

Frank Keating

As governor of Oklahoma in 1995, he guided our state through the aftermath of the April 19 bombing.

Chapter 01—1:12

Introduction

Announcer: Born in St. Louis, Frank Keating grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He received his undergraduate degree from Georgetown University, and a law degree from the University of Oklahoma. His thirty-year career in law enforcement and public service included service as an FBI agent, US Attorney and State Prosecutor, and Oklahoma House and Senate member. He served presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush in the Treasury, Justice, and Housing Departments as Assistant Secretary of Treasury and General Counsel and Acting Deputy Secretary of HUD. In 1993, Keating returned to Oklahoma to run for Governor. He won a three-way race by a landslide and was easily reelected in 1998, becoming only the second governor in Oklahoma history to serve two consecutive terms.

As the Governor of Oklahoma, Keating won national acclaim in 1995, for his compassionate and professional handling of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In the aftermath of the tragedy he raised more than six million dollars to fund scholarships for the nearly two hundred children left with only one or no parents.

Listen to Frank Keating share his oral history on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02—8:58

Keatings Come to Oklahoma

John Erling: My name is John Erling, and today's date is April 20, 2013. Frank, would you state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age, please?

Frank Keating: Yes. Frank Keating, 2/20/44, I'm sixty-nine years old.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

FK: At 2121 South Yorktown in Tulsa.

JE: Here in the Community Room of this fine facility.

FK: And it happens to be the place my mother-in-law, Kathy's mother, Frances Chandler lives, so we have a free room.

JE: Where were you born?

FK: I was born in St. Louis, Missouri. My mother and dad were like my wife and me, accidental 'meeters', if that were a word. Dad was the son of a businessman in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My mother was the daughter of a banker in Salem, Illinois. Dad was, of course, during the Depression on his way to a job in Salem, Illinois, for Frick-Reed Supply Company, an oil well supply company. He was having dinner at the hotel, the Park Hotel in Salem. And he noticed this really cute girl and her, appeared to be brothers or colleagues or friends. And he said, "I like this town. I wonder who that girl is?" And it turned out to be my mother.

So they met later and were engaged and were married so Pennsylvania father, an Illinois mother, moved to Tulsa in 1945, I was six months old.

JE: Why did they move to Tulsa?

FK: Well, everybody in those days, Dad used to laugh, the Okies left and went to California, and all the Easterners came in to work in the energy business. So Dad founded a drilling business and he was a drilling contractor in Tulsa and a very involved, very active civic leader for many, many years on a volunteer basis. They came for the purpose of the energy business as so many people did.

JE: Your mother's name?

FK: My mother was Mary Ann Martin. Her father owned the National Bank in Salem, Illinois, Salem National Bank. In the Depression there was not a banker on the banking committee of the US House and he ran at large, elected by the entire state of Illinois. During the Depression was elected, served one term in the US House, did not run again. Went back and saved his town and saved his bank.

But he felt it was important for every citizen to play some role in public life and public policy. So that was my mother's dad.

Dad's father, in 1900, with two other men bought a company called the Grogan Company in Pittsburgh. Bailey, Banks, and Biddle in Philadelphia, and the Tiffany's in New York were the largest jewelers in the United States, Grogan in Pittsburgh. That's where all the money was, steel, aluminum, Heinz, oil, you know, at Titusville, the first oil well. So Grandpa was a real scholar in crystal and silver.

He was the owner of this company, he bought it himself in 1917, and they only sold sterling silver. So one of my hobbies is going on eBay and I find beautiful sterling Grogan pieces, and I buy them to the extent I can afford them. And I bet I have hundreds of them. So I could open a Grogan Company today because they're Grandpa's pieces.

But he was in the jewelry business and my other grandfather was in the banking business. But Grandpa Keating was like my father, very much a voluntary head of the state prisons in Pennsylvania, the Chairman of the Prisons. And was very active in civic affairs in the town.

JE: And your father's name?

FK: Anthony F. Keating, Tony Keating.

