

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

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

Peggy Parks  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
April 11, 2012  
Prairie Grove, Arkansas

## Objective

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

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

## Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

### **Citation Information**

See the Citation Guide at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.php>.

**Scott Lunsford interviewed Peggy Sue Murphy Parks on April 11, 2012, in Prairie Grove, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Peggy Sue Parks, this is now the tenth? What is today's date?

Bruce Perry: Today is the . . .

Peggy Parks: The eleventh.

BP: . . . eleventh.

SL: The eleventh. This is our second day—uh—in our interviewing process, and I—I just wanna thank you again for giving us all this time—um—in your life. And I can't tell you how valuable—uh—these stories have been so far. You've really done a good job of—of giving us a painting of what Fayetteville and—and growing up was like when the town was small and all the characters around you and the—it's just been—it's just been a treat. And I—I just have to thank you again for—for doing this with us. I think we're on our fifth tape, so this is our—this is the start of our fifth hour on this.

[00:00:54] PP: Well, but also in response to that [*clears throat*], I feel very honored to do this—um—that you thought my life and [*laughs*—and my growing up was significant enough. Course, I did live through some very significant times. Uh—the Great

Depression and World War II, the Korean War, you know, and Vietnam—um—all of that, you know, is—is woven into your life in some way or another. And after—uh—World War II we didn't have a family member who was in the service. But those things—uh—do affect your life. You do read about it and absorb it. Uh—and I was always trying to keep my fourth graders up on current events, and it was just—there were things going on—uh—that—that they would get really interested in. I remember, particularly, Watergate.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:56] PP: And they would—the—uh—newspaper came to the school, and they would want me to go up to the—and—and I took the paper, but I didn't have time to read it before I went to school. They would want me to go up to the office and—and get the *Gazette* and give 'em the latest. Um—and I loved that about 'em because I wanted them to keep up with current events. I wanted them to think of the world beyond their classroom, beyond their home, beyond their city—uh—even beyond their state. I wanted them to realize they are a—uh—a member of a world of people not just a—a small group. Um—and—and so, for them to want to keep up with national politics, of course, that was a [*laughs*] interesting but difficult time. Um—really—uh—

made me feel good.

SL: The . . .

[00:02:49] PP: And—and there were some, now, that—that—uh—  
one child in particular I'll tell you about because he watched  
the—the evening news every night with his mother.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: I mean, this was just—this was just a part of his life. And he  
came in and, one morning, and he said—as he walked in the  
door and I was sitting at my desk, he said, "Boy, they better not  
give away the Panama Canal!" [*SL laughs*] And this is when the  
discussion—uh—and the vote was coming up in the Senate—uh—  
whether or not—because we did have control over the Panama  
Canal, having built it, but with the promise that we would at  
some time—uh—return the canal to Panama.

SL: Panama. Mh-hmm.

PP: And—uh—and all of the money that we received from it, you  
know, was coming to us and feeling that ab—absolutely the  
Panamanians deserved it. It was their country that we had cut  
through. So—uh—I—I wondered why he was so distressed  
about this and—and I said, "Well, John—um—what made you  
feel so strongly about this?" And he s—and course, I was thrilled  
that he even knew that this was going to be a debate . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: . . . in the United States Senate and that our two senators would be involved in this very important vote. So I said, "Why do you feel that way?" And he said, "Well, after all, we built it, we paid for it, we died for it, we had malaria for it, and we found a cure for malaria and yellow fever for it, and—and rightfully, it—it should be ours, and we should get the money from it for the money that we put into—to building it." And he just couldn't see it. And I said, "Well, John, think about it this way. Now, what if Panama—uh—owned the Arkansas River, and every time that we went to Van—from Van Buren to Fort Smith and had to cross the river, we had to pay a toll to Panama. Wouldn't you think that was strange after so many years? After all, it's our state, and it's—the river is named for us, and it flows right through our state. Wouldn't you think it would belong to us?" So he kind of, apparently, pondered on that [*SL laughs*] and—and—and went home and talked to his mother about it. [00:05:26] And I said, "And another thing. You're an American citizen, and if you feel very strongly about something and it's coming up for a vote in the Senate, you need to write to your two senators and tell them exactly how you feel and why you feel that way." And—uh—it was really funny because—uh—at that time, I think it was

[19]78, and—um—I—who was our senator? [00:05:55]

Kaneaster Hodges had taken—uh—the place of—um—of—of  
this . . .

SL: McClellan. John McClellan.

PP: McClellan, who had died.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: And the other one was—uh—Fulbright.

SL: Uh—Bumpers.

PP: Bumpers.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: So—uh—anyhow, I said, "You need to write them a letter and  
tell them how you feel about this, and it could very well influence  
their vote." And so, on the day of the voting, he was kind of  
tense about this and the next [*laughter*] morn—and the next  
morning he was incensed. "Miss Parks, do you know they're  
gonna give away the canal?" And I said, "John, did you write to  
your two United States senators like I told you to?" And—and he  
said, "Mmm—no." And I said, "Then you cannot complain  
because you did not do your part as a citizen, so it's partially  
your fault [*SL laughs*] that the vote turned out the way it did."  
But I said, "Now, I want you to write to Senator Bumpers. Uh—  
you don't have to write to the other one, Kaneaster Hodges,



'cause he can't run again." But Senator Bumpers, feeling this was the right thing to do and having read the book called *The Path Between the Seas* and about the conditions under which the United States and how they treated Colombia in—during this time—the United States did some things that were not right. And—but because we had power . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: . . . that we sorta forced it through about our getting in to build the Panama Canal. And I said, "I want you to write to Senator Bumpers and—uh—now and"—no, it wasn't then that I told him to do it; it was later. It was about a week later. And John came in still with this on his mind [*SL laughs*], and he said, "Oh, Miss Parks, I change—did I te"—oh, I know what it was. We were reading—um—in history and—um—we were reading. I would let one student come up and lead the reading, the oral reading, of the chapter, and it was on Teddy Roosevelt.

SL: Ah!

[00:08:11] PP: And he was leading [*SL laughs*] the reading, and it came to the Panama Canal. And he turned to me, and he said, "Oh, Miss Parks, did I tell you? I changed my mind about the Panama Canal." And I said, "You did? Why?" I was just flabbergasted. He felt so strongly about it. And he said, "Well,

you know, I thought about what you said, and I told my mother, and we talked about it." And he said, "You know what? I think that they did the right thing." And I said, "Now you are gonna write, not to Kaneaster Hodges 'cause he can't run again, but Dale Bumpers could have put his job on the line because he"—I already knew that the majority of people he heard from from Arkansas were against giving the—the Panama Canal to Panama, releasing it to Panama. And I said, "I want him to know how strongly you felt about it and that you changed your mind and why you changed your mind." And he said, "Okay, Miss Parks, I'll stay in recess and do it." And he did. [SL laughs] And he sat there at the desk, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote. And he turned it in to me. I was just blown away. It was precious. He told him exactly how he had felt and why and then why he had changed his mind, and he thought that Senator Bumpers and—and Senator Hodges had done the right thing. It was such a precious letter. [00:09:35] Not only did we send it to Senator Bumpers, but I sent it to the *Arkansas Gazette*. And I can show you a copy of this letter.

SL: Oh, that's so great.

PP: And—um—so they—they called Donald because the *Gazette* didn't know how to reach me at school.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:09:51] PP: And they apparently knew me and knew Donald, so they called the telephone office and—and talked to Donald and said, "You tell your wife that the—uh—the letter to Bumpers about the Panama Canal is going to be published next Tuesday." And not only did they publish it, it was the first letter for the— from the letter—on the—under the Letters of the Editor and it was headlined "Changed Mind on Bumpers's Vote" in big letters. It was just wonderful. But the thing about it that was so wonderful was that—uh—to—to think you're teaching young minds that are facile and that can be—they can be impressionable, and you have to be very, very careful that the things that you put into their minds are the good things, the right things, the positive things—um—because it could go either way, depending on what they hear at home and what they hear at school, what they hear on the playground. Um—but I so admired him for admitting to me that he had changed his mind about it and why.

SL: It's just remarkable to me that we're talking about a fourth-grade student.

PP: Nine years old.

SL: Nine years old.

PP: He had just turned ten, I think. And I think he said that in his  
le—I—I think he said, "I'm—I just turned ten years old, and I'm  
in—in Mrs. Parks's fourth grade." And—um—I was so proud of  
him, but I was so proud of the *Gazette* for treating it . . .

SL: Sure.

PP: . . . like they did.

SL: Yeah.

PP: But it was important because a ni—a ten-year-old, just turning  
ten, had—uh—this was so—such a big thing for him.

SL: What—and what an—what an innocent voice.

PP: Mh-hmm.

SL: A thoughtful, innocent . . .

PP: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . voice.

PP: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, he doesn't have anything in the . . .

PP: Right.

SL: . . . game except just his belief of—of what's right and what's  
wrong.

PP: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: And to—to put that out there and—and to have him change his  
mind just makes it out of the ballpark. I mean, it's just . . .

[00:12:04] PP: Well, you can imagine how, as a teacher, how I  
felt . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . to think that—I don't know. It made such an impression on  
me and—and I've—I just felt like—often, young people's voices  
should be heard because, as you say, they don't expect anything  
from it. They don't expect any quid pro quo, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: It's a—it's just, "This is how I'm thinking about it, and this is  
what I've read about it, and this is how I feel about it." Um—  
although you don't feel that strongly about very many issues,  
you know. But when you do I think it's wonderful that—uh—that  
you can continue to think about it and see if you're on the right  
track.

[00:12:51] SL: The passion was just—it—what's so valuable about  
that is that it—it is pure and . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: . . . and he—it just came from a pure point of view . . .

PP: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that it—you can't have—uh—you know, once you're in high  
school or later on in life. There's too many things that come into  
play that—I—it is—you know, I—I—I just can't—uh—um—you

made some really, really good connections with those kids in all those—yeah, how many years were you teaching?

PP: Thirty.

SL: Thirty?

PP: Thirty.

SL: You know . . .

PP: And I just loved it.

SL: . . . what—what a wonderful thing to get up every morning and know that you're gonna be with those kids and . . .

PP: It was. And you know—uh—it was funny because—um—people would say, "Well, didn't you ever wanna teach another grade?" No. That's the perfect [*SL laughs*]*—to me it was the perfect age. They still respected the teacher. They still wanted to learn. Uh—they didn't have boy and girlfriends. They were not on any big—they were on teams but not big teams where it really mattered whether you won or lost.*

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:03] PP: Um—it just—I mean, this was the, really, the focus. And learning—p and learning all these new things. We started four [*claps hands*] new subjects in fourth grade, which meant I taught eight solid subjects. But starting health and science and hi—American history and world geography—that really

broadened their minds, and they were just—you know, this expansion was just amazing, and it was fun. And I always tried to make these things fun and have a fun part about it. But it made me think how many grown-ups or even high school students or college students would admit about something that they felt strongly that they had decided that was the wrong approach and that they'd changed their mind. Now, they might've done it, but are they going to admit it to anybody, to a teacher . . .

SL: Hmm.

PP: . . . to their friends? And—and for him to come out so forcefully and say, "Oh, Miss Parks, did I tell you? [*SL laughs*] I changed my mind about the Panama Canal." And—and for him to express himself that way. He was just as positive and—about that he had been wrong and that now this was the right thing to do.

[00:15:22] SL: You know, I—I get the feeling that as much as you taught them and exposed them to the world, that they were probably teaching you something every day.

PP: Oh, of course they did. Of course they did. And—and—but also, it was seeing the thrill of it, and sometimes they would come, and they'd say, "I—I wanted to tell you that I have memorized all the states and capitals of the United States." Not anything

that we had touched on. And I said, "You did?" [*SL laughs*]

And—uh—[*SL laughs*] you know, "Why did you do this particular thing?" And they did it because they wanted to tell me that they had done it and wanted me to be pleased and knew I would be pleased—that I—they had added this to their curriculum. And—and of course, you know, to see that delight on my face and that hug [*laughter*], you know, was—was worth it to them. But I think lots of times children respond so positively if you lead them in that way, and they knew that I thought that learning and knowledge were so important in their lives and that anything that they would learn—uh—lots of times—another thing they would learn would be—uh—all right, well, we started off probably with the United States, but I could put a map up on the blackboard with all the states drawn but no names, and then they would learn to put the names on all the states. And then they would learn to put the names and the capitals on all the states, which was—you know, this stays with you forever. Um—I know even on crossword puzzles—uh—they will say—uh—uh—"What—what is the rela—you know, in what way would you travel to—uh—from Dallas to—uh—Memphis," you know. And there'd be three little blanks, and it would be "north, north, northeast, east northeast," you know, that sort of thing.



SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: Well, see, this goes on. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PP: Well, they would know.

SL: Yeah.

[00:17:35] PP: Because they would re—and—and I've told children all along, "Whatever you learn when you're young, you will know the rest of your life. And if you cannot quite remember it, you can pick it up again in just an instant." Now, another thing they did—and it was not required—was they would reme—they would memorize their presidents in order.

SL: Gosh!

PP: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, and so forth. Okay. But this was fun. And then they would come up in the front of the room and recite it. Well, then the next thing I knew the whole class had done this. And then what was funny—they'd stand up, the whole class [*SL laughs*] in a row, and maybe we'd start with this one right over here with it, but they could go right on through. Didn't miss a beat. It was funny.

SL: That's thrilling.

[00:18:24] PP: And you know, when I see my children now—maybe

I see them when I'm walkin' in the park, see them in the grocery store, see them at the reception after their wedding. Do you know what they say to me? "Miss Parks, I can still do it. Washington, Adams [*SL laughs*], Jefferson, Madison, Monroe"— [*laughter*] and I love it.

SL: Well, and they love it.

PP: I love it.

SL: They love it, too.

PP: Uh-huh.

SL: They're proud of that.

PP: Oh, and they're teachin' their children to do it, you know.

SL: I know.

[00:18:51] PP: And this is what's really funny that even little tiny tots can pick up that sorta thing, and—and it becomes a game. But it's a really good game because it gives 'em a time line for American history. And so, you know, like with Teddy Roosevelt. Well, that was when the Panama Canal was—was built.

SL: Sure.

PP: And started in, I think, 1908 and finished in 1914. But—uh—I just—I—I don't know. Not only did they memorize the presidents in order, but they also memorized Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

SL: Oh my gosh.

PP: And it's so beautifully written.

SL: It is beautifully written.

PP: It's so—but then right in the middle it kind of—these words are so beautiful, and yet they're—they're kind of interspersed. I mean, it—it's kind of one thing, and then they say it again but another way or—and—uh—[*SL laughs*] but then they also memorized—uh—the Freedom Pledge . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: . . . and—um—the American's Creed, which that's beautifully . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

PP: . . . beautifully worded. Um—uh—part of Lincoln's second inaugural address—just on and on there were things like this. And—and for some of the really bright children—uh—who maybe finished their work early—uh—I would have things like this already typed out and on sheets. And I'd say, "Do you wanna do this? Do you wanna memorize this?" "Yes." They'd go to the library and read it. Some of 'em, I found out, had photographic minds, and if they were reciting something like that and came to a pause, they could . . .

SL: Picture.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:29] PP: It was up here [taps temples], printed. It was a photographic mind. Oh, I was so envious. And they could come up with the right word and proceed on. [*SL laughs*] Was just amazing to me. But I just felt like, and as I would tell them, you know, "You're not all gonna be firemen or doctors or teachers. But there's one thing that all of you will be, and that's a citizen of the United States, and I want you to appreciate the fact that not only do you have many privileges for being a citizen of the United States that other children around the world do not have but that you have corresponding responsibilities. And one of the main ones is to vote. And when you turn eighteen, I want you to be sure that every vote that comes up that you're down there voting and—because this is the responsibility. And if you don't do your part, then you don't have any right to criticize the results if you didn't participate."

SL: And I know that stuck with 'em.

PP: I really think it did because I was [*laughs*] passionate about it, you know. And—but I also wanted them to have a love of their country that some of the great politicians and great writers have written about it, and if they would memorize these things, you know, it would make them see how important it was to other people.

[00:22:12] SL: You were incubating good citizenship. That's what you're doing.

[00:22:15] PP: And that's so important. And you know, you read now so much about bullying . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . on the—and in the hallways on the—out on the playfield, on the bus. It's just the idea that you can cause physical harm to another person and because you're big and strong and you can do this that you should be able to get away with it. And I just—I—you have to have respect and concern for other people, and you have to think, "How would I feel if the tables were turned and someone was bullying me? How would I feel?" But they never think about that. They just think about themselves. So I think that's real important to the—and not only that we feel that way about the people we associate with, the people in our state, the people in our country, but the people around the world. And though they're different, that doesn't make them any less, and it doesn't make us any more. But we need to learn about 'em. We need to learn about their culture. We need to learn about their religion. [00:23:41] We need to learn about their education. And if we would spend some time learning about the education right now in the Oriental countries, in China and

Japan, we would be amazed at students who go to school six days a week.

SL: All year.

PP: All year long. And they're gonna be so ahead of us in science and mathematics, particularly. And they will start—well, in China right now in first grade they have to begin learning English. Now, not only Chinese but they have to learn a foreign language. And a foreign language that's hard to learn, really hard to learn. But China has realized that they're a part of a global community and that English is the most common language around the world and that if they're going to get ahead, they'll not only have to know their own Chinese language, which would be very difficult for us to learn. Many people do but . . .

SL: Oh, it's . . .

PP: . . . very difficult . . .

SL: . . . crazy difficult.

PP: . . . to learn those characters.

SL: Yeah.

[00:24:59] PP: But to learn a foreign language and to think that China—right now I have a nephew who has been invited to teach at a university in China. And his wife is teaching English to

first-grade students in China.

SL: Second-language stuff.

PP: Second language. And it's so interesting to me because this particular university invited him to come. And what they're doing is they invite the best of the best university professors to come to their university and teach for a year. They will pay your way over there. They will give you an apartment. Give it. They will give you an automobile. They will furnish you with a maid. They will provide food for you. They will do—and they pay you a salary, but of course, it's a very small salary because everything is paid for you. And—to get you to come. And then if they like you and like your teaching and you like the situation, they'll ask you to teach a second year. And after—but even after the first year or the second year, if you're going back to the United States they'll pay your way back. [00:26:20] Now, why are they doing all of this? They want to attract the best of what America has to offer in the university systems to come to China to teach. Well [*sighs*], you know, what if they're successful? What if they can lure lots of our best professors to go over there and teach, try it out, and then they will offer them a, you know, a lot of things. But they want them to try it out and see if they like it and, like, maybe would like to come and teach there. So I

feel like that, you know, we think that we're the biggest and the best and the richest and the smartest and the—and I think there's some things that we need to learn from these other countries who already know what they need to do to expand their educational system.

[00:27:27] SL: Yeah, we—I don't know if or how we catch up 'cause I feel like they're already pushing ahead of us, and I think our positioning has diminished in several areas.

PP: But I think, particularly, in math and science.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And these ar—they're so important.

SL: Yeah, I know. I'm not sure how we got, in that regard, how we got lazy. I don't know why we thought we could just . . .

PP: They're hard subjects.

SL: They're hard subjects, and we just didn't have the—we just never belie—well, I mean, you know, we came from a period where getting through eighth grade was enough. And then you were expected to work . . .

PP: And then getting through high school was . . .

SL: And then getting to—right. And then . . .

PP: . . . was enough.

SL: . . . college education . . .



[00:28:24] PP: And we're still there . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . with some—in some areas and with some families that if they graduate from high school, then they go get a job.

SL: Mh-hmm. I don't know. [00:28:36] I don't know if we can turn it around or not. Surely we can. Surely we can refocus and do something about it to catch up on that kind of stuff. I—you would know much more about that than I would 'cause you . . .

PP: Well . . .

SL: . . . you keep up with it, and you know, most of America doesn't keep up with it although we hear that. We hear that we're—sciences are falling behind. Our scores are falling behind. And there are efforts being made to emphasize those areas, but it's hard to compete with going to school every day or six days a week every . . .

PP: And homework.

SL: . . . all year long.

PP: And homework every night.

SL: Homework and . . .

PP: And parents expect them to have homework every night.

SL: And there is that honor . . .

PP: And respect for teachers, for education, that . . .

SL: And for family, too.

PP: And we used to have that. [00:29:28] We used to have that great respect for teachers. If you got in trouble in school, you were in twice as much trouble at home. And also, they were revered and highly respected and spoken well of at home. [00:29:45] And then parents would make sure that the—their children put education in the forefront of their lives 'cause this is the main thing in their young lives because that's—they're not working. And so, for them to go to school and learn and even to come home and have homework is a good discipline for them. But it's what they should be putting a lot of effort into, but we should start, oh, we should start so many of these things in first grade—learning a foreign language—because that's when they can pick up the right pronunciation. And by the time that their voices change, they can't [*SL laughs*—they might . . .

SL: They can't . . .

PP: . . . learn the language, but speaking it . . .

SL: Being fluent is . . .

PP: . . . yes, is another thing.

SL: . . . more difficult.

[00:30:46] PP: But there's so many things that—I can remember one time talking to my children, and I was going to te—this I

had learned in college. I had used it, however, in my classroom, but then I came across it in a college math class. And it was how to check column addition by striking out nines. It's a fun thing. But anyhow, I remember one—in one class and I said, "You know, I was gonna teach you something and put it on the board, but I don't believe I will." "Why not, Miss Parks?" [*SL laughs*] "Well, I learned it in college. I was exposed to it in college, and it's so hard, and here you are just in the four"—"Oh, we can do it." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Oh, I don't know. Let me think about it." And I said, "I tell you what. If you all go home and get a good night's rest and get up and eat a good breakfast [*SL laughs*] so that, you know, you're not thinkin' about how hungry you are, well, I'll think about it. And if you still want me to show you how to do this—because it's kind of like magic." And they said . . .

SL: Oh boy.

PP: . . . "Oh, Miss Parks!" [*SL laughs*] Oh, well, they could hardly wait till the next morning.

SL: Yeah, right. [*Laughs*]

PP: They were so excited.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

[00:32:06] PP: So I put it up on the board and showed 'em how to

do it, and it is kind of like magic.

SL: It is. That nine thing . . .

PP: And it will work unless you transpose the numbers. Then you could miss the problem and get the checking right, you see, 'cause you'd be workin' with the same numbers.

SL: Right.

PP: But other than that, it's foolproof. You don't even have to have a calculator. [*Laughs*] And it's really—it's a fun thing to do, and I have shown people this, and they're just fascinated. And it is kind of magic. And course, they could go home and show their parents, you know, that they could find out for sure—because, you know, in subtraction and multiplication and division, you do the opposite of those three, and that's how you can prove that you've got the right answer.

SL: Right.

PP: But what about addition? What do you do? What's the opposite of addition? Well, subtraction. Well, you can't subtract everything. You know, in a column addition, you couldn't. It—two numbers you could. So learning how to do this—and it's fast. Once you get onto it, it's really fast. And they really impressed their parents with this.

[00:33:05] SL: That course sounds like math patterns. Is that—was

that the name of the course?

PP: No, it's not a course. It's just this one thing.

SL: Oh. Oh.

PP: It's just one step. But when I—when it came up in my math class—and I don't remember whether it was business math—what I was taking but I said, "Oh, but I teach this to my fourth graders. I've done this for years." "You have? Can they do it?" I said, "Oh yes, they beg me, you know [*SL laughs*], if I tell 'em that I'm thinkin' about teachin' 'em how to do this." It's a college—it's in college, usually. [*SL laughs*] But there are ways—and children—if you kind of make it like fun or somethin' that their parents have never heard of that they can go home and tell them something they've never heard of. If you can [*SL laughs*] make it sound—"It's a little bit like magic," you know. And it becomes a game.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And if you can make a game out of it, boy, they're gonna lap it up.

SL: That's so good. You know, we . . .

PP: But that's why teaching was so fun for me.

[00:34:03] SL: Well, and you know what? We're gonna get back to teaching because you had thirty years in it, and I know that

you're gonna remember some more stories as we go on. But I really love this time that we spend on your teaching career, but you know, we're still workin' on gettin' you out of high school [*PP laughs*] in the chronology of things here. We—I—and I don't know if we should go back to what life in Fayetteville was like when you were in high school. I know we talked about Miss Ellis—or Miss Bell.

PP: Oh, well, both of 'em. Both of 'em. We had . . .

[00:34:43] SL: But did we talk about Miss Ellis, though?

PP: Well . . .

SL: I think we just talked about Miss Bell.

PP: . . . she taught American history. I loved American history. I loved Miss Ellis. But the thing that she did with us—she had us do memory work. To get an A in American history, you had to memorize the entire Declaration of Independence. [*SL laughs*] Now, you read it sometime, and see, they have that beautiful first part . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . "Fourscore and seven years ago"—no, that's the Gettysburg Address. But you have that beautiful first part, and then you have all the grievances. On and on and on. "This is why we are doing this" . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . "because we owe this to you" . . .

SL: It's written to the king.

PP: . . . "to tell you all the grievances that we have that you have not understood and tried to change them." And then there's the beautiful ending of it. So you could get a B in history if you were gonna make a B anyhow, or a A maybe, if you just memorized the first and the last parts, which is all I did. [SL laughs] But by golly, some of those A students—and I would've had an A in history otherwise. But I couldn't memorize that well, and we'd stand up in front of the class and recite it.

SL: Gosh!

PP: And it [laughs]—she was very demanding, and her tests were hard. But I just thought American history was just fascinating. [00:36:11] Now, on the other hand—and English I loved, and I loved doing the oral reports and the written reports. And English teachers do not ask for that now. I think that's one of the most important parts of senior English—junior and senior English—is to learn how to write well, correctly and yet interestingly, and then to learn how to get up and make a speech and make it interesting and not be so scared to get up in front of the class. I had a fourth grader, and she had written a paper that I thought

was so good, and I wanted her to come up and read it in front of the class. Now, some of 'em just were excited, but she said, "I can't do this." And I said, "Yes, you can." And she burst into tears and she—to get up in front of her peers and to read something she had written. And I said, "Well, I tell you what. You come up here," and I put my arm around her, "and I'll read it for you." And her little heart was about to beat out of her chest. [SL laughs] And I didn't know whether I was doin' the right thing or not. But anyhow, I read her thing, and the children clapped, and they just thought it was wonderful. But later on she was one of those that learned her presidents in order, you know, and her parents came to visit. They were from North Little Rock, and her grandmother was a teacher, a math teacher, and her mother was an English teacher in our school. But here she had grown up so shy and just to get up in front—and she just—well, she would just—I don't know—would've gotten sick and thrown up, I think, if I had just insisted.

SL: Yeah.

[00:37:59] PP: But anyhow, when her parents came, I had her get up and say the presidents [laughs] in order for them. They couldn't believe it. They knew how shy she had been, and for her to get up in front of her classmates and recite like that, and




yet we had gotten her over it just by giving her practice in doin'  
it. And she wanted to show off for her grandparents, and they  
were so . . .

SL: Oh!

PP: . . . proud of her.

SL: You know that they were. They . . .

[00:38:26] PP: But now, most of the children were not that—and  
they want—and another thing I did was to give each child an  
opportunity to come and lead the reading. The first reading in  
any chapter we would read out loud together. And before we  
would pick the chapter apart, you know, and with the emphasis  
on different thing—parts of it. And so, they would also get used  
to doin' it and by calling on the other children, you know, to  
come up and read. And this was a good experience. It made  
them feel like a teacher. I had a high [*SL laughs*] stool that I sat  
on, and they could sit there on my stool, you know, and call up  
the children to come and read and to read [*SL laughs*] a  
paragraph or whatever. And that made them feel that they were  
 just almost a teacher. It was funny, too. [00:39:18] I would  
become so engrossed with my children and want them to do  
well. If they really were having problems, I would—now, we had  
parent-teacher conferences, which were wonderful. But if a child

was havin' a particular problem early on—now, some teachers below me would wait until the last of school in May and all of a sudden realize that child could not—was not ready for fourth grade. That's when they realized it and told the parents [*clunking sound*] they would have to repeat the third grade. Well, you ought to be able to realize it as soon as the children come into your room so that if they need special help, you can give them special help. You can call in the parents. They can help at home and gladly do it. You can even go so far as to hire a high school student to be a tutor, and that's a good income for a high school student and a good job. And they sometimes have ways of teaching children that are just phenomenal. So . . .

SL: Not to mention what it does for the student, for the child.

PP: Exactly. And the idea of waiting till the end of the year and then saying, "We'll have to retain the—your child," because that's a big thing.

SL: It's a huge thing.

[00:40:39] PP: It's a huge thing. But I would get engrossed with my children, and I would, every year, cry at the end of the year. [*SL laughs*] And I would tell Donald—I'd say, "I'll never love another class like I did this one." [*SL laughs*] And he'd say, "But that's what you said last year." [*SL laughs*] But each

year—and the reason it wasn't boring—even though I was teaching the same things but in a different way, perhaps, to fit a different class. And depend—if they were a very smart class, boy, we just went full speed ahead. But if they were a slower class, you know, we would take more time over each thing. And they say, actually, that the best teacher is not the teacher—is not the student in college who is the smartest, makes straight A's, catches on quickly, because then they don't understand . . .

