

Chapter 01 – Introduction

Announcer: Montie Box, known as “Mr. Sand Springs,” was a real estate developer, civic leader, and philanthropist.

After graduation from Sand Springs High School, he joined the Navy Reserve and soon began attending Oklahoma A&M College, now Oklahoma State University.

After service during the Korean War, he returned home to begin a 68-year career in real estate development, joining his father-in-law, Ray Brown, in his insurance and real estate business. He eventually purchased the Ray Brown Agency and went to work promoting Sand Springs.

He served the community in many capacities, including the founding of the Sand Springs Education Foundation with his wife Betty.

Montie also served on the board of the Tulsa County Fair board and was a member of the Tulsa Metro Chamber. He was a regent and chair of the Board of Regents for Tulsa Community College.

When asked how he would like to be remembered, he said: “As a good man that cares for our country and for people like Sands Springs.” Montie Box died January 2, 2024. He was 93.

Montie was 92 when he recorded his oral history for VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 – 8:26 Box Family

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling, and today's date is August 24, 2022.
So, Montie, would you state your full name, please?

Montie Box (MB): Montie R. Box.

JE: I've got to ask you what R stands for.

MB: R is Roland. I was named after my two granddaddies.

JE: Okay. All right. Your date of birth?

MB: 7/31/30.

JE: July 31, 1930. You've just celebrated a birthday.

MB: Yes.

JE: And how old are you today?

MB: I'm 92.

JE: 92 years. Why do you think you were able to live to be 92 years old?

MB: I've had a sweet wife over here, Betty, yeah. And we've had a good marriage.

JE: Yes.

MB: And we have a great, wonderful family. Big family. Children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren now.

JE: Yeah.

MB: And Sand Springs has been good to us, and we love it. So, Betty, you're joining us. Thank you for doing that.

Betty Box (BB): You're quite welcome.

JE: Nice to have you here. And so your role is to kind of keep us on the straight and narrow, and then interject along the way some things that you may remember that maybe Montie doesn't and I don't know about.

BB: Okay. I will do that.

JE: So you do that, and how many years you've been married?

BB: We've been 40 years. Be 41 this coming January. 41.

JE: That's great. So you've seen a lot of things in his life and your entire ... congratulations on that family you talked about.

BB: Thank you.

JE: So, Montie, tell us, where are we recording this interview?

MB: Sand Springs, Oklahoma, in my building or our building. Sand Springs, Oklahoma.

JE: And it's Montie Box Real Estate.

MB: Yes.

JE: ...Building that we're in right here on Broadway.

MB: Yes.

JE: Where were you born?

MB: I was born in Comanche, Oklahoma.

JE: And so since you were born 1930, I'm going to bring up the Dust Bowl of the 30s, 1934, 36, 39, 40, and then that brings you up to 8, 9, 10 years old. Did you have any feelings of Dust Bowl or even the Great Depression, because they were also your first early, uh, of your life?

MB: Yes. I had some. My dad managed the largest diversified farms in the Southwest. But he came to work for the Sand Springs Home for \$25 a month. And we had a little house west of Sand Springs. And he finally

became manager of that farm, which was the largest, I said, diversified farms in the Southwest. He had a lot to do with my life.

JE: But the actual Dust Bowl, you probably didn't experience the dust blowing.

MB: No, not. No, I didn't.

JE: And because you were farming at all, maybe the Depression didn't affect him any?

MB: Well, the Depression when you were, we were all alike. We were all poor at that time. Tulsa, Sand Springs. But Sand Springs has been a very caring community. Charlie Page, which is the founder, we had the orphanage and we've got the widow's colony. We have a very caring people in our community. Still are. We have the Salvation Army, which I've been part of for 60 years.

JE: Yeah.

MB: Tulsa Boys Home, which is a caring of young men. We're just a caring community in Sand Springs.

JE: Yeah. Your mother's name, her maiden name and where she grew up.

MB: Yes. Her name was Montie Modena Box. Her name was Smith. I had an uncle who was dean of men at OU. Good man.

JE: So your mother's name was Montie Modena.

MB: Yeah.

JE: And then your mother named you Montie.

MB: That's correct.

JE: So she was Montie and you were Montie.

MB: And my granddad was a Montie.

JE: All right. So then wasn't this confusing? When everybody was calling for Montie? Is it me, my mom or whatever? That's kind of unusual.

MB: Well, I grew up until I was in high school. I was Sonny.

JE: Okay.

MB: Sonny Box.

JE: All right. All right. All right. Yeah. I've never heard of anybody who's named after their mother.

MB: Yeah.

JE: But that worked out fine. What kind of personality was she? What kind of person?

MB: Well, my mother was a fiery redhead and she was a darn good woman, boy. She even taught me how to dance. Said, "Son, now if you hold a woman by the middle of her back, you can lead her any place you want her to go."

JE: Yeah. Yes. Sweetheart, redhead, wonderful. Did you have brothers and sisters?

MB: I have a sister, Judy. Judy Walton. And she's been a sweetheart. She's now lost her husband, Clark. Clark, a couple of years ago and we miss him.

