

Jeannie McDaniel

Dedicated more than 25 years to bettering her city and state, while also becoming an accomplished distance runner.

Chapter 01 - 1:33

Introduction

Announcer: A longtime Tulsan, Jeannie McDaniel has worked to better her city for more than twenty-five years. She worked at the Citizens Crime Commission from 1981 to 1991, serving as director from 1986 through 1991, coordinating programs like Alert Neighbors and Crime Stoppers with the Tulsa Police Department.

In 1991, McDaniel created the full-time position of Mayor's Office for Neighborhoods, registering hundreds of neighborhood associations and building the annual Neighborhood Block Party program.

Elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2004, Jeannie McDaniel was appointed to the Health Committee, where she hosted an interim study on mental health in 2005, which resulted in funding Tulsa's Mental Health Court. McDaniel carried legislation that resulted in public school students being permitted to carry medicine for allergies. As a member of the Education Committee, she continued to focus on high quality standards for students, supported college tuition assistance (OHLAP) for Oklahoma's young people and better compensation for teachers. She has been recognized numerous times for her government work.

And she is a runner. Jeannie is the only runner in Oklahoma to hold more than one national record. She has held national age group and single age group records in both 12-hour and 24-hour categories. Jeannie is one of three runners to be in the long-distance running state record book at every standard distance.

She was inducted onto the Oklahoma Long Distance Runner Wall of Fame in 2015.

Listen to Jeannie McDaniel tell her story for the oral history website

VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 9:25**Many Schools**

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is December 2, 2020. So Jeannie, would you state your full name please?

Jeannie McDaniel: Jean Marie McDaniel...Jeannie.

JE: And your date of birth?

JM: 12/10/48.

JE: And your present age?

JM: 71 in another week,

JE: I am recording this on the phone here in the office of Voices of Oklahoma and where are you, Jeannie, when I talk to you?

JM: In my home.

JE: Here in Tulsa. We should say for the record and for history's sake, we continue to face the pandemic known as COVID-19 or coronavirus, and I'm conducting my interviews now by phone. Normally I have been doing that in person. For those listening back generations from now, we're all wearing our masks, social distancing, smaller gatherings. Just finished Thanksgiving where many families did not get together. So Jeannie, how has Covid affected you and how have you been dealing with it?

JM: It's been an interesting year, John. I started out actually having run over 100 miles in Phoenix and then had a few house issues I faced. And then with Covid hitting our family... of course, school was canceled and the kids were learning from home...I have some grandsons I am close to here in Tulsa...then my mother began to have a series of strokes and ultimately was moved to an assisted living facility after rehab in Phoenix. So I have put over 25,000 miles on my car this year trying to be safe.

JE: Wow, yes. Yes, indeed. Well and now there's word that there are vaccines and maybe even an awake at least in the United Kingdom but soon here in the United States as well so we're all looking for that to happen. So Jeannie, where were you born?

JM: I was actually born in Ohio, in mid-Ohio outside of Marion, Ohio and really stayed there until I moved to North Dakota, John, for high school.

JE: Oh yes, and we do want to get to that. So that's a farming community is it?

JM: It was a farming community. And then later I moved to Columbus and spent elementary school years there.

JE: Your mother's maiden name, where she was born?

JM: LaRue, Ohio, and the name was Fager. So we have a whole history wrapped around that of migrating west, you know, in wagon trains and things - but pretty much a farming community. I still have relatives farming in mid Ohio.

JE: Your mother's personality, what was she like?

JM: Well she is still with me. I talk to her every day. In fact, my mother is a very dynamic woman. She is 94. She is 4 feet 9 now and she is still playing Mah Jongg, any card game, anyone she can get to sit down with her and play. Very dynamic, reads every day. Cognitive skills are good. Actually it has been a sad year for her because Alex Trebek passed away and Jeopardy is her favorite show.

JE: Hmm...you must have drawn, you probably feel, much from your mother perhaps?

JM: Yes, it's sort of a plague in a way. My family inherited an inability to sit still. We're not good sitters; we can't sit and look out the window and think. We are doers. Actually we don't have many portraits of us. Most of it is action - in the Grand Canyon we're climbing a mountain, we're outside running. So we got this from her and I think all of my kids have inherited that gene.

JE: What a great affliction to have!

JM: (laughs) Unless you're married to someone who likes to sit. We're just not good sitters.

JE: And then your father's name?

JM: Marion Emptage.

JE: And was he from Ohio? Did he grow up there too?

JM: Yes, yes. They grew up in the same town, were childhood sweethearts and married. He was a World War II vet.

JE: And his personality, what was he like?

JM: Um...wow. My dad was a very giving person. I mean, he was known in his neighborhood for mowing yards and just doing things for other people. He was a very, very caring person and did a lot of things for other people.

JE: How about grandparents? Did you have grandparents that were an influence on you?

JM: Oh my goodness. Well my parents divorced when I was very young. I had two brothers that were each a year apart. So my mom had her hands full. But my grandmothers were probably the centerfold of my growing up years; you know, farmed, sewing, canning, reading every book in the attic, being adventuresome. They let us be wild and free, so we swam in rivers, walked on railroad bridges, did all the things that we needed to do, I think, to develop personalities and self confidence.

JE: So then how many brothers/sisters do you have?

JM: It's a big family but I have two real brothers, two half-brothers and two step-brothers. Some are no longer with us but my two brothers I talk to every week. We're close. One's in Ohio, one's in Arizona, and we are best friends, which I'm really thankful for. And my kids are best friends, so I don't know how this has happened but we all just get along.

JE: Yeah. And then you were the only girl?!

JM: I'm the only girl, yes.

JE: We talk about tomboys. Do you think you were a tomboy to be around the boys or what?

JM: Totally, totally. And being the oldest girl, I was very bossy, very domineering. You know, I thought I knew everything and had everything right. It was an adventure.

JE: And it helped shape you probably for later on, right?

JM: Absolutely (laughs).

JE: Yeah, so your parents divorced when you very young. Then did you move then to a larger city or where did you go?

JM: We went to Columbus, Ohio at that point. Thinking back on it, John, in 1955, my mother had no car and she did not have a college degree at that time. She went on to get it later, but she worked for IBM and was a keypunch operator. We lived in an apartment and used public transportation. She was very, very strong - very strong-willed. Remarried when I was about 10. I actually have a half-brother 10 years younger than me. She went on to graduate from Mayville State Teachers College in North Dakota where we went because of the Air Force. My stepdad was in the Air Force. So she graduated from college the year that I graduated from Grand Forks Central.

JE: But didn't you go to many different schools over a period of time, like 12 schools in 12 years? Tell us about that.

JM: I did. Well, as a kid living in an apartment with a single mom, we moved around to different apartments a lot. Amazingly, as I look back, she managed to still be the Brownie leader and do many things with us kids. We participated in sports even at that young age...which then there weren't as many organized sports for kids. But from ice skating to sledding to scouts to baseball - we didn't miss anything. But we did move a lot. And then a lot of schools during that time were segregation/desegregation and we'd be transferred, so I did end up going to a lot of schools. So you learned, much like being in the military later, to make friends quickly and acclimate as fast as you can to get involved in things. You tend to be more outgoing.

JE: As I remember in my elementary, the new kid or kids that came in, there was a stigma - they were always new. We somehow thought about them differently. Did you feel treated like that, you were always the new kid?

JM: Well I didn't have the accent different until I went to North Dakota. But yes...and I also was a very chubby kid and I read a lot. I made friends but I was very careful and I was always good to my teachers. You know, being the oldest child, you always think you have to be an over-achiever. I never felt scorned or anything but I can't look back and say I had a best friend or went to school for years - I don't go back to Grand Forks for reunions or anything like that because I didn't have those attachments that people that live in one place have.

JE: Right.

Chapter 03 - 5:45**North Dakota**

John Erling: So then your stepfather was a military man and that brought you to North Dakota and to Grand Forks?

Jeannie McDaniel: It did, yes.

JE: And that was the Air Force base?

JM: It was the Air Force. Of course, you can imagine moving there being the outside kid. I couldn't wait to get out and graduate. So I graduated in the summer and left at 16 and then started college in January when I was 17 at Miami of Ohio.

JE: Wow. What year did you graduate from Grand Forks Central?

JM: I was thinking about that last night (laughs). I think it was August of '65 maybe. It was the year my mother...I went to her college graduation one week and my high school graduation the next week. But at that time, they were very accommodating. I think there were 12 of us in that graduating class, some being kids from the air base. As you know, it was 25 miles from town and we really weren't as included in town activities and things as you would be if you lived in the community.

JE: But you did attend Grand Forks Central?