SL: What it is to struggle.

PP: . . . what it is to struggle because it comes so easily to them and they—and so, you introduce something to the children, and it's ha—and some catch it, but a lot of 'em don't. And of course, it bores a very smart person to have to go over something two or three times. So they think that a—the best teacher, and that always made me feel good, was not the smartest [*laughter*] but was a smart person but who didn't mind going over for certain children who needed that. To go over it and over it until they could get it. And sometimes it was half the class.

[00:42:13] SL: Well, I was gonna ask. With the slower students, during the class period did you have students that were doing well doing different activities than those that weren't doing as well? Or did they all experience the same thing at the same

time and then if they . . .

PP: We did at the beginning when it was initiated. At the initial introduction of whatever of the geography lesson, the history lesson, we were all doin' it together. I expected the same of all of 'em but at different levels. And then if they needed more help, then this is where, okay, I could choose library helpers. [00:42:58] I don't know whether I told you about this one girl or not. And her friends were chosen to be library helpers, and they would be the students who caught on the first, the quickest, and got their—all their work done at school and still were ready to do more. So it was quite an honor to be chosen to be a library helper. And so, she came up to me, and she was the child of a friend of mine. [*Laughs*] And she thought because of that and because she had known me since she was born, you know, that I would choose her to be one of the library helpers, and I didn't. And she said, "Well, Miss Parks"—she came up to my desk, and she said, "I'd like to be a library helper." And I said, "Barbara, every afternoon," I said, "you waste so much time in class dawdling," and she got it from her father. He was the same way. [*SL laughs*] "Dawdling over your work and then you pile up all of this work in your knapsack to take home to do at home." And I said, "Your mother's kind of had it up to here

with your homework." And I said, "The children that I chose are the ones that get all of their work done in class. They have time to do it. I give you time to do it, but you dawdle and dawdle and dawdle and don't get it done, and then you take it home and expect your mother to help you—not to do it but to help you with it. And that's not her job. The teaching job is mine. The mother job is hers." So I said, "I tell you what, Barbara. If you learn to get all of your work done in class, in class time, and turn it in, then next semester I promise you I will choose you as a library assistant." So it was a struggle for her, but bit by bit she learned. She was smart. [*SL laughs*] It wasn't that she couldn't do it; it's that she wouldn't do it. She just couldn't get . . .

SL: Didn't have the discipline.

PP: . . . organized.

SL: Yeah.

[00:45:07] PP: Didn't have the discipline. But it was her nature, also, and that was what was so sad because she really came by it naturally. Not from her mother. [*Laughter*] And her father was very, very smart and the child of a teacher and very smart but just, you know, not one of these fast-speaking . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . kinds of persons—or fast-doing. So you know, it was hard to blame her for that and yet some—but she cou—I knew she could do it. Well, gradually, she really did do it. Honestly, she really did and began to bring her grades up and began to be happier in school. Began to not have all of that homework to take home. [00:45:55] And so, by the next semester, she got to be a library assistant, and she was so—but she had earned it. Her mother, who was one of the best teachers ever in Prairie G—her grandmother—that ever, I mean, and—like, my husband talked about her con—"Best teacher I ever had."

SL: [*Laughs*] Okay.

PP: That was her grandmother. She stopped me in the grocery store, and she said, "I just wanna thank you." Said, "I cannot believe what you've done with my grandchild." And she said, "You can see it in her. She must—she is so much happier about school. She never dreads going to school. She wants to go. She's become a different person." And she said, "You accomplished it." And I said, "Well, bribes sometimes work."

[00:46:45] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, I wouldn't call it a bribe. I think you gave her a clear path to reach her goal.

PP: I did and . . .

SL: And it was a . . .

PP: And also . . .

SL: . . . it was a status thing for her. And you read that that was—  
that could be inspiration.

PP: Would—what would do it.

SL: And you picked up on it, and it worked.

PP: Well, and because she said, "I want to. Why did you not pick  
me?" And I thought, "But I would pick you, except"—and by—  
and the thing about, I think—and particularly in the primary  
grades—I think they still think of 'em as children. [00:47:21]  
And so, they talk down to 'em, and they teach down to them.

SL: Right.

PP: And they will not just open up an honest conversation with 'em  
about the child and what they think the child can do better and  
suggest a way that they could do better. But they just sort of  
say, "Oh, but she's only six." "Only seven." "Only eight."

SL: You know, may . . .

PP: And mine are only nine, and I'm saying, "Okay. [*Laughs*] You  
know, this is gonna—this is going to"—and they would say to  
me, "Having eight subjects in one day—blah." I mean, it was  
like this [marks air in quick succession]. And they—well, we had  
seven because we had a semester of health and a semester of  
science, but everything else was every day. And they'd say,

"Oh, Miss Parks!" And [*SL laughs*] I would say, "But learning is fun and when you really put yourself into it—now, for instance, you need a good night's sleep. When your mother and father expect you in bed at eight thirty or nine, you should be there. And no—and don't complain about it. Don't say, 'Oh, you know, my friends get to stay up till ten,' or 'I'm not finished with my homework,' or 'I'm reading a good book,' or whatever. Do not do that. Get a good night's sleep. Get up early. Eat a good breakfast. Then when you come to school, you'll have the energy and the r—and your mind will be rested, and you'll be ready to open up that mind to everything that we talk about, and it's going to become fun. And then you're gonna go home in the afternoon, and you'll say, 'Guess what we learned in school today?' And it'll be something that maybe your mother and father did not know or had not thought about in a long time or are just real surprised that you've already learned." [*SL laughs*]

[00:49:12] So you know, it's a—learning is something that you do all your life or should do all of your life. You don't quit when you're not in school. That's not the only place you learn. You learn in life, so you continue to keep up with current events. You continue to read. You continue to learn. You continue by traveling. There are many, many ways to learn. But if you're



going to be an interesting person, you need to continue learning all your life.

[00:49:42] SL: Peggy, have you ever thought that maybe your children were so enamored with you and were so eager to learn with you that maybe you had some kind of knack of becoming one of them or becoming nine years old again to see it from their point of view?

PP: Well, now as I loo—well, yes, I think I could get on their level and see what they were—and feel what they were feeling. I do think that, but then I was tryin' to raise 'em above that level. But the thing, I guess, that I've thought about more lately is that verse in the Bible in Jeremiah. "For I know the plans I have for your life." And for me to know that first week in substitute teaching, "Dear Lord, this is what you wanted me to do all the time." All the things I had considered doing, for instance, like nursing, I wasn't suited for, but somehow I knew. I just knew. When I was teaching and working with these children, I felt so alive, and I thought, "Oh yes, this is my calling."

[00:50:57] SL: Well, you know, maybe they—maybe the children sense that light that came on inside of you.

PP: Well, they knew I was there because I love teaching. And they knew I was there because I wanted to be, that I wasn't there

because I had to be to earn money to put my husband through school, or I wasn't there to earn money because we needed the money and we were a poor family. I wasn't a rich person [laughs] at all, but I was there because I chose to be there. And I think this was the thing that the superintendent saw in me when he observed me substituting and convinced the school board to hire me to teach full time. He sensed something in me that—the joy that I . . .

SL: There you go.

PP: . . . had in teaching. And it really was a joy.

SL: Well, I think the children must've sensed that, too.

PP: Well, I think they did because I was spontaneous about it.

[00:51:59] But then the only criticism I ever had of other teachers was teaching down to—because they seemed young and little, and you know, I just felt like—you would be shocked at what first graders can learn if you give it to them and give it to 'em in a way that you make it interesting and fun and exciting. And I'm just—it just makes me sad. And I know our third grades could've taught more than they taught. But it was kind of like . . .

SL: It was ingrained in the system.

PP: It was. And they just, and so, they just kind of relaxed and kind

of, you know—and it was hard to teach so much and to be sure that they were catching every different subject because they were so different. And to be able to have an interest to teach different subjects, but I did learn. I did love—I loved teach—I—science was the hardest thing for me to teach. Health was easy. Geography was easy. History was easy. Math was easy. If I'd gone up in higher math, I woulda been—I couldn't have done it with the same enthusiasm, and as far as geometry is concerned, I think they oughta take it out of high school.

SL: Geometry?

[00:53:35] PP: It shoulda been—be an elective. I mean, if you can tell me one thing that I've ever done with geometry—you know, what I learned from it—because I've never seen the sense of it. And I can remember leaving high school and walking down School Street on the last day of school, and my bursting thought was, "Peggy, you will never, ever, ever have to take geometry again." [*SL laughs*] Until I taught—I took a math class—a survey class at the university, and it did have algebra and geometry in it but other things, as well.

SL: You know, I actually excelled in geometry. I think because there were pictures I could look at.

BP: Scott, we need to change tape.

SL: Anyway, okay, well, let's take a break on that.

PP: Oh . . .

[Tape stopped]

[00:54:31] SL: All right. So Peggy, this is our sixth tape on our second day, and we had a wonderful, wonderful discussion about your teaching and some of the wonderful things that your students did and brought to you and how you energized 'em and all that stuff. But we really—hadn't really gotten you through high school yet, but I wanted to—around your high school age—about the time that you were going—entering high school, you know, the war, World War II, was going on. And do . . .

PP: It started.

[00:55:07] SL: It started. And do you remember much about how that war affected the Fayetteville community and those around you? Can you talk a little bit about what Fayetteville was like as the war was going?

PP: Well, my class, we were freshmen in high school. And everything was going normally until December the seventh, 1941, and it was a Sunday. Now, have I touched on this before?

SL: You mentioned . . .

PP: And . . .

SL: . . . that you heard it on the radio.

PP: Right. And that's—already we've talked about . . .

SL: I—you can tell it again. That's okay.

[00:55:47] PP: Well, it was a Sunday, and we'd been to church and had dinner, and I was washin' the dishes. And my sister and mother were listening to the radio and crying. And I went into the dining room where they were, and I said, "What is it?" And they said, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." And so, "Why are you crying?" And they said, "Because it means war." And I didn't exactly—you know, you—if you haven't been in a war or through a war or you've just read about 'em, you really don't know exactly what it's going to mean to you. [00:56:23] And we didn't know for a while, except that right after the turn of the year when it became 1942, my brother wanted to enlist in the air corps and not wait for the draft, which he knew would be coming along. And so, Mother had to sign papers. He was young, and he had—she had to sign papers and she really—it was hard for her to do, but she did it for him. And he was in the air corps, and course, they all wanna be pilots and—because—usually because of their eyes they can't be a pilot, so he was . . .

[00:56:59] SL: Well, now, how did your father feel about it?

PP: I don't know. I think he probably felt more how Jimmy felt about it because he'd been in World War I. And so—and I

expect he was in the infantry. I mean, there was no air corps. And so, I imagine that he was more sympathet—I don't remember him saying or trying to talk him out of it.

SL: Okay.

[00:57:30] PP: So he was a bombardier on a B-24 and they—it was a—we didn't realize how difficult it really was. They—there were no creature comforts on that plane. They were designed and made and staffed for one thing only, and that's to drop bombs on the enemy or enemy territory. And there was no heat in the plane. It—going at such high altitudes, it became very, very—way below zero weather. There was no food on the plane. There was no bathroom on the plane. They had urinating tubes for them, but of course, the urine often froze in the tubes and, you know, were useless to 'em. It was an extremely—they didn't have any windshield wipers, so if it was raining or foggy or something—well, raining, the pilot had to stick his head out the window [*SL laughs*] to see where he was going. And it was amazing that there was just nothing provided for them because these missions lasted from eight to ten hours. And my brother was a bombardier and, course, had to open the bomb bay doors and drop the bombs. And he never, ever talked about this. He would not have complained about the lack of creature comforts.

That's—it was war, and that was part of it. He would, I'm sure, thought—but killing was just again—very much against his nature. [00:59:24] And on one of his missions, his forty-third bombing mission [*SL sighs*], the plane was hit by flak and lost two engines, and they had to bail out. And the War Department and his base in Italy di—they didn't know where they were or what happened to 'em. They just didn't return to base in Italy. It turned out that they had bailed out over Yugoslavia, and the underground in Yugoslavia got them underground. [*Laughs*]

SL: Back to Italy.

[01:00:07] PP: And got them back to their base in Italy. But in the meantime before they got them back, the War Department sent a telegram to my mother. Now, I thought this—I think this is interesting. They send it to the mother. And you know, the mother is the glue that holds the family together.

SL: Yeah.

PP: The mother's the one that has the healing hands. The mother is the one that can make you feel better just by being in her presence. You know things are gonna be all right. She's gonna take care of you. But anyhow, they send these telegrams to the mother, and it was that my brother was missing in action and had been for quite—for several days. And they didn't know

where or—where he was. A friend of mine, her mother came to get my mother and said, "Let me take you down to high school, and we'll get Peggy to tell her what's happened." And Mother was so grateful. She didn't drive, and we didn't have a telephone, and so, she came down and got me and took me home and told me the news. And I just went upstairs and threw myself on the bed. I was so fond of my brother and to think of him being missing—because you can't help but think, "What will the—will there be another telegram? And will it be the inevitable?" And—but my mother was being very, very brave, for which I appreciated, and I thought, "Here I am crying, and Mother's not crying." It wasn't that she wasn't crying inside. She was. But she still had a family to take care of. And then a few days later, we got a letter from my brother that if we had received a telegram to disregard it—that he was back at his base in Italy. But he never, ever, ever talked about his—when the war was over and he came home, he would never talk about his experiences. They were too horrifying to him, and he just wanted to put that in a lockbox in his—somewhere hidden in his memory and not have anything more to do with war.

[01:02:27] SL: Did you correspond with him during the war?

PP: I wrote to him constantly. Silly, little teenage letters. But I



always had a knack for writing and for writing about experiences and for—especially if they were funny. And it turned out, he wrote to me and said, "Please send more letters because there are many of my buddies who do not get any letters from home, and I read my letters to them." [*SL laughs*] And so, he wanted more letters to read, which, you know, I was—it made me so proud that he liked 'em and would even share 'em with his buddies. So I did write to him. [01:03:09] I was crazy about my brother, and we were just sort of cut from the same bolt of cloth. We were very simpatico as members of the family. Now, I think we took after my father, and the other girls more took after my mother. And they loved to garden and can vegetables. That wasn't my thing. [*Laughter*] Writing, which my father could write beautifully. He was such a sensitive, gentle person. He wrote the sweetest, sweetest letter to his mother and, my grandmother, and he wrote, and he said, "If I could just have a wish that I could wish for every young boy that I know, I would wish that he had a mother like you. You have always been so hardworking and—for all of us to, you know—for us to have a home and to have shelter and to have food and to have clothing." And he said, "Your work-worn hands are prettier than any hands that I have ever seen." And he signed it, "Your boy,

[*SL laughs*] Gene." [01:04:30] So we never heard anything about the war and knew—and when Jimmy came home, he had a problem of adjusting. I mean, war is so anti to anything that he'd ever known or experienced, so grim, so horrifying, so deadly, that it was hard for hi—and then to come home and things were peaceful and loving and normal, and it was quite a culture shock, I think, to him. And for a while he really had a problem with trying to escape the war in his own mind and heart yet not talk about it. But he did overcome that, and he's tried to go back to the university and it—he couldn't concentrate. He couldn't, at that time, he couldn't make it work. [01:05:32] But he found out that he could get a printing job in Little Rock, and that was what, you know, my father did—his father did. And this seemed a goo—this seemed something that he was familiar with and comfortable with and good at. And this is with the Arkansas Printing and Lithographing Company in Little Rock. Went down there and got a job, and this helped him finally to overcome the war and his memories of it, and he began to live a normal life. [01:06:03] And he met a girl who worked there and—but I was visiting my Aunt TZ in Little Rock, and the company had a party, a picnic out at a lake, and they had put out—put down a wooden dance floor. And I can't remember if they had a combo or if

they had, you know, a recorder—recorded music but they had—for people to dance. And my brother that—whom I didn't think ever danced asked me to dance. I was [*laughs*] so thrilled, and we danced. And this girl—and I found out later this girl and her friend—oh, she had a crush on Jimmy [*SL laughs*], and she was so jealous. [*SL laughs*] And the two of the—now, I found this out later because he married this girl. So she was telling me later that she was so jealous. And she and her friend were talking about it and saying, "Well, I don't see what he sees in her." [*SL laughs*] And the other one said, "Well, I don't think she's so much." [*Laughter*] And it just tickled me to death. Here I was his sister!

SL: Yeah.

PP: And I—and she—they all thought, of course, I was a girlfriend.

SL: Yeah.

[01:07:15] PP: Well, anyhow, he did marry this girl and she—that's how I found out what they thought of me. [*Laughter*] But he—this all worked out for him, and then he had a son, and this was the culmination of his life to have this baby boy who was named for him, and his name was Jimmy Eugene after his father and his grandfather, and he was just the apple of my brother's life, really and truly. And his son adored his dad. It was just the

sweetest, sweetest father-son thing that could've possibly happened, and it was just the light of his life. But still again, they would come for visits to Fayetteville, and I would visit in Little Rock and visit and stay with Aunt TZ, and things just moved on. And Jimmy continued to work for—it was AP&L, but it was not—I think there was another AP&L. Arkansas . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. Power and Light?

PP: . . . Power and Light. And so, we were careful about sayin' that he worked for AP&L. [*SL laughs*] But he loved the job, did well at it, was promoted and promoted. And loved doing what he was doin', and course, that's the important thing. And my nephew grew up to be a fine young man. Had an unusual writing ability. Most unusual. And won prizes in high school for his writing ability. And he went to and graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. And still—and I think my mother, his grandmother, really felt like he was gonna be a writer as, you know—but then that isn't what he did as a living. [01:09:35] But anyhow, my brother became sick. When he was in the air force, I think Lucky Strike was the main tobacco company that sent free cigarettes to servicemen. And of course, they did need something to sort of relieve their nerves and steady them, and Jimmy became addicted to smoking. And I

think I mentioned when we went to my grandmother's house, even with dates as we got older, she would always lecture us on the bad effects of smoking. She knew. My mother already knew about things that—so even though it wasn't commonly known about that cigarette smoking could have a bad effect on your lungs. So—but it turned out with Jimmy—he did develop lung cancer. Now, we were having family reunions every year in Fayetteville and Prairie Grove. We would be one place or the other. And the whole family would show up. Now, as I said, we grew up not being allowed to quarrel ever. We were very close. We did things together as children, and we grew up being very close, so everybody made it back to the family reunions. And it was a wonderful, joyful time, always. [01:11:13] But after Jimmy got sick—and he had a really, really bad cold and didn't go to the—and it wouldn't get o—he couldn't get over it. And his wife kept, Louise, kept wanting him to go to the doctor, and he finally did. And they determined that he had terminal lung cancer. And this was a terrible shock to us and to—because this was in January, and we thought, well—it got so bad so quickly that he couldn't swallow. And he couldn't, therefore, eat, and he was losing weight rapidly. And he was sort of living off of Popsicles. You know, he could swallow liquids but not food. And

so, we thought, "We won't have the family reunion." It just seemed terrible because, of course, Jimmy wouldn't be able to come. Well, unbeknownst to us—now, my younger sister and I were the ones that always planned the family reunion and did a great deal of the cooking. She would, you know, she would make casseroles, and I would, too, and then she would freeze hers and then bring 'em in a freezer and thaw them at my house. But [*sighs*] we found out, and I can't remember exactly how, but Jimmy in his weakening condition was hanging on so he could make it to the family reunion. Well, of course, we put that together real fast and had the family reunion and stocked a stockpile of Popsicles for him. [*SL laughs*] And he loved the reunion. [01:13:00] Now, all of us knew—now, we invited favorite cousins who ordinarily had not come to the—'cause it was just our family—to come. Boys who had grown up idolizing Jimmy and—to come and share the family reunion and shared their memories. And this is—we determined this whole family reunion was in Jimmy's honor, and we were going to devote our time and our remembrances that would include him, that would be memories of him. And this is what we did. And funny stories—oh, the stories. When we were at my grandmother's house and walking on the railroad track tryin' not to fall off and

all these funny things that [*SL laughs*] happened to us and the feelings that those boys had about Jimmy growing up. And Jimmy was a worthy role model, I will have to say. But anyhow, they just grew up loving him so much and wanted to be just like him. And course, they would tell him this, and course, he was not aware of this, that they had felt about him when they were younger and he was a teenager . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . and a young man. And all during the reunion, it was just in his honor, and it was—he just felt our love and our devotion to him and the memories, the funny memories and the good memories and the memories about the Christmas where we all decided that—we told Mother and Daddy not to get us any gifts so they could get Jimmy a bicycle so he could ride with his best friend, the Pyeatt boy, and—who was goin' to get a bicycle for—he knew he would. We would call up memories of things like that that were just so precious, and he loved it. [01:15:04]

And when they left the reunion on Sunday evening—they stayed as late as they could, and they turned the corner to go—to head back to North Little Rock, and my nephew was driving, and Jimmy was in the front seat, and Louise was in the backseat, and Jimmy said, "This reunion has done me more good than all

the chemotherapy and all the radiation that they've given me." He said, "I feel better than I have felt in months." [01:15:44] And all the way home to North Little Rock, he told his son and his wife for the first time his war experiences. And he took that lockbox out and examined it, and for the first time, he could really face talking about the horror of war and what he went through. And for four hours he told them. And my nephew was enchanted to hear his dad talk about this. His father was so brave and so uncomplaining about the way that, when they were on their missions, that they had absolutely no creature comforts. They were difficult missions in every sense of the word as far as their lack of comforts, as far as what they were having to do, as far as them thinking about what they were doing. It was very difficult. But he finally was able to get out what he had repressed for these, many, many, many years. [01:17:08] And so, that summer—he was right. That reunion did something for him. He had a wonderful three months. And he didn't dread the chemo like he had before, and he said, "I feel so good some days I just wanna call 'em and say, 'Bring some more on.'" This is how good he felt until sometime in September, and then he began to go downhill. Now, this was exactly what the doctors had said would happen, but the doctors had had no idea that he



was going to have that glorious three months after the family reunion. I think they were just amazed. It was almost like he'd had a healing, but he hadn't. But he did have something wonderful that he could share with his son and wife. And then he became very, very sick, and he was in the hospital. But you know, hospitals keep you only so long.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And then they have to turn you out. And they sent him home to die, and they just couldn't—they couldn't do it 24/7. No one really—no family can really do that 24/7. And they're not equipped, and they're not trained to handle people who are that sick. [01:18:40] And somebody told them about in North Little Rock they had a hospice hospital, and they called, and they could get him in. And you paid, in that situation, you paid a certain amount when you went in, and that was for them to do all of the paperwork and get all the medications and get everything set for you. And then after that I don't think they charged, or it was just a minimal charge, a very minimal charge. And these hospice nurses, of course, were trained for this very thing, for the end of life and to deal with the patient and the family. And my nephew just so adored his father that he stayed 24/7 with him there in the hospital so that his mother could go—

come home and rest and then come to the hospital but then go home and rest and then come back. But she always knew that her son was there, and if anything changed quickly, that he would call her and she could go immediately. And then he began to get into a deep sleep, almost a coma-like sleep. And at one point he opened his eyes, and he was trying to say something. And it was garbled as far as my nephew was concerned, and he went over and leaned over his father and had him say it again, and he still couldn't understand what it was. And yet it was something that seemed to have possessed his father that he must, he must, say this, and he must get it out, and he must make them understand. And in came a nurse. And my nephew had told me—'course, he was keeping me up on all of this and he nev—he told me—he said, "We never had to send for a nurse. We never had to ring for nurse. They came in constantly, just constantly, to check on things." [01:20:44] And a nurse walked in and went up to Jimmy and listened to him, and she said to Jimmy—she said, "Did you see an angel?" And he said, "Yes! Yes!" And this was the message he wanted to get out. It was so important for him for his son to understand that he had seen an angel. And it meant so much to Jimmy, and he knew what it would mean to his son and to his wife. And

they summoned his wife to come and told her about what Jimmy had tried to get out. And then she went home to rest, and my nephew stayed with him. But in the meantime he had called me and told me to be in prayer for Jimmy but also for him and for his mother. He had previously, knowing this was coming—he had asked me to write the obituary 'cause, of course, I knew more about his early life. And I had written his obituary and sent it down for him to send to the *Gazette* and the *Democrat*, and I sent it to the Fayetteville paper. And—but he said, "Please pray. Pray for Dad. Pray for me. Pray for my mom." And of course, I did.

SL: Sure.

[01:22:29] PP: And at 4:55 I got a telephone call, and my brother had died peacefully, accepting it, ready. And I think that that was why it was so important for him to share his experience with his son because it not only prepared Jimmy, but it prepared . . .

SL: His son.

PP: . . . my nephew for the dying of someone he just loved and felt he could not part with. And he called me immediately, but what he said was—when I answered the phone, he said, "Aunt Peggy, our prayers were answered." And I knew. And it was just such an important moment, an important time for us, that even now

it's such a bond that we shared this special, special time in my brother's life. And he knew how much I loved my brother. And I had written my brother a long letter about how much I had always adored him. And how much he had meant to my life and how much he meant—in knowing him as well as I did and knowing my father with his gentle spirit, what I would want to look for in a husband and—'cause I knew what I loved so much about them. [01:24:26] So then after Jimmy Eugene said, "Our prayers have been answered," and I prayed for him over the phone and for his mother and for his father, and then he said, "Would you write the eulogy for the service?" And I said, "Yes." And it was hard to write it, and yet it wasn't. And I realized this is what God wanted me to do, and therefore, he would give me the spirit and the words and the determination and the ability to write the eulogy for someone I loved very, very much and had lost. And I wrote it. And it was—in a way it brought me peace. I was able to express my feelings about him. I was able to talk about what my brother was like. I even mentioned the pigeon club that had meant so much to him and was so unusual for boys to do and—in the obituary and in the eulogy. And I sent it off. I think we faxed it and—to get it down there as quickly as possible. And I wasn't able, because my husband was not well

and because David was on a trip, to go to North Little Rock for the service. But my brother-in-law—my sister—younger sister's husband, who could have been a minister [*laughter*], we're all sure, and has done missionary work, but he read the eulogy at the service. And Betty said the hardest thing was that they had a trumpeter who played . . .

SL: Hmm. Taps.

PP: . . . taps at the burial. And that's always been so sad, and yet it was so wonderful. Jimmy had served four years in the service. And for him to have that last haunting but, oh, but heavenly, beautiful send-off was absolutely wonderful. [01:27:37] And my nephew e-mailed me or—I can't remember whether it was that or whether he—I can't remember—or called me—but he said, "Don't worry about missing the service. You were there. You were there in the obituary. You were there in the eulogy. You were there in your prayers. Your presence was felt. You were there." And it meant so much to him that I could be with him that way, even though I couldn't be with him in physical presence. [01:28:18] So it's one of those things that you're thankful for family. You're thankful for growing up together and loving each other. You're thankful if you have a mother that wouldn't let you ever, ever quarrel. You're thankful that all of

your shared experiences were loving. You're thankful for having a brother who knew he was terminally ill and was barely hanging on so he could come for the family reunion. And he didn't know it was gonna be in his honor. But the fact that we were able to do it and the fact that we brought up so many happy memories, the fact that there was lots of laughter, the fact that there were tears when he left. But the fact that it meant so much to him that he had a wonderful three and a half months that even the doctors couldn't explain. And you just realize that there is a comforter that does supply your needs when you think that "I cannot bear this." On the other hand, then you think, "Would I have wanted to keep Jimmy ill, not being able to eat, not being able to swallow?" So death was a gift. It was a gift. It was a gift for Jimmy and his wife and his son, who had seen him suffer through this. It was a gift for all of the family. And he—course, his memory is still so strongly with us that—that's why families—this is the importance of families. To make happy, happy memories so that when you lose one, you don't lose them entirely. And also, it's important to my family to know that there will be another reunion of the family.

[01:30:52] SL: That's right. [*Sighs*] Well, I'm not sure where to go from here. You know, that war changed many lives, and I'm

assuming it changed Fayetteville. I mean, for y'all the world kind of came into your life in a very real way when he got back. And I'm just wondering did any of the pigeon club go to war?

PP: It was gone. It was gone. And . . .

SL: I mean, what—but did the—did any of those guys . . .

PP: No. You know, I—no, I don't know what happened to it. I wish I did know because they—the last I remember the cotes were in our backyard. And I don't remember where they were moved, when or—I just don't know.

[01:31:50] SL: Well, I'm talkin' about the members—the—all the neighborhood boys . . .

PP: They were all about Jimmy's age.

SL: So they probably saw . . .

PP: They graduated. Went . . .

SL: They probably saw some . . .

PP: . . . went to the service.

SL: . . . service action, too.

