

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Oklahoma native John L. Massey grew up in Boswell, Guthrie, and Durant and graduated from Southeastern State University (now Southeastern Oklahoma State University) in 1960. While a senior in college, he won his first race for the State House of Representatives, serving two terms in that body and two additional terms in the state Senate. Mr. Massey left the Senate in 1970 to devote full attention to business interests.

He has owned and established over 20 businesses, operated Holiday Inns and other motels in southeastern Oklahoma and north Texas, and developed apartment complexes in both Durant and Oklahoma City.

In 1966, he joined the Durant Bank and Trust Company as a director and was appointed chairman of the board in 1986.

John contributed \$1 million to establish four John L. Massey Endowed Chairs in the School of Business at his alma mater as well as the landmark Durant Bank and Trust Building in Durant to the university to establish its Mainstreet Campus. In May of 2005, the business school was renamed in his honor.

John was 86 when he died June 24, 2022.

You can hear John talk about his hard work, which led to business success, on the oral history website and podcast VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 7:27

First Job

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling, and today's date is February 7th, 2013. John, state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age, please.

John Massey (JM): I'm John Lewis Massey. My date of birth was 5-21-36...76.

JE: Tell us where we're recording this interview.

JM: First United Bank in Durant, Oklahoma.

JE: Where were you born?

JM: I was born in Durant, but I only lived here a few months before I moved to Boswell, Oklahoma. My dad had a funeral home business. He moved the family to Boswell, Oklahoma, and I lived there until I was 14.

JE: Just a little bit about this town, Durant. It's a beautiful city. They have the Magnolia Festival here. Just a little comment about Durant.

JM: Durant is a wonderful place to live, and we've got a very, very excellent school system. We have a university here. A lot of activity goes on for young people as well as adults. It is a very nice town to live in and raise your family.

JE: It's a beautiful high school I saw a driving in.

JM: We're very devoted to our school system. We passed a sales tax issue for eight-tenths of a cent to pay for that building over 25 years.

JE: And then the name of the university is?

JM: Southeastern Oklahoma State University, the School of the Rising Sun.

JE: And we'll be talking more about that, but the weekend following Memorial Day is your Magnolia Festival.

JM: That is correct.

JE: Your mother's name?

JM: Jenny Massey.

JE: And her maiden name?

JM: Jenny Bryant.

JE: Where was she born? Where did she live and grow up?

JM: Kentucky. Her mother and dad both died in the same week when she was 14 years old. Family got the six kids. Five of them got to stay pretty close. One, which was a baby, was adopted out to somebody else, and she had never found him. But five of them were adopted by Ken Fulks in the Boswell area. She lived here until she died when she was 88 years old. She lived here in Durant.

JE: Oh, Durant.

JM: We moved to Durant in 1951. We moved away from Boswell in 1952. In 1950, lived in Guthrie one year, and then moved to Durant.

JE: What was her personality like?

JM: She was the most wonderful person you'll ever meet in your life. A dedicated Christian lady, always thankful. I never heard her complain about nothing. And no kidding, her family complained about anything. And I tell you what, if you complain about something, she said, "if you can't do anything about it, keep your mouth shut." And she was a great leader, a great lady. And I think the greatest thing I've ever done in my life was, I built a chapel in her honor at Falls Creek, so every young kid could understand what Jesus Christ really stood for.

JE: And Falls Creek is a Baptist youth camp.

JM: Largest youth camp in America.

JE: Yeah, and you built a chapel in her honor.

JM: Her honor.

JE: She obviously had a big impact on you in your life.

JM: Very, very much so. She always told me one thing, do what's right. And if you don't know what's right, pray about it. But do what's right. And I have carried that throughout my life. I think her motto is doing the right thing for the right people.

JE: So many times, as you were in the legislature and all, there could become issues. Your mother's words probably were in the back of your head.

JM: That is correct.

JE: You could have chosen left or right.

JM: To stick with the truth and go on down the road.

JE: Your father's name?

JM: Emmett Massey.

JE: Where was he born and grew up?

JM: At Boswell, Oklahoma.

JE: So, obviously, that's where they met.

JM: Yes.

JE: What was he like? Describe his personality.

JM: My daddy was an outgoing guy, a fun-loving person, a very smart man. A very good man. My dad went broke in the funeral business in 1936. And he went to work for a company called Co-op Publishing Company out of Guthrie. And until they sold that company, he was on a salary. And it always bothered him. It wasn't enough.

And he went through some tough times. But my dad, whenever he was around 60 years old, he got on his feet and did the same thing he'd been doing all of his life, but he got the profit instead of the company getting it. And he'd sell these orders. He called on courthouses and sold all office

supplies and those big binders that they have and everything.

He printed those for them. And he was very, very successful the last seven or eight years of his life.

JE: So that was his business?

JM: Yeah. He did really well. He had a heart attack and he was coming out of the hospital. And I said, "Mom and Daddy, y'all sit down here and let me go over there and pay this bill so they won't be bothering Mother." And he said, "I'll pay the bill." And I thought, my gosh.

The next morning, I ran the Holiday Inn back in those days. And he came out of my office that morning and told me how much money he had saved. And I was shocked. But it was wonderful. They had bought a home. And Mama lived in a little home over on Willow Street here. And after I got making money, I said, "Mama, would you like a nicer home?" She said, "this is the nicest home in the world. What do you mean, boy?" Anyway.

JE: So your father was a businessman.

JM: My father was a salesman.

JE: Did you draw something from that thinking of sales?

JM: I've always been insolent. You know, I was with Daly Oklahoma for 13 years here. And I had a distributorship here in Durant and Bryan County. And then I had the living textbook program in southeast Oklahoma.

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

JM: Yes, I have a brother and sister older and a brother and sister younger.

JE: Your early beginnings in your family, you weren't wealthy.

JM: We lived in a four-room house. There was nine of us in that house. We didn't have any running water. We did have electricity. Yes, it was tough. But, you know, back in those days, you didn't know how tough it was. You

didn't realize it until you get something better than how tough that was. But that was all training.

You know, I'm a firm believer that everything in my life was preordained by the good Lord. And the trials and tribulations that I went through early in life were all growing to this job that I've got today. I'm a firm, firm believer in that. Because, you know, I see kids get knocked down and don't know how to get up and go on. But when you're poor and they get knocked down, you have to get up and go on.

JE: Did you have jobs early on as a youth?

JM: It started in the fourth grade. The third week of school, my teacher asked me when I was going to get my textbooks. I said, I hope this week. But I was embarrassed that she asked me. And I would borrow the other kids' books at night so I could get my lessons. And I started crying. I got up and left. And I went downtown.

Okay, I have a name. A Mr. Howard sold textbooks. And I asked him if I could have my books. It's \$4. And I would pay him back by shining shoes on the street every Saturday for four weeks. I had a paper route, but only made a dollar probably a week. But I got him paid back in two weeks. And this man kept up with me the rest of his life.

And one time he stopped by the Holiday Inn. And every time he'd see me, "How much debt you got now?" I was up for about \$40 million. And then I thought he was going to have a heart attack. And I got thinking about it almost had one too, you know. But anyway, that was my first job. And I never asked my parents for any help after that. Fourth grade. I've had a job the rest of my life. Sometimes two and three of them. I made that talk one day I was introduced at South Oklahoma City Community College.

Ike Glass introduced me as a man that started with nothing and got something. I started in that story right there. And I told him, I'm going to do this. I told it for the first time that I had ever told it.

Chapter 3 – 11:15

Had Never Seen a Republican

John Erling (JE): First school you attended?

John Massey (JM): Boswell.

JE: Boswell Elementary.

JM: Yes. I went through eight grades at Boswell. And I had very, very good teachers. You know, I had the greatest school experience of my life in those first eight years. All the teachers knew your family and they didn't mind you got out of line, putting you in line real fast. Very disciplined school, but a very dedicated faculty that I couldn't say enough about.

JE: On into junior high school. Then?

JM: Junior high school. I went to Boswell for seventh and eighth. In the ninth grade, I went to Fogarty Junior High School in Guthrie. And that was really a wonderful experience. Never will forget it. I got there and went out for football. I got a job at Daly O'Cloyman, throwing papers at 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning. And then I had a job at Dairy and Ice Cream. It was owned by Ralph Hood, who was a great mentor to me the rest of my life and the rest of his life.

He's dead now, but I worked about 14 hours a day. And then I had enough money saved up that I didn't have to work through football season. And when I footballed in on the second game at Moore, Oklahoma. I'll never forget this because he picks the captain. The first week he picked a guy as captain. And the second week he picked me. And all the guys says," he thinks you're the second best football player on the team."

And it did something to me. It lifted me up from being a country boy that I was in town now, you know. And it was a great experience. Every time I drive down I-35 and I see that. It's a football field over there on the east side. That was where it was.

JE: In Moore, Oklahoma?

JM: Yeah.

JE: This thing of you working as a youngster, that was just an automatic with you. Nobody told you you had to. You just felt, I need to work.

JM: I have to. In order to have clothes and have things. You know, another thing happened to me at Guthrie. I dated a girl named Patty Gumerson. She died a few years ago. Her name was Patty Gibson, Fred Gibson's wife. She was my girlfriend and we'd have these little parties on Saturday night. I didn't have anything besides Levi's. That's all I owned.

I thought that was all I needed to own. But the boys were wearing slacks. And I didn't have any slacks. Ralph Hood bought me a pair of slacks at C.R. Anthony's. And did you know I never told that story until four or five years ago. I was coming out of Stillwater seeing a friend of mine that was on his deathbed.

And I stopped at Guthrie, Oklahoma and saw John Gumerson. Ralph Gumerson's son. I had lunch with him. And he said, "you know, John, you were here just one year. But you always kept up with my dad. And when he died, you sent an awful nice check for whatever he wanted it to go to." He said, "I don't understand that." And I said, "John, your dad bought me the first pair of slacks that I ever had." He said, "John, I didn't know that." I said, "he didn't tell anybody and I didn't either."

But I'll always remember Ralph Gumerson. The Gumerson family, all of them, John and Patty and their mother, just great. People in the world. Tell you another story about Guthrie. I had never seen a Republican. And I moved to Guthrie and a guy named Barnes, Lefty Barnes, was a Republican nominee for governor. And a guy by the name of Bill Clark and I, Bill is a professor of mathematics at Stephen F. Austin and has been for many, many years.

He lived in my neighborhood and I said, "I heard that there's a Republican lives here in town." He said, "well, most of them are." And I said, "really? What do they look like?" So we go over and sit catty corner from the

Barnes house. And he came out and I said, "well, he looks just like a regular person."