JM: Absolutely. That's where I got my high school diploma from.

JE: In 1965, right?

JM: I'm thinking it was '65, yes, because I was 16.

JE: Well I'm kind of zeroing in on that and you and I both know that Grand Forks is my hometown, although I went to Grand Forks Central for one year. I had gone to a junior high school in another part of town my sophomore year in 1957. Let me ask you about some names that might have been there that we both may know. Do you remember Ken Rio, was he there?

JM: I don't remember that.

JE: Serge Gambucci was a hockey guy. Elton Scarford...

JM: That rings a bell. It was my first experience at hockey versus football...coming out of Ohio State and Woody Hays growing up...I went to North Dakota and realized that hockey was the sport. You know, it was really interesting...I mean, there are many things about North Dakota that probably helped shape me too - one being the flood. I remember the flood and sand bagging the Red River...I guess it is the Red River that flows through there, flows north?

JE: Yes...

JM: Yes, I remember that, the annual floods. Then when it was really bad, the sand bagging. I

remember going to northern Minnesota a lot. I remember the Yard Birds came there one time and the Beach Boys came to Fargo. That was probably the biggest single celebration while I was up there – the Beach Boys in Fargo. It was just Turtle River...I did learn about Indian reservations in North Dakota because I did some missionary work over there to the base. I actually skied once in North Dakota at Turtle River.

JE: Oh really (laughs)...

JM: Yeah (laughs). I think they had one ski run (laughs). So you could rent skis or you could take a toboggan. Everybody used the same hill.

JE: Really...

JM: But it was charming. You know, you take what you can. You learned about sugar beets. It was just very flat and big sky country.

JE: Yep. As I tell people, North Dakota is so flat, you can watch a dog run away for two weeks.

JM: True! Oh my gosh, very true. And the wind always blows. But it served my family well when I was there and I think it was a good stepping stone for me. I think I got what I needed from the high school there. It served me well, John. I wish kids today had some of the advantages we had with, you know, instruction and education and the backgrounds we got that served us well, I think.

JE: Here's another name that comes to mind...Leo M. Haysley. He was a music guy. Does that ring a bell?

JM: That does sound familiar because I did play the clarinet. I played it for many years. I played in the band up there. I still have a clarinet and I keep thinking I'll play it but I've lost my embouchure and I've lost, believe or not, my air. So it's in the closet and the kids got it for me a few years ago for my birthday and I really need to get it out and play on it.

JE: (laughs) Well, I just want our listeners to know this interview will be about, I guess I've already stated, your professional life and your running life. So move on now...you've already indicated you were a reader. But then you went on, you attended Miami of Ohio University for a couple of years, right?

JM: I did. I was there...it is sort of interesting, I was thinking this through...I went there in '65. I ended up leaving in '68. My stepfather was deployed. He was in Saigon at the time during the Tet Offensive in '68. I actually married while he was overseas. I married a man I had met there at Miami. He graduated ROTC and so we entered right into the Air Force. So then I spent the next 12 years having children and we were in the Air Force until we came to Tulsa. He actually was in Thailand in '75. I moved six times at that point, didn't work, had four kids. Then we left the Air Force in '78 as the war was winding down and he decided that wasn't going to be his career, and we moved to Tulsa, actually with American Airlines. I've lived here ever since.

Chapter 04 - 3:22**Vietnam**

John Erling: Let me bring you back to Miami of...was that a good experience? You were so young, I think you would have been 17. Did you blend well?

Jeannie McDaniel: No, of course not. No one should go to college the month after they turn 17. And I was 1,000 miles from home and I was on a scholarship. No, it was not smart, not a smart thing to do. I should have gone to UND, you know, NDSU and then closer to home. But being young and thinking I knew more than I did and was smarter than I was, I went there. No I wouldn't recommend kids go away to school. It was a great school. Again, I had great instruction but I really wasn't prepared to do that by any means. The Vietnam war was on, we had protests, Dow Chemical, so there was a lot of conflict going on at the time in our nation. So no, it wasn't a good time. We had protests, we had Woodstock, just a lot of diversions. I did not do well. So when I left there, I did not leave with a degree. I left and ended up getting married and having kids.

JE: Did you participate in the protests of the Vietnam war even though your dad was in the Vietnam war?

JM: (laughs) I did attend a protest but it wasn't against the Vietnam war as much as it was against Dow Chemical. I think we had a campus because I believe...I was opposed to napalm, using napalm. So yeah, I had long hair and I ironed it and wore bellbottoms and was really more engaged in the war situation because, of course, my family was military, the man I was to marry was in the military wearing a uniform and the country really wasn't for Vietnam. I mean, we were experiencing Kent State at that time. It was a very, very tumultuous time and divided families, much like our recent history here. Families were divided, you know - people were either pro-war or anti-war and I definitely wasn't Jane Fonda or anything like that but I had real reservations about what was happening. And such a division of the young men who went. I had friends and relatives die there, and then I had others who barely knew what was going on.

JE: On the issue of protests, where were you then for the Kent State shootings, which was May 4, 1970? And for the record, that was the killings of four, wounding of nine other unarmed Kent State University students and it took place during this peace rally opposing the involvement of Vietnam war.

JM: It was horrible. At that time, I actually know exactly where I was because we were living in Shreveport, Louisiana at that time stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base. I was about to give birth to my second child. So I was very much Walter Cronkite, Time Magazine, and still trying to figure out, living on a base where many of us had husbands deployed, how all of this was coming down because I could see both sides of it. It was a very sad time.

Chapter 05 - 3:50**The Four Children**

John Erling: So then how many children did you have in your marriage?

Jeannie McDaniel: (laughs) Four (laughs).

JE: (laughs) Why are you laughing?

JM: Well I have to laugh. I did have four children. Let's see, I had one in northern Michigan in Marquette; I had two at Barksdale in Shreveport, Louisiana; and then I had one in Dayton, Ohio when we were stationed at Wright-Patterson. But those were just growing years where, you know, you've memorized every Dr. Seuss book in the house. Much like Covid, you're home every day when you had four kids and I had learned to carry one on a backpack and push a stroller or pull a wagon and do all those things. I was active...I swam. I would swim. I could swim up to a mile a day. I tried to stay healthy and just be the best parent I could be because it was like being a single parent because if you were in the military at that point, you were usually alone with your family. And that's what I did until we got to Tulsa.

JE: And then you moved many times - what six or seven times in 12 years?

JM: Six times. We did, we moved a lot. We did northern Michigan/upper peninsula, 240 inches of snow that year. Then 2-1/2 years at Barksdale. We went to Dayton for a master's degree. My husband got his master's. Then we went to Boston; we were stationed outside of Boston at Hanscom Field. Then back to, actually I stayed in Ohio when my husband was deployed to Thailand. Then we moved to Tulsa when we separated from the military. Yeah, so I did move a lot.

JE: So then you in essence never did fully unpack, did you?

JM: No, and I still don't keep a lot of things. I'm not one of these people that...I'm not a packrat at all. I don't keep a lot of things. I tend to hope my memories last because that's sort of where I have captured most of my stuff. Being military, you move so much, you just don't have time to collect things and I have continued that in my life. I collect memories and times and occasions more than anything.

JE: We should name your children.

JM: Okay. The oldest one is Teresa Smith and she lives here in Tulsa, has her own business, and she has two children who are in college right now; I have one at OU finishing nursing school and I have one in engineering at OSU of her children. Then I have my second daughter who is Christine Marsh; she has been with Family and Children's for over 22 years I think; she has two boys and their father died a few years ago, Jack and Ben, so I have been to a lot of Booker T. ballgames and Carver ballgames in the last two years; she lives here. Then I have a son, David Seres, who lives in California in Newport Beach where I try to get to two or three times a year; he has really been my inspiration, John,

in trying new things, the ultras and all. All my kids have run ultras; all of them have run marathons. He has gone into the ultra ironman. So that's David; he has no children. He's kind of the uncle of the family who takes us on adventures. We did a raft trip through the Grand Canyon last year as a family. Then my youngest son lives in Oklahoma City; he is a gastroenterologist, Ken Seres, and he has two kids. Yeah, I'm really blessed.

JE: Yes, yes you are.

Chapter 06 - 2:35

Tulsa

John Erling: Let's track you then. You came to Oklahoma with American Airlines in 1978. Why did American Airlines bring you here?