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

FK: She went to Northwestern in Evanston, Illinois. She was a member of Phi Alpha Theta. She was a very smart lady. I was always very much in awe of her because she was intellectually extremely capable. She was very frail physically. She died when she was only sixty-six. She had rheumatoid arthritis badly and it was just an enervating illness.

But my mother was an example of how wonderfully America has done. Because she graduated from high school, went to Northwestern University, got a degree in Criminology, of all things, in the '30s, and taught the fifth and sixth grades.

My wife, Kathy, graduated from Edison High School in Tulsa, went to the University of Oklahoma. And her mother told her, "If you marry a bum you'd better be a nurse or a teacher 'cause you won't be able to find any other kind of job." So she became a special and elementary teacher.

And yet our daughters, we have three children, but our daughters, one got a degree at Southern Methodist and became a lobbyist for the US Chamber. And the other daughter got a degree with the University of Virginia and then came back to OU and got a law degree. Now think about that. Two generations ago women could not be lobbyists or lawyers. So I think it's just wonderful that a woman today can achieve what they did.

But my mother was frustrated. She didn't like to be in the kitchen and she didn't like house-ly, wifely things. And she was frustrated because she was not able to use her talent.

JE: Your father's personality, what was he like?

FK: Keating is an Irish name and Dad was Catholic, although his mother was a righteous Presbyterian from Cheltenham, north of Philadelphia. So he had a little mix of everything. But Dad was just very gregarious. He used to laugh that he told Gifford Parker, who was the founder of Parker Drilling Company in Tulsa, he said, "You know, Gifford, I was the only roughneck on a drilling rig with a college degree. I guarantee you I was the only one. But I was a milkman, I worked in a steel mill," Dad said, "anything." Because there was no room for him in my grandfather's business, the jewelry business. So Dad basically did everything and only ending up in Tulsa as a drilling contractor.

JE: What did you draw from your parents?

FK: Dad was a person who worked hard, but he used to call himself the head of the dry hole drilling company. Because whenever he'd drill a well for someone it was a producing well.

Whenever he drilled it for himself it was a dry hole. So when he passed away he was very modestly fixed. And my mother died years before, so Dad didn't really leave anything. But he was an extraordinarily hard-working person for charity.

For example, the studhorse note signers to build Gilcrease Museum, to keep Gilcrease's collection in Tulsa. Dad was one of the men that signed that personal note to convince the city that they ought to buy the collection. And if the city didn't buy the collection, Dad said, "I didn't have the money to pay my pro rata share of the note."

I never had a chance to tell him but wouldn't it have been great if you had a multibillion dollar art collection that you owned a portion of? That wouldn't have been too bad.

Then he was Chairman of Philbrook and he was on the national board of the Boy Scouts, the head of the council here. Twice he was the General President and Chairman of the United Way, the Arthritis Foundation, president of Central Hills Country Club. I mean, there wasn't the Tulsa Club, there wasn't an entity business in philanthropic in Tulsa that he wasn't extremely active in, if not the leader of, and yet, financially he was not in a position to give a great deal of money. Which I really admired because it's easy to write a check, it's quite something else to go out and try to encourage other people to get involved in philanthropy.

The Salvation Army is a good example. He was forty-five an active volunteer in the Salvation Army on the Advisory Board here in Tulsa. And I think that's extraordinary. A Catholic in those days was not involved in the Salvation Army.

JE: So you obviously drew the example of public service. That had to be pressed in your mind because you'd been in public service so many years, drawing from him.

FK: That's right. My mother was a disciplined student. She was in the Shakespeare Club here in Tulsa, for example. So my love of literature, and I've written four award-winning children's books for major publishers. Harcourt and Simon and Schuster, a fifth one is coming out in about a year on Abraham Lincoln, but I think my mother's scholarship, my mother's writing and discipline as a student was important.

And Dad, I think, he felt public service was an obligation. He started on the City Commission here, when Dewey Bartlett was governor he was on the State Highway Commission. You name it, he was involved in civic affairs. And that was to him what people do, that's an obligation of citizenship.