[01:32:03] PP: And the thing about it was with Jimmy, you know, like with anybody, any family that sent somebody off to war, the fact that they came home alive was just the most wonderful thing in the world. And that they could live a natural, normal life. They could marry, have children, have a job, go to family

reunions. So when this happened to me as, and to him, as sad as this was to me [*clears throat*], I had to think about how much we had with him that was such a gift. And so, you can't—you just—you know, as sad as it is you have to be grateful and grateful that his suffering was over and grateful that he still knows what's going on in the family and grateful that we still have such happy memories of him. And I think that that is a lesson that is hard to learn because you have to experience it to really learn it. But once you do everything in life and every friend you have and every person you look up to and every acquaintance and—you know, it just makes you so grateful for life, for experiences, for good things that happen, and good things far outweigh bad things. And also, to—I think it's important to express that gratitude and to live that gratitude. Life—you know, if you really think about it, it's a wonderful life. [01:33:57] And as I grow older and the years pile up, it makes me doubly grateful when things that are so wonderful come into my life, and I have lived this long to experience them, to be a part of them. I'm grateful to be a part of this. Very grateful. And it's made me think back on my life and all the good things. And that verse in Jeremiah, "I know the plans I have for your life." See, I can look back over eighty-four years and see God's



hand in every portion of my life. In seeing God's desire for me to be able to find my—whatever talents he gave me and whatever job I would fit into the best that would—not only that I could do well but that I would love doing and that it would fulfill my life, and hopefully, I would mean something to the life of others—to the lives of others. And yet I can look back and see God's hand in this, and yet, you know, he had to open the doors and almost push me in. [*SL laughs*] And—but I can see why that he told somebody to open a door for me, that it blessed my life in such a way that it determined who I am, and it determined all that I do love and appreciate about life. And it just makes me feel so happy and contented. And I think contentment, if you [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Priceless.

PP: Is priceless.

[01:36:18] SL: Okay, so kind of back on our chronology of events in your life. Jimmy goes to war when you're entering high school.

PP: Yes.

SL: You do very well in high school. You make good grades. You make a better effort at all the curr—extra—extracurricular activities and achieve some leadership there that took you places. [01:36:44] Now, when you finish Fayetteville High

School, did you go to Batesville first, or did you go to the University of Arkansas?

[01:36:50] PP: I went to the university. Let me tell you one thing that—I said I admire Chancellor Gearhart so much. I started admiring him when he was in high school, and I'll tell you why. When he was a junior in high school, I entered the American Legion Oratorical Contest.

SL: Oh!

PP: It is strenuous. [*SL laughs*] You wouldn't believe how many people, when we have a large gathering and that comes up, how many people did this when they were juniors in high school. It was—it's a big thing.

SL: I'm very familiar with it.

PP: So I entered it, and so, I won the local contest, and I won the area contest. No, I won the division con—or somethin'. It was something smaller than area. So I won two contests, and I was sent to Clarksville for the area contest and following that was the state contest. All I wanted to do was to get to Little Rock to get—now, I didn't dream I could ever win the state contest but just to get there would be such an honor.

SL: Sure.

PP: So you had to write—you wrote a five-minute speech. It was at

least five minutes, and it was on the privileges and responsibilities of an American citizen. Something like that. And—but then you had to prepare a two-minute extemporaneous address on each of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, and some were easier than others. And you wouldn't know which one they were gonna pick out for you to do, so you had to be equally prepared for all ten.

SL: For all ten of 'em.

PP: So—and see, knowing this—and I went through the local contest, and I went to the [*laughs*—I can't remember what the second one was called. I went down to the area contest and—in Clarksville. Miss Ellis went with me on the train, on the six o'clock train to Clarksville, and we went to the high school. And so, I was a bit nervous, but I was also excited about it.

SL: Sure.

PP: And when I got up to give my five-minute spiel, I did well. I really—I could tell. You can—any speaker can tell when he's got the audience with him.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Can—you can feel it. You can sense it. And I had it. And I was feeling pretty good about it. And then it came to—and then there was a boy from Fort Smith named Danny Woods, and he

did well on this first part. And then it was time for the second part, and they had a fishbowl type of bowl, and they had all of these numbers, you know, one to ten, folded up so you couldn't see them but not folded completely, some of 'em, maybe. But you were to reach in and pull out one. And I was first. And I reached in, and I saw, even before I really kind of op—I saw the number, and it was the worst one. And I can't remember which one, which amendment. I could've looked it up, but it was the worst. [SL laughs] And I looked down at a partially opened piece of paper, and it had one of the easier ones, and I wanted so badly—how could—could I sneeze real bad and drop this?

SL: [Laughs] Oh yeah.

PP: I mean, what could I—how could I do this? And I might—I really—this, I was turning over in my mind. [Laughter] It's horrible to say, but I was. [01:40:21] And I was thinking, "You know, I think I could do this. I think I could slip that back and get the other one inconspicuously. They weren't particularly watching me, you know, and I think I could do this." But I'll tell you what stopped me. They probably wouldn't see it.

SL: But you would know.

PP: But guess who would?

SL: Miss Ellis?

PP: No, it was God.

SL: Oh, God.

PP: I thought, "God's gonna see me do this, and it's just not gonna work out."

SL: Yeah.

PP: I mean, it would just be a terrible thing to do. A terrible lie. So I kept the difficult one, and I didn't do as well. And I knew it. And Danny Woods did well. He had an easier one. And I think he said to me later, "Oh, thank God you pulled out [*laughs*] that one so I wouldn't get it." But anyhow, the judges debated and debated and debated, and then they came up to us, and it was between Danny and me. And they said it was so hard to decide and they just—they went back and forth and back and forth. And course, I think, my feeling is I perhaps won the first part; he won the second part, which really was harder.

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:42] PP: So he won. And I was very disappointed. Very. Because I really wanted to take Fayetteville High School to state. But I didn't. And Danny Woods went to state and won the state, which, you know, made it a little easier 'cause I . . .

SL: Sure.

PP: . . . came so close to him.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And then he won the state, so you know, that kind of rel—kind of made me feel a little bit good. [01:42:12] And—but then when Chancellor Gearhart was a junior in high school and he entered the orator—the American Legion Oratorical Contest, he got the—he won the first three. He got to go to state, and he won state. And whether anything was beyond that—I kind of thought there was, but I don't know. But I, course, I knew his mother, and [SL *laughs*] I thought, "Oh my gosh, Fayetteville High did get a win and [*laughter*] did get to state and did win." And I was so proud of him that I member writing him a little note saying how proud of—that I had entered this, you know, and wanted to just get to state. But there he had gotten to state and had won it. And I was impressed with him from then on. [*Laughs*]

[01:43:03] SL: Well, you know, he was a, and still is, a great speaker. But he teamed up with a boy named John Scott Alexander, who lived on Lafayette. And they went to, as a debate team, they went to nationals.

PP: Mh-hmm. And this is what—I kind of thought there was something beyond state.

SL: I'm not sure if the oratory . . .

PP: I'm not . . .

SL: . . . had any play in that.

PP: He was—and I don't think he—'cause I think I mentioned it to him, and I don't think he was sure.

[01:43:32] SL: Yeah, but they did go to Washington, DC, and I . . .

PP: Oh!

SL: . . . I—they placed pretty highly. I'm . . .

PP: Oh!

SL: They may have come in fourth or something. I mean, it was pretty big doin's.

PP: National.

SL: Yeah, pretty big doin's.

PP: But it's good training, too.

[01:43:47] SL: Sure. Sure. Think on your feet. So you went to the U of A first.

PP: Yes, I went to the U of A. It's really funny. I went for a year and a half. And you must understand that I graduated in 1945. The war was over in August of 1945. And university started in September, the first of September, and I'm telling you, we had so many boys who were coming on the GI Bill for a college education. I mean, there were probably at the university six or seven boys to every girl. [*SL laughs*] I'm telling you, it was date heaven. [*SL laughs*] And it was the girls who had to keep

a little black book. I mean, a boy would call for a date on Friday. "Sorry." "Saturday?" "Got a date." "Sunday?" "I'm sorry. I'm tied up." "Monday?" I mean, it started gettin' to be into the weekdays, not just the weekends. And oh, how much fun! Oh, my go—and these were all dates for some . . .

SL: Function.

PP: . . . something that was going on, for a movie, for a concert, for a basketball game or a football game. I mean, it was this kind of dating, so it was fun. It was completely innocent, and it was fun to have a male companion and—but they were never serious dates. I mean, not—or certainly not with me. But there were so many cute boys on campus. [*Laughter*]

SL: Wore you out. [*Laughter*]

[01:45:34] PP: And I even told Senator Bumpers the first time I met him—he had been in college and then had gone to—into the war and then was back. So he was a little older, but when he came back, he was in my class, my sophomore class. And so, the first time I ever met him in 1970, he had 1 percent name recognition then and I—so I told him—I said, "Did you realize that we were in the same class at the university?" And he said, "No, did I know you then? Did we have any classes together?" And I said, "No, but I thought I dated every cute boy on campus, and I



don't know how in the world I missed you." [Laughter] And so, we became friends.

SL: Yeah.

[01:46:19] PP: And—but I do have a *Razorback* I kept. It's the only *Razorback* annual that I kept, and it shows Dale Bumpers and Peggy Parks in the sophomore class. Just to prove it. [SL laughs] Well, I tell you, after a year and a half of this, I, myself—it wasn't my mother. I, myself, thought, "I think I need to be taking my classes a little more seriously." [01:46:44] And at the time I was president of the young people in our church in the state, and I was traveling a lot for that. But because I had that position in our church, I was offered a complete scholarship to what was then called Arkansas College, which had been established in Batesville the same year the university was established in Fayetteville. And it, course, it never grew like that. But it's an important school because from Batesville on up to the Missouri line, you know, there's nowhere else to go. It's really hard to get from Batesville to the university. And then the other choice, you know, was Jonesboro. So it really was in an important position, but it's never been a really large college. But I had a complete scholarship, and I thought—and because I was traveling so much and it was easier from Batesville 'cause it

turned out one of their professors went—he was a minister, and he taught Bible at Arkansas College, but he went every weekend to Little Rock. And I think maybe he preached in a church there. So I could get a ride to Little Rock and back with this professor and stay with my Aunt TZ in Little Rock. And then wherever I had to go to represent, you know, the Presbyterian young people, I could go out of Little Rock, and it was much easier . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:48:19] PP: . . . because we'd make the trip on Friday evening, and I could travel to Prescott or, you know, Forrest City or wherever it was that I was making a speech for the young people. So this really worked out. And the—for—and then, like, driving with him was very nice, and he was—but I will tell you this. He put his accelerator—and I don't know whether he had a governor on it or not, but we went fifty miles an hour.

SL: Top speed.

PP: Top speed. And it was a hundred miles to Batesville. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PP: And you know, I wished—course, they didn't have the interstate then.

SL: Right.

PP: But it did take a long time.

SL: Yeah.

[01:49:03] PP: But it was—I'll tell you another story about my brother. It was the dearest thing. I was there, like I was, on the weekends. Usually would see him, and he, for whatever reason, he took—I—maybe I needed to go shopping, so he said, "I'll take you." And he wasn't married then, and so, he took me shopping. And I needed some shoes, and I had a gray suit. Now, I didn't have many clothes 'cause, you know, I never had any money. And I was writing for the newspaper in Batesville and got a little money that way. And . . .

SL: The *Guardian*?

PP: Not a whole lot. [*Laughs*] Writing . . .

SL: Well, it wasn't . . .

PP: . . . a column. School . . .

[01:49:42] SL: It wasn't the *Guardian*, was it?

PP: Yes, the *Batesville Guardian*.

SL: Okay.

PP: And what were the name of the people? You know 'em. They're still there, I think.

SL: Yeah, I . . .

PP: Their son, maybe.

SL: . . . just met them, but I . . .

PP: Yeah.

SL: . . . couldn't tell you.

[01:49:51] PP: All right. And so, anyhow, he—and so, then I needed some shoes, and he took me to the shoe store. It was hard for me to buy shoes 'cause I had a very narrow foot. But in this shoe store, I found a pair of red shoes, and I thought, "Well, now, that's gonna really set off that gray suit." [*SL laughs*] And they were sling-back pumps with the toe and the heel out, but they fit perfectly, and they were beautiful shoes, high-heel shoes. And then the salesman said, "Let me show you what I've got to go with it." And they had red leather bows to go with the red leather shoes. [*SL laughs*] But I didn't have that much money. And sadly, I really wanted 'em, but I couldn't—I didn't have enough money to buy 'em. I barely had enough money to buy the shoes. So I bought the shoes, and then during the week I got a package from my brother [*laughter*], and of course, it was the red leather bows to go on the shoes. You know, he went back to the store and bought those 'cause he could see how badly I [*SL laughs*] wanted 'em. And it was such a gift because it was so thoughtful and so loving and so—something I really, really wanted. And it really dressed up those shoes.

[01:51:01] SL: And you totally didn't expect it. He just . . .

PP: I totally did not. It never occurred to me. It just never occurred to me.

SL: [*Laughs*] Those are the best.

PP: Oh, those are—oh, absolutely. [*SL laughs*] The absolute best.

SL: Yeah.

[01:51:15] PP: It was—he was so thoughtful of me and—but without—but he was still just a brother. I mean, he—you know, it wasn't anything that I would expect him to do or would ask him to do something, you know . . .

SL: No.

PP: . . . for me. But of course, when he did it was absolutely precious. [*SL laughs*] And when he asked me to dance at that picnic, I was—couldn't believe it [*SL laughs*] 'cause I didn't know he even danced.

[01:51:49] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, okay, so you go—you leave the univers . . .

PP: Oh well, I went to—I went a year and a half, and so, then I decided to transfer to Arkansas College, so I'd went at semester. And as I'd said before, those five Chinese boys . . .

SL: Yep.

PP: . . . enrolled at the same time. Now, that meant a lot to the school.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Coming that distance and find—even finding Arkansas on a map. 'Cause, course [*clears throat*], they flew to New York [*clears throat*], and then knowing about Arkansas College, and then for their father to have—the father of two of 'em to have said, "Whatever you do, don't become a Christian."

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah. I remember. You told us that story.

PP: "Because"—yes, "Because if you do, I'll disinherit you." [*SL laughs*] He was serious.

[01:52:34] SL: I know, but you don't really think that happened.

PP: I don't know. Proba—surely not. And it could be that the boys never . . .

SL: Really joined . . .

PP: . . . told him . . .

SL: . . . or—yeah.

PP: . . . and never made a thing about it. But you know—but it still woulda meant a great deal to them.

SL: Sure.

PP: Even if they never got to practice it until they were out of the house or—and you know, out of any close association, perhaps, with the family, it would still always be there that they had committed themselves on their own volition, knowing what was

supposed to face 'em, you know. And so, you know, it could be that they never mentioned it when they got home.

SL: Well, what kind of . . .

BP: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Oh! We've done another hour.

[Tape stopped]

[01:53:34] SL: Does anyone ever call you Peggy Sue?

PP: Not anymore.

SL: Not anymore?

PP: If I ever hear Peggy Sue, it's somebody from way back.

BP: We're rollin'.

PP: I didn't change my shoes.

SL: We're rollin'?

BP: Yes, sir.

SL: Okay, so is this tape seven?

BP: Seven. I think it's seven. Or maybe it's six.

Joy Endicott: Seven.

SL: Seven.

BP: Seven.

[01:53:53] SL: Joy says it's—it's gotta be seven if Joy says it's seven. So we were talking, let's see, we were talking about your college years, and I'm tryin' to remember where we left off, but I

think we had gotten you out of Arkansas College. I think. You went to Arkansas College, and you were going down to—the pastor there would give you a ride to Little Rock . . .

PP: Yes, yes.

SL: . . . and you'd be able to do your statewide travel out of Little Rock. Centrally located. Stay with Aunt TZ and . . .

PP: Mh-hmm.

[01:54:37] SL: So what was it that—I mean, you stayed another ye—a year and a half at—or a year?

PP: I was a year and a half there.

SL: A year and a—so between the two you had three years.

PP: Three years.

[01:54:49] SL: Now, what prompted you not to just stay in Batesville and finish up there?

PP: Well, two things. One was my mother [*laughs*], and why she thought I should stay in Fayetteville I—I mean, we never got into it. But then that's when Mr. Dyess came along and offered me the job at the electric company with a very good salary. And I really thought about it, and I thought, "You know, if I went back and got my degree, I'd be looking for a job, and I don't think anybody would be on my doorstep then, you know, asking me if I wanted to work for their nice company and a good



salary," and so, maybe this was my opportunity, you know, to go ahead and take a job and always with the idea that I would finish college. And—but anyhow, that's why I didn't go back.

SL: So your mother really wanted you back in Fayetteville.

PP: Yes.

SL: And you got this job offer.

PP: Yes.

SL: And so, you came back.

PP: Yes.

[01:55:58] SL: And you had a good—you enjoyed your work at the electric company.

PP: Yes, I did, but I didn't wanna do that forever.

SL: Right.

PP: But then they had a funny rule at that time that when you got married you had to quit, and they lost four girls. When I left to [SL laughs] get married, there were three others, and I mean, and the reason that they had that rule was because if they hired married women, they might get pregnant. Well, at least you'd have nine months to [laughs] work that out. But as it was it was just quickly, you know, here were four leaving.

SL: That was a hot seat.

PP: That was a hot seat.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, now . . .

PP: No wonder he was goin' door to door. [*Laughter*]

[01:56:42] SL: Well now, so—but you weren't leaving—I mean, you were leaving because you had the—someone—that Don had proposed to you. Is that . . .

PP: Right, right.

SL: Now, how did you all meet?

PP: Well, we met [*clears throat*—I had been at Arkansas College, and then I went to Ferncliff, the church conference grounds, for three weeks. Formed my own college group, and then I was a counselor for the high school group, and then I was a counselor for the Little Pioneer group. So it—and then I went to Little Rock, course, with Aunt TZ, and it was third of July. And so, my brother was off on the fourth of July, and we were gonna ride the bus, the midnight bus, from Little Rock to Fayetteville. Took six hours, the bus did, on that Highway 10.

SL: Oh!

PP: Oh!

SL: Yeah.

PP: What a ride. And I cannot sleep sitting up, and neither could he. We got in at six in the morning, dead tired, you know, and the bus station at the time was only, like, two blocks from our

house, so we walked home and greeted our parents, went upstairs, and went to bed. He went in his room, and I was in the other room. And we were—and then Mother came upstairs and woke us up. I do not remember right now whether Jimmy went with us or not, but she said, "We're havin' a picnic. We're going to Lake Wedington. Get up." [*SL laughs*] And I [*laughs*], oh, I didn't want to. I didn't wanna get—I just wanted to sleep and sleep and sleep. And course, I'd just had about three or three and a half hours of sleep. But I did get up and go. And my younger sister was there and at—I don't think Jimmy went. I think he was able to stay in and sleep. [01:58:35] And [*SL laughs*] we got to Lake Wedington, and Betty and I were—and I guess Mary was along with us, but we were swimming. We were sitting down on the beach, and she said, "Don't look around now, but there are a whole bunch of boys back there really givin' you the eye." Well, the funny thing was when I'd gone to Ferncliff, I needed a new bathing suit, and of course, I didn't have any money. I mean, that's my life story. And [*SL laughs*] so, I went into Little Rock, and I couldn't go to the—you know, Blass's or Pfeifer's or Kempner's. I couldn't go to the nicer stores 'cause I didn't have that kinda money, so I went over to one of those—I fo—oh, I thought I was gonna say 'em, but

anyhow, those small, cheaper stores. And the only bathing suit they had that—in my size was a two-piece, gaudiest bathing suit you've ever seen in your life. It was white in the front with big red flowers on it and then solid red in the back. [*SL laughs*] I'd never had a two-piece bathing suit. Mother never would let me have a two-piece bathing suit. But I had to have a bathing suit to go to camp. And you know, so I wore it and swam and—at—in the lake. But that's what I had on for the—'cause I'd just gotten home and had no chance to go shopping or do anything else, so I took that bathing suit. And fortunately, my mother was still up on the hillside where they have the picnic tables, and then there was the dressing room, also the bathrooms and all. It was a building that was in between us, so she didn't really . . .

SL: So she couldn't see you.

PP: . . . she didn't really see that bathing suit. [*SL laughs*]

[02:00:22] So naturally when Betty said, "Don't look around," guess what I did?

SL: [*Laughs*] You looked around.

PP: And so, then I decided—and there were, like, eight or ten or twelve boys there. And I decided I needed to go in and get a Coke. So I walked up the pathway into the—and on the other side where—and the boys were on one side, and on the other

side was a girl that I had met because we had come to Prairie Grove, these boys were from Prairie Grove, to start a young people's group in the Presbyterian church. And I had met her at that time, and she was on the other side of the path, and I spoke to her. Went on in, got the Coke, came back. But course, out of the other eye, I was looking over to the boys. And [*SL laughs*] went back to where Betty was, and we went in swimming, and that was, you know, all there was to that day. [02:01:15] Early the next morning I got a telephone call, and it was this nice, nice voice, and he said—he told me his name, and he said, "There were several of us from Prairie Grove that were swimming at Lake Wedington, and we saw you there yesterday. And I would like to take you out on a date and to go to the underground cave by Bella Vista."

SL: Oh, Wonder—Wonderland or . . .

PP: Wonderland. Wonderland Cave.

SL: Yeah, Wonderland Cave. Yeah. They had—were they still having bands play?

PP: Bands and dancing. And I'd been there, but then I thought, "My mother does not know this boy, nor do I. And if she thinks that I'm going on a pickup date [*laughs*], sort of, to—she will not allow me." And even though I was a college [*laughs*] student, I

was still . . .

SL: Under the . . .

PP: . . . whate—I mean, because I was in my mother's house, and I mean, I think that was fair . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . that I wouldn't do anything bizarre that she would consider not ladylike. [02:02:30] So I told him I couldn't do that, but I said, "Why don't you just come to the house and meet me and meet my family, and then we'll, you know, do somethin' else." So he did. He was just such an—had such a nice voice. But what I thought to myself was I thought, "Oh, dear God, don't let him be one of the hairy ones." [*SL laughs*] There were two of 'em. And you know, not had any hair on the back but hair—black hair on the chest and black hair on the arms. He had black hair on the legs. And the boys I had dated, if they had two hairs on their chest, ooh, they were so proud. Well, here was [*laughs*]—I mean! So I said, "Don't let it be one of the hairy ones." So when he came to the door on Friday evening, you better believe it. It was one of the hairy ones.

SL: Oh.

[02:03:20] PP: But very, very nice, and turned out he's an identical twin.

SL: Oh.

PP: And this is Donald, and his brother was Barry. Looked exactly alike. I mean, carbon copies. But anyhow, this was Donald. So my sister Jean was there, and she, I think, she needed to go to the bus station. She was [*SL coughs*] apparently just visiting, maybe from Chicago or wherever. But anyhow, that was an excuse, then, to move on out and do something. So we took her to the bus, and then we went down to Jug's Drive-In. That was the first drive-in in Fayetteville, and it was on Dickson Street, and it was the place to go and see and be seen. [02:04:05] So we went to Jug's and got a Coke and talked and had a chance to get to know each other. And he wanted to know how—and this girl that I spoke to was his cousin. So you know, it was just kind of a family affair. Well, it wasn't an affair. [*Laughter*] But anyhow, so then we went back home and made another date to go see a movie. Maybe it was the next week. I'm not sure. Turned out later, much later, I found out that Barry was gonna call me for a date, and he couldn't believe that Donald had already done it. Donald beat him to the [*laughs*] punch.

SL: Not only do they look alike, they thought alike.

PP: Being twins. Exa . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:04:44] PP: They did think alike. Really thought alike. So



anyhow, we dated for a couple of weeks, and then I went to leadership training at Montreat, North Carolina, and there were the presidents of all of the—what we call synods, but mostly they were states. And I met a boy that was undoubtedly the best-looking boy I have ever seen in my life. [*SL laughs*] And he was the president of Virginia and went to Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina.

SL: Big, good college.

PP: And so, for the leadership training, the presidents were there for the first week and then the whole elected group, you know, the vice president and the secretary and tre—and so forth came the second week. So for those two weeks, we were together all the time. And we would go swimming. He would want to go swimmin' at six o'clock in the morning, and because I was so smitten, I would go with him. And oh, that water was ice cold. I mean! [02:05:49] But Montreat's a beautiful place. It's Lake Susan. It's a huge lake, and around this lake are four mountains. And of course, they're named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And see, it was exactly like Ferncliff, only this is a great big Ferncliff. And at one end was Assembly Inn, where people could come and stay. People would come for—and then



they would have conferences all—not just our conference. They would have conferences all summer long. And they would have missionary conferences and things like that and conferences where they would have these outstanding speakers in the Presbyterian Church, and you know, you could come and stay at Assembly Inn and be there for the conference. So this was going on all summer. But we were there for two weeks. And another thing that was very strange about this. [02:06:41] We had—as I say, the synods were mostly states, but then there was a Snedecor Memorial Synod that was a black synod, and they sent a black delegate, who was president of this particular synod, Snedecor Memorial, and we ate in a large, large building, and it was a cafeteria. And we went over for our first lunch, and as the president of Snedecor Memorial came through, they told him he couldn't eat on the first floor. Presbyterian Church. [SL sighs] And this was nineteen forty . . .

SL: [Nineteen forty] seven?

PP: . . . six.

SL: Six.

[02:07:29] PP: And you know, it was just horrifying to us. So they said he had to eat in the basement. So of course, we all gathered together, and we went downstairs and ate in the

basement. But what they did when they realized that this is what we were going to do, they put a card table at the end—these were kind of booths that we sat in in the basement—and put a card table and a chair for him. Still separated. So we made the most of it. Still just [*unclear words*]*—*you know, this is—we have delegates from the Deep South, you know, from Florida and Alabama and Mississippi and . . .

SL: And this is North Carolina . . .

PP: . . . Georgia.

SL: . . . that you were . . .

PP: And we were in North Carolina.

[02:08:19] SL: And was this the first segregation experience that you had personally witnessed? Is . . .

PP: Except that on a bus—and where was I? I don't know whether it was in al—but anyhow, they made the—well, you know, we called 'em colored people or Negroes and had to give up a seat and go sit in the back. And that hurt me, but this was worse.

SL: Yeah.

PP: A young person.

SL: Well, and a . . .

PP: And the only one that was gonna have to eat in the basement while we ate on the main floor, but we all went down and joined

him. So this is what we did for every meal. We ate in the basement. All of us. [02:09:07] But then we had a skating party, and they had a skating rink there at Montreat, and we all went in to skate, and he came along, and they wouldn't let him come in, so we all left. And the next morning he had gone home.

SL: Oh!

PP: And he could've stayed surrounded with all of us, you know, but I guess it was as hard for him to believe at a church conference that this would happen. And anyhow, it was a very, very hard—coming from where I was in Arkansas and the—and in Fayetteville where there were so few black people, and they were so well mannered and polite and never caused any trouble ever, any kind. And the only thing they ever did that even made us realize they were there was when Joe Lewis would win a fight, you know, and they would celebrate till dawn. But that was fun. That was fun to listen to, just the excitement that they were having over that. But anyhow, that was a hard lesson. So why did we get started on this?

SL: Well, we were talkin' about how you went there and you met the most beautiful boy you'd ever . . .

PP: Well, I did.

SL: . . . seen. And you spent—you were so smitten with him.

PP: Oh yeah.

SL: You went . . .

PP: We were together . . .

SL: . . . swimming with him in the mor . . .

PP: . . . the whole time. And we never even kissed. I mean, and we were both in college. I think it—when I think back on that, I think that is so strange. But we were both smitten and—we really were. [02:11:03] And we—so then when I came—so I'd met Donald, and we dated but just maybe two or three dates, and then I went to Montreat, and then I was together with Curtis the entire time and then left and came back to Fayetteville and came back and dated Donald. And then I went back to Arkansas College, and I was writing to both of 'em. Tum-tum. [*SL laughs*] And so, then Curtis was going to Davidson College, and he was a smart, smart, good-looking boy. Became a minister. So I think in a way things worked out because I don't think that was my forté to be a minister's wife. Maybe you never know till you try it, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . but anyhow, so he was president of his class, and he wanted—and they were havin' a huge dance, a huge—it was a

huge weekend, and he wanted me to be his sponsor—to come to Davidson College for this big dance, you know, and I would be presented and all. And course, you know what I'm gonna say. I didn't have any money.

SL: Right.

PP: [*Laughs*] I couldn't go. And I couldn't have asked my parents for money for me to make a trip to [*laughs*] Davidson, North Carolina, to see a boy.

SL: For a dance.