You know, I never seen one. So anyway, I saw Lefty Barnes. And of course, he had a daughter named Janie that was a friend of mine. She was in seventh grade. And Janie's son-in-law is a Democratic member of the state Senate from Norman, Oklahoma.

JE: How about that?

JM: I was with he and another guy one night. And this other guy got telling back whenever I was chief page of the Senate that I took these kids, some of the pages, and we went over Guthrie for something. And that guy said, "why did you go to Guthrie?" And I said, "I used to live there." And he said, "my mother-in-law was there. You probably wouldn't know her." And I said, "well, try me." He said, "Janie Barnes." I said, "ask her if she remembers John Massey."

JE: Were your folks politically active and they were Democrats?

JM: My dad was very active back in those days. That was after the Hoover administration. And you know how politics is. They blame the man in office for everything. He has nothing to do with it. But they blame him anyway because he tries to take credit for it and otherwise. But it was a thought process.

You know, it was 99% Democrats. Back whenever I was a senator from Bryan County, I bet there wasn't 20 Republicans in the county. And one of the Republicans was one of my dearest friends. It's Lou Hewitt, who was postmaster here. Lou, he was a great advisor to me. He was really a good man.

JE: Then you're into high school in Durant.

JM: Durant.

JE: And you played football?

JM: Played football. When I first got here, I went to work at a grocery store. And then I got a job at R.C. Pullet Company, which was a dry goods store. Then I worked on the ice docks. And then I went with my Uncle George, who opened George's Drive-In here. And I worked there the last two years in school. Worked there 40 hours a week. Played football. Taught Sunday school. I had a full schedule.

JE: You said ice docks. People who listen to this may not know what that is.

JM: Well, we fill up ice jugs in the morning, and people come by. And we delivered ice to homes. I did that one summer, but my regular job was running an ice dock. And that's filling up water jugs for workers as they go out to work that day. They'd come by and fill up an ice jug, charge 10, 15, 20 cents, you know, whatever the size of the jug was.

JE: So in high school, beyond football, were you involved in anything else in school?

JM: Oh, yeah, DECA. I always enjoyed DECA. That's Distributive Education Clubs of America, where you go to school half day and you work half day. I was in that two years.

JE: Were you a good student, do you think?

JM: I was above average student. Didn't probably apply myself as much. I think I started applying myself, I joined the Army in 1954 in November. Mike McCoy and I went on the buddy system, and he decided we should be in the Medical Corps because he had a brother-in-law that was in the Medical Corps. So we joined. And he flunked his physical, and they brought him home and took me on.

It was a great experience. I went through basic, and then I went to medical school down in San Antonio. And they put you in the field medics first for about a month, and then they moved you to this school. Once you go through that month, you learn how to study to stay in this school. Everybody in that class had a degree except me and a boy from California that was a National Guard just there for the school. And I learned how to study.

So I did real well. I got the honors student of the class. But I really got the honors student on OJT. They take your 12 weeks there at San Antonio, and then they take 12 weeks on the job training. Shifts go 7 to 3, 3 to 11. But I realized that if I'd go work at 6.30, I could meet the night shift. And then I'd work with the day shift. And I'd stay another 30 or 45 minutes after my shift to get acquainted with the evening shift. Because I knew they voted on what the students did.

And you go from department to department every two weeks. I won by a landslide. And I got a job. They sent me to Colorado Springs, Fort Carson. And we were interviewed, seven or eight of us, by the public health department. The man from the public health department asked me what I knew about venereal disease. I said, "I'd never heard of it." He said, "Have you heard of the claps?" And I said yes. But I didn't know it was venereal disease.

All of us went through, and he called three of us back. And he picked me. Now, can you believe, I was a private first class, I guess. I got an office. I got a secretary. And nobody could bother me. I was there for about, I guess, 16 months, 17 months. Had a great job. Sunday school superintendent. Got acquainted with a lot of good kids. I worked at a theater at night. A guy named Joe Anderson, who was Carl Albert's administrative assistant. He stopped by dad and says, "where's John? We need him to make speeches." "He's stationed in Colorado." "Have him put in for a transfer."

So dad called me. And I did. I wasn't sure I wanted to leave Colorado. It was nice. And I had good assignments. And I had a private room. I mean, just had everything a soldier would like. But I did. And the first sergeant said, "you type it up yourself. I'm not typing it up. It's going to be turned down." And I said, "just do it. I don't care." So he did and turned it down. And that was 10 o'clock in the morning.

At 1 o'clock, he came upstairs to my office. Said, "I've got to have you off this base by 6 o'clock." He said, "what in the world have you done?" I said, "I don't know." But anyway, I got transferred to Fort Walters, Texas. I get there, and they're changing the base from an Air Force base to an Army base. And put the helicopter school in. That's what they're doing. So I get

there, and there's not very many good soldiers around.

In other words, I got all the jobs I needed. So they put me in charge of sick call. All the patients come through you, and you assign them to the doctor in which they should be. I did that, and then they put me in charge of the Venereal Disease Department, Public Health Department there.

Then they put me NCO in charge of the new hospital. The major that was in charge of it, one of the nicest guys I've ever met in my life, got kicked out of the service for personal reasons. And the colonel, his name was Colonel Sweet, he said, "well, you've been doing all the work anyway. Just watch this." And I was in charge of building a pretty good-sized hospital. Now, back in those days, it was real big. How big it is today, I don't know. I haven't been back but one time since I got out.

But I was in charge of that, and that took about 12 hours a day, five days a week. But I'd sell encyclopedias at night. New standard encyclopedias. I got a \$20 down payment. And that was my commission. I sent the order in. They sent in the books. How many I'm paid, I don't know. I never saw a set of new standard encyclopedias until I was in college. And I saw a set one day. But I sold a lot of encyclopedias.

JE: You were like 19, 20 years old here.

JM: Oh, yeah. I got out of the service, and I was 21 years old.

JE: In 1957, I believe, you got out.

JM: Yes, sir.

JE: But this transfer came about through Carl Albert's office.

JM: Yes. I called my dad and told him that it had been turned down.

JE: And I'm sure he called—

JM: Joe Anderson. And Joe Anderson just stay still.

JE: I thought they were transferring you there because they wanted you to make speeches.

JM: That's right. Down here on the weekends, I'd come home and make speeches. I made two speeches. He had an opponent that year, some retired veteran over in eastern Oklahoma. And I spoke at Ida Bell at a big rally one night, and I made one other speech.

JE: And that was it?

JM: That was it.

JE: For Carl Albert?

JE: Uh-huh.

Chapter 4 – 6:14

Carl Albert

John Erling (JE): Tell us about Carl Albert. What kind of a person he was.

John Massey (JM): He's probably one of the greatest people in the history of Oklahoma. You know, he's a Rhodes Scholar, super intelligent. When the politics got a little hot on him, I'll never forget. He called me. He said, "if somebody would tell me what they want, I would know what to do, but nobody tells me. Because I'm speaker. I'm majority leader for that. I was honored everywhere I went. But very few people told me what they needed." Now, he did so much for their agriculture. I mean, we had ponds. We had everything.

And, you know, once we were able to tell him something that we wanted, he got it. You know, he wasn't a politician. He liked public policy. He liked the intellectual part of it. He was great. You know, he went to Richard Nixon and said, "Richard, this is getting real serious, your impeachment. I do not want to be president because your party won the election. And I

think that it's very important that you pick somebody to be vice president." It was a vacant job. The rumor is he helped him pick Gerald Ford.

JE: Oh, really?

JM: Yeah.

JE: Because Carl Albert was next in line of succession because he was a speaker of the House.

JM: That's right. He's totally good. His administrative assistant probably for the last 15 or 20 years there was Charlie Ward. Charlie Ward was editor of the newspaper in Durant and went and quit to go up there. And, of course, I knew him as a kid. But he has to be one of the greatest Christians I have ever known. I have seen him put up with stuff that nobody would put up with and walk away as Christ would.

JE: Charlie Ward.

JM: Charlie Ward. After he retired, he moved to Tulsa. His wife, Mary, still lives there. He died a few years ago.

JE: We should point out that Carl Albert was a very short man, wasn't he?

JM: Very short and very smart. You know, we had his birthday party every year until he died. And we had one after he died, I guess. But he was always in MacAlester. All the judges would come and all the different political people would come. It would be a big crowd there. Julian Rothbaum was the man that put it on. He paid for it himself out of his pocket.

But it was always a big crowd and always a fun day. I was in Tulsa. Oklahoma State University was having President Bush, senior. To be the speaker. This was after he went out of office. So they asked the regents to come in this room and have their picture made of the president. I've got the picture in my office of President Bush and I. And I said, "I'm honored to have my picture made with you today. And tomorrow, I'll have lunch with Carl Albert."

He said, "how's Carl and Mary doing?" I said, "They're doing fine. I said, Carl is sick. Sometimes he gets there and sometimes he don't. But his son, his daughter, his brother. His wife. If he's not there, they will be there."

He looked over to an aide and said, "where will I be tomorrow at 11:30?" And he gave me a phone number and he said, have one of them call me. Mary got there and I gave her the number. She called him. Mary got through talking to him. She said, "that's who we played bridge with every Saturday night when we went campaigning."

JE: How about that?

JM: They live next door to each other.

JE: That's great to hear because here we have a Democrat and a Republican liking each other. And we don't seem to have that today.

JM: You know, you interviewed Senator Garrison. He's one of my dearest friends. He was Republican leader whenever I was a Democrat. He and I and Gene Stott were together an awful lot. The two of them were the funniest two people that ever lived. Playing jokes on each other, so forth and so on. But, you know, I'm so glad that we loved the Republicans just like we loved the Democrats. I saw very, very little difference. Every once in a while, there'd be some bill that'd call up. A Democratic bill. But it was the right thing or I didn't vote for it.

But Denny Garrison, I'm so thankful. Dewey Bartlett, you know, I met the mayor, Dewey Bartlett, and talked to him. I knew his dad very well. We lived in the same hotel together. And when Dewey got elected governor, he called me up and said, "when are you going to be in the city?" And I said, "tomorrow." "Come by."

And I went in there. He said, "you know, I lost your district more than any other district in the state." And he said, "what I'm going to do is send a Republican down there to be president of that college." I said, "oh, you are?"

Yeah. So the time came, about a year and a half. And they had a guy lined

up from the University of Oklahoma, a Republican, to come to be president of Southeastern, except he wasn't for sure they had the votes. I'm having breakfast one morning at Sheraton Hotel. Bill Kerr was there.