But a combination of his love of the English language, his business focus, his political focus, it was not sordid to be in public life, in his view. And it was an obligation of citizenship and a free society. But also his interest in philanthropy, that clearly motivated my way of thinking as a citizen myself.

JE: Your family, brothers, sisters have—

FK: We have in the family three boys. My mother and dad had three of us. My older brother, Martin, who lives in Tulsa, who by the way, wrote a novel on terrorism that was very, very well done.

My twin brother, Daniel, was a banker, a financial services professional and he writes a column for the *Tulsa Beacon*, the conservative newspaper here.

And it's interesting, you know, I do the children's books, they do things that are serious. I'm not smart enough to write anything that's serious. So, I mean, you know, all of us got our college degrees. All of us have advanced degrees. Martin has a law degree, I have a law degree, and brother Dan got a master's in finance.

Chapter 03—2:25

Education

John Erling: Elementary school, where did you attend?

Frank Keating: Well, we're a Catholic family. My mother was a convert. My four grandparents, by the way, Quaker, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic. But Dad was a very devout Catholic and my mother converted so we went to Holland Hall, my brother and I did for kindergarten. And then first, second grades at Marquette School in Tulsa; third, fourth, fifth, and sixth at Monicaseno in Tulsa. Seventh through twelfth at Cascia Hall in Tulsa. And then I went back East to college to Georgetown University to undergraduate school and came back to OU for my law degree.

JE: Your experience at Cascia Hall, would we know some of the classmates that you attended school with there? Your experience there?

FK: I had a rather bizarre group of friends, and here I was the vice president of my class in the seventh grade. President of my class eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. And president of the student body and editor of the newspaper with Tony Lauinger, who has been a very active right-to-life leader in Oklahoma for years.

But my best friends were Gailard Sartain, you know, who was infamous for humor in motion pictures, and Raven Martin, who headed the legalism of marijuana efforts. So you talk about not only an eclectic group of friends, but a dysfunctionally eclectic group of friends. Not Gailard, but Raven was a piece of work. But I mean, we were all friends, we all went to school together. We got along well together.

JE: You graduated in '62?

FK: Yes, from high school.

JE: Living in Tulsa then, the stores that you remember downtown, maybe hangouts—

FK: You know, in those days everything was pretty well personal to the city. You had Miss Jackson's, which is still here for the ladies' ware. My mother shopped at Miss Jackson's. You had Brown Duncan, again, another Tulsa. You had Sidenbacks, and these were Tulsa stores, of course, Petty's is still here, that was the grocery store of choice for a lot of people. The Petty's family have been great friends for quite some time.

But our favorite hangout, and probably everybody who grew up in the '60s, was Pennington's on South Peoria. And that's where we would go after movies or after dates and we would have a Coke at Pennington's. That was Sonic before there was a Sonic. I mean, a drive-in spot, a hangout for teenagers that was pretty innocent and a lot of fun.

And the Admiral Twin Movie Theater, by the way. That was another place we all went out. You know, outdoor theaters were popular and that's where you would go to a movie for a dollar.

Chapter 04—1:45

Segregation in Tulsa

John Erling: Did you ever sense how blacks were treated back then in the '50s and '60s here in Tulsa? There was a separation, obviously, and they were treated differently. Did you sense or feel any of that?

Frank Keating: Well, Dad was very much a civil rights guy, so Myrtle was a maid that worked for us. Alva was the laundress that worked for us. MZ was the yardman. So we were very privileged to have people who were able to work for us. But Dad always viewed civil rights and the treatment of black Americans, which was the position of the party of Lincoln, the emancipator, that's why he was Republican. And to him, the Democratic party was the party of the Klu Klux Klan. I mean, the first time, he said, "I ever say colored only bathrooms was in Tulsa."

I remember as a little boy going out to the fairgrounds and seeing colored and white drinking fountains and colored and white bathrooms. I would ask Dad, "What is that about?"