JE: Yeah. But how old is she?

MB: 12 years younger than I am.

JE: All right. So she's like 80 some, 80. Yes. Much, much younger, right?

MB: Yes. All right.

JE: So then give me your father's name.

MB: James William Box.

JE: And where did he grow up? Where did he-

MB: He grew up in Comanche, Oklahoma.

JE: Okay.

MB: Went to Oklahoma State.

JE: What was his personality like? What was he like?

MB: My dad was always the gentle type. My mother was the fiery redhead.

JE: Okay. But you learned a lot from your father.

MB: Oh, yeah. He was a mentor or not. He was very firm. And when he said, "Son, let's go to the garage, your mother said, you need a whipping." And we'd go to the garage and he was nice until he hit me a couple of licks and then he'd get mad. And I remember the day he said, "Bodina," that was my mama, "that boy's had his last whipping. Let's go walk." And that's what we do.

JE: Yeah. Instead of having a whipping.

MB: Yeah. He was quite a gentle man.

JE: And then, so tell us again what he did. He was in a farm-

MB: He was the manager of the Sand Springs Home Farms.

JE: Okay. What is that, Sand Springs Home Farm?

MB: Well, they were the largest diversified farms in the state. They were in the southwest at one time. You name it, we had it. We had hogs, chickens, sheep, and milk and shorthorn cattle, Holstein cattle, Jersey cattle, had it all. There's lots of different farms over Sand Springs, five of them in fact.

JE: Okay. Did someone own them all or was it a, who owned all those farms?

MB: The home was – The home orphanage which Charles Page founded.

JE: Okay. But the farm, you said the farm itself, was that owned by-

MB: The Sand Springs Home.

JE: By Charles Page?

MB: Yes.

JE: Wow.

MB: Yes.

JE: And he, had he bought up all this land and farm?

MB: Yes. He had. But he made his money in oil. But Sand Springs, you know, we used to have a trolley car from Sand Springs to Tulsa. Every 15 minutes, it ran. Sand Springs has been a very, thanks to Charles Page, a very caring community. We have the orphanage and we have the widow's colony which is 60 ladies who have their home in Sand Springs.

JE: Right. What brought Charles Page to this area? Do we know?

MB: I, he was before my time.

JE: Yep.

MB: But yes, he came over here and founded Sand Springs.

JE: Yeah. Yeah. And then, and he found, yes, he founded the Sand Springs and we always hear about the Charles Page Boulevard and most people today have no idea who, what an influence Charles Page was on this entire area.

Chapter 03 – 6:06
WWII

John Erling (JE): Your education, what was the first school you attended?

Montie Box (MB): Tanglewood. Tanglewood was a two-room country school where we did, you know, had two teachers and, you know, probably 50 students, all of them all. And I learned probably as much there as I did through my university years.

JE: Tanglewood, is that in, was that a town or Tanglewood?

MB: No, it was just the name of a school.

JE: But it was where?

MB: It was five miles west of Sand Springs.

JE: Okay.

MB: And the best teacher I ever had, Bonnie Dunn, she taught me. She taught me more about life and living and being a good man. But she was also my school bus driver, which was her car.

And what a wonderful woman.

JE: Yeah. So how many years, how many grades?

MB: Eighth grade.

JE: You went there through the eighth grade?

MB: Through the eighth grade.

JE: In a two-room schoolhouse?

MB: Two-room schoolhouse, yes. There was two teachers. One through the fourth and fourth through the eighth grade. Yes.

JE: Wow. So then from there, you went to what school?

MB: Sand Springs High School. It was called Charles Page, but at that time it was Sand Springs High School.

JE: And did you participate in sports?

MB: Oh, well, I tried. But all the WW2 boys came back. And the little guys that weighed 125 pounds could hardly make out the team when some of those boys were married and had children and coming back to high school.

JE: Yeah. You're talking about the veterans that came back from World War II at that time. But didn't you do some wrestling?

MB: Yes. I was, well, I helped start the wrestling program here. I wrestled a little in college in Philadelphia. Until I met a couple of guys that knew how to wrestle. But yes, I changed a lot of young men's lives through our wrestling program.

JE: That's great. So then in high school, did you enjoy your time there?

MB: Oh, yes. I was president of the senior class. And I had a lot of fun.

BB: You were in the band?

MB: Oh, yeah, the band, the high school band.

JE: And what did you play in the high school band?

MB: Clarinet and alto sax.

JE: Yeah. Well, you showed leadership early on then, didn't you, being president of your senior class?

MB: Well, I loved school. I would deliver the milk every morning into the orphanage and the widow's colony five miles and five miles back. And at that time, hitchhiked and made eight o'clock band practice.

JE: Wow.

MB: But during the war years. You put up your thumb and anybody go by, no. Because everybody had gas rationing and warring. You know, you picked up that person and knew it was going to be okay.

JE: Yeah. So we had Pearl Harbor.

MB: Yes.

JE: December 7th, 1941. And then you would have been 11 years old about that time.

MB: Yes.

JE: Do you remember that day?

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: Tell me about it.