Bill Kerr and I usually sat with each other and talked. He was chairman of the Democratic Party. He said, "John, You look like you're worried." And I said, "I am." I said, "there's not any Republicans in Southeast Oklahoma. And he wants to send a Republican president down there. And I've got to work with him because that college is the most important thing to Southeast Oklahoma as far as I'm concerned. And it bothers me."

He said, "who's on that board?" And I had listed them. He says, "John, I think I can talk to this one right here." I said, "how would you know him?" He said, "he does the audit for Kerr-MJEEe." So I got a call at 10 o'clock to meet him at Buff Bay. They had a deal they had out north of the capital. I forget the name of it now. It was made out of logs and stuff. So I met that regent there. And that regent changed. And he said, "don't tell the soul." I said, "could I talk to the superintendent of schools, state superintendent of public instructions who's on that board?" He said, "that would be all right." And I went to him. He said, "now we've got them 5-4." He didn't get his man, but he sure called me up. "How did you get that accomplished?"

JE: So who became president?

JM: Leon Hibbs. Leon was a great president for a long time. And then he went downhill. And my heart bled what he did to school and what he did to himself. And more about what he did to himself than anything. But he wasn't in on it by himself. There shouldn't have been other people punished.

Chapter 5 – 8:20

Never Lost an Election

John Erling (JE): When you then got out of the Army in 1957, what was your intent? What were you going to do then?

John Massey (JM): I came back to Southeastern, went to school, got elected on the Student Senate.

JE: Were you intending to go to Southeastern right away? Weren't you prompted to do that by somebody?

JM: Yeah. We rented a house south of the President's home. And Dr. Scheer, who was President of the College, he had no children, had one nephew. But he took an interest in me because I got up and went to work at 4 or 5 o'clock and come in at night. And he just took an interest in me. And nobody had ever mentioned me going to college.

My mother and dad, of course, they had eighth-grade educations. They never suggested it. Nobody in high school suggested it. So I got back from the Army and I enrolled in Southeastern. I was elected in the Student Senate, and then I got the outstanding freshman that year. Then the next year, I got the outstanding sophomore. And then I got the outstanding senior.

JE: Well, Dr. Scheer took an interest. Did he prompt you to go to Southeastern?

JM: Oh, yes. He prompted me all my life. He was like a second daddy to me. He was just such a great man. But, you know, one time he came out and he said, Mrs. Scheer, he was a southern gentleman, and Mrs. Scheer is what he called his wife, and I would like to buy you a muffler.

JE: A muffler?

JM: Yeah. My car muffler had gone out. And I said, "Dr. Scheer, I can't accept charity money. It beat me to death." I said, "week after next, I'm going to get one. It's \$7.11, and it's at Jimmy's Auto Supply, and I'll have a friend help me put it on." But I said, "I can't accept that." "John, he said, why don't you do this? Why don't you park your car in the front of the house instead of the side of the house? Because when you go down the side and you pop that muffler, that noise wakes my wife up."

He said, "why don't you go down the front?" I said, "Dr. Scheer, do you

know who lives down that street? Every house a college professor lives in for two blocks. It's all downhill. They teach. Your wife don't teach." I told that at her funeral or her memorial service.

JE: So your experience there at Southeastern was good, and you received a bachelor's degree there?

JM: Bachelor's degree, uh-huh.

JE: In 1960, I believe.

JM: 1960, and while I was a senior, I ran for the state legislature.

JE: Which you would have been then how old?

JM: I was 23. Whenever I ran, I got elected at 23, but it was 24 just a few days afterwards.

JE: What made you think you as a 23-year-old, which would make you of the youngest the state had ever seen, could run and be elected?

JM: I was state president of the Student Government Association, so I knew all the presidents of the student bodies very well. I went to most of the colleges, visiting, you know, the student government. I was very much involved in Young Democrats. And so a group of us decided that we'd all go back and run for the legislature. And there was an open seat here. I ran for that open seat and ran against a prominent attorney here in town and a soil conservationist. And I didn't get but 64 or 65 percent of the votes.

JE: That's all you got?

JM: But I knocked on every door in this county.

JE: So then why did you win if you were running against this older gentleman?

JM: Give a young man a chance. Then 10 years later, I told him, "experience counts."

JE: Right. So was it based on that, give a young man a chance?

JM: No, I didn't. I based it on wanting to be a servant. I'd always been a servant. I'm still a servant. It thrills me to serve. It thrills me to give. It's my DNA, you know. I can get all that from my mother.

JE: 23, did any other political folks come and help you campaign and help you?

JM: Oh, no. I had every college kid in Bryan County. I belonged to a fraternity called Sig Taws. We had mostly. We had country kids in that fraternity, and we took petitions, and whenever precinct, when they got a majority of people signed up, that was it. And then I'll tell this story.

Kay Bass, he was a brother-in-law of one of my opponents. He'd give me a \$100 bill every Sunday morning at 5 o'clock at the paper office. "Can't vote for you, but wish you well". And he said, "just taking those petitions up there, don't do it. They'll follow the projection, and they'll postpone, postpone." He said, "take this \$100 bill and go up there and file." And I did. And I filed with money and a petition.

JE: Maybe you just out-hustled your opponent, and you had all these young people that were helping you. And that's what got you in. You served two terms?

JM: Two terms.

JE: Any issues that you dealt with at the time?

JM: Yes. When I first got elected, I had a Democratic caucus, and J.D. McCarty was elected speaker. He asked me, he said, "what issue are you excited about?" And I said, "education." I said, "what I'd like to do is get the money raised for free textbooks." And we raised it to \$5. And that was enough for books for grade school and high school. I didn't tell him the whole story. I did on the floor of the house. I told the story.

And the woman that heard the story, that asked me for my books, her husband was state senator here when I was a little boy. He ran for

Congress in '46 and got beat and left and went to New Mexico. Of course, it became unthinkable. I had a big story to a lot of people. And she found it out there, and she called me. She said, "I wouldn't hurt you for nothing in the world." And I said, "you didn't hurt me. You made me".

I said, but look what we accomplished. Maybe we got an extra dollar on textbooks for our children.

JE: The story of you earning enough money to buy those books. And alludes to earlier how things are placed in our life to set us up for the next level.

JM: Every time. That's what's fascinating. I went to the house for four years. I ran against an incumbent for senator in '64. And he was a wonderful man and a good friend of my mom and dad's. His name was Senator Belvin, chief of the Choctaw Nation. Just a good man. But he had a hot temper. And the newspaper here wrote something one time. He called him Onionhead.

Bob Peterson didn't forget. He was a newspaper man. He was a good friend of mine. I ran for senator and liked just a very few votes, beating him and Sam Sullivan without a write-off. And then he pulled out. Then three months later, the Supreme Court ruled one man, one vote. So that's when we got redistrict. Well, Patience Ladding in Oklahoma City was the judge that asked her to divide the state. Bryce Baggett was her nephew. Bryce Baggett did it. And he sent me some money. And he said, maybe \$200, \$400. I said, "why in the world would you give me four incumbents?" He said, "because I thought you could beat all of them."

I did, you know. I beat Joe Bellicob. And Sam Sullivan. Jimmy didn't run. Bob Trent didn't run. Senator Medill didn't run. But I beat them. And, of course, I had a lot of respect for Joe Bellicob. I liked him very much. And, you know, after the race was over, we got to be friends again. And he always was very kind to me. And I was always kind to him.

JE: So you don't know what it feels like to be defeated, do you?

JM: No, sir.

JE: Never lost an election?

JM: No, sir. I've never lost at anything. And the reason why, every time I got knocked down, I knew how to get up. See, that's what you're taught by being poor, is get up. And you never let anybody tell you that you're bad. Never let anybody tell you that you're dumb. Never let anybody tell you anything bad about yourself. You know yourself. You know your weaknesses and strong points. And you use those.

I never will forget my senator, a guy here in town, an alcoholic. One day he said, "you know, you need to bring those bills down here for me to read." And I said, "why would I want you to read them?" He said, "so I could give you advice." I said, "do you think you'd ever be sober long enough to give me advice?"

But, you know, that man really thought the intellect is all you need in life. And I used to feel sorry for him because he'd come to the courthouse. After I got out of office, I was the only jury, and he came around about half drunk. And I thought, "Judge, why do you let him even come in here in a court-appointed case? It's just a brilliant man that threw it away over the bottle."

Chapter 6 – 14:00

Political Names

John Erling (JE): Governors at the time, Governor J. Howard Edmondson was the first governor you served under.

John Massey (JM): Good man.

JE: A little bit about him?

JM: J. Howard, I met him in 1958. I was speaking for W.P. Bill Lackson, and he came to Bryan County. He had a cousin here and had a pretty good-sized family. And they all came with him, and they came to Kemp, Oklahoma. I had to speak before him. So I spoke for W.P. Bill Lackson, and I come down,

and he spoke. And I thought, my gosh, why ain't I for him? You know, this is a dynamite.

I got acquainted with him. And then his first two years in office, Charlie Craig and I, representing the League of Young Democrats, got to go to the governor's office to visit with him. I never will forget, Charlie Craig told him he was state president of the Young Democrats, and he said, "you know, I'll win by a big margin because my dad runs a farm credit service. He approves loans for everybody out there. He does this. He does that. I'll win. John comes from a poor family, and he probably will have to run once or twice before he gets elected." We started. I started out the door. Howard Edson put his hand on my shoulder. He says, "I'll bet on you." And I won, Charlie Goss.

JE: That's great. You were a public speaker. Did that come naturally from that very beginning?

JM: It come from wanting to so bad back in 1946 when Carl Albert ran, Bill Steger ran, Fred LaServey ran. All these candidates would come through these little towns, put up their speakers, play music, get a crowd, make speech. They'd give me a quarter to hand out cards for them. Everybody gave me a dime to a quarter. Bill Steger gave me a dollar every time.

And Bill Steger gave me a dollar the rest of his life. He was a guy from Harvard. Princeton Law School to Harvard. Sharpest dresser in the world. Nicest guy in the world. He practiced law here in Durant. And every time we'd come from Bosworth to Durant to buy clothes or anything, I'd always go by his office because I knew I'd get a dollar. And after I moved here and I announced for the legislature, he said, "You know, you're announcing against my best friend." And I said, "But your best friend didn't work as hard for you as I did." He said, "You're right."

And Bill got disbarred for some reason. And I helped him get his license back. He moved to the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City and ran up to Darndest Bill up there. And the guy that owned it, I knew through Bill Dane. And he said, "You think he'll pay me?" I said, "Yeah, if you get some money, he'll pay you." I said, "It might take him some time, but I don't know of anybody he ever beat out any money."

