

Jenkin Lloyd Jones Jr.

Through the headlines of the *Tulsa Tribune* the Jones family has been a part of local and national history.

Chapter 01 - 1:15

Introduction

Announcer: The grandfather of Jenkin Lloyd Jones Jr., Richard Lloyd Jones, bought the *Tulsa Democrat* from Sand Springs founder Charles Page, and turned it into the *Tribune*. The *Tulsa Tribune* was an afternoon newspaper and consistently republican; it never endorsed a democrat for U.S. president and did not endorse a democrat for governor until 1958.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones Sr. was editor of the *Tribune* from 1941 to 1988, and publisher until 1991. Jenkin Jones brother Richard Lloyd Jones was the *Tribune's* president.

Jones Airport in Tulsa is named for Richard Lloyd Jones Jr.

Other Jones family members served in various capacities on the paper, including Jenkin's son, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Jr., who was the last publisher and editor of the paper which closed September 30, 1992. Like other large city evening newspapers, its readership had declined, causing financial losses.

Jenk Jones spent thirty-two years at the *Tulsa Tribune* in jobs ranging from reporter to editor and publisher. He is a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame and the University of Tulsa Hall of Fame.

And now Jenk Jones tells the story of his family and the *Tulsa Tribune* on Voices of Oklahoma, preserving our state's history, *one voice at a time*.

Chapter 02 - 12:05

Jones Family

John Erling: My name is John Erling and today's date is February 25, 2011. Jenk, state your full name, please, your date of birth, and your present age.

Jenk Jones: Jenkin Lloyd Jones Jr., I go by Jenk. Date of birth is 6/24/36. And I am seventy-four.

JE: We are recording this in my home near 81st and Yale. Where were you born, Jenk?

JJ: Born in Tulsa.

JE: Which hospital?

JJ: St. John, the original.

JE: Your mother's name and maiden name and where she was born and where she came from?

JJ: She was Juanita Carlson. She was born in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her father was governor of Colorado. She came from the largely Swedish community in Northeastern Colorado.

JE: And she came to Tulsa?

JJ: She came with her married sister to Bartlesville when the married sister's husband, Jerry Westby, was working with an oil company there. And I assume that's where she met my dad.

JE: Your father's name?

JJ: Father's name, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, born in Madison, Wisconsin.

JE: So he grew up in that area?

JJ: He grew up in that area. My grandfather was the publisher of the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

JE: The story begins then talking about your grandfather and it does talk about the *Tulsa Tribune*, its legacy, and the family Jones.

And, Jenk, why don't you give us a brief bio of yourself here as you're going to be the storyteller.

JJ: Well, I've worked on newspapers in Colorado, Minnesota, and Alaska, before coming back to the *Tribune*. I worked on the *Tribune* for a total of about thirty-two years. And I went from cub reporter to copydesk to telegraph editor and rim-man and assistant city editor and assistant managing editor, and on up the chain over a long period of time. My specialties were covering government; I covered both the State House and Washington, covering politics, doing political polling. Great interest in geopolitics worldwide, international relations and so on.

But I also covered the space program, including a number of launches. I did travel writing from all over the world. I think I had bylines from seventy-seven countries and almost every state.

And I covered fun things like prisons and sports and prime news.

JE: Your education, you went to elementary here in Tulsa?

JJ: Went to elementary at Elliot. Went to junior high school at Horace Mann, before it was a prison. Had a year at Central, and then I finished up with two at Choate in Wallingford, Connecticut.

JE: And why Wallingford, Connecticut?

JJ: Well, my dad wanted me to go to a prep school prior to college. So I went up there and it was an interesting experience. I like to travel, of course, and so, that's one of the reasons I've lettered in three sports was so I could make all the traveling teams. Because New England, particularly in the fall, is a pretty place to see.

JE: And those three sports were?

JJ: Football, basketball, baseball.

JE: And then on to college?

JJ: And then went to the University of Colorado where I was the tenth member of my family to go to school there.

My grandfather, who became the governor of Colorado in 1914, was the center of the Colorado line, along with his two Swedish brothers about 1900.

And then I had an uncle that played football up there about the late '20s and early '30s. It was a Rhodes scholar and was Carl Albert's roommate. And my mother kept house for them at Oxford, which is why she and Carl were friends until she died.

So, we had a long family tradition with the University of Colorado.

JE: Is it fair to say, as we begin to tell this story, that we begin with your grandfather Richard Lloyd Jones?

JJ: Yes. He was a journalist early on, although he spent a year as a professional actor in New York, and was a member of Actors Equity all his life. But he was editorial writer in New York and Washington.

One of the people who worked for him when he was an editor at *Collier's Magazine* was Frederick Remington. And the walls of his office were covered with Remington's work. And when he left to go to Madison to buy his own newspaper he decided to leave the artwork on the walls there because he said, "It belonged to the magazine."

But I always said, "He left the family fortune on the wall."

JE: Whatever came of it?

JJ: Uh, I don't know. But he went back to Madison where he made a considerable name for himself, along with his first cousin Frank Lloyd Wright.

My grandfather left Madison in 1919, but still made enough of an impact on the community that he was voted one of the one hundred most significant citizens of Madison for the twentieth century. Even though he missed the last eighty-one years of it.

JE: Wasn't he also founder of All Souls Unitarian Church?

JJ: He was cofounder of All Souls Unitarian Church, along with Bill Holway.

JE: Here in Tulsa?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative). And his father was a Unitarian minister.

JE: How did he connect to the *Tulsa Tribune*?

JJ: I don't know the full background but I know he came down to Oklahoma at the time of statehood. I think he was writing for *Collier's* then. But whatever magazine he was writing for, he wrote a very glowing account of this new state and its potentials. I think that always was in the back of his mind. Somehow he found out that Charles Page, the wonderful philanthropist from Sand Springs who owned the *Tulsa Democrat*, wanted to get out of the

newspaper business. They had had some connection, so he came down and they made an agreement and he bought Charles Page out. And changed the name to the *Tulsa Tribune*.

JE: Because it was the *Tulsa Tribune Democrats*?

JJ: Yeah, a very short time, a month or so. Of course, *Tribune*, going back to the old Roman term, meaning a servant of the people. My granddad was a political maverick. If the Democrats were in he was a Republican. If the Republicans were in he was a Democrat, unless he was a bull mooser. So he was kind of all over the political map.

He covered national conventions for fifty-six years, which might be a record, starting with William Jennings Bryan's Cross of Gold speech in 1896, and ending up as a Taft delegate to the '52 Republican Convention while my father was writing editorials for Eisenhower, which made for fun in the family.

JE: But the *Tribune* became a Republican newspaper.

JJ: It was, let's put it, largely Republican. But it supported a number of Democrats in various races. It was a very strong supporter of Howard Edmondson in 1958. The first really Reformed Democrat and the first Reformed Governor we had and the first from Tulsa. And supported Mike Monroney in '62 for the Senate.

And in 1968, my dad, who was, of course, the editor and publisher, and my uncle, who was the president of the company, ran the business side, split on who to support. So instead of ducking the issue like most papers would, they wrote editorials, one for Bellmon and one for Monroney, of equal length.

My uncle, not being a trained writer, still did an excellent job with his. And they ran side by side. And that caused quite a bit of comment in journalism circles around the country.

JE: The *Tribune* never endorsed a Democrat for president, did it?

JJ: Not in my memory. But I don't go back to, uh—I think my grandfather was pretty unhappy with a lot of the Republicans in the '20s, so I don't know how that goes.

JE: A little bit about his cousin, because his cousin's name is so famous, the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Before I get into more of that, Lloyd has made its way down through the Jones family. Everybody's middle name is Lloyd.

JJ: Yeah, and actually, Frank's middle name was not Lloyd originally, but he changed it to Lloyd because he had spent a lot of time with the Lloyd Joneses up in the valley around Spring Green, Wisconsin. So he changed his middle name to Lloyd to correspond with the Joneses.

Wright, of course, is just as Welch a name as Jones.

JE: So then, he was spending time with the Lloyd Joneses?

JJ: With the Lloyd Joneses.

JE: And who were they, then?

JJ: Well, that was the family that came over from Wales in the late 1840s. My great grandfather, who became the Unitarian minister, went off to the Civil War as a drummer

boy and soon ended up as an artilleryman and fought through many of the great campaigns on the western part of the Civil War. Uh—

JE: So then you've maintained to honor the name of Lloyd—

JJ: Well, actually—

JE: ...nearly every male.

JJ: ...I don't know how it works but a lot of times in correspondence you would see Lloyd Jones hyphenated. Which is often something you see in the British Isles. So we just gradually dropped the hyphen, although I still had some correspondence with the hyphen. And just made it a middle name, even for our children.

JE: Your grandfather commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to build a house for him here in Tulsa.

JJ: Right.

JE: In 1929.

JJ: Right.

JE: And that house still stands there.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: What is the address of that?

JJ: I think it's 3704 South Birmingham.

JE: Did you live in that house?

JJ: Yeah, for about two or three weeks when I was four and a half. We had moved from the original house that the Jones family had bought up on Vancouver and Cameron on the northwest side, up near Owen Park. We were moving into a house at 38th and Lewis and it had some repairs that needed to be done. So we stayed in my grandfather's house for two or three weeks.

JE: That had to cause quite a sensation in Tulsa with this famous architect. But he hadn't really attained his fame yet. Your grandfather was probably trying to help him out?

JJ: Yeah, he was trying to help him out. Because there wasn't a lot of work at that time, it was the start of the Depression. I think Frank was already pretty well-known, but he hadn't achieved his topping.

Remember, this was some years after he had built the Imperial Hotel in Japan that was practically the only building that survived the 1923 earthquake. So that had done much to make his name.

JE: The name of the house was?

JJ: West Hope.

JE: Why that name?

JJ: I don't know.

JE: No idea?

JJ: My granddad had a summer place first in Minnesota, and later in Wisconsin, which was named North Home, so—

JE: West Hope. It was listed on the National Register of Historical Places, and it remains.

You mentioned the Depression. Comment about the Great Depression and how management had to cut staff, reduce salaries, and that type of thing.

JJ: I was only born into the latter half of the Depression. But I do know that Dad told me that at times—they tried to keep staff but they had to make four pay cuts during that time, including his. Of course, newspapermen weren't paid very much at that time and wages generally were miniscule compared to what they are today. So some of those cuts may have been fifty cents a week. But since fifty cents could pretty well feed a family a good meal, that could be important.

But they managed to hold the paper together and they had a separate building. They were on Archer Street. I think the military wanted the building as World War II approached, so they decided to move into the *World* building and set up a joint operating agreement with the *World*, which was only the third such agreement in the country. Each newspaper remained independent in staff editorial writing and news, but they shared presses, trucks, engraving equipment, and things like that. So that there was a considerable cost saving for both papers.