And he said, "Well, that's just Oklahoma, that's the Democrats." I mean, he would always talk about "This was the Democrats." So if you were a civil rights guy, in Dad's view—it's really funny how times have changed, but in Dad's view you became a Republican. And that's why he said there were no Republicans in public office in Oklahoma because most Democrats were not interested in emancipation. So that was his view.

I'm a totally colorblind person, always have been. And I think probably that comes from my father, who was a Pennsylvania Republican civil rights guy. He helped raise the

money to build St. Augustine Church in north Tulsa, which was the African American Catholic church.

I remember asking him about it and he said, "Well, it's important that there be a Catholic church for that community, and it's just a fact, we've got to build a church there." So he did, helped other people do it.

Chapter 04—2:35

Kathy and the Kids

John Erling: As you've already alluded to, you went to Georgetown University. I believe you had a Bachelor of Arts degree in history?

Frank Keating: Yes.

JE: And then the University of Oklahoma for your law degree in '69.

FK: Right.

JE: You've referred to your wife, Kathy. When did you meet Kathy?

FK: Kathy was another like my father and mother, it was a surprise meeting. I'll back up to say, just like in high school I was president of the student body at Georgetown, president of the student body at the University of Oklahoma Law School. And I was just always loving organizing and putting on events. I did the Gridirons, as a matter of fact, one year at OU. And a friend of mine, John Mackey from Lawton, wrote the music and I wrote the lyrics and designed the stage and put on the play. And it was really a success. So I was just utterly focused on school work and outside activities. Really never thought about girls and getting married. So when I graduated from law school I became an FBI agent on the West Coast. I was in Seattle and San Francisco as a Bureau agent in Berkeley, California.

When I left and came back to Oklahoma, and became an assistant DA under Buddy Fallis, downtown, a friend of mine who was working at the courthouse said, "My wife's friend is a girl who graduated from OU this year and how about would you like a date with her?"

And I was dating a girl and I said, "Well, yeah, sure." So it's a blind date in April of '72, and I asked Kathy to marry me on our third date.

JE: And did she say—

FK: And she said, "I'll think about it." But we were engaged in August and married in November.

JE: Wow.

FK: Met in April, engaged in August, and married in November. I think it was August we were engaged. And we've been married forty years. We have three children, and we've never been happier.

JE: The names of the three children?

FK: Well, the first is Carrie, Carista Herndon Keating, named after Kathy's mother's maiden name. Carrie lives in Oklahoma City, she married a lawyer named Ryan Leonard, and has four children from ten years old down to, Mary Frances is probably a year and a half.

Kellie, our middle daughter is a resident of Richmond, Virginia. She went to Southern Methodist.

Carrie is the one that went to the University of Virginia and OU Law School, but Kellie, our daughter, went to Southern Methodist. Married a young man from Virginia. They live in Richmond and they have four children, from nine years down to five months old. I think little Nicole is five months old, probably.

And then, son, Chip, lives in Oklahoma City. He's Anthony Francis Keating III, named after my father and his great, great grandfather. Chip has two children, little Callie, and his boy is about two and he is Francis Anthony Keating III, named after his grandfather, me, and his great, great grandfather, who was in the jewelry business in Pittsburgh.

Chapter 06—4:25

FBI

John Erling: You began your career in law enforcement and you were made a special agent for the FBI. What kind of work were you involved in?

Frank Keating: Well, when I graduated from the academy in Quantico, in those days to be an FBI you had to be a lawyer or a CPA. I had a law degree. I had passed the bar, I didn't really care about it because I thought it would be fun to be an FBI agent.

So my first assignment was in Seattle, Washington. You know, most all of us were bachelors, we just had a grand time. Did criminal investigations, crime on the government reservations, all the financial crimes, automobile theft, bank robberies, some internal security stuff. But then I got transferred to San Francisco, lived in San Francisco, and worked in a resident agency in Berkeley. No great surprise in Berkeley, California, in those days. Internal security, new left terrorism, those were some of the things I did.

But I thought the Bureau was great, very professional group. I became an agent in 1969, left in 1971, to come back to Oklahoma to be an assistant DA. I just really wanted to try cases and work for Buddy Fallis.