And he paid him. He finally got into a big case at Blackville, Oklahoma. But he went under a shade tree and signed up all those workers. And he made money and lived the rest of his life. After he died, his son, who hung around the Capitol an awful lot and an awful good kid, he inherited all of his mama's stuff, his aunt's stuff, his daddy's stuff in West Texas, and got apparently a hold of a lot of money.

JE: Henry Bellman was the governor from '63 to '67. And you served under him. You served under him as well. But as you were in the legislature, you were a seatmate with Henry Bellman. Isn't that true?

JM: No. Henry Bellman and I got to be friends. I was vice chairman of appropriations, and I'm an early riser. So I'd go out to the Capitol a lot early in the morning and eat breakfast with Governor Bellman. He told me something one time. He took a piece of paper, and he turned it over like this.

And he said, "John, there's 20 percent over here, and there's 20 percent here, and there's 60 percent of us in the middle. There's some over here that are sold conservatives. They don't want government to do nothing. There's some over here that wants government to do it all. He said there's a happy medium in the middle, 60 percent of us." He lived that life, 60 percent in the middle. He didn't want to butter up the ultra-conservative or the ultra-liberal to either one. He became a very, very close friend of mine.

JE: Didn't you convince him to appoint Justice Ralph Hodges to the state Supreme Court?

JM: That's correct.

JE: And Ralph Hodges was pretty young at that time.

JM: He was 34.

JE: Yeah, that's young for a justice. So tell us why you asked that, and did it take a lot of convincing of Bellman?

JM: Ralph Hodges was a good friend of mine. I first met with Dale Cook. Dale Cook was Henry Bellman's lawyer and visited with him. And he knew Ralph by reputation and was very impressed. Then I talked to Governor Bellman, and they set up a meeting over at the governor's mansion.

Ralph left there and called me and said, "meet me in your room. It's a hotel". And I said, "Ralph, I've got a session." He said, "I need to talk to you." I said, "how did you get in my room?" And he said, "I called him out of a key. I lived with Senator Baldwin, who was from Anadarko, his hometown." And I said, "Thank God that Senator Baldwin's out here."

But anyway, I went down there, and Ralph said, "John, our meeting didn't go good." And I said, "what happened?" He said, "nothing happened. That's why it didn't go good." So I said, "Ralph, you're experienced. You're expecting probably him to ask you questions that he probably don't know to ask you." And I said, "he's a farmer and a good man and a good governor." But I said, he might not know the right questions.

And I said, "Ralph, I'm not sure I know the right questions to determine whether you'll be a good judge. I know your heart." And I got him settled down. And the next day, I went to Dale Cook and talked to Dale. And he said, "everything will be all right, John. It didn't go good." But I said, "I want you right. Write down some questions that he needs to ask these other applicants." He said, "I will."

Dale Cook, you know, became a federal judge there in Tulsa. And good man, good man.

JE: But Governor Billman had to go largely on your recommendation.

JM: Yeah, and I think Dale Cook backed it, backed it up. Ralph was one of the best judges in the history of Oklahoma. He never got tied to any organization, anything besides doing the right thing.

JE: Another governor then, you've already talked about him, was Dewey Bartlett. He was governor. 1967 to '71.

JM: Dewey and I run around together with his friends. Dewey was more of a elitist. I don't think he ever understood the people that I had to represent. But, you know, he comes from an elitist background and so forth and so on. You know, you've got to be raised with them to know them. I think Dewey meant well. He got Bob Lawler in his office as his legislative assistant. Bob Lawler was one of the smartest people I ever served with. Very compassionate. He was a conservative Democrat from Miami, Oklahoma.

I was down there one day and they were going to fire Bill Dane. And I said, "Bill Dane hadn't done anything."

JE: What was he doing, Bill Dane?

JM: Bill Dane was highway director. That's Donna Lewis' husband. Donna Lewis married him and they got two kids. And I said, "Bill Dane's not a dishonest man. He's a brilliant man, but he's too damn lazy to do anything wrong. I mean, he had over 204 hours from Yale University. He's smart. He's smart. He's a smart, smart guy."

They broke a story on Bill Dane's brother-in-law buying land up around new interchanges and so forth. So anyway, they said they were going to fire him. And so they did. And so I introduced a resolution to the Senate to select committees to investigate him. And they cleared him of any wrongdoing. It was a reward to him. And then he moved to Durant and brought his two kids down here. They lived here until right before he died and moved back to the city.

JE: David Hall defeated Dewey Bartlett to become governor and he was.

JM: I did not serve under him.

JE: Under Hall?

JM: No, I met David Hall. About 60 businessmen got together and visited with him. They asked him to appoint a state regent from here. And he said, "I'll appoint John Massey if he'll introduce me tonight." And I introduced him. When the time came, he didn't do it. And, you know, I don't dislike David

Hall. I talked to him on telephone. He talked to me about his book and all this stuff.

But, you know, I thought. I told him, I said, "you're not telling the whole story now. There's more to this story than what you're telling." He sent me a transcript of what he's saying. I said, "tell the whole story and tell it honestly and rightly because, you know, they got it on tape." I said, "you've got to be totally honest if you're going to write a book because some kid might read this book," you know. And I hadn't talked to him since.

I didn't return any more of his calls because he was wanting me to buy books for libraries. Maybe it was a good book. I'd buy it for schools because I think that you could set an example for a lot of young kids. You can give some of them an idea of how I want to be like that. I want to accomplish something.

JE: So David Hall's book is not telling the whole story.

JM: I haven't read it. The transcript he sent me, the whole story was not told.

JE: Okay. We don't have time to get into that whole thing now. But did you ever work in campaigns for Senator Robert Kerr?

JM: Yes.

JE: Let's talk about him.

JM: I was really involved in, I guess, his last race and organizing youth and doing work like that. I've got a picture of him. I had my arm around him. Ann Morgan got a copy of it, and she used to work for the Kerr Foundation. She was a book writer and very good at it. She says, "what are you doing with your arm around him?" I said, "well, he's my buddy." She said, "you're the only person I've ever seen put their arm around him." And I said, "you should have tried it." But he was an awful good man.

JE: What was his ambiance when he walked into a room? Was he attention-getting, or what was he like?

JM: He walked in the room, and a crowd melted. You know, the last speech he made in this county was at Bochita, 12 miles down the road. I was told by Lou Hewitt and Rector Sarangin that my job was to make sure Bob Peterson was there. He was editor of the Durant Democrat. Ralph Hodges, who was district judge, and I was senator then, and Bob Peterson and a group of our gang went down there. They saw me, and Ralph said, "we want you all to sit right over here. It was to the right of the podium." And Bob Kerr got up and talked about asphalt roads. He said, "if you like it, tell Bob Peterson, because he don't like you to have, he wants them made out of cement."

He said, "tell him what they mean to you. If you don't like it, tell me, and I'll do something about it." And he blistered Bob the worst I have ever seen in my life, and Bob never got over it. Bob never got over it. But Senator Kerr? He had that crowd in the palm of his hand. I mean, he was good. He was good. A lot of people tried to be awful close to him. You know, after you get elected, you make a lot of new friends.

But those old friends is who he always paid attention to. It's Lou Hewitt, a Republican here, who worked for some big agency in Tulsa, the federal government. And then when the administration changed, he had to change, and Senator Kerr made him post-manager here.

JE: Would you say that, as we look back in time, the delegation that we would send to Washington, Senator Kerr and Carl Albert would be the two best, powerful people we've ever sent?

JM: That is correct. I think that Senator Monroney is due to lobby our stuff here in Oklahoma. He's the one that brought all that here. He was a very good senator, but he was so overshadowed by Senator Kerr. But Senator Kerr and he were very good friends.

JE: Yeah, Mike Monroney, they were senators at the same time.

JM: That is right.

JE: And then Kerr overshadowed him.

JM: Right. And then, see, you had Edmund. And then, see, you had Edmund. You had Edmondson, who was a good congressman. You had Snead. That was a good congressman. You had Jarman. And then they had a Republican in Tulsa that they accepted just like their family. People back in those days got along. This nation has been torn over politics, and we've got somehow to bring it together because we're Americans first and we're Democrats and Republicans second.

Somehow we've got to get people speaking in a spirit of love. You know, I told the congressman from Edmond, I've known him through Paul's Creek. He called me and said, "John has had a wedding in your mother's chapel. He's a minister. And I just had a wedding over there. And I just thought of you, and I thought I'd call and talk to you."

And I sent him some money. I had my wife, too, when he announced. Nobody gave him a chance except I knew he'd win because I know how a Baptist organized, and he's an organizer. He won that race big time up there. So anyway, I said, "I'll tell you something. I hope that you don't learn to hate while you're in Washington. I said, if you do, resign. Resign that day. If you get hatred towards a Democrat because he disagrees with your philosophy, resign because your belief is more important than your office."

And you know, he went back and told his staff that. And I'm in a deal with the Choctaw chief. One night, I flew up to Oklahoma City with him. Went back with it. This kid came by, and he says, [unintelligible] I said, "tell me why." He said, "you gave my boss the best advice in the world: If you learn to hate, resign."

He said, "he told us that, and he wanted us to live that way, too."

JE: Great. And here we are, for the sake of history, and for those who will listen to this years from now, in 2013, we have that great divide, and I don't know if hate is the word, but they certainly dislike each other, Republicans and Democrats. And they are at an impasse over most everything.

JM: They are, and they're going to stay that way. And I hate it. You know, I think that Tom Cole is a good congressman. I think that several of them are very good. The boy from Edmond is extremely good. He's a leader. And Tom

Cole is as good a man as I know. And you know, Tom Cole calls me all the time.

Of course, I've always been helpful to him and knew his mother, and she is a senator.

JE: Tom Cole, we point out, is a Republican, and here he's calling you a Democrat.

JM: Yeah, we're friends. And you know, he'll talk as long as he wants. He'll talk as long as I can talk, and I'm a pretty good talker, you know. All you got to do is say one word and I'll go.

Chapter 7 – 14:45

Businessman

John Erling (JE): So, you decide to give up on politics. You probably could have had a bright future in politics. Didn't you feel like you would want to run for governor?

John Massey (JM): I'll tell you what happened. Senator Baldwin and his secretary played gin rummy a lot in his office. The door was closed. I didn't have a car up there because we had one good car and my wife needed it here. And I had two little boys. So I rode back and forth to the Capitol with him or with anybody else that's going back to town. I never had to catch a cab, I'll say it that way.

