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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Ray Thornton

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

September 20, 2011

Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

See the Citation Guide at http://pryorcenter.uark.edu.

Scott Lunsford interviewed Ray Thornton on September 20, 2011, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Let's get started on this thing.

Ray Thornton: Okay.

SL: We're rollin' tape now, and—um—Ray, I usually start with—today's date is September 20. The year is 2011. And we're in Little Rock at 1 Gay Place. I'm sorry. I don't know the name of the person whose residence that we're at, but we—we decided we wanted kind of a private, withdrawn place to—to do this interview, and—and—uh—Julie Baldridge, your—your loyal—uh—helper has—has gotten this pla . . .

RT: She and I have worked together for many years, and she is really an extraordinary person. And—uh—on this day, she has just been named—uh—the interim director of the—uh—uh—scholarship lottery commission—uh—staff in—uh—Little Rock.

SL: That's a great honor.

RT: Well, it is for her, and—uh—and she deserves it.

SL: Well, we're very grateful for her help in—in finding this place and getting us together and . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: Um—let me say first that—uh—uh—it is a great honor to be

sitting across from you. And—uh—I've looked forward to this for—for some time. Now let—let me give you a little—a brief description of what we're doing . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . here. Uh—we're recording this interview in high-definition video and audio. And—um—you will get a copy of all the raw footage . . .

RT: Good.

SL: . . . of what we do so—so you can look at it. We will also transcribe this interview. And when that's ready in its first draft, we will send you that transcription.

RT: Very good.

SL: And between those two elements, we'd like for you to look and read, and if there's anything—anything—um—in the interview that you're uncomfortable with, you just need to tell us, and—and we'll remove it. Um—the transcripts . . .

[00:01:51] RT: Well, you might substitute a more—uh—uh—eloquent and articulate [*SL laughs*]—uh—interviewee, but I suppose that would not be—uh—in keeping with the purpose, which is . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] No.

RT: . . . to let [*laughs*] people see me.

SL: We don't do that.

RT: Okay.

SL: We won't do that. We won't substitute you. But if there—really, seriously—if there are any problems that—that you're uneasy about, you just let us know, and . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . and we'll work it out. Uh—the transcript that you get—we'll ask you to make sure that we got the spellings right and—um—that the places are right and maybe the dates. If—if there's any questions—Joy will have questions for you . . .

RT: Good.

SL: . . . after each break—uh—to [*camera clicks*]—to help along with that—to speed up the transcription process. Um—now—uh—once all of that is kind of taken care of and you're comfortable and—and we—we've done what we need to do to—to make you comfortable—uh—then we will—um—post this stuff on the web . . .

RT: Mh-hmm.

[00:02:49] SL: . . . on the Pryor Center website. And we'll have selected video clips. We won't do the entire video 'cause it takes up so much space. But selected highlights of [*camera clicks*] the—and you'll know what those are gonna be before . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . we do it. But we will post the—the transcript, the edited transcript, in its entirety. And we will post the [*camera clicks*] audio portion of this interview in its entirety. Uh—we will also—uh—post the pictures that Kris is scanning in—in the back . . .

RT: Yes.

[00:03:19] SL: . . . so that people can see these things that we're talking about, as well. And—um—we'll—we'll let you know when that's about to happen, and—and [*camera clicks*] we will encourage Arkansas students of history, both in the grade schools and secondary schools and the universities. We'll encourage [*electronic sound*] researchers and documentarians to use this material to proliferate Arkansas history. And we think we're having great success with it, and people are—are really going to our site, and we already have teachers that are using it in their classrooms. So we're . . .

RT: Great.

SL: . . . we're excited about that. Now, if, Ray, if all of that's okay with you, we're gonna . . .

RT: Oh my.

SL: . . . we're gonna keep goin'.

RT: Yes, I'm—uh—I'm very honored that you would come and want

to—uh—interview me. Uh—I have looked back, and—uh—I think I have had a remarkable—uh—set of parents and—uh—loved ones who have steered me and guided me, and—uh—I'm glad to have an opportunity to talk some about that.

SL: Okay. Well, let's get goin'.

RT: Okay.

SL: And let's remember, also, any time that you need to take a break . . .

RT: Oh . . .

SL: . . . we're gonna take a break.

RT: Okay.

SL: Now we will take breaks every—about every hour anyway.

RT: Okay.

SL: Um—'cause that's how long the tapes last. And I'll encourage you . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . to get up and stand and walk around and get out of that chair.

RT: Sounds good.

[00:04:46] SL: Okay. Well—um—I usually start with where and when you were born.

RT: I was—uh—born—uh—in Conway, Arkansas, in a house that my

father had bought for his mother. She—he paid $600 [*SL laughs*] for the little house on Ash Street in Conway because—uh—uh—she had lost—uh—through a separation her husband—she was selling—uh—pins and needles and other—uh—materials like that in a little cart that she pushed around the city of Conway. And Mother and Dad thought that—uh—uh—she needed more. So they paid $600 for this house on Ash Street. Uh—I was born there and then went with them to Leola where my dad was superintendent of schools and Mother—uh—after a while—well, she'd been a teacher before I was—uh—born there. And we—um—uh—[*unclear word*]—had a little house in Leola

that—uh—we paid about $1100 for. And—uh—my earliest memories were of Mother in that little house. And they were teachers, and they spent their time teaching me. Uh—I don't want this to sound like I was just a bookworm, but I was reading by the time I was three and reading—uh—the newspaper to my grandfather, who lived at Prattsville—uh—by the time I was three or three and a half, and he was a great influence on my life, as well. [00:06:40] Uh—the—uh—when I ran for Congress from the second congressional district—uh—there was some talk that I was a—uh—uh—somebody who had chosen to move into the district—uh—in order to run. And we countered that pretty

effectively by asking—uh—Mr. Kitchens, who owned the little house that I was born in, if we could open the campaign there. And—uh—he said, "Certainly, if you'll—uh—tell me that you won't do anything to—uh—cut my—uh—rights to use a gun for hunting." [*SL laughs*] And I agreed [*laughter*] to—to that, and—uh—we had the campaign opener on the steps of the house where I was born in Conway, Arkansas. And—uh—with that, the—uh—uh—criticism for—of my being a—uh—uh—uh—a walk-in person seeking a district to run in kinda disappeared. I—I

was . . .

[00:07:48] SL: You know, that's a . . .

RT: . . . a native.

SL: . . . very, very appropriate way to start a campaign, even if there hadn't been that controversy.

RT: Yes.

SL: That—that really says something—uh—about . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . the—the family and . . .

RT: And—uh—uh—uh—Dr.—uh—Farris—uh—who had been president of UCA, had been reared across the street from where my mother—grandmother's house was. And I choked on a banana

and hard rock candy, and this was Mr. Snow—uh—who—whose mother ran across the street and took me by the heels and shook me until the—uh—uh [*SL laughs*]—rock candy and banana—uh—came out. So my life was saved there. And—uh—uh—Dr. Snow—uh—uh—was always pleased that he could claim credit for his mother saving my life.

[00:08:48] SL: You know, I don't think we got the date that you were born.

RT: Say?

SL: The date that you were born?

RT: Oh—uh—I was born on July 16 . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

RT: . . . 1928, before the—uh—crash on Wall Street. And—uh—uh—the dates—uh—of the house purchases—uh—may seem remarkable. But—uh—$600—uh—for a little—uh—two-bedroom house on Ash Street was the goin' price—uh—at that time.

SL: So—um—you were born just right at the head end of the Great Depression.

RT: I was. And because I was carefully taught—uh—I remember clearly—uh—many aspects of the Great Depression. I learned to read when I was three. Uh—I got special teaching from my two teacher parents, and as a result of that, I was—uh—uh—a

university student—uh—when I was sixteen years old—uh—again, attending at what was State Teachers College in Conway. And—uh—I had been kind of a bookworm in high school, and my classmates were always good to me, but they would talk about checking me out to help [*SL laughs*] get their lessons. And I—I—I sensed that they—uh—uh—thought I was—uh—maybe showin' out or something, but I really wasn't. I—it was just easy for me to—uh—read and—and get the information out of the books.

[00:10:31] SL: I—I wanna go back to—uh—to—uh—your—uh—let—let's talk a little bit about your mom and dad.

RT: Okay.

SL: But I also wanna talk about your grandparents . . .

RT: Good.

SL: . . . on both sides, and—um—so—um—your mom and dad—were they—um—where were they from? Where—where did they come from?

RT: My father was from—uh—the Conway area. He actually lived out on—uh—Gold Creek, which is now submerged under Lake Conway. And—uh—he was bright. He was the oldest of six children. His mother—uh—Sally—uh—Thornton, was a remarkable lady who had—uh—been—uh—uh—left by her

husband, who was a nice guy. I kept up with—uh—him through—through the years. Uh—and—uh—she had a tremendous will, and Dad, as a result, became the first member of our family to go to college. And he graduated from—uh—Teachers College in about 1925 or so and got a job as superintendent of the Poyen School District. He was the first person in Grant County—uh—to have a college degree, and they called him Professor Thornton. And [*SL laughs*] he—uh—uh—he was very, very smart. Uh—I think he was very smart in marrying Mother [*laughter*], who was also a—a—a brilliant person who later became a schoolteacher—uh—of—uh—more than forty years' experience and for whom the Harding University has named—uh—their College of Education building.

SL: That's a great honor.

[00:12:34] RT: It's the Wilma Stephens Thornton—uh—Building in Searcy, Arkansas. So I was fortunate in that I was a young child of two schoolteachers, and they didn't have enough class members in their classes, so they spent their time teachin' and indoctrinating me. [*Laughter*] And—and without my having any idea it was unusual—uh—they had me reading at the age of three. And while I was that age, I would go to Prattsville and read the newspaper to my grandfather. Uh . . .

SL: Now was—was your grandfather in Prattsville—was that your mother's father?

RT: That was my mother's father.

SL: Uh-huh.

RT: Mr. A. J. "Jack" Stephens. And in 1932—uh—he ran for state representative.

SL: Okay.

RT: And I got involved in that first political campaign by standing at the gate of the little house we lived in in—uh—uh—Leola and makin' a speech to anybody or any group that came by to please vote for my Papa. [*SL laughs*] "He's the best man in the race." And—and—uh—Papa—uh—took a special interest in me, and we—uh—developed that kind of friendship that may be unique to a—uh—a grandfather and a first grandchild. He was a remarkable guy.

[00:14:04] SL: Well, do you—uh—did you ever get to meet any of your great-grandparents?

RT: Yes. I—uh—I remember—uh—Mama's—uh—mother and father. Uh—I only remember—uh—his death and funeral, but I—I remember—uh—Maw Pumphrey's—uh—being around for couple of Christmases. And my—uh—Grandfather Thornton—Ashley—lived to nearly a hundred, and so I got to know that great-

grandfather well. [*Sniffs*] My papa**,** A. J. Stephens's—Jack Stephens's—uh—father—uh—was Lorenzo Dow Stephens. He traveled with Fremont to California and came back and was with General Fremont when he signed his premature emancipation proclamation. And—uh—he—uh—he was older, and he died when my grandfather was about fourteen or fifteen years old. And so Papa—uh—had a early—uh—uh—run at bein' the senior—uh—member of the Stephens family. And—he—uh—they lived at Mountain Spring, Arkansas, which is just north of Cabot.

SL: Yeah.

[00:15:34] RT: In fact, I think it's now—uh—surrounded by Cabot. Um—and Papa would tell me stories of life as it was in the late 1800s. And I learned from him, not book knowledge, but knowledge about people. He was so interested in—uh—people and what they—uh—could do. And course, I—I was interested in him because he, after all, had become the representative from Grant County, and—uh—he and I would talk politics. And he told me, and I remember this because—uh—it did have an effect on me, he said, "The best job in politics is to be a congressman because when you're a congressman, you're not a part of a—uh—a political party. You don't have a single unit of government to run. You're one of many people who have been selected by

their—uh—ci—fellow citizens to represent them in Congress. And so you are the people's representative. And I hope if you ever decide to go into politics, you will seek a congressional [*SL laughs*] position." Well, I—I—that was kind of a civics lesson. I didn't realize—uh—the difference between being a—a—a governor or a state senator. Uh—but those people all represent blocks, groups of people. And the governor administers—uh—politics. The only public official in the United States who can only be selected by the people of his district is a United States congressman. A United States congressman cannot be appointed, is not elected by a legislature, is not appointed by a governor or a—but must be elected by the people who live close to him and select him or her—uh—as their representative, their ambassador, to Washington.

[00:17:57] SL: Real truism that—uh—all politics is local. In this case . . .

RT: Uh—that's exactly right.

SL: . . . it—it is—it is the case . . .

RT: That's exactly right.

SL: . . . to be made there.

RT: And especially in the people's House of Representatives. Now I don't want to get too far ahead, but I have been distressed

that—uh—in recent years—uh—the people's House acts more like a—uh—uh—a political group or a—uh—uh—a set of people who are bound by instructions that—uh—are binding on them and not to represent the people. Your—uh [*snapping sound*]—I became good friends of—of David Pryor when we were both at the University of Arkansas. And he was an example of a person who believed in the people's government, and—uh—and he taught me a lot. [00:18:51] Uh—but going back to Papa—uh—I—I really had a special relationship with him, and his words of advice meant a lot to me. Um—I—I don't know if you want me to go on with that.

SL: I do.

RT: But I have one—uh—remembrance that—uh . . .

SL: I do. I—yes.

RT: . . . of him. Uh—we had a—uh—centennial of the—uh—state of Arkansas's—um—admission into the Union in 1936. And we had it at Jenkins' Ferry, which is a—the site of a Civil War battle—uh—in which—uh—the Union army—uh—retreated from Camden and was—was savagely beaten at the battle of Jenkins' Ferry. They—uh—were able to make a—an escape—uh—across the Saline River at Jenkins' Ferry—uh—with—uh—the loss of—well, the historical papers of the time put the dead and wounded, and

many of them did not survive, at Jenkins' Ferry at two thousand people.

SL: Oh my gosh!

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:18] RT: Now that's a battle that, in light of three thousand people being killed at the World Trade Center, it's remarkable that you had that kind of terrible battle in Arkansas and near Prattsville. My grandfather—great-grandfather, Leven Pumphrey, sat on the porch of his house in Prattsville. He was too young to fight, but he'd listened to the savage bouts—bounds—booms of cannons, screams from Jenkins' Ferry, which were only a couple of miles away from his home. The Civil War was a terrible war for Arkansas and people—families split. Some members of the Pumphrey family sided with the Union and wanted to remain in—loyal to the flag. Others, maybe a majority, thought that the Confederate side was correct, that it wasn't right for us to be told what to do.

SL: States' rights.

RT: That's—yeah, yeah. It—didn't want the Yankees tellin' us . . .

SL: Sure.

RT: . . . how we should behave.

SL: Yeah.

RT: Well, my grandfather, Jack Stephens's father, Lorenzo Dow, I think I mentioned, served with Fremont . . .

SL: Yes.

RT: . . . General Fremont and was with him when he wrote his premature emancipation proclamation and fought in the battle of Shiloh. So Papa always told me, "Don't talk too much about your [*SL laughs*] great-grandfather. It's—he didn't have a very popular view [*laughter*] in Arkansas."

[00:22:21] SL: Well now, how far did that predate the accept of the emancipation?

RT: Well, it . . .

SL: How many years . . .

RT: . . . it was right at the outset of the war.

SL: So . . .

RT: Fremont came back from California to fight and to dispose of some of his property, and he had the idea that by freeing the slaves, we would cause them to revolt and the cause would be over. Lincoln did not think it was proper to make that a—an early declaration. In fact, he probably did not have the political capital to make an emancipation proclamation. So it was about three or four years later before Abraham Lincoln's proclamation was made.

SL: That's a very proud moment in your . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . family history.

RT: Yes.

SL: That's really, really good. You know, I'm always interested in details.

RT: Yes.

SL: You mentioned remembering a funeral of one of your grandparents or great-grandparents.

RT: Yes.

SL: Can you describe that funeral for us?

RT: Yes. It was Leven **"**Pa**"** Pumphrey's funeral. It was at the little church at the Philadelphia Cemetery. Prattsville was named after John Pratt, who traveled with a group of about forty families from Alabama to Arkansas in 1850 or so.

SL: Kay.

[00:24:14] RT: And John Pumphrey and John Pratt married sisters, and so the Pratt family and the Pumphrey family grew up very close together. And the Pumphrey plantation, which was not like a Delta plantation at all, but it was a suitable place where they could raise some cotton. And they did have slaves, but many of the slaves took the name Pumphrey and continued to live there.

And many members of the Pumphrey family were—had funerals which were well attended by the blacks in the community. And Leven Pumphrey's funeral was one that was like that. The singing was beautiful. The circumstances of the funeral itself were austere but fervent and hopeful. The Philadelphia Cemetery is a beautiful place just outside Prattsville, and it is still active and one of the most beautiful cemeteries anywhere. I remember it well.

SL: So by that time there were automobiles and automobile hearse and . . .

RT: I remember the first automobile that my grandfather had. My dad had become superintendent of county schools in 1933, about the same time that Papa became a state representative. And Dad had a car because it was his job to be the active superintendent of all of the little country schools in the county. It was a working job, and he had to travel from one school to the other to do the administrative work for Prattsville and Leola and Tull and Grapevine and . . .

[00:26:37] SL: These were all county dirt roads.

RT: County examiner is what the name of the superintendent's position was. [*SL laughs*] And these were dirt roads. Yes.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

RT: Yeah. And I remember, speaking of dirt roads, my grandparents Stephens had six children. The first, Albert, was born without a left leg. His left leg ended around the knee with a stump below that, and Witt would carry Albert on his back. And I remember—no, I don't. My mother has told me how the family celebrated when Albert got into his teens and they got a prosthesis leg to fit on his left leg so he could walk and get around like others. Despite that handicap, Albert was a good baseball pitcher. And [*laughs*] he could throw, according to Halbert—Bill Halbert told me that Albert could throw as hard as Dizzy Dean. [00:28:18] And of course, I don't know how they knew that, but [*SL laughs*] only Witt could catch him at the ball games. And one instance there is that Witt—Papa had told Witt and Albert to go clear up the river-bottom field and wanted to be sure they got it done today. Well, on the way to the field they saw a baseball game goin' on.

SL: Uh-oh.

RT: So they turned off and [*SL laughs*] went over to the ball game, and Witt became the catcher, and Albert became the pitcher. And Albert could really throw usin' that prosthetic leg to hike up, and he could sizzle it in there. Only Witt could catch it. And they were havin' a pretty successful game when Papa came by

and noticed that they were out there. He didn't let them know he saw 'em, and they weren't sure that they had seen him. But that evening Papa said, "Well, did you boys get the field cleaned up today?" And they swallowed hard and said, "No, sir, we didn't quite make it through." Said, "Do you think you can get it done by noon tomorrow?" "Oh yes, sir. Yes, sir." And so he [*laughs*] motivated them to get out the next day. Witt loved Albert and helped him to overcome some of his difficulties. And Albert got married and went to Florida. His wife left him, and he came back to Prattsville and married Helen Halbert. And they lived happily until now because Helen is still living and has one son named Mike who is taking care of all of the cattle and farm operations that Albert had developed over the years. I'm rambling. Sorry.

[00:30:24] SL: No, no. This is good. You know, you've mentioned that you were born on Ash Street. Was it pretty urban for the times . . .

RT: No, no.

SL: . . . back then?

RT: Ash Street was, of all things, paved. It was a concrete street, but it ended at the block where the house was located. 202 Ash Street . . .

SL: Okay.

RT: . . . was the number. Right across from that now, in the field that I played in is a—an elementary school. I believe it's the Cone Elementary . . .

SL: Okay.

RT: . . . School. And right down the street, about seven or eight blocks, was Teachers College—later Arkansas State Teachers College—University of Central Arkansas. And my mother did most of her collegiate work there at UCA in the summertimes, so I spent a lot of time in Conway with the Thornton family.

[00:31:36] SL: Well now, did you have any siblings?

RT: Yes, one sister born—I kind of think maybe this is—has somethin' to do with my becomin' a reader at three. She was born when I was three years old. She is a very bright and lovely girl who just celebrated her eightieth birthday. And she married Professor—Dr. Evan Ulrey at Harding University.

SL: Okay.

RT: She taught English there for many years and reared two fine girls, Ann and Bonnie, and Robert Ulrey works here in Little Rock for Stephens, and he is a brilliant young man. They have two children, Robert and Jill, who are among the new generation that's coming on now.

SL: Now the house that you were born in was not the same house that you were raised in. Is that . . .

RT: That's correct.

SL: Okay.

RT: It was—it remained my grandmother's house until her death. And then it went to the Kitchens family, and now the Kitchens family members that I knew have died, and I'm unaware of whether—what part of the family may still own the house.

[00:33:05] SL: Mh-hmm. Well, let's talk about the house that you were raised in.

RT: Okay. That was in Prattsville first.

SL: Okay. Now where is Prattsville in relation . . .

RT: Pratts . . .

SL: . . . to Conway?

RT: Well, it's actually in Leola. In Grant County, you go to Sheridan, which is in the center of the county, and you head west on 270. The next city you get to is Prattsville.

SL: Kay.

RT: And then the next little town is Poyen, and it was at Poyen where my dad has his first schoolteaching job and met my mother, who was in Prattsville. And then the next stop is Malvern. South of Poyen toward Camden is Leola, and Leola was

the place where the battle of Jenkins' Ferry commenced and came back up toward Sheridan across the Saline River.

SL: River. Uh-huh.

RT: And as I say, was a horrible battle, and it's just remarkable to me that you would have two thousand casualties there at a battlefield that is not really mentioned much.