JE: And that was in 1941, I believe?

JJ: Yeah, 1941.

JE: Your grandfather Richard Lloyd Jones had two sons and a daughter. Let's name them.

JJ: Okay. Richard Lloyd Jones Jr., my father was Jenkin Lloyd Jones, and my aunt was Florence Barnett, Barnett was her married name, but she was better known as Bisser or Biss. And that came because my dad, as a toddler, couldn't pronounce baby sister. So it came out Bisser and that's how she got that nickname.

JE: All three siblings became part of the publishing work. And both your father then and your uncle were involved in it. Richard Lloyd Jones Jr. was president of the Newspaper Printing Corporation.

JJ: Right.

JE: And then your father, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, served as the publisher and editor of the *Tribune*.

JJ: Right.

JE: With that established then, we move forward. And then you as grandson served as editor and publisher when the last issue of the *Tulsa Tribune*—

JJ: Right.

JE: ...came off the presses.

Chapter 03 - 5:00**May 31, 1921**

John Erling: Let's talk about May 31, 1921, and the Tulsa Race Riot. There was an encounter between Dick Rowland, a black teen, and an elevator operator, Sarah Page. The door to the elevator opens, she screams, and the rest is history.

History tells us then, and you can take off from here, about a headline in the May 21, 1921, edition of the *Tribune* that said, "Nab Negro for attacking girl in elevator." It is frequently cited as a contributing factor in Race Riot. So, in your historic view of this and what you know as a family member, what can you contribute to that?

Jenk Jones: Well, I hadn't seen that headline till my sister brought it up to me a few weeks ago. But if that's an inflammatory headline I don't know journalism, because it was very much the style of the day in newspapers everywhere. You wanted a strong, active verb early on and they used the term "Negro," which is what blacks generally were known as in those days. I never saw the story.

I do know that my grandparents hid black people in their home during the Race Riot. I also know that my grandfather, when he was the publisher in Madison, had taken Booker T. Washington into his home when all the hotels in that so-called "liberal city" refused to serve him.

And, of course, my great grandfather, at considerable risk, fought to free the black slaves as part of Mr. Lincoln's army. So I think there's a family history there that is a counter to any sense of racism.

I do know also that when the riots hit a lot of American cities in the '60s, and Tulsa was at a very, very tense point, my dad did something I don't think I've ever seen him do, and that was, he ran a front page editorial that just said, "Let's cool it." And it was a commonsense thing. "Let's back off from this. We've got no reason to have problems. We can discuss any differences we've got." And it just relieved the pressure. It was almost like a front coming through and chasing the thunderstorms out.

So I think the family has a pretty good record. We were also among the first newspapers in Oklahoma to employ black reporters and photographers. I don't know the particulars, there's been talk of an inflammatory editorial but nobody has ever come up with one. You know, there's many old copies of newspapers that lie around, something would have come up.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: But the family definitely was not a racist family. And I don't know, I can't speak for every reporter we had on the staff, and, of course, that happened fifteen years before I was born, but I think the family's record is pretty good.

- JE:** Supposedly, then, there was a second article reporting on plans by white residents to lynch Rowland. And the story of history says that all originals of the editions of the newspaper were destroyed. The relevant pages also are missing from the microfilm copy so the facts remain in dispute.
- JJ:** Yeah, they do remain in dispute but you can't tell me that somebody didn't have copies tucked away somewhere. I mean, people just do that.
- JE:** Yeah, residents would have had them.
- JJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Would have stepped forward and said, "Here, I have it." But then I think there's a story that as soon as it was out it was ended immediately, because maybe there was a thought that this was inciting riot, I don't know. But was it ever part of your family talk?
- JJ:** Not really. I heard more about the hiding of the blacks. Not only my grandparents but their neighbors. Quite a few people in there took black families in and fed them and hid them while the worst of the riot was going on.
- JE:** And then it was interesting because this story, not just with your paper, but it seemed like it was not dealt with state-wide until probably the '90s?
- JJ:** Yeah.
- JE:** That it was something that was left out of history books and a lot of students of my age and younger who grew up here said—
- JJ:** You're speaking of the race riot itself.
- JE:** I'm sorry, yes, I am. That it was never continued on in history books.
- JJ:** Well, I think most kids were aware of it in school but it was not something that was dwelt on. You know, it was certainly a bad Chapter in Tulsa history, although those that hit in the '60s were worse than most of the places. And I'm sure those cities had problems dealing with it too.

It was a tough time in Oklahoma because the Klu Klux Klan was extremely strong. It's been estimated that anywhere from 60 to 95 percent of Protestant ministers were involved in the Klan. And the Klan really was two functions, it had all the bad elements of the Klan, anti-black, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic. But in some small oilfield boom towns there was no law. So people, to run the prostitutes and the gamblers and the thieves out of town, joined the Klan and made that their concern. So the Klan was very big.

The majority of the legislature at one time was supposed to be Klansmen. You have to look at what happened in Tulsa against that kind of a background.

Chapter 04 - 6:00**Richard Lloyd Jones**

John Erling: Your grandfather, then, Richard Lloyd Jones, he knew how to drum up circulation.

He sponsored beauty pageants. Because the *Tulsa World* was already in operation.

Jenk Jones: Yeah, the *Tulsa World* was actually both younger and older than the *Tribune*.

Because the *Tribune's* roots would go back to 1905 with the *Democrat*. *Tulsa World* came in, I think, a little after statehood. But the name of the *Tribune* didn't come on until 1920, so in that respect, its ancestry was older but the name was newer.

JE: He was pretty active, he maybe attacked city officials that—

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...accused him of corruption and weak law enforcement. He was a real populist sort of guy.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And that increased circulation. You were the afternoon newspaper, publishing every day but Sunday? Or did you—

JJ: Published Sunday too.

JE: Oh you did? But you dropped Sunday, didn't you?

JJ: Dropped Sunday when they went into the joint operating agreement in 1941.

JE: Your grandfather though was an interesting guy because in his writing he would have the Saturday sermonettes and he became famous for those, I believe.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: He was a friend of presidents, Theodore Roosevelt.

JJ: Yeah, Theodore—

JE: Woodrow Wilson.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative). He was a very close friend of Alf Landon. We named our son Landon, it was just a name we picked out of the blue. But when I interviewed Alf Landon and told him that he sent me a picture of himself with my grandfather.

JE: I thought this was interesting. Once your grandfather was criticized for being a conservative. He said, "I would conserve the humanism of Lincoln. I would conserve the steamboat, the telephone, the radio. I would conserve justice. I would conserve democracy out of which freedom comes. In conserving these we progress.

JJ: Well, he was a great Lincoln follower. He purchased the Lincoln birthplace to set it aside as a national monument. He represented a group of young men that ponied up the money together for it. He gave Gilcrease Museum a live mask of Lincoln's hands and face, which are on display in the Americana exhibit at Gilcrease right now. This is, of course, 2011.

He was just a tremendous fan of Lincoln.

JE: Richard Lloyd Jones, your grandfather, died at the age of ninety in 1963.

JJ: Right.

JE: You remember details of that?

JJ: It was a pretty well attended funeral. I was finishing my tour in Washington when he died. So I wasn't there in the last weeks. I had come down to see him maybe two months before. Yes it was a big funeral.

JE: Your grandmother and her name?

JJ: It was Georgia Hayden. She was a pretty extraordinary woman. I think she had an IQ of about 160. She was totally legible with either hand. She played golf left-handed at a time when women didn't play golf. I was lucky because I inherited her left-handed clubs. So I played with wooden shafts and ladies' clubs until they started making men's left-handed clubs.

But she was a college graduate. She was National President of Kappa Kappa Gamma. She was a teacher. She was a leader in women's suffrage, in planned parenthood. A lot of issues, some of them fairly controversial.

JE: We should mention that your uncle then, Richard Lloyd Jones Jr., served with distinction in aviation. And he served in the Tulsa Municipal Airport Authority and the Board of McDonnell Douglas for decades.

JJ: Right, and I think he was Chairman of the Authority. And then he was very active in the move to get American Airlines maintenance base to Tulsa. He and my dad both became pilots after the war on the GI Bill.

Both of them had gone into World War II over age, past draft age, and they had the kinds of jobs that would have made them secure from being drafted or anything. But they both went in as naval officers. Dick served as a gun captain on a merchant ship. My dad was on a CVE with, other words a baby flattop aircraft carrier in on the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

They were always proud of the fact that they went, as Dad said, "in harm's way," even though neither of them consider themselves heroes. They were just among the other twelve million people who went off to war.

JE: Do you remember stories that they may have told from war days?

JJ: I know my dad—the Japanese Kamikazes off Okinawa were targeting carriers in particular. One of them made a run at their carrier. And a CVE was not an armored ship, basically they were old freighters that they just sawed the top off and put a flight deck and an island on. And you could put twenty-five or thirty planes on them.

But there was one Kamikaze that made a run at them and would have hit them and probably blown the ship to pieces, but one of their scout planes, at the last possible second, shot him down just maybe a quarter of a mile away. That was a harrowing experience.

I think the worst thing for my dad, my dad was an avid walker and for ninety-one days he was confined to the flight deck of a small carrier. So when he finally got his shore in

Guam, he took a long walk into a coconut grove. And when he came out an MP saw him and he said, "I wouldn't go in that grove if I were you, sir. There are Jap snipers in there."

JE: Any other war remembrances that either one of them might have brought back?

JJ: Only my dad's remembrance of the end of the war. He and the ship's doctor had taken a walk up into the hills. They were in Pearl after the Okinawa campaign refitting to go in on the invasion of Kyushu, which was to be the first of the Japanese islands to be invaded. And, of course, the atomic bomb had been dropped. Dad and the ship's doctor were walking up in the hills where you could overlook Pearl Harbor. And all of a sudden, a Very flare went up. And then another one went up. And then every Very flare the sailors could get hold of went up in the air.

And Dad just turned to the doctor and said, "The war is over." Because those sailors were going to shoot off everything they could.

Chapter 05 - 1:40

Jones Aviation

John Erling: Well, your uncle's love of aviation, he helped to establish then, apparently, Riverside Airport in Jenks. And it was renamed in his honor.

Jenk Jones: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So we have Jones Airport.

JJ: Right. Which it is usually referred to as Riverside Jones because there's a Jones Airport in Bristow, and that can be a little bit confusing.

Yeah, Dick was also an aviation columnist for the *Tribune* for a while. And he took a pen name, I think it was Neenah Menasha, who were two little towns in Wisconsin near where he grew up that he just borrowed for his pen name. Sort of like a Mark Twain.