Jeannie McDaniel: In the Air Force, my husband was a procurement officer and so he made arrangements with American Airlines in the maintenance base. His name is Frank Seres. He still lives here in Tulsa and we are good friends and have actually played duplicate bridge in the last year or two before Covid as partners. Frank set up American Airlines maintenance to do maintenance for military planes. So for that time period when we came here, he was sort of a liaison between the military and American and seeing what services this maintenance base could offer. So that's what he did. We divorced in 1980 and I decided to stay in Tulsa. This was a community that I had no relatives here but I had four children here and we had made good friends here. Since I had moved around my whole life, I decided I'd like to stay in a place where my kids could call home and we did and I have never regretted staying in Oklahoma at all.

JE: Right. So then what did you do then. You said you have to be doing things...

JM: (laughs) I ran the Tulsa run (laughs). I had begun to run in 1978. You know, I had been a stay-at-home mom for all those years and I was turning, I guess, 30. I bought a pair of running shoes. I had a brother-in-law who was like 18 years younger than me and he had come here and I was teaching him to swim. He was getting ready to go to college and didn't know how to swim. He grew up on a farm. So he said why don't you run with me and we went running around Thoreau track at the time and it seemed easy. So obviously we went to Famous Footwear and looked at a Runner's World magazine and they had two shoes, Adidas and Brooks, and I picked a Brooks and I've never quit running since. As I started running and with that, setting goals and having some, you know, personal success with it, I translated that into getting into the workforce. So I entered the workforce in 1980.

JE: I want to talk more about running at the end of your professional life but I'm glad you brought it in then and how you actually got started.

Chapter 07 - 7:30**Citizens Crime Commission**

John Erling: You became involved in government and all, I don't know, in 1980-81? I did talk to the former mayor, Susan Savage, about you...

Jeannie McDaniel: (laughs)

JE: ...and she said she hired you at the Citizens Crime Commission, so I'm following up. Is she telling the truth?

JM: Yes she is. And it was actually very funny. I had never driven to downtown Tulsa and Bob Herring, the former editor of the *Tulsa World*, and Joe Herring - they were my good friends. Bob had helped me get a paper route. I also had that as a job at one time, too. I would throw a paper before I would go to work at the Crime Commission, the *Tulsa World*. So Bob said I know this woman and she is looking for someone to help her. I had taught myself to type because going to college in the 1960s, women who went to college thought they would never need to type, so I taught myself to type on a little portable and I took shorthand lessons. So Bob said, "I have this woman and she needs help." At that time, we had no cell phones, of course, and so on a Sunday, I drove to downtown Tulsa to the NBT building...I think the NBT building...and figured out where I would park. I had read John Molloy's "Dress for Success" so I had bought a gray suit and I had an interview with Susan Savage. When I came out, I remember I had a flat tire and I drove this huge station wagon. I was in downtown Tulsa and I thought *oh if I ever get out of here, I will never come back.*

But I sent my thank you note to her and about 3-4 weeks later, she called me and offered me the job. It was really very funny because she offered me \$1,000 a month and I said, "no, no I'm not worth it, I can't accept that." You know, I've never really worked outside of the home to speak of, part time little things, and, you know, I could run a PTA bake sale pretty well and a cake walk. So I said I would not accept that salary and she said well okay and she hired me. I asked for a job description and she said well no, you just learn to do everything I do; watch me. And I thought *well, okay*; I had no experience in the workforce.

Within two weeks, she had me going on Carolyn Jenkins' show on Channel 6 at 6 in the morning to do an interview and I had never done television except for dancing or something like that. I said "what will I say?" And she said, "have a message for the people that are listening to you and whatever she asks you, say what you want people at home to hear." It was great advice, John. I had a great teacher. Mayor Savage was a wonderful teacher and a wonderful manager and I learned a great deal from her because she gave me opportunities that I otherwise would never have had. Shortly after she hired me, she went on maternity leave and she said you need to do what I have done.

You know, we're in a two-person office and we faced each other. I think actually at the time, Williams Companies was donating our office and we got another office so we didn't have to face each other; she had a room and I had a room. She left to go have her second child. I had a lot of great mentors on that board. I had Steve Turnbo, who was on the board at the time too, and Phyllis Edmonds from Sooner Federal, and Ed Jacoby and just numerous people on that board who just helped me along and were good role models...such very good role models. At that time, we used the Chamber of Commerce. I would walk up and down Boston every day because we didn't have a copy machine, we didn't have a postage meter or anything, so I did most of my work in the basement of the Chamber of Commerce...if you can believe that!

JE: I'm hung up on this \$1,000. If you wouldn't accept \$1,000, then how much would you accept?

JM: I think the first paycheck might have been \$600 or \$800. She bumped me up pretty fast when she went on leave, and I gained confidence. I asked her years later why she hired me and she said well a lot of people ask her that question. I had no experience in the workforce whatsoever. It was good we were in an office by ourselves because I think I only had like two or three outfits that I wore over and over and then if we had a board meeting, I would wear my little gray dress-for-success suit. She told me if someone could have four kids, get them up, get them dressed, get them to school, be a scout leader, run, and do all of these volunteer activities that I did, that was the person that she wanted. I don't know if that's the truth or not but I believed it and so it gave me confidence that I could really do anything she asked me to do or anything that needed to be done. In those days, John, we didn't have correcting typewriters. We didn't have copy machines. Our computers when we got them looked like a Hasty Bake; I mean, they were huge. So it was one of those things where you did everything that needed to be done. You cleaned the toilets, you put out the press releases, and you did interviews on television.

JE: Kind of briefly tell us what was the Citizens Crime Commission?

JM: Well the Citizens Crime Commission was actually an outgrowth from the Chamber of Commerce. Martin Fate had helped to develop it through a task force and Susan was hired as their director. It brought to Tulsa the Crime Stopper program and Alert Neighbors was developed through Susan. What we did was we would help people try to learn to be safe in their home, so we worked arm in arm with the police department, every police chief and officers on the street, teaching people just what they could do to target hard in their own homes. You have to remember this was before cell phones. We used to lug around a big VCR with a cassette tape in it that Tulsa Cable, or whatever it was called back then, would play at their facility out there on Sheridan. We would go into people's homes with our VCR, or sometimes they would put it on the cable channel

if the host of the meeting had the channel. At those times, people still invited neighbors into their living rooms. It was very block party-ish. You know, invite your neighbors over and get to know their names, exchange phone numbers, know who their kids are and what time they get home from school. Those are the types of things that really helped to target hardened people, you know, from daytime burglaries and other things that would keep them safe. So we did that. We would do up to 200 meetings in some years. We had a volunteer force that went out, a lot of Rotary members, Kiwanis and Lions people that helped us do that. I actually learned public speaking through doing that. I did many, many meetings. It's such a blessing to me because it enabled me to go all over Tulsa. I could go to north Tulsa, south Tulsa, west Tulsa, and even neighboring counties and put on these meetings. It helped me to see, which later really helped me when I went on to serve the city and in office, how people live.

Chapter 08 - 6:25

Tulsa Community Action

Jeannie McDaniel: I'll just give you one for instance. In north Tulsa, I did a lot of meetings through the Tulsa Community Action Agency, which at the time gathered people together for cheese and different food products. I would go into those meetings and we would have them in housing projects. We would have them in all kinds of housing. They always opened with a prayer. On the wall, I would always remember there would be a picture of Jesus, the one with just his face or sometimes the one where Jesus is standing in front of a door. I didn't have that same experience in south Tulsa. But also in north Tulsa and sometimes west Tulsa, there would be a wall of pictures of the people in that family that had graduated from high school or served in the military. So there would be a head shot of someone in their uniform or a cap and gown. It meant a lot to me because it just was a way of expressing how important family was to those people that I was trying to help and it stayed with me always. Unfortunately, over the years, that changed and now on those walls, there are flat screen televisions and not so many pictures of family at those moments that were important to us in our growing up lives. I saw neighborhoods change and evolve like they do, like cities evolve and change, and that sort of makes me sad in a way. I have wished for some of those days when we still value those same things.

John Erling: But then former mayor Susan Savage convinced Roger Randle to hire you at city hall when he was mayor for the Office for Neighborhood.

JM: Yes. At the time, it was a part-time position that a dear man, Roy Valentine, a retired police officer, was doing. Roger came into the office, as you know, as we changed forms of

government and Susan was his chief of staff. What he valued when he talked with me was the fact that people needed to gather together. As he went about during his campaign, he realized that as he'd sit in people's living rooms, the neighbors didn't know each other. He very much thought that was not helping the cohesiveness of neighborhoods so he said, "would you come and run this Office for Neighborhoods?" At the time, he had started off as a mayor's action center and so he wanted people to think...my office was on the top floor with the mayor's action center, we were all up there with the mayor...he said I want people to know if they talk to you, they're talking to the mayor. Or if they call the mayor's action center, the mayor knows what's going on.