And so I'm outside and down the hallways of the Capitol and you see a picture of all the old senators. And I was chief page of the Senate in 1953. I was working on the ice docks and I was filling up Senator Cartwright's jug every morning before he went and campaigned. And he knew how much I enjoyed politics and so he asked me to go be chief page of the Senate and I did. It was a great experience. Great experience.

So I was looking at these pictures. And Senator Baldwin came out and I asked him about everybody on that picture. And the future of a state

senator is not that great. You get spoiled in the legislature. It's hard to ever come off of that.

JE: Spoiled?

JM: Meals, drinks, entertainment, catered to. People looking up to you. People ask you to do this, do this. And then all of a sudden it's gone. I was 34 years old. I had to vote to be pro tem two years hence. And Vina Smith and I had agreed that he'd keep it two more years and then I would take it for four years. You think about it, I'd be 40 years old. But the way the terms work, I'd be 42.

Now, to start at 42 is bad. At 34, if you make some mistakes, you'll be forgiven. But you're getting 42 and you're getting in a different age bracket. So I just decided. I wasn't going to do it. Didn't tell a living soul. I went down and called Bob Peterson and said, "we need to talk." I said, "I will not seek reelection." He got Dr. Hibbs and told him. And they had several hundred people out there trying to talk me out of quitting. I said, "I made up my mind." It was hard. Believe me, it was hard. I love the Senate. It was hard, but it was the smartest thing I ever did.

JE: Something had to be calling you, though, to cause you to leave the legislature. Was there a calling? Was there a business?

JM: I knew I wanted to be a businessman. I came home and we bought the Holiday Inn.

JE: You came home and bought the Holiday Inn.

JM: Let me back up. I already owned several apartment houses. The first two apartment houses that we owned, the Center and Savage apartments, the guys that built it got in trouble and couldn't pay the deal. A mortgage banker was on the note. They gave us those two apartments. All we had to do was pay for them.

So we went out there and did all the work ourselves. And that was a 62 unit and 24 unit. Then I built two more with that, two 40 units. I built both of them while I was in the Senate. Got them all paid for and then built

another hundred and something units down at Wood Manor. I gave them to my son and he sold them back a few years ago.

JE: Let's go back to this beginning again of the first apartment building.

JM: Didn't have a penny.

JE: Didn't have a penny.

JM: No. Didn't have a penny in it. They gave it to us, tried to get their names off the note. I made Glenn Justice, who's a mortgage banker, stay on it. So we got the apartments full, got making money.

JE: But you had to pay the bank.

JM: Oh yeah, we paid the bank.

JE: Based on what revenue that was coming in from the rental of the units?

JM: The rental of units. We ran the apartments for like \$100, \$150 and get \$400 for them now. But it paid its way.

JE: That's the very beginning then.

JM: Well, I made good money with Daily Oklahoma.

JE: Tell us that story.

JM: I had a local distributorship and it paid \$100, \$125, \$150 a week. But I sold the living textbook program to practically every school in Southeast Oklahoma. I was in the office one day of Helge Holmes, who's the circulation director. And I said, "what is this?" And he told me about it. He said, "we hired a guy from OBU and one from Oklahoma City to sort of spearhead this farm."

I said, "this is a good program. Could I sell them?" He said, "You can't sell those." I said, "I've got a degree in education." I said, "yes, I can sell them." And he says, "I'll sell them to you for a penny a piece. I got four cents for

them." I said, okay. And I sold them. And I had probably a thousand, two thousand a day going out. I sold more in Southeast Oklahoma than they sold in the state of Oklahoma.

JE: This is the living textbook?

JM: Living textbook. That's using a newspaper as a textbook. And you take 15 minutes of your class period time, a history teacher, and talk about the news, because that is what's going to be history tomorrow. I went short, and then I got the head of the history department at Southeast to buy into the program. He loved it. He said, this is history tomorrow.

And then the second thing he told me, he said, "John, another thing you can do with this program, a lot of athletes don't like school." And he said, "you might teach them to read, just to give them the sports page, and you'll improve their reading ability." So I sold it to every school in Southeast Oklahoma. It's a big deal.

JE: That was big revenue for you.

JM: Oh, yeah. Three cents a copy.

JE: Three cents a copy.

JM: For each newspaper, I was paying a penny for it, and I was charging four cents. I was getting three cents, and they was hauling the papers there. I didn't have to worry about that.

JE: The teachers then would take the newspaper and then teach from it for free? 15 minutes of every class. That's where you got your money.

JM: That really got me rolling. It was a lot more than living. I never did spend much money. Nobody ever taught me how to spend. They taught me how to make it. They never taught me how to spend it.

JE: Did you ever learn how to spend?

JM: No, I don't spend any money.

JE: All right, so then you were accumulating money. So when this opportunity for the apartment buildings came along, you were ready for that.

JM: Yes, it was an opportunity. We took those over and built up quite a few apartments, and we had some in Oklahoma City. Then we got out of Oklahoma City in the 70s or early 80s. These here I kept for, well, my son sold them, I guess, 10 years ago. I don't know.

JE: So you're a natural businessman. You're obviously a salesman to go along with that business mind, and you're a public speaker. So you have all these gifts.

JM: The greatest gift I've got is I love my fellow man, and I understand my fellow man. That is the greatest gift my mother could ever give me. It's to love people, because people are good.

JE: Well, some of them aren't.

JM: Some of them aren't. Sometimes we have to think what they had gone through. And, you know, Mama taught me to never be around anybody hot-headed, because you never win. They'll always get you in trouble and embarrass you. And people that are negative, you get as far as you can, because you can try to change them, but in the end you can't.

JE: Yeah. Today we're sitting in your bank. How did you get into the banking business?

JM: In 1965, Roy Hooten, who was president of Durant Bank & Trust, he and I and Don Carpenter and Joe Clay was going to go eat Mexican food one Thursday night. And he was telling me that Bill Kerr was going to buy the Durant Bank & Trust.

JE: Is Bill Kerr related to?

JM: Senator Kerr, his son.

JE: Okay.

JM: I said, "well, I know Bill Kerr very well. And I said, why don't we go back by my office and I'll call him?" We go back by the office and call Bill Kerr. And I couldn't find him. I had his number in Minnesota and I had his number in Oklahoma City, and I couldn't find him.

So Jack Kahn, who was Senator Kerr's law partner and chairman of Fidelity Bank, I called him. And he says, "can you get a contract?" And I said, "the president of the bank is here with me. And he says we can." He says, "meet me here at 6:30 in the morning at the Whitehall Club. That's on top of the Fidelity Bank." I get up at 2 o'clock and drive to Oklahoma City. And Roy Hooton goes with me. On the way up there, Roy said, "John, I get nervous around these big shots. So you're going to have to do the talking." And I said, "I don't know that much about banking except what I learned in college."

We get up there. Jack Kahn listened to us for a while. And he said, "Mr. Hooton, would you excuse John and I? We're friends. We've got to talk in a few minutes." He goes out. And Jack said, "how much money you got?"

And I said, "I've got about \$5,000. I've got about \$1,000 in my bond account that I can get out." And I said, "there's probably \$1,000 in my savings account." He says, "John, back several months ago, I loaned you \$400 to buy some stock." I said, "I've still got it to know what to do next week. And I was going to talk to you about that after this meeting and get you to let me pay part of it."

And we knew it. Pay the interest. He said, "John, you're going to sell that stock today. He called downstairs and got my stock certificate brought to me." And I went to Jack Hewitt, who's Lou Hewitt's son, who's my mentor here in Durant. His son is a Republican and a good man. I said, "Jack, I've got to sell this stock. And I bought it because Jack Kahn told me to buy \$400 worth of it and loan me the money." And it was worth \$16,000. I got the money. And that next month, that company went under. And that was the \$16,000. And the \$5,000, I got into this bank with.

And I was elected chairman, I guess, in '75. Then started buying it up. There were 14 of us. When somebody would sell, the rest of us would pick it up.

And it had come down to just me the last 10 years because my board members were older. I owned 22%. One board member had to get out. So I negotiated the price to his.

And we had a buy and sell agreement. But it wasn't applicable in that case. It was in the 80s. So I negotiated a purchase from one board member. It gave me 44%. So I went to the board and I said, "now I can't buy this 44% and have to sell the bank tomorrow if I can't buy your stock." So we've got to do away with the buy and sell agreement. If that's what you want to do or if you want to sell the bank, we'll sell it now.

You know, whatever you want to do. Anyway, we changed our agreement. Mr. Spence, who owned the sale barn here and the one on the bottom, he's a really good man. Big cattle man. He sold me 7% of his stock to give me controlling interest. But I'd have to buy the rest of his stock at book value. And I said, it's fine.

He sold me the 7%. And then about two years later, he walked in here one day and he said, "John, you made me \$300,000 last year. I'm not worth that to you. I want you to buy my stock." And I said, "we've got a deal. I don't mind. I'll do anything you want to do." He said, "I want you to take it and pay me out over 40 years." And I said, "40 years? I won't be alive?" He said, "Greg will."

JE: Your son?

JM: Yeah. I waited a few days and, you know, something like that. You would give a man time to think. I knew I would. But I wanted him to be rest assured he was right. He still was. I said, I'm going to change that to 15 years. And I did. He was a wonderful man. A wonderful man.

And then I had Mr. Rustin, who stayed. He was an outstanding man. He had a cement company here. His boys run it now. And then I had Mr. Davis, who was a good man. He worked in the bank 50 years. And he didn't own as much as the rest of us. But I bought his stock.

JE: And that was Durant Bank and Trust.

JN: Right.

JE: And then you changed the name.

JM: Yes. And then I bought another one with a group of us, a bank at Holdenville. I ended up with 35%, 40% of that. Then I finally bought up into the 60s. And I merged the two banks together to become First United.

JE: First United Bank. And now it's one of the largest privately held banks in the United States.

JM: Yes.

JE: Privately held. How many branches do you have now?

JM: 30. I think there's 30 facilities.

JE: Mostly in this vicinity of Durant?

JM: No, we go from Zapoppa to Durant, Oklahoma City. We've got three in there. Then I've got several in Texas. I've got five in Denton County. One in McKinney and one in Craig Ranch.

JE: You really weren't looking for a bank when that opportunity came to you. Had you thought about the banking business?