JE: And then about your father, he flew, he loved aviation as well.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Your father, Jenk, became assistant secretary of the Navy under President Eisenhower.

JJ: Yes. He was only in that role for four or five months because my mother became extremely ill and Dad came back to Tulsa to take care of her. But he was always very interested in the Navy.

He actually served in the Pentagon as a speech writer for an admiral after World War II. Because, despite the fact that he had been in on two major naval battles, he still didn't have enough points to get out immediately. So he spent several months as a speech writer for an admiral. Which probably helped him in his later speaking career because he became nationally famous as a speaker.

JE: And he was president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors?

JJ: Yes.

JE: President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. So very well respected nationally as he wrote from his home base here in Tulsa.

JJ: Right, and he was, of course, a nationally syndicated writer for about three decades. And he spoke all over the country on a variety of topics, many of them dealing with journalism.

Chapter 06 - 8:45

Tribune Editorial Stands

John Erling: Well, let's talk about some of the major campaigns that the *Tribune* led as I throw them out to you. You will have more background to them.

The paper led the state fight for reapportionment, which was very crucial to urban areas getting equality. Maybe you can tell us about that.

Jenk Jones: Well, Oklahoma never did reapportion according to the Constitution. And my dad filed suit in 1941 against the legislature. And the Supreme Court said the legislature was in violation of the Constitution. But it assumed that the legislation would see the error of its ways and correct them, which, of course, the legislature didn't.

In 1961, he filed suit again, and again the Supreme Court said that the legislature was in violation but that the court couldn't do anything about it.

At which point, I wrote a story pointing out that the Supreme Court was malapportioned. That the six justices that voted against reapportionment represented only 39 percent of the population. And the three justices who supported reapportionment represented 61 percent of the population.

Oklahoma was so badly apportioned that some of the senate districts had ten times or more citizens in them than other districts.

The House apportionment was also wacky because any county, no matter what size it had, and Cimarron County was about four thousand then, could have a state representative, where the two big counties were limited to seven.

So, the two major urban counties, Tulsa and Oklahoma, had fourteen out of 121 members of the House and had two members of the Senate out of forty-four between them. And where you have the votes, you get the money. So all the money in the state was going into rural roads and rural things. And the highways that served Tulsa, particularly, were dreadful.

I mean, for so many years all that transport had to go down the narrow, twisting, two-lane Highway 66 between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. It was basically about a three- to

four-hour drive. The roads north to Bartlesville and southeast to Muskogee and just about anywhere you wanted to go out of Tulsa, the roads were terrible.

When reapportionment came in, and that came as a result of three-judge Federal Court ruling in 1962, later reaffirmed by the US Supreme Court. All of a sudden then, Tulsa got equal representation and so did Oklahoma City and other urban areas. What did it mean?

First of all, it meant a lot more state representatives and senators. It opened representation to blacks. There had only been one black in the legislature up until that point, and that was in 1908. It opened it to women, because there had been only one woman state senator between the 1920s and 1974. It brought money into areas, which were much more representative of youth than the smaller counties, which were generally much older in population.

At the time of reapportionment Tulsa did not offer a single hour of state-supported higher education. Now there are seven state colleges of one form or another in Tulsa County or immediately next to Tulsa County, plus Rogers State at Claremore.

So there's just an enormous difference in that alone. The roads are better, the cities have been getting the kind of financing that they deserved for so long. Reapportionment was the most important single factor in Oklahoma history, and it was the *Tribune* that led the fight for that. It made a lot of enemies, as you can imagine, in rural areas.

JE: So that was a decision by your father to lead that fight?

JJ: Yeah. But my grandfather very much supported it too.

JE: Yeah. The paper also pushed for central purchasing, which has saved the state and other agencies a great savings.

JJ: Yeah, hundreds of millions of dollars, at least. That was one of the reforms that Howard Edmondson brought in. And Howard was the first governor from Tulsa and the first real reform governor in state history. Democrat elected in 1958. He also brought in the fight to get rid of prohibition, which was one of the most hypocritical things because it sponsored so much lawlessness. We strongly supported that.

And that was an interesting coalition you ran against because you ran against a combination of churches and bootleggers who worked closely together under the table to try to defeat anything that would get rid of prohibition.

JE: Edmondson was in office what years?

JJ: Fifty-nine to '63.

JE: And it produced such people like Cleo Epps?

JJ: Yeah, the bootleggers you had and Cadillac Jack Edwards and Cleo Epps. All sorts of—

JE: Big Al McDonald.

JJ: Yeah, of course, a lot of those people were robbers and killers, on top of being bootleggers. Your average pint-pincher wasn't major problem but we had real criminal elements.

And we'll speak of Nolan Bullock later, but I remember the time that we got word that the sheriff up in Jay would take money to allow the bootleggers to run liquor through his county. Once you could get inside the border county you were pretty safe in moving your cargo around. So, Nolan, who could talk like George Raft, the famous movie actor, got on the phone and talking out of the side of his mouth he made a deal with the sheriff as how much money they would give the sheriff to run liquor through the country. Of course, we had other reporters listening in on other lines.

They made a deal. The sheriff wanted so much and so on. And then we printed the story. And the sheriff barely got out of town ahead of the vigilantes.

JE: So that would have been in the '50s?

JJ: In the '50s. And the sequel to that is, years later Nolan was up in Delaware County doing a story and he was about out of gas. And he pulled into a gas station and the guy who comes out to service him is the ex-sheriff. The sheriff looks at Nolan and Nolan looks at the sheriff and Nolan drives out of there as fast as he can with the sheriff jumping in a car and chasing him through the hills.

And Nolan didn't stop until he pulled up on the courthouse lawn at Jay, where the new sheriff was a personal friend who could protect him and escort him out of town.

JE: Wow, that's a great story.

We can wrap this by saying that prohibition actually produced criminals beyond bootlegging—

JJ: Oh sure.

JE: ...and it made them go into other forms of lawlessness.

JJ: Yeah, just like bootlegging in the Capone era in New York and so on, spread on into drugs and numbers rackets and all sorts of other things. Anytime there's a lot of illegal money floating around it's going to find someplace to go.

JE: Where would the liquor come in from?

JJ: A lot of it came through Arkansas. Kansas was a dry state. Missouri had a lot of liquor outlets, although Missouri had dry Sundays, they couldn't sell liquor in Missouri on a Sunday. I think Texas might have had the local option. So a lot of the states around here were not particularly wet states. But I know a lot of it came in through Arkansas through those porous eastern counties.

There was one time, I believe it was in Stillwell, there was so much money in being a rural sheriff, if you wanted to be crooked, not all were, but if you wanted to be crooked there was a lot of money, particularly in a border county. And the sheriff in Stillwell was in a primary against his chief deputy. And I think the chief deputy won the primary.

But the next day they met in the courthouse and they went after their guns. And it was a dead heat, literally. So then they had to have a new sheriff because—but that one, we got calls from the newspapers in London about that one. The wild west exists.

JE: I've interviewed Buddy Fallis, former District Attorney, and—

JJ: Good friend.

JE: ...we talk about all these characters that he prosecuted back in those days. The paper supported the merit system laws that took patronage away from the state Senate.

JJ: Yeah, state senators, particularly like the prisons in McAlester and so on, they had yea or nay on whether hundreds of people got jobs. And, of course, if you wanted a state job you'd have to have a kickback, in most cases, to your state senator. Or you'd have to contribute to the Flower Fund, as they called it, for his reelection. Or you'd have to go out and knock doors for him, something like that. So, it was a highly inefficient system, which not only cost the state a lot of money but often got it poor-performing employees.

Whereas the merit system took the power away from the state senators. People had to pass tests. The ones that were the most meritorious were the ones that got the jobs. And it was a bitter pill with the state Senate. It took away much of their political power. All of a sudden, you didn't have this legion of workers who would go out and insure that you'd win the next election.

JE: Raise money for you and all that.

Chapter 07 - 3:15

Investigative Reporting

John Erling: In the area of conducting an investigation reporter Bob Foresman, he was writing about county commissioners' crooked ways for many, many years.

Jenk Jones: Yeah, he would go investigate the billings and so on and he found that Commissioner A might be paying six times as much for road grader blades or culvert pipe or bridge lumber as Commissioner B. Or that the commissioners in one county were charging significantly more for the same materials as the commissioners in another county. So he wrote frequent stories on them. We never put all the beads together in one necklace, in other words, we'd do a story here and a story there, but we hit a lot of the counties. And we certainly exposed a lot of fraud, including some in Tulsa County.

One of the Tulsa County commissioners went to prison and another one came very close to doing it. So, Foresman was writing about that at least two decades before the County Commissioner Scandal broke. Which really, the revelation there came through the federal operations. Mostly out of Oklahoma City, but then later in through the Muskogee and Tulsa eastern district and northern district.

Ultimately, the County Commissioner Scandal of the 1980s that many people have described as the worst case of corruption in American history. We have seventy-seven counties, which means we have 231 county commissioners. We had approximately that

many who were nailed for being involved. In some cases there were six sitting or previous county commissioners in a single county. Some cases, like Tulsa County, there was no one indicted, so we were pretty lucky; we had more honest people.

But this was a matter of literally the stealing of millions and millions of dollars. Some of it was in kickbacks, some of it was in Blue Sky purchases where you would write an invoice that you received something and you'd get paid for it. But you never got your material. And then you would kick part of that back to the supplier.

Much of that was exposed by a lady, I think, in Stephens County who got worried about the bridge her kids were crossing. It was old and rickety. And so, she went to the County Commission and somehow found that they had enough bridge lumber to re-bridge every bridge in the county six times over. At least, they had it on the books, but they didn't have it in actuality. She got ahold of somebody and things went from there.

But the *Tribune* was blowing the horn a long time before anybody wanted to really listen.

JE: Didn't this actually break in the mid-'70s? Like '77?

JJ: It was maybe the late '70s, but—

JE: Right.

JJ: ...you didn't really come to fruition big-time until the early '80s.

JE: Okay. There must have been a culture that existed, it wasn't just one or two.

JJ: No—

JE: As you pointed out, it was all these. So it was just kind of a given thing—

JJ: Right.

JE: ...I guess then.

JJ: Right, right. When you look at much of the third world today, you run for political office so that you can steal the public money. A lot of our well-intended foreign aid goes into deep pockets, which is why the Swiss courts have been shutting down the assets of Gaddafi and Mubarak and others right now, because they realized that their billions of dollars that should have gone to the peoples of those countries that went into the pockets of the rulers.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Well, that was the same thing on a smaller scale in Oklahoma.