MB: Well, I had woke up from having pneumonia and my grandmother was sitting beside me and she was crying. And I said, "Grandma, what's wrong?" And she said, "well, the Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor and we'll go to war and both of my boys will be there." And sure enough, they were. Both of them. Jody was with Patton in Germany. Paul was laying pipelines to the tanks in Italy. Her two boys.

JE: So those were your uncles, actually.

MB: Those were my uncles. Yes. I was always upset because I wasn't quite old enough. The day I turned 17, I went over and joined the Naval Reserve. And stayed in the Naval Reserve until I got in college and they were paying \$10

a month and I could get an advanced ROTC for 30. So I got an advanced ROTC.

JE: All right. President Roosevelt.

MB: Yes. Quite a man.

JE: And was president then, of course.

MB: Yes.

JE: You remember the day he died?

MB: Oh, yes. Tell me about that. Well, first time I saw my mom and dad cry. The only other time was when Will Rogers went down in an airplane crash. The two times I saw my mom and dad cry.

JE: Yeah. And it brings you to crying right now, as a matter of fact.

MB: Yes. I'm sorry.

JE: Do not feel sorry. That's okay to cry. We laugh and we cry both. So no problem at all.

So that shows you how big these two people were, President Roosevelt and Will Rogers.

MB: Yes.

JE: Do you remember listening to either Will Rogers or President Roosevelt on the radio?

MB: Oh, yes. Yes. Especially Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a very strong voice.

JE: Yeah.

MB: And, yes.

Chapter 04 – 10:45
Insurance & Real Estate

John Erling (JE): What year did you graduate from high school?

Montie Box (MB): 47. 1947.

JE: All right. Then you went on to?

MB: To Oklahoma State, which was Oklahoma A&M at the time.

JE: Right. And then you were there for four years, I suppose.

MB: Four years. I got a degree in agriculture economics.

JE: Okay. So I'm sure you were pretty active at OSU.

MB: Oh, yes. Yes.

JE: What activity? What were you in?

MB: Oh, well. I was. The main thing, I worked as a kitchen boy at the Capadelta house. I was able to get my meals for free. Looked after those girls like I was their big brother.

JE: Yeah. How about T. Boone Pickens? Was he around at that time?

MB: Oh, T. Boone, yeah. He was a wonderful guy. T. Boone, I remember the day he came into our fraternity. And he had been down in Texas. And he left there after a couple of days and didn't like it. And I remember the day he became a Sigma Alpha, Epsilon, Sig-Alf.

And I remember the day he came in there. Yes. He and I became very good friends. He was the same class as myself. And I remember when he didn't have a pot.

JE: All right. But T. Boone was, you were very industrious because you were a worker. T. Boone Pickens, I've interviewed him, too. And he's on our website. I mean, he had all these newspaper routes. And so both of you were workers from the very beginning.

MB: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, yeah, he was a good man. T. Boone and I, we were fraternity brothers.

JE: Yeah. How about the sports and the coaches of football or basketball at OSU when you were there? Who do you remember?

MB: Well, Mr. Iva. Yeah. He was the main one. And he was a, he didn't mince words when he was coaching. I can see him grab a towel off a player and nearly give him neck burn. "Get in there, boy. Get in there. Let's get it on."

JE: Yeah.

MB: Myron Roderick, who was our wrestling coach, became a very good friend because I came back and coached some wrestling here.

JE: Okay.

MB: And started our wrestling program at St. Frank's.

JE: Yeah. Social involvement at OSU, that was back in the big band era.

MB: Oh, yeah. Big band.

JE: Can you name some of the big bands who came through?

MB: Well, Tommy Dorsey, for example.

JE: Yeah. And you were a good dancer by this time because your mother taught you to dance.

MB: Oh, yes. Yes, I was.

JE: I bet you were.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I used to run off down when I joined the Naval Reserve when I was turned 17 and they sent me down to New Orleans. And I love that good old Dixieland type music. Yeah.

JE: Yeah. You've got a great memory. Here you are 92 years old and all these things are coming to your mind. All right. So, you were in reserve officer training.

MB: Yes. ROTC. They put all of us boys that were in school of agriculture in the infantry. Hell, yes. I was a 1542 infantry platoon leader.

JE: What rank were you?

MB: Oh, I was the first lieutenant. Here in Tulsa, I was a company commander of a counterintelligence. I knew more of what was going on in Washington with the top secret. Secret clearance. I was the only one in Tulsa that had that type of clearance in World War, Korean War, we called it.

JE: The Korean War was going on, but your first assignment was in Germany.

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: And then counterintelligence. Yes. And did you meet, where did you meet for the counter in Tulsa?

MB: Oh, in Tulsa?

JE: Yeah.

MB: Tulsa Reserve.

JE: It was at the fairgrounds.

MB: Well, that was quite a history I had in the fairgrounds. I became the, well, I was president of the whole fairgrounds. And the time that we brought Willie Nelson to town, man, did we stir the pot then.

JE: What happened? Why?