PP: For a date. For a dance. So course, I didn't go. But he needed a picture to put in the yearbook, and I did send a picture. Had a photograph made and sent it to him. And I am in the Davidson College yearbook. [*SL laughs*] But I didn't get to go to the party. [02:12:43] But we continued to write, and then he wrote to me and he s—he had another year at Montreat of leadership training, and I had already completed my two years. So he wrote, and he said that he would be going to Montreat and why didn't we both write and get jobs at Assembly Inn, and he'd be there for his group, you know, and yet we could work the rest of the summer till college started, and I thought that was an excellent idea. So we both wrote. We both got jobs at Assembly Inn, and then I wrote Donald and told him I wouldn't

be home this summer because I was gonna go to Montreat and work in Assembly Inn. I already had a job. And he sat down and wrote me a four-page letter. [*SL laughs*] And he poured out his heart. And he said, "I was so looking forward"—but what he said that made—what made me really stop and think was not his feelings toward me, but he said, "But if going to Montreat is really what you think, you know, the Lord wants you to do, I would not stand in your way at all, however." And I thought, "I'm not going for the Lord. I'm going for Curtis." And—but the fact that he said that and—but I didn't intimate in any way that I was gonna [*laughs*] do missionary work or anything like that. All I said was we would work, you know, in the hotel. But somehow that struck me, and I thought maybe my parents were misled. Maybe they thought I was gonna do something churchwise by going to Montreat for the summer. Well, whatever it was, I came home. And Donald and I dated all summer, and then I thought I was going back to Arkansas College. And then when I didn't go and Mr. Dyess had offered me a job, then I took the job, and by probably two weeks after I started the job the first of September, Donald and I were engaged. [02:15:07] So I don't—I didn't—I don't think I wrote after I told him that I wasn't coming to—I wrote to Assembly Inn and told 'em I wouldn't be

able to come. I don't think that—I just don't know what I did. I must—I did not write and say I was going to get married—that, I mean, that I was engaged. But I told Donald—I said, "We have to wait a year." Because I had made a promise to Mr. Dyess that if I took the job, I would not at semester drop it and decide to go back and finish my degree." And so, I thought, "Well, I made a promise. I've got to keep it." And—but I think—I just don't know what I told Curtis other than I wasn't coming to Montreat for the summer. But I didn't tell him why, I'm sure, because then the next summer he called me, and he was in Memphis and he—and I think it was in August. And this is the closest inland he had ever come from—he lived in Lynchburg, Virginia. And so, he was gonna come on up to Fayetteville to see—to be with me, to see me. And I said, "Curtis, I'm getting married." [*Laughs*] So that was that. [02:16:29] Another boy that I had dated when he was at the university, and he was one of the—I've forgotten what we called 'em, but they were a select group of senior boys, seventeen-year-olds, and this what we called 'em, the seventeen-year-olds. And they were coming to the university, and they would get their high school diploma, a cre—credits of one year in college and also get basic training in the service in that one year. And see, they were just our age.

So this boy dated—we—he and I dated, and he was fun. It was sort of an off-and-on thing because I had never gone steady with anybody but we kind of in a—for a short period of time maybe did. But anyhow, he thought he was in love with me. Well, he called just like Curtis did, and he was coming—he was from El Paso, Texas. So he was in Oklahoma City—his far in—and called me and said he was coming. And I said, "Oh, Tommy, I'm getting married." So they didn't come. It wasn't like we had three there. [*Laughs*] They didn't come. I—they said, "Are you sure? Wait till I"—and Tommy Box just said, "You just wait till I get there." I mean, he was gonna change my mind. [*SL laughs*] And I said, "This is a formal wedding. Invitations have gone out. It's a church wedding. It's a big"—it wasn't a fancy wedding, but it was a big wedding.

SL: Sure.

PP: And with invitations that went, you know, to family and friends. So it was all set up, and there wasn't anything like callin' it off or changin' my mind. So anyhow, that's how we ended up [*laughs*] . . .

[02:18:16] SL: Well, was Don in college when y'all were dating or . . .

PP: No, he had—he and Barry had gone—now, see, remember he's



eight years older than I am.

SL: Oh yeah. That's right.

PP: So he and Barry had gone two years and then decided—what they—he—their—they had an older brother, James, and James was eight years older than they were. And he had started a theater in Prairie Grove called the Beverly Theater. And so, Donald and Barry ran the theater for him when he went to Chicago. And he was with a group of people, men—I don't mean a big group, but there were others involved, who started the *Quiz Kids*. And that—they were little, you know, and it was a very, very popular show. And by the time it—I guess it was on radio because there wasn't television yet and certainly not here.

SL: In [19]40s. No.

PP: And so—but for years he got royalties from that show that he could almost have lived on. But also, he moved, then, to Hollywood, to North Hollywood, California, and was station manager for KNBC-TV.

SL: Wow.

[02:19:34] PP: And you know, he was really pretty successful. But while he was in Chicago, he wanted Donald and Barry to come up there and be trained for theater work, and Donald wanted to go, but Barry didn't. It turned out as I got to know them better

Barry was more of the home boy even than Donald was. They were so much alike. I mean, people couldn't tell 'em apart. And during the war, the drugstore downtown wanted to have pictures of all the men in service in their uniforms and put them in the window of the drugstore. It—this is—was a ceiling-to-floor plate glass and a beautiful place to put those photographs. And Donald had sent a picture, but Barry hadn't yet. And so, what were they gonna do, you know. They didn't wanna put one without the other, so they just put two pictures of Donald in it. [*SL laughs*] And nobody could tell the difference. I mean, you know, but they had the biggest arguments, and course, the drugstore people were just—they were entertained all day because people'd say, "This one's Barry and this one"—"No, it isn't, either. Now, this one's Donald, and this is Barry." [*SL laughs*] And the grandmother swore she could tell. Now, mo—other people might—but she said, "I've always been able to tell 'em apart." And so, she told 'em apart, and they never told her [*laughter*] that they were both Donald.

SL: That's great.

[02:21:06] PP: And—but it was—but they were absolutely—I mean, I—see, I didn't know them then, growin' up. But they must've been idolized in the town. You've never seen two such good

boys in your life, really. Their brother was—had his little kinda wild days a little bit. Not bad, but a little. And then, of course, left the small town and went to the big city and—but then—and then the younger one had a problem, I think. Now, he wasn't as good looking as the twins were and then, of course, people making over the twins all the time, and for a small town like this, this was really a novelty. So he, you know, develo—had a few little problems and in working for the telephone company, Joe just absolutely wasn't gonna do it. And they couldn't ever get him up in the morning and get him to have breakf—they were all livin' at home at the time. And then he would take the truck out at night on dates. Well, and then maybe he would take the keys up in his room and lock the door. [*Laughs*]

SL: So . . .

PP: So they had problems, but it was so funny because, as I say, they were so idolized and for good reason. Their . . .

[02:22:35] SL: So their family had the Prairie Grove Telephone Company?



PP: Yes, it was started by Donald's mother's father, who was a doctor, Dr. McCormick. And his brother was a pharmacist, and he was across the street. And the doctor got so tired of running [*laughs*] back and forth across the street that he hooked up a

line between his office and the pharmacy, and that's how it got started. And it . . .

SL: One line.

PP: . . . and then it grew from the—you know, others adding on and others adding on. And he was such a smart doctor and did so much for Prairie Grove, starting so many businesses, as well as being a doctor who rode on horseback and made house calls even over into Indian Territory, you know, which was Oklahoma, but at . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . that time it was Indian Territory. And so, but then the hi—the—you know, finally more and more people wanted a telephone, and they added it on, and the telephone company was started. And it was upstairs above a building on Main Street and all these big wires—what would I say—the big—with the wires in 'em.

SL: Transformers?

PP: No, not a transfor—but anyhow, all—they were all [*laughs*] coming through a window [*laughs*] upstairs. It was really funny. And then there was a switchboard.

SL: Yeah.

[02:24:09] PP: And they had an opera—they had a night operator,

and her name was Maggie. So one day—one evening she came to work, and they had a new one of these black things through the window. And she thought, "Well, when did they string that line?" And it was a black snake.

SL: Oh my gosh!

PP: And people would call Maggie, and they knew, you know, sh—I don't know. I guess she could—became familiar with their voices because one time there was a Chicago operator and was tryin' to get a call through and had to go through Prairie Grove, but it wasn't to end here. It was to go on beyond. But it got stopped here, but she had the key open. So what the ca—what the Chicago operator heard was—the key went down and a—and Maggie answered, "Operator," I guess. And the voice said, "Hi, Maggie. What time is it?" And Maggie told her, and she said, "Ring Mama, please." Just "Ring Mama." Who could it be? But Maggie knew. [*SL laughs*] She knew who . . .

SL: Knew the voice [*unclear words*].

PP: . . . who her mama was and rang her.

SL: Yeah.

[02:25:13] PP: One time my mother called after Donald and I married, and my mother called, and nobody was there, and so, [*laughs*] Maggie or whoever the operator was at the time said,

"Ms. Murphy," said, "She apparently isn't home. Why don't you try the Boston Store in Fayetteville?" [*Laughs*] My favorite store.

SL: Yeah, sure.

PP: I was there.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh no.

PP: And I said, "How on earth did you know?" And Mother got tickled, and she said, "Well, that's where they told me to try." [*Laughs*] Well, that's a small town for you.

SL: Well, yeah, telephone operator . . .

PP: But . . .

SL: . . . knows everybody. Were there . . .

[02:25:50] PP: And another thing that was really, really funny, and I'm—if—we may have to just mess up this tape, but we had a party, and this girl was so smart, and she had figured out how to do something, and this was a game that we played at the party. And I can't remember exactly how it got started, but she would ring, and, oh, and she would say, "Maggie, ring the wizard."

SL: The wizard?

PP: The wizard.

SL: Okay.

PP: And you would be think—you would have drawn a card from a

deck of cards, and let's say it was the ace of spades. No, let's say it was the jack of spades. And so, she would ring the wizard, and the wizard would take down the receiver and start saying, "Spades," and if that was the suit that it was then the operator—let me see. Oh, no. No, no. The one on the other end of the line that had drawn would say, "Mr. Wizard, what card am I holding?" Oh, I can't remember how they did this. But anyhow, and then after you started down the four choices of what—which one it was and then you would start with the ace, the queen, the, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . the jack, the ten . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . and go down until you were interrupted. But Maggie had to be in—or the operator had to—no, it was Maggie 'cause at night and—had to be in on this, but nobody could figure out how Mr. Wizard could say the card that had been drawn at this party at the house. And the wizard was Donald's mother.

SL: Oh! [*Laughs*]

[02:27:53] PP: But it was that—nobody ever figured it out, and I can't explain it exactly perfectly, but it was really set up [*SL laughs*] funny.

SL: Ah, that's a funny family.

PP: Well, and for his mother to do this . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . to play along with it, was really cute. But anyhow, they . . .

[02:28:12] SL: Where did he propose to you?

PP: Well, oh, this—oh, this is funny, too. [*SL laughs*] Well, we had dated all summer. And then at Arkansas College I had met this boy, and we [*laughs*] called him Luscious Lucian. His name was Lucian Abraham.

SL: M'kay.

PP: And we called him Luscious Lucian. And all the girls wanted to have a date with Luscious Lucian. But Luscious didn't go to Arkansas College. He came to Fayetteville and went to the university.

SL: Kay.

[02:28:50] PP: So when—even when I thought I was going back to Arkansas College and didn't—but Luscious had come to Fayetteville, and he called me for a date. And even though Don—we hadn't said we were going steady. We just ended up not dating anybody else. But we hadn't said anything about it, and we were—and when we first started dating, I said, "Now, I'm not gonna get serious here 'cause I don't—I am not ready



and don't want to get married," and he said, "Me, too." [*SL laughs*] So we were safe with each other.

SL: Yeah.

[02:29:21] PP: So [*SL laughs*] Luscious called me, and I wanted to go to the county fair, and Donald, being older, he'd passed by the county fair [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . time when he thought that was charming. So he wouldn't take me. But when Luscious called, he said, "I wondered if you'd like to go to the county fair with me." "Ooh, yes. [*SL laughs*] Would I ever!" [*SL laughs*] And so, off we went to the county fair.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And this is the only boy I dated, now, except Donald, all through the summer. But I thought, "Boy, when I get back to Arkansas College [*gasps*], every girl on campus is gonna be so envious of me 'cause I had a date with Luscious." And his family was quite well to do, which doesn't explain anything, but they were. And he lived in a big house across from the girls' dormitory. So we were on those rides. That's what we went for, you know, was not to see the—anything but do the rides. And so, it was one of these that turns you upside down.

SL: Oh, okay.

PP: I don't know whether it was the Loop-O-Plane, but something like that, you know, where we were turned up—absolutely upside down. And—which always would make me feel kinda sick.

SL: Sure.

[02:30:37] PP: But anyhow, when we got—what happened was that all the change fell out of Luscious Lucian's trousers [*SL laughs*] onto the ground. So when we got off of the [*laughs*]*—off of this ride, whatever it was, he had to scoot under it to find his change because that's all the money he had.*

SL: Okay.

PP: And why, with his family bein' so well to do, I don't know. But anyhow, that was it. And if we didn't find that money, our carnival was over.

SL: Yeah.

PP: So he was under there lookin' for it, and here came some of my girlfriends. And they said, "Hey, Peggy! [*SL laughs*] What're you doin'?" "Well, just, you know, havin' fun at the carnival." "Well, are you alone?" "No." "Uh—well, who are you—do you have a date?" "Yes." "Well, where is he?" "Well, he's"—ugh! I mean, that was too embarrassing! So I said, "He's gone to get a Coke." [*Laughter*] I think they saw him.

SL: Yeah.

PP: I do. Well, anyhow, so Luscious Lucian found his money and with whatever amount we—he had left, you know, we enjoyed it . . .

SL: You spent it.

PP: . . . I suppose. And I was spending the night with a friend of mine who lived only a couple of blocks from my home, and so, he took me there and left. [02:31:58] And then the next day I had a date with Donald on Sunday afternoon. And I watched him come up the walk, and I thought, "Oh, Peggy, you idiot." Contrasting his maturity and his good looks and his kind of suave manner and all compared to Luscious Lucian, who was my age. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PP: Do you see what I mean?

SL: Yeah.

PP: The contrast was just so great, and where Donald had never actually said, "Will you marry me"—he certainly never got down on one knee. He certainly didn't put a diamond in a glass of champagne, you know, and—where I would drink it and then come to the diamond or anything like that. It wasn't. But he would say—but he would—he'd be very subtle about it, you

know, hoping someday we could get married. Kinda feeling me out.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

PP: And . . .

SL: Asking but not really asking.

PP: But not really asking. Not being formal about it but still letting me know this is how he felt. [02:33:03] So then when he picked me up that afternoon and we had a date and went out to dinner that night, and I said, "Oh, Donald." [*Laughs*] I told him about the night before 'cause he was really shocked that I had another date. He was really shocked. And he said something—he said, "Well, you know, I know we've never said anything about going steady, but I kinda thought we were." And so, then he sa—because he said, "I'm—really been thinking about it." And course, he was of the age when he needed, honestly, to be thinkin' about getting married to somebody. And when he said that, I said, "I will marry you." So it was like that. It was just—but isn't it strange. You know, you think about how things work out and really and truly when he was—during his long illness before he died, and I would—I think he knew me the whole time. I'm not sure. [02:34:01] But he—when he was in long-term care at City Hospital. And I would go up every day, and I'd take

him out on the porch or outside on the whee—in the wheelchair and I would kinda comb his hair and things like—and I'd say, "Donald, there is—I would never have married anybody but you." And I really think that's true. So somehow, I guess, you know, God had to work this out [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . to make me completely sure that this was the right one, and it was.

[02:34:35] SL: So you guys get married, and do you move to Prairie Grove?

PP: Yes, yes. We got married. We had a church ceremony, and it was wonderful, and it was a packed church because—two families. This one so, you know, well thought of in Prairie Grove. I mean, from—Dr. McCormick was one of the first settlers. Built the—one of the largest houses in town, and it probably was the largest at the time—a really lovely, lovely home. And started so many businesses. He was involved in just almost every business. There was—it was a small town and s—and not too many businesses. But he was very, very involved and smart. He laid out the road si—Highway 62 from Fayetteville to Prairie Grove. He laid it out. He didn't do it, but he laid it out for the highway department. But they were so well thought of here.

And then my family church, you know, that's where we were married, so it was a big, big—but it wasn't a fancy wedding. I only had one attendant, my sister Betty. The colors were white and gold. I had a long—a beautiful, long, white dress and headdress, and I carried a white Bible with white flowers. Betty had a gold dress made just exactly like mine and a gold hairpiece. And Barry was Donald's best man. And then we had a reception in the church parlors.

[02:36:15] SL: Now, you could tell the difference between Barry and Don.

PP: Well, one time I really thought they'd switched because we knew, at Ferncliff, we knew some twin girls, and they did do this, and they just got the biggest kick out of it [*SL laughs*] and thought it was so funny. And so, I really thought they—and I said, "Are you really Donald?" "Well, of course!" "You're really not Barry playin' a trick on me?" "Of course not!" Oh, they wouldn't have done that for all the gold in Fort Knox. I mean! But just because these girls had played a trick and because they did look so much alike, I really thought that one—I mean, I—whether he was acting different—I don't know. But I really was suspicious.

SL: [*Laughs*] But you never—but they didn't, or you just believe

they didn't or . . .

PP: They never did.

SL: They never did.

PP: They never would have.

SL: Okay.

PP: And you know, it was so funny about not wantin' to go on that Fourth of July picnic, but how many times do you think I've thanked my mother over that? [*SL laughs*]

SL: That's true.

PP: I don't know that we would've ever met. I don't know that we would have ever—our paths would have ever crossed. Now, there was a cousin or maybe it was a distant c—everybody in Prairie Grove was kin.

SL: Yeah.

PP: I mean, everybody was cousin so-and-so or aunt so-and-so. And—but there was this one boy who was in college with me, and he was gonna ask me for a date and never did. Now, I'd never met him. I mean, I don't—I didn't know that. I didn't know that till much, much later. So—but that was my only—and then Donald's cousin that I had met when we came down to Prairie Grove. But as far as having our paths cross, I don't think they would've. I think I owe it all to my mother. [*Laughs*]

SL: Gettin' you up.

PP: Oh, I . . .

SL: Wakin' you up.

PP: . . . didn't want to go. I didn't want to go. And you see, when you get to a certain age and you look back and you see how things went to get—you know somebody's got to have a plan 'cause it wasn't my plan.

[02:38:16] SL: Well, now, had Donald finished his high—his college?

PP: He didn't go back.

SL: Didn't go back.

PP: So then—well, and the reason—here they were running the theater. And then James Fay wanted them to come to Chicago, and then he went to Hollywood and he really—and oh, Donald's father just—oh, he just would've died if they had moved out there. He—I—his mother and father. So—and they had—they were, as I say, such good boys. Never, ever caused any problem. [02:38:54] And the—it was interesting, too, because they had James Fay and then—and you realize back then that babies were born at home with no anesthetic, and the doctor came to the house and delivered.

SL: Yeah.

PP: So Dr. McCormick delivered James Fay. And then when Mother



Parks became pregnant again, he told this doctor here in town—he said, "I just can't go through this again, watchin' your own daughter, you know, go through the labor." It was hard and because—oh, they loved each other. Dr. McCormick was just crazy about Myrtle, his daughter, Myrtle. So the other doctor came when it was time for the delivery, and if Dr. McCormick had come to assist him, it would've been wonderful, but he didn't. He trusted the doctor. And he had off—given him good tips, you know, now and then about certain things. But anyhow, the baby—he—it was hard—it was a hard delivery. And he used forceps to help him . . .

SL: Extract.

PP: . . . extract the child, and he crushed the baby's head.

SL: Oh!

PP: And the baby died.

SL: Oh!

[02:40:24] PP: And Mother Parks, who was such a strong Christian, I didn't think anything would ever, ever, ever be more than what she thought she should bear, but this was. I mean, I—she told me about it. I didn't—I wasn't around at the time. But she had a nervous breakdown, and she said she could hardly stand for Jim, her husband, to go out and gather the eggs in the

henhouse. I mean, just to leave the house. So Dr. McCormick had the telephone company and then Jim Parks—well, they said Myrtle was so crazy about him she was determined [*laughs*] to marry Jim Parks. And her mother didn't think Jim Parks was quite on their level. But they were s—oh, they were such a loving couple. And so, anyhow, after this, she said she had a nervous breakdown. [02:41:18] And then—so then five years later, that was three years after James Fay, so then five years later, she became pregnant again. And Jim Parks called everybody that he knew, literally, and told 'em that he was gonna have twins. [*SL laughs*] And they said, "Twin cows?" And he said, "No! Twin boys!" And so, when the time came for the delivery, course, Dr. McCormick came and delivered Barry first. And then he said, "Myrtle, there's going to be another one." And she said, "I don't think I can do it." And he said, "It won't be like the first one. It won't take as long." And sure enough, it didn't, and that was Donald. The second one was Donald. And they looked at Mr. Parks and thought for sure he was gonna faint. [*SL laughs*] He had—he'd told everybody he was gonna have twin boys, and then he had twin boys, and what'd he do? Couldn't believe it. [*SL laughs*] And there they were.

SL: There they were.

PP: And he was just about to faint away. Oh, it was just a funny story. But [*SL laughs*] and then Donald's grandmother, the wife of the doctor, left the house. Oh, she was upset! She said, "Only animals have multiple births."

SL: What is that?

PP: Well, she was such a grand lady. And . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

PP: . . . it didn't seem that those two were—honestly, that Dr. McCormick and his wife really went together. Now, he died be—I never did know him, unfortunately. But I did know her, and she [*laughs*] wasn't the grandmother grandmother that you might think of, but she adored those boys. Adored 'em. After that, after she said that and said, "Only animals have multiple births." She adored those boys. [*SL laughs*] Oh my goodness. And as I say, they were quite a sensation in the town but never, ever, ever, ever caused any kind of trouble.

SL: Yeah.

[02:43:29] PP: Anywhere. But—so Jim Parks was running the telephone company, and then after they didn't go back to college, they started workin' for the—it was—you know, they had that option, always, of working with their dad in . . .

SL: Sure.

PP: . . . the telephone company.

SL: Yeah.

PP: So then he ran it until—and he died in nineteen—say, 1953, maybe. We were married in [19]49.

SL: Kay.

[02:43:53] PP: I adored that man. Oh, I hated to lose him. And he had been out playing Pitch, which he did every Saturday night, and he came in, and Mother Parks was sick with the flu and not feeling well at all. And he came in whistling, you know, because he'd had a good time playin' Pitch. And she said she thought to herself, "Oh, thank God that Jim is so well," 'cause she wasn't feeling well at all.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And he got up early the next morning and was in the bathroom and collapsed. And so, she called Donald, and she said, "Something's happened to Daddy." And Donald—we just lived a block apart. Our backyards sort of—not—well, almost came together. And so, he came up, and then I was scared, and I got—he had the car, and I had a car and—or maybe I walked up. I'm not sure. But anyhow, I came up, and David was asleep. He was two, and he was asleep in his crib. And I thought, you

know, "He'll sleep through all of this 'cause he doesn't get up this early." This was real early in the morning. And then it really was serious, and she had called the doctor, and he hadn't come. And I said, "I'll go get him." So I got in the car and went to Dr. Frank's, and he said, "I'm so glad you came to get me." He said, "I am so mad at Rodney!" His son. He said, "I've told him never, ever, ever to park behind me." And his car—and Rodney had the keys and was sleeping—did I tell you this? And was sleeping in the—above the garage. And so, Dr. Frank . . .

SL: Oh, that's right. He'd been out all night or something and—that's right.

[02:45:40] PP: So—but anyhow, he came in, and he said, "Myrtle, there's nothing that can be done." And I said, "Can't you do something?" And he said, "Actually, no, but even if I could, I wouldn't because there's no way I can bring him back to" . . .

SL: Where he was.

PP: . . . "the Jim Parks that you know and love. He would not speak, and he would be bedridden and couldn't speak." He said, "Can you imagine Jim Parks not speaking?"

SL: Yeah.

[02:46:08] PP: And so, then I had a nervous breakdown.

SL: Oh!

PP: I mean, oh gosh, this just hurt me so badly. And this was the week before Easter. It was on Palm Sunday. And then I heard that little noise at the back door, and David had waked up. And he was two years old and went next door and couldn't rouse them and then walked up to Grandmother's house in those little footed pajamas. [SL laughs] And the screen door was locked, and he knocked on the door. And I said, "Oh, David!" And I tried to explain to him. And course, I was crying because Jim Parks was dying, and it was a difficult time. [02:46:53] I didn't have a nervous breakdown right then, but other circumstances contributed to it. And I really did. I mean, it wasn't a breakdown that had to be—but I did end up in the hospital for a few days. I couldn't keep anything down. I mean, everything—I was vomiting and had diarrhea, and they couldn't stop it.

SL: You were really upset.

PP: I was really upset. Really hurt. Really couldn't understand things. And I think that Jim Parks was probably seventy-six.

SL: Yeah.

PP: But he was so vigorous and such a kinda commanding person and fun and interested and lo—just loved life. How could he—how could this happen?

[02:47:45] SL: Well, did they think that he had a stroke, or he just

slipped and fell or . . .

PP: They said it was a cerebral hemorrhage.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And then, course, when that happens in the brain, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . that's it. And the doctor said, Dr. Frank Riggall, said, "I hope I go just like him." And I kinda think he did. I think that his was sudden like that. It's really hard on the family. Really wonderful for the person who doesn't suffer. And you don't have to see them—watch them suffer or be diminished by dementia or—you know. They're just always gonna be alert and alive and loving life, just the way you remembered 'em, and that's the way they'll be in your memory.

[02:48:35] SL: So how did Don do?

PP: Well, it really crushed him, both of 'em, both Donald and Barry. Course, then they called Barry, and it really, really hurt them, really hurt them. And I kept saying, "But you've got to call James Fay in California." And so, Donald finally did when he could gather himself together.

SL: Sure.

PP: And talked to **Janet**, and James Fay was in New York, and he was sick in New York in a hotel. And he was there for an NBC

meeting but got sick. And so, we couldn't plan the funeral until he felt better and could fly down here. And it was—I don't know. And then the newspaper wrote a—in their editorial space, you know, a tribute to Jim Parks. He was well known, not just in Prairie Grove, but in the county and particularly . . .

SL: You mean the Fayetteville paper?

PP: In the Fayetteville paper. Yeah. Of course, we've only—in Prairie Grove we only just had a weekly paper. Always. But anyhow, it was a sad time for a lot of people. But then I just remember Mother Parks when Dr. Frank said, "He's gone." And she just leaned down and kissed him on the lips. And she said, "Jim, I didn't wanna lose you." But she was very brave after that, very brave for all of us. [02:50:16] And of course, it was so hard for me 'cause he adored David. Just adored him. And was just crushed because we didn't name him Jim Parks. Now, not James but just Jim Parks.

SL: Jim Parks. [*Laughs*]

PP: Well, we would have except that James Fay had had a son, and they named him James Parks . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . and called him Jim. And course, James Fay was his name.

SL: Right.



PP: And so, he had a right to name his boy James after himself and then after his father.

SL: Sure.

[02:50:47] PP: So I told 'em—I said, "I just didn't think that was right," and I thought they would resent it, you know, with two grandsons—even though if one was named James but called Jim and the other was just named Jim. But then when Joe and Jerre had a son, guess what they named him? [*SL laughs*] James.

SL: James.

PP: And called Jim. But he—but that Jim was not at all like his grandfather, and David would've been so much like the twins and would've—you know, everybody would've really noticed the similarity. But . . .

[02:51:27] SL: Now, refresh me again. As far as Jim goes, was it Jim that was the entrepreneur that . . .

PP: No, it was Dr. McCormick. It was . . .

SL: It was Dr. McCormick.

PP: . . . Myrtle Parks's father . . .

SL: Oh.

PP: . . . who did—no, Jim ran the telephone company. But Dr. McCormick was just involved in just everything. And he, as I say, would ride horseback into Indian Territory to take care of

patients. He was one of these really, really brainy people that—you know, it was fortunate he was a doctor because [*laughs*] they hadn't had a doctor like this in Prairie Grove.

SL: Maybe ever.

PP: Well, I don't think any would have matched him from what I've heard. But for him to have started so—like a canning company. I mean, there's a whole list of things that he started, and it gave jobs to so many people, too. [02:52:36] And—but then being such a prominent doctor and then when the Drs. Riggall, Dr. Cecil and Dr. Frank came, there was a division in the town because these were furriners. They were from England and were—got their training, their schooling, their medical training in Canada.

SL: Right.

PP: And then came down here and happened to land in Prairie Grove and built a hospital, a really remarkable hospital, which was open, and lots of people from Fayetteville would come down here to that. And the Riggalls were well known throughout the county for being very, very smart doctors. [02:53:26] But then when Medicare came along in the early [19]60s, maybe [19]62, and it required nur—registered nurses on duty 24/7.

SL: Wow, that's expensive.

PP: That was why they had to close. They had regular—they had registered nurses during the day but not during the night.

SL: Right. LPNs.

PP: Uh-huh. So . . .

BP: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: We're out—time for tape change?

