM: With the Arkansas poem. I'd met a lot of senators. And I'd met a lot of senators in the environmental work that I did in New Orleans. Cynical is a good description. No. And we had two senators in Arkansas that were not cynical. [02:28:47] David and Dale. David Pryor and Dale Bumpers. They literally put us on the map as—those two guys as our senators put us on the map as a state that had integrity. They were so important to us. And you know . . .

SL: Right.

SM: . . . it all came and went. It was in times and seasons, you know. But yeah. It was wonderful to get to meet him, and it was wonderful to get to do that. What an opportunity. But that all came from that show at the museum. And all those years later when I did my show at Crystal Bridges—and we used my work to introduce Crystal Bridges to the land, and it was Alaska and all the other expeditions combined. And the—you know, and my Rockies documentary. And everything. It was just magnificent. I kept thinking—you know, and Mr. Crossman had made very clear to me, "Susan, solo exhibitions in this museum are done by masters." "Excuse me." It was really a shame that this had to come so late in our history because there were so many artists that deserved to be called masters way before me,

you know, that their work surpassed—the amazing thing about it is that we have so many artists in this country that their work surpassed any European artist, anyone. It was just better.

Different, but better.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

[02:30:23] SL: Let me think. We were—there was one show where you had submitted a piece, and somehow or nother, someone told you to come . . .

SM: Oh!

SL: . . . and get it.

SM: This I tell kids. This is what I tell high school kids that are taking art. Arts, Crafts, and Design show in Little Rock. Arts, Crafts, and Design show—this was in the mid [19]70s. And it was put on by the Junior League. Let me tell you something, those women are awesome. They're smart business women. They know what they're doing. They understand their community. And they want—and they did this for charity. They wanted to make money. So they chose the artists. And there was 410 of us. And I was up on the upper mezzanine. It was at the big convention center there in Little Rock. And I was up on the upper floor, and then there's a lower floor, and then there's a

basement area. And I was at—you walk in and turn left, and I was at the end of that walkway, but there was no art between me and—I started the art. [02:31:29] And there was no art the other way so then—I started the show. And this was my first year, and I had done a drawing, *Eating Persimmons*, the raccoon, and it was a 30x40 pen and ink. It was a really nice piece. And everybody set up their booth [*unclear words*]. And this is when I went and did the shows by myself. My girlfriend ?Ruanne Ewing, Lola Ruanne Ewing?, who had a pottery place here in Eureka—I came over from Siloam. I met her. We loaded everything in her van, and we went together. Okay, we shared our room and—you know, and so—two girls. And so she put up her booth. I put up my booth, and I took my art to be juried. I took it down. I took it all the way down. And—oh, just a second.

SL: Okay.

SM: Sorry, guys. She's gonna stand out there and cry. Can't be cryin'. Can't be cryin'. Come on. Shh. [*Dog panting*] Sorry, guys. Relax. You wanna go be with Daddy? [*SL laughs*] come on. Shh. I'm gonna sit down. Lay down. Libby, lay down. Go to sleep. Libby, go lay down.

SL: Okay. It's all right.

SM: Okay. [*Laughs*] Dogs.

SL: Yeah.

[02:33:00] SM: Okay, so—[*dog panting*] shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh. Baby, come—shh, shh. Go to sleep. That's a good girl. Lay down. Be easy. Go to sleep. So I go all the way down through all these 400 artists, right. Oh, this is really wonderful. "Nice piece." "Oh, yeah." Take it on down. Leave it at the doorway. Go back up. About an hour later, over the loudspeaker, "Will Susan Morrison please come to the jury room?" So now I walk back down through everybody, and they're [thumbs up]. People who love you go like this [thumbs up], people who hate you go like this [scowls]. And they're everywhere, especially in art. So I get down there, and the docent is standing outside the door. And she's got my drawing in her hand, and she says, "I'm sorry, but he refuses to jury this. He says it is not fine art." Hands it back to me. I carried that piece all the way to the top of the stairs.

SL: Past all . . .

SM: Back to my booth.

SL: Past all the other . . .

[02:34:11] SM: Past all the other artists. I was so embarrassed.

Because your friends are goin' [*gasps*]. And your enemies are

goin', "Yeah, [*laughs*] what'd you expect?" You know. You know. And I got up there, and I set it down, and I went to my hotel room. And I turned the air in that hotel room purple I was so mad. [*SL laughs*] I was so mad at that SOB from New York. A New York juror down here not knowin' what he was lookin' at. I was furious. Just furious. And by God, I was gonna go get all my stuff and pack it up and leave. I'd show them. And then I thought about it. Well, why would I do that? They've got this big party. They've presold all these guys walkin' around with ribbons with money in their pocket that's already spent pickin' out art. I am here to sell my work. I'm here to get patrons. I'm gonna go do this show. Heck with 'em. So I did. I dressed up and marched back in there dressed to the nines and waited. And I'm always popular in shows. People love my work. And sure enough, here come these ribbons from—oh, yeah, well—and then other people just buyin'. And I'm just sellin' like crazy, and I got all these ribbons all over my booth. And then here comes this guy. Bill Cravens. Just been made president of First National Bank in Little Rock. Right on down. And he walks in in entourage with his guys, and he looks around, and he says, "Hello, my name is"—shakes my hand. "I have just been named president of First National Bank in—here in Little Rock, and it is

my directive to become the patron of an artist for my bank—to become a pat—I've chosen you. Can you be in my office on Monday?" [*Laughter*] "Sure." So Monday I walk into his office, and Walter Nunn, Rose Publishing, is sitting in there. And Mr. Craven says, "Well, here's what we'd like to do. We'd like you do to four drawings of Arkansas, North Arkansas rivers. And we would like for you to do a book. And we'll underwrite it, and Mr. Nunn will publish it. Would you like to do that?" [*SL laughs*] "Sure!" So I go to Eureka sp—I go back to Siloam Springs, and Georgia Elrod?

SL: Yeah.

SM: You know, she went on to become a judge. She was my lawyer, and this is back when she had the alligator, original of my alligator behind her so people would be frightened of her. And said, "Gives me authority," you know. So I go in, and I go, "This what's happening," she goes, "I'll write the contract. Everything'll be fine." So they had to pay me \$500 apiece for those four 30x40 original drawings. And they underwrote the book. And within a year, I would do a show. And I went out, and I traveled all the rivers, and I wrote the book, and we published it, and all the art. And we had a big show at the bank on a Sunday afternoon, and that's when I met David Pryor

because he came into that show, and the media was all over the place. And he announced to the state that I was an Arkansas treasure. And that started my career. [*Dog barks*] Really kicked it off. First book, everything. If I had let that juror from New York shame me into not believing in myself and my work, it would have been all over. [02:38:14] And that's what I tell students. Listen to criticism. If it's constructive, use it. If it isn't, blow it off. It's not important. It isn't. It doesn't mean a thing. Because in the end, that's one person's opinion. One. I don't care how many Ph.D.s they got behind their name, their ability to jury art, their sense of taste is only theirs. And maybe they don't have any. [*SL laughs*] You don't know. Just 'cause they say they do doesn't mean they do. It just doesn't. And that's—you know. [*Laughs*] That was what I did.

[02:38:57] SL: You know, you gave me a stack of books.

SM: Yeah.

SL: I confess I didn't read all of them. [*SM laughs*] I scanned most of 'em. But I did read one that I thought was unusual coming from an artist. And it had more to do with shaping one's career. What it takes to be a successful artist.

SM: Yeah. That's pretty [*unclear word*].

SL: And I don't think I'd ever read any book like that. And so you

kinda go step by step what needs to happen, when it needs to happen, what you have to accomplish in each chapter to be a successful artist.

SM: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

[02:39:45] SM: Well, and it's a—you know, that gift was given to me in a very different way from Andy Warhol.

SL: Well, tell us the Andy Warhol story.

SM: I was living in New Orleans. And I was doing all that environmental work, but I was also doing Pirates Alley Art Show, and that's when ?Carl Bach? came up. He owned the Escalade Gallery, and he—quote, "You're not a very good painter, but I'll buy every painting you do." [*Laughter*] And he did. Fifty bucks a pop. But anyway, that was really big time for me. But my—really I was doing a lot of environmental work and political work, and so I was really spread out to a lot of different things. But my father's had a dear friend who—his sister lived in New Orleans. Mrs. P. R. Norman. And she was the chairman of the board of New Orleans art museum. And she and I just became great friends. I just loved her. You know, and I was in New Orleans by myself. I didn't know anybody. So she became quite the great aunty figure, you know. She was just so, so

endearing. And I was doing at this time these little brush drawings of Siamese cats. They were very gestural. She loved them, and she bought her favorite and hung it up in her home. [02:41:00] And she called me one day, and she said, "So, Susan, I need for you to become a docent." "What's that?" "A docent. People who help people when they go through the museum. A docent. You just help the museum." "Oh, okay." "Okay, good. Now you're gonna chair a committee." And I said, "Oh, really?" And she said, "Yes, and that means you have to be at the museum two weeks from now, da-da da-da da." "Okay." So it was the Andy Warhol exhibit called the *Basement of the Met*. This was 1966, [19]67. And I go to the meeting. It's a boardroom. The muse—all museums have a boardroom. It's the boardroom. And at one end of the table sits this guy with grey hair, black, horn-rimmed glasses, his suit, a banker's suit, we used to call it, with the vest and everything, and his attaché case. And everybody else is on the side, and Mrs. Norman sits at the other end. And it was Andy Warhol, and he commenced to do the contractual business for this show that he was doing at the museum. He knew exactly how to talk business to these people. Exactly. He understood the contracts, he understood what his role was and what he needed to accomplish, and did it.

Then we went downstairs with the curatorial director. And the show was to be in the rotunda of the museum. They gave him all the floor plan information, all the measurements of the heights of the ceiling, all the measurements of where the lights would be because lights have to be in certain places, especially in a rotunda. [02:42:53] And so he gets all this information, and then he turns to me, and he says, "I hear that you're chairing my committee of ladies," and I said, "Yes." He said, "I need you to do me a very great favor." He said, "When—you'll be handling all my publicity, and so I'll be sending you things throughout the year, and you just be sure you get 'em out to the newspapers and everything and handle all of that for me. And then I'm gonna need you to be there when we put up the show." And I said, "Sure." Didn't think a thing of it. Okay. He was just a guy. Just a guy. Fast forward. Now it's November or December, whenever the show occurred, and it's Monday. And the museum has been closed for a week already because these giant crates have arrived. You know, huge crates and all this stuff. And we have to be there at eight o'clock in the morning every morning for a week to work all day. So we arrive at eight o'clock, and here comes Andy. Now he's got on his jeans and his tennis shoes and his sweatshirt. And his, you know, and his

t-shirt. And he—and the guys in the orange suits are his best friends. He worships the ground they walk on. "Would you like some ice water? Can I get you a sandwich?" I mean, he was really nice to them. And just as nice to us because we were helping him mount his exhibit, and he treated us accordingly. [02:44:19] I just loved him. And he was so cute. And every day at lunch, he took us all out on the grass, and we were—and a catered lunch was brought to us. And then one day, he said, "Mrs. Norman says I'm supposed to talk to you because you're a good artist, and she wants me to help you because you're interesting." And I went, "Okay." [*SL laughs*] So we went off to the side, and he says, "Just lemme explain this to you. First—the first thing you have to do is decide what you do best. Not what you like best, what you do best. And then you have to figure out a way to make it different from anyone else. Totally original. And you have to be so good that when the copycats come along, you're better than they are. And I'll show you the rest later." Wow. He was dead right. Dead on right. Kay. So. I watch him mount this exhibit. He knew if a light was a quarter of an inch off. He knew it. He would just go, "Uh, there. No. Back. Then you've got—that's it. You've got it." This is what he'd do. And he would arrange and arrange and make up—he

was just incredible. His interior design smarts are off the planet. He was an excellent interior designer. So I watched and learned. If you're gonna be a really successful artist, you've really got to understand interior design because that's your show. Every time. And I learned that from him. So now we get the whole show up, and everybody—and you're nice to people. You treat the people that help you like gold because they are gold. They're incredibly important to you. Every one of them.

[02:46:21] So, all right. So now it's opening night. And we're all lined up on the stairs going to this big, domed rotunda. You know, it was very Greek. And—or Roman or whatever it was.