MB: Well, we had some 50,000 people, 5,000 people show up. And I knew it was going to be a problem, and I had already made reserves where they were going to go. And I brought the TU football players in to try and make sure that everything was kept and we didn't have one problem.

JE: So, that was in the IPE building then, right?

MB: Yes, all right.

JE: Why was it controversial for Willie Nelson?

MB: I really don't know, because he had already made a name for himself, Willie.

JE: Maybe drugs were involved? Marijuana?

MB: Oh, yes, we knew. And we already had, I set up at the fairgrounds a place where we had people who had had a little too much. I hired the, no, I didn't hire them, I asked the TU football players to come over and just be in plain clothes. And if someone kind of got out of hand, well, and we didn't. We didn't have a bit of trouble with Willie.

JE: Right. So, were you chairman of the fairgrounds?

MB: I was chairman of the fairgrounds, yes. Tulsa. Okay.

JE: In Tulsa. Interesting how you, coming from Sand Springs, come into Tulsa to be the chairman of the fairgrounds.

MB: Well, I was a bit of an Aggie, OSU, and I had a big, you know, yeah, I had a liking. I showed milk and shorthorn cattle. We were one time the largest diversified farms in the southwest with my dad.

JE: Right. Oh, and you showed cattle at the fairgrounds.

MB: Oh, we showed milk and shorthorn cattle. I showed, yeah, Berkshire hogs. My dad showed the grand champion Berkshire salad at the International World's Fair in San Francisco, 1939, way before I was there.

JE: Wow.

MB: But I did know agriculture, yeah.

JE: Why didn't you end up being a farmer?

MB: Because of money.

JE: Yeah.

MB: No money, and there was no money. I spent my time in the Army, came back, and went to work for Mr. Ray Brown. And the first thing I know, I'm it.

JE: Because, okay, you went to work for him. What was the work?

MB: Well, work was real estate and insurance.

JE: That was his company, real estate and insurance.

MB: That's right.

JE: And he was your father-in-law.

MB: Yes, at that time.

JE: At that time, right.

MB: He was a good, became, I remember when he turned it all over to me and he became our first elected mayor in Sand Springs, Ray Brown.

JE: Wow.

MB: Quite a man, quite a man. Yeah. And he said, son, it's either black or white, there's no in between.

JE: Yeah, no. And so that was, what year, 1953 or so?

MB: Yeah, 1950. Yeah, 1951.

JE: You graduated from OSU in 51.

MB: 51. Went in the Army for two years, and came back and became with Bishop Brown in 53 or 54.

JE: Right. All right. So then did you assist him in both insurance and real estate to begin with?

MB: Yes. And then he, what he said, bought in five years. I want out. And he became our first full mayor in Sand Springs.

JE: Okay.

MB: He changed from the mayor form to council form.

JE: All right. So then what kind of insurance was this?

MB: Oh, insurance, we had, we didn't have life insurance. We had all the other type. If you wanted a car insurance, and you wanted a house insurance, a farm, whatever, that's what we did.

JE: Okay. But then real estate, too.

MB: Yes.

JE: Tell me what kind of real estate that was. Well, real estate at that time, I was selling just normal houses. He would say, "son, there's no in between. It's either black or white." Honesty and integrity is what he taught me more than anything else.

JE: Right. So did, you were selling houses, but did you sell land, farmland, too?

MB: Yes, yes. Some of it. Some of it. But most of it was houses, because it basically was insurance. Insured your house or insured your farm, whatever. But basically, farm and ranch.

And he sold out to me, and I became an independent agent, independent insurance agent.

We sold a lot of houses in Sand Springs.

And then I hooked up with a guy by the name of Bill Brice. Bill had a degree in engineering. I came over here, and we became partners, and we did land developing. We developed a lot of different subdivisions, probably six or seven different subdivisions for homes. He did the engineering, and I do the sales. We'd throw it in the pot. Never had a cross work.

JE: Yeah. Yeah. But about the real estate business since 1953, say, up until now, a lot of ups and downs.

MB: Yes.

JE: And maybe, I'm thinking now about the 80s, the oil bust and all that, did that affected real estate?

MB: No. It really didn't in Tulsa. Tulsa was very progressive even then. Tulsa has always been progressive.

JE: So, did you sell real estate in Tulsa and in Sand Springs?

MB: Well, no. Basically, Sand Springs.

JE: Right.

Chapter 05 – 7:34
Senator Robert Kerr

Montie Box (MB): I now have the new bridge that they're going to charge money for, which I'm real upset about. I think it's a ridiculous thing to put a pay on a five-mile bridge. I think it's a ridiculous situation and try to make money off of the damn thing.

John Erling (JE): Okay. Where is this? Where?

MB: The Gilcrease Loop.

JE: Okay. They're talking about that right now. In fact, it was in the paper this morning, I think.

MB: Oh, it was, and I don't agree with that at all. I think it's ridiculous to pay to go to Tulsa or from, if I'm in Oklahoma City, hell, I can go all the way around Oklahoma City. I'd never be charged a dime.

JE: Right. And I think if you had a Pike Pass, it was \$2 and some cents, and otherwise it was going to cost you \$4 for that loop.