Chapter 08 - 3:35

1956 Vote Scandal

John Erling: Then again, we have a reporter Nolan Bullock. He broke the 1956 Wagoner County vote scandal.

Jenk Jones: There was a state senator John Russell over in Wagoner County. And Wagoner and Okmulgee County had a common senate district—two counties, one district. Tom Payne from Okmulgee County ran against him. And Tom Payne was a relative reformer by Oklahoma standards. John Russell was part of what was known as the old guard, the get-along, go-along old boys that were used to passing favors and money between themselves.

Well, Payne ran a good campaign and he apparently had won the campaign by five hundred and some votes. And then they discovered seven hundred and some absentee votes in Wagoner County. Now that was about ten times as many absentee votes as Tulsa County would cast at that time. And the votes came in like 680 something to twenty-three in favor of Russell, which made him narrowly the winner.

Well, they started to investigate and they found out that Russell's workers had gone out and paid people in nursing homes and other places with twenty-dollar state checks to vote for him. So you're using state money to buy the votes to reelect the guy. The *Tribune* broke that story.

Well, the old guard wanted Russell back in but that was a little too hot for them to handle. So they eventually decided there would be a new election. And Russell claimed he was the winner so he didn't need to run again.

Payne filed, Russell didn't, and the courts declared Payne the winner. It was one of the most blatant examples of the problem.

You know, this business of reapportionment, again, I did a story in 1962 about the inequalities of road money spending. Harper County in northwestern Oklahoma was basically a Republican county, although the registration was slightly Democratic. Harmon County in southwest Oklahoma, was heavily Democratic, had the same population. I think the difference was ten people. But one of them had almost a hundred times as much money, the one in Southwestern Oklahoma, as the one up in Northwestern Oklahoma.

Tulsa and Bartlesville tried to communicate over that terrible Highway 75 that went up around dead man's corner and the Singing Highway. And wandered from Vera to Ramona to Ochelata and was anything but the straight shot we have today. And was a very dangerous road. And yet, down in Southern Oklahoma where the political power lay, you had four-lane highways with almost no cars on them.

I always said, "You could study Oklahoma politics by driving from Ardmore to Madill." Because Ardmore had a weak state senator, so Highway 70 out of there was just a typical two-lane road.

You crossed over into Johnson County where the chairman of the Highway Committee of the Senate lived and, all of a sudden, the road broadened out and had big, beautiful shoulders.

Then you got into Marshall County where Raymond Gary, the former governor and the kind of the leader of the rural forces lived and you got a four-lane highway with nothing on it except the occasional chicken.

JE: When the newspaper would break these stories, like the Wagoner County vote scandal, would the newspaper get threatened?

JJ: Yeah. You got some threats, mostly those were bluster. We had dealt with some union violence where we got a few death threats and so on. And I've had a death threat or two. But usually if they're going to make threats they're not too dangerous, they're getting it off their chests. It's the guy who doesn't say anything, like some of these terrorists we're dealing with that is a more dangerous—[file cut off]

Chapter 09 - 4:25

Nail the Pusher

John Erling: Interesting, we had a Nail the Pusher program that allowed people who may have been afraid to call the police to use as a conduit to pass on information on drug dealers and many were arrested.

Jenk Jones: Yeah, I was a conduit. People would write, "Just nail the pusher," to the *Tulsa Tribune* and they'd all come to me. I would put a code number on as, you know, some way of contacting back if their information led to an arrest and a conviction. It provided an awful lot of information to the police.

Well, let's put it this way, there probably weren't too many Boy Scouts riding in. A lot of them may have been drug pushers trying to get rid of the competition. But if we could get enough people doing that we could clean up the town a bit.

JE: So that was your project?

JJ: I think my dad came up with the idea but I was the one that handled it.

JE: Nail the Pusher program.

JJ: Yeah. We had, I'd say, several hundred people over a period of time write in to check out somebody or other or, "This guy is peddling at this corner."

JE: How many do you think were arrested as a result?

JJ: I don't know how many but I know that there were a fair number.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And, if nothing else, it put names in the police files that they could follow up.

JE: The *Tulsa Tribune* got very involved in the community. For a long time the *Tribune* had a public appeal to send kids from poor families for a fun week of summer camp. How did that work?

JJ: It worked very well. It grew, I don't know whether it started with fifty white kids and twenty-five black or a hundred white kids and fifty black. But they sent them to a camp up in the hills of the Ozarks of Eastern Oklahoma.

A lot of these kids had never been, literally, off the pavement. They had never had a chance to go canoeing or fishing or play softball or anything like that. So it was a real eye-opening experience for them. For many of them, I think it meant that they could see there was something better in life to strive for than they were used to. So it may have been an incentive.

We had it for girls too later. I think it was just boys initially. That program lasted from the 1930s until the *Tribune* closed in '92.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound). You had another campaign known as the Neediest Families Campaign. And the *Tribune* started that.

JJ: Yeah. That was to help families at Christmas that, for one reason or another, illness or injury or loss of a job or something like this, families that had particularly dim prospects for a Christmas. Almost invariably they were the ones that were involved with children too. We ran that until the *Tribune* closed, and then the *World* picked that one up.

JE: And continues today—

JJ: Yeah.

JE: ...in 2011.

JJ: And continues, right.

JE: And then there were some other public fundraising the *Tribune* ran. And the Preservation of the Redbud Valley Nature Area in Northeast Oklahoma.

JJ: Yeah, Redbud Valley is an extraordinary place. It's north on 161st East Avenue, off of I-44, about four miles north. Harriett Barclay, who was a professor of botany at TU, came to us because it's sort of a meeting place of America. You find plants there that are Eastern plants, plants that are Western plants, Northern plants, Southern plants, all in this kind of a rich, botanical mix. It was threatened because the quarries up in that area were gradually moving toward it.

So what we did was, through the public, raise the money to purchase Redbud Valley. And it's still set aside as a nature preserve in an area where universities and high schools can go out and study various botanical things. There's also some geological interests out there.

And then the Pedestrian Bridge, which is another thing, well, they were getting set to tear up the old Midland Valley bridge across the Arkansas River. We got a figure on how much it would cost to repair it so that you could use it for bicycles or joggers. Ultimately, they build fishing piers and so on.

But we sold it to the public, I think, at twelve dollars a foot. For twelve bucks you could buy a foot of bridge. And we raised enough money to repair that. And today, it's the main link between hiking trails and bicycling trails on both sides of the river.

JE: Which the paper pushed for, a major system of biking and hiking trails.

JJ: Oh yeah. The late Jim Sellers, and Jim just died last week, that was one of his special projects. He wanted to see, not only the city completely ringed by biking and hiking trails, but connected to other municipalities around here. And we've come a long way toward that.

Chapter 10 - 4:45***Tribune People***

John Erling: There's some great people that worked for the *Tulsa Tribune*. Let's just mention some of them. We have Joe Howell, he was a reporter for your paper for more than half a century.

Jenk Jones: Yeah, Joseph E. Howell is the way he bylined his work. He worked for us, well, he was in his eighties when the *Tribune* closed and he would have never been retired by us, I guarantee it. I mean, he was a walking encyclopedia. Young reporters could ask, "Joe, what was this that happened in 1953?" and he could tell them to the decimal point. He was an expert in Oklahoma politics. I greatly enjoyed working with him on that. He had covered state highways from the days when they were of dirt and gravel. He knew more about the GRDA probably than anybody at the GRDA. In fact, if Joe wasn't at a GRDA meeting their main source of reference was missing.

He covered the Arkansas River navigation system from the very early days. He took a break from the *Tribune* for a couple of years and he worked for a year for Senator Robert S. Kerr, who was the driving force behind the Arkansas River navigation system. So he got deeply involved in that, and he covered that whole long and difficult process of getting that thing built.

He covered the state capitol for many years for us. He even covered agricultural things because he lived on a farm up close to Locust Grove, would commute in every day. So he knew agricultural things.

And Joe was simply, as I said, a walking encyclopedia. The thing I always tried to stress to younger reporters, Joe Howell never met a story that he was too important to deal with. If somebody needed a two-paragraph rewrite done on something, Joe would step up and do it. He was not a gifted wordsmith in many ways, but he could tell a story.

I remember working with him on a series of stories we did that covered the first twenty-five years of Oklahoma statehood. It was just a masterpiece. It gave Oklahomans an understanding of their beginnings.

JE: We referred to Nolan Bullock but let's do a little more on him, and even how he first came to the paper.

JJ: You know, I can't tell you how he first came to the paper but I never knew the paper without Nolan until his death. He had had his run-ins with breaking stories on other papers on criminal activities, crooked unions, and so on. He always walked with a limp, he'd been thrown down the stairs breaking a leg, at one point.

JE: Thrown down the stairs? By?

JJ: By somebody he had exposed. This was before he was with the *Tribune*. Nolan was one of the chief instruments in breaking stories on bootlegging and crime in Oklahoma. In fact, I went

down to the penitentiary with him when I was a teenager and it was, "Hello, Nolan." "How are you, Nolan?" He—half the guys in the pen he knew, and a lot of them he'd help send there.

And he was also a very good political writer. He was just a little, bitty man. Probably weighed 120, 125 pounds. But, believe me, he had the kick of a mule.

JE: Any particular story or two?

JJ: You know, they tried to get rid of Nolan. There was a major liquor conspiracy case in Oklahoma, and Nolan was indicted, along with quite a few others, almost two dozen others. Almost all the others were convicted.

The judge, after hearing the prosecution's case against Nolan, threw the case out. He said he'd never heard of anything so weak in his life. And he just exonerated Nolan. It was an effort by a lot of the bootleggers to try and get him, on trumped up evidence, which, I think, even the prosecutors didn't believe it. But the judge sure as hell didn't.

JE: So that happened while he was at the *Tribune*?

JJ: Yeah. It—

JE: So was it covered extensively—

JJ: Oh yeah, yeah—

JE: ...that your own reporter was being indicted?

JJ: Oh yeah, yeah. The one thing I remember about Nolan, he had an uncanny ability to remember what he had written before. And one of the hardest things in journalism, and I've had to do it many times, is dictate off the top of your head.

I remember Nolan was covering a famous rape case, which it involved the son of the Oklahoma Lawyers Group, the son of a man who had run for Attorney General. And several other prominent figures. And Nolan could go and give you a first edition story, dictating from Oklahoma City. And then he could, just off the top of his head, dictate twenty paragraphs for the next edition, and have a perfect pick-up point where you— and then come back on the final home and dictate another twenty graphs or so.

As a deskman working the stories, you didn't have to do much repair work. He could just fit those leads right into what had come before. He—

JE: He was carrying it in his head.