SL: Americans killing Americans.

RT: Yeah.

SL: That's what's sad about that.

RT: Right.

[00:34:35] SL: So how much time in your early years did you live in Prattsville?

RT: Okay. The—my grandparents lived there. And Leola was ten miles away.

SL: Okay.

RT: So—and Mother was very much a homebody, so we spent time every week in Prattsville.

SL: Okay.

RT: And I would spend summers there. My Uncle Jack was the youngest of their children, and he was about six years older than I am. And we were raised almost as siblings. He is a remarkable [*SL laughs*] person, and, like, well, like I say, we

were all pretty much in poverty. When I was speaking of my early years at Leola, I remember Witt coming by to take me for a ride in his little convertible called "Buckles."

SL: Okay.

[00:35:47] RT: Now why would it be called Buckles? It would be called Buckles because he was travelin' the West selling belt buckles. He was a good salesman, and he had followed the crops north into North Dakota, Montana, and he discovered that it was easier to sell belt buckles than it was to get out and help make a crop. And so at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, he got thick with the paymaster, and the paymaster allowed him to set—this was a group of people who were given military duties. It was in the heart of the Depression. And it was a way to get some money as a young person. So he was a pretty good sergeant type, and he talked the paymaster into letting him put up his stand to sell belt buckles [*SL laughs*] at the end of the pay line. So as they would come through—the soldiers would come through—he'd—and get their pay, he was the next person they saw. He said, "Now here's where you get your belt buckle [*SL laughs*] to commemorate your time here at Leavenworth." Well, most of 'em didn't know that they weren't supposed to buy one, so they automatically did. Once in a while some guy would say,

"Oh, Country, I don't have to have a belt buckle." And so Witt would shut it down for a little bit till that guy had worked his way on through, and then he'd start it up again. And he sold over five thousand dollars' worth of belt buckles, and his commission, and that was about five thousand belt buckles, his commission was such that he got to keep about two thousand of it or three and brought the rest of it home and wanted to buy a jewelry store at Malvern. And Papa said, "Nah, son, you're not gonna make a—what you can make there, I—if I were you, I'd consider sellin' those belt buckles or somethin' on a broader scale." And Witt said, "Okay. What can I sell?" And Papa said, "Well, our Arkansas bonds have all defaulted. They're sellin' for ten cents on a dollar. [00:38:33] And what I'd do, I'd get out here, people don't have any money, and offer 'em ten cents a dollar. Banks and New York institutions, they've written Arkansas off. And buy as many of 'em as you can, and then you sell 'em for twice that down here, and everybody that buys one from you will want to have some more of 'em 'cause eventually Arkansas will pay 'em off." Well, that was the germ of the idea that led Witt in 1933 to establish Stephens, W. R. Stephens Investment Company. And the first three or four years were magnificent, and Witt went down to Prattsville and told Papa that he had

achieved more than anyone could ever imagine, that he had enough money that he could take two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, sell out, and buy a farm down at Prattsville, and the family would be set up forever. And Papa again, according to Witt, Papa said, "Well, if I were you, I would consider that you just now have enough money to start an investment company, that you're doing well with what you're doing, and you ought to keep it up." Well, Witt always followed Papa's advice, and he did. And it was a good thing he did because the market turned sour, and they had another little minidepression, and it nearly wiped him out, but he kept goin'. [00:40:23] And so by the end of World War II, he had made one important big purchase, and that was the Fort Smith gas company. And that company up in Fort Smith remained his, 100 percent ownership, until many years later when he and Jack divided up the company between them. I didn't want to talk this much about Witt, but it's important to know that by 1950, when I graduated from Yale, Witt had earned enough money to be considered a very influential person in Arkansas. But that's somethin' that I ought to mention because it was not Witt, it was my [*laughs*] mother and dad who taught me how to read and who impressed on me how important it was for me to collect

knowledge and get to be aware of what was goin' on. And so I became a good examination taker, and I didn't know it was anything special. Mother and Dad never allowed me to think I was any smarter than anyone else. They told me, "You've got some gifts, and you use 'em." And so I took an exam on graduating from high school, and I got a scholarship to Fayetteville. I went up to Fayetteville and—at sixteen years old and takin' twenty and twenty-one hours semester, including a chemistry class under Dr. Wertheim, who had a reputation for bein' the hardest grader up there. And Dr. Wertheim gave a test at the end of the school year in which he said, "Now this has never happened, but I always give twenty-one questions. And you can get five points for every question that you get exactly right." Well, I made a hundred and five. [*SL laughs*] I got all twenty-one questions right, and he urged me to consider chemistry as a career. The scholarship resulted in the fact that by the time I was eighteen, I was enrolled in law school, real properties under Meriwether, Dr. Meriwether. And wow, he was a hard teacher. [*SL laughs*] [00:43:39] And Dad called to my attention that Admiral Holloway had started a recruitment program for navy officers, and it was a scholarship program that paid all of your books, all of your tuition, fifty dollars a month,

and gave you a summer cruise as a regular midshipman. And after graduation you became a regular navy officer, served side by side with Annapolis officers. And dad insisted that I ought to take that exam. Well, you know, I thought I was pretty well along, but I said, "Okay, I'll take the exam." And I don't know how to say this without bein' immodest, but it was their fault, Mom and Dad, for teachin' me how to take exams. [*SL laughs*] I took that exam as an eighteen-year-old law student and having had chemistry and analytical geometry, solid trig, all kinds of mathematical and engineering background courses. I took it in Little Rock, and not long after that, I got a letter asking if I would come down to New Orleans to make application for the Holloway Plan. And I did and went down there on a train. When I got there, they told me I'd made—I think they said the highest score in the United States, but it may have been one of the highest scores in the United States. And that was because they'd taught me how to take exams and I was a law student with freshman and sophomore courses in science and engineering under my belt, competing against eighteen-year-old high school graduates.

SL: Yeah.

[00:45:55] RT: So I don't think it's miraculous [*SL laughs*], but they

said, "You can go to school anywhere in the United States." And I said, "I'll go to Yale." And I knew that was a good name, and that was the only influence that I exercised. Now what the navy had to do—they had a really difficult time talkin' Yale to accept me with any—because I wasn't a freshman, you know. And they talked them into accepting me as a sophomore at Yale. And I graduated from Yale in three years. While at Yale, I remembered my debating, which Mother had got me in as a elementary school student, and I got on the Yale debating team and debated with Bill Buckley and Brent Bozell and Rod Hamel and others. I was on the varsity team, and I beat Bill . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Good.

[00:47:08] RT: . . . Buckley at the sophomore, junior, and senior contests. Rod Hamel beat me for number one on the junior. And some guy from literature beat me in the senior oratorical contest talkin' about a poet, Yeats, and I have to admit, it was an awfully good speech, but it wasn't about politics or—and so I didn't really believe it was fair. I finished second in the senior oratorical contest. And my classmates in the navy selected me as the outstanding naval student that year. I applied for admission to the Yale college law school and failed, despite Dr. Osterweis's personal plea that I should be allowed to go. But

they didn't admit students until just before the September class, and I had to know. So I found Texas willing and happy to accept me as a student down there. Applied for and went to the University of Texas Law School, where I met Professor Joe McKnight, who is still my great friend, three-year Rhodes scholar, professor emeritus at SMU. Jack Locy, who helped Texas Instruments develop the transistor—had a wonderful career there because Mom and Dad had taught me how to take tests. And it was really remarkable. It's, you know, it wasn't me; it was the result of the great adventure . . .

SL: Well, you know . . .

RT: . . . that I was on.

[00:49:17] SL: . . . it all kinda goes back to how mothers and dads raise their kids. And . . .

RT: Oh, absolutely.

SL: . . . and what they emphasize. I want to talk a little bit—I want you to talk a little bit about the home life that you . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . grew up in. So I'm—are you in Leola, or are you in Prattsville or—when you're growing up? What age . . .

RT: Leola and Prattsville until Dad was elected county school superintendent. Then we moved to Sheridan and for . . .

SL: And how old were you then?

RT: Five.

SL: Five. So you remember reading when you were three.

RT: Yes.

[00:49:56] SL: Do you remember much about the house . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . before you moved to Sheridan?

RT: Yes. The house at Prattsville did not have a fireplace when I was a kid. Of course, none of the houses, Conway, Leola, or Prattsville, had utilities. They didn't have electricity. They didn't have water. We didn't have indoor plumbing. The thing I remember about the house at Prattsville is that there was a stove in the middle of the room that they took down in the . . .

SL: Summer.

RT: . . . in the summertime. And we would eat there. Mama, by Mama I'm meanin' my grandmother, was a wonderful cook, and she [*laughs*] could outwork anyone I ever saw. The most difficult thing I ever got into was buildin' a fence across the pasture behind the house, which Mama and I built. And I didn't know how this frail little lady could work me so hard, but [*SL laughs*] it was really a revelation to me. And Papa was a brilliant man, self-educated. He didn't have a degree, but he could quote

Tennyson, Longfellow, Kipling. The books that we had were mainly Westerns—Zane Grey. The radio we listened to there—he had a radio, battery radio. We would listen to *Lum and Abner*, and I remember how hard it was to read at Leola because we had just a kerosene lamp. At Prattsville they had Aladdin lamps, which had a wick, and the fuel came up and lit a wick and gave you about as much light as a forty- or sixty- . . .

SL: Watt bulb.

RT: . . . watt lightbulb, and that was a revelation. At Sheridan, after a few months, we got electricity, and that was a revelation to me as I—and Mom and Dad, I guess because they were schoolteachers, got offers to buy and sometimes gifts of books. And they got a *Encyclopaedia Britannica Junior* given to them, which we kept at home, and I read it. It . . .

[00:52:57] SL: *A* to *Z*.

RT: Yeah. Yeah, I—it was remarkable. And I started reading books from the public library and—everything from *Moby-Dick* to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* . . .

SL: Sawyer. Uh-huh.

RT: . . . and *Huckleberry Finn*, and I checked out a book or two every week and enjoyed reading. I can't imagine why—well, there was nothin' else to do. There was nothin' else to do.

Mother was not gonna assign me to the full-time job of feedin' the chickens and milkin' the cow, though I did both of those. And she encouraged me to study and read, and in fact, when she went back to teaching, she occasionally took me along to her one-room assignments, and after a while she had to tell me to quit contributing because I . . .

SL: You were dominating the . . .

RT: I was dominating [*laughter*] the . . .

[00:54:27] SL: So her—was her school—was it a one-room school that she was . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . teaching in?

RT: Yes, it was at Dogwood, Arkansas, which is between Leola and Sheridan. And she taught at Dogwood for two or three years and Moore's Chapel a year, and finally, the schools all got consolidated into Sheridan, and they had to take Mother with them because she had been teachin' 'em and they couldn't let her go. Well, she quickly became the best teacher at the Sheridan schools and ran a student council where the students were fully responsible for behavior. Had a student government, a student court. She took students to Florida and Texas and Missouri and everywhere, where the student governments would

meet. And the Sheridan school program was identified as bein' the best or one of the best in the country. We were always featured. And Mom was honored with a fountain put up outside the school and dedicated to her, and they've let the water quit runnin' on it, so [*laughs*] I—they just forgot about it. I mean . . .

[00:55:54] SL: Yeah. Well, you—student governmentwise, didn't you run for president of the student body . . .

RT: Oh, that was . . .

SL: . . . in University . . .

RT: . . . that was at . . .

SL: . . . of Arkansas?

RT: Yeah, that was after I spent two years at Fayetteville and then three years at Yale, and I got the awards up there for a scholarship. I had one year at Texas, which was a wonderful experience. And then I went into the navy for three years, active duty. I was top-secret control officer of the aircraft carrier *Philippine Sea*. I recommended or transcribed communications for the admiral. At special sea and anchor detail, I was the officer on the bridge of the ship responsible for talking with the captains of the tugboats and telling them what they were supposed to do as far as . . .

SL: And . . .

RT: . . . pushin' the ship and lining it up to make a good landing. I never missed. Of course, the pilot of the ship would tell me what to tell 'em. [*SL laughs*] But I could also see what was happenin', and so that was a good experience.

SL: Well, I—we'll talk about the Korean War here . . .

RT: What's that?

SL: . . . in a—we'll talk about the Korean War here . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . in a little while.

RT: But let me go ahead.

SL: Okay.

RT: Then I got out . . .

Trey Marley: Hey, Scott, real quick—guys, we need to change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[00:57:35] SL: We've started our second session here . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . today. You're holdin' up really well and . . .

RT: Thank you.

SL: . . . you've already told us some great stories. And what I love the way that you've talked so far is that you've kind of given us a preview of things that we can kinda go in detail a little . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . bit later. But I wanna keep goin' back to the home for a while.

RT: Okay.

[00:57:54] SL: I'd like to spend some time in the communities that you were raised . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . and get some descriptions there. And one of the very first things that you mentioned early on in the first tape was that your grandmother was, when living in Conway, was actually pushing a cart . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . selling needles and . . .

RT: Thread and thimbles and Marvel Oil and—that was a liniment that she would sell. And she had the responsibility of raising the five children, other than Dad, who had gotten out and was making money as a schoolteacher. By the way, that payment was not too high. During the Depression years when Dad was county school superintendent, his salary was fifty dollars per month, and [*laughter*] it's incredible that we made it on that. But my grandmother, Sally Thornton, tried to be self-sustaining. And she would get up in Conway with her cart and go person to

person by the houses and knock on the door and see if the mistress of the house, the lady of the house, was interested in some thread or needles or thimbles or liniment or other things that she had in her pushcart. And she did that each day. That was their source of money.

[00:59:38] SL: Well now, how large of a community was Conway back then? How large was the community back then?

RT: The community was about two or three thousand people.

SL: That's a pretty good size town.

RT: Yeah, it was. It was [*laughs*] far from what it is now, which is a metropolitan area. But it had then, as it still does, the advantage of being close to Little Rock and having some very vibrant leadership. The Dunaways were very influential. The Hope family were in Sheridan, mainly, and Prattsville. And the advantage of Conway was that it had these two—three great colleges. My dad worked on the Baptist college helping to build it. Dad went to school at State Teachers College, and Hendrix was an outstanding institution. And so Conway's key to success has been education. And by the way, education is my love. My [*laughs*]—while they were teachin' me to read, my parents also taught me to value education.

SL: Well you know, you were really blessed to have that emphasis so

early. And really, at the time when you were that age, there was still a lot of pioneer kind of . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . hardscrabble determination . . .

RT: Oh yes.

SL: . . . that pervade—you know, was pervasive . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . in Arkansas back then. And . . .

RT: Well . . .

SL: . . . that your moth—that your grandmother was out there . . .

RT: Pushing a cart . . .

SL: . . . and . . .

RT: . . . to make the ends meet because, you [*laughs*] see, there was no Social Security then. There were very few charities, and the idea of most people is they didn't want to have charity. They wanted to do it themselves. And it became the responsibility of the oldest boy, my dad, to take care of his mother. That's why he spent $600 to buy her a house . . .

SL: House.

[01:02:17] RT: . . . at—because they were living in a hovel. And these were hard times. As I mentioned, we didn't have electric lights until I was in Sheridan after having lived at Leola and

Conway and much of the time at Prattsville. The effort that everybody made was to be independent and self-sufficient. And I—my chores were to milk the cow or cows; we had one. I also helped with Mama and Papa's cattle. The—feed the chickens, and you had a flock of about fifteen or twenty chickens, and one reason was once in a while you'd have the preacher over for lunch, and you had to have a chicken to feed the preacher. And we were—it was a very rigorous religious setting. We didn't work much on Sunday. And worse than that, I couldn't go to the movies on Sunday. [*SL laughs*] I could go on Saturday. [01:03:40] And in—I had a job as the movie projector operator, and my pay was that I got to watch the movie free. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, that's when they were—you actually had to load up film and . . .

RT: I'd load up the film at the . . .

SL: It came in reels and . . .

RT: . . . at the theater. Change the reels. Ignite the electric arc, carbon arc, that cast a very brilliant light on the screen. And . . .

SL: So what . . .

RT: . . . it had—what's that?

SL: Do you remember what theater that was?

RT: Yeah, it was Jack Bain's theater on Oak Street in Sheridan, and

Jack was a good boss. I think after a while he began payin' me ten dollars a week or something. But the main thing was I helped him. And right down the street from Jack Bain's theater was a radio shop, and durin' those years you couldn't get new radios, but the manager of the radio shop had a big bin full of radio . . .

SL: Parts.

[01:04:46] RT: . . . equipment. And I built—I made radios, and he sold 'em for ten dollars apiece. And they were a—they were both running on batteries and on plug-ins. The—some of those radios are still in existence. But I built not only [*laughs*] a radio for everybody I knew, but after I started sellin' newspapers, I became an entrepreneur. And before I stopped my newspaper career, I was responsible for delivering every copy of the *Gazette*, the *Democrat*, and of the *Pine Bluff Commercial* . . .

SL: *Bluff Commercial*.

RT: . . . that came to Sheridan. I was the delivery boy for all of those, and I had to keep 'em separate and had to collect individually for each of those papers. The—Isaac Mayhew was the owner of the radio shop that let me build those radios for sale. And Vernie Lowman was the owner of the Ford Motor Company, and his cousin, Duffy Lowman, encouraged me to

learn how to weld and how to work on motors and helped me.

When other people were buyin' motorbikes, I built one. I didn't use a frame or anything. I built a box grid case and bought a washing machine gasoline motor. Now that—you may not know those, but when you had automatic washing machines and you didn't have electricity, you had to have power. And so the power was a little one-cylinder, one-and-a-half horsepower motor. And I built a box frame to cover that motor. Developed a variable pulley drive to connect it to the rear wheel. Used the new departure brake that was in the wheel. Developed hand signals or grips for braking, and I built my own motorcycle that had a top speed of about thirty miles an hour. I used it in high school, and it was still runnin' after I graduated. It went from one person to another. It stayed in existence, laughably, for ten or twenty years, and everybody was proud of it. It was a washing machine on wheels. [*Laughter*]

[01:08:04] SL: You know, I—in all my interviews I've never heard anyone say anything about a gasoline-powered washing machine.

RT: Well, that's the—what you had if you didn't have electricity and you wanted to have a washing machine out in the country.

SL: Well, and gasoline was so cheap back then.

RT: Oh! Yeah, I—we went to Corpus Christi one time and bought gasoline for nine cents a gallon; eleven cents a gallon down in the Texarkana area.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Well, so how big a town was Sheridan when you were growin' up there?

RT: Seventeen hundred.

SL: So that's sizeable . . .

RT: It was ne—it was half the size of Conway.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And it was there that you had the movie theater projectionist . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . job.

RT: Right.

[01:08:58] SL: So I guess we could talk a little bit about . . .

RT: And the mechanics job. I mean, my first real makin'-money job was there with Vernie Lowman and Duffy Lowman and buildin' the . . .

SL: Radios.

RT: . . . I couldn't call it a motorcycle, and I couldn't call it a motorbike. It was an—it was a runnin' washin' machine. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, that sounds great. So you had—you were a projectionist.

You learned welding and how . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . how to build . . .

RT: I learned how to repair motors.

SL: Repair motors and then also radios. You built . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . radios and . . .

RT: I sold . . .

SL: . . . you delivered papers.

RT: Yes.

[01:09:43] SL: So you were workin' all the time.

RT: All the time. All the time. I earned money from the time I was ten, I suppose, maybe before. [*Laughs*] Well, one thing I felt a little guilty about, my granddad paid me—said he'd pay me two dollars to sow the back garden, two acres, in clover. And I took off, and I was scatterin' it and got through in about, oh, forty-five minutes or so and came back in and got my two dollars. And he said, "Now son, you've done this very fast and very fine, but I guess you know that after it rains we'll find out how much of that ground you actually covered.

SL: Turned. Uh-huh.

RT: And I thought a minute and said, "Well, if you don't mind, I

believe I'll give you this two dollars back." [*Laughs*]

SL: You know, two acres is a lot of garden spot.

RT: It is. It is. And he raised corn and—for the pigs and for the horses. And amazing thing there, he had this little black pony that he kept on that two acres, and I wasn't smart enough to know that the reason for that pony was for me because I could use it. I'd go over there and ride that pony. And Papa was lookin' after what I needed. And we were tryin' to—everybody was tryin' to be self-sufficient, and it was a great experience.

SL: Well you know, that's what the Depression really made clear. That the folks that were self-sufficient did better during the Depression . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . than those that were not . . .

RT: That's right.

SL: . . . that depended on paying for services and . . .

RT: That's right.

[01:11:52] SL: And I'm just wondering, you know, earlier you mentioned how Witt had had some success with the buckles and then had success with the bonds. And he, on a number of—it sounded like a couple times he was thinking, "What can I do to guarantee that the family is gonna be okay?"

RT: That was really a key thing. He was so interested in getting away from Depression, the tough times. And he had a loyalty to his family that was incredible. Witt and my dad were the two leaders of the family in that regard. My dad, with his schoolteacher salary of fifty dollars, and Mother, with her schoolteacher salary of fifty dollars, we had more [*laughs*] income than any of the other family members, except for Witt through his sales. And Witt loved the way that my dad would buy timber. And Dad would buy the timber at a price where he could sell most of the timber off of it and come out even and keep the land free. And as a result, he was able to accumulate several thousand acres of timberland on a schoolteacher's salary. And when Witt really became wealthy with the Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company purchase—now he'd already had the purchase at Fort Smith, and he was, you know, doin' well, but he wanted to build—rebuild the family farm like it had been durin' the Pumphrey days. And so he got with Dad, and Dad made the arrangements and bought with his own money, and sometimes with Witt's, but he bought several thousand acres of land around the Prattsville homeplace. And they worked together to develop what is now the Prattsville homeplace for the Stephens family. [01:14:17] And Witt was so interested in family that the first

thing he did after getting that repurchase of family land was to build a home for his mother and dad and a lake so that Mama could fish [*SL laughs*] without havin' to go out somewhere. It was family self-sufficiency, and I was always proud that Witt considered Dad his intellectual equal, at least, and at Witt's suggestion, Dad surveyed timber for the Arkansas State Hospital grounds at Benton and helped Witt throughout the years in purchasing and selling real estate. Dad never made a profit on that. He was—he said, "You've done so much for us that I'm glad to do whatever I can do for you." And that was the family deal. If one of us prospered, then we felt like everybody had prospered.