MB: That's exactly right, sir. You're right as rain.

JE: Right. Right. And so you're upset about that.

MB: Oh, I'm very upset. I think it's the worst thing that could happen when you charge people on that. It's not right. Not right. I mean, in Oklahoma city you can get one all the way around their city and not charge a dime.

JE: Yeah.

MB: Why charge money? It was never built to charge money.

JE: Right. But what can we do about it? You can't do anything about it now, can you?

MB: Well, I guess I can't, but I'm going to try.

JE: There you go. Ninety-two years old.

MB: Yes, sir.

JE: And get out there. Save us some money on that.

MB: Well, you know, we've got a good county commissioner.

JE: Who is your county commissioner?

MB: Betty?

BB: Karen Keith.

JE: Who?

BB: Karen Keith.

MB: Karen Keith.

JE: Oh, Karen Keith's your county commissioner.

MB: Yes, she's a sweetheart. Yeah.

JE: And she'll fight.

MB: She'll fight. Oh, she's a wonderful lady.

JE: Do you remember what kind of money you were making back in the 50s when you were selling insurance and all?

MB: Oh, nothing. Two hundred dollars a month.

JE: Yeah. The commissions on the insurance is very small.

MB: Oh, yes. Very, very small. Twenty-five percent.

JE: All right. The Keystone Dam.

MB: Yes.

JE: Were you around for the building of that?

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: Tell us about that. Was that a popular thing? Were you for that?

MB: Oh, most certainly. I helped do it.

JE: Okay. Tell me how you helped build the Keystone.

MB: Well, Bob Kerr.

JE: Former Senator Robert Kerr.

MB: Bob Kerr was as strong as Lysol. And we had Mike Mulroney, you know, and the little Dixie. Yeah. We had power. I remember the day that I was president of the OSU alumni. And I said, I brought Bob Kerr in here. And I said, "Bob, we need a better straight shot to Stillwater from Tulsa. And we need OSU in Tulsa. We need both. And we need a road."

"Well, Montie, where do you want that road?" Bob Kerr was strong. And I went up and drew a line from Tulsa to Stillwater. And right there's where the road went. And Bob, like I said, he was as strong in Washington as we've ever had anybody.

JE: Yeah.

MB: Mike Mulroney and Bob Kerr.

JE: The two of them were great. Absolutely. The building, though, of the Keystone Dam, did Senator Kerr help you with that?

MB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes. When the Cimarron and the Arkansas, because I used to fly my plane over, and you could see where the red from the Cimarron coming into the Arkansas out of Colorado met and became... Into the Arkansas River.

JE: Mm-hmm. So, you just said flying. You were a pilot, too.

MB: Oh, yes. Yes.

JE: When did you become a pilot?

MB: Oh, way back. I owned probably half a dozen different airplanes, as did my wife, Betty. Betty's also a pilot. We flew a lot of Mooneys. A Mooney was a good airplane.

JE: Mooney was a brand?

MB: What?

JE: Mooney was the type of plane?

MB: Yes. Uh-huh.

JE: Right. So, you said you had five or six different planes? Oh, yes. Yes. And you used those because you flew to many of your properties.

MB: Oh, well, not the basic properties, but I don't know. I think aviation was on the brink of not getting there, and I knew I was out of Riverside, and I helped do one over here. We called it Bill Pogue. Bill was my classmate in high school, and he became, of course, the astronaut that everyone knows, Bill Pogue.

JE: Right, and I've interviewed him for Voices of Oklahoma.

MB: Well, then you know what he was.

JE: Yeah, he was a great man.

MB: Oh, and he and I were classmates.

JE: Oh, okay.

MB: And we used to, he had a 29 Dodge and I had a 30 Oakland, and we were always going to race. But I had to cut my 32s because during the war you couldn't buy 32 wheels, and I cut it down to a 16, and I knew a 16 with his 16, he'd outrun me. And I kept putting it off, and every day we'd have a race with Bill Pogue. But we became good friends. In fact, I have a mannequin that's sitting in one of my offices of him.

JE: I There were two sports guys. Two guys out of Sand Springs.

MB: Yes.

JE: And who were they?

MB: Jerry Hader was the baseball player, and also more than that, but he became, he worked for several of the big boys, New York Yankees.

JE: Yes.

BB: And the Red Sox, wasn't it?

MB: What?

BB: And the Red Sox?

MB: Yes, the Red Sox, yeah. He was different. He married when he lost his sweetheart. He quit.

JE: Did he play baseball in Sand Springs?

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: Do you remember seeing him? Did he play for the high school?

MB: Oh, yes. He also had basketball. He was an all-state basketball player as well.

JE: All right. Then there was another player. Marcus Haynes.

MB: Marcus Haynes. Yes.

JE: Greatest dribbler ever.

MB: Oh, ever, ever. Yes.

JE: And I've interviewed him, and he played, of course, for the Harlem Globetrotters.

MB: Yes. Yeah. We had the Harlem Globetrotters in Sand Springs.

JE: Oh, did you?