JE: The Weather Underground Organization, was that under your jurisdiction—

FK: Yes.

JE: Did you get involved in whatever work it was with them?

FK: Yeah, the Black Panther party was headquartered in Oakland. They were a subject of investigation of the FBI. The Weather Underground Bill Ayers of recent notoriety in the presidential election in 2008. Bernadine Doran, Bill Ayers's wife, all of them were fugitives. And they were all subjects of investigation, criminal investigations, actually, by the FBI.

JE: Wasn't the group involved with campaigns and bombings through the mid-seventies?

FK: Yes.

JE: They too targeted government buildings along with several banks.

FK: Right.

JE: And I point that out because here we have the bombing of federal buildings and the bombings that are going on today—

FK: Right.

JE: ...that there was this going on back in the '60s and '70s.

FK: Right, and those individuals generally were from, not very affluent, but certainly affluent families. And for some reason or another they despised the United States. I mean, they hated the country, everything it stood for. Probably all that came from their view that America was a colonial power in Vietnam. I mean, the Vietnam experience, obviously, it's all of us know of that era radicalized a lot of people.

But I viewed my work as routine. I mean, if somebody blows up a bank, if you're a criminal, I don't care what their motive is. Motive only matters for punishment. It's kind of like if somebody holds up a liquor store to buy food for their children it's still a crime as if you held up that liquor store solely for the purpose of just getting money and buying narcotics. But when it comes time for sentencing and the person who bought food for a child will be treated more leniently. But it's still a violation of the law.

So I looked upon all those people as curiosities to me. I couldn't understand why this country's so glorious and, sure, any human society makes mistakes, but the United States is a wonderful nation with wonderful people that we start and stop. We stumble, but we fix things. The whole issue of slavery is a good example.

The behavior in Berkeley was just stunning to me. I thought spring in Berkeley just naturally smelled of CS gas. You know, there are riots all the time. And you think, "Don't you have something better to do than rioting?" It was just a very unusual time in American history, and I think an unfortunate time because our land hadn't accomplished anything. Just hurt a lot of people.

JE: So then you come back to the Buddy Fallis office, Tulsa County District Attorney Buddy Fallis.

FK: Right.

JE: And become an assistant there.

FK: Right.

JE: How long were you there in that office?

FK: Just a year and I tried probably fifteen, maybe it was not quite that many, certainly anyway ten felony jury trials. Got lots of trial experience and then went with the Blackstock Law Firm. And ran successfully for the legislature in 1972, so I served from '72 to '74 in the state house.

In those days, out of 101 members we had twenty-five Republicans. That was the high water mark of Republicans. I think one year back in the '20s the Republicans had the majority, but, you know, they searched out after Republicans on Saturday night with their headlights. There weren't too many Republicans. So most of my friends, quite truthfully, were Democrats.

That's one of the reasons why I never had a problem with bipartisanship, because my grandfather was a Democrat member of Congress. And in Oklahoma, growing up in Oklahoma, especially if you were in the legislature, there were nice Republicans, but there were nice Democrats too. And if you wanted to get anything done you worked with the Democrats because they control the place.

Chapter 07—3:50

Public Service

John Erling: What led you to running for office?

Frank Keating: Well, I have always been drawn to public service. I always thought it was exciting to be involved in public issues. So it wasn't a situation where I thought about it and just grimaced and tried to figure out should I or should I not. It was a mixed district in the sense that it could go either way. It was a swing district.

JE: What district? What—

FK: In District 70 was the state house district. There was a lady named Mary Margaret Wick, who was in the personnel business, who was the Democrat and I was the Republican. And I won and served one term. And then ran against a Republican incumbent Peyton Breckenridge, who was a very prominent family. Matter of fact, their grandfather Peyton and Philip Breckenridge's grandfather was Wade Philips, who of course, constructed Philbrook Museum, of which Dad was Chairman of the Board at one time.

But anyway, so I served in the state senate for two terms and then in 1981, became the first Reagan-appointed and confirmed by the Senate US Attorney. That was one of four senate confirmations that I had.