In truth, Roger and Susan...even to a larger extent...she was there so many years would know...she would walk into the center and what's up, what's down, what's good, what's bad. At staff meetings, as you were sitting there going around that table, you were saying what did you hear this weekend at the soccer game, at the meeting, because I continued to do meetings. When I went to the city, we expanded the neighborhood association, the homeowners' association, and the block parties just exploded at that time, which was all helping people come together, share food which tends to be a common denominator as it is in most religions and rituals in our lives, and get to know each other.

JE: Yes. And then weren't you on to public works as well with Charles Hart?

JM: (laughs) For a short time after Susan left being mayor and we had a new mayor come in, Charles Hart said to me, "what do you want to do, what are your plans for the future?" Because he had been involved in staff meetings. Through the years, Charles Hart always wanted to know what was going on in neighborhoods as well—street projects, what are you hearing, what are you seeing, pot holes, street lights—all the things that were under his purview, he wanted to know what people thought about it. So if he would catch me in the hall or at a meeting, he would say well how is this project working?

I remember one time I said, "well actually, when they re-paved North Cincinnati, it doesn't feel quite right." And we got in the car with some of his traffic engineers and drove it and he said this is not right, we need to look at this and make it right. And I really appreciated that. He got very involved in neighborhood revitalization, tearing down homes. I remember we used grant money sometimes for abandoned homes which, you know, had no possibility of being lived in again. Sometimes by taking a neighborhood and letting Habitat rebuild homes there or others, it really helped to improve neighborhoods. I have to tell you as I drive to Booker T. Washington where I have a grandson in school and I am there quite often, every time I drive down Virgin or I drive up Peoria and I see the intersections, the streets, the roads and the sidewalks, I'm so proud of what our city has done...improvement in the parks...it's been decades of good works that were planned.

I have to tell you one of the things we did once we formed all of these organizations and block parties, we used those people as sounding boards for that third penny sales tax. That third penny sales tax was crafted by citizens...a great deal by citizens...it was prioritized by citizens. I'll never regret that. I think the work of...and you have to think, it was before cell phones for the most part and certainly before Facebook as Facebook didn't come about until 2004...we didn't have the internet connections then that we have today...but for those times, it was really feet on the ground and I really think that it helped. I don't think we've ever had a third penny sale to my knowledge...I can't remember it...but I think it's because we actually were in people's homes and their churches and hearing what they wanted and what was important to them.

JE: Yes.

Chapter 09 - 6:50

Public Office

John Erling: You pointed out all your children graduated from college and you hadn't, but then you started your college journey at Tulsa Community College.

Jeannie McDaniel: Right. That's back at Charles Hart, he said to me what do you want to do now, because I was no longer in the Office for Neighborhood and he had said I have a recycling position, you can come down here and do recycling. Frankly, I think I might have worn that trash bin costume at a parade or two before so I said sure. It was working with people and it's where the rubber hits the road again. We were working at recycling at that time through TMUA, weighing a lot of those options that we had, so I went to Public Works. But at the same time, I said you know, I've always wanted to finish my college degree and he said well why don't you? I had actually started going to TCC at night for two years right before Susan left. I would work during the day and go to TCC at night. I got my associate's degree and then when I worked for Charles, I went to school on Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays at OU. OU at that time had a program here for working people and it worked out so I actually graduated.

JE: You are to be commended about that, age wise...

JM: Not really, I mean my kids were gone. I was home alone and with my husband, Joe, who I've been married to, you know geez, since 1986. So I had no excuse not to do it, John. I mean, my kids said you've always wanted to do this - do it! So I did and it was very enjoyable. Again, it helped me in my job because I was the oldest person in the classroom. I was sitting there with young people who had jobs for the most part. They were in their

20s. I could hear what they were saying was important to them. Well that translated to me at the city, so I was beginning to hear how younger people were feeling and what they wanted in a place to call home. So I really gained a lot from getting that degree, more than just taking jobs and reading books, which I loved. But I learned a lot from the other students that were there doing the same thing I was doing because many of them were employed by State Farm. You know, a lot of our businesses would pay for their workers to go to college and so I was mostly in the classroom with people who were employed, very young and were doing it for their work.

JE: Yeah. Well little did you know you were being prepared for the next step in your life and that was to...

JM: No I didn't (laughs).

JE: ...was to run for public office. So how did that come about? I believe some people asked you to run for the state legislature.

JM: Yes, yes. Jari Askins came to Tulsa and had a meeting with Lucky Lamons and myself. Mary Easley was turning out...no she wasn't, she was running for the senate actually. She ran for her son's seat in the senate, which left an open seat. Of course, I had never dreamed of running for office but at that time, I was eligible to retire from the city of Tulsa so it seemed like a logical progression. I kept my day job, though. I campaigned and that is probably one of the best experiences of my life, knocking on people's doors and hearing how they feel. It was just unbelievable. I thought going in their homes and listening at meetings was something, but when you knock on a door and a man comes and he has just put a wig on his wife and drawn on her eyebrows because she has cancer and she can't see and he is worked about what he is going to have for lunch, it just opens your eyes.

And so for the first time, I became aware of how many people didn't have health insurance in our city, how many people had lost their jobs and were victims of downsizing that we had gone through, this was 2004, and they just wanted to know where the next paycheck was going to come from, or worried if their son was going to get a colonoscopy. Those were just...it was heartbreaking. I would knock on doors where people were living on \$400 social security. So, of course, they owned their homes but they had no insurance on their homes and they were just scraping to get by. You could see they had space heaters instead of furnaces. So it really allowed me to get an even more in-depth understanding of some of the challenges that people have every day.

JE: What district were you in?

JM: I'm in district 78. I still live here. It's around the fairgrounds, between the fairgrounds and TU. So I had a long stretch and a wonderful district at the heart of Tulsa, I say. I went all the way to Swan Lake and part of Maple Ridge eventually, because I was re-districted. You know, during the time we had some changes in our lines. But I went all the way out

to Mingo Creek, actually 11th and Garnett. So my only high school I had was Hale. But I learned all of the schools in the area, all of the churches in the area, and knocked every door in every neighborhood in that area. At that time, there were no gated communities in my district so I was really able to meet people face-to-face.

JE: I would imagine many of those people knew of your name or knew you as you knocked on their door.

JM: Well they did, yes, but it was almost...I felt like it was like getting a master's degree in human relations. It was so helpful to me to understand why people make the decisions they make sometimes. But I will tell you this - I almost lost that election. I had a young attorney who had just moved back to Tulsa, was married, expecting a baby, who attended church in the district. I, you know, had to go to a recount. We had a runoff and I ended up winning that election by 22 votes out of 15,000. So as well known as you think you are, you are really not (laughs). I mean, it's just...people that vote aren't always the same people that you see in other public places. But I made so many friends and went on to serve for 12 years. Even now, I will be at the grocery store and someone will say could you knock on my door so we can talk? And I'm like...well no (laughs), it grants you permission to knock on people's doors and ask them what they think. There was no greater joy from that job than that. It was the people I served by far.

Chapter 10 - 6:57

Oklahoma History

John Erling: You ran as a Democrat.

Jeannie McDaniel: I did, I ran as a Democrat. This district was pretty divided. I can't remember if I had more Democrats than Republicans. It was very close. But as you know, John, in the political world...and I used to tell people, they said well you're a Democrat, and I said, "No. You know, actually when I look in the mirror in the morning, I don't see a Democrat or a Republican, I see my mother. And it scares me, I'm like oh my God, what is she doing in my house?! I haven't cleaned and here she is!" As I've aged...I don't know if you have any resemblance to your relatives...but I never think of myself as a Democrat or a Republican. It was always trying to do better for whatever cause we needed to find a solution for. So I'm very thankful that people didn't look at me as a Democrat. They actually...my name would be in yards next to Mary Fallon, next to Senator Inhoffe...I mean, people would just mix me in. And I wish that's the way it were more, that they would vote for what I would bring to them which was their voice at the capitol. That was my goal.