JM: Well, I bought 20 shares of stock in 1962, three, somewhere along in there. I think for \$1,100. I had an interest. And I think what interested me, Clark Bass owned this bank before the 14 of us. Well, he sold it to Glen Justice and Glen Justice sold it to us. You know what? He talked to me about being a banker. I was running against his brother-in-law for the state house, and I thought that might have had something to do with it, but it didn't. It had nothing to do with it. But it was always in the back of my mind.

JE: Okay, so it was there. That seed was there. And then when Jack Kahn comes along, bingo, all the pieces begin to fall into place.

JM: He taught me how to buy a bank. Jack Kahn was an awful good man. He spent a lot of time with me, sat and talked to me. You know, and never did talk to him about any major problems. I always had a pretty good staff. I've got William Ferndorf here that came to work here when he was 18 years old. He's 58 or 59 today. And been with me all these years. I'm going to tell you how he got hired.

I was Clem McSpadden's campaign manager. I had to have somebody put up signs, and he was the best that I ever saw putting up signs.

JE: For Clem McSpadden?

JM: Yeah.

JE: Tell us who he was.

JM: Clem McSpadden was a state senator, president of the Senate, United States Congressman. Didn't enjoy Congress. He only stayed there two years. He was a rodeo announcer, world-renowned, and probably one of the nicest guys in the world. And I was involved in his campaign for governor.

He ran against David Bourne, and we got swept out of his old guard. But he was an awful good man. I got William to put up signs for him, and so I had to have a payroll and got the president of the bank to hire him down here, and he's been here ever since. He's the chief administrative officer here today. And then I had Gary Forbus, who was my head lender.

He's semi-retired now. He's 60 years old, and as smart a man as you'll find, he still is on our board and committees and still participates.

Chapter 8 – 9:10

Holiday Inn

John Erling (JE): When you look at somebody's life like yours, all these opportunities, is there luck involved in any of this?

John Massey (JM): You know, I believe that down through life, you're put in certain positions. Certain circumstances. Some good, some bad. And it's how you react to what's good and what's bad. I believe that that's all training for you. But I've been knocked down a lot, and I've jumped up and go again.

Of course, I think, good Lord don't let you have it unless you've got something in mind. You know, I've tried to use the money I've made for good purposes. Falls Creek. My church. My colleagues. My college. You know, I've given to a lot of other colleges here in Oklahoma.

JE: To show that you were serving the customers, there's a story told me about the bank would give away toasters. And this lady came in complaining she didn't get her toaster.

JM: Yeah, we was giving away something. And this little lady had a grocery store out on North Washington Street come in and ask for something. And they said, that's for new customers. She called me and I said, "you're the newest customer I've ever seen. How many of them do you want?" She had about \$400,000 in the bank.

So, you know, I'm 76 years old, almost 77. And if a person's got a complaint about the bank, they still call me. Of course, everybody says, "because you always give in to them." I said, "not all the way. I said, I've never given a bad loan." I said, "I'm taking money out of my pocket."

A boyhood friend of mine, Boswell, in trouble, sick, declared bankruptcy on me. His wife coming here crying. Yeah, I gave her \$400. I knew I wasn't going to get it back. Didn't expect it back. But she came back for the second \$400. She didn't get it. But, you know, if you love people and you try to help people.

And, you know, seeking to let that customer understand. I've never turned down a loan. I said, "I can make that if you'll do this, this, and this." I know they can't do it. But I at least leave them with a spirit of crying. When I first come down here, I was asked for the money. I mean, people ask you for this, that. Strange things happen in banking.

JE: Do you consider yourself a conservative businessman?

JM: Oh, I'm conservative throughout.

JE: Ever take a big gamble?

JM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, when I put these banks together. I never worked at a bank. And I came down here in 1984. In 1984, I sold the Holiday Inn and my partner sold the nursing homes. I had quite a bit of cash. So the board asked me, would I start spending time down here? I was chairman of the loan discount committee.

And I'd come down here on Tuesday morning. And the board stayed around one day. Or the committee that's on the board stayed around and said, "why don't you start spending some time down here?" So I started spending time down here. No salary, no nothing. And I started finding things that I didn't think were right.

And started changing them. At the end of the year, they said, "John, how much are we paying you?" And I said, "nothing." And the most conservative member of that board said, "how many would give him the same thing the president made?" I passed out. Anyway, in '86, I bought controlling interest.

JE: Of this bank?

JM: Of this bank. And then I had controlling interest of Holdenville, maybe. 91, I think, is when I merged. 92.

JE: You brought up Holiday Inn a while back. And I stopped you because I wanted you to go back further. How do you come to buy a Holiday Inn? That wasn't a dream to be in the motel business.

JM: Well, it's another service business. See, I sold hamburgers all through California. I went to high school. George's Drive Inn. I liked the restaurant business. I knew how to cook. I knew how to do everything out there. So this came open. And a guy here in town, the richest man in town, was a

friend of mine.

And he said, "let's buy that. And he can run that." He made me an offer of 670. And my partner that's in other things with me went out there and offered him 750. And we bought it. So I had to go out there and make sure it was run right. And I enjoyed it. It was fun.

JE: Did you get in on the operating of it?

JM: Every day. 365 days a year. It was fun.

JE: And you enjoyed it?

JM: Oh, yeah. Something happens funny in the motel business every day. Something happened funny most every day at the motel and the restaurant.

JE: You were there kind of full time. What else did you have going for you?

JM: Oh, I had department houses. I was in charge of them. And I was with the Daly Oklahoma a year and a half. And finally a district manager came by. And at 10 o'clock in the morning, I was swamped. And said, "let's go knock doors." I do that every Thursday night. And I said, "I do it." He said, "I'm going to do it now." So I went in there and called Helge Holmes. Said, "Helge, I need to resign. I said, it's not going to work."

He said, "I told him not to come down there and bother you." I said, "well, he's here." He said, "let me talk to him." He fired him on the spot. And I said, "you're having to make excuses for me. And I don't want you to have to do that. Because you did all the time." I said, legislature, you know. Your contract says you can't do anything else besides that.

JE: So you left.

JM: I left Daly, Oklahoma. But then, of course, I had plenty to do. I worked at the motel from 7 o'clock in the morning usually to 12:30. And then I went to the apartments. And I'd go to different ones. I made them all every day.

JE: How long did you own the Holiday Inn?

JM: 14 years.

JE: Did you do other motels?

JM: Yeah, I owned the Ramada Inn over at Sherman and the Villa Capri at Idabel.

JE: But you got out of it. You could have gone on and on with that as well.

JM: Oh, yeah. Motels were good business to us. The Holiday Inn here was getting old. And, you know, Holiday Inn had certain expectations. And I knew it was coming. I didn't want to spend \$200,000 or \$300,000 out there. So I sold it for \$2 million something.

JE: But then here in the banking business, you have all these branches. You went out and bought banks.

JM: See, I had the two banks. And I got along with regulators real good because they were teaching me a whole lot. You know, you can learn a lot from regulators if you just be their friend and be nice. They can tell you a whole lot. They can tell you what's wrong or they can suggest what's wrong.

There's a couple of pretty sharp people there. I always had a very strong relationship with them because they taught me something all the time. The meanest examiner FDIC had taught me more because I'd been wrong. Here's a guy that didn't trust nobody. He came in the bank, that door right there.

I got up and I said, "I'm John Massey." He said, "I'm Mr. So-and-so, Mr. Massey. You need to see me. Knock on the door and I'll come out. And do not bother my examiners through this exam. Okay?" I went over and turned the coffee pot off and acted like I locked the locked box of wood bid.

The examiners laughed, you know. His name was Mike Peterman. So he

stuck his head in the door and said, "I'm going to write those apartments off by half a million dollars. Write them down." I said, "hell, I thought you sold insurance. I didn't know you wrote loans down." I wished I'd never said it. These examiners rolled in here. They knew he was coming to my front door. So they opened that damn door a little bit to listen to what I'd say.

They'd like to die. He said, "Todd, you should never say that to an FDIC examiner". I said, "y'all told me to read that damn book and I read it." So anyway, I said, "I think that what I need to do is take you out there and show you those apartments. Show you what can be done and what has been done. And then you won't feel that way." He said, "Mr. Ferndorf's taking me out there." And I said, "well, y'all got personalities just like, go ahead."

William's not outgoing personality and he wasn't either. So Monday morning, a young man from New Mexico who worked for FDIC in Oklahoma, he came in my office. And he says, he is going to write these down some. And I said, "well, I've called the bank commissioner and had him send an examiner down. That's who writes loans down." This young man, I told him, I said, "you understand me." I said, "well, you know what?" And they tell me, they make me promise them that I will do it. But they can't make me do it.

He said, yeah. He said, "if you could find the person that owns the apartments around there and get some kind of appraisal they got. And if you could get an operating statement, it would help me decide what I'm going to write up. I'm going to write it up and he's going to make the decision."

But I know he's wrong. "And I want you to be satisfied because they tell me you're an honest man." And I said, okay. He said, "how long would it take you to get that?" And I said, "I think I can do it for you right now." They were appraised last month. Here's the appraisal. And here's 10 years operating statements.

He said, "you own them all." I said, "yeah, I own them all." So we finally agreed to write them down \$100,000. I kept those and operated them for all these years. Mike Peterman, his last thing to do was here. And I walked

in. He showed him where I sold them. I made a 22% return on my investment. Plus, I made double the price of apartments. I said, now you wish you hadn't screwed up like that. He's a good guy.

Chapter 9 – 15:00

Massey School of Business

John Erling (JE): Education is your main passion, has been for years and years

John Massey (JM): I found out a long time ago, it's not always the smartest man that wins. It's always not the dumbest that wins. I found out that education, if you can apply what you learn to your life, that you're a whole lot better off. And I found out that most successful people do have a college degree. There's a lot of smart people that don't have a college degree, but there's a lot of smart people that do.

And if we can open the doors to give everybody a chance to train their minds in whatever they'd like to do in life, we would be a whole lot better country. But we've got to open that door. And thank God in Oklahoma, we do open that door. We've got Oklahoma's promise. It's on top of the budget. State regions tells how many students we're going to have.

JE: And what is that Oklahoma's promise?

JM: It's OLAB. It's Oklahoma's promise to kids that their parents make less than \$50,000 a year. They stay out of trouble and take the 17 hours of core curriculum, and they go to college. Now, the great thing about these kids, they do better than rich kids do. They're the top leaders in Oklahoma in retention and graduation. They're the best.

Every year, the legislature plays around with this, and it always worries me that they're trying to correct, and they don't know what they're trying to correct. And the young man that runs after Oklahoma is a very fine young man, been doing this ever since I've been on Regents, I guess, 22 years. He's 47 years old.