JJ: Yeah, and, believe me, it's tough to do.

Chapter 11 - 5:10

Bootlegging / Reign of Terror

John Erling: You know, about bootlegging, I was going to mention, there were some high profile people in Oklahoma that were caught. Wasn't there a raid in Southern Hills?

Jenk Jones: Oh yeah, yeah. That's one way Howard Edmondson helped get rid of prohibition. He said that he had merely promised a vote on it. But he was actively opposed to it. So he and his safety commissioner, Joe Cannon, went out to raid private clubs and to stop cars coming into the state if their backend looked a little heavy. You know, like people were transporting three or four cases of liquor. He caused tremendous road jams.

But, yeah, they arrested a lot of prominent people, and that helped make people mad enough. Because as Will Rogers said, "The Oklahomans would vote dry as long as they could stagger to the polls." And that was pretty much the truth.

JE: Maybe Oklahoma served as a setting for the TV programs. Some of those FBI stories.

JJ: There was a movie, *The FBI Story*, with Jimmy Stewart. That was about the Reign of Terror in Pawhuska. They didn't use the name Pawhuska, but it was about the murder of Indians for their oil money. That was one of the great tragedies of Oklahoma because somewhere between twenty-four and eighty Osages, possibly even more, were murdered for their oil rights or for their oil allotments. Which, during the 1920s had made the Osages the richest people per capita on earth.

JE: The oil made the—

JJ: Yeah.

JE: ...Osages the—

JJ: Yeah, these killers would sell these people an insurance policy with a ridiculously high amount. In other words, they might sell them a five hundred dollar policy and then they'd require them to put up twenty thousand dollars collateral. And then they would kill them. And they would get the twenty thousand dollars, or something.

Or they would marry into an Indian family and gradually eliminate all the members for their head rights. Because in those days head right at that time was worth ten to twelve thousand dollars a year. Which today would translate out into a quarter of a million dollars or so. So if you killed off four or five members of the family and inherited the head rights you'd do pretty well for yourself.

JE: And that actually happened?

JJ: Oh yeah. It was a famous Reign of Terror in the 1920s, early '30s. That was actually the case that made the FBI. That was the first big case of the FBI.

JE: In the '20s?

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And it happened up in Osage County?

JJ: Up in Osage County. A banker from Fairfax, his nephew, and another cowboy were the prime figures in it.

JE: It all happened around Pawhuska.

JJ: Yeah. Pawhuska and Fairfax, all through the county. They killed the Osages by poisoned whiskey, knifing, bombings, shootings. It was a pretty bad scene.

JE: I want to be clear about this, they would kill an Osage.

JJ: They would maybe sell an insurance policy to an Osage.

JE: A regular insurance policy.

JJ: Yeah, but they would have him put up far more in collateral than the policy was worth. So if he died and defaulted or something then they would get the collateral. They would also get head rights. And the head rights were the key, because there's only 2229 head rights, and all this money was being split that number of ways.

JE: Explain the term head rights.

JJ: If you were an enrolled member of the Osage tribe as of July 1, 1907, you got a head right. You might also inherit a head right from a father or a grandfather. So some individuals had more than one head right. If you had a family, say, of four, and two children were alive at that time, you'd have four head rights. Maybe you'd inherited three or four more head rights and you're bringing in ten to twelve thousand dollars per year per head right at a time when that would translate into two hundred thousand dollars or so today, you were talking about an awful lot of money.

The Osages were, per capita, the richest people on earth at that time.

JE: The Osages were very wealthy and—

JJ: Yeah, because—

JE: ...so then it was no problem to sell them an insurance policy and put up this enormous collateral.

JJ: Right. Or they just used every scheme you could think of. Because the Osages were, as a rule, not very sophisticated. They had never dealt with that kind of money before. They had previously gotten allotments for grazing rights and things like that. But their allotments before the oil came in might be \$160 per person per quarter, enough to buy coffee and salt and beans, but not enough to get rich on.

JE: So these folks would come in and take advantage of that so-called non-sophistication. And sell them this idea of an insurance policy.

JJ: Or any other kind of thing. As I said, they had all sorts of schemes. You might marry into an Osage tribe and the wife as a head right, plus she has her parents' head rights. Then you kill her and you inherit the money.

JE: So this would have gone on for—

JJ: Several years. One of the OSBI agents who helped crack the case was later murdered and they never solved his killing.

JE: So your newspaper would have been writing about this?

JJ: Oh yes, writing a lot about it.

JE: Again, you're saying that's how the FBI—

JJ: That was the first great case that the FBI worked that helped make them famous.

JE: Right.

JJ: It's called the Reign of Terror.

JE: Must be books written about that.

JJ: Oh yeah. In fact, there's one written by a former FBI man. It's a pretty good book. He's not a great writer but he's a good fact provider.

Chapter 12 - 4:12

Oral Roberts

John Erling: When Mary Hargrove was writing about Oral Roberts and the business side you were talking about, did Oral complain to your father about this? He thought it was unfair. Did you ever hear from Oral Roberts about it?

Jenk Jones: I don't think so. We always had a fairly good relationship with Oral. Bob Foresman was the one who broke the stories that Oral was going to build his university. And then Bob and I later won the AP Writing Award for an interview, a four-hour interview we did with Oral. I did most of the writing but Bob knew Oral very well and could ask certain pertinent questions. Was a very much a part of the interview. Generally, it's better for one person to do the writing.

I remember Oral explained to me his technique was not to speak to twenty million people at once but to speak to one person twenty million times over. In other words, he would look out of that television set right into your eyes and communicate with you. Everybody felt he was just one-on-one with them. And when I wrote the story that won the award it was, "Oral Roberts, Basketball Fan Extraordinaire Plays the Game of Life Man-to-Man."

And so you're able to use basketball terminology and you got a basketball game and man-to-man. But it really represented exactly the way Oral operated.

JE: Was that interview conducted in the '60s?

JJ: It could have been, '60s or early '70s.

JE: His university came about in the '60s.

JJ: Yeah it came about in the '60s. In fact, I helped him put together the *Oracle*, helped the students get the first baby steps started on the school newspaper. Because I'd been on the school newspaper when I was in college.

JE: So that shows the friendly terms you were on—

JJ: Yeah.

JE: ...with Oral Roberts.

JJ: Yeah, and Oral lived next door to my granddad's place. You had to kind of go around the block to come in that way just because of the way fences worked. But my dad, on his

walks, would often stop and talk to Oral. And, you know, religiously they were several light years apart.

JE: You've got to remember that he was a Universalist and here's Oral Roberts, a Pentecost faith-healer.

JJ: But, you know yourself as a person who has interviewed so many people, you can interview people of vastly different beliefs than you have and still get along well. And Dad and Oral were friends. I mean, they weren't the kind who would go out to parties together or something, but they got along well. And I'm sure that Oral was probably upset to some extent just by the fact that we showed how big an industry it had become. It wasn't all in the religious business.

But I never got any gripes from him and I would have heard from Dad if I had.

JE: I was asking that question because for this website I interviewed Oral Roberts. And he said to me, "You know, when the media came after me I never struck back, did I?"

And I had to say, "No." So I was kind of testing to see—

JJ: Well, if we came after him it was just in the sense of showing how big the Oral Roberts thing had been. We didn't try to make a judgmental call on it.

In fact, I remember one of Mary Sidebar's was just about how much the City of Faith had meant to some of the people who had come down to see it. It was a very positive story. So when you're written about you're much more sensitive to things. Maybe the fact that we pointed out that they had created X millions of dollars doing this or that could be looked upon negatively by them simply because it's being pointed out. You're not making a judgmental call whether it's good or bad but sometimes they can get kind of sensitive.

JE: Right. Probably in the area of when he would plead for money.

JJ: Right.

JE: Then this story that they were out making millions, in a business sense, he wasn't as poor, perhaps, as it seemed to be when he was asking for money.

JJ: Right. I remember John Wolf and the nine hundred foot Jesus. John Wolf was our minister and he made a lot of fun of Oral's vision of a nine hundred foot Jesus. Which we all assumed would have been on the Oral Roberts basketball team the next day.

JE: Right. And we all did and—

JJ: Yeah.

JE: ...I did my share of that on the radio, as a matter of fact.

JJ: Right. I used to start with you every morning on the radio because I'd get up at quarter of five and pick up the news and your things and listen to it on the way in.

JE: Yeah, those were good times.

Chapter 13 - 5:35
Opposing Editorials

John Erling: As we move along here, do you want to comment on some of these? You had reporters like Royce Craig and Ben Newby.

Jenk Jones: Well, they were photographers but they were all pilots. So we ran through four *Tribune* planes over the years, increasing range and so on. Starting with a Stinson Voyager and winding up with a twin engine Shrike. We didn't necessarily pioneer aerial photography but we pretty much did in this area. They had different backgrounds.

Lewis had been a pipeline pilot, used to flying 150 feet above the ground or so. And he and I covered floods and other things at treetop level.

Royce had been a pilot in World War II, flying the Hump from Burma to China.

Ben had been a B36 pilot carrying atomic bombs behind him.

They all had different backgrounds but they were all excellent pilots who could slide the canopy back, roll the plane over on one wing, and take pictures of everything from car and train wrecks to dam construction, highway buildings, you name it, even football games in progress. So we were really one of the pioneers in using planes for a lot of aerial work.

JE: So again, that was Royce Craig, Ben Newby, and Lew Jarrett.

JJ: Right.

JE: Were there editorial wars between the *Tulsa World* and the *Tribune* that you were often at different sides of issues?

JJ: Sometimes we were. The battle over where to put City Hall, which we won, because the *World* wanted to put it in a place that they had some financial considerations. A lot of political battles, which we certainly won our share of and probably more than our share.

I remember in '62, when I was first polling. The *Tribune* was supporting Republican Bellmon for the governor and Democrat Monroney for senate. And the *World* was for Democrat Atkinson for governor and Republican Hayden Crawford for senate. And we won both of those.

A lot of times in city elections we would differ. But then on things like 1017, which your wife's definitely familiar with because Bellmon signed the legislation in her school yard on—

JE: Marshall Elementary.

JJ: Right.

JE: That was House bill 1017 and it was a reform bill—

JJ: That was an educational reform bill. Both the *World* and *Tribune* not only worked hard for its passage but later on when there was an effort to repeal it they worked hard to fight the repeal. There would be times like that.

Probably the one time the *World* was right and we were wrong was on the Spavinaw flow line. They supported that back in the early days and we were supporting water out of Shell Creek.

Then, on the other hand, we had an opportunity to be a pilot project for building city expressways. And we were going to give a lot of money in here and Tulsa would be the kind of a pilot to see how urban expressways worked. Well, we supported it and the *World* didn't. We lost that one and so Tulsa's expressways were twenty years later than they should have been.