[Laughs] And we're all in our formals and our tuxedos. And here comes the first limousine. And four women get out. And they make women from this era look tame. They were wild. They just looked totally bizarre. And they get out, and each one has a white Afghan hound with a platinum chain. Platinum collar, platinum chain. So there's two over here, and there's two over here holding the hounds. The next limo drives up, and it's Andy. And his hair is spiked. And his glasses are wild. And his c—and his suit is velvet. And his cape is velvet with a red satin lining. And he looks totally bizarre. His hair's bwah! You know.

[SL laughs] And so he's—and he goes and he takes two dogs in

one hand and two dogs in the other hand, and he marches up those stairs. And when he gets next to me, he winked, and I—my mouth had to be hanging open. I mean, this—and I—who is this? You know, who is this guy? [02:47:45] He goes in there, and I knew who was in that room. I come from that social register. I was watching who—if you weren't worth a couple of mil, he didn't have time to talk to you. He p—I don't know how many millions of dollars he raised personally for his art, himself that night. That's why he was there. It was business. And so that's what I learned. And s—everybody—you know. So then the thing that comes to mind immediately is, "Well, that's rather callous. That's just, you know, personal gain." No, it isn't. Bottom line, if you're starving in a garret, you don't get to do your work. And if what you do is something that requires money to support it, then you have to make the money to support it. And that's what I learned from him. There was nothing in—everything that he did, he did out of necessity so that he could be the artist that he was. And that was the essence of who he was. It's always the essence of who an artist is. You can blame 'em for this and blame 'em for that and call 'em this and call 'em that. The bottom line is if they are creating a body of serious work, that's who they are. That's where everything goes. That's

why you do everything you do. So you can do the work. It's compulsive. It's obsessive. It rips your heart out, and it feeds you like the honey from heaven. But if you're not able to do it, you're dead in the water, and you die. You drown, gulping. And I know it, you know. Just as sure as I'm sitting here, that's what happens. And I just—so from that point on, I got it. I understood it. [02:49:43] And as I became more and more successful, one of the things I felt I needed to do was talk to young people and art students, and I do a lot of that. But I wrote that book drawn from my life. And it's very personal 'cause I don't know how to do it any other way. This is how I did it. And that's what it's about. It's about how I did it. And I have a lot of young artists come to me, and I talk to them. I had a young man come to me once. I have two stories about young kids. I had a young man that was in high school. And I was doing Arts, Crafts, and Design. And his dad comes to see me at lunch time. "I'm bringing my son in tonight, and you have to tell him that—not to be an artist, but to be a chemist." And I went, "What?" He said, "No, I'm serious. He is so gifted. If he becomes a chemist, he will do something great, and he'll make a great living." And I looked at him, and I said, "Then don't bring him to me because I'm not gonna lie to him for you. Just don't

even—I don't wanna see him." And he said, "No, I promised him." And I said, "Well, I won't lie." So this young guy comes in. [*SL laughs*] Senior in high school. Gettin' ready to graduate. Making decision about what college to go to, what he's gonna major in. And he opens up his portfolio, and I am seeing a high school student who is doing drawings at the level of a professional artist. Gorgeous, classic realism, right out of the era of Michelangelo. I mean, it is stunning work. Oh, my God. And I looked at his father, and I looked at the work.

[02:51:26] And I looked at him, and I said, "Okay. Here's what I'm gonna tell you. You have the talent to become a great artist. I'm not gonna lie to you. You do. But here's what you need to know. You won't make very much money. You'll wear your heart on your sleeve. Your life will be hard. It's not fun. It's work. If you go be a chemist, your life will be easier, and you can be an artist as a hobby. But if you choose to be an artist, you will probably be a very great one." And he went on to be an artist. He went to the University of Arkansas. He got the Fulbright Scholarship, went to Japan, studied, and—China? No. Japan. Went to Japan and studied there for two years, came back, was the first American artist to receive a—to go to Oxford in fifty years, and he went as an artist. Fifty-two years. And he

went as an artist. He said, "I will not go and major in art history to get a degree from you. I will have a studio. I will produce art, and I will be—and I will receive my doctorate"—master's. His master's—"in art." And you know what? They gave him a studio. [*SL laughs*] And it was China. And he went back to China and fell in love with a Chinese woman and has lived there all the rest of his life. And so of course I lost touch with him. But that was him. [02:53:03] Now I was in my gallery one day, and this young guy comes in. Really charming, really good looking, probably early twenties. And he rips out this portfolio. Technically, he was really good. Deader than a doornail. [*SL laughs*] And I looked at him, and I said, "So. Looks like a lot of work." "Oh, no, no. This is easy. It's easy." He said, "I'm really good at this. I can just whip these right out." And I looked at him, and I said, "Your soul doesn't live in your hand. Do what's best, not what's easiest." And he gathered up all of his stuff and left and never heard a word I said, I'm sure. But it's true. Being a good technical artist is a wonderful thing. And there's lots of fields that you can certainly succeed in and do well. But if you think the guy that came up with the Golden Arches, if you think the people who came up with the iconic commercial art designs are not wonderful artists, they are. They

chose a different field to express themselves in, but they're as dedicated and as real as any fine artist. And I told this to high school kids. So you guys over here being fine artists, don't you dare be smug because one of them would very likely be far more famous than you ever are. Don't ever forget that. And they're taking greater risk than you do. Because being a fine-art artist—one of the things that's the greatest pitfall for fine-art artists is you go to school. You learn genres. I do this genre and that genre, rrderrah. And then you pick the genre that you like the best. [02:54:49] And here is what Mr. Crossman said to me. We were in an exhibit looking at really good art and showing him this and that 'cause it was all really art that I thought was fantastic, and finally he turned to me, and he said, "Susan. This is all being done in New York by artists who are better than these artists. It's a genre." And then he said, "What you do, nobody does. That's the difference. That's the difference." Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, they made the trend. They created the genre. They didn't follow suit. They didn't follow suit. And the artist Picasso made the genre.

SL: Yeah.

[02:55:45] SM: So if you're an artist that follows suit—I would go to the big national wildlife art shows. I'd outsell every artist in the

room, and why? Well, these guys are all doin' ducks flyin' off of the water. They're—a genre. They're doing genre art. They're doing exactly what all the national wildlife artists do. They do the hunting dogs. They do the guy with the guns. They do ducks flying off the water. They do landscape, landscape, landscape. They do animals in landscape. It all looks the same. Some might be a little bit better than others, but it all looks the same. I go in and do one of those shows, and I don't look like anybody in the building. That's the difference. And that's what makes the—what makes my work masterwork. Now if I wasn't—if I hadn't been given the gift by—from God to be as good as I am—if I had—but it's gift but it's work. There's a—just like that guy that I was talking about that was so good. Yeah, he was good, but he wasn't willing to do the work. You—the thing that I think separates masterwork from regular art, aside from everything else I've said—when you go to a museum, and you walk up to a true master work, okay, that painting grabs you. It just reaches out and grabs your heart and takes it from you. Ruff! The artist that does that is not the same as the artist who just creates a painting or a drawing. When you do that work, there is a piece of you, an energy like a flame, that is poured into that drawing or painting. But you've gotta know how to do

it in a way that it will come back out. So there has to be a generosity there. You have to do it in a way that will feed the viewer. That energy has to come back out. And I have drawings that—and it's really hard to make it happen, especially when you do something that takes so long. Every time I sit down, every time I do the work, I have to pour that energy into every single line of every segment of every piece of what I do so that when it's done the energy can flow back out. And at the end of my day, it's not my eyes that are tired, it's my heart. I lay down, and I pass out for three hours. And I can't move. I'm gone. I'm asleep. And I wake up tired, but I can get some things done. And it's that energy that is put into the work that makes a difference. Do I do it when I draw my bunnies? No. You know. That's easy stuff. That's easy energy. That's just joyful, happy stuff. Little stuff is easy. I'm talkin' about the majors here. I'm talkin' about the really important, hard-work majors. And that's—you know, and every artist is like this. I mean, all of us. Bateman, everybody. You do your major work. You do your serious, hardcore, major work, and then you do the small pieces. And the small pieces are for people who can't afford your hardcore, major work, and they're also for you to keep in practice and do your work and just do it 'cause you need

to take a breath. You take a breath. You never stop working, but sometimes you take a breath. [*Laughs*]

[02:59:17] SL: So when you're working on a major piece. I—is there—do you get it done in a week, two weeks, three weeks, a month? I mean . . .

SM: The grizzlies that you saw out front took me nine months. The stallion that is so popular, seven months. The Florida panther was five. I mean, my majors take anywhere from four to nine months, ten months. And that's—I grid—and remember, I grid, I work in abstract . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . I step back, and that has to be part of realism.

SL: Right.

SM: That is—and everybody talks about how realistic. "Oh, I can just reach out and pet it." Look again. My work is very impressionistic. It really is. My color, everything. It's really modern impressionism. I'm not a realist. Not by any means. I'm not. [*Laughter*]

[03:00:24] SL: Well, there's some photographs of you years earlier when the kids were at home. And it looks like you're on your bedroom floor.

SM: At the farm.

SL: That's at the farm, but in some of the photographs, you're actually sitting on the piece.

SM: I would sit on it.

SL: So how does that not damage it? How does that not—do you put something under it . . .

SM: No.

SL: . . . besides the rug?

SM: There isn't—no. I don't know. I don't know.

SL: I was so intrigued with that—with those images of you.

SM: Well, I'm little. And back then there was no such thing as a hydraulic drawing table.

SL: Right.

SM: I had my drawing table in my living room that my brother made for me, and it was like, you know, four by eight foot, but how do you get to the top?

SL: Right.

SM: So when I was doing these big pieces, I'd sit on 'em. And when I think back on it, I don't know how they didn't—it had to affect my perspective for sure. You know. But they were very beautiful.

SL: Yeah.

SM: They worked. They worked. And they, you know, they were

very well accepted. The one with the pair of pair of pandas that you see in the photo, that's the one that's in your Museum of Natural History here in Little Rock.

[03:01:51] SL: So we haven't really talked much about your siblings. You've mentioned Karen several times.

SM: Mh-hmm, my oldest sister, Karen.

SL: Yeah. But you have a younger sister.

SM: I have a younger sister, Ellen, and a brother, Andy.

SL: And a brother, Andy.

SM: Yeah.

SL: And are they still all still with us?

SM: Yeah. Yeah, they're all still alive. Karen's one of those people that just lives on. [*SL laughs*] She's been sick. She was born sick. You know, we all have—they're in every family. She was born sick. There's been something wrong with her her entire life, and her life has been very tragic on very many levels. But she is—she's stalwart.

SL: This is the—Karen is . . .

SM: That's my older sister.

SL: . . . is who I heard you talking to about . . .

SM: That's who we were talking to.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah, I called her.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I said, "K—I need to talk to you, Karen, we can find out about"—  
you know.

SL: I remember that—in that conversation, I heard her say, "Susan!"

SM: Oh yeah.

SL: There's this declarative . . .

SM: [*Laughs*] Oh, yes.

SL: . . . open—to get your attention.

SM: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah. It's like you break . . .

SM: Well, she was a . . .

SL: . . . breaks everyone's . . .

SM: . . . school teacher forever, and I was her worst student.

[*Laughter*]

[03:03:05] SL: Okay, so now tell me about your younger sister.

SM: Ellen?

SL: Yeah.

SM: Well, my sister, Ellen, is a—and I dearly love her, but she is a  
story of what happens to kids in LA in the [19]60s.

SL: Oh.

SM: And her child, her—well, she had two children, but she lost one

four days after it was born—a little girl. Her son I have raised.

SL: This is right. I remember you telling me this.

SM: You couldn't. It just—uh-uh. Bad stuff.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. Very bad. And in LA there's a lot of bad stuff. And my brother . . .

SL: Sometimes it's the most vulnerable and innocent that get caught in that.

[03:03:50] SM: [*Sighs*] There's a streak in my family. I was talkin' about my dad's dad? My sister is—has that streak in her. And sh—there's a appetite, a romantic thing about evil . . .

SL: Right.

SM: . . . that attracts her.

SL: Yeah.

SM: She is—her site is called Ape Leather, and she sells S-M.

SL: Wow.