And Glenn Johnson is probably the smartest man that I've ever known.

JE: He was the chancellor of the Board of Regents.

JM: Yeah, he used to be Speaker of the House.

JE: And president of Southeastern Oklahoma. President of Southeastern.

JM: Very, very smart boy. He comes from a family that lived in Washington, D.C., went to prep school there. His father was a congressman. And he's a good man. He's totally good inside.

JE: Before I get into your work as a regent, let's talk about Southeastern, your school that you love. Here you are. You've talked about your early beginnings and shining shoes and all that. Today at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, we have the John Massey School of Business. Now that is an accomplishment.

JM: Glenn Johnson was here, and, you know, I went on the state regents. I was more than good at college. Southeastern Oklahoma State University. And there, George Kaiser from Harvard. There, the doctor was from Columbia. Several OSU. A lot of private school, big schools. And, you know, they were very, very understanding. But they didn't know what the regional university system stood for.

I run into the business world, I would hear people say something about a regional university as compared to the two comprehensive. So I decided that I was going to build a school at Southeastern through Glenn Johnson and them to have the same qualifications at Southeastern. They've got a W&O issue, and we do. I endowed, I think it's eight or ten chairs out there and several professorships.

The state matches those, so we bring in top professors, and they're all making over \$100,000 a year. You know how good they are? I haven't been around really since Glenn left. The guy that was head of it agreed to quit since we got our accreditation, and he didn't do it. I don't know that much about it today as I used to, but I still got probably 20 kids here working

internships and stuff.

Used to have 30 or 40. If they're in the banking school, we try to find them a place to work in the summertime, a bank in southeast Oklahoma. If they come from here, they won't stay here. And, you know, you bring a person in here from a large city. You don't know how long they're going to stay, because sometimes your wife can't find enough shopping to do. I tell them, 26 miles from here is all the shopping in the world you want to do, all the restaurants. We've got good restaurants here. I'm going to take you to lunch here in a little bit, and you're going to be very pleased with the food.

JE: Let me point out that the John Massey School of Business earned accreditation in the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. That makes the Massey School of Business part of an elite group that makes up less than 5% of the world's business schools that have earned business and or accounting accreditation.

JM: That's right.

JE: Now, that's strong.

JM: That's strong. If they just keep it, and they have to really do that accreditation, I think, every five years. And the lady that's in charge of it now is very smart, and she's not in the business school. She's a dean. They've got a real organization out here, and I don't really understand it, but she's the one that talks to me.

JE: David Walters, a Democrat, appoints you as a regent, board of regents, and these are nine-year terms. Then we have... We have Governor Keating, a Republican, who appoints you. And then we have Governor Henry, who appoints you and is a Democrat. So that's three terms of nine years, making you, when you complete it, probably already are, the longest-serving regent the state's ever had. Isn't that true?

JM: Uhuh.

JE: So I guess the question is, how did you get this Republican Keating to continue that nomination?

JM: I've known Frank since I was a young member of the legislature. His dad was on the highway. He was on the highway commission, and I was on the watchdog committee from the legislature that attended meetings. Bill Skeeth and I. He and his brother, twin brother, run around there with their dad, you know, and so I got acquainted with him. And then after he got to be governor, I was around him some.

One day he got up to make a speech here and there, and he said, "I've known John Massey since I was in knee pants." One day he asked me, "do you feel like serving another term?" I said, "another term?" "Yeah, two or three of them." So he reappointed me. Now, he made the announcement in Durant. A young man from Durant became president of Connie Cofellops, Archie Dunham.

Archie came here to do the Massey Lectureship, and I knew Frank Keating was on his board. And I asked Frank, I said, "I know it's not proper, but would you want to come to Durant and introduce him at this lectureship?" He said, "oh my gosh, yes." So he came down, and after the lectureship, there's a luncheon, probably for 80 people.

And Glenn said, "now would be a good time to announce John's reappointment." And Frank Keating jumped up and announced it and got a standing ovation. Of course, he was organized. He told me later, he said, "I caught a hill from some of those Republicans." And I said, "yeah, I catch a hill about having you down there all the time, too." Frank Keating's my friend. Henry Bellman. He appointed me on the Securities Commission.

JE: Securities Commission?

JM: That was before I became a regent.

JE: Let's talk just a little bit about some of the issues as you look back now. So how many years have you been a regent at this point?

JM: I guess it's about 20 or 22. I've been 23.

JE: So how many years do you have left on this?

JM: I've just been on this term two or three years.

JE: Okay, so you have about six years left on this term. What year were you appointed, Hunter Walters?

JM: '91 and '92. The big issue then when I came on the board was setting standards for kids to enter college having to have an 18 or 19 ACT score here, 22, 24 at OU. And Northeastern, there's 20. Roger Webb was president there. A very strong leader and a good man. I had parents calling me all the time that my kids would have an opportunity to fail.

I said, you know, "they got that in high school. They knew this when they were in high school. That they had to do so." It was good to get in college. Because our dropout rate from college, all these kids that couldn't do that were flunking out. And I guess the parents that got the toughest with me, one guy was from Hugo. And he just wanted his son to go to Oklahoma State, which was higher.

Right along the same thing, OU, there might be one hell of a difference, but he couldn't get in. So I said, "you and your wife both went to Southeastern. Both done well. Why don't you send him to Southeastern?" And he flunked out here his first semester. I had a guy in Oklahoma City call me and just raise all kinds of things. Because his son couldn't get in OU.

And I said, "he can get in OU. He goes down here to the Oklahoma City Community College for one semester to make grades. There's a way he can get in if he proves himself." But, well, he's a taxpayer. And I said, "you don't spend much money at OU. It's very small." What's an Oklahoma taxpayer spend? I mean, it's a 10% of their budget. And that's more than that then.

But, you know, all the things parents get in their mind, and they can't realize that these kids have got to prove themselves to themselves more so than to the school. That was a big issue for, oh, I guess two or three years. And finally it became old hat. And every school has raised theirs. I think

you've got to have 20 here now. And you've got to have 24, I think, at OU, maybe 25. Same thing at OSU.

JE: Twenty-five?

JM: An ACT score.

JE: Are you surprised that there are those in the state who are not interested in really, truly funding education the way it should be?

JM: I'll tell you what. A lot of that's brought on by colleges. Whenever I was a senator, I wanted to learn how to play golf. I went out to golf course. I was there two hours. And I'm going to say six people come up and ask me why this man wasn't working. He was working for the taxpayers. And he was a man that worked 27 days and got five days off. He was a game ranger, a great guy.

And I said, "he gets in his time. Don't worry about him." But then, as long as I played golf and I got to be a regent, people would see a college professor out there. But they didn't know that guy taught the night before or had to teach that night. They don't know enough about it, except they're jealous. I think public schools, back whenever I was a student, of course, the teachers had professional dress. And now they wear most anything they want to. I see that on college campus, too.

JE: Does that bother you?

JM: Yes. It bothers me. I think it's where I come from that I always wanted to wear a suit and tie. And I thought all professionals did. Now, we dress down on Fridays here. Tomorrow, I'm going to have a jacket. I'm going to have a tie on. My people here in the bank don't wear ties on.

JE: So are you saying there's a perception of educators that they don't work hard enough?

JM: They do. But people don't understand how hard they work. They don't realize. A teacher teaches five hours a day or six hours a day, and she's got a great paint purse that night. And then she's got to work on the discipline.

See, back whenever I was a kid, there wasn't a discipline problem in the classroom. The teacher sent you down to the principal, and he busted your butt. That was it. It didn't tolerate that.

And today, they have so many restrictions on them. I mean, it's hard being a teacher. You stop and think. You think to get their lesson plan and grade papers, I don't know how they do it all. So you've got 30 in a class, smaller grades got 20, but 30 in a high school class, and you've got to grade papers. I mean, that's a job.

JE: So we have elected officials who we think we sent the best and the brightest to our state legislature or a governor. And it doesn't seem that they hold education as in high esteem when that should be the foundation. And for many reasons, and we're always talking about jobs and business, that that supports that. We ought to be funding that as much as we are funding health care.

JM: We should. We're working on this new program of trying to turn out so many college graduates. We've got 14,000 more students than we had three years ago. We graduated a bigger percentage than our challenge was. And we didn't even include the religious schools like the Baptist, Nazarene School, Tulsa University. We didn't include all those. And we still got more. The governor did not recommend an increase in higher education budget.

JE: How can somebody even come to that conclusion?

JM: You know, I haven't talked to Mary.

JE: You're talking about Governor Fallin right now? I've known her for many years, and I like her. But I'm sure Chancellor Johnson will have a chance to talk to her. He's very persuasive, and he's put together a good program for higher education.

JE: What we're doing here is an interview that goes on the Internet. On VoicesOfOklahoma.com. Is it true you're studying online courses?

JM: Yes. You know what happened? I got a report that showed what percent of classes that are being taught by a computer. See, I don't understand that. I read a lot of magazines. And they all got stories about Harvard and Yale and Stanford, MIT. All these people teaching a free course. That's free for a year.

So I asked the committee to be formed. To study this in Oklahoma. And let's get on top of it before it gets on top of us. The committee is working. We're meeting after each recent meeting. We've got a consultant out of Atlanta that's worked with higher education for many years. And he's bringing his group in now. And I suggested at our last meeting that we form a committee of educators. And I don't mean presidents.

I mean people that's in the trenches. That really understands what's going on with students. And see what happens. Now, Western State College came before us first. And I asked the question, "how many students does it take to pay for one of those courses?" They said ten. I said, "so you're charging this kid a tuition plus a fee for computers." And I said, "how can you justify that?" "Well, we need the money." It got my attention.

If we're paying so much for academics. And we're charging the kids high tuition rates. Then we charge them another fee for the course. Which might be paying for that. Why? So we're getting into it. And I think within a year we'll have a good policy written. And I think we'll understand their budget more than what we do now.

I think we need to understand it very well. Because we allocate funds. That's our job. Is to approve programs and allocate the funds. It's not an easy job. On allocation of funds, we've got a procedure we go through. And the presidents have all agreed to it. I say all of them as far as I know all of them. A committee of theirs presented it to them. Then it came to the state regents and we approved it. So I'm hoping it works out fine.

Chapter 10 – 12:25
Native Americans

John Erling (JE): You have personally scholarshipped many students, haven't you?

John Massey (JM): Oh, yeah.

JE: You perhaps met them personally and felt this is somebody who should go somewhere. And so you've helped them.