BP: Yes, sir.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:53:56] SL: Okay, so this is tape eight.

BP: Yes, sir.

SL: This is fun. Did you ever think that you'd talk eight hours?

PP: No. [*Laughter*] I think every—other people have thought I could easily talk eight hours. [*Laughter*]

SL: But you know what? It's fun, isn't it?

PP: It is.

SL: I mean, we've had—think of all these stories you've told us now.

PP: Well, I, you know, I would tell anybody on the street I've had a wonderful life. I really have. So yes, it's fun to talk about.

[02:54:24] SL: Okay, now, we were talking about kind of life out here in Prairie Grove. We—we've kind of moved out of

Fayetteville now, and now we're in Prairie Grove, and it's a sm—

much smaller community.

PP: Yes.

SL: And everybody knows everybody.

PP: Yes.

SL: And we were talkin' about Dr. McCormick and Jim Parks, and we knew that—you talked about how Dr. McCormick was a great entrepreneur and had his fingers in a lot of things in this area and that Jim worked for him at the phone company. I guess he—did he run the phone company for him?

PP: Well, he was—he started out, I think, as an operator and then—and gradually took it—took over.

[02:55:13] SL: Uh-huh. Well, so after—what happened after Jim's death with the phone company?

PP: Well, the boys had been working for—and they had been building lines, actually. Just actually setting the poles and stringing the wires and all of that—working out. They'd take their lunch every day and eat their lunch out. Really enjoyed that kind of work. The people in the community were fabulous. They wanted telephones so badly that sometimes there would be an argument across the highway over who was going to give them land—not sell 'em land, give them land, to build the line so they could get telephones out in a more rural area. They had—I—they enjoyed

being out—working outdoors. They enjoyed taking their lunch. Course, they would work up such an appetite. I suppose everything tasted—and it's a wonderful—wonder we didn't kill 'em with—sendin' 'em with tuna fish sandwiches and [*laughs*]—you know, in the heat of the day.

SL: Right, right.

[02:56:31] PP: But they really loved that kind of work, and they were very careful and—about it. They weren't halfway about it. They did it right. They only had one person, actually, who helped 'em all the time. They had a terrible, terrible ice storm in forty—January of [19]49, and it, oh, it wasn't just the telephone company. They—out of all of their telephones that they had, there were only a very few of 'em still in—still working. I was working at the electric company at the time. But they called in crews from Shreveport and south Arkansas, many little towns in south Arkansas, and called in crews to help them. Course, electricity's another thing. You know, you've got to have that. So—to get their service back. It was just a trem—it was days and days of freezing rain and ice. It just piled up.

[02:57:38] SL: Well, now, did the telephone lines share the electrical poles?

PP: Yes.

SL: Okay.

PP: And someti—yes. And sometimes—but of course, out in rural areas they were setting poles. But it was a devastating time. And course, the ice broke the poles and brought down the lines—naturally, brought down the lines because it was so—the ice was so heavy. And this is right before we were to get—this was in January before we were to marry in September.

SL: Okay.

PP: And course, I knew what it was like because I was workin' for the electric company. And like, we were working six days a week, you know, just the office crew, much less the crews that went out and—you know, to replace the service. [02:58:30] But I remember that Mr. Dyess—well, we didn't agree on politics, and I guess in the election of [19]48—and I really thought—and bet—and we bet money. I think we bet a nickel. [SL laughs] I bet on Harry Truman, and he was just crushed. I mean! When Harry Truman won, it was—he, you know, he spent all day—he paid off his bet on my desk and went to his office and locked himself in, and we didn't see him the rest of the day. [SL laughs] But he came up to me, and I think maybe he was tryin' to get back at me for winning that bet. Because Harry Truman, he didn't have much use for. But he said

somehin' about he thought I'd better start lookin' for another fellow to marry because that whoop-and-holler system was on the ground, and they didn't see how they could, two boys and one helper, could ever get it back.

[02:59:31] SL: Whoop-and-holler system?

PP: Whoop and holler. And he's such a refined man, you know, and such a good friend. I couldn't believe that he would really say—and I guess he was teasing. But it sounded—and course, the whole thing was just horrible. And it did take 'em six weeks to do it—of hard—really workin' seven days a week to get that—all of that restored but they did. And it was quite something for them to be able to get all those telephones working again. And then, course, their father was still alive then.

SL: Yeah.

[03:00:11] PP: Now, he died in the early [19]50s, [19]53—[19]52 or [19]53. And when he died—by that time they'd hired some people to build the outside lines. And so, Donald—I guess they just decided that they would each take part of the business, you know, and they would run—each run one part of the business. So Donald ran the office, and Barry ran the outside plant, and that worked out really well because they each knew their place. They each had authority. They each, you know, managed a part

of it, and to split it up that way really worked out very well.

[03:00:51] SL: Well, now, were they still working for Dr.

McCormick?

PP: No, by this time he had died.

SL: And so . . .

PP: See, I never knew him.

[03:00:59] SL: Did Jim buy the company . . .

PP: Well . . .

SL: How'd that—how did y'all come . . .

PP: Well, course, he married Myrtle, who was Dr. McCormick's daughter, see?

SL: I see.

PP: So it just passed down.

SL: I see. Okay. Okay. I'd forgotten that. All right.

[03:01:16] PP: And so, then the boys came along, and when James Fay wanted them to come into the movie business or, you know, that kind of business in Chicago or Hollywood, of course, Jim Parks was just sick 'cause I know he was thinking of the company . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . and who would run it if they left. Well, it turned out to be the right thing to do for them to stay here and run the company.





Did a good job, really good job. So Donald and Barry decided between the two of 'em that they were going to be the first telephone company in the state of Arkansas to have one-party systems. You know, no party lines for all of their customers. And their customers were in Devil's Den and Skylight Mountain—difficult places. But everybody was going to have a single line. No more party lines. And by golly, they did it. They were the first company in the state of Arkansas to have one-party lines for all of their customers. And they did this without a rate increase.

SL: Wow.

[03:02:22] PP: And I wrote, and I'd like for you to see this story, I wrote a letter to the editor, and I didn't even know who it was, to the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*—not the *Democrat-Gazette* but the *Arkansas Gazette*. And I started the letter off by saying, "Boy, have I got a good story for you." [SL laughs] And you know, that really caught his eye be—and I went on to say that "I know how fair you are. When you have two sides of a story, you always manage to print both sides instead of takin' a biased look and printing only one side." And I said, "When—every time I pick up the paper, I read about the utilities in Little Rock, AP&L and Southwestern Bell and"—what was the gas company?

Louisiana Gas . . .

SL: Arkansas Western Gas and Louisiana. Yeah.

PP: Loui—I think down there. "Are asking for a cost-of-living rate increase and it—and you know, saying, 'We've got to have it because'"—and course, they have to go to the Public Service Commission. When they want a rate increase, they have to get permission from the Public Service Commission. But if you say, "This is cost of living. We've got to have it, or they're not gonna have service because we can't provide it at this particularly low price." And I said, "But here we are. We're a family-owned telephone company started by my husband's grandfather by stringing a line across Main Street from his office to his brother's pharmacy, and that's how it started probably in, like, 1888. And it's still in the family. Still owned by the family. And they have just now become the first telephone company in the state of Arkansas to have one-party service for all of their customers. And they did it without a single rate increase, and they don't need a rate increase now. And I don't know about this cost-of-living, you know, need for rate increases because we're such a small company and spread out, you know, on a—in a territory that is"—you have an allocated territory at that time. And I said, "We're down at Devil's Den and up on Skylight Mountain and all that rugged terrain, and yet that's where our

customers are, and that's—those are the people that we serve."  
So I said, "And if you would want to do a story on the Prairie  
Grove Telephone Company, I would like to ask if Mike Trimble,  
the best feature writer in the state of Arkansas—if you would  
send him to do the story." [03:05:34] Well, the letter ended up  
on the desk of Carrick Patterson . . .

SL: Okay.

PP: . . . who was the editor of the paper. Now, we had an Uncle  
Hugh Patterson who ran Ferncliff, and I think there's a  
connection, but I'm not sure. But somehow when he retired  
that's what they did. They sent him out there, and he loved it,  
and everybody loved Uncle Hugh. But anyhow, this was Carrick  
Patterson. So he wrote me a letter, which I have, and he said,  
"Dear Miss Parks. Thank you for sending us your newsy letter  
about your telephone company. And we would like to do a story  
on your company and if possible, if we can—if Mike Trimble is  
free at that time, yes, we will send him up to do the story. And  
Miss Parks, if the way you write letters is a good example of the  
way you write, how—would you consider writing feature articles  
for the [*laughter*] *Arkansas Gazette*?"

SL: Neat.

[03:06:52] PP: Well, that was a happy moment. So sure enough, it

wasn't too long before they called and said they were going to come and do an interview and that Mike Trimble was coming. So he wrote the most precious story. He didn't have any background knowledge about telephone companies. Didn't have a clue about 'em—how they were run, how they operated, what kind of money they made. And he came up, and he started his story by saying—well, after he came in and introduced himself—said, "Both boys had to run home and put on ties [*laughs*] 'cause I was gonna take pictures." And—but anyhow, they told him all about the company, how it was started and how—you know, and then their father running it, and now they were, you know, running it. And he didn't take a single note.

SL: Wow.

PP: Didn't have any background for it. Took a lot of pictures and went home. And then we waited. The story didn't come out for two or three weeks, and we kind of wondered. You know, did he forget everything he learned, or were they not gonna use the story or what? But—and this is interesting. [03:08:13] On our wedding anniversary, on September the sixth—was a Sunday. And in that special section of the paper, the second section of the paper, was this wonderful article, and it said—I can't remember. I'll show it to you. Like, "Prairie Grove Telephone

Company Takes Care of Its Telephonist." They used the word telephonist. Well, I had never heard—I thought they made it up, but it actually was a word. And here was that—a lot—big pictures and this incredible story. And it came out on a Sunday, and they figured this would be the best time for people to receive such a big article.

SL: Sure.

[03:08:57] PP: You know, that . . .

SL: It is.

PP: . . . they'd have time to read it. And by Sunday night the boys heard from Governor Clinton [*laughter*], our United States senators. You know, they had read it and laughed and been pleased over this story and really, really pleased that Arkansas would receive that kind of publicity. It was just a precious thing.

SL: Put you all on the map, didn't it?

PP: Really did. It really, really did. And it was such a contrast to those other stories that they had been running. And to think of this little bitty, family-owned [*laughs*] telephone company doing what they had, giving better service to their customers in rural areas than, you know, Ma Bell could do. So anyhow, it—with the division of the authority, that really worked out for both of them because they both had their—the outside plant was so different.

You know, that was the building, the installation. [03:10:01]  
However, one time Barry—and this was kind of typically Barry—not all the time—but he went a house to—they had ordered their phone. They were moving, and they had ordered their phone to be taken out, and they'd already moved to their new place. And he went in this house, but the couple was still there for some reason. But anyhow, he chatted with 'em and took out the phone and left and went to the new place to put in the phone. And there was a couple. And he said, "But I just took out your phone," and they said, "You didn't take out our phone. You've got it in your hands. And are you gonna install it for us here?" And he thought, "Oh dear!" And so, what he had done—he'd taken out their own phone [*laughs*], so he had to go back. And he said to the couple—they were sittin' there. They watched—and they said, "Why didn't you tell me that, you know, you didn't order your phone?" And they said, "Well, we thought you knew what you were doin'." [*Laughter*] So anyhow, he replaced the phone and then . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . went down and then hooked up the other phone. But [*laughs*] this was the sort of story that somehow—I don't know how he would end up doing things like that, but it was always a

funny story. [03:11:20] But it worked out, and Donald was—he was so good. He's very thorough, and he's very—and David is the same way. He's very organized. Everything is in its own folder, every little bit of business, so that you can look up things in just an instant. If you're looking for facts, figures, amounts, whatever. And he did such a good job, and he was so conscientious about it. And to save money he would go down on the weekends and mow the grass and would also clean the office, so they didn't have to pay someone to come in and clean. Donald was very thorough about everything that he did. Now, he wouldn't go home and clean our house [*SL laughs*] while I was teachin' school, which would—you know, I would've loved that.

SL: Right.

[03:12:14] PP: But [*SL laughs*] this was his particular responsibility, and I guess he thought home was my responsibility. Anyhow, he really worked hard, and he was really proud of it and really—they would go out anytime and fix a phone. They guaranteed twenty-four-hours phone—if your phone was out. Course, if it went out during the day, they'd get it fixed. But if it went out in the night, they would still go out. And this is one thing Barry would do. He would go out at night and fix a phone. You know,

sometimes in rural areas they have emergencies or sickness.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Accidents.

SL: The phone's the only . . .

PP: And they need the phone.

SL: Yeah.

[03:13:00] PP: So they really were very conscientious about their service for very low rates and didn't see any need to ask f—go to the Public Service Commission so finally the Public Service Commission—someone down there said—and then we heard this story—they told us this story. ?Don? said, "Well, what about the Prairie Grove Telephone Company?" And they hadn't heard anything. And they looked in the file, and nothing was there. No complaints. None. And somebody said, "You better go up there and see what's happened." And they came up and found a fully running telephone company with no complaints. And it's—they were just—they just marveled at it, you know, that nobody—because that would be the thing that they would threaten to do to—"We'll report this to the public servi—if you don't come out and get it fixed or if our service is not satisfactory." But they always took care of those things, and so, it very much impressed the Public Service Commission. So



things went along and very, very smoothly. [03:14:13] And then when David—he didn't graduate at that time when he first started working. And he started reading meters, or he started—what did he do? He was working outside and really liked it. I say reading meters. That's not the way they worked. But anyhow, he had said when he was little he wasn't gonna work for the telephone company. He was gonna be a big-city operator. But then he fel—but then somebody convinced him—one of his friends, Joe, convinced him. He said, "You—I don't think you realize how lucky you are to just have this fall into your lap to run a company. You know, when Donald and Barry are ready to retire, you're gonna be it. And if it's not gonna be you, who is it gonna be?" And he began to think, "You know, well, this isn't something that I should disregard. I ought—I need to think th—about this seriously." And decided he would stay with the company and learn all about it that he needed to. And fortunately, he started from the ground up.

SL: The ground up . . .

PP: So he knew about . . .

SL: . . . so he knew the operation.

PP: Yes, the things that happen outside, as well as in. And he is like his father. He's very meticulous, very detailed, wonderful

records, just—you know, you just wouldn't think, maybe, that people would keep such perfect records, but they both did.

[03:15:54] SL: So Barry didn't have any children?

PP: Yes, but he has two girls. And then we had one boy. And they're very close. The three of 'em are close, and their homes are—there's a com—sort of a compound situation of land that Don and Barry wrote—bought together and decided they were gonna develop into a housing development, but they never did. So those three children live in this area and ha—is—has large expanse. It's a wonderful place. And David's house is here [indicates placement], and Karen's house is here, and Susan's house is here. And so, it's been a—those three have—are very, very close.

SL: Good.

PP: It's more like brother-sister than cousins. And now that David is running the company—Donald and Barry are both deceased, and he's running the company. Both girls are on the board. So all the fam—it's still just all family. Well, I mean, we have other people hired, of course. But the main part—part of running it and the board making decisions is still family, just still family.

SL: Well, that's good.

PP: And it's been such a sweet arrangement that it could stay—I just

know Jim Parks is just sayin', "Oh, you know" . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . "what a wonderful, wonderful outcome this has turned out to be." But anyhow, it's—it has improved. [03:17:22] And David, even more than Donald did, has go—he goes—we used to go to conventions and kind of find out things, you know. And Donald got, and Barry'd, got to where they didn't—oh, especially Barry—didn't really want to go to this sorta of thing, but David does. But he finds out. He talks to people. He calls people. He has a very good mind, and he can focus it on, you know, this kind of—what's coming up, what's new, and stay on track so that our company has everything that Ma Bell offers except lower rates. And it's been—I don't know—to see him take over—course, that's a mother's pride, but he's done a really, really good job. [03:18:17] And another thing he did that Donald didn't do. Well, he hired someone to clean the office, and he hired somebody to mow the lawn. [*Laughs*] But he also compartmentalized the work, and so, he has one person head of this unit and one person head of this unit and one person head of this unit. And when there's a problem in the area, they don't come to David like they came to Donald. Whoever was—is the head of that group that's who they complain—now, if that person

can't solve it then he co—he or she comes to Donald—to David. So it really runs like a greased wheel, you know. It's—and—but also, in elevating these people, it made them so proud and made them feel like they had a personal . . .

SL: Stake in the . . .

PP: . . . stake in the company. And Donald had told him all along, "Always hire good people and give them raises and treat them well and keep them because this is a lot cheaper than having to train new people, you know, to fill in the different staffs." And that's what David has done. And he—and they're all like family. We have a Christmas party, and then we have a picnic, you know, in summer or fall, and they all bring all their children. And at the Christmas party, now, we've had to build a new warehouse that's off by itself, and it's a huge—it's a big building, and they keep the trucks out there and things like that. But also, it's so big they have a basketball court there. *[Laughter]* And then when we have our big Christmas party, we always have a catered dinner, and it's huge because they bring all their children, and there are gifts for them. But—and then they get the—all the employees get a raise, a bonus, at Christmastime.

SL: That's good.

PP: And I think they get a raise in the summer, so I think these thi—

are two things that they can, you know, look forward to. And we're keeping our employees till they retire.

SL: That's a good sign.

PP: And that's just wonderful.

[03:20:42] SL: How large is the company? How many do you all employ?

PP: I've forgotten. I could find—I'm—I can find out for you.

SL: Oh well, it's not that . . .

PP: How many, you know, telephones we serve. But—and Prairie Grove and Lincoln are growing, but they're not growing so fast that utilities and the school and all can't keep up with. And it's a slow, steady growth. We are—and we've also had—oh dear, it's gonna get too technical for me, I think. [*Laughs*] We've had sidelines that we're going to not continue. But the company itself has—is just doing well. I think we've—I think we had a little increase, and it wasn't very much, just recently. And maybe it was, like, \$2.60 a month or something. It wasn't much of a—you know, it wasn't a big increase for which we—I think we did have to get permission.

[03:21:47] SL: Well, now, how old was David when you started teaching?

PP: Oh, he was—he—I think he was just before being three. I think

I started in September, and he was three in December is the way I remember it. Yes, he was three. And I was criticized by my so-called friends [*laughs*] who thought it was terrible. Thought I should stay home and raise my child. And—but that was their idea and—but this was me and my feeling. And I had been substituting and had someone to take care of David. And the first year I had a lady take care of David that—it didn't really work. It wasn't a very satisfactory—and it made me wonder if my friends were right. Nothing wrong with what she did. But I did get another lady who just [*laughs*] lived—well, here's a house and a street and then her house. And she could walk back and forth. So she would come down early and then take David over to her house. And I think he called her Nanny. And she was fairly strict with him. [03:23:12] And I asked him once—I said, "Would you rather have had somebody younger that would, you know, have been—and was that all right to have Nanny take you—take care of you?" And he said, "Well, of course." I mean, course, children are like that, maybe. They just adjust.

SL: They're resilient.

PP: But he liked her. He liked her a lot, and she was the mother of a teacher, too, so anyhow, it worked out.

SL: Good.

PP: But she kept him, and that was—he was three, and then he didn't start school until he was six. And so, I guess it was three and a half years that we had somebody. Because he could've started when he was five and would've been six in December, but he would've been one of the youngest . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . in his class.

SL: Right.

[03:23:58] PP: And it turned out that when I was in the hospital having delivered him—and he was a large baby, eight twelve.

SL: Oh!

PP: And I don't know—I mean, this is where I guess they used to use the biceps or something. But anyhow, they had to do a curettement. Anyhow, they had to cut me and stitch me. And I had several stitches, and I know the nurses would say, "Ugh!" You know, and I couldn't get out of bed.

SL: A cesarean.

PP: No, it wasn't cesarean.

SL: It wasn't?

PP: Hm-mm. Hm-mm.

SL: Hmm, okay.

PP: No, it wasn't like that. And so [*laughs*], it was a natural delivery, but they just had to enlarge it.

SL: Uh-huh. Okay.

PP: So then the day I was to leave to take David home, I'd been in the hospital twelve days. And they were—I had to wait. Now, I could've gone home, but it was over Christmas. My mother would've gladly come and stayed with me. Would've loved it. She loved all the new babies. But the—some of the family was coming for Christmas, and it would've spoiled Christmas for everybody. So I elected to stay in the hospital where somebody had to take care of me, as well as the baby. And so [*laughs*], then they brought this girl in. [03:25:24] Now, I had just been in the operating room and had those stitches out and brought back. Never been on my feet in twelve days. And they brought this girl in, and she was seeing spots and things, you know, and she was seven months pregnant. And she didn't think anything was wrong with her, but when she told her mother, her mother said, "You have to go see the doctor." So they brought her in and actually—I was in a double room, but they kept it as if it were a single room as long as I was in there. But they put her in the other bed, knowing I was going to be dismissed. But I had to wait for Donald to get off work to come get me. [*Laughter*]



So they put her there, and then her mother came in, but the doctor came in and examined her, and she told me that she was, you know, seeing these spots and things like this. And I said, "You're gonna have to tell the doctor that." I mean, I [*unclear words*]*—*because my sister Mary had almost had uremic poisoning, and I thought this was what it was. And this is what it was.

SL: Whoa.

[03:26:33] PP: But she didn't think it was anything serious. But anyhow, Dr. Frank came in. Oh, no, no, he just came down to check on her. And he checked her out but as he went—her—the head of her bed was here [*indicates placement*], and mine was here, and here was my head up here. But he was a big man and a tall man, and he blocked her vision. She couldn't see me. And he looked at me, and he went [*shakes head no*], which I knew meant serious. This is serious business. So—and he wanted me to be aware without sayin' anything.

SL: Right.

PP: He didn't say anything to her. [03:27:09] Well, then her mother came in and she—Dr. Frank had gone to lunch, but I was in the end of the hospital, the west end, and his office was on the west end, and he would go in and out the back door. And he

had, because he was a big man, he had a heavy tread. I had heard him just come in from lunch, and the mother was there, and all of a sudden, the girl went into convulsions.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Terrible. I mean, she would've just been off of that bed, and it was a—you know, they're high beds for nurses to tend to you, so it would've been bad and been really bad on the baby . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . for her to fall out of bed like that.

SL: Sure.

PP: But her mother was there and just simply almost had to get on top of her because her arms and legs were flailing . . .

SL: Flailing. Yeah.

PP: . . . and course, you know, her eyes were rolled back in her head. And the mother was just screaming. It scared her to death, and she said, "Get the doctor! Get the doctor!" And because I—and they'd just brought David in to nurse, and David was nursing. I hadn't been on my feet in twelve days. My mother had made me a nightgown out of fairly heavy cotton material and—long nightgown, high neck [*SL laughs*], long sleeves. So I was perfectly protected. And so, I jumped out of bed.

SL: Oh! [*Laughs*]

[03:28:31] PP: David starts screaming. I mean, here he was tryin' to nurse. I took him in my arms. I ran barefooted down the hall, but it's not—was not a long hall and then over, and I said, "Dr. Frank, you've got to come quickly. She's in convulsions." So he did come quickly and look at her, and I was back there just holding David. And then after he had [*SL laughs*] examined her, he came to me, knowing I hadn't been on my feet in twelve days and knowing I had a nursing baby, and he said, "Go down to the nurses' station," which was, you know, at the other end of the hospital. "Go down and tell them to prepare the delivery room for an emergency cesarean." So here I go [*SL laughs*], carryin' the baby. David's still cryin', and then I'm worried about the girl, and I'm worried about the baby. She's going to have an emergency cesarean. What's gonna happen to the baby? So I was sittin' in a chair in the hall. I didn't know what to do. Nobody—well, the nurses were all busy, and maybe they were at—some of them were at lunch. [03:29:46] But anyhow, I was sitting there holding David, and David was crying, and I was crying. And Dr. Frank came down—oh, they wheeled her down, and then her father came. And so, they wheeled her down beside me here and took her into the delivery room, and her

father came and then—and her mother came, following the gurney. And then Dr. Frank came and looked at me and did a double take, and he said, "You might as well be crying for the heathen in China." And he was that way, but he loved us dearly.

[03:30:28] And it was Dr. McCormick, Donald's grandfather, who paved the way for the Riggalls to come because it divided the town. Dr. Mock was here and Dr. Baggett, and they didn't want these two foreign doctors coming in here. And—but Dr. McCormick spoke up for 'em, and so, they did come and build a hospital. So they really loved the McCormick-Parks family.

[Laughs] [03:30:55] So when he said that, he didn't mean to hurt me, but I said, "Will she be okay?" And he said, "The mother will. I don't know about the baby." So then the—he got a nurse, and he said, "Let Peggy have this room right here and get a bottle of water for ba—for David." And so, they did and—but I think I went out and sat with the family. [Laughs] And course—but then he came out—he went in, and then he came back, and he said, "You wanna see a miracle?" And no, I didn't want to see a miracle 'cause I knew what probably he had in mind. And he said, "I have got three minutes. Once I make that incision, I've got three minutes to get that baby out." Well, I was so wobbly on my feet anyhow and if [laughs] . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . if I saw blood or anything, yeah . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

PP: . . . I mean, you can imagine.

SL: Me, too. Yeah.

[03:31:53] PP: So I said, "Well, thank you, Dr. Frank, for thinkin' of me, but I'll take a rain check." [*Laughter*] So he went on in to do it, and then I went out and sat with the family and held David, and then we heard a cry.

SL: Neat.

PP: And so, the baby was alive. We knew that. I didn't know what condition but—so then I went back to the room, and I called a friend, and I said, "Please come and get me if you can. I cannot wait till five o'clock because she's gonna be in here, and she's had a cesarean, and her family is here, and I need to get out of this bed and out of this room." So you know, you just get this—it's like gettin' a second wind. Well, you just get this feeling of strength that you had been so weak you thought you couldn't take two steps, you know, without falling, and all of a sudden, you're running pell-mell. And I packed up my things, still had on just my nightgown, and I didn't dress. But I packed up everything, and my friend came to get me to take me home.

[*Sighs*] So there I was by myself with a baby, and the nursing wasn't taking hold properly. And sometimes that happens.

SL: Yeah.

[03:33:12] PP: So what was I going to do? Well, so I called later at the hospital and wanted to know how the new mother and baby were doing, and they were doing fine. So then I called Dr. Frank, and I said, "I can tell he's not getting enough to eat." So they decided just to go ahead—you know, now they will work with mothers and—you know, to try to get that to work out. But he just decided to start David on formula and did. And—but anyhow, at least he did get—his little tummy got filled up.

SL: Yeah.

PP: They had—I was so glad that they had kept me for so long and kept David for so long because they—he didn't—he—and maybe it was the fact of the nursing wasn't givin' him enough food. But nothing went through him. If he had a bottle of—even of water or what it came back this way. [Indicates vomiting]

SL: Oh.

PP: Nothing moved all the way through, and they thought there was a blockage. And if there was—now, this—he was born on Sunday. I was gonna stay twelve weeks so, you know, I'm . . .

SL: Twelve days.

PP: I have a little cabin there and—but they—he told the nurses to bring David in, and he was in the delivery room and in the operating room, and he took—they took down the diaper, and there was a BM.

SL: Oh! [*Laughs*] That's good.

[03:34:48] PP: And that's what saved him from having to have surgery. So it was—it wasn't an easy time. My mother did come to stay with me when I [*laughs*] did get to go home. And then on Saturday morning my father called. We couldn't understand what he said. We called Mary and told her something had happened—my sister Mary, who lived in Fayetteville—and that she needed to go and check on Daddy. And she called and—she called Dr. Lesh, who lived just, you know, that . . .

SL: Ruth Lesh?

PP: . . . block from us. By the time Mary got to the house on Dickson Street, Dr. Lesh was already there. Course, at that time people didn't lock their doors and . . .

SL: That's right.

PP: . . . he knew something was wrong with Gene Murphy, and he just waltzed right in and was taking care of him. [03:35:42] And he told Mary—he said, "Call your mother," and said, "It's a stroke. But your mother can take care of him." And then,

course, Mary came right down and got Mother, and here I am with a baby, a new baby, and I've just hardly gotten on my feet. And so, the—it was New Year's and ball games.

SL: Oh! All at once.

[03:36:09] PP: And we didn't have a TV, and Donald had been invited to our friend's house, the one who came to get me, two houses down to see the ball games, and he went. And here I am, like, oh! You know, scared to death. I'm just glad he was as big as he was. I mean, you know, if he'd been little bitty, tiny, I would've been a nervous wreck.

SL: So . . .

PP: But what I did was I bathed him. I took care of him. I gave him—I fixed the formula. I gave him formula. I cooked a big dinner, roast beef and all the trimmings. [*SL laughs*] I mean, you know, it was amazing. But I thought, "We've got to eat." And I was a little shocked at Donald to be quite truthful.

SL: Well, sure.