SM: And has. She sells the chains and all that crap. [*Laughs*] Pardon me. And j—when she—and this is most interesting. The guy she married, finally married, was a musician and a singer. And I really liked ?Rab?. I really did. They came to the farm and spent time, and he taught me how to sing the song "The Cuckoo." And he actually lied to me and told me that I was

singing it in tune. I know full well I wasn't 'cause I can't. But he—I just liked him. And I understood why she fell in love with him. But when she was with him, they were hangin' out with the Manson bunch.

SL: Oh, man.

SM: And this is—and Jay's a baby. And she was neglecting him. And when I—when—and she got pregnant. And back then—well, in many states now. It's—we're back to the—you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . Dark Ages.

SL: Right.

[03:05:24] SM: But back then when you became pregnant if you started having any issues at all, they put you in the hospital. And you stayed flat on your back till that baby was born no matter what. And she had liver issues because I'm sure she was—you know, hepatitis stuff. You know.

SL: Right.

SM: And she lay flat on her back and had the baby, and it lived four days.

SL: Oh.

SM: And so—and I—during that time I had her son. Jay came to live with me. And I had a baby that was pushin' three and had never

been potty trained. He didn't know what a nap was. He didn't know what a regular meal was. All he knew to do was be belligerent. And he called the woman who was my maid, who was Black, Mother. So I wouldn't let me call me anything but Aunt Susan so he could get clarified as to who I was. And we potty trained him, and we gave him naps, and he—we got him on an even keel, and he was doin' great. My boys tha—he and my boys loved each other. They got along fine. And it came time for him to go home. And Karen was the one flyin' everybody back and forth. [03:06:34] So she came and got him and took him home. And Ellen started calling me and telling me that, you know, she really didn't want this kid. I needed to take him back. I said, "Ellen, look. You need to stop. You just lost your little girl. You need to take a breath. This is a blessing. Love your little boy. He's a great kid. He's gonna love you." Well, this just—she just ramped it up. And so finally I said, "All right. I'll take him. But you're not comin' back in eight years and tellin' me you changed your mind. I will adopt him, and that's the only way I will take him." And so I did. I adopted him. And Karen went and got him and brought him back to me. And I had a little boy that for a very long time, every night, climbed up in my lap and cried himself to sleep because the sun

was gone and it wasn't gonna come back the next morning.

SL: Wow.

[03:07:32] SM: Terrified. Terrified. And he took—and he and the boys came in one day very solemn. Very, very solemn. [*SL laughs*] Now I was being—now he called me Mom. "Aunt Ellen drowned in the canal behind the house, and we buried her." That was his mother. "Really?" "Yes. So everything's okay now. I don't have to be afraid anymore. She's dead." And we start to see upticks. But take him to a restaurant, he'd have a panic attack. You take him anywhere, and he was frightened. Always frightened. And now he is a senior executive for Maui and Company. He is incredibly accomplished, and he does battle every day with all the injury that was done to him. And beats it. Beats it. He's astounding, and I just—I admire him so—he's an amazing guy. I just admire him so much, and he is a wonderful son. He's awesome. He's a really good son, you know. Yeah. And he's a wonderful brother. My boys all dearly love each other, which I think's a real blessing. But they're real close. They're real close. [03:08:48] Jay and Charlie are only six months apart. Charlie's older. And Charlie, when Jay came home to be with us, it was time to go to nursery school. I had my kids in nursery school. And Charlie came to me. He said,

"Mommy, we can't go to nursery school. Jay can't go, and I have to stay here with him 'cause he can't be here by himself. He has to have me here." So I said, "Okay. You do what you think is best." So Charlie stayed out the whole d—the whole semester, you know, from September till Christmas time while Jay got settled in and feelin' pretty good, and then they went together to nursery school.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a great story.

SM: Yeah. Yeah. And that's kids bein' good to each other, you know. But they—and they're to this day good.

[03:09:33] SL: So what about your younger brother?

SM: Andy? Well, Andy was the kid that—I was my dad's girl 'cause I was such a tomboy.

SL: Right.

SM: And I think Dad always wished that Andy had been more [*laughs*] like me and me more like Andy, you know? He would've made a better girl. He was asthmatic, so his health wasn't great.

SL: Oh.

SM: And he was—he tended to be—he could get upset really easy. And so—and my dad was old school, so he's tryin' to teach his son how to play golf, and he's crying his way around the golf

course, you know. It's just that stuff. But Andy—and Andy—  
goin' to college—he was just—he was goin' to U of A, and he was  
flunkin' out and really bein' bad. And Dad said, "That's it. I'm  
cuttin' you off." You have to understand. I mean, this kid had  
nothin' but money. He said, "I'm cuttin' you off." [03:10:21]  
So Andy called me up and came and lived with me on the farm  
for two years because—and he had to earn every penny he got  
on the farm. And I busted his butt. I mean, I worked him hard.  
But he was good at everything he did. He was smart. And after  
two years, he came to me, and he said, "Okay. I got a friend up  
in Syracuse, and he's got a Porsche shop up there, and he  
repairs Porsches, and I'm gonna go up there and help him fix  
Porsches, and I'm gonna go back to school." And I said, "See  
ya." [SL laughs] And he got his degree in cartography. He  
graduated *magna cum laude*. He was really an amazing student.  
He just had to grow up and be on his own.

SL: Right.

SM: He needed to be on his own. And he went on to be the first  
person to do 3D mapping of our nation's bases, our military  
bases. He was part of the group that went to Russia when  
they—you know, when Russia quit being the Soviet Republic and  
became more—the people got their land back.

SL: Yeah.

SM: They weren't Communist anymore. The people got their land back. And when people got their land back, they had to map it. They had to figure out whose land was whose. And so they had to go back to their ancient maps and then—and so a group of American map makers went in, and my brother was one of them. They were contracted in, and they did—they mapped Russia's lands. And Andy was there for about two years. And he had—Andy had top clearance. He had top clearance because of what he'd done on the bases. [03:12:02] And they came in and they said, "Okay, everybody, pack up your stuff 'cause we're leaving." Boom. And they said if—"And, Mr. Douglas, we'll go with you." And they went to Andy's apartment, and they helped him pack up everything, and they put him in an SUV, and they drove him out to the tarmac and put him on a different airplane. They had to get him out of the country. And he said that was probably the most exciting thing he ever did. [Laughter] Yeah, but so he's very gifted. And now he's retired, and he lives in Albuquerque.

SL: Amazing family.

SM: Yeah.

SL: You have an amazing family.

SM: It really was.

AM: We have nine minutes on the other Odyssey.

SL: Okay.

SM: We've really been talking too long.

SL: Not really. They should—I'm not exactly sure what's happened there, but they should go five, six hours.

SM: Well, we've been talkin' a while.

SL: Mmm. Not really.

SM: We started at ten.

SL: So I mean, we've got cards in the cameras themselves, so . . .

SM: Oh, okay. Then it's okay.

SL: . . . we'll just keep going.

SM: Okay.

[03:13:03] SL: The—so you're not—are you s . . .

SM: Have I got you so confused you don't know [*laughs*] . . .

SL: No, no. No, no, no. There's so much that—are you still drawing?

SM: Mh-hmm.

SL: You've . . .

SM: I'm doing it differently now.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Well, we now—I'm starting to have trouble with my left eye.

SL: This is what I wanted to talk about. It's—it is . . .

[03:13:31] SM: Of course, I have cataracts.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I'm having trouble with my—and that's correctable, but I have trouble with my left eye, and this is where we found out that my dyslexia is caused by what happened to my mother.

SL: Ether.

SM: Ether. So this is—it damaged my brain, and now that brain damage, as I age, is affecting my left eye, which is my dominant eye. Whoopie. So for me to do a drawing from start to finish, from pencil to ink to color, I don't even—I don't wanna attempt it. I know that I would not be able to do it. But what I'm doing is—I have all these drawings, you know, from—after what—Pablo Picasso said, "I decided I'd better learn how to draw first."

[*Laughter*] So from 1972 to 1987, everything I did was pen and ink, and I was learning to draw. And then in [19]87 I decided to go to color, and my son Charlie, my middle son, the architect . . .

SL: Right.

SM: . . . says, "Mother, you should use Prisma pencil." Well, you know [*unclear words*] your kids. You, "Yeah, right, Charlie," and ignored him. [*SL laughs*] And this kid going to architecture

school without a dime in his pocket scraped up enough money to give me a set of Prisma pencils and said, "Draw with 'em." And so I did. And he was right. Of course. Of course.

SL: Of course.

[03:14:50] SM: But I—where was I?

SL: Well, we're just talking about the degenerative nature.

SM: Oh. Oh, okay.

SL: From the ether and—yeah.

SM: Okay, so what's happened is—so now—okay, so I did full pencil, the full ink, lift the pencil out, take it to full color. So now I've got all these drawings that I did from 1972 to 1987 that are essentially drawings that I took to full ink. And a lot of them I'm done. They're done. But there's a lot of them that they're not done.

SL: Right.

SM: They would really like for me to take them to color. So that's what I'm doing. And I just did that with that eagle. And so that's a new focus that I have, and it's working.

SL: Well, it's . . .

SM: And it's wonderful because I get to continue to work, and drawings that had—have had a whole life one way get to have a whole life again another. I think it's really cool.

SL: It is cool.

SM: Yeah.

[03:16:02] SL: Yeah. So how many of those do you have to do? Do you have enough to keep you busy for the next decade or . . .

SM: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah. So I mean, I know that takes months.

SM: I produced and printed anywhere from fifteen to twenty to thirty a year because that's how prolific I was.

SL: Right.

SM: And it was pen and ink. It went fast. And when I—and in [19]87—[19]80—that—around [19]85, [19]86, I realized that it was really time for me to go to color, and the reason why was because the pen and ink was getting too easy.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh, no. You were getting bored with just . . .

SM: No.

SL: . . . with pen and ink?

SM: No, easy. No. No. Just getting too easy.

SL: Not a challenge anymore.

SM: Not a challenge anymore. And when your work isn't a challenge, it's time to change it. And the appropriate thing for me to do was go to color, but I was really in a trap because I had developed a very distinctive style, and it did not lend itself to oil

paint, and it did not lend itself to watercolor. It was drawn. And I really didn't know what I was gonna do. And when Charlie handed me those Prisma pencils, it was an answer to my prayers because it was perfect. Yeah. [03:17:26] And they're luminous. They're translucent, so they're luminous. They act like oil paint. Oh, come on, Da Vinci painted with 'em. He painted with encaustic wax. And they're gor—encaustic wax is gorgeous. About a hundred years ago, a chemist just figured out how to make it permanent. You know, they had to set the color. After they painted a strip, they had to set the color with little lamps and heat it, and then they could move on, and that's how they'd been doin' it. And about—ah, it's been a century now. A chemist figured out how to make it permanent without having to do that, and it went to block form, which is pencil and block. And they have hard, and they have soft, and they have block. And I use the soft. So I sharpen them. [*Laughs*]

[03:18:16] SL: So what's next for you?

SM: Well, I have a lot going on. I have this commission from Mr. Franklin, which is a huge commission.

SL: Now this is just colorizing what you've already got?

SM: It's—yeah. And it's very different, and it's not something I had planned to do or would do except this was an extraordinary

thing. And I'm—and he asked for my stallion to be black because of his horse. And I went and met his horse, and I spent time with him, and it is a very worthwhile project. It is something that I should do. He needs for me to do this for him. It's an important time in his life. I think it will be a turning point for him. And he is six months younger than me. And so I'm gonna break—I had made a rule that if it was in color, I wouldn't touch it. So we took the color, and we—I had Robbie do the—Greg's master printer.

SL: Right.

[03:19:31] SM: I had him take it to grey tones, and I'm gonna use that to draw from. And I—and it's—let me tell you something. It's five times harder than just taking a pen and ink and going to color because there's all this grey tone in it. There's all this stuff—there's pencil line that was so blended. It's not gonna be easy, and I'm probably gonna end up doing a lot of pen and ink on it. But I don't care. He's a—I don't care. The horse deserves it, and he deserves it. The horse is amazing. It will be—he—his horse is—the color and the feel will come from his horse, but his horse was just like that horse. When I met him and he told me about his horse I—and he called it a pet.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I expected a pet. And I walked up to a seventeen-hand high Friesian who had been a show horse lookin' down at me like, "And who do you think you are?" "Uh—[*SL laughs*] um—well—you aren't who I thought you were." "You bet I'm not, honey." No, very, very, very tough guy. The horse is resilient, angry, smart. And just tough. And the person who saved him won his heart. And I'm gonna tell you, that is the only person in his life who has ever won his heart because nobody else asked for it, and no one who would ask for it could've gotten it except Jess. And the reason why was because Jess is that kind of a person. He just literally was able to—he can heal his heart. Now when he run—this horse—this is a horse that nobody could get near. He'd been so abused, and he was so angry. He was a champion. He deserved respect. And he didn't get it. He just got overworked. Okay, so he was mad. And nobody could get near him. and now when Jess goes up to him and taps him on the shoulder, he lifts his foot so Jeff can clean his hoof. Jeff doesn't have to lift it—Jess doesn't have to lift it. He lifts it. His name is Hans. Friesian. These are the horses that they used—these were the war horses that were used by the knights.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Very brave. Beautiful guy. It's gonna be hard. [*Laughs*]

[03:22:12] SL: What about environmental efforts?