MB: He brought them in here. He brought, okay. Yeah. He was quite a guy. I wish I could have known him even better. Yeah.

JE: I think he walked to school. He walked to Sand Springs High School.

MB: The Harlem Globetrotters.

JE: And he wanted to play. But anyway, you'll have to listen to that story. He tells the story of VoicesofOklahoma.com. Well, those are great names. Great memories. Sand Springs has really grown. How big is Sand Springs now?

MB: 20,000, possibly. Yeah. Yeah. It's growing.

Chapter 06 – 10:27
Sand Springs Education Foundation

John Erling (JE): Tell me about the real estate business today, because it's different from what it has ever been. Prices are inflated. The inventory is low.

Montie Box (MB): Well, the inventory is short, but the prices are high. You pay, I'd say, two to three times what you would pay 20 years ago, yes.

JE: Right.

MB: But there is a shortage right now of homes. You can't find them real good. You know, it's not that prevalent. You know, one time we were having big subdivisions, which I, Bill Bryce, my old partner, we do a subdivision. We did several together. And, but you don't find them that way today.

JE: Yeah. You know, you're... You were so instrumental. Who did you look up to? Who were the mentors, the people that you looked up to?

MB: Well, always my wife.

JE: That's good. That's good to say that. Right. Who else?

MB: Well, I always had people that, Bill Pogue, for example.

JE: Yeah, right.

MB: I don't know. I really, people who I looked up with was people like Marcus Haynes, who did a lot. He did a lot of things here. But people like Bill Pogue, who was national, international. And he told me about a couple of incidents that he had in the air. They were spooky. But he was a good man, Bill Pogue, my classmate. Ray Brown was the head insurance for real estate, and my dad was farming.

JE: Yeah. I see in 1973 you were named Oklahoma Realtor of the Year.

MB: Yeah. I became very interested in trying to make Oklahoma named. I became also a regional vice president of the four states. At one time, I made it over to Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. I think I did. I was a regional vice president of the International Realtor Association.

JE: You were a founding member of the Sand Springs Education.

MB: Yes, with some help from my sweetheart, and yes, in fact, I made a meeting yesterday with that foundation.

JE: So how much money has the foundation given away?

MB: Over a million dollars.

JE: And who do you give it to?

MB: We give it to teachers for innovative type teaching. And I started that foundation. We were the parents of that foundation.

JE: You were given the honor of life membership on the Tulsa Boys Home Board of Directors.

MB: Yes.

JE: And then you were inducted into the Sand Springs Education Hall of Fame, and you should have been, that's for sure. You've received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Realtors, considered to be the highest honor a realtor can receive, a member of that Hall of Fame. Isn't that great?

MB: Wonderful. You look back on your life and try to be a good man. My dad said, son, there's no in-between, it's either black or it's white.

JE: Right. Right. How about your health over the years? Have you had good health?

MB: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I have a—when growing up, I had pneumonia, like to kick the bucket. But my grandmother stayed by my side, in fact, in those days,

they didn't have anything besides hot pads and a little coat, you know. I remember waking up on December the 7th, 1941, my grandmother was sitting beside me, excuse me, crying because I said, "Grandma, what's wrong?" Because I'd been out and out of it for a week or so.

"Well, she said, Jody and Paul will both go in the Army." We—the Japanese just were on Pearl Harbor. Yes. Terrible, terrible times for our state and our country. But we came out on it, we kicked ass and took names.

JE: We did indeed. All right. The country today is in turmoil as well. Yes. We have very right, very left, we're—

MB: We're in trouble.

JE: Okay. Right.

MB: We are in trouble. I think if we don't straighten this president we've got now, I might not know who should say it, I'm not in favor of what's going on in our country today. I'm really not.

JE: Okay. You said you're not in favor of this president?

MB: No.

JE: Oh, President Biden.

MB: Biden.

JE: Well, then we have former President Trump. Were you for him?

MB: Oh, yes. Trump was a damn good man and he should be back up there.

JE: All right. But now we know, and we won't get into this anymore, but for history's sake, now we know that he kept a lot of material that he should have left in the White House, brought it to his Mar-a-Lago. What do you think about all that classified material?

MB: Oh, I think that's a small bowl of crap.

JE: Okay. He probably shouldn't have done it. But, you know, if you're president of the United States and you can't take a few mementos away with you, something's wrong.

JE: Okay. All right. All right. All right. Don't come across the table at me here now. Were you a lifelong Republican?

MB: No. No, no. My dad, we were strong as Oklahoma was. At one time, we were a Democrat with Bob Kerr and Mike Monroe. Exactly. All right. So then you became a Republican, though, did you?

MB: Yes. Yes.

JE: All right. Was that because of business, and you felt that Republicans—

MB: No, it was because of the turmoil that was going on in our country. I had already served and given, willing to give my life for this country.

JE: Right. So when did you become a Republican? Do you remember? Was that in the 60s or 70s?

MB: When we lost Bob Kerr and Mike Monroe and Carl Albert, those type people that we had up there, we don't have them today.

JE: No.