There were a lot of times we differed and a lot of times we agreed. There wasn't any conscious thought, I'm sure, on either paper of, "The other side's for this so we'll be for that."

JE: Where the actual work was done. You were housed in the same...?

JJ: Housed in the same building and when computers came in we all carried codes that would keep *Tribune* writers from getting into the *World* files and vice versa. We had certain things like libraries that we could access either way and we were very good. The editors of both papers let it be done known it was a firing offense if you tried to mess around in the other paper's files.

In the days before that when it was hot metal and it was very slow to set type compared to the computer days I remember doing an interview with David Boren. I had him come out to my house when he was running for governor. My polls had indicated he was going to win. So I had him come out to my house and I interviewed him about how he won and what he planned to do with his administration and so on. And all this was before the election.

I wrote the story, we set it in type, and hid it from the *World* because election night you could never interview a politician, they're just too busy. I mean, you'd get a snippet but you'd get no in-depth. The day after the election here's this interview with Boren as if we'd just sat down the night after the election and gone through this whole thing.

I later did it with Bellmon for governor, so that was kind of neat to hide that and then Wednesday morning pull it out.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: So you played a lot of games like that.

An interesting bit of how the newspapers worked. In the days of hot metal we got our stories on teletypes at sixty-six words a minute, which isn't very fast. Then we would have to hand edit them, send them downstairs, get the type set, get it corrected, go through all the mechanical processes of making a mat and casting a plate and getting the plate downstairs.

Well, Apollo 11, the first rocket to go to the moon was due back on Earth on the minute of our press start deadline. So I had two options: I could either wait until they landed and then go through this long process that would have made us over an hour late starting the press, or I could do what I did, which was write their arrival back, write the whole story

about how they came back to Earth successfully, make the plates, have them on the press. And unless somehow the capsule sank or something, as soon as the capsule landed in the water and the frogmen jumped in with the flotation gear I picked up the phone and said, "Roll." So less than a minute after they hit the ocean the *Tribune* was probably the first paper in the world rolling with their return from the moon. The only thing I didn't have in it was how far they landed from the carrier.

JE: So then that would have come out that afternoon.

JJ: Yeah, right.

Chapter 14 - 2:00

Stop the Press

John Erling: Were there cases where you'd say, "Stop the presses"?

Jenk Jones: Oh yeah. There, different ways. One day back before I started there we'd been sued in the case. The judge who was going to hear the libel case, there was some reason to run a picture of him in the paper and they got the wrong cut line on it. And it said, "Prize hog shown."

And my dad came running out of the office yelling, "Stop the press!" Well, a few papers had gotten out and the judge got one of them. But, fortunately, he had a sense of humor and we won the case.

The real one I remember that I was involved in was he had just started our final press run on the final home and there were shots fired at the time Reagan was getting into the car. We knew that Jim Brady, his press secretary, had been hit and that a policeman and a Secret Service man had been wounded. We didn't know anything about Reagan. But that was still dangerous enough that I stopped the press. And then I had to call the general manager and the Composing Room superintendent and go through all the steps. Because there was several different departments. "Don't send the boys out for lunch. We're going to come back with a hot one."

We worked up about a ten-paragraph bulletin. We just had gotten that one finished and started into the plate-making process when the word came out that Reagan was shot. So, same thing, I stopped everything and here we came again. By that time, we had that picture that won the Pulitzer Prize of Reagan being assisted into the car by a photographer who is in his second day on the job for the AP. Talk about luck.

We got a story that Reagan had been wounded, taken to the hospital, condition uncertain. So our press started an hour and thirteen minutes late that day. We didn't hit

the front porch until maybe six o'clock in the evening. But at that time, we were still fresh because nobody, until seven or eight o'clock, knew what Reagan's condition was.

You know, I had to stop the press twice that day.

JE: Wow. Unusual in the life of any newspaper—

JJ: Oh yeah.

JE: ...to stop the press.

Chapter 15 - 4:50

Fun Stories

John Erling: As a young boy, when did you think you wanted to emulate what your father did?

Jenk Jones: Well, I don't know if I ever emulated what Dad did. Uh, we took somewhat different paths and we had different areas. They always said I knew more about Oklahoma than he did, which I don't think is true. But, certainly, I covered the state. We both have been in every county seat in Oklahoma, and I've written stories from almost every county.

But I remember in the ninth grade we had to do an occupational thing. Well, I did it on being a police reporter. Because I used to go down on Saturday mornings when I was a young teen and watch them run all the people through police court and saw. And I always found that fascinating.

Then I used to go and throw the switches to let trains in and out of Tulsa at the switch tower. The guy that ran the switch tower would let me throw the switches to let passenger trains and other things through town. And because there were a lot of steps at the switch tower he loved to have me go down and hand out the orders to the freight trains as they came through. You know, stand there and hand them the forked stick and they'd grab the orders off.

And that was fifty yards from the Ape's Nest, which was probably the worst den of iniquity in Tulsa where you could get a guy killed for twenty-five bucks.

JE: Was that a bar?

JJ: Oh no, it was everything. A gambling den, drugs, whiskey, everything. It was at the tee junction of Archer and Greenwood. It's long since been torn down. It was an education just watching who went in and out of that.

I used to ride with cops from time to time. I can remember kicking in drug dealer's doors at four in the morning with the cops. Which is another way the police really trusted the *Tribune* because we had reporters out on about five of those. I just happened to be on one. I went in with Lynn Jones, who became one of the first women to really rise high in the police department.

JE: So that was as a teenager?

JJ: No this was—

JE: Early? Later on.

JJ: ...this was when I was an editor, actually.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: But they trusted us enough, this was a major operation that had to be carried out everywhere simultaneously. So we had reporters following the cops right through the door. It's interesting because you never know quite what's going to be there.

JE: Perhaps in those cases you were scooping the *Tulsa World* many times—

JJ: Yeah, yeah.

JE: ...and those kind of things.

JJ: And I had a lot of interesting experiences. I went down to the deepest face of the deepest coal mine in Oklahoma, sixteen hundred feet underground to do a story on the guys that worked down there and the dangerous work. I've gone out on manhunts and flown with the Air Guard bombing Arkansas, which is good exercise.

JE: Bombing Arkansas?

JJ: Yeah. They have a bombing range over there near Fort Smith. They come in and drop the bombs and then pull four G's coming out of it.

There are few places I've been that my insurance agent shouldn't know about. Like the Middle East. I interviewed one guy one night who was number two terrorist in the world. I was with several other journalists. We met in a dark room because this guy moves every hour.

And we interviewed some people who were in the anti-Arafat PLO, and when you go down in their bunker you go past a couple of teenagers with AK-47s guarding the door.

I've been underneath the DMZ and a tunnel the North Koreans dug, not for exercise.

JE: And you wrote stories from over there.

JJ: Oh yeah. Yeah. I—

JE: The *Tribune* would often have staff-written stories from many, many countries.

JJ: Right. One decade I just got ambitious and went back and counted and I think we had sixty countries that staff members had written stories from. Even Dick Jones, who was not a born writer, I mean, he was head of the Southern Newspaper Publishers and the Bureau of Advertising and the vice president of the *Associated Press*. But Dick was a businessman. He went to China, one of the first Americans to get into China, went in with Lindblad. He wrote his impressions.

Dick was, as I said, not a trained writer but he was a great people person and a great observer of people and of life. So he dumped ninety tripled-spaced pages on my desk and said, "Here, fix these up."

So it took a certain amount of hatcheting and clefting and putting leads and summarizing or wrapping up a story at the end. But Dick's observations were so good,

about everything from watching an operation where they used the needles instead of an antiseptic, to greeting school kids, to the fact that you could never throw anything away in China.

He had a soiled baseball cap and an empty ballpoint pen and he tried to hide them in trash bins and so on. And invariably somebody would come running out to the bus waving his hat or pen saying, "Mr. Jones, you forgot!" So he had just some great things.

Well, anyway, we ran that series because it was such an eye-opener. He got tremendous credit for that. So they're after every trip he took. He wrote at least one story.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And would bring it to me to edit.

Chapter 16 - 2:15

The Rambler

John Erling: We should mention the Rambler column.

Jenk Jones: It started by my dad back, I think, in the '30s before he became editor. And then Roger Devlin took it over for many, many years. Roger did a lot of it by just wandering around downtown and talking to people. Of course, he eventually got known by a lot of people in town and it was mostly bits and snippets of things.

Troy Gordon's column was somewhat similar in the *World*.

And then my brother Dave took it over, he having been a former Washington reporter and an entertainment editor, came at it in somewhat different thing.

But anyway, three different people ran that column for over half a century, which is pretty good sense of continuity. And we had some other great columnists.

Jay Cronley came to us. Of course, his dad was an excellent sportswriter on the *Oklahoman*, and so Jay grew up in the business too. And he was himself a tremendous athlete, played baseball for OU and so on.

I remember Jay learning to write in the column form that he used. I often use him as an example because I would edit him but Jay would write and rewrite and rewrite a piece until he got it the way he wanted. Of course, the more you do that then the less rewriting you have to do. Because you begin to learn the shortcuts to doing things correctly.

Jay was a tremendous column writer who has had more than a dozen books published and I don't know how many magazine articles and so on.

And then we had writers like Mike Sowell, who is now a professor of journalism at OSU, who was one of the great light-touch writers.

We had Jim Downing, who was Buddy Fallis's father-in-law, who would write stories about his family that were absolutely hilarious. As an example of the kinds of things we did, we sent Jim to drive from Tulsa to Panama and record his experiences. This was forty-some years ago.

At every border he came to it was just about like the Berlin Wall. They were never open for business, they always wanted *baksheesh*, or as they say in Spanish, *la mordida*, "the bite," the bribe for getting through. And, of course, the roads were full of potholes that could swallow an ordinary automobile. So Jim had some funny, funny stories, but he was pretty good in Spanish so he could get stories from the people.

Chapter 17 - 7:40

Tribune Closes

John Erling: The newspaper came to an end in 1992. What dictated that it became an afternoon? Was it because the *Tulsa World* was already here as a morning paper? And then you took the afternoon?

Jenk Jones: I—I—I really don't know. But for a long time, being an afternoon paper was an advantage. Afternoon papers tend to have the higher circulation. Daylight Savings Time was one thing that hurt afternoon papers because people could stay outside working or gardening or something until nine o'clock, by which time they were getting ready to go to bed. And, of course, the evening news telecast, both network and local, bad as it, and it's pretty bad, hurt papers. So it just became a trend across the country.