SM: I will never stop doing that. This whole thing that I'm doing with you and the—all of that work. But do you know who Jim Dailey is?

SL: Jim Dailey?

SM: Jim Dailey. Mayor of Little Rock for so many years.

SL: Yes.

SM: Okay.

SL: I don't know him, but I . . .

SM: And then he went on, and he was the interim chairman of the parks and parkway commission?

SL: Right, right.

SM: No, tour—parks and tourism commission. Well, he and I have been friends forever. And I called him up, and I said, "It's time for me to do another book, and I wanna do it through the Game and Fish Commission like I did before, and I need you to help me," and he goes, "Okay, but I don't know anybody there." And I said, "Well, then go find somebody that does 'cause we've gotta go do this." And he went, "Oh my God, all right." You know. And so he's been working on it. And so he's become very, very good friends—and you gotta know Jim. When he says, "I'm really becoming friends," they are—with the vice

chairman of the commission, and he knows a couple of guys on the board. He searched out—he knows a couple of guys on the board. And so now we are going August something to go visit the director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to talk about a book. And what I wanna do is I wanna do—and I hope—this is my hope. [03:23:45] My hope is is that they will see the vision that I have because just a book published in Arkansas would be easy and wonderful, but that's not enough. What I would like for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to do is do a book based on my American Wildlife Expedition work and talk about the role that Arkansas plays in the wildlife and every state in the Union and how all of the states play a role in all of the country's wildlife because it's all so spread out now, and how important that is, and have Arkansas be the state that opens up their mouth and says it. Because it is such forward thinking. And use my book as an illustration for that. And then also do some documentaries and stuff to go with it. That's—you know, and get the Smithsonian involved. And that's how you spread the word. And that's where I am because it's time to not do Animal Tracks. It's time to do something different. But it is time to do it. It's time.

[03:24:55] SL: So documentaries, then. You'd kinda like to do

some . . .

SM: Well, I did—you know, we did the Rockies documentary . . .

SL: Yeah, now so I don't . . .

SM: . . . and it was really nice. And I . . .

SL: I don't really know much about that documentary.

SM: Well, we did it. I produced it. I didn't. You know the guys that did all the Arkansas games for years? I can't think of his name, but they—he and his wife. And they'd go and film the basketball games and all that stuff, then they'd do all the news reels and all that stuff. Well, he was—they produced other stuff, and he produced my Rockies documentary for me. And then I gave him all my film. He—and then he gave—and then I got a camera from Bedford Camera & Video, and my three months in Alaska I hauled that camera on my shoulder. I got great footage 'cause he taught me how to do it. And then when I brought it back, they were moving, and he was retiring, and all this stuff was happening, and the next thing I knew h—it'd all been on film. Gone.

SL: Gone?

SM: Gone. Can't be found anywhere. And you know. I think he was having some issues. I really do, and I think that's why they shut everything down, and somehow that all got lost in the shuffle.

SL: And you're talking Bedford or . . .

SM: No, no, no, no. This is the guy I was talkin' about that produced my Rockies documentary.

SL: Oh.

SM: Bedford Camera & Video just gave me my equipment.

SL: Right.

SM: They just gave me my equipment to do with it. They gave me my camera. They gave me my video camera. They gave me everything I needed. They were one of my sponsors that I had on my jacket. [*Laughter*] Yeah, for Alaska. And I—and it was a wonderful experience, and I got great stuff in Alaska, and I'm really sorry that we don't know—and maybe someday it'll turn up. Who knows. Somebody'll just go, "Oh yeah. I remember seein' that in a box somewhere."

[03:26:48] SL: Wow. Okay, so is there—do you wanna take a break and maybe think a little bit before we call it a day? Maybe think of some other things . . .

SM: Do you have anything?

SL: Well . . .

SM: I think you need to take a break. I think I've just about warped your brain. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, no, I came in warped, so [*laughs*] you may have turned it

in a slightly different . . .

SM: Something we share.

SL: You may have Prisma colored it a little more, but . . .

SM: It was always warped.

SL: Oh yeah, let's pause and . . .

SM: Okay.

[Recording stopped]

[03:27:25] SL: We've had a little break. We're going to try to cover twenty-six years of your life here in the next hour or so. [*SM laughs*] So where do we start? What is it that we haven't gotten to yet?

SM: The American Wildlife Expeditions.

SL: The American Wildlife . . .

SM: Expeditions.

SL: Expedition? Like . . .

SM: Yeah, it's called America's Wildlife and Wildlands: The American Wildlife Expeditions.

SL: Okay.

SM: And I divided the country into eight regions, and I went out, and I explored each region. And I did a series of drawings based on animals that were chosen from that region. And I wrote three—two books and a documentary based on those trips. When I

finished Animal Tracks, I was the 900-pound gorilla.

SL: Really?

[03:28:20] SM: And I just didn't really know what I wanted to do.

And there was a lot of pressure from my brother and my husband and Fortune 500 companies for me to do endangered species of the world. Well, every wildlife artist does endangered species of the world. And it just didn't appeal to me. And so in the meantime I did a series called Forest Cathedral Suites, which was some pen and ink drawings and very nice poetry, but it was just—I was just marking time 'cause I didn't really know what I wanted to do. And I needed to stop.

SL: Stop. Just a second. This is too much. Go ahead. Yeah.

SM: Okay.

SL: I don't know what I was gonna say. Okay. All right, I'm sorry.

SM: Okay.

SL: All right.

[03:29:16] SM: And I just needed to stop. And so for a whole year, I refused to do anything. And that winter we went to California to see my folks for Christmas, and I wanted to go to Palm Springs 'cause I wanted to be where it was warm. So we went to Palm Springs. And Karen Sausman is the—was at that time the director of the Palm Springs desert museum, which was a

natural zoo. It was a zoo of the animals of the area. And very highly respected woman, very important in the environmental field. And Randy went to see her, and she wanted to see me, and I didn't want to. I just wanted to stop. But she really told him—she really urged him to get me to come, and so I went to see her. And I was glad I did 'cause I liked her. Brilliant woman. Very important, and her desert museum is very important. And I told her—we got to talking, and she said, "So what are you gonna do next?" And I said, "Well, you know, they want me to do endangered species of the world. I don't wanna do that. Blah, blah, blah." She goes, "Susan. I am not going to ask you. I am going to beg you to do America's wildlife. It's all endangered." [03:30:53] I went from there to the Anza-Borrego Desert. I started writing. I formatted the whole project. I look into the eyes of the animals. And they cry out to me. Make us larger than life so that we might live. Capture us in line and color so that we might be free. Lay our hearts at the foot of humankind so that we might be remembered before it is too late. We started the expeditions right then. We did the great Southwest. We went straight back out to the coast. And I met with the biologists who were trying to save the California condor. And we went up to the Sespe Sanctuary and went with

the biologists on Mr. Toad's wild ride. Bwoo-hoo-hoo! [*Laughs*]  
There—we started in trucks. We were on dirt roads. You gotta understand, after the rains in California, these roads just cave away.

SL: Right.

[03:31:57] SM: And the precipices are 1,000 feet.

SL: Yes.

SM: And it's scary. And this guy goes there all the time, you know, so he's used to it, and it was a kid who's in his twenties, easy. And we're—we start in the truck and we followed him in our truck, and then we got on the four wheeler. And that's when it was Mr. Toad's wild ride. We rode on the back of the—there was—it was a four wheeler setup, so two people can ride in the back, and then there was—he was pullin' a little trailer with a calf carcass for the birds. [*Laughs*] "We're all gonna die." You know.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SM: It's just oh, my God.

SL: I know.

SM: It was so scary.

SL: I know.

SM: And we finally got to where his little trailer was. And this is

where this guy was gonna spend two weeks. And he had this little wood stove in it, and a cot. And from there we went out to where the birds were. And this is where he watched the birds, and this is where he had a sleeping bag and a bunch of stuff. And it was a blind, and there were the baby California condors sittin' on the ground feeding from the calf carcasses that they bring it. And that was the problem. They'd jump up in the trees, but they wouldn't fly, and they didn't know why. They had no idea. But if they couldn't get 'em to fly, the species was going to become extinct. [03:33:23] So I went down to the San Diego—we I—we went from there down to the San Diego Zoo, and the father of the California condor—and I cannot think of his name. It's in my book—was there. And I met with him. And he was getting ready to take a trip to Peru to observe the condors there, the Andean condors because they were similar birds. And he kept very close touch with me, and when he got back from there—what they learned was the reason why the babies weren't flying was because there were no adults there to teach them how do it.

SL: Whoa.

SM: So they brought in Andean condors, introduced them to the flock at the zoo, get it all under control, took 'em all back out to the

site, and the Andean condors taught the California condor babies how to fly thermals. And that's what saved the California condor.

SL: What a miracle.

[03:34:36] SM: That simple. And there was a young man that I met.

He was—he did a lot of the education, but they all took care of the birds. They all took care of the birds. And I met with him for an entire afternoon because he was really the guy that had all the info. Other guys did a lot of the work, you know, da da-da da-da, but this was the guy with the info. And he was a strikingly handsome young man and just burnt, you know, and that blonde hair and those bright eyes. He was just an amazing looking guy. But he had these white scars all over his arms.

SL: Oh.

SM: And so I asked him. I said, "So what happened?" He said, "Well, I was doing the Peregrine falcons. And my job was to go on the bluffs and get the babies out of the nests and leave the eggs—get the—rescue the eggs out of the nest and leave the porcelain eggs, and then come back with the babies." That was his job. He did that work. And he said, "But the problem is that you're supposed to wear all these—all this padding to guard you from these birds 'cause you're stealing their babies. They're

attacking you." And he said, "But I couldn't because the bluffs are so treacherous that it made me too clumsy. So these scars are from the birds attacking me." [*SL laughs*] So then I said—now, let me tell you, the law of being a biologist is you're a biologist. This is science. We don't really care about this. If there's anything I can tell you, those guys in the field do. Because I said to him—I said, "Okay, then how do you feel about the California condor?" He didn't take a breath. "I would die for that bird." Those are the people that are saving our endangered species all across the world. The ones who would die for those animals. We see it in Africa all the time. They do die for those animals. [03:36:47] We see it in this country. Poachers are very dangerous people. They will shoot a wildlife officer and never take a breath. In a heartbeat they'll shoot 'em, and they'll kill 'em because they want that animal. They want that trophy. And that's what I learned about these biologists. They're amazing people. And I came to respect them so very much. So from there we did all the Great Southwest. And we did all this travel and all this amazing stuff, and it was just wild, and I had such a great time. And then we got into the Chihuahuan Desert. No. Then we—no. I wanna tell about Tucson. [03:37:27] Then we went down to Tucson. And the Arizona Sonoran Desert

Museum is in Tucson. And the guy that runs that is a Brit. Very dry. Very neat guy. And we had an afternoon meeting with him, and we had toured the whole zoo. Oh my God. So well done. So well done. And they had the hummingbird compound that they were redoing. And so we went in, and we met with him, and we were talking about the hummingbird compound, and he said, "Yeah." He said, "You know, we're wiping out the rainforests. We're wiping out all these things on our planet. And we have no idea what that species does that's crucial to us." He said, "Let me tell you what happened here. We went in, and we took all the hummingbirds, and we put 'em in cages. We went into the compound. We completely cleaned it out." 'Cause they were gettin' ready to move butterflies in with it—in with 'em. "We cleaned it all out. We took care of everything. We got new—cleaned it all up. Brought all the plants in. Everything's been cleaned off, da-da, da-da, da-da, da. We put the hummingbirds back in, and the hummingbirds are building nests that are falling apart. They don't hold together. We test the birds. The birds are healthy. Can't figure out what's wrong. So we went and got nests from the wild. What is not in this bird's nest? Spiderwebs." Spiderwebs hold hummingbird nests together. Without spiders, hummingbirds cannot exist.