MB: We've got some good people, but no, the strong—at one time, Oklahoma was so strong politically, if you went up there and you said you wanted to see Carl Albert or Mike Monroe or Bob Kerr, you were seeing people.

JE: Right. And you probably went to Washington to see these people.

MB: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. I became very, very interested. When I was chair of the four states, I became very powerful in Washington at one time.

JE: Chair of the four states. What do you mean?

MB: Well, I was a realtor. I became the realtor of—represented the four states—Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Arkansas.

JE: Right. Of Republican presidents, did you ever meet President Ronald Reagan?

MB: Yes.

JE: Tell me about meeting him.

MB: I have a photograph. I saw Mike talking to him.

JE: And then, so you met him—

MB: In Washington.

JE: In Washington. You also served as a regent for Tulsa Community College.

MB: Yes.

JE: For many years, 1995 to 2006.

MB: Yes.

JE: Tell me about that. You know, I interviewed Dean Van Treese—

MB: Oh, boy.

JE: And it's a great story about he actually brought that concept—

MB: Oh, he did.

JE: ...to Tulsa.

MB: Yes.

JE: And people were against it for a while.

MB: Yes.

JE: And he had to kind of prove that this is important to have—and Oral Roberts was helpful to him in that—

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: —in that regard.

MB: Dean Van Treese was one of the finest men I've ever known.

JE: Yeah.

MB: Oral Roberts, I've met him, but that's about it.

JE: Yeah.

MB: I taught a business course at ORU one year.

JE: Oh, really?

MB: Yes. I got to know a lot of those people. They're good people. Oral Roberts University, he was a very strong man.

JE: Yeah. But then, as a regent, how did you get involved with Tulsa Community College?

MB: I was interested in education. Dean Van Treese is one of the strongest individual people up front I've ever known. I remember the day that we went out west, and he said, "Son, what do you think? What do you think about that piece of dirt that we've been given? What do you want on it?" And I grinned, and he said, "Yeah, a community college, huh?" Yeah. And that's where the West Campus was born. We had been given that land.

JE: And you were chairman from 1996 to 97 of the Tulsa Community College.

MB: Yes. Good people. Good people.

JE: And it's amazing today what that school is.

MB: Oh, let me tell you. We have a granddaughter that I helped fund for more nurses. We needed more nurses in Tulsa so bad.

JE: Yeah.

MB: And we had 60. And now we've got more than that, and she is now a registered nurse. Right, Betty? Yeah. You want to tell them about it?

BB: Baby nurse.

MB: Baby nurse?

JE: Uh-huh. Yes. Right. You know what I like right now? Because you get very forceful, even here at 92. You're still there.

MB: Yeah.

JE: You get mad. You get upset. And you've talked about nurses now. And this is, I admire this very, very much.

Chapter 07 – 3:45

Coach Box

John Erling (JE): You were involved with the Salvation Army. That goes back 60-some years.

Montie Box (MB): Well, yes. When I came back out of the Army, I remember giving Christmas to these kids through the Salvation Army and the Tulsa Boys Home.

JE: Yep.

MB: Sand Springs is (I genuinely do not know) a community for people.

JE: You were instrumental in getting the Salvation Army a new facility built in 1978.

MB: Yes.

JE: That's it's current location and you helped raised money for that, no doubt.

MB: Oh yes, we raised money. I have those boys out there that need it. And we changed those lines of those young men and made men out of boys. And I was real proud of the Tulsa Boys home.

JE: Yeah. You're a former coach and manager of Tulsa and Sand Springs Pee Wee Wrestling.

MB: Yes. I started our wrestling program, and we've changed a lot of lives. When you can get your butt kicked on the mat and have to stand up and shake hands with that old boy, and it teaches you humility as well as trying your damndest to get it.

JE: Yeah.

MB: But I know we've honored some young people.

JE: I'm sure there are many, many, many men, women that could come back to you and stand in this room and say, Thank you, Monty, for what you've done for us. Because you've included hundreds and hundreds of young people because of you.

MB: Well, thank you.

JE: Yeah. Oh, and they still call you Coach in town, right?

MB: Yeah.

JE: Here comes Coach Box.

MB: Well, I, you know, Bobby Lyons was... One of our coaches here. Marvin Roderick was one coach at Oklahoma State. I have my arm around both of

them. Trying to raise money to put our coach in the Hall of Fame at OSU. And he got it done.

JE: Good. You were given, on behalf of Salvation Army, the William Booth Award. Very prestigious. Very prestigious award given to you from the Salvation Army.

MB: Well, our Salvation Army has done... I've been very strong with the Salvation Army.

JE: Yeah.

MB: It gives something that somebody else can't give. They don't ask for anything. My wife, Betty, has been part of that situation forever. When we can give to these kids something that they don't get, they don't get it otherwise.

JE: Yeah. Well, you were blessed with a great family because you had grandparents and mother and father that helped you so much.

MB: Oh, yes.

JE: And so you've been helping those children who perhaps lost their parents and weren't living with them.

MB: Well, Sand Springs is a charitable city.

JE: Yeah, but...

MB: It's Harley Page.

JE: But so are you.

MB: Well...