[01:15:38] SL: That's really something that the family ties are that strong. And again, it's almost the—yes, before the Depression you had folks that were hardworking . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . and believed in . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . doing the right thing and all that. But that Depression really kinda solidified . . .

RT: It really welded all of us together. And I don't mean to leave out the other members of the family 'cause everybody did what they

could. Lois Lowe,second to Mother in terms of age, they developed a dairy farm that produced a lot of milk and a lot of poultry at their place. And Harry and Jewell had a wonderful career. He was a tax man, and there were a lot of good conversations [*laughs*] about taxes in our discussions. And all of the family felt like Papa and Mama were the central focus of our well-being. Now the same was true of Dad and his family, but that was in Conway. And the Prattsville scene—we began to think of Prattsville as bein' a Hyannis Port or a family retreat, and it was a great time.

SL: Well, it became that.

RT: Yeah.

[01:17:20] SL: Yeah. You know, you mentioned—we kind of touched a little bit on chores around the house and some of the things you did. And you mentioned that y'all had some pigs, some hogs. Do you member hog days where . . .

RT: Oh yeah. Yeah, we didn't—I was forgiven for not enjoyin' the slaughtering of the hogs, but that happened. And we'd put the hog in a smokehouse to cure it. Refrigeration was a problem, and a smokehouse was a necessary way of preserving the hog meat. And the gatherings not only included everybody workin', but also chess and checkers. My dad and Witt would play

checkers, and it was always a good contest. [*SL laughs*] My dad and Keeling Lowe, Nancy Baker's father, would play chess, and that was hilarious. They were both pretty good, but my dad would use psychological warfare to try to rattle Keeling, and Keeling could take it. [*Laughter*] And it was almost like watchin' a football game. The [*SL laughs*]—this was not chess as practiced by the masters [*laughter*], but it was chess in the hands of two country boys who really loved to win.

[01:19:07] SL: Yeah. That's a—that's rich. That's really, really good. All right. Now you did mention a little bit about the role of religion in the home. And there's a couple of questions . . .

RT: Dad was—my papa was superintendent of the Bible schools at Prattsville in the Baptist Church. He had been reared—after his father, Lorenzo Dow, died, he'd been reared by the Hogan family up in Conway, and they were members of the Church of Christ. And Papa knew the religious feelings of both religions. And Dad was—had settled on the Church of Christ and became the person who first constructed the First Christian Church in Sheridan. His name is on the foundation of that. And after some time went by, and with the help of a wonderful Harding student named Jim Bill McIntyre, they started the Church of Christ in Sheridan. And lawyers will have a fit at this, but we chose as, or Dad chose, as

the meeting place for the Church of Christ the courtroom [01:20:43] of our county courthouse because that's where Dad's office was, and we took that over each Sunday. And Brother McIntyre was a wonderful preacher who preached the funeral services for both my dad and my mother, saying that they had the greatest influence of anybody in—alive on his career. Dad told me—I worried because—I said, "Now what about Papa, who's superintendent of the Baptist Church?" And Dad said something that was unusual for—I thought later. He said, "Son, we don't decide who are Christians." Said, "I personally think that Christians worship in a lot of different houses. It depends on their relationship with God." And he taught us that we should do the best we could to live a Christian life, but that we were not in the position to judge other people of the adequacy of their religion. And Papa and Dad got along fine. They appreciated each other, and I appreciated them. I'm a Christian, and I can worship in the Christian Church or the Church of Christ or the Baptist Church or the Episcopal Church. I have no hesitancy in worshiping in a Catholic church. I think the issue is your relationship with God and with Christ, and that is the result of the teaching of my two parents, in large part.

SL: Was there any Bible study in the home?

RT: Yes. We studied the Bible at home, and in fulfillment of Dad's principles on that, I became one of the teachers of the men's Bible school in the Methodist Church. And I would go there and teach the men's Bible class and then go over to the Church of Christ for the worship ceremonies in the Church of Christ. No hesitancy on the part of either congregation about my being willing to tell the story as I understood the story at both places.

[01:23:44] SL: When it came time to—the meals at your home, were they—were there times set that you needed to be at the table?

RT: Yes, and [*laughs*] you didn't get to the table unless you were there at the right time. And the Sunday noon meal at Mama Stephens's house was superb. The cooking was mainly done on Saturday, so it was just a question of makin' sure it was warm and served properly. And Mama's meals were fabulous. In fact, people would stop at Prattsville to spend the night at their house [*SL laughs*] and enjoy the meals. And they—there was a little bit of compensation for it. I don't know. It wasn't exactly a hotel.

SL: Right.

RT: But there was—they didn't lose money on the deal, and the people loved goin' to Mama's for dinner. We [*laughs*] were there

often, mainly because my dad had a good appetite, and he thought that you couldn't—nobody could do it better than Mama Stephens. And the—times were hard, but we didn't know it. Times seemed to be very good.

[01:25:15] SL: Many times people talk about how they didn't realize it at the time that they were either poor or challenged . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . because they really had everything that they needed.

RT: Yes. Yes, we didn't feel poor. We were not poverty-struck—stricken. Those were good days. Now there were some bad days, but by and large, the family ties were so important that we got along. Papa said this; he said, "There is nothin' that will unite a family more than havin' the wolf at the door. If you have the wolf at the door, everybody'll lock arms, and you'll put up a fight, and you'll get by. But"—he said, "the thing that will destroy a family is if you put a pot of gold in the middle of the table, and brother will start fightin' against brother and sister and excluding mother and father because everyone wants that pot of gold. And a pot of gold in the center of the table will often wreck all but the best families." Well, I didn't realize how true that was until later experiences have shown how today's families, when they are surrounded with wealth, they don't care

for each other. They fight among themselves.

SL: And keep to themselves.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Don't share or support each other.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Well, back—I'd like to go back to the dining table 'cause . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . I think it's where families gather.

RT: It was.

[01:27:11] SL: And was your—was it your father or Papa that always said grace over the . . .

RT: Well, it was that we always had grace. And if we were at Prattsville, it would most likely be Papa Stephens, though it might be that he would call on me. And if we were at Sheridan, it would be my dad, except that Dad believed that women were not being treated fairly in the Church of Christ, and he would ask Mother to say grace or my sister and, by his actions, proved that he thought that women deserved a seat at the head of the table and taught me that women were teachers in the early church and that Priscilla and Aquila—that Priscilla was the female and her name came first. And he was a very liberal person, even though he was a member of the Church of Christ. He thought

that women were not being given fair treatment by most of the Churches of Christ.

SL: That is a liberal stand for the time.

RT: Say again?

SL: That is a very liberal stand . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . for the time.

RT: And he was the elder, so that became the standing at Sheridan. And I grew up really not understanding how strict some of the Churches of Christ had become in that regard. I consider myself to be a Christian. I'm perfectly comfortable in a Christian Church or in a Church of Christ because neither of them try to impose on me my own reflective belief in the Word of God.

SL: Well, that's the way it should be.

RT: What's that?

SL: That's the way it should be.

RT: It's the way it should be.

[01:29:38] SL: Well, I guess the—after the meal, did the women generally clean up the . . .

RT: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SL: . . . dishes and . . .

RT: That was tradition. The men adjourned to the checkerboard or

the chessboard or to stories about where it'd be good to go fishin'. Now we didn't fish much on Sunday. We—it was a very strict religious view.

SL: That was kind of God's day.

RT: Yeah.

SL: So chess, checkers, stories after the meal. And you mentioned that y'all had a radio, a battery- . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . powered radio.

RT: Yeah, I—well, of course, you knew I built radios. But Papa and Mama had a radio at their house in Prattsville, and we used it mainly for listenin' to *Lum and Abner*. They loved *Lum and Abner*, and they gave us a tra—*Lum and Abner* gave us a collection of tapes that are lost now, I think.

SL: Oh!

RT: But that was a delightful radio show.

[01:30:58] SL: Well now, what about music?

RT: Music was very important. Dad had never had formal training, but he could sit down at a piano and play "Red Wings" or other songs by just having experimented as to how they ought to go. My mother didn't do that, but she loved hearin' it. And my sister became an accomplished pianist, and we had a piano in our

home. And Brother McIntyre and his bride, Betty, would come to the house, and they would play and sing. Dad loved the *Grand Ole Opry*. We would listen to Nashville, and I learned to play the clarinet, saxophone and did so in college. And then when I went to Texas, I began to play the guitar, and I became pretty good at it.

SL: That's my understanding.

RT: Yeah.

[01:32:16] SL: [*Laughs*] Did you have a name that you went by?

RT: Cowboy Ray.

SL: That's what I thought. Did . . .

RT: Cowboy Ray.

SL: Were you ever in a studio at all or . . .

RT: Yeah, I've done—I have some recordings, but I mainly did it for fun. And that was at Texas. After I graduated from Yale, as I said, after three years I graduated, I went down to Texas and became friends with these marvelous people and almost adopted Texas. And I learned to play the guitar there and took the nickname Cowboy Ray.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's really good. Now I know that you spent some time in Fayetteville and . . .

RT: After that, too.

SL: After that, too. And do you remember—first of all, what was the music scene in Sheridan and Conway? Was there any—were there . . .

RT: *Grand Ole Opry* is almost characteristic, plus pop music. We—there was a hit number one on weekends that played all over the country, and the eye—Texas—oh, "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You" was a hymn, almost. I can't think of the names of some of the songs that—"Deep in the Heart of Texas." I'm surprised that I can't think of more of those songs.

SL: Well . . .

RT: "Tennessee Waltz."

SL: "Tennessee Waltz." Also at that time, weren't there—was Texas swing kind of . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . coming into play back then?

RT: Yes.

SL: You had Bob Wills.

[01:34:31] RT: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Well of course, the thing that I really enjoyed was folk songs. Harry Belafonte was an idol of mine. We—I took Papa to see Harry Belafonte up at the national convention, 1956, when we nominated Stevenson for another run at the presidency, and Jack Kennedy was there,

and he and Papa met. And I got Papa in to see Harry Belafonte and those kind of singers. The music was good, wholesome music, and I think that's why I liked bein' Cowboy. I played folk songs and became good friends of Ronnie Hawkins, who is the songster of Canada. He is a remarkable musician, and he and I became friends at the University of Arkansas. But this is after I got out of the navy.

SL: Yes.

[01:36:05] RT: I came back to Arkansas, and for the first time, Witt had decided that he wanted to put me on a salary. And I became a salaried employee with the duty of sellin' securities while I went to law school, and I loved it. It was very encouraging. He told me I didn't have to go to law school, but if I wanted to, go on back there and sell securities as I could. And I got back up there and met a couple of people that have been very important to me. One I met—three people. One was not at the university; my wife, Betty, and I met after I got out of the navy. I was—I'm much older than she is, and we fell in love and married after a couple of years. But the first person I met up there was a fine young man named David Pryor [*SL laughs*], and I have enjoyed my relationship with David over the years. We—I worked with him while he was editor of the paper down in

Camden. We went to school together. I—we sat down one day on the patio of the Coachman's Inn in Little Rock. I had formed that corporation for Witt and Jack, and David and I were sitting down there, and he had been disappointed because he had not been hired for the summer by Senator John McClellan. And we sat back there and decided that it would be an awful good thing if both he and I could go to the Senate. And we talked about that and enjoyed it and have enjoyed our relationship through the years. He, on the other hand, remembers coming up to Fayetteville and seeing Cowboy Ray [*SL laughs*] running for president of the student body with Ronnie Hawkins doin' the singing. And Ronnie Hawkins is a great friend of mine. He really loves callin' me Cowboy [*SL laughs*], and we picked and sang some together. I'm not gonna take too much credit, but I taught him a few [*laughter*] little ditties, and he could do 'em better than I could. And Ronnie became a go-to fellow in Canada. He—when I was in Congress, the Canadian embassy had a concert with him being presented as being in charge of it. And when I was elected attorney general, Ronnie called me about two a.m. at my house in Little Rock and said, "Cowboy!" [*SL laughs*] And I said, "What is it, Ronnie?" He said, "I've got a fellow here I want you to meet. We've been out, and he's the

best one of us I've ever run across." And I said, "Well, what—I appreciate your call. I'm—I was awake waitin' for your call." [*SL laughs*] And he said, "Aw, Cowboy, this fellow is Gordon Lightfoot. Gordon Lightfoot. And you don't know him, but you're gonna know about him. I've picked him up here, and we're enjoyin' Canada, and we wanna come down and visit you in Little Rock." And I said, "Well, come ahead. We're ready." [*SL laughs*] And he said, "He's written a song that I want him to do for you." I said, "Okay, what is it?" And Gordon Lightfoot cut loose with "In the early morning rain with two dollars in my hand" and "Sittin' on the runway number nine, waitin' to go." And sang the whole "Early Morning Rain" song, and I loved it.

SL: Well, sure.

RT: Oh, he was good. And Ronnie said, "Now you come up here. You kick that attorney general's office out, and you come up here and join Gordon and me, and we'll have us a band." [*Laughter*] And . . .

[01:40:57] SL: He is somethin' else. You know, he always had a knack for gathering the greatest musicians . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . around him, and he still does to this day.

RT: Oh yeah. He is marvelous. And I'm—guess I'm the only person

who's ever had Gordon Lightfoot sing an original composition to me at two o'clock a.m. on the . . .

SL: Over the phone.

RT: Over the phone.

SL: [*Laughs*] You are. That's an exalted position right there.

RT: Yeah.

SL: That's really good. Well, so in your home growin' up, y'all had a piano.

RT: Yeah.

[01:41:30] SL: Now for the most part, when that piano was played, was it popular music, or was it . . .

RT: Popular, mostly.

SL: Were there ever . . .

RT: Mostly.

SL: . . . any hymns done . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . on it?

RT: Yeah, mostly popular.

SL: Okay.

RT: I got to where I could play a little by ear—guitar. I could play guitar chords on the piano. My sister became a very good player and could play classical music, as well as popular.

SL: So we've talked about the technology of radio and it being both battery-powered and plug-in . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . kind of stuff. And we've talked a little bit about the music going on. Now do you—what about telephone? What about telephone when you were growing up? When did you first have a telephone?

RT: Well, we had a telephone at Mama and Papa's house because Witt always liked to talk to them. And it was at the end of an eight-party party line, and Mama and Papa's telephone ring was two longs and two shorts. And it was fun because you'd ring out, and a call came in with two longs and two shorts, and you'd pick up the phone, and you'd hear, "Click, click, click, click, click." And it was people pickin' up on the party line [*SL laughs*] to make sure that they knew [*laughs*] what was goin' on the Stephens's phone.

[01:43:09] SL: Isn't that funny? Now you know, kids today—folks today probably don't know what a party line is. They . . .

RT: Yeah. Well, there were eight people's phones on this line, and everybody could hear the two longs and two shorts, and everybody'd know that's the Stephens's number and so they—everybody wanted to hear [*laughter*] what was goin' on on the

Stephens's number. And it did—it was—well, it was a marvelous thing. The Sheridan exchange was owned by Pete Bailey, and his wife was the operator. And if you wanted to get Dr. Hope on the line, you'd call and say, "Can I speak to Dr. Hope?" And Miss Bailey would say, "Well, he's not at home right now. He was at McCoy Drug Store a minute or two ago. I think we can get him over at Oklahoma Tire and Supply." And you say, "Well, will you connect me?" And, "Yes." And so long before today's modern technology, Miss Bailey could connect you with Dr. Hope or Dr. Kelly or whoever you wanted, and you didn't have to forward or anything like that. And they had a—everybody loved 'em and we—there's just one bad thing. Witt couldn't always get service to talk to his mother . . .

SL: Folks.

[01:44:46] RT: . . . and dad. So about this time, Hugh Wilbourn and Charlie Miller had left the Bell Company and started a little repair store named Allied Repair Store. And they went down to talk to Witt. Oh, Witt had bought from Pete Bailey the Grant County Telephone Company, and he was still havin' trouble gettin' the connection made to Prattsville. So they went down to talk to Witt about repairing the thing. They listened and didn't come to any agreement, and then they left to go down [*unclear word*].

Witt thought of somethin'. Caught 'em at the front of the door. They were leavin', and he said, "Hey, I want to ask you somethin'. Why don't you buy that telephone company? You can fix it up and know what you're doin', and I'm just sittin' on it as an investment." And they said, "What do you mean by it?" He said, "Well, we'll agree on a price, and then I'll finance it for you, and let you pay me for it." And so they did, and that was the beginning of Allied Telephone Company. Basically, Witt financed the thing for Hugh Wilbourn and for Charlie Miller.

[01:46:16] SL: Two things. Allied became Alltel.

RT: That's right.

SL: And is Hugh Wilbourn—is that Andy Wilbourn's dad?

RT: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

RT: Andy—Randy.

SL: Randy Wilbourn.

RT: Randy.

SL: I mean, Randy.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Randy sits on our board of advisors . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . for the Pryor Center.

RT: Yes.

SL: So . . .

[01:46:35] RT: Yeah, that's right. And so he talked 'em into it, and they worked out a deal where they took over the little Grant County Telephone Company and named it Allied Telephone Company. And it started off, and they needed some help legally. I had my own law practice. They came to me and asked me to help 'em, and I'd just started workin' for 'em when Hugh Wilbourn walked in one day and said, "Ray, I've had the most amazing thought, and I want you to help me with it." And I said, "Well, what is it?" He said, "I want to become responsible for long-distance service out of our Sheridan exchange." And I said, "Well, [*laughs*] doesn't Bell do that?" And he said, "Yes, because they control the lines and the switching equipment." Said, "Now I have a way to initiate, start up, local calls that can go on the network and won't require us to pay any carryin' charge" . . .

SL: To Bell.

RT: . . . "by AT&T because we'll have the origination and we'll have the termination of the law of the thing. And the only thing we may need to rent is some interstate circuits, but that will not be subject to the Bell—that'll be at a rate that's prescribed for

regular service." And I said, "Well, it sounds good to me." So he hired me to develop that, and we went to Chicago and talked with IT&T. Amazingly, they thought it was a grand idea and put us in touch with their counsel, and they thought it was a good idea. So working with counsel for ITT, we set out to patent Telfast—*T-E-L-F-A-S-T*—Telephone Fully Automatic Switching and Ticketing. And ITT had a plant in Tennessee, and we got the patent work started and contacted that plant and started buildin' the machine that would be in Sheridan and which would—you could dial either a one to automatically go anywhere, and that was fine, or you could dial zero. And when you dialed zero, you went into the automatic telephone ticketing apparatus, and you got recorded as to what you were tryin' to do, person to person, collect, or whatever.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

[01:50:02] RT: And then you completed the call yourself, and the recording machine knew how much to bill you for those connect charges. You didn't use an AT&T operator to get through. It was an automatic machine, and it worked. And McSweeney of Chicago and I worked together on the bargaining agreements, and we were well along toward usin' it 'cause there wasn't any restriction on doin' that, but AT&T and Bell sued us for degrading

their service by putting these unmonitored [*SL laughs*] calls on the line. Well, we took it—they took us to the Public Service Commission to restrain us from connecting that system to theirs. Well, we defended, and I was in charge of the defense. And we got a unfavorable PSC decision, two to one. And the two people basically said, "You can't put something on Bell's line without their approval." And so we took that a next step and went to the state supreme court, and there we should have won it, but we had the defense that we were just gonna go through those lines to other independent telephone companies. And we had all these companies signed up that they would like to use it. [01:52:12] Oh, and while this was all goin' on, we got the equipment built and installed at Sheridan. And when the commission said, "You can't degrade service to Bell," we made a real quick change, and it would only terminate in non-Bell exchanges. It would go to New York. It would go to Columbus, Ohio. It would go to San Francisco. It would go to Texarkana because Texarkana was in a private company, non-Bell. And so we had 'em sandbagged where we could use this—our equipment to make connections all over the United States. PSC didn't have jurisdiction all over the United States. We could make connections all over the United States as long as it didn't

terminate and degrade service to some Bell customer in Arkansas. Well, we hooked it up, and it worked like a charm. Bob Wilbourn, no relationship to Hugh, worked with Reynolds in Indiana, and he started usin' the phone for contact there. Other people picked Texas. Other people picked—and it was workin' just like it was designed, and it really frosted 'em. [*SL laughs*] So guess what they did? They cut off service to Sheridan, Arkansas; Fordyce; Prattsville—about seven or eight interconnected . . .

SL: Community.