SL: Wow.

SM: That's the key to their existence. So that's their critical species to the hummingbird. What's ours? What species are we gonna annihilate that without it we cannot exist? We don't know. But don't think it isn't true. So I went from there with a great deal of food for thought. [03:39:40] And then I went down into the Big Bend. And I spent three weeks there . . .

SL: This is the Rio Grande?

SM: Huh?

SL: Rio Grande?

SM: Rio Grande.

SL: Okay.

SM: I spent three weeks there with the biologists and the educational people at the park. We went all over the park. We did all these amazing things. And then it was time to go meet the director of the park, who was a guy from Boston who sat behind his desk. He was very pale. [SL laughs] And they were having a lot of trouble in the park because they had—they'd had an overpopulation of mule deer, which he would do nothing about. No control at all. And the mule deer started dying, and they had this overpopulation of lions that were leaving the park and going out and attacking cattle and causing all these issues. And so I

went in to meet this guy. The perfect—"Oh my God, what is this bureaucrat doing here?" He had no idea. He didn't care. He didn't wanna know. He had his job. It was cush. He was doing well. He would leave this and have a promotion. What did he care? And he sat there, and I looked at him, and I said, "So I hear you have this issue with an overpopulation of mule deer," and he went, "We are a vast, wild park in one of the wildest regions in the nation. We do not control the wildlife here. It is not necessary." [*SL laughs*] And his staff is standing behind him goin' [stares at ceiling]. [03:41:25] And so I left the park, and I went up to a place called Black Gap Wildlife Refuge. And this is where they were saving the bighorn sheep, the Texas bighorn sheep. And the Texas bighorn sheep is extinct in Texas, so they were bringing 'em in from Nevada at \$22- to \$25,0000 a head and puttin' 'em up on this mountain. And they had this guy who was a wildlife officer that took care of the herd. And he was a biologist, a zoologist, biologist, and he tended this herd, and I go to meet him. [*Laughs*] And I walk into this trailer, and this—and we're there because they're doing big—they're using helicopters to mount these big wells way out into the desert for water for the sheep, okay. Now this is an umbrella species. That means water for everybody.

SL: Right.

SM: That's what umbrella species are about. So I'm going in, and I'm meeting this guy that's—the guy that's the biologist in here. And you know, they see all kinds of biologists. They all look different, but most of them have a look. You know what they are.

SL: Yeah.

[03:42:41] SM: And I'm walking, and here's a guy sitting—leaning back in his chair—chair in the back and spittin' in a can, and he's got on his Stetson, and he's got on his big belt that says he's a champion rodeo guy, and he leans back and, "Hi, how are you today? Pchoo!" you know, and I'm like, "God, I love this guy." So we started talking about his sheep, and he says, "Yeah, well, that idiot down in that park, he's breedin' lions in there, and now they'll—now all that—those deer are dyin', and they're comin' up here, and they're killin' my sheep." And he says, "A mountain lion ranges fifty miles, and I got three to four sittin' on my mountain top, and they're all a mile apart. And I have to trap 'em, and then I have to shoot 'em." And that really made him mad because he doesn't kill animals. That's not his job. That's not who he is. "And I have to shoot 'em." Oh, he's furious. And I'm like, "Wow." So this is from the horse's mouth. This is the

guy who does the work to preserve these animals sayin', "That's what happens when you mismanage." That's what happens when you put the wrong person in the wrong place. No one should be in those parks that is not regional. No one should be in those parks that is does not know what's goin' on in the parks. They should actually come up through the ranks to become director of that park. They know the park. That's what should happen, and it's not what happens. But that's what should happen. But anyway. [03:44:01] So I leave there, and I've got—and he says to me, "You gotta go visit this lady, this old lady," and I went [*laughs*], "Okay." "And she's written a book, and you can get a book from her." I thought, "Oh." A hundred and five years old.

SL: Wow.

SM: So her ranch is not far from the wilderness area. And this is all the Chihuahuan Desert. And so I go down to her ranch, and I have to be there at nine o'clock in the morning to meet with her. And her daughter answers the door, and she says, "She's not in yet. Just go in into the kitchen and wait on her. She's not in." About thirty minutes later, here she comes. She comes stormin' in the kitchen door. She's been out checkin' her cows on her horse. She's got on her split leg trousers and her boots and her

vest, and she's got her lariat in her hand, you know, her crop in her hand. And she walks in and, "Hi, darlin', how you doin'?" [SL laughs] Wow. She outlived four men, you know. And she's been runnin' this ranch forever. And I talked to her for a while. And what I found was this very bright, very undauntable, just kind of amazing woman. And she taught me a big lesson because she kept sayin', "Aw, it's all about attitude. It's all about attitude. It's just—be who you are. Don't be afraid of anything. What's there to be afraid of. Arr, arr," you know. And it was "Harumph, harumph, harumph." I'm like, "How cool is that?" you know. [03:45:44] And I left there understanding how smart it is to not let age affect your life because she never did. She never did. And I'm sure she had had health issues off and on. What did she care? They were just a bump in the road. She tough and smart, and I real—that was a real highlight of the Great Southwestern Expedition that I did. And from there we came on up and came home. And then I did the drawings, and it was beautifully supported by patrons. And after that, we went and did the Southern wetlands. But before I did the Southern wetlands, I determined that I really needed to do a list of drawings that I wanted to do from the region and hand that list to my patrons and let them reserve drawings and start paying

for them. And about the time they paid them off, I'd have the drawing done, and that would support me. And so that's when I started doing it that way. And a few came on, and I took the trip, and I came back, and I was diagnosed with breast cancer. And I was very blessed. I was very fortunate. It was—hadn't even gotten to stage 1. And we ju—it was all done surgically. Everything was taken care of. And then Alice Walton came back in my life, and she said, "So [*SL laughs*] I want you to do seven pieces for me off this list," and I went, "Seven?" "Yes. And I want you to do them, so you better get to work." [03:47:34] And this was how she was helping me. She had reserved them. And I was by God gonna draw 'em. And she pestered me and hounded me and made me—you know, she wouldn't let me stop. She, "Get to work. Get to work." And it's very important because that help, that—her bein' her 'cause that's who she is really spu—and not only that but knowing who she was—this was long before Crystal Bridges and how—and what a good eye she had. She owned the Animal Tracks collection. I knew how well—what a good eye she had, so every drawing I did had to be perfect for her. And I wanted that challenge. That was good for me. And so I did those drawings for her and recovered. And after that I did—we started doing the Rockies Expeditions. And

I—you know, the Great Southwest was one, and the Southern Wetlands was one, and the Rockies was like six trips. 'Cause you don't go do the Rockies in one trip. There's no way. And it took a long time for me to do the Rockies Expeditions, and there was a lot of drawings reserved. The big grizzlies came out of that. Just a whole lot of important pieces. The mountain goat and her kid came out of that. It just goes on and on. I can't think of 'em all off of the top of my head. My eagles came out of that, my bald eagle, but not my golden. My golden came out the Great Plains. But there's just a lot of good work that came out of that. And it took a long time to accomplish those expeditions. [03:49:10] And it was at the end of that that Lila and I took the trip that I talked about, okay, in . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . my faith piece. Well, the rest of this story's hilarious because it was the last Rockies experi—trip, and she and I were taking it. And first we had to get in the motorhome, which she had said she'd never really done. And she had to. And so she—Randy gave her like an hour training, and then she—and we headed north on 37 goin' to Illinois. And about forty-five minutes into the trip, she turns to me, and she says, "I don't think I can do this," and I said, "Lila, you're committed. We

gotta do it. They're expecting us." "Oh, okay." [SL laughs]

You know, and so she goes—after about three hours of drivin'—and she whips into the gas station and the big, you know, the big truck stop, and we start fillin' the motorhome and everything, and she goes—I said, "You know, you're really good at this," she said, "Well, my dad was a truck driver." [SL laughs] [03:50:17] So then I got her—we get almost to Barton and Sarah Jennings—that's where we're going in—up in Illinois. And he's a—he was a professor up there at Southwestern Illinois University, so we're meetin'—we're goin' to their home. And we go up there, and I know where I'm goin' because I've been there before, right? And I said, "Okay, Lila, turn here. This is where we turn right." And she turns right on this road, and pretty soon it was a dirt road. And it's cornfields, and cornfields have those big ditches. And the road was—you know, it was standard road width, but it was dirt. And me—I'm just goin', "Okay, we gotta turn around," and she goes, "What?" [SL laughs] And I said, "Yeah," so we—so I—she turned around. She got us to—and this is a thirty-eight foot motorhome, darlin', this is not some little thing. She got us turned around and back up to Bart and Sarah's. Well, then we're headed for Colorado. And this is my favorite part of this whole story. We're in Nebraska.

SL: Kay.

SM: And we're on the interstate, 79 or whatever it is.

SL: Yeah.

[03:51:24] SM: Well, whoever let the contracts in Nebraska had one contract for the people that were laying the pavement and another for the people who were doin' the overpasses, and nobody did who connects. So it was like this. [indicates abrupt dropoff with her hands] There was no—it was like this. And these are diesel pushers, man. The engine's in the back. [Laughs] So we're goin' along, and we hit one of those, and it goes—the big motorhome—and we're doin' seventy-five miles an hour, and that motorhome goes kawahack, just like that, and we're like [throws up hands with an expression of surprise], you know. And we go a little further, and we hit another one. Kawhack! And Lila, "What in the world?" And you gotta remember this is this devout Christian woman. And we hit another one, and she turns the air in that motorhome purple. And I went, "Lila!" and she said, "God will forgive me." Just like that. [Laughter] It was hilarious. And I said, "Slow down." So every time we came to one of those, we slowed way down, and we found out from truckers later, you know, that that was exactly what was wrong. And we went on all the way to

California. And on the way back—and she stayed out there while I did a lot of travelin' with my son and a lot of other—with Jay, my son. Did a lot of other stuff. And then on the way back, she—we noticed just as we hit the California desert headed out of California that the motorhome was going, "Er-ee, er-ee."

SL: Uh-oh.

[03:52:51] SM: And it was not good. And so we pulled into this truck stop. And for us—it was, you know, JB Hunt guys, Walmart trucks. Those guys knew us. They all knew us because of Animal Tracks. They knew me, and they knew that motorhome 'cause I'd done all that other travel recently. And so [*laughs*] they were like—so we pulled in—"No, no, don't—you don't wanna go here. Go about ten miles up, and there's an American station up there. You wanna go there. They got great mechanics." So we went up there, and the guy—and it was a Mexican—and he was really cool—that was runnin' the whole thing, and he said, "Now just go over there and park it, and then when we're ready, we'll let you come in, and we'll check it for you." He said, "I'm not—I just—I can't fix it. It's a motorhome. But I can tell you what's wrong and what needs to be done." "Okay." So we wait. And then pretty soon it's time to—and we wheel in, and there's this little Japanese guy about this tall. [*SL*

*laughs*] "I fix! I fix!" And Lila's like, "Okay." So we stop, and we get out, and we leave him with it. "I fix. I fix." We go back a couple hours. We come back, and he's, "I fix." And our big—there's a big shaft that g—there's a big drive thing that goes through the middle of the motorhome that's for balance. It keeps you from bein' too bouncy. It had sheared. He just took it out. Took it out and put it in the bay. Okay. He fixed it. It wasn't gonna do it an—the noise was not gonna occur anymore. So I go in to talk to the guy, and I said, "You fixed it," and he said, "Yeah." He said, "It turned out to be something we could do." And he said, "So yeah, he fixed it." And next to him was this giant guy who did all the hard, heavy work. It was really good. It was so cute. Mutt and Jeff. Well—and he looked at me, and I said, "Well, how much?" and he said, "Well, that'll be \$275," and I went, "Okay." And he went, "It's \$45. I'm kidding you." [*SL laughs*] I'm like, "Man. That guy was right. That trucker that—you know, that JB Hunt guy was right. This is where we needed to be, you know." [03:55:12] And so we went on from there across the deserts and home. Yeah. But it was—you know, two ladies. And becau—and from then on we were Lucy and Ethel, and everything we did was—it was just hilarious. And I learned—Lila and I learned from each other.