PP: But I didn't say anything to him. And . . .

[03:37:08] SL: So this is nineteen, what? Fif—forty . . .

PP: [Nineteen] fifty-four.

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-four?

PP: [Nineteen] fifty-four. Dece—well, New Year's of [19]56 was



what it was that day. That was New Year's Day. And then my sister Betty was here from Dallas. Had been here for Christmas, and that's why I didn't want Mother to come down and take care of me because, you know, Betty was staying with them. So she ca—she and her husband came down to tell me that Daddy was going to be okay, that it was a stroke. Mother could take care of him, and he was gonna be all right. And so, I said, "Well, why don't you just stay for dinner?" [03:37:45] And there I had company for dinner and a new baby, and I was scared to death and it all—you know, the only thing was—the only thing David has ever done in his life that was difficult for me to handle. He had colic.

SL: Oh.

PP: The worst kind. And he would start early in the evening, and it would go till after midnight.

SL: Oh my gosh.

PP: And it was constant crying, and you could not—if I coulda held him and that woulda comforted him, that woulda been fine. I would've loved that. But no. His little arms were doin' this [flails arms]. He was, like, having a convulsion. His legs were goin' like this. His arms were goin' like this. Screaming. Crying.

SL: Oh my gosh.

[03:38:28] PP: So what—how we worked it out—I would take part of the evening—well, Donald would take the first part of the evening, and I would try to rest, and then he would rest, and I would do the rest till after midnight. But then one evening after Donald had done this two or three nights, he came in, and he said, "Peggy, you've got to take him." And his face was stricken, and he said, "In my mind I was thinking, 'I'm so glad we don't have a gas stove.'"

SL: Oh my gosh!

PP: He would he—I mean, it was that difficult to keep him.

SL: It was that hard.

PP: And Da—Donald—the only thing that would pacify him at all—he would do him like this [raises and lowers cradled hands], and that would quiet him. But I couldn't do that for . . .

SL: Float. Yeah. [*Unclear word*] float.

PP: And you know, I was too—I just didn't have the strength to do that. So I—so there I was from then on dealing with—and I said, "Dr. Frank, can't you give him something to—he's obviously in pain. Obviously." And he said, "I can give you somethin' to make you sleep." But I heard later that babies with other doctors were given a kind of green medicine for colic that would

kind of—would . . .

SL: Relax the muscles.

PP: . . . relax them. Uh-huh. But I never got any.

SL: Well . . .

PP: And it lasted for two months.

SL: Golly!

PP: Two months! It was the last of February, the very last day of February, when David finally slept through the night and—without this colic in the beginning. So then—and I've told him—I said, you know, "That's the only trouble you ever caused us," and it really is. Never, never was there another problem.

[03:40:17] SL: Let's get back to your father. So he had a stroke.

PP: Mh-hmm. Mother nursed him.

SL: Your mother nursed him. Did he continue to work at the . . .

PP: No, he couldn't for a while. I mean, he really couldn't. But then as he got better, and you know, and his strength began to return, and course, Mother was such a good nurse. And she was so conscientious and so careful of him and fixed him the right kind of food to eat, you know, and all of that. [03:40:48] So then he went back to work, but he couldn't guard himself. I mean, he threw himself back into work like he'd always done. Long hours, standing on his feet for a long time. He had another

stroke.

SL: At work?

PP: Uh-huh. And the company, the newspaper office, the people who ran it, said, "We just can't—we can't deal with this. We can't have him die, you know, here in the office. We just can't be responsible for that." And they wanted him to shorten his hours, but he didn't know how to do that. I mean, hard work was all he'd ever known all of his life, from the time he was fourteen years old. So . . .

[03:41:31] SL: Were they still living in the original house . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: . . . at this time?

PP: Yes.

SL: Okay.

PP: On Dickson Street. And also, the news—Mr. Simm came down to talk to me about Mother and Daddy and the pa—newspaper. They had an ongoing thing in Hot Springs of a week at one of their hotels and taking the baths and all. And they thought this would help Mother and Daddy and wanted to know what I thought about it. And I said, "I just think that's the sweetest, sweetest thing for you to offer." [03:42:08] But they didn't go, and then he had the second stroke, so they retired him. The

office retired him. And they had a big celebration, and they called it Murphy Day, and it was on a Saturday, and all of the newsboys wore these little placards. Said Murphy Day on 'em. And then—and they put out an early edition of the paper and then the whole—everybody connected with the newspaper were invited with all their families to go on a picnic to Lake Wedington. And they honored Daddy, and it was the sweetest, sweetest thing and lots of publicity about Murphy Day, you know. [03:42:51] And he—you know, this was really sad for him because he would've worked many more years had this not happened. He was young. And—but anyhow, it did happen, and he just didn't know what he would do with himself. Really and truly. He didn't have any hobbies. Gardening wasn't his hobby, and he didn't play golf and, you know. Well, then my younger sister in Dallas had a baby, and they wanted to know if Mother and Daddy could come, and they did. Now, I think—I know later they rode the bus. I think they went on the bus. I don't think Donald—Daddy drove.

SL: Well, that's probably good.

PP: But they—yeah. But they both went down there. This was the turning point for Daddy. I don't know. Just getting away, being with—and then with the new baby. It was a sweet, sweet time

for him. And when he came back, he just had made up his mind that he was going to adjust to not going to work every day. And he did well. He did extremely well. He died when he was eighty-four.

SL: Wow!

PP: He died in 1980, and he was eighty-four.

[03:44:08] SL: And how long was it since he'd had his second stroke?

PP: He was in his forties.

SL: Is that right? So he was retired for forty years or . . .

PP: A long, long—longer than . . .

SL: Thirty-five years.

PP: . . . he ever intended to.

SL: And—wow.

PP: And . . .

SL: That's great.

[03:44:24] PP: But Mother took such good care of him, and they did go on trips—not just to Dallas but they went to visit other children. This was wonderful for them. And—to do this. And course, they never had because he'd worked so hard. And now that they were being able to travel and see things. Then—and when Jeanne had a baby, they went up there and—into

Michigan. [*Coughs*] And all of this was—it just really made it wonderful for my dad. For my mother, too.

[03:45:01] SL: So how long was it before—let's see, now. Hatfield did their thing in . . .

PP: Well, it was about [19]52, I [*laughs*]—[19]52. [19]72, I think. And Mother was devastated. Just devastated. Because they could walk to everything and by this time I think Mother had sold Daddy's car and—thinking he shouldn't drive.

[03:45:31] SL: She was still not drivin'.

PP: No. She'd never learned. [*SL laughs*] And women didn't. A lot of women didn't . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . you know, at her age. So—but they could walk to the grocery stores. They could walk to church. They could walk to the Square. She just—and well, they just—and they loved the neighbors. The neighbors loved them. So I went up there, and I told Daddy—I said, "Let's look for a house, and Donald and I will buy it, and then you can just pay us rent." And it woulda been, you know . . .

SL: Yeah, nothing.

PP: . . . not much. They—cause they'd never paid much rent. And of course, we would've done it for no rent.

SL: Well, sure.

[03:46:15] PP: But—depending on how Daddy—I mean, if he would take that. So we found this house, and it was in such a mess, and we turned it down. And then later we couldn't find anything else in the area. Anything else. Then we went back, and somebody had come in and cleaned it up, and we were really, really surprised. Took Mother and Daddy back to see it, and they liked it. And there was a wide front porch, and the front porch and above the roof of the front porch it was painted blue. It was so pretty, like the sky.

SL: Yeah.

[03:46:52] PP: And in a lovely, lovely neighborhood on Washington Avenue.

SL: Washington. Mh-hmm.

PP: And they were not much—and then the grocery store on the corner, which was not . . .

SL: IGA?

PP: Huh?

SL: IGA?

PP: No, it's the other one now. It's the bigger one. Safeway.

SL: Safeway.

PP: Safeway was on the corner. I mean, they just walked up to their



corner, which was, you know, a couple of houses, and then down a short block, and there was Safeway. So this was perfect.

[03:47:25] It was so funny 'cause I would go up and, later on, take Mother for rides and take her to the grocery store. And after she died—after my daddy died and then Mother died, if I ever went in Safeway I just couldn't keep the tears back. I mean, I never cried in the house. It was just funny, but I just so associated Safeway with my mother and taking her there to buy groceries.

SL: Sure.

PP: It made me sad. It was the—you know, one of those strange things. But actually, this move was really better because it was—the real—and they could walk to the laundry. [03:48:13] But then my sister and I went together and bought a washer and dryer. Now, Mother, by this time, was—I don't know where she got this funny idea that we weren't to do anything for her [*SL laughs*], but we could do it for Daddy. So we ordered a washer and dryer and told them, "When you take it out there, they will say, 'We didn't order it, and take it back to the store.' But do not get—let them get away with that. [*SL laughs*] It is paid for already, and you are to install 'em. And you tell them that you have orders. It's been paid for. We have to install it. But if you

never want to use it, that's fine. But it's there." And Mother was upset and miffed about it, and course, I think Daddy thought it was wonderful. Well, the next thing I knew, Mother did tell me—said, "Well, you know, sometimes Daddy has accidents." And she said, "You can't imagine, 'cause we can't always get to the laundry, how nice it is not to have to take—go out to the laundry and get the laundry done and not only washed but dried. Not hangin' it out on the lines" . . .

SL: Yeah, the line. Yeah.

PP: . . . "like we did on Dickson Street."

SL: Right.

[03:49:26] PP: So—and see, Betty and David and I—Betty and David and Donald and I could—we could do this without it hurting us. We weren't doin' without in order to do for Mother and Daddy. And Daddy, I think, realized this and was . . .

SL: Comfortable.

PP: . . . happy and delighted.

SL: He was okay with it.

PP: He was okay with it. And all he wanted to do was not ever be a burden to the family where we would have to support 'em. And he had grown up with poorhouses. When people couldn't—could no longer, you know, have enough money to live alone and pay

the utilities and all, they were sent to the poorhouse.

SL: Yeah.

PP: He had such a fear as a child . . .

SL: It was . . .

PP: . . . of the poorhouse.

SL: They were horrible.

[03:50:09] PP: So—and we were determined for them to live in their own home. And we had put in the house, you know, a gas heat and air, and that was wonderful for 'em 'cause they'd never had air-conditioning before.

SL: Central heat and air.

PP: Central heat. So that was wonderful for 'em. And living on that street was 'cause it was so beautiful and the—in the springs with the azaleas and the pink and white dogwood up and down the street. I mean, people would come to drive up and down Washington Avenue, and . . .

SL: They still do.

PP: . . . there they were living on it . . .

SL: They still do.

PP: . . . and could walk and see it. It turned out to be a, really, a gift. [03:50:52] And the funny thing that I was gonna tell you is several people had looked at the house, and the McConnells,

who had lived there, they had never, ever for anybody come down on the price. And then when Donald talked to them—and he did all the business side of that. And he made an offer to 'em, which was considerably lower than what they were asking, but I guess—I don't know why they did it, but they had him pay a little bit more and let us have the house. And then we spent some money to fix it up. Put in the central heat and air. We carpeted. We put wallboard on the—and papered and painted and made the house pretty and attractive and easy to take care of. [03:51:36] And it was [*laughs*], you know, it was really a godsend for them, which I think even my mother finally realized what it did mean for both of 'em for her to be able to stay at home and take care of Daddy and have thi—have a washer and dryer there—not have to get out in the elements. And also, there was a daughter who lived very close by, so we could see that they always had food. If there was snow on the ground or something, well, either I would—see, I wouldn't be in school. Either Donald and I would take up groceries, or my sister would take groceries. And so, they got to stay in the house. Both of 'em. [03:52:21] And—well, he died—Donald—Daddy died in the Veterans Hospital, where he wanted to go. And he was—he felt at home there. He felt like that he was a part of it 'cause he was

a veteran of World War I.

SL: Right.

PP: So this suited him just fine.

SL: So . . .

BP: Scott, let's change tape.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:52:46] SL: Peggy Sue Parks. [*Laughs*] We're on tape number nine, and we're just now getting to where your father chose to go to the VA Hospital. Is that right?

PP: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you had moved your mom and dad. You and Don had got them a nice little house on Washington Avenue, the neighborhood that they had known and loved so well. You talked about walkin' with your mom to Safeway and . . .

PP: Oh.

SL: . . . and how it kinda—you tear up when you'd go—ever go there. [03:53:28] Now, so, your father goes to the VA Hospital, and is that where he passes?

PP: Yes.

SL: How long was he at the VA Hospital?

PP: Well, he had been out there when he'd been sick, and this really

wasn't—it wasn't too long. I remember—let me think about this 'cause I member I mi—well, I think I missed a week of school. I did. And I went to school on Monday, and then I think I went to the hospital and then—and he was—the doctor said to my sister and me when we were there that evening—he said, "Your father's not gonna recover this time." And we had sent Mother home to rest, and we didn't know whether to, you know, call her or just what to do. [03:54:37] And then I think he used the word cancer, which we didn't know anything about. Now, I don't know what—and it didn't matter at that point.

SL: Right.

PP: So I really don't know whether it was, like, prostate or what it was. But he . . .

[03:54:51] SL: So he had had a third stroke.

PP: No, this was not a stroke.

SL: Oh.

PP: And this was—I know they—I don't know the word for it, but they pumped his lungs out. They were filled with fluid.

SL: Oh, okay. So . . .

PP: And—but anyhow, it was—it—we all knew it was a serious time and probably the time. And I remember that we tried to get word to my sister in Dallas and my brother in Little Rock, you

know, that it was getting close. And— isn't that funny? I can't remember exactly which day he died and the day of the funeral.

That's a strange thing. I will really have to think about this.

[03:55:48] But when he was at the ho—when he died I remember his—I guess he was in a ward, perhaps. But anyhow, the fellow who was next to him just cried and cried and cried. And I went over to him, and I said, "It is okay. Daddy's better off. And it really, really is okay, and it's okay with the family that he's better off now than to stay alive in here and suffer like he has." It's so strange to me that I can't—it's har—because I was teaching, and I took off school. It was in the springtime and the thing that—the only thing that impressed me with my children was that I had given them—I had a lesson to write a—it wasn't a book report, but it was an essay-type thing, and then I missed the rest of the week. And I thought, "They won't do it because I'm not there," and you know . . .

SL: Substitute just kind of . . .

PP: Uh-huh. And when I got back on Monday, all the children lined up and brought me the papers and put them on my desk. I was so pleased. I thought, "That's the best thing to happen after losing my father. To come back and have the children respect me and respect the fact that I had asked them to do this, and

they did it." I was just—that just kind of evened things out for me a little bit.

SL: There's just something wonderful about children that . . .

PP: They sure can be.

SL: They sure can. They're healing, aren't they?

PP: Mh-hmm.

[03:57:49] SL: So in that one week, your father moved into the VA and . . .

PP: He was already there, and then . . .

SL: Oh.

PP: . . . you know, they knew it was going to be terminal. And then I was there with him, and I told Mother—I either took her home or told her go home and to rest. And course, she really—she did lie down but I—as a nurse she knew what was coming, and she didn't want to not be there. And I understood that. It—and then it—I don't know. It's always—it's all a little bit mixed up. And then we called my brother, and he drove quickly up here from North Little Rock, but by the time he came, my father had passed. And he just was devastated that he hadn't made it. And I said, "But Jimmy, it wouldn't have made a difference. He wouldn't have known."

SL: Yeah.



PP: "He wouldn't have known you. He wouldn't have known you were here in those last hours." I said, "It was really the easiest thing in the world, the easiest kind of death. He went to sleep."

SL: Yeah.

[03:59:13] PP: And—while we were there. And I was there, and Mother was there, and I think Mary was there. While we were there sitting with him and just watching the covers, you know, as he breathed, and then, all of a sudden, the covers didn't move. And I told Mother, and he was gone. But it was so easy. It was the sort of thing that would make you hope that this would happen to you. That he would just go to sleep and then just slip away, and that would be it.

[03:59:59] SL: Well, he had a lot of fans, didn't he? And there were a lot of . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: . . . people that really grew to love him, and he was a—that was so great they had that . . .

PP: Murphy Day.

SL: . . . Murphy Day, yeah.

PP: Oh, that was . . .

SL: That's a nice touch.

PP: That was really, really wonderful that they did that.

[04:00:15] SL: Well, so now your mother's alone.

PP: Yes.

SL: And how long did she continue to live after that?

PP: Well, she lived to be ninety-two, and she was, I think, two years younger than Daddy. If he was eighty-four . . .

SL: Fi—hmm.

PP: . . . she was eighty-two and—well, she lived ten years. And—but she was in City Hospital in long-term care for the last of those years. I was thinking it mighta been four 'cause Donald was there for four year—no, Donald was there for three years . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

PP: . . . in long-term care.

SL: Okay.

[04:01:00] PP: But we were so—I was so satisfied with the care that Donald got, and I know we were with Mother. And it—but I would go and take her for rides. I remember that. And before she was actually in long-term care—and I would try to avoid going down Washington Avenue, particularly that part where her house was. We did not sell her house for a yea—for over a year after she got sick and was in the hospital because it just seemed not right. So—but she did live a long time and really did very well considering that she didn't suffer as much as some people

do in their last weeks and days.

[04:01:59] SL: So you and Don continued to be out here in Prairie Grove. He continued to grow the—he and Barry continued to grow the company, and you continued to teach and do your calling. And you really pretty much had a wonderful life out here.

PP: I really have. It's very important to me. I wouldn't've done well in a city, actually, with—you know, it's so impersonal. And here it's just—you know, when I tell people about things that go on, like somebody calling me from the office and telling me what's in my mailbox. "So do you wanna come and get it or just let it lie for a few days?" sort of thing. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's so great.

[04:02:53] PP: I think it's a—but this sort of thing goes on a lot, and I don't know. It really has—it's where I need to be, where people do things for each other, where I can do for others, and they will, in turn, do for me little things that really do help out a lot.

[04:03:18] SL: You know, I, lookin' at all your photographs and stuff, I can't—you can't ignore how much political involvement that you've had. Now, were you and Don active in Democratic politics?

PP: Always.

SL: Always.

PP: Course, his father, you know, I told you was a great Democrat, and so was my father. His father even more so. And we grew up that way. My first bet was—oh, did I say somethin' about Harry—not . . .

SL: Harry Truman.

PP: . . . Harry Truman. No, no, no, it was long befo—it was ten years before that or longer. No, it was in—I have to go way back. Help me. It was [19]36.

SL: Well . . .

PP: I was nine years old.

[04:04:10] SL: So who was—well, that would be Roosevelt years, right?

PP: Okay and—yes. Course it would. It would—it woulda been his . . .

SL: Second . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: . . . term.

PP: [Nineteen] thirty-two and then [19]36.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[04:04:25] PP: Okay, I'm betting on Roosevelt. Always. [SL

*laughs*] And Joe Reed was betting on the Republican who ran against him. Now . . .

SL: Joe Reed.

PP: Joe Reed. Oh . . .

SL: Now, is that Reed—did he have a steel . . .

PP: No.

SL: No?

PP: No.

SL: Different Reed?

PP: And his father was a big Republican. I can't remember his name. But I mean, he was as well known as a Republican as Jim Parks was as a Democrat. And so, his son was a Republican. And of course, it was Thomas Dewey. No, that was in [19]44. But it was somebody I liked a whole lot better in [19]40. Someone that—that's the only Republican I ever thought would [*laughs*—if I were ever to re—vote for one it would've been this one. Do you remember who it was?

SL: Hm-mm.

[04:05:17] PP: And I may have 'em switched, but Thomas Dewey was one of 'em. But anyhow—oh, it was Alf Landon?

SL: I don't know. But you know, back in those days in Arkansas there weren't that many Republicans.

PP: Oh, I know. [*SL laughs*] I mean, it was always . . .

SL: I mean, if you were in the Democratic primary, you were pretty much . . .

PP: Exactly.

SL: . . . in office.

PP: You're gonna be it.

SL: It wasn't much of a race in the general election.

PP: And boy, think how it changed last time. I lost every vote except for governor. And everyone else was a Republican, and there were some really good Democrats running.

SL: I know.

PP: So that's showing how things are changing. Oh, it's sad to be in the minority.

[04:06:10] SL: Well, maybe that'll swing around. [*PP laughs*] You know, that pendulum swings.

PP: I think it was Alf Lan . . .

SL: I don't know how long it'll be before it swings the right way in Arkansas but . . .

[04:06:19] PP: My mother-in-law used to always say, "The pendulum has—it'll go too far one way, but it has to go too far the other way before it gets back to the center."

SL: Yeah, that's pretty much the way it runs. Well, so Jim Park was

a noted Democrat.

PP: Absolutely. And all of the Democrats in Washington County, if they were gonna run for office, they would run to Jim Parks first and want his endorsement because that was almost as good as [*laughs*]*—*and he called a lot of people, and he took a lot of people to the polls. He was an active Democrat. And*—*but he never*—*he would never have run for office, but he would endorse candidates. And he always picked one out, and of course, the family always voted the way*—*what*—*whoever he picked out, except me. And there were times when I picked out another candidate, and I did for governor, and then we met him la*—*I'd never met him. And Mr. Parks*—*we'd gone down for a telephone convention to Hot Springs and he ca*—*he was one of the speakers. And he said, "Well, daughter voted for you." He said, "Against my wishes. I was a so-and-so man." And he said, "I asked her why she did this, and you know what she said? 'Because he's so good looking.'" [*SL laughs*] And I*—*now, right now I can't remember the governor's name. But . . .

SL: McMath?

PP: No. That's who it coulda been but it*—*I don't think it was.

SL: Well, there was Cherry, McMath. Tryin' to think who else. I mean, Faubus beat Cherry.

PP: Oh, Cherry was one I had picked. Oh, he was my boy. And I—I mean, there were people who were Democrats who really didn't think he did as good a job as I thought he did. And I think that was the one that I said he was so good looking. [*Laughter*] And then one time he came to Fayetteville. He had two aunts who lived in Fayetteville who had never married, and he came to visit them, but then whoever was taking him around, he told 'em he wanted to come to Prairie Grove, and he showed up at my house, and I was so excited. Francis Cherry! I was so excited to see him. And I said, "Well, let me call Donald," and he said, "I didn't come to see Donald." [*SL laughs*] He came to see me. And [*laughs*] we had the swe—Donald did come up, but we did have the sweetest visit. I really admired him.

[04:08:57] SL: You know who his driver was for the race that he lost against Faubus?

PP: Hm-mm.

SL: David Pryor.

PP: Oh! We'll have to . . .

SL: Young David Pryor.

PP: Oh, how bout that?

SL: He was in college up here.

[04:09:09] PP: Uh-huh. Well, I really did. I really did like Cherry,



and I member he came and spoke—he's the one that came down to the convention and spoke to us, and that's where we met him. And that's when Mr. Parks—we were in the lobby. Oh, that was it. I was in the lobby talkin' to somebody else, and he was here—back here talkin' to Governor Cherry, who had just walked into the lobby, and he said, "Daughter, come here." And I turned around, and oh, that was my chance to meet Governor Cherry. I was so excited.

[04:09:40] SL: There, you know, there is a—back in those days it was—those—the political profession was very honorable.

PP: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And this is what Dale Bumpers always said that his father had told him that politics was an honorable profession, and that's what my father would have said. Course, we didn't have corruption like they did in some places in politics.

[04:10:10] But—and you know, really, honorable people ran for office. That's why it was considered honorable. And it was some—and there were people to look up to, not to say disparaging things about because they were wheelin' and dealing in their political office, but people you really did look up to and you wanted children to learn about and to admire and to imitate and perhaps run for office.

[04:10:41] SL: And you know, even opposite sides were still—

treated each other with respect.

PP: Yeah, with respect. Yes.

SL: It was a much better, healthier—and things got done. And it was just a different climate.

[04:10:57] PP: Course, it's never been as bad as it is now. Never. And—but the funniest thing to me this year has been the Republican primary, the Republican races, where they have disparaged each other so badly that by the time they get to the primary—well, we know now it's gonna be Mitt Romney. But boy, they gave a lot of sauce and syrup and real meat to President Obama because of just what they said about each other.

SL: Mh-hmm. I—well, as an interviewer I'm not really supposed to—I'm supposed to remain neutral. [*Laughs*] But . . .

PP: Well, but you know, you can be neutral but still say, "This is what happened. This is what they did."

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. It is what they did. I really—I think the presidential race is over.

PP: Oh, I do, too.

SL: I think it's now the congressional races that are gonna be the factor.

PP: Mh-hmm. Course, that would delight me.

SL: Me, too.

PP: I want Obama to win. I want him to have a second term. I really think it will define him, and I think people will come to really honor and respect him. I think he can bring the country a long way. I can—you know, and I said when, like, when Roosevelt died people didn't know Harry Truman very well, and they were afraid of him. During the war, could he get us through the war in Europe and then the war in Japan? And of course, he could, and often, as my mother-in-law used to say, the office makes the man. And so, you know, you rise to the occasion, and you do what has to be done for the country. [04:12:55] You can even think of Jeff [*laughs*], our athletic director.

SL: Oh, Jeff Long.

PP: Jeff Long. I was thinkin' of Jeff Duty. [*SL laughs*] Jeff Long—of rising to the occasion. This was—this had to be hard on him.

SL: Trial by fire.

PP: And you could tell it by his face how hard it was but how determined he was to do the right thing for the university who—for whom he worked and who hired him. And I so admired him, and then when his voice broke, you know, you had to realize how hard it really was, how sad it made him to have to fire the

man that he had hired. And—but he did the right thing.

[04:13:49] SL: Well, what was moving was it was very evident how much he cared for the student athletes. That's—when he started talking about the athletes.

PP: Mh-hmm. And having to tell them. And of course, if they were recruits recruited by Petrino that—it makes it doubly hard 'cause now they don't know who their coach will be.

[04:14:10] SL: Right. Well, do you want—let's see, now. I've got a note here that says—were you on the State Democratic Committee?

PP: Yes.

SL: In 1988?

PP: Yes. When I retired from teaching, immediately [*SL laughs*]*—it really surprised me.*

SL: I don't know anybody that doesn't flunk retirement. [*Laughs*]

[04:14:36] PP: And—but it amazed me that it—that Governor Clinton appointed me to the State Democratic Committee, and it was—I couldn't go down to the convention in Hot Springs because I had a wedding I had to go to, and then I had family who was coming to stay with me. So I—by the time I found out I'd been appointed, they were already gathering at—for the convention. So I didn't get to go and sort of be instated or

whatever they do. But it was a very high honor. And course, at their meetings at—we went, and Donald loved it. He, course, he went with me, and I did tell 'em they got two for the price of one. And the governor would always—no matter who was the governor, Governor Clinton or Jim Guy Tucker, but they would always have us over to the Governor's Mansion, you know, for a reception. It was always a elegant and fun thing. It was—and I've always loved politics. Donald has, too. We've both been interested from way back in childhood and being Roosevelt supporters for so long. So this was a very nice part. And I was appointed five times by the governor, who gets to appoint a man and woman from each congressional district. So first it was Clinton, and then it was Jim Guy Tucker and—who continued the appointment. And I was so pleased, and I loved going to the meetings and loved being on the committee.

[04:16:27] SL: How did you first meet Bill Clinton?



PP: He was here teaching, and he wanted—he must've heard the Parks were always interested in politics and big Democrats, and so, he wanted to meet Donald Parks. And course, by this time his father was gone. And he came down on a Sunday afternoon and met Donald at the—Donald was at the office, and he came to the office and met him, and then Donald called me to

come down and meet him. And Bill Clinton stood up as I entered and shook hands with me, and it was like—you know, I'd hate for him to ever hear this or see this, but . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] It's okay.

PP: . . . but it was like shakin' hands with a fish. [*SL laughs*] And I thought, "Oh dear, I've got to straighten this man out." [*SL laughs*] And I was so impressed with him except for that, and I did straighten him out. [*SL laughs*] And from then on it was a firm grip. [*SL laughs*] But then we didn't see him very much an—but—and this was in [19]78 . . .

SL: He was gonna run against John Paul Hammerschmidt.

PP: Well, he had already lost that election.

SL: Oh, he'd already lost that race.

PP: Yeah, and then he ran for attorney general and won.

SL: Okay.

[04:17:45] PP: And then he ran for governor and wo—well, he ran for governor and won, but then lost in 1980 to Frank Smith.

SL: White.