[01:54:18] RT: . . . Allied lines in Fordyce. They severed service and said, "You—your call cannot be handled by this automatic equipment," when it was entirely over our lines and when it was goin' to Indianapolis. And they kept the service interrupted for, oh, quite a while, and I filed the biggest antitrust suit that has ever—had ever been filed in Arkansas, and we finally got their attention. And the—we kept it in court. They tried to get us out of court, and Judge Oren Harris, thank goodness, could not understand why we should be barred from presenting our case that using our own equipment consistent with the rules of Bell, why they had a right to stop all service to Sheridan. Well, it ended up that Bell, whose vice president, Mr. Black, had said,

"When improvements like this are needed, Bell will supply them." And we had a case that was a winning case. So ATT and Bell entered into a settlement agreement, which gave the beginning to Allied Telephone Company's growth, becoming Alltel, and eventually becoming the largest independent telephone supplier in the United States. And I'm proud to have been a part of that, and it all happened because Witt wanted to talk to his parents with a clear [*SL laughs*] connection. And I'm grateful that I had a part in it. I'm terribly distressed that the Arkansas Supreme Court in a four-to-three decision held that we couldn't go on that—the nationwide telephone service.

[01:56:53] SL: You know, it's ama—what's also amazing is that technology came out of a little telephone repair shop.

RT: Yes. Yes.

SL: And that shop was in Little Rock?

RT: Yes. Yes.

SL: You know . . .

RT: Yeah, and it was a brilliant decision. It meant—it had—Howard Aibel of IT&T and others were just in awe that Hugh had invented this thing, and it had the possibility of making telephone system today better than it is.

SL: That's a great Arkansas story.

RT: Yeah.

[Tape stopped]

[01:57:30] SL: We were just talkin' about how we've been doing this interview, how we've been kinda jumpin' back and forth and going back to the way you were raised at home . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . and how that kinda manifests itself throughout your career. And we'd just finished talkin' about Allied, which became Alltel, and the case that . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . you rightfully won for them. And—but I do wanna go back to the home because I think there's some things that folks did in their li—growing up and the challenges of the time. And you were born right before the Great Depression . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . so you were kind of—you were kinda tossed in the—out of the pan into the fire . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . as far as struggling to earn a living and people getting by. Now y'all's family did very well with that. You were kinda self-sufficient in many ways. But one thing we haven't talked about at length is back then when you didn't have electricity,

you didn't have refrigeration.

RT: Yeah.

SL: In fact, refrigerators weren't really happening at all. [*Clears throat*]

RT: Yeah.

SL: What was happening with men—we had figured out how to make ice.

RT: Yes.

[01:58:49] SL: So tell me about [*RT clears throat*] how you kept things cool growin' up.

RT: Well, what we had was a ice chest, and as a matter of fact, at Papa and Mama's house we had a Servel refrigerator. And as you may know, a Servel works on heat and not electricity. And by burning kerosene in the Servel, it would heat the salt and run it through a couple of compressors and boilers, and it would become cool. So we were real pleased to have a Servel refrigerator at Papa and Mama's house. Now it happens that later on Witt bought Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company, and they bought the Servel manufacturing plant, and that became the basis of the gas-powered refrigerators that were sold for years by the gas utility companies. And of course, out of the lighting part of it, we had Aladdin lamps, which gave a very warm and

distinguished glow, and it was better than candles or kerosene lamp. And so when Witt bought the Servel plant, he turned them to making gas lights and promised to light the streets from Little Rock to Shreveport with gas lights if they wouldn't raise his franchise taxes. So things worked together. And the Arkla Village development down at Emmet, Arkansas, where they made rocking chairs for President Kennedy and where the Conestoga prairie schooner patents were held, and we made prairie schooners and wagons there that were useful during the centennial years. And most of those came from Arkla Village. And that gave me the idea of making cars, for an example. But these historic things, like the Arkla lamp lights, the Arkla lamps, the Handywagon, the Razorback Boat Company, all of these things happened after I had completed my navy career. But they all dated back to a remembrance of the years where Arkla lights, or lights using oil, and refrigerators, like Servel, were things that we dealt with. I think it all ties together.

[02:02:25] SL: I—you know, [*clears throat*] Ray, I have to tell you, I've never heard of the gas-powered or the kerosene-powered refrigerator.

RT: Yeah, really?

SL: Really. I never have. I mean, I, of course . . .

RT: Servel.

SL: Servel.

RT: Servel. Check the history books. The refrigeration was an absorption cycle that the salt exerted such a draw on the liquid that it flashed into a vapor, and the cooling process would refrigerate. In fact, that's very similar to the ice house-making machinery involving the—oh, the cycle where ammonia is used to make ice and which was distributed to houses by horse-drawn wagons. And we would get in our house, which we didn't have a Servel, we would get a forty-pound block of ice and put it in this ice chest and keep our meals cool there. You had to fill it up with ice about twice a week. And the—we made do with a lot of things that you don't hear about.

[02:04:03] SL: Well you know, ice was delivered. Wasn't milk delivered, too?

RT: Absolutely. Ice was delivered. Milk was delivered. The ammonia ice houses supplied ice for commercial practices. That's the way you got air-conditioning in the theaters. You didn't have a—an air-conditioning unit. You melted ice and blew air across it to cool the theaters.

SL: Big fan . . .

RT: Big fan.

SL: . . . blowin' across the ice.

RT: Yeah. And I appreciated it because with the duty I had of changing the film for Jack Bain in the movie house, I got to be in a cool place, notwithstanding the very heated light that was lighting up the film.

[02:04:53] SL: You know, it's becoming increasingly clear hearing your involvement with all these mechanical things that you had a very strong grasp of physics and engineering, mechanical engineering.

RT: Yes.

SL: And did that start to . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . accumulate at home, or did that happen when you went to the . . .

RT: That started from early years at home, and throughout my college I kept—advanced in engineering, science, technology, chemistry. I think it always surprised colleagues of mine that I had the engineering background that I was fortunate in getting.

SL: All that's—engineering is very dear to my heart 'cause my son is an engineer and got a degree . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . from Lehigh, and I'm really proud of him for that. And he

does have—it does take an analytical mind . . .

RT: It does.

SL: . . . to do that.

RT: It does.

SL: So . . .

[02:06:05] RT: Well, I just loved it, and as you know, I made radios and sold them. I built my own motorcycle out of a gasoline washing machine motor and a few pipes. And I did well in my navy engineering courses. I became the electronics officer, the operations officer, of ships of the navy. I was top-secret control officer in charge of communication for the admiral and for the fleet in Korea, for the aircraft carrier *Philippine Sea*, of which I was the signal officer. And so I have, mostly unknown to people in my acquaintance, that I really have a strong engineering background, and that became useful to me when I went to Congress and became chairman of the science and technology committee, the Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Technology. And it surprised my colleagues in Washington, but when they [*laughs*] found out I had built a fleet of automobiles called Handywagons and had developed a knowledge of recombinant DNA at a time that that was becoming an issue, my career nationally really moved toward science and engineering.

But we've gotten there awfully fast. Before I got there, I got out of the navy and for the first time went to work for my Uncle Witt, and he put me in charge of development of various enterprises. I formed Arkansas Cement Corporation, Arkansas Chemical Corporation, Razorback Boats, the pipeline connecting to Helena for the chemical ammonia-producing plant over there and the forestry plant at Gurdon. He really gave me a lot of enterprises to work on that were very exciting, including the development of the Handywagon, which I . . .

SL: Well, we're just—we just need to go ahead and talk about that Handywagon.

RT: Go ahead?

[02:09:00] SL: Yeah, what was the idea about the Handywagon?

RT: Well, the idea was that at that time in America you didn't have anything beside Cushman motor scooters below the size of a full pickup truck. And in the gas company we had constant needs for servicemen servicing gas lights, for meter readers to go from house to house, hopefully with a vehicle that you could leave running while you went and examined the meter. And in talking with Witt about it, I told him that with our Razorback Boat Company, coupled with the Servel manufacturing arm that built refrigerators and which had built airplane parts during the war,

coupled with the Conestoga prairie schooner patents that we had, that we were in an ideal position to build a lightweight, quarter-ton truck that would get thirty-five, forty miles per gallon and serve for meter readers and that kind of enterprise. And he checked it out and was told by people in the company that there's no way we could do it. And he's told me that, and he [*SL laughs*] said, "I'll give you a—I'll allow you two hundred thousand dollars to build me a hundred." And so I said, "Well, I'll go after it." And we did it. And I got the help of a pipeline foreman named Ed Handy, who could build anything that I could draw or design. And we worked together at his privately owned shop out on Rinke Road here in Little Rock, and I did most of the sketching, and he did most of the building. And we came across a Dutch manufacturer named van Doorne's Automobiel Fabrieken in Eindhoven, Holland. And the van Doornes were adventurous, and they had built a passenger car with a two-cylinder, horizontally opposed gasoline engine that would go about forty miles an hour and was in use in Holland and some in other European cities, but it was too small for American people. And so I found Ed Handy, and he could build anything I could describe. [02:12:12] So we went to New York and called on Jan Soeten, who was their representative, Eindhoven's, the van

Doornes' representative in the United States, and we explained that we wanted to build a lightweight utility truck and would like to experiment with his two-cylinder motor and the automatic transmission that they had developed. So we bought two vehicles, brought 'em back to Ed's shop, dismantled them, substituted for the stamped-out press a sturdy box girder-connected frame with coil springs for the rear wheels and with torsion bar springs for the front end. Both of those together allowed us to add seven inches of driving space to the—accommodate American-sized people. And we built a couple of those, and Witt said, "Go for a hundred," and so we did. And I thought to myself, "What better name could we have for these than the name of the pipeline foreman who has basically reduced everything that I could draw into a machine?" And so we called them Handywagons. And I was very proud of them. We still have a couple of them in the museum in Grant County. Many others were sold to private people after we went down on the project, and the little trucks worked fabulously. They got about thirty-two miles per gallon, had a top speed of about seventy.

SL: Wow!

[02:14:29] RT: People who had seen the Cushmans were startled by how much superior these were to the Cushman vehicles that

were then being used by the post office and others. And Witt came to me and said, "Ray, you've amazed everybody. If you can guarantee me a unit cost of a thousand dollars per vehicle, I'll authorize you to buy and build a run of one thousand of these machines." Well, I was tempted to cheat, but I never have. And I came back to him and said, "It'll cost me twelve hundred dollars per unit to build 'em." And he said, "Well, I don't think that I can sell 'em for a price sufficient to pay for replacements and to maintain parts if you can't get the price below a thousand dollars a unit." And so reluctantly, we went out of the Handywagon business. About two or three years later, the oil embargo hit, the price of gasoline skyrocketed, and he told me we made a mistake. [*SL laughs*] If we had kept going, we'd be on top of the market now for lightweight, fuel-efficient vehicles, and it was too late. We—our equipment had been basically abandoned, sold off, and we pulled the project down. Jan Soeten, the Dutchman who was high in the van Doorne family circle, was disappointed and urged us to try to renegotiate the price of seven hundred dollars that they had given us for the engine and the drive, and we had done the rest for around five hundred or six hundred dollars, which put our price up to twelve hundred dollars per unit. Well, we abandoned it and should not

have because, without my knowledge, the Dutch were as excited about the project as we were. And the van Doornes had authorized a purchase of one of our Handywagons, which they took and brought it up to new standing. Took it to Eindhoven, Holland, where it sits today as a beautiful example of Dutch-American . . .

SL: Engineering.

[02:17:31] RT: . . . engineering. And I have a copy that Julie Baldridge found in—on the computer of one of those vehicles that they have. As I say, we have two in Grant County. But what it illustrates to me is that they were as excited about this use of their automatic drive. It was an automatic belt drive, variable transmission, and they got the idea that this little vehicle would have been an exceptional niche player in the scheme of automobiles. Now there are lots of units in that niche. Toyota. A bunch of others that fit that niche, but it wasn't filled then. And had I had Jack's wisdom about the future, I would've said, "Well, why don't we go to Eindhoven and talk to them about bringing their plant to Arkansas? And we will work with them to produce this larger fiberglass economical truck here in Arkansas, and I bet you that with McClellan's help and with Wilbur Mills's help that we can sell 'em to the post

office for their delivery vehicles." And I didn't have enough gumption [*SL laughs*] to make that step because if I'd made that step, and knowing as I now do how proud they were of their work, they would've been glad to come here and go partners with us in building a plant in Arkansas to supply the post office's need for that kind of delivery vehicle.

[02:19:42] SL: Man, it almost makes you wish you could just go ahead and fire it up again anyway.

RT: Well, I found out to my dismay, three years after I had built these—this fleet, in Washington the Arab oil embargo made this kind of vehicle very imperative. But unfortunately, the equipment that we'd put together to do this limited-production role—run had been forsaken. Witt left the gas company, and Sheffield Nelson didn't see much future in it, and so we didn't have the capacity at that time without doing it all again.

SL: So what a great engineering feat that is, and what a great partnership that could've been.

RT: Well, Witt thought so, and one of—he corresponded with me about it many times, how we messed up on our timing on that and why we should've recognized that we needed to develop a partnership with the van Doornes. And I don't think there's any question that with the presentation like I just discussed that they

would've been here ready to go.

[02:21:08] SL: You know, there's another cultural element that we haven't talked about at all. And I don't know how things were in Sheridan or Conway, but that would be the segregation . . .

RT: Ah . . .

SL: . . . side of life . . .

RT: . . . yes.

SL: . . . growing up. And I just wonder, as a child and going through the public schools, you know, it seemed like—the way that I hear this is that the African American and Caucasian American relationships were fine with the children . . .

RT: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . growing up. In many instances they played together, you know, out in the street or in the yards. And—but once they became public school age, the paths divided. And so were you aware at all of the segregational . . .

RT: Well, I was aware in this sense. Papa Stephens's, Jack Stephens's father, Lorenzo Dow, had fought with Fremont and was with Fremont when he issued his premature emancipation proclamation, and our family did not believe in slavery. Now there was some doubt about how quickly or how you overcame that, but Papa used to tell us, "It won't do to go too closely into

Lorenzo's attitudes there because he thought that the slaves ought to be freed and that the North was on the right side." Well, now that's true, and I had that background very much taught to me. We didn't do everything we should have, but the few blacks who lived in Grant County will tell you that the Pumphrey family, which was my mother's family, were very generous and not in the typical slaveholder-slave relationship. And Papa certainly knew that that was not the valid way to make a government, and I appreciated that. In other words, we had black friends who would come to our house, and some of 'em would help cook a meal; some would come and borrow food for their table. And we were taught, and it was mainly Christian, that it was wrong to have people of inferior quality caused to be slaves. Now we knew that it didn't matter whether they were—they didn't have to be a free person to be a Christian, but we knew that, in our view, that bein' Christian meant you didn't own anyone else's soul, that they had their own free soul and should be honored and respected just like everybody else. So we were known as a family that was not a part of the violently segregated side of the struggle here in the South.

SL: The African American population in the county was pretty small.

RT: Yeah.

SL: So you probably didn't see much . . .

RT: No, no.

SL: . . . confrontational . . .

RT: No, that's right.

[02:25:06] SL: . . . stuff. Did—were you were aware of the different drinking fountains or bathrooms or . . .

RT: Yeah, you couldn't help but notice that there would be a "colored only" or "whites only" sign in front of restrooms. And there was discrimination in eating places, and I was uncomfortable with that. At Yale I became friends with Levi Jackson, who was an African American football star. And my roommate on the aircraft carrier was Lonnie Marshall. He was one of the first black midshipmen to serve, and we had a true friendship. So I can't speak for everyone else, but I grew up inoculated against the idea that whites were superior to blacks.

SL: So let's see now. When did you enter the navy program?

RT: Okay, I graduated from Yale in 1950. Went one year to the University of Texas . . .

SL: Texas.

RT: . . . at Austin, and that was the—a turning point in my career. At the end of Yale, I was Ivy League. I was a bookworm. I was good at reading and answering questions. At the University of

Texas, I became Cowboy Ray. [*SL laughs*] I had friends who opened my eyes to a different way of living and I—it's a year that I truly treasure. As a result of that, I went into the navy with my eyes open and had a good three-year span. Two combat tours of Korea and a tour on a dependence passenger ship, of which I was operations officer, electronics officer, and top-secret control officer. And we lived a good life, and I was a bookworm, except for the navy and the guitar. And when I came back to Arkansas, as I told you before, after the navy, Witt had given me a job as a salesman. And I met David Pryor, who is a wonderful product of Arkansas public schools. I met professors that were so smart and so good, and I became an

average student. I studied people. And at the end of my first year back on campus, I got the idea, which David Pryor played a part in and Harlin Perryman and others, of running for president of the student body. And I did so as Cowboy Ray Thornton, pickin' and singin' on the steps of the library to get a crowd to appear. And then I'd turn the singin' over to my friend, Ronnie Hawkins, and he would keep the crowd and enlarge it while I went around and shook hands with everybody and asked for their votes. And Ronnie and I made a good team, as a result of which I ran as a write-in candidate, I mean, a petition candidate,

against two established candidates of the two political parties. And I wound up getting 60 percent of the vote . . .

SL: Landslide.

RT: . . . and letting them divide the other 40 percent.

SL: Landslide.

[02:29:33] RT: And [*SL laughs*] as president of the student body, I had some good things happen on the campus there. One was [*laughs*] that I happened to have an uncle, Jack Stephens, who was a trustee, and so we got a lot of recognition for the student government that we might not otherwise . . .

SL: Sure.

RT: . . . have gotten. And David was a leader there, a natural leader, and we went to the Chicago presidential convention. I took my granddad, and David went along with us, and we had a good time. And David often tells about the night that I wanted to get [*SL laughs*] my granddad to see Harry Belafonte, who was entertaining at the Chicago hotel. And David had tried, and they had no seats, so I went over to the maître d', and David saw the conversation, and he didn't see the size of the bill [*SL laughs*], but I tipped the maître d' a fifty-dollar bill, and all of a sudden, a table came out and sat right in front of Harry Belafonte. And David and my granddad and I sat there and enjoyed Belafonte's

performance. It was a great convention, and we nominated Stevenson. My dad—my papa met Jack Kennedy in a—an elevator, and Kennedy asked him whether—if he should ever run for president or vice president, how would he do in Arkansas, and Papa said, "Well, you'll do all right. We had a Catholic run when Joe T. Robinson ran for vice president, and I helped them carry Arkansas. And all you have to do is to remind people that we're in a free country and that no one should be excluded from striving for the highest office in America because of the fervency of their religious belief." And I watched Kennedy register on that, and it's basically what Kennedy said down at Houston a couple of years later, when he turned the mood of the country onto the question that you shouldn't be disqualified for presidency because of your belief in the Catholic Church.

[02:32:28] SL: That's right. That's right. You know, we've mentioned David Pryor several times . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . in this interview. It's plain . . .

RT: Well, he's one of my dearest friends.

SL: . . . it's plain to see that y'all have great fondness for each other. But at the same time, you guys were—ran against each other in a political primary.

RT: Neither of us wanted to run against each other, and we ended the campaign closer friends than we started because neither of us took an unfair poke at the other. It was terribly close. It was one that could've gone either way. There were three of us who finished with 32 percent of the vote, and then there was a spoiler, A. C. Mowery, I believe, from Texarkana, who got just enough votes from me to let [*laughs*] Jim Guy finish second. At midnight I was running ahead. [*SL laughs*] By about four a.m. it was David and me, and then Jim Guy sneaked in in front of me.

[02:33:45] SL: Now who was the third candidate in—was it . . .

RT: A. C. Mowery, I believe. Please look that up.

SL: Okay. I'll look it up. Well, that's a remarkable—that's gotta be very, very rare, especially in these days.

RT: Oh yeah. Well, and . . .

SL: It's impossible in these days [*unclear words*].

RT: . . . and David constantly has reminded me of our friendship when I decided that I needed to leave the university to go back to Washington to carry what I called a Marshall Plan for America, to use the technique that General Marshall had used to rebuild Europe to rebuild America. David signed on as the chairman of my congressional campaign.

SL: Unheard of.

RT: True.

SL: It just doesn't happen, does it? That really speaks well of your-all's respect for each other and your friendship. That's a good story.

RT: Yeah. Well, he's a great man.

SL: Well, you know, it's a shame that it's not like that anymore.

RT: Well, it's too bad we couldn't've called those Coachman Inn days forward where we both sat there and talked about how great it would be if we could both be senator.

[02:35:04] SL: Yes. Yup. That's somethin' else. Now, okay, well, maybe we should start talkin' a little bit about—first of all, were there any—I'm gonna go back to home, speaking of friendships.

RT: Okay.

SL: Early childhood friendships.

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: So I know that you had them.

RT: Yeah. Well . . .

SL: I know that you also worked yourself like a dog . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . in between four or five jobs at a time. But did you have good childhood friends and . . .

[02:35:37] RT: Jimmy Koon is today one of my closest friends. He was the son of the jeweler. He set my eyes on fire when he built a motorbike. Of course, he had an advantage. He had a bicycle to start with rather than a washing machine.

SL: Washing machine. [*Laughter*]

RT: But he also had a motorbike. He is maybe the most careful and efficient jeweler I have ever known. He repairs everyone's jewelry to this day. He spurred me on to build the radios. We built a line of airplanes, some of which had motors and all of which had our steering mechanism made up of gyroscopes. And we would launch our gyroscopic airplanes from the clock window of the Grant County Courthouse [*SL laughs*] and watch as they followed the directions that we'd given those gyroscopes as they traveled for a good distance. Now I'm not gonna claim that we had it fixed up as well as these drones that are operating now, but it was the same [*laughs*] idea.

SL: Same idea.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Remote control. Boy, what are the chances that anyone . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . could get up in those towers today and let . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . loose with a . . .

RT: And Roswell Hill, who was part of our group, predicted that we would see people go to the moon. And I was incredulous, and Jimmy didn't see how it could be done. But Roswell had the confidence to foresee Wernher von Braun and his ability to lift people up to walk on the moon.

SL: In Sheridan, Arkansas.

RT: Sheridan, Arkansas.

[02:37:48] SL: So besides inventing things and being entrepreneurs that you guys were, what—did you play sports? Did you . . .