- JE:** Alright, so all the things we've talked to in your life so far and all the moving and all that kind of thing came down to a special day known as swearing in day. I don't know if you've reflected on all that, that you would never have thought you'd be sworn into a position of the Oklahoma State Legislature.
- JM:** No, it was a wonderful honor, a wonderful honor. I actually...one of the first things I did after I finished my campaign and after my first session, I sat down and read Angie Debo. I mean I thought who are these people? What makes them think this way? Because I had lived in many states but Oklahoma has a unique personality. As you know, depending on the part of the state you reside or live in or were raised in, you might have very, very different ideas than someone in Tulsa. So I didn't understand it and I thought I've got to learn the history of this state, and so I just had to go all the way back and read about the history. I knew about the Trail of Tears but I didn't really know about the Trail of Tears; the race riot or massacre I didn't really know about. I needed to learn better because when you sit there with that 100 other people and they are saying what's in their hearts and you're thinking oh my gosh, what leads them to these conclusions? So I spent a lot of time learning more about Oklahoma and what makes people here think the way they do.
- JE:** Right. So tell us about your first bill that you presented. What was it and the experience of doing that?
- JM:** You know, I'm not sure I remember my first bill, but I can tell you this - I entered in and the Democrats went into the minority for the first time. The first time in state's history, the Democrats were in the minority in the house. So my chances of having a lot of success weren't very great. Being the person I am, knowing me and public safety, I don't think any of my early bills got much attention. Although I think now it's funny because I've been working with groups like AAA and the police department, so we were working on things like seat belts in the back seat. Well people thought that was stupid. They didn't even like wearing seat belts in the front seat, so there was no way they wanted seat belts in the back seat. Texting - I think it took...I was there what 10 years before we and Sue Tibbs finally pulled through a texting bill. But those are the types of bills I would lean to, things people had told me that were problematic. I had had a friend killed by being ejected through the back seat when their car was in an accident on ice. She was ejected and killed. Her two daughters and husband who was driving lived. So I believed not smoking in cars with children was important and things like that, which I wasn't getting much traction to be honest with you (laughs). But you carry those bills and sometimes it takes many years to get things like that passed. Then sometimes you carry bills that agencies ask you to pass and I did some of that for the Oklahoma State Health Department.
- JE:** Right, so we should point out that the years we are talking about were 2004 until 2016. So people can think about what you were doing. But you got involved in many things. Let me

point out here, though, that you were instrumental in getting funding for Tulsa's mental health court?

JM: Yes, and actually I think if my memory serves me, I believe Dave Bean may have been the police chief at that time. Yes, at the time, we did not have that. I'm glad you remember that. I had forgotten that. I would just work on things like that. I was surprised I had opposition to be honest with you, but there are many people who thought all of that could be handled through the DA. Obviously, the mental health court is near and dear to me. I'm a big proponent of mental health help and the more we can do to reduce the size of prison population and jails. The other thing, John, is that I was a big advocate for women's rights and I continue to be to this day. So, of course, each year I had a number of bills that I would have to rise and debate in opposition to in standing for women's rights. Actually it was all brought back to me as I'm reading one of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's books right now on her rulings. It's her writing. It's Ruth Ginsburg in her own words. I actually sometimes forget how far we have come and yet how far we have to go because when I moved here in 1978, of course, the ERA had just been defeated and it, you know, never has passed. But I forgot that in Oklahoma...and we were a state that never passed, of course...but how entrenched some of these beliefs were. In fact, when I did some bills, especially bills on children of incarcerated parents, I can remember people arguing with me that children of incarcerated parents have no rights. I learned that many of the legislators believe that children had no rights, that they are the property of parents and women are the property of men. That was very hard for me to understand. I still don't completely understand it. We have fought more and more each year since from funding to education to women's rights to opening doors for kids who may not have had the same opportunities I had. It was just always surprising to me how much opposition we had.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 11 - 4:54

Boys Club

John Erling: At the time, you were one of 19 women serving in the state legislature so it was a good old boys' club. So how did you navigate this good old boys' club and you needed support on a bill...tell us about that.

Jeannie McDaniel: Well, I guess this is part of where being a parent came in handy because I'm very small, as you know. I'm 5 foot 1. I learned right away that I wasn't going to fight my way anywhere. I wasn't going to be a harsh disciplinarian because sooner or later, all

of my kids would be bigger than me. I had to learn to negotiate from basically the time they were born on. I tried to negotiate and reason. I think that served me well there. I will credit someone else here and that's Michael Patton. I worked with Michael clear back when we were picking up trash and litter along the highways and planting trees and doing things. When I ran for office, he said to me, "Jeannie, people want a politician that will listen, not just talk", and I honed my listening skills. I had been a volunteer for years with Call Rape, and I have learned to listen. People will find that hard to believe since I do talk, but I would listen to these people and I would find a commonality, John. I would find something we had in common, and I served with people that that was challenging to do in some cases, but we would find it. Once you find that thread of what you have in common, you build from the commonality. So you build on your commonalities and not your differences and that's what I did.

JE: Who were your buddies in the legislature? Were there any that...

JM: Well, it was very strange actually. Jabar Shumate went in with me. He left us later to run for the senate. But if you can picture this - Jabar Shumate who is much taller than me and much larger than me - we actually traveled around the country to conferences on education and different committees we were on. And Wade Rousselot, again the John Wayne of our class, who was very tall and very large...Wade Rousselot and I were good friends. There were so many. I mean, everyone in the caucus got along, but I would say in my class...Wade was in my class. I didn't have...I can't remember having women come in with me; in fact, I don't think they did. But certainly them, and then later and younger...I call them the kids...of course, Emily is there now...Emily Virgin came in and was a bright star. And it was good to see young people come in. Scott Inman was just a fantastic orator and I sat in front of him and often would...I'd send him notes while he was speaking. So I served with some very, very smart people. For that, I am extremely grateful because I think they helped me grow and be a better person.

JE: I want to pick out some items here that you were involved in, like you got behind public school students to be able to carry medicine for allergies. It's hard to imagine...

JM: Oh absolutely, absolutely. Well I guess because I was a woman and had kids, they put me on the education committee. I was on the education committee for 12 years and often in the minority. I had to laugh because I had never been in the classroom except as a student, but they put the girl - because I was the girl - on education and left me there forever. I would rather have been on criminal justice or something that I had more knowledge about...you know, the prison system or criminal justice. But I stuck with education. I was very unsuccessful on anything to do with sex education, biological knowledge through the years. I worked with the community service council and we just could get nowhere on educating kids. Thankfully we had the internet now and kids, I

think, are educating themselves – and probably I’m getting educated too – on how you go through your teen years and puberty and become good adults, safe and healthy. We had no success there. However, we just kept plugging away and that was one of the things – kids were always in my office and I appreciated that...kids who had transgender issues, kids who had bullying issues, kids who had trouble with regular school. I’m a big proponent of public education and these kids and their teachers meant a lot to me. I tried to always be their face when I rose to speak if it was on education issues or personal safety issues or health issues for them. Yeah, I did.

Chapter 12 - 7:25

Rural vs Urban

John Erling: There’s this ying and yang between the rural legislators and the city legislators.

Did you feel that? I mean, you would come up with bills that would just seem so obvious for you and then maybe a rural legislator would oppose you because they thought differently. Was that an interesting...

Jeannie McDaniel: It did. It came up in strange places. I’ll give you an example. I never would have dreamed this because I had thought about it. One was in my own caucus even I would have that. One was DNA. We had someone bring a bill to take DNA when you’re arrested and, oh my gosh, we never could get that. It had to be upon conviction. Even then, they just see DNA as their personal property. You know, of course, during those years, we had filed so many rape cases and we had done so many wonderful things with DNA in crime solving. And yeah, the rural legislature was totally against it, totally opposed. That surprised me. Now I could understand they want kids to ride in the back of, you know, pickup trucks and they don’t want seat belts and they don’t want any government telling them what to do. That was probably the biggest difference in rural and urban. Whereas we know living in the city, we have to have rules. You know, we have to have rules that our houses, our garbage, our pets...because we live in a city and we live close together and our density is such that we have to have ordinances that operate that. So I was familiar with cities and how people had to work together so we could live in a city that we wanted to call home. Rural Oklahoma is completely different. They didn’t want government telling them anything. You know, I would go onto properties where people would have every car they’d ever owned and they were 80 years old. They were all in the back pasture and they said that was fine. It was really funny how they didn’t want anyone telling...even if it was regarding their safety...they didn’t want anyone telling them what to do. And I noticed it

rural urban more than an age thing...it was rural urban. That's when I really appreciated Angie Debo. I must tell you one of the things that helped me a great deal was that I met with Henry Bellmon a few times. We ended up sitting next to each other at functions. I actually learned a lot from him too. One time it was a veterans' ceremony and I said something to him (I think he was on Iwo Jima for over 20 days) and he turned to me as they gave him an award and he said, "I was the lucky one, I got off". And he did, he got off that and went on to service. I ended up reading his biography and he was a very gentle, kind person and he listened. Now sometimes I think he slept but he also was listening and I appreciated that. You just try to emulate people you admire like that.

JE: Yeah, we have his interview on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

JM: Oh my gosh! Oh I have to listen to that because he was just one of a kind. I mean, I remember his vote on the Panama Canal and I just thought that takes courage. You know, sometimes it's hard to have courage and I think a lot of people sat on their courage when we were voting sometimes.