JE: Yeah, accept a compliment here, Monty.

MB: Thank you. Yes. Thank you. I appreciate it.

JE: Since you're 92, how old were your parents? Did anybody else in the family live to be in their 90s?

MB: No.

JE: No? You're the only one?

MB: Yeah.

Chapter 08 – 6:40

How To Be Remembered

John Erling (JE): What kind of advice would you give to young people today? Advice. What would you give them?

Montie Box (MB): I think Charlie Page, “think right.” That's it.

JE: Yeah, think right.

MB: Think right.

JE: Yeah.

MB: And I think that's probably as good as you can get.

JE: Yeah.

MB: Because, you know, our country needs it right now. Yeah. We need it bad.

JE: Yeah, we do. How would you like to be remembered?

MB: As a good man, take care for our country. I was willing to give my life. I have an honorable discharge from the Navy and the Army.

JE: Yeah.

MB: And it was a hot situation. I was a young lieutenant in the infantry, and instead of going to Korea, I went to Germany. Yeah. Because I... I think my coach, or my colonel, was my dad's football coach, and somehow or other he can have me go to Germany instead of Korea.

JE: Okay.

MB: I still, I don't know how else I got there.

JE: Yeah. So you'd like to be remembered as?

MB: A caring community, a good husband, that cares about people like Sand Springs has done for many, many years.

JE: Yeah. And that's true. What was the price of bread and milk back in the 50s?

MB: You could buy a loaf of bread for 10 cents. A loaf of bread, yeah. Yes, the prices were terribly low. Of course, too, when we had World War II, you had rationing, everybody had food stamps, and it was a different, different, different world.

JE: Yeah.

MB: But Dad worked for \$25 a month. Can you imagine working for \$25 a month? Did it, and glad to do it.

JE: But he always provided for you. I mean, you never went to bed hungry.

MB: Oh, never, never. You know, and I can remember, though, going to school in Tanglewood, a two-room country school, and I would have a sack lunch, and some of those... those kids was hungry. And I'd always tell Mama, "Mama, some of those kids are hungry." Well, that's, that's gonna cease.

And next thing I know, her and another lady were cooking and getting commodities from the WPA and giving a hot lunch for some of those kids that would come to school and hungry.

JE: That's great. Yeah. And you, you spotted it. You knew it. And then your mom provided for that.

MB: Yes.

JE: And you were a young man. Did you always have electricity and plumbing in your homes or at the school?

MB: Oh, yes. Well, we did. We had a... I lived in a big tin room, an Osage Indian-built home. And my dad was, at one time, named the Farmer of the Month for the nation. And we were the largest diversified farms in the Southwest and had a big tin room home. It was built by the Osage Indians.

JE: And why were you living in a big... Oh, that came with the farm.

MB: Yes.

JE: The big tin room home.

MB: Yes.

JE: Oh, that was quite a building, a house then, for you.

MB: Oh, a big, big, big, yes. It burned to the ground and was rebuilt into a little native stone house. But my dad, every morning, would say, Son, it's time to deliver the milk. And he ran in front of the house. He pulled through, grabbed my leg, and threw me in the floor. Let's get it with us, son. And every morning, I had delivered the milk five miles in. And five miles back, hitchhiked and made band practice at 8 o'clock.

JE: You say you delivered it. Were you on a bicycle, or how did you carry it?

MB: No, no. I had a pickup.

JE: Oh, you drove a pickup.

MB: Pickup.

JE: What kind of a pickup was it?

MB: We had a 40 Ford.

JE: A 40 Ford.

MB: Yeah. And it was, then, back in the war, the first cars that came by was in 57. A lot of people don't know, like, the Oldsmobile. The Oldsmobile, the reason we have a hydromatics was that some boys lost their limbs.

In fact, I roomed in college with a young man that had lost his leg. And that's the reason for the Oldsmobile today, people don't know that, of why the hydromatic was done. It was done for the one-legged boys.

JE: How about that. What was your most favorite car that you owned back then?

MB: Cars?

JE: Yeah. Car. What was the best brand that you liked?

MB: I had a 1929 Oakland.

JE: Oakland, yes. And who made the Oakland? Where was that made?

MB: I don't know. I found it up there, and it had been stored away. Yeah. But Ford, 44 pickup was the best thing driving today. I loved it. Yeah. 44 pickup, let me tell you, it could move. And I remember my mom and dad had a 1949 Dodge. I went up on Pike's Peak and drove up there.

JE: Wow.

MB: A good life, a good life. I've had a, Betty's been a wonderful wife. We have a wonderful family. Grandchildren, great-grandkids. And life's been good to me.

JE: Yeah, it has been. Well, it's my honor to interview you here for Voices of Oklahoma.

MB: No, it's my honor to be across the table. Thank you. I know your reputation better than you think I do. You have been a voice that has been for the good of Oklahoma. Thank you for your work and your voice. You've got a wonderful voice. Keep it up. I love you for it.

JE: I love you, too, Montie. Thank you so much. This was good. We both have tears in our eyes right now. That's good. Yes, yes.

Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, on VoicesofOklahoma.com