JE: Let me take you back to when you were a state senator, '75 to '81?

FK: Right.

JE: Any particular issues that were really prime that come to mind that you were addressing back then?

FK: Well, I was very interested in criminal justice, because that was my background as an assistant district attorney and felony trial prosecutor in Tulsa, as well as an FBI agent. But I remember there was one incident, Frosty Troy, who was the editor of the *Oklahoma Observer*, I used to write articles, anything that I thought was interesting, for him. You know, he was very much a liberal Democrat and I was, quite truthfully, more of a rebel that wanted to expose what wasn't being done right.

I remember one time, the chief investigator of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation was a guy named Tom Puckett, who was a very professional guy. He began several investigations of sitting legislators and, of course, that didn't sit well with sitting legislators. They put together a committee in the legislature to examine his behavior. So they began an investigation seeking his ouster for apparently personnel practices that the legislature found offensive.

For some reason or another, they put me on that commission, which was a real mistake on their part. And I'll never forget one of the early meetings we had the chairman of the commission said, "Okay, now what we're going to do, we're going to bring in these two witnesses and they're going to say X. And then we're going to give our report to the Speaker saying that Puckett should be ousted as the chief investigator of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation."

And I said, "Well, now, doesn't the guilty man have an opportunity to bring in witnesses in his behalf?" And you could hear a pin drop like, "How did he get in here?"

The chairman said, "What are you getting at?"

And I said, "Well, I mean, if this is a commission seeking the truth the very least we can do, should do, is to not only have the witnesses your time out but let him have witnesses to talk about his side of it."

He said, "Well, no, we're not going to do that. We're going to have the witnesses that we want."

And I said, "Well, then I'm going to go out here and call a press conference and denounce this whole process, including you, unless you open it up to a fair and balanced analysis of what occurred."

And they did, they opened it up, the commission gave its report some weeks later praising Puckett as a highly skilled professional in Oklahoma and saying no more.

From that day until the day he died, Mr. Puckett just loved me. Because if it weren't for me being there saying, "Wait a minute, what are you all doing?" it would have been very bad for a very fine public servant in Oklahoma.

So I was focused on those kinds of issues, obviously, you know, Bill of Rights for the Mentally Ill, and more of a civil liberties approach. And that's where Robert Henry and I became good friends. He was a young legislator at the time. We served together and did a lot of effort in the criminal justice and the juvenile justice arenas.

Chapter 08—3:25

State Senate Minority Leader

John Erling: You became the Senate Minority Leader while you were in office.

Frank Keating: Yes, yeah. There were forty-eight members of the senate, and still are, and there were eleven Republicans. And I was the leader of the eleven Republicans. That was the high water mark in Republicans at that time.

Here's another example. I was always looking for "this isn't right." For example, the law on the commitment of alcoholics to a mental health facility. Because alcoholism is a disease, the law required that the alcoholic, alleged alcoholic, commit a criminal act before you could have a commitment trial. Which meant he had to beat up his wife, assault somebody at work, or burn down the house before you could have a commitment.

So I wanted involuntary commitment of an alcoholic based upon a six-person trial in front of a district court where you could have professionals say this person is a real threat to himself or others. Interestingly, the bill was quadruple assigned, which meant it was intended to be killed, because it was a Republican bill. Republican bills didn't pass.

So I finally got it through all these committees and here it was on the senate floor, finally the bill is on the senate floor. Herschel Crow, who was the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee from Aldus, who later, by the way, became my Secretary of Transportation and a Republican. Herschel Crow stood up, he was a great, big, impressive man and a fine guy, he said, "Senator Keating, I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but this is too important a bill to be handled by a Republican. So I ask that it be given to me and I'll be the principle author."

I didn't care as long it passed, and it passed. What was interesting to me, and it showed the importance of this bill, there was a lady, and I won't mention her name, who's a friend of my mother-in-law's, who was the first—it wasn't called a defendant, it was called like a person who was to be involuntary committed for alcoholism. I was the prosecutor. Judge McDugal asked me to be the prosecutor as a member of the state senate but to see how the bill would work.