JE: And it's too bad, you said he's one of a kind and he should never have been thought of as one of a kind. There should have been many, many kinds of Henry Bellmons.

JM: Right. And that's what he would tell you. He would tell you that.

JE: And obviously a big supporter of education. You supported the college tuition assistance...

JM: Oh absolutely.

JE: Better compensation for teachers...

JM: Yes.

JE: Did you find in the legislature, I mean while you were obviously a big supporter of education, that there were actually those who were not quite as supportive of funding education?

JM: Well, you know...look, when you get elected and you're put on committees, it's interesting because people who carry this legislation, some of them may have been on school boards. Very few of them had been in the classroom. Some had...I can think of the head of the education committee, Ann Coody, was there and she had been a principal in Lawton or someplace like that. But I kept thinking...do they really know kids. Because when we came up with the third grade reading proficiency that you had to read by third grade or else, and I'm thinking *oh my gosh, you know we have kids that wet the bed till they're 16. We have kids who suck their thumb. We have kids who have a lot of challenges and they overcome it at different ages.* I couldn't believe that we wanted to have this harsh line in the sand.

The same thing with grading school. I always thought that parents did that on their own. You put your child in an atmosphere/an environment where they can thrive and grow to be the best they can be. I couldn't believe these people wanted to put time limits on when you had to do certain things. So I just found it very, very difficult. And

granted, education does need to change and there are things we did when you and I were in school that you wouldn't do today. However, that being said, I'm not sure the people that were making these changes were making them for the right reasons. Often it was a template from another state; it was a nationwide wave that swept and they would bring these boiler plate bills to the table and pass them. Maybe what works in California doesn't work in Oklahoma or what works in Florida doesn't always work here. You have to modify it. I was always sad that we didn't use the people who actually had to implement these issues. That was just my take on it but as I said, I'm not a teacher. I just had to sit on the education committee for 12 years and watch and listen.

You know, you swallow a lot of blood. You bite your tongue and you just try to say what you're hearing from the teachers in your district. I have a lot of teachers that live in my district and parents in public schools. We're all trying to do the best we can do but it's just complicated issues, I thought, for a lot of people and may have even had people leave the profession. I had teachers who just couldn't stay in the profession. On the other hand, I had some come into it who were doing great jobs at some unique schools. To be honest, John, living in Tulsa is the only place I would want to live in Oklahoma. I just think that this is an oasis of good ideas and people willing to roll up their sleeves and work hard. I was proud to call Tulsa home. I hated to see some of these things that our educators are going to have to face because of decisions made in Oklahoma City.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 13 - 3:45

Covid and Education

John Erling: We should also point out because of Covid, the challenges that these teachers are facing today and whether to keep a school open or closed because of the virus that is so contagious. We have distance learning, virtual learning, and children that probably will be left behind - hopefully not for a long time. It may take them a while to catch up. That's what Covid is doing that is facing these teachers. You're so connected to them because of your work there in the legislature, you must have a feeling for what they are going through today.

Jeannie McDonald: Well you know, the month after my term ended serving, my son-in-law died at the age of 49. He had been a soccer coach, active in his church, and left two sons who were 9 and 12 at that time; they are 14 and 17 today. So the minute I left office, I ended up getting a minivan and becoming a carpool grandma for soccer, football and everything. Their mom continued to work and live here; they live in the same house. But I had been very active at Council, formerly Lee School, where my son-in-law went, his

mother and dad had taught and been involved, so I had been in schools all the time. After I left office, I continued to be in schools - so I've been at Council, I've been at Carver, I've been at Booker T, I've had kids at Jenks.

And then also these last few years in addition to helping my daughter with my two grandsons—now one turned 16 and my job got a little easier—but I also took on prison ministry through my church. I was at First United and I dove in to Exodus House and had at least seven people, I believe, that I helped coming straight out of prison into interim housing, reconciling with their families and getting back on their feet and their job. So I had a chance to look at their kids who had been away from their parents who had been in prison and the kids were in schools scattered throughout the state. So I know those kids—I know them, I talk to them, I love those kids. And I have my own grandkids who had their own experiences that I hear about every day.

The challenges were tremendous even before we got to Covid. But this has been very complicated. I mean, I can't even imagine as a teacher. My daughter-in-law, my stepson's wife, is a teacher here in Tulsa and they went back - the kindergarten, pre-K and whatever - and within the first week, every first grade teacher in that school had to go into quarantine. Every first grade teacher! I mean, just keeping teachers in the classroom has been such a challenge, so I can't even imagine as I watch my grandsons every day get on the computer and try to learn with their teachers, because everyone is learning at the same time. It's just unbelievable. So if you don't have a parent that is there standing with them helping to guide them, I don't know how this year won't be a loss for many, or certainly a setback for almost every student and teacher that we have.

So yeah, we have a long road ahead. It can't be done without money. I mean, just the complications...my hat is off to all these young people who are parents today and trying to have a job and trying to raise kids. It was already hard with social media as we know and all of the things that brings into their home that they hadn't anticipated, but then to put Covid on and become an educator in your own home, that has really complicated a lot for everybody.

Chapter 14 - 8:00

Running

John Erling: Let's talk about running. You can recap for this segment why it is - when did you start running?

Jeannie McDonald: I was 30 when I really started running. I mean, I bought a pair of shoes and called it running.

JE: So that would have been about what year?

JM: 1978.

JE: Alright, so the running craze...had it hit yet? Was it getting...

JM: I didn't participate in the first Tulsa Run. I made the second one. To be honest with you, the reason running appealed to me is my kids were all active in sports. So they were all playing soccer or football or doing something. In fact, my oldest son got to participate in a Roughnecks camp that we won through your show on KRMG.

JE: Hmm...

JM: One morning you had some kind of contest or something and the winner would get to go to a children's camp put on by the Roughnecks...or one of them, I don't know, it might have been just one. But my son won that. I tell you this because of this - I spent a lot of time at athletic fields. Well, I could run around. I mean, I could run while the kids were practicing, and so that's sort of how it just came to be. I was able to use my time well. Then as it turns out, all my kids ended up running. I never encouraged it, but in my first Tulsa Run, I think my oldest son and my second daughter were in it. I think one beat me - he beat me and she was five minutes behind. So we've just embraced it, and the kids can tell you if they had spelling or homework, they would ride their bike with me and I could quiz them while I was running. So it was a cheap sport, very cheap sport for me. I could do it at night; I could do it in the day. I did it going around the block, you know, while they were doing their homework.

JE: Right, and then eventually you got into marathons I suppose...

JM: Right.

JE: You've run more than you can even remember, I would imagine.

JM: You know, the one thing I haven't done is I haven't kept good records. I mean I just do it for why I'm doing it...I make friends, have a good time, enjoyment, physical fitness. So right, I have run a lot. I think I quit counting at 30. Then a few years ago after I would have a session, we decided to run a marathon in every state. So I pay a little bit more attention right now. Right now I'm actually running the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Run, which we have a Ruth Bader Ginsburg shirt and we have a medal with her picture on it, and we're running 87 miles in honor of her years on earth.

JE: How far are you running?

JM: 87 miles. But you don't have to run it at one time. You can walk it; you can jog it; you can do whatever. But I'm in the middle of that right now. I'm at about 40 miles. I've got 47 to go...

JE: People listening to this are smiling right now when they hear you say 87 miles. That is pretty amazing. So then when did you become an endurance runner? I mean, you run all of these marathons...you thought, oh that's too easy, 26 miles is nothing and I need to start running 50 or 100 or what?

JM: No, just the opposite! I was racing marathons and I had some success. I had some really good ones and I got to go to Boston. Once I actually went with my son who qualified - Ken, he's in Oklahoma City. I think the year he started medical school, he qualified and I qualified and we went together and ran Boston. But actually, as I said, it's my memories and occasions that I put a lot of thought into. I actually had a son, David, who thought I should try triathlons, so I did. I did one at Grand Lake and then I did one here in Tulsa that had Lance Armstrong who was just a kid. So I thought well triathlons were good but you had to have a bike and you had to swim more. So I tried the marathon and I really hated them because they beat you up so badly on the pavement. So then I decided to go to ultras because at that time, ultras were usually in the woods or in the hills like Leadville or Pikes Peak or Arkansas. So I thought well you know what, this is fun - you can walk along in the woods and eat and have a good time and you have 24 or 36 hours...30, not 36. So I really went to those races because you could kind of dawdle more and talk more and see deer running, so I kind of went to the ultras because I could slow my pace, it was easier on my body, and I liked it. I liked the people. It wasn't as competitive as the marathons and yet it gave me more time to play outside, so I did.