Then when we went up to Alaska to do the Alaska expedition, and we were in Denali and—who was the woman that was our senator for a while?

SL: Blanche Lincoln.

SM: Blanche Lincoln. Well, she—we needed all this stuff to happen in Alaska—she opened doors all over the country for us, but for Alaska I really needed help for Denali. Well, she just paved the way. And when we got there—I did—I was there with Bart and Sarah Jennings for a time, and then I was there with Lila. And Barton and Sarah and I did a lot of photography and a lot of stuff, and it was really neat. But then Lila and I were doin' the stuff that Blanche had provided us the inroads to. And one of those was there's a gate halfway through the park. And nobody goes past it except the busses. We had a pass. We had a green pass that was on our windshield. And I'll never forget when we drove up to that gate and that ranger looked down and saw that green pass and looked at us. [*SL laughs*] "How'd you get this? [*Laughs*] Nobody gets this but production companies." And Lila just shrugged her shoulders and said, "We just know the right people." Off we went. [03:56:50] And in the back of the park we were—you know, we were—the—we were lookin' for wolves. That's what we were lookin' for. The wolves. 'Cause in Alaska

there's a wolf that lives in Denali that is called the Alaska Interior Wolf, and we were hoping to see it. And we saw it, but we saw it as part of a group of wolves that they had at the park that they used that were—had been used for show. And they show 'em to people. So they're tame.

SL: Right.

SM: But we saw amazing things and did amazing stuff, those two ladies. And those pictures that you've seen of us and me with my camera and stuff, those are . . .

SL: Right.

SM: . . . all taken by her back in the back of that park. And I—you know, she was fearless, so I wasn't afraid. And maybe she thought I was fearless so she wasn't afraid.

SL: I'm sure there's a little bit of both.

SM: Both, yeah.

SL: Both ways, you know.

[03:57:45] SM: But it was very—Denali is a very imposing environment. It feels huge. Huge. And important. And it's—now it's become very fra—everything's fragile. In the mountain we met some guys from Belgium. He ha—a young man and his father. And every—he was a—he insured banks in Belgium. No, he wasn't. He was Hungarian. Hungarian. He insured banks.

That's what his company did. And his father was retired. He had been a stockbroker in New York. And every year they met someplace and climbed a mountain. It's what they did together. Serious climbing. And they had just climbed Denali in the traditional way. They were not flown in to the base camp and climbed to the top.

SL: Started at the . . .

SM: They came in the back way, packed everything in, set up their own base camp, and climbed the back of the mountain. And his father was in his sixties, and the story that they told was that he—and there were very—it was very dangerous because the mountain, even then, was melting. Melting. And they—and so it was very dangerous. And they came to one place and his—and he—and his son fell right through the crevasse, right down through the hole in the ice that they didn't see 'cause there was snow over it. And he said his father braced himself like this and just stopped him. This guy's sixty-five years old—and stops him and then pulled him up out of there. You know what kind of strength that took? Man, that guy was something. And I'm like . . .

SL: It's adrenalin.

[03:59:45] SM: We were so impressed. We were so impressed. And

this is when—you know, we had the camera. And Sarah was with me, Barton and Sarah were with me. And this was so cute 'cause Sarah and I are very different. And she was—she's the one who published my book, *Drawn from My Life*. And so she's—I said, "Now Sarah, I—you're gonna film this, and I'm gonna interview 'em. So just—do you think you can do this?" And she said—she took one look at that young man, and she said, "Oh yeah. [*SL laughs*] I can do this. It's gonna" . . .

SL: That's terrible.

SM: . . . "be easy to point my camera at him." [*Laughs*]

SL: That's terrible. You girls are terrible.

SM: And I said, "You do it, girl." Yeah. [*Laughs*] [04:00:18] So we did Alaska. And there were so many other places that we went, but Alaska was three months of travel, learning, understanding. I got to fill out . . .

SL: It's a huge, huge state.

SM: Well, it's a huge state, and it's the only state left in our union that is still primitive. Everywhere you go in this country—understand this—there is no real wild lands left. They are all remnant. So they have to be controlled. Everything about them has to be controlled. The wildlife in those remnants have to be controlled. They cannot let their numbers get too large. You

have got to control that. Everything about the land, everything about the trees, everything has to be controlled 'cause if you don't do it, it's gonna go away. And the big thing you have to control is infringement. All these big battles going on about Sawtooth and all—you know, and all of these different areas in the country. And they talk about, "Well, that's just perimeter." You bet it is. It's critical to the survival of that particular monument or that particular national park. It's just critical to the survival of that area. One day—and I've said this—I said it when we were in White Sands, and I'll say it again. One day our national parks will have fences that are twelve foot high set in concrete that's four foot, six foot deep so that the wild land that is in those parks cannot escape out, and the animals that do not belong in there that are feral dogs, feral this, feral that from the ranches and all the surrounding areas can't get in.

SL: Can't get in.

[04:02:02] SM: Including poachers. When we were in Yellowstone—you talk about Yellowstone. Randy wanted to go on a hike, and he did this everywhere we went. He went off alone. Well, bear season had just started. And there's that picture, and he's sittin' there talkin' to the ranger. And what I'm talking to him about is Randy's percentages.

SL: Of survival?

SM: And we couldn't talk him out of it. He was gonna do it. Where we were was at the northeastern end of the park. You know where we were. Way up in the northeastern end where the wolves are in Lamar Valley . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*]?

SM: Lamar Valley.

SL: Okay.

SM: Okay, up in Lamar Valley. [*Sighs*] And Randy hiked that hill comin' back down to the campground. And that's right where the poachers come in. And he just told him—he said, "If they see you, they'll shoot you."

SL: Wow.

SM: "They will shoot you." [04:02:59] But the best story about poachers was at—I was in New Me—northeastern—northwestern New Mexico. The San Juan. The San Juan River.

SL: Sure.

SM: Well, the Jicarilla Apache reservation is back down south and east of that.

SL: I think I've—who—let's see. Where is the San Juan . . .

SM: There's a little . . .

SL: . . . Dam?

SM: The San Juan Dam is way up by Ship Rock. It's way up in . . .

SL: By the Four Corners?

SM: By the Four Corners. If you come back into the state—and it's the Jicarilla Apache Reservation.

SL: Okay.

SM: And they were the ones that they couldn't—they put 'em with the other Apaches, but they had always lived the Pueblo Indians, and they were so tame that they were just—they were just killin' 'em. So they had to bring 'em back to [*laughs*—and let 'em live with the Pueblos because—have—they wouldn't get murdered. So they came back. And but they were not like the Pueblo. They were much more warlike and different. They were more aggressive people. They were Apache.

SL: Right.

[04:04:18] SM: They weren't as hardcore as those guys down in Arizona, but they were still Apache. And we were meeting with Stuart, who was the—to get permission to go on the reservation for three or four days 'cause I was lookin' for mountain lions. I wanted to photograph 'em, and this was the place to go. Their mountain lions are as big as African lions.

SL: Wow.

SM: They're famous for their mountain lions.

SL: Wow.

SM: And so we go there, and I—and we go and s—and we go to the offices, and he's late 'cause he had to go get paper for the girls for their copy machine. And this giant man comes walking through the door, and he is just the epitome of a lawyer. He's just incredible. And he walks in, and he looks at you, and you see—he smiles. And you just see this whole other heart. It's amazing. So we went in his office, and there's this big pelt layin' over his coffee table, and he said, "Yeah, this was one that came down into the town, and we had to kill it." And he said, "It just—it was really awful, but," he said, "I didn't have any choice." He said, "I dont' kill 'em unless we have to."  
[04:05:23] But then he starts talkin' about the reservation. And there are a million acres of wildlife refuge, and it's the largest and best in our country. The largest and best in our country. And here's why. He tells us all about everything. And then we go out to meet his warriors who are coming in. And he called them his warriors. And these guys are comin' in, and they're takin' off their flak jackets, and they got their, you know, their guns in the [*laughs*] back of their trucks, and I'm like, "Stuart?" And he said, "Poachers are very dangerous people. They come here, you know, they disappear." [*Laughs*]

SL: So . . .

SM: I'll bet they do. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

[04:06:21] SM: You know, and I—and one of the things we're gonna—wanna redo the documentary—and I talked about that in the documentary, and I can't have that be for public. Not anymore. Not for general public. We can use it for something like this, which is history, but I'm sure he would be very chagrined if this—when he said that, at that time, it was perfectly okay. You could do that. But now you can't. You can't say things like that. He can't say things like that. He can't say that when people come onto his reservation with guns that are dangerous that they are gonna shoot 'em and kill 'em and bury 'em. It's sovereign nation. They're a sovereign nation. They can do what they want. They just know that they—that's a very unpopular notion. [*Laughter*] You know. [04:07:04] But and—but the way you hunt there, you go out with a Jicarilla Apache guide, and you cull the herd. This is why everything's trophy. You cull the herd. Well, a cull is trophy, okay. A cull is a good trophy. But every once in a while, somebody'll go—and it costs you about \$25,000 to do that for like a three- or four-day hunting trip.

SL: Wow.

SM: But . . .

SL: I keep saying, "Wow" . . .

SM: I know.

SL: . . . to everything that you say. [*Laughs*] But this is . . .

SM: But you—I know. These trips are amazing. But you disobey that guide and you kill that trophy elk, you're fined \$80,000, and you never come back to that reservation again. Ever. You're fined 80 grand, and they are a sovereign nation. You don't get off the ground until you've paid 'em. Hey.

SL: That's what it takes.

SM: That's what it takes. That's what it takes. That's how—and they've got trophy elk, trophy mule deer, trophy turkey, and trophy mountain lions. And they have the healthiest, most well-cared-for, best wildlife in the nation there. And the reason why is because they have a—and all of tribes everywhere you go on the reservations, the environmental person, the person over the environment, is a war chief. They already know. It's a war chief. I met the war chief that was over the environment for the Taos Pueblo. Brilliant man. Great. We went on a horseback ride with him way up in the mountains. And it was just—oh. It was amazing.

SL: Was it Land of Enchantment? New Mexico?

[04:09:11] SM: Yeah. It really is. And at the pueblo—I was at the pueblo with my—and I showed you the photo of the bear up on the mountainside. And I was there with my god-daughter, little Laura. And we were—she traveled a lot with me. And we had done the pueblo all day. And it was ju—it was winter. Snow on the mountains. It was really cold. And we come to the last shop. 'Cause you go from shop to shop to shop, and it's their homes.

SL: Yeah.

SM: They've taken a room. And so we come to the last one, and there's this older woman there. And her stuff is really beautiful. And I said—and I made the remark—I said, "We were out on the plaza." And I said, "I have never felt energy like that before." And she looked at me, and she smiled, and she said, "Of course. People have prayed there for a thousand years. People have prayed there for a thousand years."

[04:10:14] SL: Where was it in—is it in Santa Fe where the plaza—there's a church there that has a mysterious spiral staircase?

SM: It's—that's Santa Fe.

SL: Yeah.

SM: It's the church. It's just the sp—I've seen it.

SL: Yeah.

SM: And you walk in in there, and you have no idea how it ever happened.

SL: Right.

SM: You ca—the . . .

SL: The carpenter showed up . . .

SM: Carpenter showed up, built it . . .

SL: And just—and left.

SM: And the belief is that it was Christ.

SL: Yeah. No nails. All pegged.

SM: No nails. All pegged. [*SL laughs*] And it just is suspended.

[04:10:53] There's a lot of—you're—all those areas are vortexes. You can feel it. And I spent a lot of years not believing in that. And then when what happened to me happened in Sedona, I came to understand. When you say vortex—the reason why I didn't buy into it is because I—okay, sorcery and witches and all that stuff. No, no, no. A vortex is a very real thing. It's about energy. And Eureka is a vortex. It's a water vortex. Heronswood is a water vortex. One of the reasons when I drove onto this property and this house—this little flat, funny front house, and you walk around to the back—and I knew that this was where I had to live. This was where I

had to be to do my work. And then I was able to get it. It's because it's a water vortex. It's a water vortex. Vortexes are places that God likes a lot. So he visits often. That's what I say about them. Just, you know, visits. So you can find him there so easily. [*Laughs*] ?Liddie?. [*Snaps*]

SL: That's a good . . .