PP: White. Frank White. And that was a sup—a shock, a real shock. He'd never run, never been particularly interested in politics, and so many people didn't vote for Bill Clinton—either didn't vote at all or voted for Frank White, not because they wanted Frank

White to be governor but they wanted to teach Bill Clinton. They thought he was cocky, that his whole administration, his whole first administration, had been like they were superior, and they didn't need advice from common people, and they didn't need to talk to other people. And then he did two things that really upset people. One was the immigrants that he moved to Fort Smith. And one was he raised the license fee. And not—I just think he was naive enough to think that he could do what did need to be done for the state, but he didn't realize there were repercussions sometimes. And so, that was part of it, too, and the things that people didn't like that he did. And then we were invited to Richard Atkinson's home for a reception for Bill Clinton. And you talk about eating humble pie. He did. And he was going around saying, you know, "Tell me. What did I do wrong? What are people saying about me? What can I do better?" And people were tellin' him what other people were saying. I mean, all of us there probably had supported him and voted for him. But what other people were saying. And he took it seriously. And you know, it—I tell you. It hurt me so when he lost that I had written him a long letter. And I said, "I know you're not going to—you're gonna find this hard to believe, but I think you're gonna find, if you do believe it, that this two years

can move you forward, not in politics, but later on in politics because God is going to use this time to teach you things that you wouldn't have learned in any other way or at any other time. And if you will look at these next two years as a time of learning—mistakes you made, how to correct 'em, things people are interested in, things people want done for the state of Arkansas, things people want done for their own congressional district, and visit and talk to people. Talk to the common people. Talk to—stop people on the street and talk to them." And I knew that he really was thinking about my advice and my letter when in January he accompanied his minister, W.O. Vaught, who was the minister of the Baptist church, one of the Baptist churches in Little Rock and where Bill Clinton sang in the choir. [04:21:12] And another story—when Bill Clinton was young—and he didn't have a father. He didn't have anybody to help him learn the proper way for a man to grow up and be a responsible man. But one thing he did—he took himself to Sunday school and church. Nobody took him. He walked down to the church on the corner, the Baptist church on the corner, and then he talked a group of young people to go to Little Rock for a convention that they were having where—what was his name? The black . . .



SL: Say McIntosh or . . .

[04:22:00] PP: No—that ran for office. But anyhow, he was speaking and Bill Clinton—and who was always very tolerant.

SL: National office or . . .

PP: No, state.

SL: State. Hmm, I'm not sure.

PP: You do know, but I just can't think of it now. But he—and talked them into going to listen to him speech, and he was such a wonderful, fiery speech that—speaker that—you know, especially for young people. He could really bring them up to a high level of interest. So—but I always admired this that as a young boy that somehow he realized—'cause usually it's your mother, you know, who takes you . . .

SL: Sure.

PP: . . . to Sunday school first, but his mother didn't, and you know, she had problems, and his brother, Roger, had problems, and Bill Clinton wasn't touched by that at all. I mean, not—in his own personal life, he never did drink and never did smoke. And it was just something within him that he always knew, I think, that he wanted to be—I think he wanted to be in politics. I think he wanted to make a difference in people's lives, and this is the way he could do it. So when—course, you—we've heard these

stories after we got to know him and—but then after Frank White—well, that was when I wrote him the letter when he lost to Frank. He was devastated. Absolutely devastated. So when he decided—Bill Clinton had decided that he would run again and won, and really, you know, the rest is history. He never lost again. And it—I can remember him coming to Fayetteville, and there was a luncheon meeting of people that he really—people that he wanted to be with and talk to because he was thinking of running for president. President. From Arkansas. And—but he felt like that there was a weakness that was going to, you know, be pretty obvious and that this would—was a good time to run.

[04:24:37] SL: Now, that's pretty incredible, too, because George H. W. Bush, his approval rating was off the scale at the time.

PP: Mh-hmm. And he really—yes, absolutely. And you know, the first Gulf War, he had, you know, gotten that—gotten through that . . .

SL: Yeah, right.

PP: . . . as a victory. So anyhow, it was really quite a time and people—and I can remember encouraging him but not in a big way. I don't know. It was a little bit hard for me to think of him taking such a big step at this time—that maybe—was he ready? Was the country ready for him? But you know, he had such a

magnetic personality. So good looking. So smart. So—with such a great intellect of being able to speak extemporaneously anyplace, to any group of people, on any subject, and he just won people over.

[04:25:54] SL: What about—now, is there a photo of you with Governor Faubus?

PP: Now, I don't—I'm not sure. There might be becau—[laughter] he ca—he would come to the park when we had our three-day celebration and . . .

SL: The battle . . .

PP: Oh . . .

SL: Prairie Grove Battlefield Park?

PP: Prairie Grove Battlefield Park. And I—or maybe he was our speaker one year. I think he was, and it may be—and several of us wore those antebellum dresses, you know, with the hoop skirts and everything. And I might have a picture. I'm not sure. Course, my father really liked him and the—and he had gotten lots of kudos for being the highway director, and course, he got a paved road to Huntsville, but he did a lot of other paved roads that really help people out, and they thought he did a good job as highway director. So you know, it was—I just don't think—I think he's the one, you know, politician lately—I mean, up from

then to now that I probably don't have a picture with. But it wasn't until I retired from teaching that I could really get into this kind of seriously. You know, like, go to meetings and conventions and things like that. And of course, it's an honor to be appointed by the governor. It's only one man and one woman from each congressional district. And then after your name on the state committee, it says, "G.A.," governor's appointee, so they know you didn't have to run for office and . . .

SL: Right.

PP: . . . you didn't—you weren't up against somebody else, and you didn't have to campaign for it. It was a gift, and it was a gift that you wanted to not treat lightly.

[04:27:54] SL: Do you remember the first time you met David Pryor?

PP: Well, you know, isn't it funny? They're Presbyterians, and I kind of knew the Pryors, you know, from that. And then I just kind of followed his career. I don't remember—I don't know. It just seems like I go way back with David . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] You've always known him.

PP: Well, I mean, I haven't, of course.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And—but just the name. And he had an older brother . . .

SL: Bill.

PP: Bill Pryor.

SL: He's a preacher.

PP: Yes. And I knew Bill Pryor for some reason, and it might've been Ferncliff. It's something like that, and I knew Bill, and that's why I think I go back so far with the Pryor . . .

SL: Pryors. Uh-huh.

PP: . . . family is because of Bill. And then with David Pryor, I can't remember when I first met him, and it's amazing if I don't remember because—and maybe [*unclear word*] thinking back, but I think it was so long ago.

[04:29:00] SL: Yeah. What about Dale Bumpers?

PP: Well, when I first met him, it was at Clark McClinton's house, and they were havin' a reception for him, and he had that one na—1 percent name recognition, but I had picked him out as my candidate. And my superintendent had grown up in Charleston with Dale Bumpers, and he was going to this reception, and I really wanted to go, but I would have to get someone to be in my room, to take my room as a substitute for an hour for me to get—and Donald was gonna go—for me to be able to leave and get to Clark McClinton's house for this reception. So—'cause I

think it was from two to four. [*Laughs*] So I talked to my superintendent, and he agreed to this. [04:29:55] Oh, it was funny. I forgot this, and I've still got it. But I was at a meeting where Dale Bumpers was and—no, I guess this surely must've been later because I—oh no, it was because this was for the convention and I—and so, I wrote a note to my superintendent and said, "Please excuse Peggy Parks for two days at school so she can attend the Democratic State Convention. It would mean a lot to me personally. Signed"—and then he signed it. I wrote it. [*SL laughs*] He signed it. And when I took it to my principal and my superintendent, they said, "Well, it looks like that's what we'll have to do," and they did. But that was that one. But this one, I hadn't met him. So—but my superintendent was there when, you know, Donald and I went, and he introduced us to Dale Bumpers. And he shook my hand, very firm grip, mmm, and very handsome face, and he was still holding my hand. And I [*SL laughs*] said, "Did you know we were in the same class at the university?" 'Cause he's older. Did I tell you this earlier?

SL: Mh-hmm. Uh-huh.

PP; Is it already on the tape?

SL: I think it is.

PP: Are you—is it on the tape? Do you remember?

BP: Mh-hmm.

PP: Okay.

SL: Okay.

[04:31:14] PP: So—but anyhow, so that's when we became friends.

And I would write him letters, and I wasn't hesitant about writing letters to our elected officials if I thought something needed to be done or if I wanted them to do—like, send a picture, a photograph, a signed photograph, for my . . .

SL: Students.

PP: . . . schoolchildren. That sorta thing. And they always responded. And this is what I told the class, and I wondered if they really would believe it, but I said, "You know, anytime that we would write to one of the elected officials, they will respond. They're very interested in schoolchildren, and they want to be sure that you're taking your schooling seriously, and whatever they can do to encourage you, they will."

[04:32:01] SL: Mh-hmm. Well, I think in those days they generally had a real interest in what the kids were doin' . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: . . . and how they were doin'. Now, what about Jim Guy Tucker?

PP: I didn't know him as well, but he did—knowing I was on the state committee—and course, he was always there. And all I

had to do was send a request to his office that I would like to be reappointed, and it was done. And I used to try to encourage him to come to Prairie Grove for our three-day celebration, but he said what he really liked to do was to ride in parades. And we didn't have a parade for that. And course, we're hardly big enough to have a pa—we once in a while do have a parade. But it's not at that time, not in the fall of the year, so he never did come up here, which we really wanted him to do.

SL: Should've offered him a horse.

PP: Yes. [*Laughter*] No, I should've offered him a parade.

SL: Yeah, I guess so.

PP: Somehow I should've organized a parade.

[04:33:07] SL: Well, now, of course, Bill Clinton ended up winning the presidency and occupying the White House. And there's some—it looked like there's some kind of affiliation with the Mashburns and the Barbara Mashburn Singers . . .

PP: Right.

SL: . . . and Dr. Jim Mashburn and I—there was a photograph in there of you with that group. So tell me a little bit about that.

PP: Well, Barbara would ask me to write a letter to the president requesting that the Mashburn Singers be invited to come during the Christmas recess to sing at the White House during one of



their Christmas receptions. And the students were all university students, and they were—would be out of class. And I would write the letter. And so, you know, I did arrange a way for it to get to the president's desk, and I have my copies of the letter that I would send him. But I would say, "Do you remember how impressed you were, you know, when you met an official who was high up in government and how impressed you were when you were at Boys State? Well, okay, it still goes on, but now it's you. [*Laughter*] And so, these students want to come and sing at the White House and meet you." And sure enough, she'd get an invitation. And I was on her board, so she invited me to go as a—not as a singer but as a counselor, and I did go. And—have I told this story before?

SL: Hm-mm.

BP: Hm-mm.

[04:34:50] PP: Because they would always tell us, "Okay, you know, you're going to sing, and this is the spot where you're going to be. But you won't see the president." And I sort of thought we would, but then you don't know because I—what he's doing is he's in the receiving line for a reception, and he's greeting his guests, along with his wife. And so, here we are in another area in the White House, but of course, it's so big.

SL: Right.

[04:35:21] PP: And lots of their—the guests would—in going to the dining room for—where the refreshments were or something would come by our group and listen to them, the students, sing. But then without any announcement whatsoever, all of a sudden, he would just appear. [*SL laughs*] And it was the most exciting thing imaginable, and it would just take the breath away of the students, and they would just burst into clapping. [*SL laughs*] They were so excited. And he would meet all of the students. Barbara would introduce 'em, first and last name, and he was—he wanted to know where they were from, what year were they in college, what were they taking, what—where would they go when they left college. And he really cared about 'em. And then when we got another invitation the following year, he remembered the students he'd met before. And maybe there'd be one or two new ones, but he would remember their names, their first and last names. It was remarkable.

SL: It is remarkable.

[04:36:24] PP: And so, then I would ask him—I said, "Would—do you have time to listen to them sing?" And he said, "Yes." So they would sing for him—not a whole lot of songs but one or two songs, and he loved it. And then the year that he was

impeached, we came right after the impeachment. And we were so glad we were there at that particular time, this troubling time for him. And—but anyhow, the students were glad to be there and glad that they had—this was the time that they had decided to impeach him. [04:37:05] And as we were going to the White House, just as we'd left the airport, we saw on their television screens all of the Democrats had left the Capitol and were marching en masse to the White House to give him their . . .

SL: Support.

PP: . . . support and loyalty and love. So you know, we thought, "Well, this is a great time for a whole group from Arkansas to be there and show their support for him." And so, on the day that they were to sing—and Jonathan Story was their accompanist, and he's this young, wonderful pianist. And Barbara got him to play for the group when he was only fourteen. And he didn't know anything about jazz, and she had to bring him some pieces and learn how to—so he could learn how to play jazz. And he's been with 'em ever since, a loyal, loyal friend to Barbara and a wonderful accompanist for the group. And so, then the president would listen to them sing, and when he saw me, he would give me a hug, and he would hug Barbara and listen to the group. And then when he walked back to the door that

would lead him to the hallway that would lead him to his reception line that he had—that he was going to rejoin, he would turn back, and he'd say, "I love you, Peggy." And just from that distance. And it was always so, whoo! [*Laughter*] Wow! But he would always say this to me when he saw me, and then as he left he would always call back. "I love you, Peggy." But this is the sort of love that he knew I was a loyal friend. He knew I had tried to comfort him when he had lost a race. He knew he could depend on me not only in—for support but actually for advice or just a loving friend. [04:39:25] So anyhow, it really made it quite an exciting time. But the year that they did impeach him I told him—I said, "There are so many—I have brought so many messages of goodwill to you from so many people. So many prayers are going up for you." And he said, "Peggy, it's going to be all right." And he had already—he was such a politician. He had already in his own mind had assessed the Senate, and they were the ones where the vote would be taken. And he knew how—just about, already, how many would vote against him and how many would vote for him. And when he said, "It's going to be all right," he was going on how he felt about it, how he felt on those he could depend on and those he could depend on doing the other thing. And he was right, when it happened.

[04:40:16] And he, you know, wasn't kicked out of office. And he was—it was all right. Now, we weren't there when that took place. But his assurance to me really did make us feel better. And then we took this one student who said, "Well, I just really don't think so much of President Clinton—the things I've read and the things I've heard." And they would say, "Wait'll you see him." And he said, "It wouldn't change my mind." And they said, "Wait'll you see him." And I didn't say anything. And so, after it was over, we went up to him, and I said, "What do you think?" And his face was so filled with awe. He could not find the words. He could not speak. It was like he was overcome, like he had seen an angel or—you know, he was completely sold on President Clinton. And it was a great feeling for all of the group because they had been this—some of 'em may've been skeptical, but they'd never met him. And—but after they met him, after he shook their hand and looked in their eyes and was interested in them as a person, they were—they melted, and so did this boy. And it was just—it was cute to see. It was a—it was very wonderful for me to have that—to be included in that group of students and get their reaction. And then they would write—because Barbara would want me to write up a story or to send the news into the newspaper so they could write a story

about the trip to the White House. And I know I wrote one of 'em. It was called "Singing at the White House." And it had my byline, and they published it that way.

SL: [*Laughs*] Cool.

[04:42:13] PP: But anyhow, about what all took place, and I quoted some of these students in the accounts that they wrote afterwards—what it meant to them to be invited to the White House to sing for the president and the first lady, to have him take a personal interest in them. And it made them—it just absolutely changed their minds forever about politics and about politicians. And it changed in lots of the students, really, what they wanted to study and what they wanted to study to become, not necessarily politicians but active in government, active in . . .

SL: Public service.

PP: . . . city—yes, public service.

[04:43:03] SL: It is an amazing phenomenon that [*BP coughs*] once his eyes lock on yours, it's like nothing else you've experienced. It's really quite remarkable. Okay. Now, you've had some involvement with the Arts Center of the Ozarks?

PP: Yes, I was on their board for I guess—well, a long, long time. And it was a fun board to be on. Now, like, Ozark Guidance and Washington Regional Foundation, now, these were working

boards and—but so was the arts center, and we were to ra—that was the whole idea was to help publicize the arts center and to help raise money for it. I loved being on that board. It was—I'm not a performer, and I've always thought this was so neat to be able to ru—to be invited to be on the board because I didn't have to try out for anything [*SL laughs*], you know, as a singer or a dancer or a musician or a piano player or a whatever and—or a set designer. I just—I didn't have to go up and say, "Please take me." They just took me. And Mar—Madge McCuistion and Marion Lee Matthews in Prairie Grove, who lived in Prairie Grove—they lived next door to each other. They were on the arts center board I guess from the beginning, before they ever had a building, because they're big shows and the Star—where—Starlight Theater, which was wonderful, romantic, you know, and—but then, you know, planes would fly over.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Cars wouldn't go by on that street but on the streets, you know, adjoining it. It would rain. And one time it rained so hard that Donald said, "They can't have the show." But then it finally stopped raining in Prairie Grove, and I called up there to s—'cause sometimes, you know, it—and summer showers particularly . . .

SL: Yeah, it's scattered.

PP: . . . can be very spotty.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Very scattered. And it had stopped in Springdale, and they were wiping down the chairs. [*Laughter*] So we went, and it was a wonderful, wonderful show and a—you know, that we—there was a little thunder during it but not much. But anyhow, they were the ones who got me started going to the Starlight Theater and the other productions that the arts center put on.

[04:45:50] So that's how they got to—how I got to know Harry and Kathi Blundell. And then they would also use their facilities to have a—the symphony orchestra or a smaller orchestra—not their big band, not their marching band, but a smaller group to come and play for the children, play classical music and show the instruments to the children, show what it was called, how they played it, what kind of music it made, and how it blended in with the other instruments. And these children had never heard anything like semiclassical or classical music. It had all been country music that they had been exposed to, and it was an eye-opener, and they loved it. They just absolutely loved it. And one time joining the musicians was a interpretive dance group, and it was—this is, you know, this is something you'd



know off the top of your head, but I can't think of the piece right now. But anyhow, it was—it went over like gangbusters, the music and the dance and the interpretive dancing to this particular piece. And so, I had the children write letters to them, a thank-you letter, for how much it meant to them and how beautiful it was and what a wonderful experience it was. And course, they'd never seen ballet. So . . .

[04:47:32] SL: Was it *Swan Lake* or . . .

PP: Huh?

SL: Was it *Swan Lake*? [BP coughs]

PP: No, it wasn't *Swan Lake*. It was *Peter and the Wolf*.

SL: Peter—okay.

PP: Was that it? And it was very easy to follow the dancing and the story, you know. But it was so pl—you know, pleasing to me that people would take an interest in younger students and realize that if they could expose 'em to things that they are never exposed to, how much it would enhance their life and how much they would want to see and partake of things like this as they grew older and could buy tickets to shows like this because they already knew that the quality and the kind of show it was. You wouldn't go to a ballet if you didn't have any idea what it was, and you might not ever go to a symphony concert if you did

not have some idea what they do and what they played. So it was just to broaden their experiences.

SL: Sure.

PP: And it really went over really well, too.

[04:48:45] SL: Was it your father that used to listen to the classical . . .

PP: Oh yes, he loved classical music.

SL: Did he ever—was he ever aware that that was goin' on in your classroom that . . .

PP: No. Well, no . . .

SL: No?

PP: . . . I don't think so.

[04:48:58] SL: Kay. Let's see. Now, FHS hall of fame.

PP: Oh, that was an honor. That was really an honor.

[04:49:11] SL: Now, is that the—let's see. Is that the Fayetteville Heritage Foundation or . . .

PP: I've got the invitation in . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . there . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . if you'd look at it.

SL: Okay.

PP: We'll correct it. No, that was really quite an honor. And I had gone to these from the very beginning. Like, Billie Jo Starr was one of the first honorees and—but there were others.

[04:49:39] SL: Didn't Jack Butt kinda get that started?

PP: Yeah—I, now, I don't know.

SL: I think so. I think I member him tryin' to . . .

PP: It might be.

SL: . . . get that goin' on.

[04:49:49] PP: But anyhow, it started off very small and not the big thing it is now. But it was interesting to me, and I went. And I know I went the next year. And there was one year I didn't go because I didn't know any of the honorees, actually. But then—and then Donald was not actually sick but also wasn't actually Donald, and I really was hesitant about leaving him. And didn't. And they called me out of the blue and said I had been chosen as one of the honorees, and I burst into tears.

SL: Well, sure.

PP: I couldn't believe it. For one thing I couldn't believe they had reached that far back to 1945 to pick out an honoree, and even how would they know anybody, you know, back—way back then? I can't think right now who was the fellow who—not—and they said it was so cute 'cause he was gonna have it that way.

[*Laughter*] And—but I said, "I am so honored." But I said, "I just can't do it." Now, this was in June, May or June, and this takes place in October. And so, what I'm thinking is this is not going to get better with Donald. If anything it'll go downhill and get worse, and I won't be able to participate, and that won't be fair to somebody else who could've had the honor. But Treva Hamilton was the one who called me.

SL: Yeah.

[04:51:33] PP: And she would not give up on me. And she said, "You pray about this, and I'll call you in two weeks. And you pray, and I'll pray, and let's get, you know, another word from somebody else [*SL laughs*] about this situation." And she called me in two weeks, and I said, "Well, if you really do wanna take a chance on me, I'd be very honored to say yes." Well, what was really strange, Donald still—it didn't really get a whole lot better, but we got a caregiver that was a blessing. Just—and it was a young girl. She was in college, majoring in geriatrics. This was what she wanted to do, and this would—was just fitting in perfectly with her schoolwork, you know. They would be impressed with this that she was helping out. So—and then, course, she wanted to go and take Donald. Well, see, then I could go—not leave him at home and not—but not be

responsible for him and not feel responsible and not feel like that  
I couldn't fully participate it . . .

SL: That's right.

PP: . . . because if, you know—so it just . . .

SL: What a blessing that was.

PP: It—oh, what a blessing it was. And it was—I loved it. I loved it.  
I loved it. Jack Butt was honored with me, Jack Butt and Joe—  
Bordinos?

SL: Oh, Joe Fennel.

[04:53:03] PP: Joe Fennel. And so, they had a . . .

SL: That's [*laughs*] quite a group.

PP: That was the cutest thing because they had a reception, maybe  
in June. It was early. And David took me, and it was kinda like  
it was in—at the brewpub, you know, upstairs.

SL: Oh, at . . .

PP: Is there an upstairs to the brewpub?

SL: There is one at the brewpub. There's also—yeah. Yeah, there  
is.

[04:53:29] PP: And so [*SL laughs*], that's where it was. Well, there  
was quite a gathering of people, and they were going to  
introduce the three honorees. And they did. And it was just so  
cute because it was so funny. When I knew—I didn't know Jack

Butt, but I knew his father.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And I knew who he was. But Joe Fennel, I didn't know at all. And—but everybody had talked about him, you know, and then he had been working out at the gym here—I mean, in Fayetteville and he was telling somebody about this and that I was one of the honorees. And they said, "Oh, you are going to love Peggy Parks." [*SL laughs*] And what they had told me was, "Oh, you are going to love Joe Fennel."

SL: Joe Fennel. [*Laughs*]

[04:54:17] PP: So when he arrived we just kind of said this almost in unison, you know, "I have been dying to meet you." [*SL laughs*] And it was just so cute. And we just got on, and I told Treva—I said, "You've got your three, you know, and [*laughter*] it's gonna be a great, great time for us." So it's such a bi—it—see, it's a two-day celebration for the honorees. It's not just that night.

SL: Night.

PP: It's a two-day thing. So one thing we have to do is to write a speech, a five-minute speech, and give it to the high school students. We all three had to do this and—bout what Fayetteville meant to us, what Fayetteville High meant to us and

so forth. And the auditorium did not hold all of the high school students, so we had to do it twice. [*Laughter*]

SL: Oh my gosh!

BP: Scott, we're out of tape.

PP: And . . .

SL: Okay.

PP: So—and my sister was there and—is he through?

SL: Yeah. We're gonna have to pick up this story on the next tape.

[Tape stopped]

[04:55:21] SL: So we just had a tape change, but we were right in the middle of talking about the two-day celebration for being a FHS hall of famer. And you were saying [*laughs*] you had to write a five-minute speech to give to the students. They didn't have enough room for all the students to fit, so y'all had to do it twice.

PP: Okay, we had to do it twice. And that was so funny. So we did this, and I was the last one. The boys, the fellows, did it first, and then I was the last one. And each time they would say, "You know, it's just remarkable how quiet they got while you were speaking." And it was really—I don't know. We just had s—we just got along so well, and we were all honored to be chosen. This was just the third or fourth time they did it. So

anyhow, we gave the speeches, and then we were honored, very honored, because it was brand new at the time. This was, like, 2003. But to be taken to Ella's for lunch. That was, you know, such a elegant thing to do. And as I said, my sister was here. She sat through those speeches twice [*laughter*] and then went with us to Ella's to eat, she and her husband, and we had some pictures made there. And then that night they had the big dinner where we also had to give our speech. And again, I was the last one, and again, the people who were there did get very, very quiet. Course, Joe Fennel, you know, was gonna wear his great big, black cowboy hat.

SL: Yeah.

[04:57:07] PP: And you know, and Jack Butt, bein' a lawyer, you know, he—you know how lawyers are. Their words are pricey, so they don't give you very many. And his speech wasn't so long. I think mine was the longest one. And—but they both spoke, and then I spoke. And—but anyhow, David got to—the caregiver, she wanted to come, and she wanted to bring Donald and did. And he loved it. And here, I would've turned it down . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . because of him. And not only did I get to do it and to be



honored, but he loved it. Just loved it. And then they came home and got home before I—and then David brought me home, and so, they were already there when I arrived. And so [laughs], the caregiver said, "Donald wants to know when we can do this again." [SL laughs] Said, "He had such a good time." That pleased me so, you know, that he really did enjoy it. [04:58:12] And then the next day, after we had done our speeches at the high school, the next day we were to ride in the parade that the high school does, and it's kind of a—and they had floats and things, you know. It was kind of a big . . .

SL: Like a homecoming parade.

PP: The homecoming parade.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And we would ride in a convertible and sit on the backseat [laughter], which we did.

SL: All three of you on the . . .

PP: All three of us.

SL: [Laughs] Oh, that's fun.

PP: It was cute. You just cannot imagine. [SL laughs] And so, we came around, you know, and got—we had started at the administration building at the high school and then came on up to the Square. My sister and brother-in-law were again there,

and they took lots of pictures which—that was fun. But we—the three of us had such a good time, and everybody was so appreciative and clapped, you know, and took pictures, and there was such a celebratory air, such an aura all through the Square. And they had built risers for us and then, for some of the students who sat behind us, and then we were sitting here on the front row, and we were introduced. And they had given us purple sweatshirts with Fayetteville High School Hall of Honor on it, which was so nice. So we were to wear the purple shirt and white trousers or white skirt or, you know. And—which we did. And it was colorful, and it was handsome. [*SL laughs*]

[04:59:54] And then the girl who was the homecoming queen was the daughter of one of my very best friends, and I had given her mother a baby shower when she was pregnant with this particular girl who is now the homecoming queen. So that was exciting. And [*SL laughs*] so, the parade was fun, fun, fun, and the band played, and the cheerleaders cheered, and we were introduced. And we didn't make any kind of a speech or anything there at the parade. And then we went to the football field. Now, they had a meal for us. They'd fed the cheerleaders and I guess the team—or maybe the team was done separate, but anyhow, and then they fed us, and then we went to the

game, and we were introduced. We were taken out on the fifty yard line, and they did a lengthy introduction, a di—a presentation that was also printed in a little book. And they did the entire long presentation of each one of us, and standing out on the fifty yard line, oh, that was an honor. I mean! It was just so much fun. I—I've tried to tell people who are chosen, "You'll have the best two days of your life." It's—you know, it makes you feel young. It makes you feel honored. It makes you feel that somehow someone thought you were worthy enough to represent Fayetteville High School as an honor graduate. And, oh, I wish I could think of the fellow. Oh, maybe I'll think of it. But it was really quite an honor and one of those things that, really, God had to work out for me and did.

[05:02:00] SL: Well, it was just a total reimmersion into high school . . .

PP: Oh, it was.

SL: . . . for you.

PP: Brought everything back. And the parade and riding in the parade. Oh! Well, I know what Jim Guy Tucker [*laughs*]—what—why he likes it. It's fun.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And seein' all the people lining the streets and clapping and

cheering and all of that. It was just a . . .

SL: That was a great time.

[05:02:20] PP: And you know, grown men—and Jack Butt, a lawyer.

[*Laughter*] Now, Joe Fennel had—I mean, he—they really loved Joe Fennel because at Bordinos, where he used to be, he hired so many—well, he's—where he still is but they had hired so many high school boys who needed a job to stay in school. And he hired so many of 'em to come and help out. Course, you know, and they just really thought so much of him because he helps out so many boys. So he was kind of associated, you know. He kept an association with this high-school age.

SL: Sure.

PP: But it was so—it was just a delightful occasion.

[05:03:03] SL: Well, now, Peggy, you know, at this time it sounds like Don's health is kind of failing and . . .

PP: It was, and it did. It was for four years and one—that first year when he came in 2000 and this is when it started. And then we tried having a caregiver, and that worked for a while. But even with that, when the care is 24/7, it gets to be . . .

SL: Really . . .

PP: . . . where you can't do it because you're not only caring for the person, which you could do, but there are meals to be cooked

and dishes to be washed and laundry to be done and beds to be made and floors to be swept, as well as—so what happened was we didn't make that decision. He fell.

SL: Oh!