RT: Sheridan stopped its football program when Frank Koon was drafted and I—we played disorganized sports, and I was good as a scatback, but I never did get to play high school football. I was not tall enough to play basketball. And I was stymied because my classmates kept wanting to check me out to help them [*laughter*] with their homework. I hate to say it, but I was kind of a resource for the other students. They thought that all they needed to improve their grades was to talk with me.

SL: What about—you know, you mentioned the clarinet and saxophone.

RT: Yes, I played both in the teenage . . .

SL: And was that in the marching band or . . .

RT: Yeah, it was a—the marching band. I was the best clarinetist. The teenage orchestra played for the servicemen in the teenage club, and I was good enough to play in the university band in the first two years after I got out of high school. I took my clarinet to Yale with me and found that with the military program and my Yale studies, that I didn't have time for the Yale band. And regrettably, I, hey, I admit it, I hocked my clarinet . . .

SL: Oh!

RT: . . . because during the early recesses up there, my—I was workin', in addition to the scholarship. I had a bursary job, which means I worked in the library filing and doing things like that for my food. And they shut the food line down over Thanksgiving and other days, so I had to hock my horn to pay for meals during one of those vacations.

[02:40:17] SL: That was hard, I bet.

RT: Well, I didn't like it, but I preferred it to . . .

SL: Not eating.

RT: . . . goin' without food.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

RT: My mother and dad did everything they could to help, but during my years at Yale, they could send me twenty-five dollars a month, and everything else came from my bursary job and from

my navy scholarship and living allowance. The—I wouldn't have it any other way. It worked out well. My bursary job eventually turned into working at the library, the main library, and I found that a good place to study and a good place to read extensively. So I really had become kind of a full-time student.

[02:41:11] SL: The Yale library, I would assume, has a very impressive collection . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . of . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . archival-type materials.

RT: Mh-hmm. And of course, that helped me while I was on the debating team. That's why I was able to do the research and compete with the Ivy League debaters.

SL: It wa—you got it while you were on the job.

RT: Yeah.

SL: That's good.

TM: Scott, what about the Civil War play that he mentioned earlier—by the riverside?

SL: Oh yeah. You know, we were talkin' about the crossing there and the ceremony that mar—I think it was marking the battle there at Jenkins' Ferry.

[02:41:48] RT: Jenkins' Ferry. No, it was the celebration of the centennial for Arkansas. We went into the Union in 1836, and this was 1936. And I was the speaker [*laughs*] of the occasion. And my granddad rode up on the opposite bank on a gray horse that I didn't know he had and proclaimed that he was glad to see the crowd, that he was Hernando de Soto, that he had recently left the Mississippi River, and he was trying to find the Fountain of Youth, the labeled and famous hot springs, which were somewhere across this river, and he wondered if anyone could be of help in guiding him. And the reply was, "Well, this is the gravel crossing that the Indians, Native Americans, have used in going east and west, and if you'll go across here and keep going, you'll come to the fabulous hot springs." And Papa said, "Well, I don't see any reason for stopping here. I haven't seen any gold or any silver or any magnificent villages. All of this looks like wasteland to me." And he went on across the river and proceeded to the west. And then Papa said, "But you know, folks, he missed the true value that we celebrate here. He missed the riches of this fertile land, which can grow cotton, corn, and sweet potatoes; of these magnificent trees, which can be used as timber for the construction of houses; the families that can live and educate their children here in these fine

schools. And so we have to say that de Soto did not look at the true values that were all around him and that he could have stopped right here and found that this was the most fortunate place he could be."

SL: Couldn't see the forest for the trees . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . kind of thing.

RT: Yeah. They . . .

[02:44:16] SL: Well, that era was all about finding gold and silver.

RT: It was.

SL: And . . .

RT: It was.

SL: . . . the Fountain of Youth.

RT: Yeah. But the point is that Papa recognized that we should find our treasure wherever we were and that de Soto had missed by looking for it in some distant place, that you found your treasure where you were located. And I always thought that was so smart . . .

SL: That's a good lesson.

RT: . . . of Papa to tell us that at the celebration of de Soto crossing the Saline River.

SL: Well now, you said that you were a speaker at this celebration.

What was your role at this celebration?

RT: Well, my mother and dad taught me the importance of democracy and of the values that we celebrated together. And Papa had told me that government and making sure that the will of the people be done is the thing that we all ought to be reminded of. And I had a pretty good little speech made up in my mind of praise for our teachers, for education, and for the opportunities that we enjoy.

[02:45:43] SL: And so you speechified. How old were you?

RT: I speechified.

SL: How old were you?

RT: Well, let's see. That's [19]36. I was eight years old.

SL: You may've been the youngest speaker in the entire state for that celebration.

RT: Well, I may have been. But I think they thought it was miraculous that I could stand up and make a speech at all. [*Laughter*] But I won. I—Mother saved, and I ran across them at the time of her funeral, the pins and medals that I won from 1934 until 1939 at speaking contests. They used to have contests within the county, and I won debate and speaking contests and government speakin' contests and even an English speaking contest. And those medals, I can produce 'em.

[*Laughs*] They're still there where Mother put 'em.

SL: Well, they're priceless. So were you on the speech and debate teams when you were growin' up?

RT: I was on the debate team when I was growing up. I was on the debate team at Fayetteville with Marcus Halbrook, who later became a clerk to the House of Representatives; Bill Arnold of Searcy; Phil Carroll of Little Rock. And then when I went to Yale, I think I already mentioned this, I was on the varsity debating team with Bill Buckley, Brent Bozell, the other luminary debaters at Yale.

[02:47:27] SL: So—all right. Was there any teacher growing up outside of your house that really helped . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . light up some lightbulbs for you?

RT: Alice Hope was my senior class teacher. She was magnificent. Sadie Koon taught me math and got me interested in science. The experience under Mrs. Alice Hope was incredible. She taught me things that seniors in high school don't ordinarily have. She could recite much of T. S. Eliot's poetry and would quote parts of his poems. And I remember some of those quotes today. I'm not gonna bore the crowd with reciting them. But the—she was a magnificent teacher. And when I ran for

attorney general, she wrote to every teacher in Arkansas that she knew and talked about me and what a fine example, she said, I was for education and for public office. Alice Hope. Tremendous. Frank Koon, Sadie Koon's husband, went to the war, and that's why we didn't have a football program because he was the coach. Mrs. Calloway was tremendous. I could—I can name all of them. A. R. "Mac" McKenzie was—a book can be written about his influence on education in Arkansas and should be. He's a—he was a strict disciplinarian who loved America and who insisted on students' self-governance. [02:49:41] And I often wonder how Mac would do in today's environment. I don't think the discipline—well, let me just explain. Teachers don't like for you to smoke in school, and Robert Crutchfield, Johnnie, came walkin' up to the front door of McKenzie Hall, and he had a cigarette in his mouth. And Mac bolted out the door and said, "I told you you couldn't smoke in this school. Now you leave this campus and throw that cigarette away and don't come back with one." And so Robert did, and Mac walked back in, and Velma Lybrand said, "Mac, he graduated last year." [*SL laughs*] And Mac said, "Well, he's not supposed to be smokin'" and didn't relinquish his demand that Robert put his cigarette out. But Mac didn't consider just the school ground as bein' his. He could be

driving downtown in front of the pool hall and see some student smokin', and he'd stop the car and get out and make the student snuff the cigarette out. And you didn't disagree with him. He was like Father Tribou was a few years ago here in Little Rock. Now you minded Mac wherever he appeared. And what a great influence he was on young people, and how terrible it is that we've denied to our good teachers the ability to really exercise discipline on some of the students.

[02:51:43] SL: When you were done with high school . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you're heading to the University of Arkansas . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . is that right? You get a scholarship to . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . go there. And what happens when you get to Fayetteville? What's the difference between where you came from and when you got to Fayetteville?

RT: Well, I found that I could make it at Fayetteville by working on my courses. Virgil Baker was the speech teacher. Professor—chemistry—taught me that chemi—that I could do the chemistry thing—Wertheim—and the thing that was interesting to me was that I found I could compete. Now that's not my fault. I'd been

well educated at that time. But the result was that when the Holloway Plan came open and I was competing on a national level with students who were, for the most part, graduating from high school at eighteen years old, and I was eighteen, but I was already in law school, it's no wonder that I got to choose where I wanted to go to college. Now Yale bucked about it for a while. Don't know if I said that. But they didn't like the idea of admitting me without my freshman year being done there. But the navy was able to prevail on them, and as I said, I graduated in three years from Yale with a degree that was in international law but also had elements of engineering and mathematics in it to help me with my navy work.

[02:53:51] SL: So in Fayetteville the culture was different though, wasn't it?

RT: Yeah.

SL: And it was a bigger town . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . for one thing. The student population—let's see. Is this 1954?

RT: Nineteen and forty-nine.

SL: Nineteen forty-nine.

RT: Yeah, I graduated in [19]50.

SL: So you were there when Clyde Scott was there.

RT: When who?

SL: Clyde Scott?

RT: Oh yeah. Yeah, I was at Fayetteville when Clyde Scott was there, and he was a good friend of mine.

[02:54:24] SL: Do you remember watchin' him play?

RT: Yes. And I remember riding back in the school bus from a Memphis game when we had a little fender bender, and Clyde's wife was in the bus, and I reassured her that she'd be all right, and she was. And we were close friends.

SL: Small world.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Small world. So let's see . . .

RT: Aubrey Fowler was there, Cobb Fowler. Buddy Bob Benson, who was the scatback of all scatbacks. He died recently. But Buddy Bob was playing in a game with Bud Brooks and Leggett of Louisiana, and Buddy Bob got the ball, and Brooks bounced Leggett on his rear, and Leggett got up, and Bud Brooks knocked him down again. [*SL laughs*] And a third time Brooks got knocked down again—Leggett did, and he looked at Brooks and said, "All right, you beat me on this play. Why do you keep doin' it?" And Bud Brooks said, "Buddy Bob Benson's got the

ball. He may be back this way again." [*Laughter*]

SL: He could scramble, huh?

RT: He could scramble.

SL: So that's what—let's describe what a scatback is.

RT: Well, a scatback is somebody who is not quite as fast as a sprinter as Clyde Scott was, but he was quicker on his feet. He could dodge and make people miss him, and he was a great football player and had a good career at Ouachita, where he coached.

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:56:32] SL: Ray . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . we're startin' our fourth hour.

RT: Yes.

SL: I wanna commend you for puttin' up with us this long.

RT: How many? Are there gonna be a couple more or not?

SL: We can go—we'll go as long as it's good for you.

RT: Okay.

SL: But I do think we've done a pretty good job of covering . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . early years . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . early influences.

RT: Good.

SL: We may dip back and forth.

RT: Okay.

SL: We've gotten you to the University of Arkansas.

RT: Yeah.

SL: We've established that you knew some of the football players . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . at the time.

[02:57:02] RT: And of course, we got in my first knowledge of David Pryor, who has been very important to me. And we dealt with David Pryor and the Democratic convention in Chicago. And I want to do the Democratic convention in Los Angeles, 1960.

SL: Okay.

RT: Very briefly.

SL: Okay.

RT: It was with Papa.

SL: You wanna go ahead and talk about that now?

RT: Yeah.

SL: We can. I mean, I . . .

RT: If that's where we are. If . . .

[02:57:36] SL: Well, we're actually—we're in Fayetteville at the University of Arkansas, and you're there in 1948.

RT: Yeah, but then I come back in 1950.

SL: There was something going on in the law school about that time. It was—I believe it was [19]48 when Silas Hunt was admitted.

RT: Oh yeah. My Uncle Jack was instrumental in that, and I advised with him and thought it would be a good idea to admit him.

SL: How was your Uncle Jack involved with that?

RT: What's that?

SL: How was Uncle Jack involved with that?

RT: He thought it was the thing to do, and he took a lotta heat from people who didn't like the idea of admitting him, and Jack was strong in support of giving Hunt an opportunity to go to law school there.

SL: Was your uncle on the board of . . .

RT: He was on the board . . .

SL: On the university board.

RT: . . . of trustees at the time.

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, that's good to know. And I don't know . . .

RT: I think . . .

SL: Did you actually get to see Silas Hunt on campus or . . .

RT: No, because he enrolled at the same time I transferred to Yale.

SL: Okay, so you . . .

RT: And . . .

SL: . . . kind of missed that.

RT: But I didn't miss it. I missed it only that I wasn't on campus while he was there. The controversy and everything, I was fully aware of.

[02:59:07] SL: Okay, so you go to Yale. You have really great success at Yale . . .

RT: I did.

SL: . . . as near as I can tell.

RT: I did. A lot of these people who went to Yale just barely got out, you know. [*Laughs*] I was amazed that I could come from a little country school and do as well as I did up there.

SL: Well, then again, there you go back to your folks . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . stressing the importance . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . of education. And it's paying . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . off for you ahead of schedule, really.

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: You were quite young to be . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . where you are . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . in your academic career and . . .

RT: It's a good thing I built up that head 'cause I took three years out for the military.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well you know, it's a different kind of learning . . .

RT: Yeah.

[02:59:52] SL: . . . there. So—but you graduated from Yale, and you're waiting to hear from Yale if you're gonna be admitted to law school.

RT: Yes, so I enrolled at Texas.

SL: So Texas made you an offer.

RT: Yeah.

SL: It was there that you kind of experienced a different lifestyle.

RT: I found a different lifestyle, and it wasn't better or worse. I was dealin' with a Rhodes scholar and other brilliant people, but it wasn't nose-to-the-grindstone books. All of a sudden, it was "What's behind this? What"—I was getting insight. Joe McKnight would ask the question, not "What is the law?" but

"What was the judge thinkin'? What was he tryin' to accomplish with this?" And . . .

SL: So you're reading humans now . . .

RT: Yeah, reading humans . . .

SL: . . . instead of text.

RT: . . . instead of books.

SL: Invaluable. That's . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . an invaluable kind of education.

RT: Right.

[Tape stopped]

[03:00:52] SL: Okay, so you go to Texas. You start thinking in terms of education in a slightly different way . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . more of a human relationship . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . how humans relate to each other . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . and what is not being said or what is not . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . being written.

RT: Right.

SL: It's a great . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . science that's embedded in the art of getting along. So . . .

RT: Yeah.

[03:01:23] SL: . . . you leave Texas, and you go into the navy now.

RT: Yeah.

SL: Is that right?

RT: Aircraft carrier *Philippine Sea*.

SL: And you had entered this program. It was a—was it a scholarship program?

RT: Yeah.

SL: And you were given an officer rank . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . at the end of this program.

RT: Regular navy. I wasn't a reserve.

SL: Regular navy.

RT: Yeah.

SL: And you get on an aircraft carrier.

RT: The *Philippine Sea*. Yeah.

SL: And this aircraft carrier is stationed off the coast . . .

RT: San Francisco, but I had two separate tours of duty in Korea . . .

SL: Okay.

RT: . . . on the aircraft carrier. And then I was transferred to a transport ship carrying troops and family back and forth from San Francisco to the—to Japan, to the Philippines, to Hong Kong—no, to Taiwan. We sailed by Hong Kong. And the *Philippine Sea*, what happened there, and I don't wanna put this in, when I—my two years of duty on the *Phil Sea* were concluding, I got a remarkable opportunity. I was asked if I would agree to become on the faculty at the navy academy in . . .

SL: Annapolis?

RT: Baltimore.

SL: Oh, Baltimore.

[03:03:07] RT: You know, Annapolis. And Dad was thrilled. I had to extend for two years, but I knew that if I made that commitment, my life would be a navy career, and I still wanted to get back to Arkansas and had in the back of my mind some politics, deep in the back of my mind. And so I declined appointment from the regular navy on board a carrier to become a teacher at Annapolis. And I don't know if I was the first Holloway Plan student to get that invitation. I don't know—usually they draw from the best of their Annapolis . . .

SL: Right.

[03:04:05] RT: . . . graduates. So I was tremendously complimented, but I did not want to make that career choice that goin' for navy admiral is the career that I want, and so I didn't. Dad thought I'd lost my mind. [*SL laughs*] He couldn't understand stayin' out in the operating zone when I had an opportunity to come back and teach. But I think I made the right choice because the career I've had would not have opened to me. I don't have any doubt that I could've become an admiral because I was on that track. I mean, they had really singled me out and pushed me heavily within the navy. So I don't think I want—there's too much speculation there and too much, "Well, why didn't you take the appointment to Annapolis?" And the reason is I wanted to get back into the private life that I had before.

SL: You know, I think all that's perfectly acceptable. One, it's your mind turning over your paths that you could've . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . taken and not—you're not really saying that any of this is accurate or . . .

RT: No.

SL: . . . or what would've happened or what could've happened. But you're, I mean, you're not declaring that this . . .

RT: But I had to weigh those alternatives, and I did a pretty good job . . .

SL: Yeah.

RT: . . . of weighing 'em. I had a good career either way.

[03:05:35] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about your service in the navy just . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . for a minute. First of all, you're on an aircraft carrier . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . in the ocean.

RT: Yes.

SL: And there's no ocean in Arkansas.

RT: No.

SL: So you are . . .

RT: Far from home.

SL: You're far from home in many respects.

RT: Yeah.

SL: What was life like on an aircraft carrier, for one thing?

RT: Well, I had a good group of friends, and they were smart. Jack Scantlin won citations for his work on a dosimeter to detect radioactive fallout, and his inventions were put in wide use throughout the navy. Gene Whitmer was a talented writer, and

Fred Tebeau was [*laughs*] a line of the—a gem at seeing the humor in life. And then Paul Smith of San Antonio, Texas, and Reece West of Wichita, Texas, they saved my life. I had a near-death experience.

SL: Let's hear about that.

RT: And they saved my life, and they've been constant friends since that time. I'm very grateful for the navy years that I had.

[03:07:16] SL: What was your near-death experience?

RT: It was that I had been studying for the navy UDT program, and I had my training similar to what the ducks or whatever they are go through. I could hold my breath and swim underwater for three minutes without taking a breath and other feats of body discipline. And I had done that on a trip to a swimming facility in Japan, and Paul Smith observed that I dove in one end of the pool and, wasn't payin' too much attention, but I came back all the way from that end back to the front end, bout total of fifty yards or so, swimming underwater. And then Paul said, "Well, then you quit swimming, and you just went to the bottom of the pool and didn't move any. And I began to think you were showing out, and then I decided somethin' might be wrong." And he jumped in and pulled me out, and after he got me out, my eyes flared with anger because I was being pulled out of

heaven. I was—I'd gone unconscious, settled to the bottom of the pool. The miracle that I never could understand until reading about a near-death experience a few months ago, I learned that there are occasions when you shut down so completely that you do not breathe even after you go unconscious, and that's what happened. I didn't get water in my lungs. I never breathed. I went unconscious. Stayed unconscious for a good period of time. And Paul, in getting me out on the bank, pulled or tugged at me some way that caused me to breathe. And I didn't inhale any water, but I was angry at being pulled out of this blissful experience that was unlike anything I'd ever heard of. And I didn't know anyone else had ever had an experience like that. [03:09:51] Since that time, I've learned that it happens occasionally, and sometimes, like my case, you don't recover. You keep your—you don't drown because you don't take in water that destroys your lungs. And I was mainly startled, embarrassed, and afraid to go to sleep that night because the experience had been so blissful, and I had gotten there without strangling or fighting. I was so afraid that I was just gonna stop breathing again and be done with it, and I didn't really want that to happen, though I would've loved to have gone back to that blissful experience that I was having.

Well, that had a huge effect on the rest of my life, just as goin' to Texas had taught me to study people instead of books. This taught me that there was nothing more important that I could do than to be helpful in some way to people who were living. And my ideal from that point on was not to make a lot of money, but to get into a position where I could have a beneficial effect on society. That's it.

[03:11:26] SL: That's a great story. Is there anything about that blissful state that you can reme . . .

RT: What's that?

SL: . . . is there anything about the blissful state that you can remember about . . .

RT: Oh yeah. I remember that I needed a breath, and I started to go to the surface. And I saw the end of the pool about ten feet in front of me, and I said, "Oh, I can finish this." And I went unconscious, but I was in—I was elevated, and I could see everywhere. And there is a phenomenon called "rhapsody of the deep," and it is when you deprive yourself of oxygen. And it's the source, I think, of all near-death experiences, where you don't want to get out of it. You know, you're through, and you're experiencing some connection with the afterlife. And there were figures there, and I saw my dad and my granddad,

and it was blissful. I—when I—when Paul woke me up, I was furious because I wanted to go back to that blissful condition. Now I didn't fight him or anything like that, but let's just say if you read near-death stories, you'll find that they're all very similar when you come to that point of thinking that you're dead and living in etern—what it—let me describe it. It was that—not that I was living in eternity; it was that I was living in infinity, that the whole universe was open to me, and I was part of a fabric, an infinite fabric of the universe, and that it was blissful. Now if that's not heaven, I wouldn't know what would be. But it was as though you were traveling along a line, and instead of the line being chopped off, it expands until you're infinite. And [*sighs*] it's scary even now to think about it.

[03:14:07] SL: But it was comfortable for you there.

RT: What?

SL: It was comfortable? I mean, it was . . .

RT: Oh yes. I wanted to stay there.

SL: You were relaxed and . . .

RT: I wanted—I was through. I was not . . .

SL: You were at peace.

RT: I was infinite. I was infinite. Not measured by boundaries.

[03:14:32] SL: Well, that's certainly . . .

RT: It's too mysterious.

SL: Well, it's probably a bit unknowable.

RT: Yeah, what?

SL: A bit unknowable.

RT: Yeah.

SL: You just can't quite . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . define it or know it in its entirety.