We had a six-man jury and this lady was found to be in need of immediate involuntary commitment to a mental health facility for alcohol treatment. In those days you went through a mental health facility. This lady looked like warmed-over death. She was a good friend of my mother-in-law's. They found her on a street in an alley in downtown Tulsa.

About six months later there was a review and I didn't even recognize this lady. I mean, she looked like a whole new person. She was wonderful. But she had a lawyer and the lawyer was just adamant that this was an unrighteous commitment and he asked that she be released.

The professionals said, "Way too early. This lady needs more treatment." But again, we rebel against involuntary commitment for illnesses like that, or diseases.

So they let her out and she was dead within six months. She drove herself to death.

So I just see those kinds of things, is that brother? No, I don't think so when somebody, you know, when they use narcotics or alcohol to excess. To have the state help to say, "Look, you're a citizen, we've got to help you and we're going to make sure you are treated and you can turn your life around."

I think it was for me as a civil liberties guy a part of civil liberties saying that every individual human being has value. And we're going to help this lady. But I never forgot that, the difference. She was white as a sheet and just bloated and looked horrible, and then I didn't even recognize her when she came back six months later. And then she was dead within six months after that.

Chapter 09—4:00

Former Governor David Hall

John Erling: You served under two different Democrat governors, under Governor David Hall?

Frank Keating: Right.

JE: Any interaction with him?

FK: Well, when I was a member of the state house at the time I introduced an impeachment resolution against Hall for criminal conduct. Hall was amazing. Here I was, somebody that felt he was corrupt and should be impeached, was always pleasant, just back-slapping, wonderful, friendly guy. And needless to say, my impeachment resolution didn't go anywhere, but the facts I got from Buddy Fallis, I mean, they were not secret grand jury materials. It was all a matter of record.

Some months later, toward the end of Hall's term in office, Bernie McInerney, former member of the Supreme Court from Muskogee, who was a partner in the law firm that I

was in here, called me and said, "We got a guy in jail down in Oklahoma City. You're down there, could you go interview him? We raised his fee."

So I said, "What's his name?"

He said it was Kevin Moony.

"So what's he there for?"

And he said, "It's attempted bribery."

"Of whom?"

He said, "John Rogers, Secretary of the State."

So I went down and talked to him and this guy was in an orange jumpsuit and he was one of David Hall's best childhood friends. He said, "Well, I got to be honest with you. I mean, I'm going to trial, I could go to prison."

I said, "Yes."

"I thought paying someone a finder's fee or a bonus was part of business practices and David Hall, my friend, said for five thousand dollars a month for X number of months we would handle and get the account for the public employee retirement. I think that was what it was, it was a retirement fund.

"So I agreed to do it and all of a sudden now I'm in an orange jumpsuit in jail."

JE: Moony said?

FK: Yeah, Moony.

JE: Right.

FK: And I said, "Well, in public life if you offer a finder's fee or a bonus to a public official that's called a bribe. In private life a finder's fee or a bonus and yeah, you're in big trouble."

Well, what happened is, John Rogers had a wire. He talked to Moony and he talked to Hall and that's how the case developed.

So Moony said to me, "I want to plead guilty." We had an initial appearance in front of the federal judge in Oklahoma City who was a former head of the National Guard. Real tough guy. We went down the line, Moony, David Hall, again, the just-left-office governor and not guilty, not guilty. It came to Kevin Moony and the plea was, "Guilty, your Honor."

Well, Hall looked down the line, saw me, and just turned as white as a sheet, 'cause he knew as a former DA that he was cooked because Moony had turned state's evidence. And, of course, convicted him.

Well, years later, about three years ago, I guess, we had all the former governors meet at the History Center, which I was responsible for, overlooking the dome. My creation. And the first time I'd ever seen David Hall or his wife and I made sure I was sitting in front of a mirror that I could see behind me because I really thought because I had sent him to prison that he'd come over and throttle me. And we had no interaction at all, except I said hello, I think, early.