JE: I understand your first 100 miler, you got off the track...off the designated run...

JM: Right. There's not...sometimes the paths aren't marked so well. But I got back on. Through the years, my kids would pace me. Usually after 50 miles in a 100-mile race, they will let you have a pacer with you and they help you be a little more clear headed - you know,, at 3 or 4 in the morning or whatever you're doing. So yeah, every race is different, as you know. It's a journey that you take on your own and you take from it lessons that you carry on to the next event. I really like ultras. In fact, I am missing my ultra after Christmas... between Christmas and New Year's, there's a six-day race in Phoenix and I usually do 24 or 48 hours of that and it's been canceled for this year so it's sort of sad.

JE: Okay, let me drill down into this. You say 24 hours or 48 hours. Do you sleep? I mean, do you run till you get tired and you check into a motel and then you start running again? Tell us how you do that.

JM: Well, and they're all different. There's different ways to do it. Some you have tents and you have a crew and you run. I crew for my son who does ultra triathlons, which means... like he's done five ironmen in a row. You have a tent, you have to sleep, you have to air up tires, you have to swim, blah blah blah. With me, yes, you can lay down and sleep. You can run so many hours. At my age now, a lot of the women and men in their 70s will run maybe 18 hours and then take a nap for a short while and then go out and do it again. Some people do it for 6 days. Some do it for 10 days. I mean, John, I think the most I've ever done is maybe...I can't remember if I've done 3 days or just 48 hours. But you just do what the day and time gives you. It can rain; you can have thunder and lightning. You can

have all kinds of weather conditions, bad wind. But you're out there with other people and it's a test you have with yourself. It's mostly in your head, as you can imagine. It's not in your body, in your feet; it's really in your head, in your heart, and putting your mind to something and deciding you're going to do it. And then knowing when not to do it. You know, your DNFs - your do not finish - in my family, we call that do nothing foolish. So if you're out there and it's not your day and things aren't going right, you don't risk an injury. You go home and, you know, eat a pizza and wait for the next time.

Chapter 15 - 11:35

Reasons for Running

John Erling: Okay, what about injuries. All these years, 40-some years, of running and all the mileage you have put on that body of yours. Two things here then - I want to talk about the build of runners, but what about injuries? Did you suffer many?

Jeannie McDaniel: No, I really didn't. You know, occasionally I'd get a shoe and might get a plantars, you know, maybe for a week or two. You know, you change shoes usually when something happens. For me, when something hurts, it means I need new shoes. So I listen carefully to how I feel. I've never had any injuries from running. I had to have rotator cuff surgery last year but it wasn't from running (laughs). It was a pain because I couldn't run so I had to walk five miles a day. I try to walk 15-minute miles when I walk, so that was actually hard. As you know, I've seen you jogging. It's a little easier to do what you're doing than walk fast. I don't like walking fast very well. I don't do it very well. I'm a better jogger than I am a walker.

JE: I can't walk. I just can't walk. Honestly, I can't walk as far as I can run. I just ran yesterday. I've got to get in that running motion and my body will allow me to do any kind of distance at all.

JM: Well and I think my whole family would tell you - we really run for reasons other than just staying fit. Kenneth Cooper said it best. One time we were getting ready to start an ultra and he said "you people that run more than three miles a day three times a week are running for other reasons", and he's right. You know, we're running for mental health. We are running...it can be inspirational. You can pray, you can dwell, you can think, you can memorize things. It's really time...I mean, when I'm at the river, and I know you run at the river which we've really watched come so far since 1978 and our little dirt trail...but you know, you reflect on eagles, you reflect on our friends or what's going on in people's lives and what we're thankful for. And so running has brought a lot into my life, so many friends, and has just made me a better person I think.

- JE:** And you don't listen to music or anything obviously from what you've just said...
- JM:** Sometimes I do. I have a play list (laughs), not always but sometimes I do, yeah.
- JE:** Inspiration for ideas come about, I've noticed that when I'm running. I hate even talking about my running when I'm talking about you.
- JM:** No I want you to because it's for everybody.
- JE:** This issue of running...it gets your brain going...and I've come home with many, many ideas, maybe one or two were good ones, but it all came about because of running. And I knew that when I went out to run, if I was in a crummy mood, I knew that within an hour when I come back, my mood would be changed. It's like taking a pill.
- JM:** Well and I can tell you, there have been times my family members have handed me shoes and said get out of here...
- JE:** (laughs)
- JM:** I mean, because...and it's time, I know it's time. You know, some of my kids keep track of their record. They've had amazing achievements as well, from ironman to ultra ironman. Like I said, they've all done it. I'm trying to think...I'm going to say three of my grandkids, no maybe four, have run marathons. They will go out...not the road races but in the ultras where you can, you know, run around and eat pizza nad then run around more. But I think they have all learned from it that you can set goals and achieve them; that it's what's within you, that we are much stronger than we think sometimes. And have a sense of humor because funny things...you know, you'll be out there in pouring rain and your shoes will look like, you know, mud. But over the years, I have to tell you...and I'm also in love with the Grand Canyon so I try to go there every year that I can...I've hiked and I've been rim to rim. Last year in 2019, nine of my family members floated the Grand Canyon. It brings out in you sometimes strengths you didn't know you had...or weaknesses in some cases if you don't like mountain climbing on ledges. But I think we're all in it together. We're wash and wear. You know, we can go outside in any kind of weather and with the right equipment, you can get a breath of fresh air and be thankful for the earth we live on that we need to preserve and just think about what we want future generations to have these opportunities that we've had.
- JE:** Since you'll go 50...and, by the way, the 100 mile...you are walking and running both, I suspect.
- JM:** Oh absolutely. You know, I ran a couple. I ran all I could run and had very good times. But over the years, you adjust. Even the marathons my daughter and I do, we have people who walk the whole thing, people with cerebral palsy doing, people doing for all kinds of reasons. You meet people from all over the world out there doing it. So we jog and walk. Generally you just have to respect your body and what it will let you do. Much like you - I mean, you've had injuries, you've had surgeries, and yet you're out there doing it because it brings pleasure to you emotionally and it helps you stay fit physically.

That comes home to me more and more as I've watched my parents age. My stepfather is nearly 91 and my mother is 94. I mean, you can walk in a walker and get out and get some exercise. In fact, I'll leave you with a quick story. I was in California the day of the election this year and my son has a very close-knit community that he lives in. Across the street, a woman who summers in Montana was back and she is in her late 80s or 90. Her kids had gotten her a walker and she her pearls - her Ruth Bader Ginsburg pearls - and she was walking up and down the street to get her steps for the day. And I thought oh my gosh, it is true. Our heart needs to be used. If you don't use it, you lose the strength you have in it. She said, "Oh I just feel so much better when I do this". She had her little tennis shoes on and her walker and a dog tied to it, and I thought, "That's what I want to be, that's what I want to do".

JE: Yeah. I always say to people - those of us who run and keep running, like you were born with a running chip in your brain. I'm always thinking well I should be running or I'm going to run tomorrow. It's still there at my advanced age. I can't dampen it and I'm glad I can't. It's there.

JM: Right. And I know I'm gonna do something every day. Now I run probably four days a week, walk the other three. I have ellipticals and recumbent bikes. I actually have a bike that I bike with. But I know I'm going to do something every day. I don't have a set time or a set plan but I know that I'll get out there and do it. Some days are better than others and some days you're like ah geez, I'm going to have to get on my bike in the house. But for the most part, I just think doing that physical exercise - running, walking - it helps people be better people. I truly believe that.

JE: Yep. You're not always motivated to run, though, are you? I mean...

JM: No, no sometimes I hate it. My grandsons will tell you. I poke around and I'll procrastinate and then they'll say, "Mimi, go out the door". Sometimes they'll even go out with me the first mile because it's the first mile that is hard. You know, I'm like oh I should be doing this. You know, it's not aches and pains, John, it's just attitude some days. With Covid, it's been tough. I mean, this has been tough on people all over the world. I'm just so thankful that I have running that I can do. I can get out of my house. I'm not in an apartment stuck in Paris or in New York or even California that may make people stay home. I can do something and I'm glad I have it or I would probably be awful to live with.

JE: I understand you have a T-shirt that says "Running is cheaper than therapy".