RT: Well, it made an effect on me. I no longer felt that personal achievement or aggrandizement was going to make much difference, that I'd found the peace that we ought to strive for. Have you been recording this?

SL: Yeah.

RT: Wow!

SL: It's great. I mean, this is good stuff. I mean, this is honest stuff. I wouldn't worry about it. I mean, if you decide later on you don't want this in there . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . we'll take it out. But I think you should leave this kind of stuff in there because it's . . .

RT: Let's let it go.

[03:15:24] SL: . . . first of all, you admit that it changed your life.

RT: Yeah.

SL: And it gave you a different perspective.

RT: It gave me a different perspective.

SL: And I suspect that it's gonna dovetail into what you did with your life from that point on.

RT: Yeah. Right.

SL: So I don't think there's anything to be . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . ashamed of or anything to be defensive about here.

RT: Okay.

SL: I think this is something that really happened . . .

RT: Well, we'll look at it.

SL: Okay. I think it's something that really happened.

RT: Okay.

SL: And it—your life—your career is good with or without it, but it is a turning point.

RT: Okay.

SL: And it's important to you . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . obviously, it's important to you. [*Clapping sound*] It's okay that it's important to you.

[03:15:58] RT: Well, it was a wonderful time for me, and I came out

of that experience and out of the navy with the basic desire of "What can I do to be of help to the people that I am associated with?"

SL: All right. So you leave the navy, and you go to the University of Arkansas.

RT: Yes, I returned to the University of Arkansas. Choices were to go back to Texas or go to the university, and for the first time in my life, Witt and Jack had decided they wanted me to join the firm. And so they had invited me to join the firm, and I could pick my choice. I could either become a salesman or an officer of some of their subsidiaries, or I could go back to law school, and they would contribute to my legal education, the remaining two years, or it would—I could write my own ticket. And it was a very generous offer, and I deeply appreciated it and decided on going back to law school at Fayetteville. And that's where I met David Pryor, Harlin Perryman, Bob Gilstrap, and Dean Barnhart and renewed my acquaintance with Bob Leflar and set out to become a good lawyer and had great support from all of those people. I completed my work at Fayetteville, as you know, taking time off to run for president of the student government and to win and to develop friendships that have stayed with me all the rest of my life. [03:18:14] The—after graduating from

Fayetteville and going to work, or while at Fayetteville, I went to a fraternity meeting and met a young, beautiful girl who had been in the third grade when I left Sheridan, but she had grown up into the most beautiful, sweetest girl I've ever known, and that was Betty Jo. And she became my date, and after a couple of years, we got married in January 27, 1956, and I graduated later that year. Our first daughter was born a year later, and I have two other daughters. Nancy was first. Mary Jo and Stephanie were second and third. And they've all been a joy, and Betty Jo has been a constant joy to me and taken good c—she has taken good care of me now for about fifty-four years, [*SL laughs*] and she is the sweetest girl that I have ever known. I'm very lucky that she chose me. Now she was also from Sheridan and was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Mann, who owned a dry goods store, The People's Store, in Sheridan, and they were good people and always kind to all of us. I've been very fortunate. Betty Jo [*laughs*] said, "There's one thing I won't do." I mentioned politics. She said, "I'm not gonna make any speeches." And she really hasn't. She could. They honored her as the Florence Crittenton mother of the year a few years ago, and she did a beautiful job with it. And everybody'd rather listen to her than to listen to me. [*SL laughs*] And she has a

flair for knowing people, and as you know, my perspective changed a lot, and I began to study people and wonder what I could do to make life better for people. Betty Jo was a constant adviser to me on that and has been throughout these years.

[03:20:52] SL: You know, it takes a very strong partnership to survive a political career.

RT: Oh yes.

SL: And it sounds like that [*unclear words*] . . .

RT: We have a strong partnership.

SL: . . . sounds like it was a perfect fit . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . at the perfect time in your life.

RT: Right.

SL: And it sounds like many people have benefitted because of it.

RT: Oh, we're very—we're—I'm very fortunate. And she's very fortunate, except she fusses at me a little bit because [*SL laughs*] when—after having had a lot of good experiences working for Witt in the gas company and the boat plant and the cement company and the buggy plant, after all those good experiences, I found myself one day going over to Witt's office and saying, "You know, I can't tell you how much I appreciate all that you've done for me since I've come to the firm." And he

looked at me and said, "Well, what is it?" [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Well, I really want to become a candidate for public office, and I can't ask for any better employment than you've given me. I made a lot of money, and I'm happy." And he said—he bit on his cigar and said, "Well, let me tell you this if you're comin' for advice. I'm glad to know that you are makin' good money, and if it was me, I know what I'd do. I'd stay right where you are and make a pot full of money, and you'll probably have more effect on politics than you'll ever have as a candidate. But if you decide you really want to be a candidate, then I'll support you and all the family will support you as long as you don't use your politics for makin' money. Now if you want to make money, you stay right here, and you'll make a bushel basket of it. But if you go into politics, the only thing I have or the family has to gain is your reputation for honesty and integrity, and that isn't the same as makin' a lot of money. So you think about it, and if you want to go into politics, I'll support you. If you wanna make money, stay right here." Wow! I hadn't really thought that goin' into politics would mean givin' up on makin' money. But he had it right. [03:23:41] He understood it, that goin' into politics is not the way to make yourself a fortune. It's a way to do public service, and there he was reflectin' Papa's ideals about the

role of politics and how you should go in as a public service rather than for promotion of personal goals. Well, it really made me think hard, but I decided that I wanted to go into politics, and I chose to go into a race for the attorney general. Your—you've referred to David Pryor. He encouraged me in that pursuit. David and I have truly been friends. And he said, "Ray, you would be a great attorney general." And so I ran for attorney general, and I haven't turned back. I kept goin'. David and I ran against each other one time, and he won the Senate, and I won the presidency of Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas. We both had good careers. And then when I decided I needed to go back into politics again, David was there to be my campaign manager. So my life has been enriched by the quality not only of the people that supported me, but people who ran against me. Same with Richard Arnold. Richard Arnold and I ran against each other to succeed David Pryor as fourth district congressman. And Richard was asked if he wanted to try to get a runoff, and of course, I had enough votes not to have one. But he said, "If I could choose the person to represent me other than myself, that person would be Ray Thornton." And I said, and truthfully so, that on the morning of the election I reflected on the campaign and,

analytically, as to who had shown the best qualities for congressman. I had convinced myself that he had, that Richard Arnold had shown more skills and abilities, and I was terribly torn up as I went to vote. But I overcame my scruples and voted for myself. But I really mean that. I had so—become so convinced of his great qualities that if I had just made the judgment on who had done the best job as a candidate, I would've voted for him. But I overcame my scruples. I—but he liked that. He appreciated that as much as I appreciated knowing that, other than himself, I would be his candidate for

Congress. [03:27:03] Well, I went to Washington on the heels of having started the Consumer Protection Division in Arkansas, and so I wanted to get into the judiciary because that's where consumer rights would be held. And because I had done the revision of our criminal code and gotten others to work with me in drawing a new criminal code for Arkansas, I wanted to go on the Judiciary Committee. And I got both of those assignments thanks to Wilbur Mills, and I had no idea that the Judiciary Committee would become involved in the most heavily constitutional crisis of modern times. And I immediately studied the thing, like I often do, and decided that my role was there not as a representative of the will of the people, but as a grand

juror, a person who was charged with making the judgment based on the information that you have on the law as to what the law requires. And I never would tell how I was gonna vote because I couldn't do it until I saw all of the charges and decided for myself whether any of them reached the threshold of being impeachable offenses. That frustrated a lot of people, but I was one of seven people, four Republicans and three Democrats . . .

SL: Three Democrats.

[03:28:55] RT: . . . who took that position. We were later called the Fragile Coalition. But the truth is that we all faced our job as being to measure the actual facts against the requirements of law and to decide what the Constitution required. Well, we started our thinkin' early in committee, but we didn't discover that there were seven of us who felt the same until late in the committee process. And I made a speech in a Democratic caucus in which I said, "I can't go with these articles that we have that are scattered out on tax returns and who was postmaster and who did this. The only impeachable crimes that I can see are obstruction of justice and abuse of power and the refusal to honor the subpoenas, lawful subpoenas, of the House of Representatives." And Barbara Jordan said, "Well, that just about sums it up." And George Danielson said, "Can I have the

notes that you're lookin' at?" And I decided to let him have 'em. And George Mann and Walter Flowers came to me after the meeting and said, "Ray, you're right on track with what we've been talkin' about with Caldwell Butler and Bill Bowen and Hamilton Fish, and we've called a meeting for in the morning in"—I believe it was Tom Railsback's office—"and we're gonna go over it. Would you join us?" And so I did, and I had my one article that contained those three offenses, abuse of power, obstruction of justice, and refusal to adhere to a congressional subpoena. And we got there, and all of us decided that that was what summed it up. It was those offenses against the fabric of the Constitution that required that we bring it to trial in the Senate as to whether he had obeyed his responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States. And out of that we came up by dividing it into the three parts, and the other six Southerners voted for number one and two, while I voted for all three of them because they were in my original draft and because Bob McClory and another group of Republicans were very upset about the failure to follow the subpoenas.

SL: Honor the—yeah.

RT: And as a result, those were the articles that were adopted. I voted for each of the three that were adopted and no—none

others. McClory and his group voted for my article on failure to obey the impeachment inquiry of the House, the subpoena authority, and we carried all three of those articles in the debate that happened during the next few hours. Then there was a hurrah about that, and I came down to Arkansas and attended the Dierks Pine Tree Festival. And I also stopped by Kirby, Arkansas, where Ernie Dunlap had a store, and I stopped there to visit with them. And there was a curbside thing where everybody just sat around and solved the problems of the day.

SL: Yeah.

[03:33:41] RT: Well, as I got out of my car and came walking across the street, all of the people got up and left their seats and walked away. And I said to Ernie Dunlap, "Where are my friends all goin'?" And he said, "Ray, they didn't like your vote to impeach the president." And I went on down to Dierks, and the people there weren't very welcoming either about my vote to bring the articles of impeachment. As you know, Nixon had carried that district by a vote of about 67 percent only two years earlier. And so I went on national television that Sunday or the next Sunday, and they asked me, said, "Now your district voted nearly 70 percent for Nixon. What do you think that does to your opportunities for reelection?" And I said, "Well, it's an

acceptable risk. Obeying the Constitution and livin' by the rule of law is more important to me than my career in Congress or anyone else's tenure in any office, so I'll take that risk." The—anyway, all of that to explain why everybody walked away. And I said, "Well, Ernie, I'm glad you're still here." And he said, "Well, I gotta keep the store open." [*Laughter*]

SL: So he left you, too.

RT: He was also uncertain. [03:35:23] Well, I went back to Washington knowing that I was not very popular . . .

SL: Yeah.

RT: . . . in my district.

SL: Yeah.

RT: But soon after getting back, the court ruled that the tapes were open . . .

SL: Admissible.

RT: . . . to review. And the tapes clearly showed President Nixon making the orders that sent the spies into the . . .

SL: In motion.

RT: . . . headquarters with the directions to get their—that information and that Nixon was already reading reports that had been coming out of that, but they weren't sufficient. So it was the second group that went in and got the more complete

standing. Well, all of a sudden, it flip-flopped. All of a sudden, Americans knew that we were fighting for the Constitution and the separation of powers and the authority to operate within the law and that Mr. Nixon believed that the president was above the law, that he didn't have to follow the law. Well, that was pointed out in Robert Frost's interview with the president after a while. But in the meantime, it had a tremendous effect on local politics, and I survived my next race because people thought I had done the right thing. And I'm very grateful for that. But if anyone thinks that I was tryin' to find the popular way, they're mistaken. The popular way was to vote for Nixon 'cause he had a majority of the district. Well, that wasn't the question. [03:37:33] The question was whether he had followed the Constitution, and I'm glad I made the decision that I did.

SL: Well, I would say that your role was pretty pivotal though in clearing up all—reducing the articles to three . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . that were very clear and well defined.

RT: All constitutional, all dealing with performance of your duties in accordance with the law.

SL: Now . . .

RT: That everybody is subject to the law.

SL: Here—personally, here's the serendipitous part of this for me.

RT: Yeah.

SL: I was married on that Watergate break-in day.

RT: Oh!

SL: June 17, 1972.

RT: Ah! Of all things.

SL: [*Laughs*] Of all things.

RT: Of all things. Well, you remember it then, don't you?

SL: Oh, absolutely.

[03:38:19] RT: Well, did you fault me for decidin' as I did before findin' out that the Nixon thing was right? I mean, that he had misled the whole American . . .

SL: I was not . . .

RT: . . . public?

SL: . . . a Nixon supporter in any way.

RT: Yeah.

SL: And so I was chomping at the bit . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . to get him out, so . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . I was probably not an impartial . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . participant in that . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . I was ready for the change. I—anyway, I mean, you know, since that time, I've probably gained a little bit more respect for President Nixon than I had at the time.

[03:38:57] RT: Oh, Nixon was a good president in foreign policy.

SL: Yes.

RT: And he opened China. And there are a lot—everybody has good and bad, but what he did not understand was that the president has to obey the law. He really believed, and he told his interviewer . . .

SL: David Frost.

RT: . . . that the president is above the law . . .

SL: Yeah.

RT: . . . you know.

SL: Yeah.

RT: And that was—he was flawed, and that was just wrong.

SL: Now, Ray, did that all take place in your first term or . . .

RT: My first term.

SL: First. What an initiation . . .

RT: Yeah, what . . .

SL: . . . into public service.

RT: . . . what an initiation.

[03:39:35] SL: Now you also did some work with term limits. Is that not right?

RT: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: Now was that in your first or second?

RT: Well, it was—really wound up in my second term, where I was the named congressman who supported the opposition to the term limits law. It was *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton*. And I hired a former Republican solicitor general to represent me, and the League of Women Voters selected their counsel, and we got into a deal where we couldn't decide who would . . .

SL: Be the lead . . .

RT: . . . present the argument to the Supreme Court. And my man lost, and I regret that because we wouldn't have lost by five to four. We would've lost—I mean, we wouldn't have won by five to four; we would've won by six to three if our lawyer had handled it. The lawyer of the League of Women Voters made a mistake, and you will want to correct this in the body of the transcript. The League of Women Voters' lawyer took the position that requiring that no one who had served more than three terms—more than two terms—was eligible to run for Congress. And the lawyer that got to make the oral argument

said, "That's not a condition of service," and that lost at least one of the votes. The solicitor general, Clinton's lawyer, said, "That does not go for us. We say it's clearly an expansion of the qualification clause to say that a person who has had more than three terms cannot be a candidate, that you're dealing with the qualification to run." [03:41:55] Well, I was terribly disappointed that my lawyer didn't get to make the closing argument because it would not have been as close a case. We won it five to four with Judge Kennedy making the decisive vote. And I'm thankful that we won it because that would've been a terrible precedent to say that you could have qualifications for running for president that were beyond those established by the Constitution. One of the qualifications might have been that you be Caucasian in order to run. Well, that's ridiculous, you know. And all of us knew that, but the League of Women Voters' lawyer didn't get it.

SL: Well, wasn't there also—didn't your case also—or your argument also involve the states' role . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . in determining what those term limits would be . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . and how that wouldn't be uniform.

RT: That's right. Wouldn't be uniform. That's exactly our position, that you had to—that it had to be a body made up of people of similar qualifications and that you couldn't separate 'em into those who had won one or two or ten races because it would make the body un-homogenous. You know, it wouldn't—they wouldn't be elected by the same rules.

[03:43:35] SL: Ray, I have to tell you, I think that's one of the greatest services that you were . . .

RT: Thank you.

SL: . . . a part of.

RT: Thank you. I guarantee you, it wasn't easy to find a member of Congress who would go on the record and produce the record in that case, and I'm still upset that my lawyer didn't get to make the closing argument.

SL: I can [*laughs*] tell. I can tell. I'm not sure what the . . .

RT: Well, the League of Women Voters thought that they'd provided the leadership and that their lawyer ought to do it. Trouble was, he didn't understand it. That's why they lost, I guess, and why we won in Arkansas.

[03:44:20] SL: Yeah. Okay. Now congressional careerwise, there's also the science and technology . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . end of your service.

RT: Yes.

SL: So let's talk a little bit about that. I mean, there's also some DNA stuff that was . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . kind of early on in the DNA field.

RT: Yes.

SL: I—so can you . . .

RT: Well . . .

SL: . . . are you strong enough . . .

RT: . . . the . . .

SL: . . . to talk about that for a little bit?

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: Okay.

[03:44:46] RT: The science part of my experience we've gone into. I could've been an engineer or a scientist without needing any more formal education. And Tiger Teague, chairman of the science committee, recognized that I had the skill. And as we organized the committee, he had Mike McCormack from Washington involved heavily in energy matters, and he had me involved in research and technology. And at the beginning of my sophomore term, I became chairman of the House

Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Technology. And in that position, I wrote much of the law relating to patents, getting a uniform patent law. I wrote the laws concerning, well, recombinant DNA. I held the hearings on the Department of Health—Institutes of Health's rules concerning recombinant DNA. And I had—at that time there was a movement afoot to say that we're gonna suspend or hold all of our research. I fought against that because I thought that the ide—the deal was to develop laws that respected morals and found useful the efforts of recombinant DNA to make human insulin, for example, and to make medicines and to advance the cause of science. And my hearings became almost the Bible for those who believed that we should continue research on recombinant DNA. After I left the Congress, it was appreciated enough that I was called up by the secretary of health and asked if I would join the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee to the National Institutes of Health.

SL: Institute of Health.

[03:47:34] RT: Well, I did, and they gave me a lotta respect, and in fact, within a year I was selected as chairman of that committee, which was made up mostly of Nobel laureates in science and research and medicine. And as chairman of the recombinant DNA committee, I represented the United States in conferences

with Japan and other countries who were dealing with their own versions of the recombinant DNA rules. I went to England to the Royal Society of London and participated in a international convention describing the different proposals that were being produced around the country. And without being immodest about it, I was a strong force for developing a set of rules that guided the United States, and other countries followed, in permitting research to go forward. And it was a most valuable contribution. The—there's some excellent work by the chairman of the National Science Foundation and others about my efforts there, but it's not widely known in Arkansas. But I don't know of anyone else who had more impact on our country moving forward with a solid and dependable set of rules for moving ahead with recombinant DNA research than I did. And I've gotten a lot of credit for that in the scientific community. Most people outside of Arkansas, if asked if they know anything about me, probably won't relate to the work that I had to do with recombinant DNA, both as chairman of the House committee that dealt with it and later as a member of the National RAC, Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee. [03:50:03] The—that work is—I'm very proud of my efforts in that field, and it caused me to become acquainted with people like Luther Williams, who

was provost at Purdue at the time I got to know him, one of the few African American who was involved in recombinant DNA. And I first talked Dr. Williams, after I became president of the ASU, into coming down to ASU to head our depar—our division of arts and sciences, and he decided he couldn't do it 'cause he got a invitation to go to Washington University as dean of arts and sciences. That was a better offer. I then made him an offer when I became president of the University of Arkansas to come and head up our division of arts and sciences there, but again, he got a better offer, and he couldn't come. I tried to get him considered by the search committee at Pine Bluff, and frankly, they were scared of him. Even though he was African American, he was too well versed for them to be comfortable with him as chancellor. So that one got put aside. So then he was offered a job at NSF in charge of all undergraduate programs, science programs, and he did well at that. And now he is provost of Tuskegee University, where the airmen went, and he came up about a year ago to take Betty and me out to dinner and to compare notes. And he is a brilliant scientist who I really regret that we weren't able to get him here to Arkansas while I was at ASU and then University of Arkansas and then to come down and help during the last few years. But he's a marvelous man. Hope

you meet him sometime.

SL: Me, too. I . . .

RT: Luther Williams.

SL: And he's in Alabama now.

RT: Yeah, he's provost of Tuskegee.

SL: Provost.

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:52:44] RT: . . . Johnny Cash . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

RT: Now Johnny's cousin, Jimmy Cash, lived next door to me in Sheridan. And Raymond Cash was one of his brothers. And Jimmy Cash sang on the—I think the *Fibber McGee and Molly* show back in the [19]30s, and he had a beautiful soprano voice.

SL: Is that right?

RT: Yeah.

SL: What a difference.

RT: Yeah, and of course, it was the Cash family from down around—I guess it's Cleveland County before they moved up to . . .

SL: To Kingsland?

RT: . . . Dyess.

SL: Dyess. Uh-huh.

RT: That was part of the family. And there was a Raymond Cash in that family. But the fact that both of those talented singers came from the same family, and neither knew the other, you know.

[03:53:38] SL: I know. That's one thing that we gained with Ronnie was we got to meet his cousin Dale . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . and I never knew anything about Dale.

RT: Yeah.

SL: And we got two interviews with Dale, as well.

RT: Now did you do an interview like this with Ronnie?

SL: Yes. Now I didn't—I—Jim Blair . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . did the first interview with Ronnie.

RT: Okay.

SL: And then the second interview we did out at Hawkins Holler . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Madison County at a family reunion.

RT: Okay.

[03:54:08] SL: And this woman just walked up into the middle of the interview and started askin' Ronnie and Dale questions,

and . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . we just let her do it.

RT: Yeah.

SL: It was . . .

RT: How wonderful.

SL: . . . it was funny. It was really, really good.

RT: How wonderful.

SL: It was out there in the holler. It was outside.

RT: Yeah.

SL: It was kinda rainy. We had a little tent set up that you could see the background, the holler and . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: It's beautiful. Oh, I'm sure Ronnie would let me send you a copy.