JM: No, you know, it hadn't worked that way. Last Sunday after church, my wife and son and I went to church. We were having lunch. And a young man came over and said, "I want to introduce myself to you." He said, "I'm on the John Massey Scholarship." And I said, "thank you." And I talked to him a little bit. Introduced him to my son who stood there. He left and I said, "honey, that's the first time a kid has walked up and thanked me."

JE: Wow.

JM: Now I get letters from some of them. But you can tell somebody helped them write it, you know. And I get a lot from athletic teams and all that stuff. And I don't need that. But the kids that I give a job to down here that turn out to be bankers is my reward. Because I see them. I watch them grow. I had a part in their life. You know, it's the same way with the paper boys. My paper boys that I had back years ago are the leading businessmen in this town. Greg Clay is probably the most responsible man in this town.

He's a doctor. He lived with paper for me for six, seven, eight years. John Mackey became circulation director for the Dallas-Bourne News. Reggie Selvin is one of the big ones. He's a construction company. He worked for me for six, seven years. I just go down the list. Down the list of all those kids I taught how to sell on Thursday night, two hours. Go out and knock doors.

JE: And sell subscriptions.

JM: Sell subscriptions. And the effect it's had on their life. It's just amazing.

JE: These people were responsible people as young people.

JM: Yeah, they had to get up six o'clock in the morning to get the papers out.

JE: Our state history is all part of Native Americans. What do Native Americans mean to our state? You're close to the Chickasaws, I believe? The Choctaws?

JM: Yes, and Chickasaws.

JE: And the Creeks?

JM: Oh, yeah. You know, they have an opportunity to do a lot of great things. I know the chief of the Choctaws and the governor of the Chickasaws very well. And they both do a lot of things in the field of medicine, in the field of education. I think they got 5,000 scholarships at the Choctaw. I don't know what they got at the Chickasaws. I've never asked. But Choctaw's got 5,000 scholarship people.

And they used to give them the money without any checking back. And now they've got some educators out there. And now they know what their grades are. They know everything about that kid. They know when they need to intercede in that kid's life. They've got some people out here that are just dynamite. This one Indian lady is as old as I am. She's two years, I think, younger than me. She's still out there working because she loves to help kids. She's a wonderful human being.

JE: Choctaw Nation scholarships.

JM: Scholarships. And you know everything good that comes along, they're involved in. We have a girl here that comes to us from McAllister. And she didn't understand you were out having a Boys and Girls Club. She talked to us about it, and we said, get after it. Get it organized. So out of our family foundation, we gave \$250,000 pledge. They match it. And the Choctaws gave \$250,000, and they match it.

It's just totally amazing how they help so many good causes and so many people. I was raised in Choctaw County in Boswell, Oklahoma, which is probably 70% Choctaws. And I have watched a generation come along that's proud of themselves and proud of their heritage. And that is so beautiful. You talk to them now, and they're proud. They're Choctaws.

You know, there was a time they wasn't proud. I've known all the Chiefs out here for many, many years. See, they was appointed by the President until... I guess in '65, '66, 'somewhere along there, they started being elected.

JE: They were empowered because of the gaming industry.

JM: That got the money rolling. And now what you see them think about is what's going to happen after gaming.

JE: After gaming?

JM: After gaming.

JE: Talk to me about that.

JM: See, you go out here at Choctaw, probably 95% of the customers are out here from Texas.

JE: Because you're close to the Texas border right here.

JM: Right.

JE: So they come up from Texas.

JM: This place out here is as nice as anything in Las Vegas. I mean, it's lush.

JE: Texas does not have gaming at the moment.

JM: Right.

JE: And they probably will have.

JM: Someday.

JE: Yeah. So if that's what you're saying, that gaming's going to go away here.

JM: Or it'll be curtailed, sir. Curtailed, right. But they're getting into other things to make money to support their tribe. And that is so smart.

JE: Yeah. They're diversified businesses. So it's not just that. But it really started with that, and that has empowered them so that, as you said, I don't know how many years ago, they were not proud. Any nation, any tribe we have, they weren't proud. But they are today.

JM: They are today.

JE: We see the TV commercials running, promoting their nation and all.

JM: Weren't those good?

JE: They are very good.

JM: Those Choctaws and Chickasaw both.

JE: Yep.

JM: I saw more of them in Tulsa, I think, than they did in New Ranch. I don't watch that much TV, but I see them now on TV all the time, talking about their language, talking about their arts, and talking about things. It's beautiful.

JE: Yeah. There's a prejudice yet, I think, in our state toward Native Americans.

JM: I think most of that's changing. I think there's probably some people jealous as they got the ability to game, and the white man doesn't. But that's normal. Any time you're successful, you're going to have a few people that are leery of it. The chief of Choctaws serves on my board here.

JE: And his name is?

JM: Greg Paul. He's one of the nicest people you'll ever meet in your life. Just a good Christian man, just down to earth. He's a good person. And Bill Anitubby at Chickasaw, he's another great guy. I made a speech one night. The chief asked me to have a social for the new assistant chief. So I did, and I was talking about the chief, and I introduced him as the greatest chief in the history of any tribe. Dan Johnson said, "don't forget the governor's here." And I said, "in a few minutes, I'll introduce you to the greatest governor."

JE: Right. You know, as successful as you've been, you've also had some health issues and scares, haven't you?

JM: Yeah.

JE: And your heart has been an issue.

JM: I had a heart deal. I had sort of up from here up. I walked by William's office, and I said, get me to the hospital. I thought Greg had already gone to Texas. So he carried me out to the hospital, and they gave me a shot. A heart doctor came in and said, that's what it is. So they took me to Oklahoma City Heart Hospital, where I wanted to go. I got there, and they said, you're going to have to have a little heart surgery.

I guess I was there three days, and they operated on my heart. I never felt anything except this is part of life. I never felt sorry for myself. I went through it. If I die, I don't know where I'm going. And it's a lot better than here. So the only thing you miss is your family and your friends, you know? So I got back home, and they brought a health nurse in. It's a physical therapist in the morning.

And she'd come by and work with me for a while. You couldn't do much, you know. To walk around the swimming pool was a hard job. She'd help me walk around the swimming pool. I couldn't walk upstairs where I liked to sleep, because I liked to sleep up there where I'd wake up at 2 o'clock and read. I don't like to waste any time.

So anyway, I couldn't get up there. I went through that. And I go out here to the hospital and meet the nicest nurse I have ever met in my life. Her

name is Teresa, so I nicknamed her Mother Teresa. She knows everybody that comes in there to work out. Everybody hugs her. I mean, she's a special lady. I went through that out there, and then I've got a workout gym here in the bank. And I went and bought a machine that she's got out there down here.

So I work out three days a week down here. But while I was out there, I ran into a lady that I knew in college. She married a friend of mine. She was in bad shape. And her husband, his father was a doctor, and he was admitted to medical school, but blew his eye out on the farm and didn't go. Taught school. He went and found a book by an author out of New York that went through a hard time. He had a heart attack and open-heart surgery and went through the moods that you're in. And he wrote a book about it. He bought two of those books, one for his wife, one for me.

And I read 60 or 70 pages. And I called him. I said, "Killer, I've never felt sorry for myself. I haven't been in the hospital hardly in my life. I'm a very lucky man, very thankful." That book, I gave it to Ike Glass. And Ike Glass is as fine a man as I've ever known, but he is having a lot of problems. He'd tell me about him, and I'd call Dr. White. Dr. White goes to Ponca City one day a week. So I'd call Dr. White. You've got to do something right, you know? I gave that book to Ike.

He read that book. He called me and he said, "John, thank you. I now understand the attitude you've got. That's the attitude I need to have." And now they give one to every patient. There's a guy that's operated on tomorrow. I gave him one of those books, and he said, "I'm going to send this book back to you." And I said, "why don't you hang on to it for a while?" About three weeks later, he called me. He said, "now I know what you're talking about."

You know, you get up and you go and you can't go. So you got up too fast. You know, you get feeling bad and down on yourself and down on your life, and you've got to go home and rest. That's all you've got to do. He's having a pacemaker put in tomorrow in Oklahoma City. He is going to a doctor in Tulsa. That wasn't giving him the attention he needed. We're on the return calls.

I said, call my doctor. I'm going to tell him you're going to call. And I'm going to tell him what time you're going to call. They became friends just like Dr. White and I. Dr. White's on Regents with me. That's how I got close to him.

JE: Is that your favorite cardiologist?

JM: Uh-huh.

JE: And his name is?

JM: Ron White.

JE: Well, I want to thank you for the time you've given us. It's a fascinating story. It's a rags to riches story is what it is. Students who are listening to this, and here you are, a businessman. You're a hard worker as a boy. You're a banker. You're obviously an educator. What kind of advice do you give to students?

JM: Give it the very best you've got. Give your life the very best. And you can do that through education and through religion. I really believe that any kid that wants to do bad enough can achieve what he wants to do. You've got to set your own goals. You can't let your mom and dad or your brothers or sister, anybody, set your goals. But do what you're cut out to do, to the very limits of your energies and abilities, and you'll be successful.

JE: And you've got to like what you do.

JM: Oh, you've got to like it. I love my job here. You know, I stepped down as CEO when I was 67. Now I'm 76, fixed to be 77. I'm going to die right there. Right there's where I want to die, right there in that seat.

JE: In the office next to us?

JM: I love it. I come down here Saturday mornings, sometimes Sunday afternoons. But I love my work. I love it. I've loved every job I ever had. I've never had a bad job in my life. It's all good.

JE: So you've never had a job. It's only a job when you don't like it.

JM: I've liked everything. People used to say, why don't you enjoy this restaurant out here at Holiday Inn? But it's always fun. You're serving people. I always had a good staff. I had the same five waitresses for 14 years. I had two cooks for the 14 years. I had to increase that to four. And I had five of the six maids for 14 years. That's record.

JE: In that business.

JM: But if you keep an employee happy, it's good for you. It's good for business. Nothing is more expensive than retraining people. If you start retraining them, just think how much money you're going to spend on it.

JE: How would you like to be remembered?

JM: As a man that loved his fellow man. Everybody's got something good in them. And I'm thankful for everybody. Educators, as much as I am, any profession in life. Because teachers leave such an imprint on a kid's life.

JE: You've alluded to it a few times. Your faith obviously means something to you as well.

JM: You know, you don't have faith. I don't understand people that don't have faith.

JE: Well, this has been quite a journey. Anything I haven't touched on, you want to comment on or anything?

JM: No, I appreciate you doing that. What do you want to eat? You know, my favorite restaurant downtown.

JE: I want to eat wherever you want to eat.

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