Yeah, I think if we'd been a morning paper we would have survived. The main thing was I think the *World* had gotten tired of getting trampled in every journalism contest and they wanted to be the only paper in town. And we were in there building. If we had tried to go out on our own it would have bankrupted both newspapers because the tremendous cost of setting up buildings, presses, distribution systems, and everything else, so it probably would have been in the seventy-five to a hundred million dollar range.

This was the time when Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, St. Louis, and so were all losing afternoon papers. And yet, it would have been a tremendous battle, not only for circulation, but for advertising that would have devastated the *World* as well.

JE: So subscriptions began to dwindle years before you finally closed? Or when did that begin to happen?

JJ: It was maybe ten years before. I think our top circulation is maybe eighty thousand.

JE: Then it came down to sixty thousand?

JJ: Well, in the end of the sixties.

JE: So there was a growing concern then that you realized this was coming to an end?

JJ: Well, I was hoping—we had a very solid core of readers. Of course, we lost some as they died off or moved away, but there was much less churning of *Tribune* readers than there was of *World* readers. There was the *World* might sign on ten readers and lose eight. And we might sign on three and lose two. Our readers tended to be more—

JE: More loyal.

JJ: More loyal, more faithful, whatever you want to use. But I don't think it helped the fact that the general manager of the Newspaper Printing Corporation was brought in by Bob Lorton with no input from us. And went into the Oklahoma Offset Publishing business with Bob Lorton with us cut out of that. So I just thought we were never given an equal break on circulation efforts and things like that. But, you know, you have to look at the trends. Certainly, I think we were a great newspaper.

JE: The final date was?

JJ: September 30, 1992. As Roosevelt said, "A date that will live in infamy."

The day before we had a staff meeting. My dad came out, he always had an actor in him. I think from his father. He said that he had hoped that the *Tribune* would go out on top. And he felt that our efforts at the end were as good or better than they had ever been. So he turned to the newsroom here, there, and said, "I thank you, I thank you, I thank you." Turned and walked into his office. There wasn't a dry eye.

JE: Yeah I bet not. I'm proud to say that I was there and broadcast my show from the paper that day on the same floor. Your father was on my program and I was able to visit with him about those final days. The fact that he allowed me in on it, I was proud of that.

JJ: Well, I think one thing, you know, it's not to toot a horn, necessarily, but we were journalists. We did not inherit a newspaper and then go out to Vail on our private jets to our multimillion dollar homes. We inherited a newspaper, we worked at it, and we had people who worked at it. Not only we but the people who worked there had a real love of journalism and an understanding of what good journalism meant. I'll always be proud of that.

JE: Yeah. It had to take a long time for not only yourself but the staff that was there to move on and to live with this for weeks and months.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: The fact that here was something that was so alive and so in our community was now dead.

JJ: Well, I know that I put up a thousand dollars a person if people would stay to the end.

And I think we only had one that left. And he was our Oklahoma City reporter who was a lawyer. He got an offer for a law firm so that made sense for him to go.

JE: Oh, if they'd stay till the end they'd each get a thousand dollars for staying?

JJ: Yeah. That was out of my pocket.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: 'Cause I figured that would at least pay their rent for a couple or three months while they looked around for something.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: It was too bad because the *World* kind of played games. I told the *World* that they had free rein to talk to any of my reporters. So as soon as the *Tribune* closed they could hire them on. And they didn't let on whether they would or they wouldn't until after it was over. And that left a lot of people in a kind of a limbo that didn't need to be.

The same way in the composing room, I guess it was under this federal law that I don't like but they told about two hundred that they could lose their jobs. And it wound up, I think, maybe twenty did. But they caused a lot of uproar in the mechanical departments too.

JE: Because they weren't, obviously, doing the work of the *Tribune* and so they—

JJ: Yeah, well, there were other places they could be moved within the organization but I always feel if you're facing a bad situation you try and get people to know as quickly as possible what they can do. And when you right on up to the last paper and people still didn't know if they were going to get an offer from the *World* or what, I just thought that was badly handled.

JE: How many were hired then by the *World*?

JJ: I think at one time there were twenty-some. A lot of them have left now. The *World* still has Cronley, of course, Mike Wyke, a good photographer, and Dave Sittler, who's an award-winning writer. He told me once, after having worked with the *Tribune*, the *Oklahoman*, and the *World*, he'd worked at the high, the low, and now he was seeing the in between.

And Barry Lewis, who was one of the most energetic reporters, a guy who never forgot anything. If a guy came through Tulsa in 1953 for a double-header, Barry would remember him. Probably remember what he had that day. He covered both hockey and baseball for us. Did the same for the *World*. Now he's covering their high school sports.

Both he and Sittler were people I could have put on any beat on the paper, political writer, state capitol, whatever, just good reporters who happened to go on sports.

And sports is where I started. Sports is where a lot of people started.

JE: While the afternoon newspapers were dying all across the country—I don't know if there is an afternoon newspaper today in the United States.

JJ: Well, there are probably more afternoon newspapers than there are morning. But they're in smaller cities.

JE: Okay.

JJ: Well-run newspapers in smaller cities and even weeklies will do pretty well because they don't have the outside competition. They're closer to their community. They don't try and

report on world events and national events and so on. Most of the times, they may have a local radio station but you know that can't compete news wise with the newspaper. Most of them don't have local television to deal with so they can stay much more focused on local colleges, high schools, civic events, and so on.

Chapter 18 - 2:40

Future of Newspapers

John Erling: So here in 2011, while afternoon newspapers, basically, were going out, the morning newspapers are under siege as well.

Jenk Jones: True.

JE: We could use that word, I guess, because of the Internet. Where do you see this going? Can you look into the future?

JJ: Well, I'm scared to death. Um, I think the Internet is a horribly inadequate thing. And people say, "Well, I won't take the paper, I'll read it on the Internet." Where do they think most of the Internet news comes from? It's straight out of the newspapers. There's nothing out there generating news on the Internet itself. They're picking up *ESPN*, the *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *CNN*, things like that. But those are all coming from outlets. There's no Internet news reporting.

Well, if you kill off the major newspapers, and we know that television networks are, by and large, getting out of the news business, where's your news going to come from? And where's your local news going to come from? That's even more difficult because there's just so many things that the printed page can do in terms of telling you what street closings there are, school menus, how the local hockey team or basketball team did, the latest tiffs in the City Council, and so on. It's never covered by broadcast journalism.

And broadcast journalism has the advantage of immediacy, but it has an awful lot of disadvantages, as you're well aware, and time available.

JE: So people are saying, "Well, I can read," let's say, "the *Tulsa World* on my iPhone."

JJ: But what if there's no *Tulsa World*?

JE: Right. So you think it will ever—

JJ: There will always be something out there but the quality of the something can be greatly reduced. Because it takes a lot of money to staff any kind of a news organization, whether it's *CBS News*, or the *Tulsa World*, or what. And it takes a certain degree of expertise. You can't just hire a couple of guys and say, "Fill up twenty minutes of space," and have anything that's worth using.

JE: I can't think of a major city now but it seems like there's some the morning paper have just decided to cease printing the hard copy and you can access the Internet. Do you think it will come to that? That the newspaper will exist but they'll not print and deliver?

JJ: Well, it may but it's a very difficult way to read a newspaper.

JE: Right.

JJ: First of all, with a newspaper you can just flip through it and the headline that catches your eye or the story you're looking for is right there. It's a mess scrolling through the Internet.

JE: But a lot of people are reading it that way today.

JJ: Well, maybe so and maybe a whole new generation. But they're going to get a poorer product.

Chapter 19 - 4:50

Student Advice

John Erling: Journalism students, thinking about the newspaper business, and as gloomy as that might seem right now in our talk, what do you say to a person who wants to come out and be a newspaper reporter?

Jenk Jones: Well, like I say, there's always going to be reporting. One of my former students at OSU was quoted yesterday quite a bit because of the damage of the GRDA lakes and so on. He's been a GRDA spokesman for fifteen or twenty years, Justin Alberty. He was an A student, and getting an A out of me is not easy. He's taken his reporting talents and he's the spokesman for the GRDA now.

So there are a lot of things. I used to tell the kids that even though they might not go into journalism there were three things we could teach them. That was how to gather information, how to assess it, and how to present it. I said, "There's an awful lot of CEOs who can't do that, who can't write a coherent paragraph." The person who can take a mess of information and put it together in a logical way and figure out what's really relevant and then present that in a game plan, those are skills that are valuable in any business you go into.

But, gosh, if I'd sat here fifty years ago and we'd been talking and nobody would have envisioned email or the Internet or anything like that. So—

JE: Some people have found their writing skills in blogging, and they may never have been hired by a traditional newspaper, whatever, so they're beginning to blog and form opinions in that way. So it's probably employed even more writers.

JJ: Well, the thing that scares me about blogging is most bloggers are coming from a certain point of view that they're trying to present and I think you would end up with polar

opposites. In other words, you'd end up with a *FOX News* presentation and an *MSNBC*, and it would be mostly argumentative and propagandist rather than trying to be informative.

Occasionally something comes up on a blog that's worth pursuing. It's almost like a tip. But so much of it is opinion, often embittered opinion. It's a poor substitute for something that you try to make balanced. But the whole idea of journalism, as you know, is to present the information and let the public decide.

JE: I don't know if they're differing much from the traditional editorial pages we've had of our newspapers?

JJ: Well, the editorial pages are fine, as long as they're on the editorial pages. A newspaper without an opinion is pretty spineless. It's almost just another shopper. But you keep the editorial pages and the news pages separate. Sort of like what's in Vegas stays in Vegas, what's on the editorial page stays on the editorial page. And the news pages should be presenting information in as unbiased a fashion as possible.

JE: Are you glad you're not in the newspaper business today?

JJ: No. I'd love to be in it. I wake up several times a month, usually, trying to make deadlines somewhere, invariably with complications that drive editors nuts. But I've made a new career as a museum docent, as a Tallgrass docent, and I'm just finishing a book on the first twenty years of the Tallgrass Prairie. So I'm very deeply involved with the Nature Conservancy.

Gerry and I have both worked at Gilcrease's docents and will continue Gilcrease work.

JE: You just mentioned your wife's name.

JJ: Gerry.

JE: The two of you have been married for how long now?

JJ: Going on fifty-two years.

JE: And your children?

JJ: Janny is a fifty-year-old. She's a mother in Dallas. A private pilot is her husband. She had an MBA and she still does a tremendous amount of volunteer work in the Dallas area. Her two children, one is a junior at the University of Denver, the other is in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica.