SM: Here, ?Liddie?. It's okay. Shh, shh, shh. [*Jingling noise*] She's just bein' bored.

SL: Great dog.

SM: Say, "Yeah. I'm a good girl. We thought I was gonna die, but I got saved."

SL: So I . . .

SM: So . . .

[04:12:33] SL: I—you know, the combination of your artwork and your environmental work seems to be—somehow or nother it feeds on itself. It keeps rolling back around, rolling back around. Is there anything that you wish would be introduced into that vortex of art and environmentalism? Is there something that—I mean, I understand wanting to do things to your best ability and to try to approach perfection and in every moment, but it seems to be that—s—and you can't dismiss the God factor, but it seems to me that there's something that's just not quite done with you

yet on all that.

SM: I know.

SL: That it just keeps coming round and round, and your heart keeps letting yourself open up to the next step. And it's a step that's always followed by steps that you are familiar with. You know, it just keeps revolving. And I'm just wondering—has anything ever come to you that you would somehow or nother alter that, or are you just—I—is it that you feel safe in that, and it's what you know to do? I mean, I used to always say people do what they know.

SM: Yeah, you are who you are.

SL: Yeah. No matter where you go, there you are.

[04:14:43] SM: Yeah. You are who you are. You're who you are.

And if I asked you that same question, you'd give me the same answer. "Well, Susan, I just am who I am."

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SM: I'm who I am. Whenever pieces were formed and put together and formed to make me who I am, this is the result of that. And I never know the future. I do not live in the past. We've talked about this. Telling these stories and everything is fun, but I don't go there. I don't live there. I don't care about it. I really don't. And I don't live in the future because I don't know what it

is, so why bother? I live in the moment. I work in the moment. I do everything I do in the moment. And whatever that moment wants, I have to do what it wants. I have to do what the moment wants, and I can't tell you why. It's . . .

SL: I . . .

SM: . . . just what it is.

SL: I still think it has something to do with our path before we knew it. Right at the very beginning . . .

SM: Predestined?

SL: When you . . .

SM: Predestiny?

SL: When you were being raised, early before—there was a series of gratifications or a series of awards, very personal, nothing—you know, nothing declared.

[04:16:26] SM: You know, I had sisters and brothers that were in the same places.

SL: Well, not entirely.

SM: And they didn't do the same things.

SL: I mean, they were a little bit different time.

SM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: So yours is a little bit different than theirs. Their . . .

SM: Yeah, it is.

SL: Apparently it's all brilliant, or it's all—you know.

SM: It is what it is.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. Everybody chooses—I don't know if you—I thought when I graduated from high school and went over to Santa Monica that I would be an actor because I was really good. I knew how to walk onto that stage and transform myself into a role, and it was a gift. But that wasn't the path. I danced classical flamenco in New Orleans with Teresa Torkanowsky, who had—her husband was—she was a Torkanowsky 'cause her husband was conductor of the New Orleans Symphony. So we danced to Bach fugues. She had been the first woman to do heel work. She was José Greco's partner for years.

SL: Oh. [*Laughs*]

[04:17:38] SM: So she was a master in her field. And I'm this little gringo girl, and she's got her troop of—she had twelve dancers in her troupe, and she had four lead dancers, and I was third. We dyed my hair dark brown.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh, no.

SM: And called me Susana Moran. And you know, flamenco's hilarious. I mean, everybody thinks that it's this—it's so much fun. Because you go—people who do not speak Spanish, which

in New Orleans—quite frankly, there's a lot of people who speak French, but not a whole lot who speak Spanish. And so they come to the places where the flamenco dancers are, and they sit there in their elegant gowns looking like they just really know what's going on, and it's all bawdy, and it's all dirty, and it's all nasty, and it's hilarious stuff. [*SL laughs*] And in the dances—and there's all these different kinds of dances, and the music is all—tends to be the same in each one, and they all tell essentially the same story, and one of 'em is unrequited love, and the other one is, you know, is stolen away from me, you know, and all this stuff. [04:18:44] And then, you know, and then there's the ones like she—there's one that we did that—the song was about a woman who had a bed, and she built it so high that nobody—men couldn't climb up on it. And so they stood at the bottom of the bed and cried in frustration. It was hilarious. [*SL laughs*] I mean, it was just dumb stuff. And everybo—you know, and we would do all these—and—but it was—what was funny was all this stuff was goin' on, and these women and men are goin' [*inaudible*] No, it's not. This came out of the bars. People that—flamenco came from the gypsy caves in Spain. And the gypsies were the craziest people in the world. And they were a mixed blood of people. They were—all of—they were the

ones that had all the blood of all the people that had been in that land. They were not Castilians.

SL: Right.

SM: Huh-uh. They were gypsies, you know. And but there is a—when you look at flamenco as an art form, which I was blessed to be able to do, there is no dance that equals it. And the reason why is the complexity of it. You have got three guitarists with sixteen-string guitars, and they're all playing different rhythms, and your hands are doing one thing, your body's doing another, and your feet is—are doing something else. And you're doing it all at once, and it all works.

SL: And you're smiling.

SM: And you—oh—huh?

SL: And smiling.

[04:20:24] SM: No, you don't ever smile.

SL: You don't ever smile.

SM: Ever.

SL: Oh, it's all too serious.

SM: No, no. It's very serious. [*SL laughs*] And I watched Theresa—she did a—she had a solo that she did was just phenomenal. And you know, she's wearing the—now she's in her pants and her—and she's got on her boots, and she's dancing. And this

dance is just like—oh, my God. And something happened about a third of the way through, for some reason, she got lost. I knew it. Her guitarist knew it. You know what they did? They started over because she can't pick up. It's too complicated. She has to start over. And she was the best. The best. And she had to start over. That's how complicated that stuff is. So yeah. What can I say. That was wonderful privileges of doing all those things, but we're, you know . . .

[04:21:15] SL: All right, so we really did just kind of—until now we just kind of passed over the New Orleans years. How long were you in New Orleans?

SM: Ten years.

SL: Ten years.

SM: Yeah.

SL: So flamenco, you were dancing . . .

SM: The Jean Lafitte . . .

SL: . . . you were acting, you had . . .

SM: Yeah.

SL: . . . brand—Andy Warhol . . .

SM: I did not do any acting in New Orleans.

SL: Oh, you didn't.

SM: I got—I had that time with Andy Warhol, but the big thing that I

did while I was in New Orleans—I became—I did a project in my subdivision where we planted trees. And that got the attention of my—of our parish council. And the chairman of the parish council was C. J. Eagan. And he was the most powerful man—one of the most powerful men in the state, and he was actually, oh, my God, honest. But he made all their money with their funeral homes, and he didn't need money. Now he—they had done a \$2 million park study, and they'd never done anything with it. And he handed it to me—I'd gotten on the Parks Commission after I did that project. And so he said—he handed it to me, and he said, "I want you to take this." And he literally had a meeting with me, not the commission. He met with me, and he got me in his office, and he said—handed me this thing, and he said, "I think you can do this. I want you to take this, and I want you to turn it into a program, and I want you to pass a bond. We need our national park, we need our pocket parks, we need everything done that's in this study." So I did. I did.

SL: And . . .

[04:22:49] SM: I got together with the parish architects, landscape architect. And his students helped me through the summer, and we put together the program, and we introduced it all across the parish. And I had a lot of people that were involved and that

helped. And we passed a \$7 million park bond when they couldn't get sewer. And we created the Jean Lafitte National Park. [*Laughs*] And I was twenty-six.

SL: Yeah, that's what I was saying. Your time there—you're really young.

SM: And C. J.'s goin'—and C.—well, and the way I gotten into—a part of this was that they asked me—when they found out I was an artist and saw some of my work, they commissioned me to do landmarks that were tru—crumbling or goin' away or had gone away, and all they had were photos, and I did seven drawings of those landmarks. And that's when Mr. Eagan and I started talking about things in Jefferson Parish that were going away. And that—after I finished that, they asked me to help with Edwin—who—these were Democrats. They asked me to help with Edwin. And you gotta remember, this was when Democrats were actually like Republicans. And they asked me to help with Edwin Edwards 'cause he was running for governor . . .

SL: Sure.

SM: . . . against Treen. He was running against Treen. And I—and he really needed a lot of help. And I had New Orleans in my pocket 'cause of what I'd accomplished. [04:24:22] And so I went and met with him, and I cut him a deal 'cause that's what

you do. And I said, "Okay, no Highway 1 on the West Bank. Because you put Highway 1 on the West Bank and it's all over. It's all over. Trust me. Environmentally, you're done if you do that." There is no Highway 1 to this day. And I helped him get elected, and we did stuff. Patricia, my—she was—Patricia, my girlfriend and I, we formed this little public relations firm when we were doin'—'cause we were doin' all this political stuff. And she used to say to people—and you're gonna get this joke, okay. [SL laughs] Brilliant woman. Gorgeous, walkin' around with her own light, just—they looked at her, and that was great, you know. I could talk business with 'em. But when people would say, "What do you do?" she'd say, "I make sure she's got her purse when we leave." [Laughter] Yeah. She did because I'd forget it. You know me. I forget everything.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

[04:25:19] SM: It was hilarious. But we did—what I did for—what we—what Patricia and I dreamed up for Edwin—he had—politics at that time were behind a desk. Hello, my name is Edwin Edwards, and I'm running for governor. Wouldn't you like to vote for me? And this is what I've done and blah, blah, blah. And you know, people flip the channel.

SL: Yeah.

SM: And watch something else. Are you ready for what we did? We put him on the levy with the seagulls and his grandchildren saying, as he's walking along with the sun setting, "I love New Orleans. I love Louisiana. This is my heart. This is where my grandchildren live. I will always do my be"—you know, somethin' like that. And then when he had to do the debate with Treen, they called me in to coach him. [*SL laughs*] Now Edwin was this ree-haw guy, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SM: He was hilarious, but he was smart. And I said, "Okay. You wanna beat him in this debate, just make him mad." "Well, how am I gonna do that?" And I said, "It's easy. Just what are his buttons?" Well, the biggest button at that time was capital punishment. And everybody in the state was for it, but there was this hue and cry against it, and so the politicians were all walkin' on eggshells and havin' to be real careful. [04:27:07] So I told him—I said, "Look, when they bring that up, here's your line: 'I believe in the milk of human kindness, but I have to bow to the people.' Don't forget that, Edwin." And he didn't. And so first they s—it's Treen, and they're—and Treen says whatever he has to say about this, and it's the typical stuff. And now it's Edwin's turn, and he said that. You could see the steam

comin' outta that guy's ears he was so mad. It made Treen furious that he would say that 'cause he knew that it was [*unclear word*]. He knew it. He knew that he didn't mean a word he was sayin'.

SL: Right.

SM: Because he didn't. Of course he believed in capital punishment. Everybody did. But that's what he said. And he lost it. And it—and he could never compose himself again. He just could—and he just—he lost the debate. And Edwin beat him. And those were the things that we did. But we did—but nothing that I did—everything that I did did not have anything to do with stats, with strategies, with anything. It just had to do with good common sense and what do you think oughta work. And that's how I thought. And it was effective. And that's how I've done everything ever since. I always did it that way.

[04:28:32] SL: So I guess if I look back at all the stuff that you've done, there is—there's politics involved.

SM: Every time.

SL: Every time.

SM: Every time.

SL: So in some way, you were political consultant activist.

Fascinating.

SM: Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, you know, Clinton, when he was elected governor—they came to me—I was—and asked me to do his inaugural program. And that's when I wrote the Arkansas poem. And later when he did the first joint Southern Legislative Conference, I had gone to color. So he asked me—did—the state commissioned *Eden Falls* to go with that poem. And I got to go to that Southern Joint Legislative Conference to sign the prints to all the members that came there. So yeah, Clinton—and Clinton asked—Clinton and I spent a lot of time—he asked me a lot of questions about a lot of things. He was smart that way, though. He asked everybody a lot of questions about a lot of things.

SL: He does. He did. Yeah.

[04:29:32] SM: He had no problem with findin' out what you thought and gauging that and weighing it against what he was doing, especially things and—after he was elected and I was on the Arkansas Arts Council doin' the things I was doin', he called me in his office a lot to ask my advice on things. And I happily, you know, gave him an honest answer. And my answer was always couched in, 'Right or wrong, this is what I think.' 'Cause I was only—I could only give him what I thought. You know, Hillary is brilliant. And every—and she was really the brains behind the

man. Bottom line, she was the brains behind the man. I don't think he ever opened his mouth on any major, important issue without her telling him the ins and outs and everything that he needed to know and her opinion, quite frankly. And—because he—and he did it because he knew he needed her. He knew he needed that. He's smart. He's glib. He's really good at making things happen. Is he an intellect? No, not really.