[05:04:01] PP: And he actually had had several falls, and that is a warning sign, I think, for dementia that you—they feel unbalanced and fall, just, you know, just go down. And I was fixing Sunday lunch and the caregiv—there was no caregiver. It was just Donald and me there. And he walked into the, you know, into the kitchen, and then he started—he opened the kitchen door to the garage. And I said, "Oh, Donald, please don't walk." And I—but I was fixing meat that I couldn't just leave it, and I said, "Please don't go in the garage." But he did, and then when I got this to the point where I could leave it for a few minutes, I went out into the garage, and he was slumped down in front of the garage door. And that was another time I cried. And I said, "Oh, Donald, I begged you not to come out here." And I said, "I don't think I can get you back in the house by myself." [*Sighs*] And it was really a struggle, really a struggle. And it was church time, and I didn't have anybody to call. I could've called 911, but I thought it—I didn't see it as a big problem. The big problem was just getting him back . . .

SL: Get him up.

PP: . . . into the house.

SL: Yeah.

[05:05:26] PP: So we struggled, and he struggled, and he tried to help me, and I finally dragged him back into the house. And I got—I think I got him to the bed in the bedroom. And then the next day—then we had caregivers, and I can't remem—and I think not a hospice nurse but a home health nurse came. And she said, "I think he has a broken hip." And I didn't think so, and the caregiver didn't think so. So we didn't do—we didn't call a doctor. We didn't call 911. And then the next day, I, all of a sudden, got to thinking that for three days he had laid in the bed, and course, I wasn't sleeping in the same bed with him then.

SL: Right.

[05:06:22] PP: And the caregiver was on call, and I realized he was sleeping in the same position. He didn't move.

SL: Not good.

PP: And I thought, "Oh." So then—but I still didn't think he had a broken hip, but I did think he need—the doctor needed to see him. So I called down to the clinic, which is close to our house, and they wanted me to bring him down. And it was such a short

distance, and me so sure that nothing serious was wrong, I called up [*SL sighs*] the comp—the telephone company and asked for two fellows to come up and help me take him down, and they did. But it was a struggle for two fellows in his—in Donald's condition to get him through the house and out the door and into the car—to lift him into the car. And then when I got to the clinic, they were supposed to have a wheelchair out there for me, and they didn't. And—or maybe—I'm tryin' to think if they s—no. But anyhow, there was supposed to be a wheelchair. But I went in and got one and came out. Well, it was a struggle. But then they x-rayed him.

SL: And it was a broken hip.

PP: And it was broken. And course, I felt terrible about it. Not only was it broken, it was broken badly. [05:07:56] And what I'm thinking now is that those falls—it wasn't just that big fall.

SL: It was multiple.

PP: But that was the final thing, you know. But it was—the hip was crushed. Not just broken. Not where they could go in and mend it and sew him up and . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . he'd be good. But it was gonna take a replacement. So this was hard. And when they said replacement that—I thought,

"Oh! It's getting harder and harder." But that's because I was so naïve about it. I don't know why I thought that was so much harder in this day and time than mending the hip, but I did, and maybe take much longer for him to recover. But he had the surgery, and he got through it beautifully. The doctor was—I can't remember, but he's one that everybody knows about, and he has a wonderful reputation.

SL: Park?

PP: No. But anyhow, and then he, as soon as it was over, he call—'cause I was in the waiting room, but he called a message in that Donald was doin' fine and he was still asleep under the anesthetic and they would keep him in the recovery room until, you know, x amount of time.

[05:09:17] SL: Was it Washington Regional?

PP: Uh-huh. And . . .

SL: That's where my wife works—in the recovery room.

PP: And so, he was in there and then—and so, I decided, "If I don't go out and walk rapidly, I'm not gonna be able to hold back the tears." So [*sighs*] since I didn't have him and they were watchin' him in recovery, I told the nurses that I was gonna go outside and—or I told somebody that I was gonna go outside and walk [*unclear words*]. And I took a—what did I take? They



gave me something where they could alert me if I needed to come racing back.

SL: Some kind of pager.

[05:09:59] PP: Pager. So they gave me that, and off I went. And I walked, and I walked, and I walked, and I walked, and I walked at a very fast pace, and it did help. But then the caregiver, having heard—so I had called, you know, and cancelled out everybody that would come to him—the home health nurse not to come and also the caregiver. But she came, which I just thought was wonderful, and I said, "I just can't believe that you're here." And she—I said, "I think I had better go home and get some things so I can spend the night." And she said, "That's what I'm here for. I'm gonna spend the night with Donald."  
[Sighs] You know, another blessing and—because she was so conscientious. And I went home, and I took a warm bath, and I rested, and I ate a meal of some kind, and I slept through the night, and I got up early, and I went to the hospital. And she had written down every time anybody came in and what they did for him—exactly what time. So apparently, either she didn't sleep a bit, or it woke her up when they came in to check on him. And I—that pleased me so.

SL: Sure.

[05:11:31] PP: I showed it to the doctors and the nurses. I said, "Can you believe this? That she kept such a record so that I would know absolutely what kind of care he had during the night?" And it was good care, too. And they didn't know she was doing this, that she was writin' all this down. So that really did relieve my mind. But then he stayed in the hospital, and then they sent him to HealthSouth for therapy. And he was just beginning—and I can't remember how many days, four or five days, that he was set for therapy in HealthSouth. They had lost their—they would've moved him to another—to Arizona to open another HealthSouth there. But he and I were friends. We were on the hospital foundation board together, and we were really good friends.

SL: You mean the director of this . . .

PP: Of . . .

SL: . . . rehab center?

PP: . . . HealthSouth. Of HealthSouth. But there was a new one. So anyhow, Donald went over there, and he would not participate. He would not walk. He would not do anything that they wanted him to do. But it wasn't part—it was not his fault entirely. Everybody in HealthSouth got diarrhea. I had a friend there who was in the room down the hall. She had it. And so,

you couldn't count those two days that Donald wouldn't do anything. Of course he wouldn't do anything. And another thing I was so upset about. In clothes that he had soiled, they put 'em in a drawer right beside the bed—soiled clothes. And I did tell them that I wanted to take his sweaters home to wash myself. I didn't want them goin' through the hot wash. But this was everything that I took home and scrubbed by hand before I could put it in the washing machine. [*Sighs*] But you do what you have to do. [05:13:41] And—but anyhow, and then on that last day Donald was takin' an interest in it, and he was doing a little walking with 'em. Now, it depended on the caregiver who was there a whole lot. And he really took to this one. And he was really trying to walk around with his support. And then they were doing fun things, ball games, you know, throwin' the ball back and forth and that sort—and he was participating, which is the first time he'd ever participated in anything. And all these things were to build up all of his muscles. And I thought, "Oh, this is great!" And he lost two days anyhow, so the nurses came up and said that they were having to dismiss him, and course, that meant comin' home. And I said, "Could he"—or maybe going to City Hospital. And I said, "If he could stay two more days. He's just now beginning to participate in the therapy."

And they said, "No, he has to leave today. His—that were—those were the orders." So I went up and talked to the director, and I said, "He could do so much better if—now that he's getting onto it and knowing these caregivers, these fellows, you know, who were helping out." And he said, "Oh no, no. His orders were—we have to dismiss him today." And I told him—I said, "If the director who preceded you was still here, he would've done this for the good of the patient." And I said, "I'm sorry you feel that way, that orders are more important than the good of the patient." I'm not sure that I was right in doing that. Maybe they had somebody else to fill the bed. Maybe they just honest—he didn't say that. [05:15:34] But then we thought the best thing to do was to take him to City Hospital for therapy. But here again, he wouldn't participate. I don't think he ever really tried to walk on that hip. And as it turned out, he never walked again. So after they kept him, you know, on the floor and he wasn't getting any better, they started talkin' about long-term care. And then I tried to comfort myself that I couldn't have made that decision. I don't know what I would've done. And you know, they say often the caregiver's the one that goes first because the—of the—of how much it takes out of 'em. But because he was already in the hospital and all they had to do

was just move him down to the lower floor, which was the long-term care, and because they said so, and I didn't ask or didn't think, but they said, "This is what we will have to do." [05:16:41] And they took him down for long-term care, and he was there for three years. And I went every day except Saturday, and David went on Saturday. And that was my life and—but I accepted it. And all—I would get up and try to have a good breakfast and get ready and go to the hospital and take him outside if I could. They would have him dressed and ready, knowing I was coming, and they would have him dressed and ready. Now, if it was bad weather, I'd take him, roll him around the hospital. But of course, we were on the lower floor, and there's that steep ramp, and I would . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . have to push—I should have gotten—because my knees, both of 'em, began to pay for it. And I just know that that's—'cause never—nothing else I ever did put that strain on my knees like that, pushin' him up that steep ramp. But then if I took him outside, it was also steep because it's on a hill and then . . .

SL: Yeah.

PP: . . . you know, you're—to get off anywhere you're goin' down the

hill. And so, I'm sure that added to it, too. But I wanted him out in the fresh air. And he liked goin' around the hospital, and we'd—you know, liked it that people—and the nurses were just wonderful. [05:18:10] Jane Ledbetter—if the nurses didn't really love the patients, I mean, take tender, loving care of each patient, they didn't last at City Hospital in the long-term care unit. And so, when the nurses would see him, they'd all say, "Hi, Donald!" And they would lean down and kiss him on the cheek, you know. [*SL laughs*] He loved all of this attention. He loved meeting people, you know, that came in. The nurses were so—they never passed him by without speaking, hugging, or kissin' him on the cheek or on the forehead. And they just admitted—they said, "We love Donald." [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that's good.

PP: And he had that sweet—yeah—nature about him that was just so wonderful. And then they put in a roommate that was the father of a doctor. And, oh, that was the kind of patient, you know, that is so hard to take care of, one that really doesn't wanna be there, doesn't know why he's there, doesn't believe he should be there, uses terrible language, foul language, and maybe they don't even know what they're saying. I don't know. But I went to Jane, and I said, "Jane, I'm sorry, but I just don't think that

Donald can take this." And she said, "Don't you worry about it. We'll find him a room that maybe will be a better situation for him, too." And see, the father of a doctor, how can a person—I mean, how could Jane Ledbetter do this to the father of a doctor?

SL: Right.

PP: Because, of course, all nurses have to . . .

SL: Kowtow.

PP: . . . you know, court the doctors and respect 'em. [05:19:51]

But anyhow, she found a room with a window, and see, Donald was by the window, and he wasn't by a window. And the family were grateful that they had found this better room for him. And oh, was I grateful. But I'd called David and wanted him to come up while I talked to Jane because I thought it might be a difficult situa—I mean, I knew Jane, and she wouldn't be difficult. I didn't mean that.

SL: Yeah.

[05:20:15] PP: But if she couldn't somehow adhere to what I was saying. And so, then [*laughs*] David went in to be with Donald, and he came back, and he said, "Mother, I don't think Daddy would've cared." He didn't think that Donald was going to even know what was going on. [*Tapping sound*] Now, he would know

me when I came, maybe until the last, and that one time when I came in and he was in the wheelchair and—but a nurse—they were so good to him, and they would take him up and down the hall as they made rounds sometimes just to . . .

SL: Get him out.

PP: . . . give him a different wall to look at.

SL: Yeah, sure. [*Thumping sound*]

[05:20:54] PP: And he saw me coming, and I leaned down to kiss him, and he said, "Oh, there you are. That's the—it's the best part of the day."

SL: Oh!

PP: And I think that was the last thing he ever said to me, although I—he knew me after that, but we couldn't converse.

[05:21:10] SL: Mh-hmm. [*Sighs*] That's a hard four years.

PP: Well, it was just three years there.

SL: Oh.

PP: It was one year at home, and that was hard. But you know, it wasn't as hard as you might think because once the decisions are made and once he's getting the care that he needs and once you know he's getting good care and once you know that the people who are caring for him love him, and they tease him, and they hug him and—you know, then it takes so much of the



burden off of you. It really, really does. So I would stay until his lunchtime and they—I don't know at first, but I think maybe for a long, long time they had to feed him. And so, I would take him down for lunch and get him positioned where they were going to feed him his lunch. But then I left. Now, I could have gone to the mall 'cause this would be probably one thirty. I could have gone to the Square. I could have, but I didn't. I could've gone to a movie. But I couldn't. I couldn't do something like that that would maybe be enjoyable or might would have tired me out that I wouldn't have felt like going the next day. Well, I wasn't about to let that happen. My strength was going to be used for Donald, if that was all the strength I was gonna have. So I never did do anything else except go to the hospital. [05:22:54] But I loved visiting with the nurses, you know. I just saw what wonderful care he got. [*Sighs*] Jane Ledbetter was so wonderful. I'll always love her for this, and so will every other family member of any patient in long-term care. And yet, you know, she felt like that was her calling. She really did. So—and I think, also, if you come to the point not only of saying, "Okay, I accept this. It's not gonna get better. And it's not"—I mean, it's gonna get worse, but you don't know exactly what worse is. I mean, you know what it's gonna lead to, but is

that worse than—you know what I mean?

SL: Where he is now. Yes. Uh-huh.

[05:23:53] PP: So once you decide that that's God's plan and if you really accept it—if I really accepted that that was God's plan for Donald's life, then that was God's plans for my life. And if I accepted it, I was not going to begrudge it. I was not going to complain. I was not going to find any criticism. I was not going to have any kind of a pity party. I was not gonna let people say, "Oh, Peggy!" And I'd say, "You know, you can make it a joyful day. You really can if you want to." And that's what I did. Now, I didn't do anything to pleasure myself, but I decided that being able to go and see Donald and be with him—and I could talk to him. He couldn't respond, but I don't ha—you don't have any idea what's—what they can comprehend but can't respond to.

SL: I know. It's frustrating.

[05:25:04] PP: And I'd say, "Oh, Donald. I just never would've married anybody but you. You were the only one. I'd be an old maid right now had [*SL laughs*] I not gone out to Lake Wedington that day," and things like that. And then I would comb his hair, and I would—and one time Jane Ledbetter said, "Peggy, you cannot imagine the influence that you've had, the way that you have treated Donald and the way the young interns

and the CNAs and even family members, you know, are not watching you, but they're walking past you, and they're noticing. And they're noticing that Donald has a happy face and that you have a happy countenance on your face and that you're somehow turning this into good for both of you." And that's just the healthiest way to do it.

[05:25:59] SL: That's really inspirational. You handled that very well. Not everybody does, but you did a good job with that.

PP: But I would never criticize anybody. You know, people are different. Being the daughter of a nurse, I'm sure, has something to do with that.

SL: Sure.

PP: And Mother was always so tender when anyone was sick or hurting or needed surgery or whatever it was. She was so tender that, you see, I mean, just by watching and being around her I absorbed that. And though I'm not a nurse and I ca—and I'm a da—if you're recuperating, I'm a dandy nurse. [*SL laughs*] But if you're not recuperating already [*laughs*], I'm not that . . .

SL: You're in uncharted territory.

PP: I'm not that kind of a nurse. I—it—I'm too empathetic. Whatever. Do you know I used to—when I used to volunteer at the hospital, and I'd go down at four o'clock after school and

stay till seven. And course, I would give p.m. care to the patients, and that meant a sponge bath, a back rub, an alcohol bath rub, dusting with dusting powder, sitting and listening to 'em, feeding them their supper. And I would feed them their supper, and I, so help me, could never eat supper. I was full after this.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And—but this is it. I would feel what they were feeling. And it was really, you know, kind of funny. But it would fill me up, and I just would not be hungry. And—but I also learned a lot, and I learned a lot about myself and my limitations. And so, you know, I kind of knew what I could do and what I couldn't do. But what I could do, I wanted to do it, and I wanted to learn from it, and I wanted to do it in a happy, cheerful way.

[05:28:03] SL: So Donald passes. You . . .

PP: Yes.

SL: You have the service.

PP: Yes. And you know, it was so—in our church a lot—and lot—in times, in Prairie Grove, you know, you have your own little city ways of doing things, and so, lots of times the family will sit behind in the back of the church and not in the front . . .

SL: That's right.

PP: . . . on the front rows. So this is what we did. I was really more worried for David than I was for me. I had come to terms with it. I had released Donald to God. I had already been through that. And David hadn't.

SL: Yeah.

PP: Not to that extent. And—but two of Donald's very good friends gave testimonials and one of 'em just—his voice broke. And David [*gasps*]*—I mean, he just went [*gasps*], you know, like that. He just—it just really got to him, and I reached over and took his arm, and that was all. But it really touched him.*  
[05:29:21] But the service went beautifully. Just beautifully. And then here—our—the person who does the funerals will do a videotape of pictures, of family, of happy times, family times . . .

SL: Sure. Yes.

PP: . . . and show that. And that sort of takes the sadness away. And it's just then sort of a—just a celebration of life. And it sort of takes that finality that you tend to think of in death that Christians shouldn't think of, but they do. But—so—and that went over really, really well. And then we had a family dinner that the church sponsored and this—the service was at the Methodist church because our church is not big enough to hold—I knew there would be . . .

SL: A lot of folk.

PP: . . . a lot of people. And course, the whole telephone company came. They shut down, and all of them came. And then they had a lunch for us, and it was just—it really was a good day, a good service, a good goodbye, and I think even for David it was.

[05:30:51] SL: Well, you seem k—how long ago was that, now?

PP: That was in two thou—well, 2003. He was sick four—2007. Five years ago.

SL: Well, you seem to be . . .

PP: Alm—almost five years ago.

SL: You seem to be just doing really well, just off-the-scale well. You seem full of energy . . .

PP: You know . . .

SL: . . . and you're . . .

PP: . . . I think . . .

SL: . . . full of life and happiness and grateful, and you still have this humbleness about you that's so . . .

PP: Well . . .

SL: . . . attractive, and I don't know. There's just something about—you seem so well balanced and in great shape in almost every way. I—you are—you've—you're kind of inspirational . . .

PP: Well . . .

SL: . . . in a way that . . .

PP: Thank you for saying that.

SL: . . . you've conducted yourself. I mean, it's . . .

[05:31:39] PP: I can't ex—I cannot pinpoint it. I cannot—somehow, I was determined. It—somehow it didn't seem to me that it would add anything to my faith or anybody's idea of whether or not I did have any faith if I had a long grieving time. I had a four-year sickness. And three years—and you know in long-term care that this is what it means. You're there until the end. And I seem to have been able to cope with that situation as it changed and went downhill and changed even more. And then after he died, I don't know—it just seemed like I would be railing against God. "How could you? Are you really a loving God?" And of course, knowing all the time that Donald was eight years older and that he would likely—this would likely happen. And then the fact that you look at the quality of their life as it's taken away from 'em. Now, see, with Jim Parks, that was from being very well and playing cards and skipping and whistling as you come in at midnight to being gone the next morning to Donald's long illness and the long time I had to accept it. And it—and I think bein' in a small town helped. But it was not that people were looking after me. It wasn't like that exactly. And course,

having David. He really—he's my strength. He's so levelheaded. He's such a Christian. I can lean on him. He could lean on me if he needed to. But he is so strong, and his wife is so strong, such strong Christians, and that they know without a doubt that Donald really is in a better place.

SL: Sure.

[05:34:21] PP: And that he probably is experiencing the good times that we experience [*SL laughs*], on some level.

SL: Sure.

PP: And that there will be another reunion waiting for us and, you know, to tell you the truth—now, I told you Donald almost died on my birthday, which was November the twelfth. So he died on the fifteenth, and Barry had died on Betty's birthday, and see, he just missed mine by three days. And the funeral was on the seventeenth, and Thanksgiving was coming, and Christmas was coming, but I didn't, to anybody, and even to myself, I didn't fall into despair the first Thanksgiving without Donald, the first Christmas without him.

SL: Yeah.

PP: I didn't do it. And I—in a—just a very quiet way, I just spent a—went about with my life, not allowing myself to just get down and grieve because you can't both accept it, which means, "Yes,



God, you did a good thing," because he did for Donald. So I can't remember, except that I know that I didn't and that we did have Thanksgiving with the family and that we did have Christmas. And it was, you know . . .

SL: Strengthening.

PP: It was strengthening to be with family, and we just didn't—and course, he'd been sick so long.

SL: Yeah.

PP: We'd had other Thanksgivings without chr—without Donald. Other Christmases. Three others, four others . . .

SL: Really?

PP: . . . without Donald. This wasn't the first.

SL: Right.

[05:36:23] PP: So I think with David as my strength, with God as my strength, with my thanking God for taking care of Donald, for not letting him linger when there was noth—no quality of life left for him, what a blessing. What a blessing. And I keep thinking as Christians we have to look differently at life. We have to say to ourselves, "This is not the end. We'll be separated for a while, and then we'll be together again." And I don't know. I just don't remember ever falling down in just absolute grief and despair. And I know that lots of people say the hardest time is

five o'clock when they come home from work.

SL: Right.

[05:37:26] PP: Well, Donald didn't always do this. He'd—sometimes he'd work late and then came home. We were very close. But the two of us or the three of us never at anytime in our lives was all we had.

SL: Always something going on.

PP: Well, we always had family.

SL: And always had faith.

PP: We always had faith. We always had friends. But it wasn't like we just lived for each other, and if one was missing life was not worth living. It just never was like that. And course, I was still—I think I still served on those boards before I—and I just now have gotten off the Foundation Board of Washington Regional. And the only reason I got off of the—two of the boards were they were in Springdale, and it got to the point where if the weather was bad or foggy or something . . .

SL: You didn't wanna travel.

PP: So I finally worked off of those boards. And I'd been on a long time, particularly Ozark Guidance. Well, no, both of them—probably twenty years.

[05:38:37] SL: You have an enormous [*laughs*] history of public

service.

PP: Well, but it's something I love to do. And it was so—when I retired from teaching, I thought, "Oh, is there life after teaching?" [*SL laughs*] And that was it.

SL: Yeah.

PP: And they called me and invited me to come and serve on their boards, and I just took that as God's message.

SL: There you go.

PP: And it was wonderful. And here I'd spent all thirty years with nine year olds, and now, all of a sudden, I was thrown with adults, and I loved that, too. So each part of my life was just a huge blessing for my—for me in different ways.

[05:39:16] SL: You've had a remarkable life, and you have given us remarkable stories. And you know, it's hard to see some of the things that you talked about as history in and of itself, but what you've done is you've painted a picture of what life is like not only from the early [19]30s but right now. And what life is. And people will look at this, and they'll look at it years from now. Life may be a little bit different, but there's still some core things here that will run true.

[05:39:57] PP: You know, and I've told David this—I said, "You know, if I died tomorrow, I would die happy." Because I've had

such a happy life, and I've had problem areas but have received help, have worked through them, have been blessed by them because two cancers for surgery turned out to be scary before I had it and, "Oh, thank you, Lord, for sparing me." And at age eighty-four, I can tell you my life is absolutely—well, you know what Hyatt said? "It sounds like you had a dream life."

SL: Had a dream life.

PP: I feel like now my life is a dream life. I am so grateful to have lived this long. I am so grateful to have had the experiences that I've had. I am so grateful for David and seeing the kind of man that he became, the kind of husband that he is and was, always, the kind of man to run the company that bears his name. It's such a joy for me. And these thi—and it just seems like that not a lot of things come my way. Not a lot of things are—am I invited to. I don't mean that—I'm not overwhelmed with invitations, and I actually probably don't—I mean, I love to be invited to something that I can participate in in a serving capacity not just for pleasure. I've never been one to go to lunch with girlfriends. I've—my friends will tell you, even though I can play bridge, I don't. I could, and I keep thinkin' when I get older, I will.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a ways away yet.

[05:42:15] PP: And—but I don't know. I just find—and then when spring—I guess I go through a renewal every spring. But somehow spring just [*inhales deeply*—as everything else comes out and blooms, you know, I just feel like I come out and bloom. I love it. I love going outdoors. I love seeing the blooming plants and the trees leafing out and the grass growing, and I don't have to mow it. And—but I don't know. I just—I almost—no, I won't say that. But you wonder if you really deserve this. But I'm gonna take it, whether [*SL laughs*] I deserve it or not. I'm gonna take it because I'm just loving life. I really, truly am. And nothing has to be fancy for me, and nothing has to be life changing. And that one trip that I made with David to Panama, I adored every minute of it. I still adore thinkin' about it. And people said, "Boy, now that you've got your passport, you're gonna wanna be traveling all the time." But I'm no—I'm very content at home. I'm very content alone at home. I—and—but I stay busy. And I keep my mind busy every morning. And David'll tease me, you know, about my mind, and I'll say—so I'll work the crossword puzzle, and I'll say, "Okay. I've worked the crossword puzzle. I'm good today." [*Laughter*]

SL: There you go. It's a good barometer.

[05:43:52] PP: But I like to read, and I like to work crossword

puzzles. But I'm—in a sense I think I'm a good companion to myself because I just will not let myself fall down into negative feelings, into criticisms, into—once in a while, once in a while, I feel a little bit sorry, just a little bit, because I wasn't invited to this or that. But that's so temporary. [*SL laughs*] And—but I honestly feel that what comes to me as an invitation comes from God, and it's from God to that person to me, even though they don't know it. And so, I accept those things. Every time I was called to ask to serve on a board, I felt honored, and I said yes. I have even told Chancellor Gearhart that I will serve on [*laughs*] his—what is it? Billion-dollar campaign.

SL: His cam—new campaign.

PP: New campaign. And he asked me to be a part of it, and I said yes. And I said, "Now, you know my age 'cause this goes on till 2020." And he said, "Yes, I know your age." And see, in a way that's kind of a confidence builder, in a way. I'm not takin' it that way. I'm not saying, "Then this must mean"—it doesn't mean—it was just cute and fun for him to say, "Of course I know your age."

SL: It'll be exciting.

PP: And . . .

SL: It'll be an exciting time, and it'll be something . . .

PP: But I just like—well, see, but then things come along, you know, that—and enough things come along that I am invited to participate in that keep me looking forward to this or this or this, and not more than that come along at a time, and I accept that as being what God thinks is good for me.

[05:46:02] SL: Peggy, I've got to thank you again for giving us all this time and all these stories. It's been a wonderful, great honor for me personally to sit across from you, and I know all the crew here has fallen deeply in love with you.

PP: Well, it's returned.

SL: And [*laughs*—but you know, so . . .

PP: See, don't ask me to join you [*SL laughs*] 'cause I'm the yes girl. [*Laughter*]

SL: You've already joined. [*PP laughs*] You say—you've already said yes. You said yes when you said, "Okay, I'll do the interview." You've all—you're already in. You're what I—you are now what I call a Pryor Center victim. You have fallen with us so I—and it's [*pats something*] wonderful. So I wanna thank you again. Now, there is one more thing that we like to do, and you don't have to do this, but you know, this whole idea of getting Arkansans to tell their Arkansas stories instead of someone else tellin' 'em for us. It—the idea is to show this to kids. [*BP clears throat*] Show

it to the people of Arkansas and instill some pride in being from Arkansas instead of being told.

[05:47:19] PP: We won't show it to anybody in Prairie Grove. [*SL laughs*] You can take it any—you can take it to Lincoln or Farmington or [*SL laughs*] Hogeye, and that's fine. [*SL laughs*] But not here.

SL: Well, let—this is what we usually do. We usually ask the interviewee to pretend like, just for one sentence, that this camera is a person, or you can pretend like you're talkin' to Bruce.

PP: Hey there. [*BP laughs*]

SL: And you look at the camera, and you just look straight at the camera down the lens, and you say, "I'm Peggy Parks, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas." And I'm gonna move so you don't look at me. And once you say that, if you'll just keep looking at the camera for maybe a couple of counts, 1,001, 1,002, that'll give us enough time to do an edit 'cause we wanna string all these together, with all the people that we've interviewed. Okay? So I'm gonna get out of the way, and you just go whenever it's good for you.

[05:48:23] PP: I'm Peggy Murphy Parks. I live in Prairie Grove, Arkansas. I am so thrilled to be an Arkansan. I think Arkansas



is the best place in the world to grow up, and I think Arkansas is the best place to say that you are from. People don't understand the real depth and height and width of Arkansas, but I promise you, it's all there. It's wide, it's deep, it's high, with thrilling experiences, wonderful people, dedicated ones who want to serve community, state, and nation. Arkansas has proudly sent to Washington, DC, congressmen, well-known congressmen, senators, and a president. Any state, any state, would be proud as Arkansas is to have sent the personnel they've sent to run the country. I feel so indebted to know some of these people, to work with 'em, to admire their work, and hope they'll continue to serve in public service.

[05:50:14] SL: Okay, that was really, really sweet.

PP: And a whole lot more than you asked for.

SL: Yeah, all we really want is that really short [*PP laughs*] sentence, "I'm Peggy" . . . [*SL laughs*]

PP: All right, I'll do it again.

SL: "I'm Peggy Murphy Parks, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

PP: Cut the other off and send it to me.

SL: Okay. All right.

PP: I knew that. [*SL laughs*] I knew that.

BP: All right. Ready?

[05:50:40] PP: I'm Peggy Parks. I am really proud to be from  
Arkansas.

[End of Interview 05:50:50]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]