RT: Yeah, I need to get that.

[03:54:35] SL: Okay. We can do that. Now we're on tape five.

TM: Yep.

SL: And we're rollin', right?

TM: Yep.

SL: And so we got a little bit of this Johnny and Jimmy Cash and . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . stuff on tape. But you know, we were—our fifth hour.

RT: Yeah.

SL: You're holdin' up pretty good.

RT: Okay. [*Laughs*] Good.

SL: [*Laughs*] You know, I forgot . . .

RT: Well, it's because of you. You're . . .

SL: I forgot to warn you that the worst part about this interview is that you have to look at me from time to time . . .

RT: Hey, this has been . . .

SL: . . . for a num—all day long.

RT: . . . a pleasure.

SL: [*Laughs*] Thanks. You know, we were talk—we—I wanna kinda pick up on some areas that . . .

RT: Okay.

SL: . . . maybe we oughta revisit just a little bit.

RT: Okay.

[03:55:14] SL: You know, we talked about the Watergate . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: Oh, we really didn't talk about Watergate so much as we did the impeachment process . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the finer points, the articles of impeachment and how

that was developed . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . and adopted over . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: But one of the central figures in all of that, in the Watergate crisis . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . was John Dean.

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: Now do you have a John Dean . . .

RT: Well, I have a very special memory there because I had listened to John Dean make very precise answers to the questions that the committee was giving to him, and I'd become very impressed with his intellect. He's really a smart guy. And we had the procedure where St. Clair, the counsel for the president, would examine the witnesses after John Doar had examined 'em for us. And Doar had finished his examination of John Dean, and Chairman Rodino said, "Well, we'll take a recess for five minutes, and, Mr. St. Clair, when we come back, I'm gonna let you begin your cross-examination of Mr. Dean." Fine. Recess. And we had the room cleared already because this was not being publicized, this part of the questions. And we came back in, and

I got my seat, and everybody else got theirs, and Chairman Rodino said, "All right. Mr. St. Clair, you can begin your questioning of John Dean." Well, Mr. St. Clair started in on this question that he had prepared during the recess. [03:57:30] And it was long and complicated, that somebody was here and somebody was there and they said this and they replied this. "Now when all of these things considered, Mr. Dean, how can you claim as you did in your testimony that such and such and such and such?" And about that time Mr. Albert Jenner, the counsel for the Republicans, was up waving his arms and sayin', "Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman!" And Rodino said, "What is it, Mr. Jenner?" We thought he was maybe havin' a stroke. And he said, "Our reporter didn't get back." Well, the reporter, of course, was not a newspaper reporter; it was the official . . .

SL: Court reporter.

[03:58:17] RT: . . . reporter who was taking the transcript of the hearings. And of course, that was a real casualty because we'd had a good little bit goin' there and no reporter. So the chairman said, "Everybody keep your seat. I'm going to request that the sergeant at arms go out and find the reporter and ask her to come in and pick up her microphone." And so they did that right away and got back in there, and Chairman Rodino

said, "Well, Mr. St. Clair, I don't know what we can do about this hearing since we're getting a little unusual start. Would you repeat your question to Mr. Dean?" And St. Clair said, "Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure I can repeat it exactly." And John Dean said, "Perhaps I can be of help. Mr. St. Clair said"—and he started quoting St. Clair's question word for word, identically to what St. Clair had said three to five minutes before. And there were thirty-eight trained lawyers in the room. No one in there could have done what he did, which was to say verbatim every word of the question. And Rodino said, "Mr. St. Clair, is that a faithful rendition [*SL laughs*] of the question?" And he said, "He got it word for word, Mr. Chairman. I don't know how he did it, but that is the question." And John Dean said, "And my answer is"—and crisp, crisp, crisp. He had a magnificent telegraphic mind that was—it enabled him to say exactly what had been said a few minutes earlier. And it explained to me how in instance after instance we had listened to the tapes of conversations, and John Dean's version of those tapes, he hadn't listened to 'em, but they had been word for word what had been said in the tapes. His credibility as a witness was elevated sky high. But of course, John Dean's problem was not his memory, but it was that he didn't recognize what a terrible breach of law was

occurring in . . .

SL: At the time.

[04:01:00] RT: . . . talking about fixing the grand jury and doing this, but it really breathed integrity into the testimony that ?he? was giving. The British Broadcasting Company picked up on my question and on Dean's response, which was to say that he just recited it word for word because he had that capacity and wanted to help out. The problem with John Dean was not his memory. His testimony was precise. It was in not recognizing the enormous consequences of the breach of ethics and the obstruction of justice that were going on in the president's mind during these questions and answers. Of course, St. Clair was devastated because he had intended to attack Dean, but he reestablished his . . .

SL: Credibility.

RT: . . . understanding. [04:02:04] And that was the point at which I really began to realize that the problem was that President Nixon did not believe that the president had to obey the law. He thought the president's power gave him the authority to set in motion spies and to make enemies lists and to use the power of government to destroy people's reputation. It was an important point in my consideration of the articles that I wrote for abuse of

power, obstruction of justice, and refusal to cooperate with a congressional inquiry. The thing I'm most proud of is that the four Republicans and three Democrats who came to view it as I did, we carried the day. And we made the charge one of a failure to abide by the Constitution of the United States that created the president as a coequal power with the Congress and with the judiciary. And you couldn't have a presidency that was immune from review by a congressional inquiry. And that's why the articles of impeachment were put there, to act as a check on the abuse of power by the executive officer. Let me just say in passing that they never found an instance where Bill Clinton had abused the power of his office to close down the rights of the Congress to inquire or to overturn the enemies list or to make a list of enemies. And the article that I remember well out of that was an article that the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the Republican chairman, inferred that what they were really doing was "turnabout is fair play" . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:04:36] RT: . . . and that they were trying to get back at our impeachment inquiry by finding one against President Clinton.

SL: Yeah.

RT: But the John Dean matter was one that really surprised me.

Now when we brought the articles, as I told you, I was very unpopular. But we then had the court decide to release some tapes, which proved our position, and I remember that Congressman Wiggins, who was a articulate spokesman for the Republicans, saw me in the hallway and said, "Ray, you had it right. You're—it's an abuse of power." And as you know, we got a unanimous vote in the House of Representatives to bring the articles of impeachment against President Nixon. And he had been told by Senator Goldwater that Goldwater could not find two senators who would agree to vote against articles of impeachment. So people who say Nixon was not impeached or convicted missed the point. It was unanimous against him, and I think that he made a deal with President Ford that it should all be put behind 'em and that he would resign and that Ford, in due course, would pardon him, and the matter would be over. Well, it—that's good except for one thing that troubled me, as I said, and that is that we had produced a case where Nixon had falsely accepted tax benefits of a half-million dollars for some of his gifts, and that would have been a crime. But he was forgiven for that instance by President Ford's pardon. Now as it turned out later on, after Nixon began makin' some money, he felt guilty about that, so he paid back that half-million dollars. But

at the moment, he was pardoned from the IRS—failure to pay income taxes.

[04:07:15] SL: All in the name that it was better for the country to move on.

RT: What?

SL: All in name that it was better . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . for the country . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . if they just moved on.

RT: Right.

SL: And let it lie.

RT: Well, John Dean was a brilliant guy but did not have the ethics that was taught to us in Sheridan High School. And a thing I couldn't understand is how we had slipped as far as we had in thinkin' that some Americans didn't have to obey the law.

SL: Richard Nixon was a complex man though.

RT: Yes, he was. And I admired him for his policies on China, and he was good at foreign policy. Henry Kissinger has always been good. Richard Nixon was smart, but you see, he was applyin' rules of foreign policy to warfare between parties. And that's not what we do. We're supposed to have parties that try to work

together to advance the ideals and the goals of Americans at large. Carl Albert, when I first went up to Washington, Carl Albert was speaker.

SL: Yep.

[04:08:29] RT: And Wilbur Mills was real thick with him, and Carl called me over, said, "Ray, when it comes time to vote, I hope you'll vote for me as speaker. But when it comes time to vote on issues that affect your district, I want you to vote in the interest of your district. Don't you listen to any whip or anybody like that. You do what Wilbur Mills does, and don't follow him either, but do what he does for his district. He tries to determine what is best for his congressional district and to vote that way." And so [*laughs*] I took that to mean I ought to act like Wilbur Mills [*clears throat*], and so I did, in part. You know, these tours and visits overseas that all the congressmen go to, Wilbur told me, "Ray, don't ever do that. If you have a day or two off from your congressional duties, go back to your district and talk to them. Travel the district. Find out what they're thinkin'. Your job is to represent them, not to help the Department of State to run the nation." And so I said, "Well, that's good enough for me." And I made a policy that I would never take an overseas trip because I wanted to spend every

moment back talkin' with people in my district. [04:10:10] And I thought that worked out real well until, in my senior term, I was chairman of the House Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Technology, and we had some good reasons to visit our base in Antarctica, and I'd always wanted to go to Antarctica, and I didn't think that any of my voters would be object—would object to my makin' a little trip down there. And I got all nearly ready to go, and my staff said, "You can't do it. You said you're not gonna take a congressional junket, and you can't go to Antarctica." And I tried to explain that that wasn't a junket, that I was gonna be down there with the icebergs and the penguins, and they wouldn't hear to it. So I had to give up the opportunity of goin' to Antarctica because of that commitment I had made to always go home for recesses when we weren't in Congress. And I'm not . . .

SL: Well, I'm sorry you didn't . . .

RT: . . . sorry. I still think I did it right.

[04:11:19] SL: Yeah, you did. You did. You know, I guess while we're in the science and technology area, I wonder if you might give a definition of recombinant DNA.

RT: Ah, yeah. Well, that was almost accidental. I do have a science background. And at about this time, the scientists had become

disturbed about the experimentation in DNA manipulation. Now by that, I mean that we had just discovered that DNA was the molecule that passed on genetic information from one generation to the next and that by going into genes you could adjust the life form that would come out of it. Well, we've been able to do that for centuries, breeding dogs and horses to have different characteristics. But it's manipulation by choosing the parents. And all of a sudden, we had the ability by scientists of making changes and putting into an E. coli bacteria half of the genetic information that makes human insulin so that instead of getting insulin from cattle or swine or horses, you breed these bacteria with a fragment of human insulin in two different vats of E. coli that grow like yeast and fill up their vats with E. coli that have a strand of human insulin in it. Then you harvest those strands, and you take one from this vat and one from this vat, and you put them together, and you have manufactured a strand of human DNA. And it can be used to—for insulin, and it's human insulin that you have developed through the use of E. coli bacteria. [04:13:49] Well, that seemed to me to be quite a reasonable thing to do because a lot of people need insulin and are uncomfortable with horse insulin or pig insulin, and bein' able to develop, through these bacteria, strands of human

insulin seemed marvelous. And I went to Eli Lilly. I was chairman of the committee, and we held a hearing at Eli Lilly, and Luther Williams, who I mentioned to you earlier, was there, and we studied this and came up with rules for having safe experimentation go forward in this field. And I've been given a lot of credit for my position on the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee. By the way, I was, I guess, the first nonscientist to head up a congr—a National Institutes of Health statutory committee to study recombinant DNA. Well, hey, I [*laughs*] can't even pronounce all that stuff. [*SL laughs*] But the truth is I did know somethin' about it because Chairman Wertheim's work with me in chemistry and my work in biology and the information I'd gained from listening to Luther Williams and others who were familiar with it. And so Don Fredrickson has given me a lot of credit in his book about the gene wars, the recombinant DNA struggle. Don Fredrickson has said how good it was to show that a intelligent layman could comprehend science principles and deal with Nobel laureates in matters of public policy. And I—that was about the best compliment I could've ever received.

SL: That is a good one.

RT: It is.

[04:16:01] SL: And it was pivotal work that laid the groundwork for what is going . . .

RT: Who?

SL: It was pivotal work . . .

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . in that . . .

RT: Oh yeah. It was a . . .

SL: . . . on the committee.

RT: It was the scientific battleground, and similarly, in the science and technology committee, I kept alive the use of nuclear energy in outer space so that we could send these missions beyond the—beyond our familiar planets by using nuclear energy in our space vehicles. And it's also why I really become disturbed that we don't rely more completely on scientific knowledge and nuclear capabilities in our ongoing energy independence efforts. Everybody wants to do it, but they're scared to death of nuclear problems like this occasion over in Japan. But the thing that they forget is that for thirty years, forty, we have used nuclear propulsion systems in aircraft carriers, ships of the line, submarines, and we haven't had a leakage case in all of those instances. [04:17:45] And I proposed that we use some of our government's safety precautions to build nuclear generators like

we would build a great dam, Hoover Dam, Boulder Dam, and use water. And the private utility can't build a dam like that, but government can, and it can deliver the electricity to the utility. Well, you could do the same thing with a nuclear power plant that was built up to navy safety standards and generate the electricity, deliver it to the private sector, and not pollute the atmosphere. Have a safe, clean, environmentally sound method of producing electricity, like France has done. We have really missed the boat by not using the nuclear capability that we have to make electricity safely and cheaply. Arkansas has spent something like three billion dollars maybe a year in payin' for the cost of the Grand Gulf nuclear generators when we have been generating it all this time at our facilities up near Russellville. And it has been very frustrating to me, and in fact, I proposed legislation to let the United States do the same thing as they do in water utilities, and that is to build the plant, make sure it's the safest that can be built. Don't spare anything. Make it as safe as an aircraft carrier or a submarine. And take the gate production of electricity and deliver it to the private sector and let them distribute it. It's the same electricity as everywhere else. And the only trouble with that is that nobody supports it. It's a real good idea, but it leaves the utilities out of the profit of

makin' the nuclear energy, and it leaves the government out of the principle that government ought not to do whatever can be done by private concerns, like aircraft carriers. So that's one of my ideas that I don't have much hope for, but it would be a good thing if we could do it.

[04:20:38] SL: My son says that that's the cheapest form of energy that we can get.

RT: It is.

SL: And one of the downsides for the moratorium on building nuclear plants is now we've got nuclear plants that are at their age limit . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . built on technology and standards that are forty years old.

RT: Yeah. We could redesign, build new plants up to military standards, and sell the electricity to a grid. And there would be no desire to shortcut the construction of the facility. We'd do it in a first-class way. You wouldn't want to build Boulder Dam or Hoover Dam with a crack in it, you know.

SL: That's right.

RT: You'd want to build it as a good, viable enterprise. And I'm pleased to say I agree with your son that we are missin' a bet as Americans in not going for safe and dependable nuclear energy.

[04:21:44] SL: You know, we also kinda just glanced over your career in Arkansas as attorney general.

RT: Ah.

SL: And you know, I know that there was some effort there on your part that made a difference in people's lives.

RT: Well, thank you.

SL: And so I think we oughta talk a little bit about that.

RT: Well, let me just say that I was so pleased to win the job of attorney general because we—I had worked on a new constitution for Arkansas. I'd been chairman of the executive branch committee, and we'd made a much-improved product, and I thought it would be good if the chairman of the executive branch committee of the constitutional convention were in a position to help implement it as attorney general. And it was a good idea, and the people voted for me, but then they didn't pass the constitution. And so I had to turn my attention to some of the things that we'd worked toward. And I developed the idea of a consumer protection division. Joe Purcell had thought about that and talked about it, but I wrote a statute to create it and got Bill Beaumont and Gene McDonald and others to get together and push it through the legislature, and we got a consumer protection division. I also was concerned about our

criminal code, where the penalty for stealing horses or chickens was more serious than mistreatment of a child. And it seemed to me that that was reversed and that we ought to have a revision of our state's criminal code so that we redefined what were serious crimes and what were less serious. And the—Bob Moore of Arkansas City, Sheriff Moore, agreed to chair that part of it. Ed Bethune helped on the procedural part, and we developed the criminal revision statutes of that year. [04:24:10] And then we were faced with the reapportionment of our legislators. From multimember districts, we used to have maybe twenty representatives elected from Pulaski County and one each from every little county, and there was no comparison between somebody in Grant County with one representative and that person having the same influence as a representative from Pulaski County with two hundred thousand people. And so we had the duty of forming a reapportionment, which gave one man one vote. And I drew the first single-member district reapportionment plan that was ever seen in Arkansas, and we carried it for the Senate. But it got a little too hot to handle for all of the congressional seats in the House, and so I lost my vote on the House redistricting, I'm sorry to say, with my good friend Dale Bumpers and Kelly Bryant voting for some multiple-

member districts. But they weren't bad, and they weren't bad enough, but what I was able to go to federal court and make the apology that I couldn't get single-member districts throughout but that I had all but about five districts single-member districting. And I was pleased that I was able to persuade the court that the districting was all right. [04:26:00] And since that time I've never had—I worked on several redistricting plans, and all of them have been sustained. So the idea of one man, one vote, and following the Constitution requirements that we preserve that equality has been a matter that I've been very pleased about.

SL: There's—I've got two or three things here.

RT: Yeah.

SL: But I want us to eventually work our way toward your educational, your university, service.

RT: Yeah.

SL: But before we do that, you've mentioned the constitutional convention a couple of times.

RT: Yeah.

SL: This took place in Hot Springs. Is that . . .

RT: No, it took place in Little Rock.

SL: Oh, it did? In Little Rock?

RT: Yeah.

[04:26:47] SL: Was this the same one that . . .

RT: [*Unclear word*]

SL: . . . Bob—Robert Leflar was involved with?

RT: Yeah. Well, it was. We were the seventh constitutional convention. Bob Leflar was chairman; there were four regional vice chairmen; and then the committees each had a chairman. I was chairman of the executive committee. And Bob Leflar was the overall chairman, and at the same time they—we had up the new—we brought that new constitution forward there was when I decided to run for attorney general, mainly because I wanted [*laughs*] to get into a position of serving in that office and the consumer protection and other things, but also because I thought it would be good for a member of the constitutional convention to be there to transfer powers and duties from the old constitution to the new one, and so that's why I ran.

[04:28:01] SL: So what was it about the new constitution that kinda doomed it? What—why did it not pass?

RT: Well, I think it may have been that people were a little concerned about things like single-member districts and concerned about changing the old constitution, just better leave it alone. And I really thought that it would pass. I was

surprised.

SL: There were many that thought it was going to pass. There were a lot that thought it was . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . going to pass. You've mentioned Wilbur Mills a couple of times.

RT: Ah.

SL: And we can talk a little bit more about Wilbur Mills, but what about John McClellan and Bill Fulbright?

RT: Oh my.

SL: What about those two guys?

RT: Well, what an opportunity to go to Washington and to be good friends with John McClellan. And John McClellan was the first person to tell me that I ought to practice law. And his father, Ike McClellan, told me that I ought to run for politics. [*SL laughs*] They both were familiar faces around Sheridan. Bill Fulbright was almost an idyllic figure to my dad, who thought that his—Fulbright's interest in education and abilities in statesmanship were such that he would be a giant in the Senate, and Dad was right. Bill Fulbright became one of the finest senators that we have ever had. [04:29:58] My dad also thought highly of Sid McMath. In fact, when Sid ran for

governor, Dad was, according to Henry Woods, their main representative in Grant County. And he thought that Sid McMath was the kind of voice for the future that we all ought to support, and he contributed his time and effort to Sid's campaigns. Now with that kind of background in Arkansas, and with Took Gathings, who was Mr. Agriculture for all of east Arkansas; W. F. Norrell, who represented the timber district that—in which I lived at that time; oh, from Texarkana, I can't think of his name right now; but Judge Oren Harris from El Dorado, head of the commerce division, committee; and the judge from Bentonville or the town up on the Missouri border, the little Swiss . . .

TM: Trimble.

RT: . . . Siloam . . .

SL: Trimble?

RT: No, Eureka. Eureka Springs. And these people all had the philosophy that Wilbur Mills had, which was to represent your district. And I became convinced that that was the best job a person could have is to go to Washington and represent the views and the aspirations of the people who were your employers.

[04:32:04] SL: You know, it was so honored back then.

RT: Yeah.

SL: It was an honorable profession.

RT: Yeah.

SL: And the men that were in Congress back then honored each other.

RT: Yes, indeed.

SL: And there was a real gentlemanly . . .

RT: Well, there was a nobility about it, really.

SL: Yes. Mh-hmm.

RT: John Paul Hammerschmidt came along, and he wasn't a Republican, and us Democrats—we were all representing Arkansas, and we usually voted alike. And I—one thing that has been disturbing to me is how Washington politics has been corrupted into a form of adversary against adversary, and "If you don't see it just exactly like I do, we're gonna oppose you. It's out the door." And that is very damaging to our system of government. I can't imagine that early American citizens would have thought that we'd ever get in a position where people will do roll calls to see what is the current political advantage of a certain position, and everybody lockstep, move to one side or the other.

SL: Oath, take an oath that has nothing to do with the government.

RT: No.

SL: It's to an individual. I can't believe that those guys . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . swore an oath to some lobbyist.

[04:33:44] RT: Yeah. Yeah, it's discouraging. It's deeply discouraging. Now I'm not a op—a pessimist about this country. I think we'll come to our senses. But I know that the idea was that you select someone that you had good confidence in and somebody that you thought would study the issue and vote your interest. And that was the idea of a representative, that everybody couldn't know everything about every farm bill or every aid bill or where there ought to be a dam built, but that you would look at the project, measure what it costs, measure where the money was coming from, and decide it, not on the basis of what political party you work for, but on the basis of what is best for your district. And that's what Carl Albert told me when I went to Washington. He said, "Ray, I'm gonna ask you to vote for me when it comes time to elect the speaker, but I've got confidence in your judgment, and the people of your district have confidence in your judgment. And I want you to vote the interest of your district in every matter where your district is most important. And if it's a matter of conviction, vote your conviction. Don't vote anybody else's idea or thought. If

it's about capital punishment, vote your conviction on it." And it was good advice. And Carl Albert remained my friend until his death. And he gave me good compliments. He said, "Ray, you did a good job."