JM: Oh absolutely. My son got me that one. And it is, it is. I mean, you can...in working with people coming out of prison, one of the things that's really impressed me is two of my most successful women have become...one's an exercise fanatic; she's at the gym every day...and the other has become a runner. The other day, I saw them on the river. She'd had a little setback in her career path but she has a great job and she was down there running. I try to keep her stocked in shoes as much as I can because she has embraced it

and her two sons – one who has graduated from high school now and the other one who is in 8th grade at Edison – she’s got them participating in races. They do these monster races out in the Osage Hills someplace where you crawl and you jump and you go across rivers and stuff. But as I’ve been able to share with other people what it got me, they’ve realized it and done it too. I think it’s really helped them because they’re not good sitters either; they need to be doing something. It’s been a good outlet.

JE: I think those of you who are built the way you are...how tall are you?

JM: I’m 5’1.

JE: See, in that small frame, I think you have an advantage over those of us who are much taller. Like I’m 6’1 and weigh much more than you do, but that small build is really benefitting you in running. Am I right?

JM: You’re right. It has served me well. And not being a competitive person, I have to give some credit to my husband, Joe McDaniel, who had run 40 of the Tulsa Runs before he had to stop. Joe, as well as my kids, can often see more what I can do than I think I can do. As you know, if your spouse and your family encourages your exercise, that helps a lot. So they, more than anybody else – my husband and my kids – have always said “oh mom, you can do that, you can do this, you can do that”, and I’m “well I don’t know”. But they were right. So they have really helped me to learn to be the best I can be. For that, I’m forever grateful because when I might say “well I’m not sure”, they’re saying “sure, you can do it”. That helps when you have partners and family that support what you do.

JE: Yeah, and running introduced you to Joe, isn’t that true, that’s how you...

JM: It did, right. As we think about it, yes. Because I was working for Susan and she wanted me to produce a newsletter and I didn’t know anything about computers and she did the running club newsletter and I met him that way. That’s right, uh huh.

Chapter 16 – 10:07

Running Legacy

John Erling: And you know, your lasting legacy can be in many areas of life – the legislature, the mayor’s office and all – but one of your lasting legacies was the fact that you introduced running to your family that you refer to so much here and then to grandchildren, and it all came from you. It’s got to make you feel awfully proud in the fact that they all took up running. I mean, some of them could have said “no, I’m not gonna run”. But somehow, either you convinced them or whatever or brow beat them – they’re all runners – grandchildren and children.

Jeannie McDaniel: I really didn't, I didn't. And I have to tell you a really funny story. I have a grandson who is in engineering at OSU. Trent did Tai Kwon Do, got a black belt when he was like 10 or some young age, and really was never involved in sports very much. I think he did Frisbee golf or something. And so he signed up for the Tulsa Triathlon and I'm like what? I said you don't have a bike! So we bought a bike last year. On Thanksgiving Day when I showed up at Turkey Mountain to jog with my daughter, two grandkids came along - the one who's going to be a nurse and who jogs, and Trent. And they like it and they're in college. I never encouraged them. I never said you better go do this. The only thing I've done is any kid that wants to run, I buy the shoes. Or anybody, any friends - I mean I'm big on having the right shoes. And he is a 14-1/2 shoe, because we had to get a new pair. I never preached it. I never said you need to do this. I just sort of did it and then they found that it works for them and that makes me feel good.

JE: A pair of shoes must last about a month for you, is that true?

JM: (laughs) No, I play around with them. Yeah, more than a month, more than a month. But I am careful to wear the right shoes at this age. And I don't run in the woods so much. I hiked the Grand Canyon a little bit this year. I try to stay on surfaces and I love it. I will always try to go to the bottom and come back. This year I did climb to 10,000 feet out to see the aspens but I'm more careful, I would say entering into my 70s, because if I want to run when I'm 80, I don't want to fall and break anything. So I look for good surfaces. I appreciate the chat we still have at the river and I do use that chat and I know you do too, I think. So I'm careful of the surfaces. I'm not so good in the woods. I'm a little slower in the woods now because I don't fall as well. I don't roll as well.

JE: (laughs)

JM: But I have much to be thankful for. And much of it, I think, is being here in Tulsa, being surrounded in a good community and people that have developed our trails and our parks and sidewalks. I'm excited. I mean I just think that we have become a city more attuned to health and fitness, more so than I think any other place in Oklahoma.

JE: I often think of George Kaiser when I'm running on the river and that path because he put a lot of money into that. He can be given credit for many, many things but I think of him often when I'm running on that great running path - more than a path now, separate for runners and bikers - and the money that he invested in it.

JM: Absolutely. Well and you see him down there. I've seen him a few times. Where I've run into Mr. Kaiser has been on the midland valley trail, which is concrete much to my regret. He has earphones and he jogs along.

JE: The running trail along the river, it's developed into a family affair place because you don't have to be a runner or necessarily...you see families walking together.

JM: It's tremendous.

JE: It blows my mind. And you'll see five and six people in a group, not out there to be a great marathon runner or a walker even. They all went to the river to go for a walk as a unit, a family unit - isn't that something?

JM: Absolutely. You know, my daughter lives near the river - one of my daughters - and I would tell you, I'm at the river...if I'm in Tulsa, I'm at the river six out of seven days a week at least, mostly seven...to walk or jog or ride my bike. To see these families since The Gathering Place has opened, it is tremendous...just every age, every ethnicity...it's exciting. Because I always knew the river was a jewel, always, and you did too. But this has opened it up to so many new eyes and ears and kids laughing and shooting baskets and, you know, riding skateboards. As you said, just families together or all ages. That's what's exciting to me. I never dreamed this would happen back in 1980 when I was running on that trail but I'm glad that it has. I really think it has put Tulsa on the map for some of these bigger races that they've gotten and some of these other things like the BMX this weekend at the Fairgrounds...all of those kids there riding around on bikes...it was just thrilling to see. It's health and fitness and it's getting their little hearts pumping. I'm forever thankful for that. He's done a great job.

JE: Yeah. While we sure could be developing the river - and probably should have been a lot more than we have right now - just think what that river has given us in terms of health. There we have the easy accessibility to running along the river's edge and more of us are healthy today because we had that easy access. Then we see others running...go driving down the road and I see somebody running and I say "oh yes, I've gotta get my running in today". So we set examples for people as people drive past us.

JM: You know, John, when I started running, I would say that maybe 1 out of every 10 participants was a woman, sometimes 2 out of 10, but a very small minority. We were always in the minority. And most men just didn't want to be beat by a skirt, if you remember that.

JE: Oh yes.

JM: Well, I beat all the women. You know, we had these fast runners, we had incredible times, and what has impressed me is almost every race I enter today, there are more women than men - more women than men. It is exciting. It has become an explosion for women. And if you notice on the trail, there are more women out there than men.

JE: Yeah there are, there are.

JM: And I'm glad that's happening because I think what running gave to me was the ability to set a goal and achieve it - whether it's going farther, whether it's going faster - but just knowing I could do something that was all my own, all myself. I see women laughing and having fun - they'll be in marathons or in ultras - and they'll just be having a great time. That's better for our society as a whole.

JE: It is...

JM: Yep, it is, all good.

JE: The half marathon became really popular amongst females.

JM: It's very doable. I mean, it's doable even if you don't run - you can walk it, you can walk it quickly. I think the half marathon is a great race. And you can do it and still maintain a job, a household, and all the other things because so many women are multitasking. And I hear them, the sandwich generation. I'm at a place now I didn't think I'd be. I have two aging parents. There's always work to be done and it helps keep you in shape and alert and helps you do it better, I think.

JE: Well I'm going to tell you something that you already know - our listeners may not know - that you are the only runner in Oklahoma to hold more than one national record. You've held national age group and single age group records in both 12-hour and 24-hour categories. You're one of three runners to be in the long distance running state record book at every standard distance. At the induction ceremony, your daughter, Theresa, shared these kind words - "Jeannie is recognized today because she is a great runner but she is a hall of famer in all that she does, a great model for all of us", said Theresa. You have competed in multiple ultra marathons. You have run the Pikes Peak ascent four different times, winning your age group in 1995. You are a member of the USA TF Oklahoma Sub-20 Club and inducted into the Oklahoma Long Distance Running Wall of Fame. Congratulations, Jeannie!

JM: Well thank you, John. Wow...it's been a wonderful journey, it really has, and it's not over, and that's the good part.

JE: No, isn't that wonderful to know - it's not over. So Jeannie, I just want to thank you for this time we've spent. I knew it would be interesting and I'm very grateful that you've given it to us so that generations to come and anybody listening in this generation will be motivated maybe to serve in public office and to get out and run.

JM: Well thank you, John. And I'll see you on the trail!

JE: I will, I'll see you out there (laughs), absolutely. I'm glad I can.

JM: It's a little cold today but we can do it.

JE: Thank you, Jeannie.

JM: Bye.

JE: Bye.

Chapter 17 - 0:33**Conclusion**

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