SL: No, but he has amazing retention of . . .

SM: Oh yeah, he does.

SL: I mean, he . . .

SM: Amazing retention.

SL: Yeah, he . . .

SM: He really does. But . . .

SL: Yeah, and when he lays his eyes on you, you're pretty much the only person in the room.

SM: That's his gift.

SL: I know. It's really quite remarkable.

[04:31:01] SM: Nobody else exists.

SL: That's right. It's remarkable.

SM: And I told you the story about the inaugural ball. Member? I—did I tell you that?

SL: I was there, but you'll—tell me the story.

SM: Rose Crane . . .

SL: Kay.

SM: . . . was the woman who made everything happen for me. And I did—I curated the show that—the—that was given in the big—when they have the big award ceremony for the governor, all the art. I curated all that. I did all this other stuff. I had done the poem. I had done da-da, da-da, da-da. Now it's time for the inaugural ball. And so I went, and I sat at Rose's table. And I went by myself. And Rose had this—she was single. And her date was a guy that was a shoe magnate from New York.

SL: Kay.

[04:31:58] SM: And—this is really the too—this is hilarious. So he really liked me because I was from LA, okay? And he couldn't stand all these hicks. [*SL laughs*] And he was real clear about it. They were just a bunch of hicks. And he kept talking about this at the table. And pretty soon, Rose was like [looks sideways], you know, and I'm like [looks sideways]. So he asked me to dance. And I have on this beautiful burgundy gown that had this—and I had on burgundy suede high-heeled boots and a big brooch right here, and my hair, you know, down and all this. And I'm really cold-natured, and it was winter.

SL: Yeah.

SM: So I had on these socks underneath my boots that were like Mammy Yokum socks. [SL laughs] And we're out on the dance floor. And Bill and Hillary are like not very far away. And he starts in. "I can't believe I'm here. All these hicks. All these rah-rah—hillbillies—rah-rah, rah-rah." And I—and he said, "And I'm so glad that I'm with you. You're from Los Angeles," and I said, "Yeah, but my par—you know, it's—my parents are Arkansas people, and it's in my blood." And I said, "I'm so sorry to tell you this, but darlin' [lifts leg off floor and mimes lifting hem of dress], [SL laughs] [slaps calf] that's me." He left the floor. And Bill and Hillary were laughin' their asses off. It was funny. And from then on we kinda had—you know. [Laughs] But he left. He literally left the party. And I said, "Oh, Rose, I'm so sorry." And she said, "No, I'm glad he's gone." [Laughs] She said . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . "I had no idea he was such a jerk."

SL: Really. He sounds like a . . .

SM: Yeah.

SL: . . . terrible person.

[04:33:46] SM: Yeah. But people have attitudes when they come into this state, and he was one of those. He just thought he was

so much better than everybody in the room. And he wasn't even close to as good.

SL: Yeah.

SM: He just thought he was better. And so I—but I was so glad I had on my Mammy Yokum socks. And I mean, everybody around us was just, "Yes! Yes!" [*Laughs*] It was good.

SL: That was a fun time.

SM: It was a fun time. I was like in my late thirties.

SL: We . . .

SM: We were all young.

SL: We went to both Arkansas and Tennessee balls.

SM: Oh, my.

SL: And Little Feat was playing in a bar in downtown DC that Tyson had rented out, bought out. Brought in Little Feat, so that was incredible.

SM: Oh. Yeah.

SL: Got to meet Peter Max there.

SM: Oh, wow.

SL: Yeah. It was neat.

[04:34:44] SM: Yeah. Those were neat times.

SL: Yeah.

SM: I spent most of my time on my farm, drawing. You know, it's

really interesting because we talk about all this, but most of my time has been spent at my table isolated.

SL: Well, I think your art says that.

SM: It requires it.

SL: Shows that.

SM: Yeah, but when I talk about these things—these are when I go out and do something else for a time. Every Saturday I would go in and do my gallery. And everybody—you know, when I moved to Eureka, everybody goes, "Well, now you'll get to be with all of your people that you know," and I'm goin', "I don't know anybody in this town." 'Cause I didn't. I was out here Monday through Friday in that studio. Saturday I got up. By nine o'clock I was at my gallery. Lila and I met. We figured out our day. And we stayed there until six or seven. And if I had clients, I took 'em to dinner. Otherwise I came home. And Sunday I spent right here. That was it. That was my life unless I was doing a specific thing. That's how I live. And that's how I live today.

SL: I can see that.

[04:36:02] SM: It's how you work. If I didn't, I couldn't do the work.

SL: Right.

SM: Yeah. That's how you do the work. And so every—so no, I

didn't know anybody in Eureka. [*SL laughs*] And when I moved to town, I didn't—even after I moved to town, because my studio was there, and I was working, I didn't know very many people. I got up every morning and walked, but how many folks are out at six thirty, seven in the morning? Not very many.

SL: Well, how many people work on a piece of art for seven months or more? You know, I mean . . .

SM: I don't know.

SL: . . . it's a big commitment.

SM: You know, I guess I thought it wasn't that long because Michelangelo was my mentor, and he did.

SL: For years.

SM: He worked so long on things.

SL: Yeah.

SM: Took him—you know, the Sistine Chapel took him four years.

SL: Yeah.

[04:36:53] SM: And the mural that—the mural, the big painting that da Vinci was doing, took the same amount of time. Those masters had no problem with how long it took them to do something. And they had entourage. They had their studios and their apprentices helping them paint.

SL: Yes.

SM: And it still took that long. And they didn't have a problem with that. And that was what I was reading about. That's what I was learning. So I didn't know that it was anything special. I really didn't.

SL: Well . . .

SM: I didn't know that it was something amazing to work so long on something. For all I knew, everybody did. When I found out that people did things so fast, I was astounded. I really was. I di—I just didn't—'cause it had never entered my mind to think about how long it took somebody to do something, somebody else. I'm—like most artists, I'm totally self-absorbed, and I'm totally self-centered, [*SL laughs*] so I don't think much about what somebody else is doing. [*Laughter*]

SL: I don't know if . . .

SM: I don't . . .

SL: . . . I would call it that.

[04:38:05] SM: No, it's true. It's the truth. And if I said anything different, I'd be lying. I'm nice about it, but it's still real. It's still as real as can be. You have to be. There's only one place you get it from. Here. And if you don't have that self-absorption, if you don't—if you're not in yourself enough, then where are you gonna get it from? I can't get it from anybody—

you. I can't get it from anybody. Only me. And that makes me self-absorbed. It just does. And the artists that I know who are my friends—we're all the same. And a lot of people—you know people will say, "Oh, well, you know, she's just a terrible snob. She won't even lo—she won't even say hello to you walkin' down the street." I'm not lookin'. I am not looking for people to say hello to. I'm really not. I'm probably thinking about something that doesn't have anything to do with the street I'm walking down. You know, I just—I'm self absorbed. I'm somewhere else. And we all are. You know, and my friends who are really dedicated artists, the real ones, we're—we—we'll sit—two things'll happen when we all get together. We're all left handed. [SL laughs] And we're all totally self-absorbed. And we don't care, you know, about it. I mean, you know, it's what you are. [04:39:35] And it's—and we're really hard people to be married to. My—when I look at—you know, for men . . .

SL: Be careful, now. Be careful. [Laughs]

SM: The most successful men who are artists, their wives really supported them and their work.

SL: Right.

SM: And they were very happy to have that subservient role. Well, that's a really hard thing for a man to do for a woman. And I'm

not demanding in that way, but in the end, you know, every man that's—I've had—I've been married—Kim's my third husband. And he's learned. I love him. And I would do anything for him. But I'm about me. I have to be in order to do what I do. And he doesn't, you know—my first husband—he didn't understand it, and he had a lot of issues with it. Randy—it supported him. I was the—he called me the goose that laid the golden eggs.

SL: Right.

SM: And he loved partnering in it. He loved everything we did together. He was delighted to make—to drive those things and help make them happen. He thought that was wonderful. And then he became very ill, and that all changed. But you know, that's just something that happened to him that nobody can do anything about. But and Kim is—he's this generous, loving, wonderful man who was incredibly successful in his own career and earned great admiration and respect in his own career, and he's retired, you know. [04:41:14] So he's having to understand that life with me is not what anyone could expect. It's just—you can't imagine what it's gonna be like. And I told him that. I said, "Are you sure you wanna do this?"

SL: Well, it's . . .

SM: "Yeah, I wanna do this." And I said, "But you don't know what

you're gettin' into."

SL: But, Susan . . .

SM: He doesn't care.

SL: . . . that can be a blessing.

SM: Oh, it [*laughs*] . . .

SL: I mean, how bore—how quickly can we become bored?

SM: Well, yeah, I guess that's true.

SL: You know?

SM: I guess that's true.

SL: What's the . . .

SM: And he has said that.

SL: What's the Joni Mitchell line?

SM: Every . . .

SL: People like strong women 'cause they're up to your tricks.

SM: [*Laughter*] Yeah. You know, and you're becau—it's true because that is one thing David said and Randy said and Kim says. "Life with you is never boring."

SL: There you go.

[04:41:59] SM: And that's true.

SL: That's precious.

SM: It's not boring. Yeah.

SL: It's precious.

SM: It is. It's wonderful. And he's, you know—Kim is—you know, I—now I'm married to a man who speaks five languages, three fluently, is a leader in his field. He was a leader in his field. And he was also a PA. He's—but there's—he's the kindest—his heart is huge. He has four children, and we're up to—we're going to be fourteen grandchildren soon.

SL: Wow.

SM: And he's—he spends so much time sharing with them, doing for them, being a part of their life. It's just—there's a richness to his soul that is very comforting.

SL: I'm so glad you talked about Kim 'cause I get that from him.

SM: Oh yeah. He's . . .

SL: Yeah.

SM: . . . extraordinary.

SL: I mean, it's extraordinary.

[04:43:03] SM: And my son Charlie is moving, you know, to this ranch, and so Kim went over the other day to help him move some stuff around and bring some things here. And Kim came back, and he said, "Charlie said the most interesting thing to me. He said, 'I'm so glad Mom has you because without you, she couldn't have done it.'"

SL: There you go.

SM: And he's right. He's right. Kim is—because he was talking about all the things that are happening now and, "Without you, it wouldn't have happened." And that's true. Without Kim, it would not have happened because he's that amazing support system. And he's really, really smart. So I'll go off and start to do somethin', and he'll go, "Are you sure you wanna do that that way?" And I'll go, "Yeah." "Maybe you better—let's talk about this." [*Laughter*] And after he's through explaining to me what I'm doin', I'm like, "Oh, my God." But now, you know, I mean, for all those years, I had Lila, Jenny, Cheryl, Randy. They all did all that. I drew. And did personal appearances and did what I did. Now without them, I'm having to make all kinds of decisions that I did not have to make before. And that's when he stands down. That's what he stops everything and says, "Think about this. Think through this," you know. Because I don't. I do everything on the—I do it on the fly. It's who I am. So he helps me. He stabilizes me. And he's just so kind. You know, he can't get over how much the dogs love him. [*SL laughs*] And I'm like—they adore him. Of course they do. Why wouldn't they? You know. He's—but it's like he doesn't take that for granted at all. He just thinks it's the most wondrous thing. [04:45:12] And to have that wu—and that's one of his

best qualities. He has this wonder about him. I mean, he loves—you know how much he loves music, and oh, it's—and space travel and all th—oh and—you know. And when we were talking about all these guys going up into space, he said, "But wait. These are wonderful things!" That's Kim. Every accomplishment, everything that we do, everything that takes us a step forward, he just thinks is amazing and important and wonderful. And I really admire that in him, you know. I do. You know. So I'm lucky. [*Laughs*] How'd I do this?

SL: I know. It came to you.

SM: Yeah.

SL: Wonderful time.

SM: Thank you, dear.

SL: Thank you.

SM: Loved it.

SL: Me, too. We're gonna get out of your hair. [*SM laughs*]

[End of interview 04:46:07]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]