[04:35:46] SL: [*Laughs*] That means a great deal.

RT: Yes.

SL: I'm not sure if that's ever even said anymore . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . to anybody. Listen—wasn't there a gap? There was a gap between your first congressional . . .

RT: Oh, twenty years.

SL: Twenty years. So . . .

RT: Twenty years.

SL: . . . so . . .

RT: I'm one of the very few congressmen who had two different congressional careers. My first was after I became attorney general, and I ran into David Pryor at Nashville, Arkansas, and he said, "Ray, I'm gonna give up the congressional seat. I want you to get ready and run for it." And so I did, and he did, and he got beat by John McClellan.

SL: Yep.

RT: And I won. And we shoulda talked like that before every race

[*laughter*] because later on we ran against each other, and he won. But neither event changed our friendship or respect for each other. The . . .

[04:36:49] SL: Now were you in three terms the first . . .

RT: Three terms. From south Arkansas.

SL: . . . the first time around. And then what happened?

RT: And then I ran for the Senate, and lordy, there was a fellow on the other side named David Pryor. [*Laughter*] And it was a close race, and David appreciated my stance, and I appreciated his, and we came within a few votes of havin' identical votes. I was proud of that race. I would've liked it a little better if [*SL laughs*] Mowery or whatever his name was hadn't gotten in it and taken a few thousand votes out of my column [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

RT: . . . 'cause that was out of my district, and his votes came right squarely out of mine. [04:37:36] Anyway, I don't do that. I don't do bittersweet or recriminations. I ran a good race. I nearly won and didn't lose a friend over the thing. Then, amazingly, I got offers from Ouachita Baptist University and Henderson State University. To do what? To come down and put together a public university with a private, religious-based university in programs that they could cooperate on, like a

unified library, where Henderson would take care of the mathematics and Ouachita would take of the fine arts and the humanities. And got it to where you could take courses from either university while enrolled at the other, and developing out of that pair, a stronger university that covered the field. And that consortium was Jane Ross's idea, and she got it goin' and got me involved in it. They had a—it relaxed the tension enough between the two campuses that they had a civic meeting and had people from both Ouachita and Henderson there, and the Ross Foundation had hosted it, and everybody was having a good time. And Dan Grant of Ouachita sidled over to Jane and said, "Now, Jane, I know that you have this party for the good of our people, and I was just thinkin' how grand it would be if we could have a Jane Ross Arts and Music Center over on the Ouachita campus." And she looked at him and said, "Well, Dr. Grant, I'm here for the benefit of the students. I didn't come out to pick one university over another." And she caught [*SL laughs*] Dr. Garrison out of the corner of her eye, and he was laughin'. And she asked him to come over, said, "And I noticed you laughin', and I want you to know that I'm not interested in helpin' you with your science programs. But if you'll find a way that you two can put your resources together for the interest of

students in this area and to make both institutions responsive to those needs, then my pocketbook will be open." Well, all of a sudden, she got their attention.

SL: Sure.

[04:40:42] RT: And they decided they would form a consortium of Henderson State University and Ouachita . . .

SL: Ouachita.

RT: . . . Baptist University and develop programs that were applicable to both campuses, invite lecturers in to come to both campuses, do civic enterprise things, and Martin Garrison and Dan Grant shook hands on it. They even started sayin', "Well, let's have our recesses at the same time so that both colleges go home at the same time." And they began doing things that were in the interest of the students at both campuses, and Jane Ross's foundation was the foundation that hired me to come down and help to accomplish that. And we did a pretty good job of it, and they've never gone back to the cutthroat days where the ravine was the battleground between the two schools. [04:41:47] And as a result of that effort, when ASU lost its new president, they decided without much question and called me, and several of the trustees said, "We want you to come up here and head our campus." And so I did, and we went through the

search process, and I got that job, and I loved it. They were so good to me, and I developed their programs of independent study for science and for fine arts, the idea of developing programs in chemistry. Ed Bennett got an electron microscope that I was able to get as a result of my connections in Washington. We developed a theory of "We can do anything that we have smart enough professors to attend to," and we really got a lot of people thinking of ASU as being Arkansas's state university. And we looked on our role as being a counterpoint to the University of Arkansas. The University of Arkansas under Jim Martin had been reluctant to join in the EPSCoR program that I had been chairman of in Washington. And that program was designed around presenting government support to institutions in areas where they could achieve greatness. And Jim Martin wasn't gonna become a party to the EPSCoR program until I said, "Well, if Dr. Martin doesn't want to, ASU will be glad to be head of that program, and we'll operate it in the interest of all of the colleges and universities in Arkansas." And Dr. Martin said, "Well, I didn't mean to absolutely give it up." He decided that it was better to participate in what looked to be a ship that was gettin' underway than to stay out and say, "Only we're going to do the research," because that was where

he was first . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:44:22] RT: . . . that all of the research needed to be done in his house. Well, that rocked along, and I had that experience at ASU that was very enjoyable. And then Dr. Martin ran into trouble with chancellors, and it became a powder keg at Fayetteville with the president and the chancellors fightin' each other. The chancellor at Little Rock left. The chancellor at Fayetteville had been hired and left. And Jim Martin left to go home to Auburn. And on the day that he made that decision, Jack Williams caught me in Dallas, Texas, where I was attending a meeting of the Southwest Conference coaches' deal, and asked me if I would consider coming to Arkansas as the president of the system. And I said, "Well, I'll consider it. [*Unclear words*]. I can't come up for a search. I can't treat ASU that way. If all of you want me to come, I would consider it because I think that a lot can be done for the University of Arkansas to become what it can be for the state of Arkansas." Well, I got on an airplane and came up. Brad Jesson and Jack Williams met me at the airport. I went out to the campus at MacArthur Park, and we pretty soon got into an executive committee, and they said, "We want to know if you'll become president of the University of

Arkansas." And I said, "Well, what restrictions?" "None. You can choose where you live. You can choose who—help us choose who is gonna be the leader of the different campuses." There was a vacancy at Fayetteville and Little Rock, I think, and so I decided that I would do it. We shook hands on it, and within an—twenty-four hours of the time Jim Martin left, I'd been named president of the University of Arkansas System—or not—they didn't call it the system. They called it the University of Arkansas with subsidiary campuses. Well, the first thing I had to do was to develop the idea of community, where we acted like a family and where the role of Fayetteville was to be the premier campus, but to help UA Monticello with their forestry program . . .

SL: Yeah.

RT: . . . because they needed that strength down there; to help UAPB with their fisheries program; to superintend and work with UAMS in heavy science and medical programs; to work cooperatively with UALR in developing master's programs and eventually programs in computer technology and using the resources of the Graduate Institute of Technology. And this sounds like a big plate, but we got it done. We actually formed there the—what became the University of Arkansas System,

where there was an overreaching body called the University of Arkansas, and all of these campuses had their specific roles and duties to perform. And it's worked well. I—I'm so proud of the way the university has developed, and in particular, I would size Dan Ferritor as one of the keys to our present, good university system. Willard Gatewood was real good, but he liked teachin' too much. So after he had become chancellor for a while and told me had to step down 'cause he wanted to return to teaching, I talked Dan Ferritor into becoming the chancellor. And what a beautiful job he has done through the years.

[04:49:06] SL: That took some talking, didn't it?

RT: What's that?

SL: It took a while to get Dan.

RT: It did. Dan was reluctant. Well, he remembered how it had been and how there had been warfare between the different campuses and institution, and Dan didn't want that any more than I did. We wanted to show the university as a thriving, intellectual community with a family whose brothers and sisters were helping each other to become better. And I'm so proud of Dan and all of the other chancellors. Harry Ward, enormously talented and successful. Jim Young, good. Joel Anderson, who is truly a remarkable leader. And of course, at UAPB you have

one of the landmarks of the original University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. The chancellor there is the son of the longtime president, Lawrence Davis . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:50:22] RT: . . . of that campus. Fred was chancellor at the forestry division and at Monticello, and he told me, "Ray, they're gonna strip our accreditation." And I went to Washington with Fred, and they were sayin' that Monticello is just not suitable as holding a forestry program. And I said, "Well now, let me see. What resources does it take?" "Oh, it takes strong resources." I said, "Well, would you say that Yale University has got strong enough resources?" "Of course. Of course." I said, "Well, did you know that Yale has the school of forestry at Crossett, Arkansas, which is just about forty miles from Monticello?" "Well, yeah, but that's Yale." I said, "Yes, that's Yale, and their professors are good, and their college is well recognized, and surely you don't think they need to be disaccredited." "No." "Well, did you know that UAM is part of the University of Arkansas? That it has the resources of the University of Arkansas standing behind it just like Yale is standing behind Crossett?" And all of a sudden, they got a different view of it, and it wasn't that Yale wasn't qualified to have a forestry

program in Crossett, and it wasn't that the University of Arkansas wasn't qualified to have a program at Monticello. And all of a sudden, they looked at it differently. And it was the university's program of forestry, which is housed at their campus in Monticello.

[04:52:23] SL: You know, one of the—another success . . .

TM: Scott, we got five minutes on this tape.

SL: Five minutes?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay, let's spend the—we still haven't talked about your judge—your position on the supreme court of Arkansas.

TM: Wanna change out?

SL: I don't think we can cover that in five minutes. But I think you could say something about saving Old Main.

RT: About what?

SL: Saving Old Main on the University of Fayetteville campus.

RT: Oh yeah.

SL: Dan Ferritor said you wanted him . . .

RT: Yeah.

SL: . . . to take that on and get that done.

[04:52:53] RT: Yes, yes, yes. And it was a great experience for me. I was associated with such bright, even brilliant, people—

geniuses. Dan Ferritor. Jim Purdue, who had been the chief academic officer of the State University of New York System. Willard Gatewood, a fabulous intellect. Joel Anderson, with a heart for community service and a understanding of people. Look, the thing that I think about is that my career kind of moved from [*laughs*] enjoyin' being able to do things faster and makin' higher grades than other people into understanding humanity, to understanding what made people work and how I could help people to achieve the best that was in them. And that is what I tried to bring to the different campuses in the university. And after a successful career of education, I went back to Washington, carrying with me the idea of a Marshall Plan for America. We had let our infrastructure drift away. We were not educating our students. We were falling behind China and Japan. And I recognized that we needed to do in America what we had done for Europe after World War II, and that was to make an investment in education and in lifting the minds of students so that they could develop a modern Germany, a modern Holland, that could make DAF trucks, to encourage brother and sister countries around the world to make more of themselves. And this idea of a Marshall Plan for America helped to rewrite the Clinton years of success in politics. Now I don't

think we ever called it the Marshall Plan, but much of these ideas of focusing our efforts on education, rebuilding our infrastructure, helping to assure that every person had a opportunity to get an education, which by the way, is why I agreed to start up the lottery in Arkansas, is because I wanted every individual to have a good chance of going to a good college. And . . .

SL: All right. We're gonna have to stop right here and change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[04:55:50] SL: I'm sorry we had to interrupt . . .

RT: Oh, that's all right.

SL: . . . right there at the end, but it's better to do that than run out of tape.

RT: Were we on the Marshall Plan?

SL: We were talkin' about the Marshall Plan and the idea of guaranteeing an education . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . for those that want an education . . .

RT: Right.

SL: . . . for rebuilding infrastructure.

RT: Right.

SL: Kinda the same idea when rebuilding Europe after World War II.

RT: Exactly.

SL: Applying that effort . . .

RT: To Arkansas.

SL: . . . to Arkansas.

RT: And to . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:56:18] RT: And that's the reason that, while I was opposed to the idea of the state-owned lottery, when the people of Arkansas voted by nearly two-thirds, 60 percent, to start one, I thought it was critically important to make sure that it developed the connection to scholarship and to giving deserving students an opportunity to go to higher education in Arkansas, and I was told that a program properly run could develop many scholarships and would be very useful. I've seen in the paper recently where several students have remarked that they would not have had an opportunity to go to college except for this program. And so when Bob Johnson asked me if I would act as chair of the commission to implement this program that was adopted by 60 percent of the people, I said, "Well, I'll do it for a while. I don't want to get stuck in it too long, but it's gonna need a good, steady hand to get it started, and then it can be refined and developed into an ongoing program. I'm good to get it started

because I've had experience with starting other enterprises like the boat plant and like [*laughs*] the Handywagon and other projects, and I think I can get it started right away." [04:57:56] So as we went into it, I met Ernie Passailaigue, who has—was then the chairman of—the leader, director, of the South Carolina commission and who was recognized nationally as being one of the finest developers of lottery programs. And after we studied it for a while, I called him and asked him if there was any opportunity we could get him to start the program in Arkansas. And he understood where I was comin' from because he knew that we didn't have anybody in Arkansas who was ready to step into that kind of activity and saw it as an opportunity to start us up on a program that could be successful in leading to scholarships. Well, I became very convinced that Ernie could get it done and that we'd have to pay him a lot more because to get a program like that started, ordinarily, you have to hire a consultant or two and pay them a half-million dollars each . . .

SL: Right.

[04:59:06] RT: . . . to develop the plans. Well, all Ernie had to do was to put in place the plans that he had used in South Carolina. And so it was an expensive couple of years, but it didn't cost us as much as it would have to get one or two consultants to tell us

how to do it. So instead of waitin' for someone to tell us how, we hired a manager who knew how to make it go, and Ernie did a fine job of getting it started. We have had many scholarships funded. I wish you would make a note to find out exactly how many.

SL: Okay.

RT: Julie Baldridge can tell you.

SL: Okay.

RT: The idea was to get it started and then to turn it over to regular people, and that now is going to happen. There will be somebody come out of this as executive director of the program, but they won't have to start it. They won't have to enter into all of these early contracts. They won't have to develop the program like Ernie has done. Now I hope that they will be able to make some improvements . . .

SL: Sure.

[05:00:33] RT: . . . in the way that it is administered. For one thing, nobody ought to get the salary that Ernie got. His salary was payin' him for startin' it up and is a bargain. You could've hired a couple of experts to counsel, and it would've cost more than his salary has cost. I wish him well. He got a lot of static here, and some of it may have been deserved, but the point is that we

got started on a Marshall Plan for Arkansas students, and they're goin' to school when otherwise they would not have been able to go.

SL: We'll look that up and see how many have been conferred to folks and have . . .

RT: Good.

SL: . . . taken advantage. I bet it's impressive. I'm certain it is.

RT: Good.

SL: Now one area we haven't touched on is your tenure on the supreme court of the state . . .

RT: Yes.

SL: . . . of Arkansas.

RT: Yes.

SL: So how did that come about?

[05:01:36] RT: Well, I had been attorney general, and before I left the private practice of law, I had been on one of the supreme court's major committees, the Arkansas Bar examiners. I was one of the handful of lawyers who wrote the questions and graded the questions of new applicants for the Bar. And as chairman of that committee, I'd had the privilege of working with people like Herschel Friday and like Leflar, not Bob Leflar, but his brother, who lived in Bentonville. And the opportunity of

working on that Arkansas bar examination committee had taught me how truly important legal education is and how vital the role of a strong court system is. So before I ran for Congress, I served out my term on the state board of law examiners and had good friends all around the state. The—Jim Hyatt up at Blytheville and Jack Deacon and, as I said, Bob Leflar—Eli Leflar from Springdale. And Eli got me aside one time. We were over at Hot Springs grading the papers, and he got into a conversation with me and asked me what I was doin' that was important. [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Well, Eli, I'm on the Grant County industrial commission, and I'm tryin' to help get a new industry there." And he said, "No, Ray, I don't mean what causes are you supportin' and marchin' along, tryin' to get in the paper about. I want to know what you're doin' personally that's important." And I had my feelings hurt, and I said, "Eli, why do you want to know that? What are you doin' that's important?" And he said, "Well, I know those are important things you're talkin' about, but are you doin' 'em or are you just kinda goin' along with the crowd, hopin' somebody'll notice that you're doin' 'em?" And he hurt my feelings. And I said, "What are you doin'?" [05:04:26] And he said, "Well, we had one of those important things that you talked about. We got a new library

funded by a bond issue. And after it was finished, I was just lookin' around, and it didn't have any of the books that I had found useful when I was a young man maturing into adulthood. And it was a pretty building, but it was not well equipped as far as books were concerned. So I got with some of my friends at the university, and we started goin' through our own personal libraries and makin' sure that *Moby-Dick* and the Mark Twain stories and" . . .

SL: *Tom Sawyer*.

RT: . . . "other books were there as a resource. And we all made up gifts of twenty to fifty books, and we equipped that library with good, basic reading material. And we found periodicals and indexes to periodicals that the students would like." And he said, "And we did some of those things you were talkin' about, where we helped to devote studies that were taught by retired professors. And all of a sudden, the young people of Rogers began to realize that the older people knew some of their likes and dislikes and began to work with 'em. Now that didn't take me much time, but it's somethin', really, that if I hadn't done, I don't think anybody else would've done it." [05:06:20] He said, "The thing I'm sayin' is what needs to be done in your community that isn't bein' done and that you by yourself have

the power to cause to happen?" Oh! I had made it awful personal, and I realized that I hadn't been doin' enough for Sheridan because I just workin' on big deals. And that turned me back to the page where I learned that it's not the big deals; it is payin' attention to the detail of regular life that gives you the greatest opportunity to encourage others to do well. Well, Eli's lesson was a hard one for me, but it's true, and it made a difference for the rest of my life. It, along with the experience I had in the navy of a near-death experience, caused me to realize that it is the attitude of doing something that you can do by yourself to help others that is most important and will be remembered best in future years.

SL: That's impressive, but what about—can you . . .

RT: Oh, about the case?

SL: . . . talk a little bit about the Arkansas Supreme Court?

RT: The cases. Okay. That's how I got my desire to go on the court.

SL: Okay.

RT: It was for the opportunity to deal with individual problems, recognizing that they're not all big issues, that the thing you want to do is to make sure that justice is done in each of the small issues that comes before you.

SL: Okay.

[05:08:08] RT: And as a result of that, I brought back—and my colleagues on the court would probably tell you it's "Ray's Writ" now. [*SL laughs*] They give me credit for it. The error of *coram nobis*, which is that if you have a trial which is so mishandled that the prosecuting attorney knows some information which would guarantee the innocence of the person under trial, and they intentionally withhold that evidence so that the defendant cannot get a hold of it, and it can be proved that they knew information that would have released him and kept it suppressed, you can reverse that case after it's gone through the process by a writ of error *coram nobis*. And we applied that to a case over in West Memphis, and I was [*laughs*]—it was—they called it Ray's Writ [*SL laughs*] for a time on the court. Then I was personally opposed to the death sentence except if it has been ordered and gone through the process of law. I would not reverse it because of my preference against it, but I would reverse it if it had a flaw in judgment that caused an innocent person to be in threat of the death sentence. [05:09:48] As a result of that, we have had—oh, and Arkansas at that time did not require a review of a death sentence. I was shocked to find out that that meant that a person could go to a court in a district court and be sentenced to death by a jury and either be

unwilling or unable to appeal, and the state does not appeal, and that case is executed, and the person is killed without a review of the death sentence to see if it was constitutional and if the person had had all of his rights preserved. Well, it was shocking to me to find that we were one of the two states in the Union that did not require an automatic appeal of the death sentence. Well, we changed it, and I had to argue pretty arduously with other members of the court who said, "Well, we've had it the other way, and we can't change and do that." And I said, "Well, I think a majority of us can. We can come to the conclusion that a death sentence is not constitutional in Arkansas unless it has been reviewed by the supreme court." And we did. Now a lot of people'll be mad at me about that because they don't want death sentences reviewed, but I do, and I think it's a element of freedom that needed to be protected. And I'm responsible for it, at least I was able to get a majority of the court to agree with my concern about that. The court appoints members of various committees. I always made an effort to make sure we made good appointments. The—there are lots of individual cases that I don't want to go in, but I was never in a fixed majority or minority, but I was always for individual rights of individual citizens. I think that making sure that their rights are protected

was one of the main things that we were to do as members of the court. You don't get to talk about that very much, but I am very proud of my record, and I've been told that it is a very outstanding record of adherence to the law and making sure that individual rights are protected.

[05:12:43] SL: [*Sighs*] What else, Ray? What have we—what else have—what have we forgotten?

RT: Well, I just want to thank you for coming down and giving me an opportunity to reflect on different parts of my background. As you know, I have never wanted to spend time thinkin' about the past. But it's good to recognize that some people, and you and the people for whom you are doing this, recognize that knowing what people say and do is based upon certain convictions and ideals, and I'm glad to have the opportunity of letting you and them know that I'm happy with the opportunities I've had in my career. I don't mean to say that I've always got it right, but I do mean to say that I've always gotten it right within the scope of my vision and understanding of the issues. [05:13:53] And I think, if anything, my career illustrates that because people have been so forgiving of things where I might go against the public view. For instance, the Watergate, at the time 60 or 70 percent of the people in Arkansas probably would have not elected me to

anything. [*SL laughs*] And yet I've had wonderful opportunities to serve. And what I want to say is I'm grateful for those opportunities. And I want the young people who may be looking at this to realize that if you can finish the road with the conviction that you've done the best that you can, that that in itself is a goal to be proud of.

SL: Ray, you're a fine example . . .

RT: Thank you very much.

SL: . . . of just that. Thank you.

RT: Thank you very much.

SL: Thank you so much for giving us all this time.

RT: Well, I appreciate the opportunity.

[05:14:57 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]