Then our son just got married last year at almost forty-seven. So we have not only a stepdaughter but two delightful step-grandkids who already are bilingual and one is working on a third language, and he's eleven. He jumped a cue ball over another ball and put a ball in the pocket the other day, at eleven. And I have to work like the Devil to break even with him now on the pool table.

JE: That's great. That's great.

Well, I appreciate this time you've given us to talk about a great newspaper. And some people in town will still say, "You know, I sure miss—"

JJ: Well, I said—

JE: ...“the *Tribune* in the afternoon.”

JJ: I get it several times a week. People find out that I was with the *Tribune* or people I know see me. And it was, it was a superior newspaper.

JE: I want to thank you, Jenk, very much for this.

JJ: Thank you.

Chapter 20 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma’s legacy one voice at a time, on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.

Chapter 17A – 12:43
Goodbye Tulsa Tribune

John Erling (JE): In case you're just joining us, we are broadcasting from the 7th floor of the Tribune Building on this, the final day. The headline in the paper tonight will be: "Goodbye, Tulsa." Seated right here, in the chair that is normally yours, right? In the conference room is Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Sr. Good morning, sir.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Sr. (JS): Good morning. Morning, John.

JE: Your father, Richard Lloyd Jones, bought the paper back in 1919?

JS: Correct.

JE: Some of you wonder why we have Charles Page Boulevard around town and so forth. Didn't he buy it from Charles Page?

JS: He bought it from Charlie Page, yes.

JE: It was then the Democrat Tribune, I believe.

JS: No, it was then The Democrat.

JE: Okay.

JS: And, then, you're going to have to make a gradual transition if you're going to change the name of a newspaper. So, for a brief period, it was The Democrat Tribune, and then he changed it to The Tribune.

JE: "Tribune," I guess it was, since about 1920. This investigative image that the paper has — not just an image, reality — how did that come about? Was that the spirit of your father who started the paper?

JS: That was pretty exciting. When we got to Tulsa there was a major scandal, for example, with cement contractors and the city paving. They were just beginning to pave the city. And they didn't take the investigative stories very kindly; and I remember as a child the living room filled up all night with people bearing pistols because the rumor was they were going down to clean up the family.

JE: (Chuckling)

JS: So, coming from the very quiet environs of a university town in Wisconsin, that was a very heady thing for an 8-year-old kid.

JE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. You had a choice, then, to continue this investigative style. You promoted this down through the years.

JS: Well, we always looked upon investigation not as nitpicking, not as headline-seeking, not as circulation-building, but as keeping the community on the rails.

JE: Yeah.

JS: And if you don't do some of that, you get yourself a spreading cancer and then it gets very difficult to control. I was reminded of the old socialist police chief of the — or, the socialist mayor of Milwaukee — who kept allowing the gangs to move into Milwaukee until they had spent a lot of money on slot machines, and then he'd raid 'em all. And that cost them a couple of million dollars; and after awhile, they quit moving into Milwaukee. Well, I think you have to do that type of thing if you're going to have a livable community.

JE: I read a quote here last night: "A people without reliable news is sooner or later a people without the basis of freedom" - Harold Laskie said that back in the early 50s. An issue you're proud the paper supported, or maybe an expose of some problem in the community — and there's probably several of them — but one that may jump to mind?

JS: Well I think the thing that I'm proudest of is the fact that we ended what the British call a "rotten borough" system. You remember back in the early

19th century, the parliament was being controlled by boroughs that hardly existed anymore — the industrial age had come, the population had shifted — and that became a great issue in Britain.

Well, we had a rotten borough system in Oklahoma in which the legislature would outright refuse to reapportion the state legislature in spite of the fact that what had existed in 1907 was no longer valid later. And the result was that, for example, the citizens of Love County has 9 times the representation in the state senate than the citizens of Tulsa County. It cost us some money. We had to sue in the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court said we were right, but they were sure that the legislature would take care of it. 10 years later, we had to sue again because the legislature didn't take care of it. We finally got the state reapportioned and we thought that was a public service.

JE: Yeah. This day — you probably, I don't know — when you knew this day was going to happen, but there must have been a time you thought this day was never going to happen.

JS: Well, even newspapers have been in difficulty. Reading habits have changed. I don't think that we were very optimistic about our chance of survival for the past 5 years.

JE: I see. What did you tell the staff yesterday?

JS: I told 'em I was proud of 'em. I told 'em that in the 2 months between the announcement that The Tribune would fold and today, I wondered what would happen to the quality of the newspaper, to the dedication of the staff. I said I hoped that The Tribune would be missed; but I wasn't sure that we wouldn't go out wagging a crippled tail. I could have put those fears to rest. I don't think we have ever been better. And I told the staff that I was deeply grateful.

JE: How would you like us to remember The Tulsa Tribune?

JS: As I'm saying today in an editorial, I want them to remember that The Tribune went under with sails set and its colors flying.

JE: Nice. Thank you.

JS: Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Sr. Thank you, sir. Erling in the morning here at 740 KRMG. It is 8:51AM. More, coming up!

— *Music for The Tulsa Tribune plays* —

MUSIC: “I can read what I want to, anywhere that I choose, so bring me The Tulsa Tribune. It’s my kind of news.”

— *Music for The Tulsa Tribune fades* —

John Erling (JE): 7:46AM at KRMG. Sitting with me this morning is Jenk Jones, Jr. He’s sitting with his Final Edition t-shirt on. He has a Tulsa Tribune cap on. You’ve just finished a meeting. What was that meeting that you were doing up there?

Jenk Lloyd Jones, Jr. (JJ): A morning news conference. We go over the news from around the world, and around the state, and locally.

JE: Have you selected the headline yet?

JJ: Yes. We selected the headline. It’s “Goodbye, Tulsa.”

JE: Is that what it is?

JJ: Mhmm. (In agreement).

JE: “Goodbye, Tulsa.” You had a little contest — I guess you had a number of headlines to choose from.

JJ: Yeah. We had a number of headlines to choose from.

JE: That’s what it’ll be when it hits the streets this afternoon just after 11 o’clock this morning, I understand.

JJ: Well, it will be unless something happens in the interim. (Chuckling)

JE: (Chuckling) Now... You've been with the paper for so many, many years, but an area of expertise for you has been national and international coverage and I know the paper's been proud of that because you've had people that actually — in all four corners of the world, as we say.

JJ: Yes. My dad has been around the world 5 times to 125 countries and both poles. I haven't quite matched that, but I'm working on my second hundred. But we have many reporters and editors who have traveled. In an average decade, The Tribune will have at least 60 different countries represented by Tribune bylines. My wire editor, Mike Lester, is one of the best who's worked at any newspaper in terms of his knowledge of the world and the significance of the events. That's what has made The Tribune unique, John, is that we have people who understand what's important in national and international news; and I think it makes your selection better.

JE: Well, a lot of newspapers don't do that anymore. I mean, they have people who rip the wire and take it from whatever news source.

JJ: Yeah. We try to have people who are well-grounded in history, political science, and economics and just the general understanding of the world. Jim Sellars, our associate editor, who I've sent to the Soviet Union four times, Jim speaks Russian fluently and have been able to come up with stories that, frankly, a lot of newspapers bigger than The Tulsa Tribune could not produce.

JE: Yeah. You must be very proud of this. I mean, this is family. Two families. Your immediate family: your father, your grandfather... But then you had a family —

JJ: Don't forget a brother, a sister, a son, a niece ... Yeah, it goes very deep. But we have, as you said, it's always been The Tribune family. We've tried to hire good people, and treat them well, and give them a great deal of responsibility and opportunity to do their own thing. And we've also tried to help them by sending them to many corners of the world. A lot of my reporters and editors have been sent to Latin America, Asia, Europe, Africa — to report on the news, because there's nothing that gives you the familiarity like seeing the place firsthand.

JE: Frosty Troy is going to have some comments in the next hour and we've pre-recorded them, and I think it's a great tribute to you and the whole Jones family is he says never was he told he couldn't do a story, was always given freedom to do this and that, and I'm sure every reporter to a tee would say the same thing.

JJ: Well, you know, reporters are bright people. They're well-educated, they're curious people, they have a great sense of wanting to serve the public. So, to muzzle bright people is to destroy much of the reason you hired them in the first place.

JE: An investigative style — that is certainly a part of the newspaper, raising money for special events... There's a long list — in fact, it'll be in tonight's paper, I think — of the things that were raised.

JJ: Well, I guess in summing it up, John — and, certainly, we thank you and KRMG for your help on the neediest families — the basic reason for The Tribune, always, has been not only to inform the public and sometimes to entertain it, but to try and make Tulsa and Oklahoma a better place to live. It's a fairly simple philosophy, but I think it's a pretty good one.

JE: How would you like the paper to be remembered?

JJ: Fondly.

JE: Good. Thank you, Jenk.

JJ: Thank you.

JE: I appreciate it very much. Jenk Jones, Jr. goes back to work on the newsroom floor. 7:50AM with Erling in the Morning at 740 KRMG.

— *Brief pause* —

JE: Erling in the Morning at KRMG from the 7th floor — the newsroom — of The Tulsa Tribune. My thanks to The Tribune for allowing me this opportunity to say goodbye to them. They say goodbye to you in their final

edition out in the streets, a little after 11 o'clock this morning; and I, too, would like to say goodbye.

You know, everyone in the electronic media has used The Tulsa Tribune as their source for an entire story, or it gave them an idea for another story. Sometimes we gave credit and sometimes we didn't. I personally liked The Tribune because they were not afraid to take a stand, knowing they would stir things up. It wouldn't always make them friends, perhaps even putting them at odds with the power structure of the city. In the newspaper business, The Tulsa Tribune was the closest you'd ever get to being the people's voice.

I enjoyed using the editorials, the letters to the editor, or calling the editor either to support my point of view or challenge its view. And The Tribune never called to complain about how they were treated on the radio. They took their hits, moved on down the road. I think they were too busy working on their own issues — its own special projects to improve the community.

Somehow the driveway at my house is going to look a little emptier and I'll miss seeing that yellow car driven by The Tribune carrier. Thank you, Tulsa Tribune for inspiring us in the broadcast business and bringing a feeling of family to all of Tulsa. As of today, Tulsa loses a good neighbor. Shalom.

— *Music for The Tulsa Tribune plays* —

MUSIC: "I can read what I want to, anywhere that I choose, so bring me The Tulsa Tribune. It's my kind of news."

— *Music for The Tulsa Tribune fades* —

Announcer: Shop talk in Tulsa, Oklahoma's Tribune. Yesterday's edition was the last after 73 years. Some of us Tulsans growing up didn't know what we thought about things until we'd read what Jenkin Lloyd Jones had to say about it. Somebody save me a copy of the final edition. I understand Jenk wrote the page one obit.