Then we were leaving, the elevator doors open and who's in there but David and Joe Hall. And Kathy and I got on and he treated me like I was old home week best friend. It was astonishing to me because what he did was awful. I mean, he was clearly guilty of soliciting and accepting bribes. But that was one of my more interesting moments in the legislature.

JE: And I've interviewed David Hall for this website, voicesofoklahoma.com. And he, of course, to this day maintains his innocence on it.

FK: Yeah.

JE: But when you said early on you tried to get him impeached, they were charges far different from than what he was eventually convicted for. Or was it—

FK: Yeah, I forgot. Yeah, see, I forget but the impeachment is loose as a matter of public record and it alleged all of the misconduct involving contracts and the rest in Oklahoma. But I think you're correct, it had to have been different. Because Hall was out of office when this thing happened. He had just left office, as I recall.

But it's real sad because it diminished the reputation of public life and public service.

JE: He was out of Tulsa too, as a matter of fact.

FK: That's right.

JE: And worked here in the District Attorney's office.

Chapter 10—1:40

Former Governor David Boren

John Erling: And then the other governor you were under was Democratic Governor David Boren. And we know his story. I don't know if you had any interaction with him.

Frank Keating: Yeah, well, David, as a matter of fact, I dated his sister several times in law school. He was three years older than I but he was two years ahead of me in school because he was a road scholar and had lost a year of law school, effectively. But David said something that was fascinating, I never thought about myself but I certainly did about him. Here was a road scholar, extremely bright guy.

I remember one night we went to dinner and he said, "You know something? You're the only other person I know that someday will be a national figure, except me."

And I said, "Well, I know you will be. I've no doubt about that at all, but not me." I mean, I was very ordinary compared to David. David was extremely, is extremely smart.

I admire Boren a lot. We're good friends.

JE: But back in those days were you setting your sights on being governor of Oklahoma?

FK: No.

JE: Not at all?

FK: Never even thought about it.

JE: You really didn't?

FK: No because I remember North Lincoln, all those motels, the Capitol Motel and whatever the other one. They were six-dollar-a-night motels, that's about all I could afford. And I stayed in one of those motels, examined abstracts, and trying to earn a living while I was a legislator. And I'd walk to the capitol for the exercise. Leave my car parked at the motel.

And I remember looking down occasionally at the Governor's Mansion off to the east and never crossed my mind. Boren was the governor at the time. I was in the state senate, I guess. And I was a young guy. I was in the state senate when I was thirty. I was in the state house when I was twenty-eight. And Boren was in his early thirties, maybe thirty-four, at the time as well. So I didn't think about it, I mean, it was not even something that crossed my mind.

Chapter 11—2:00

US Attorney

John Erling: So then President Ronald Reagan appoints you as the US Attorney for the northern district of Oklahoma. And you served that '81 to '83.

Frank Keating: Don Nickles was a member of my caucus. I was the leader of the state senate, Republicans. And because I was a former FBI agent and a former assistant DA, Don asked me if I would be willing to consider being the United States Attorney in Tulsa.

Well, I thought that would be glorious, you know, in the courtroom, trying cases, putting bad guys in jail. But you may remember, I was also the architect of Liquor by the Drink. I really wanted to pass Liquor by the Drink. And there was a preacher at Brookside Baptist Church, I remember, who was just hostile because I was an unremitting sinner for supporting mixed drinks sales.

So I went to see him. And a guy dropped me off, I guess my car was in the shop, and he was pompous, to say the least, and denounced me as a sinner and that they would never give in. And that they were going to oppose my nomination. Then he threw me out of his office and I had to walk home from 34th and Peoria to—we lived at 31st and Lewis, but, man, it was cold. A cold front had just gone through. I didn't have a coat and it was really cold. I was too cheap to try to get a cab and I, of course, walked home.

Don called me later because it was a lot of publicity about Keating, the Senator, supporting Liquor by the Drink. He called me and said, "Frank, oh you are my problem child."

And I was waiting for the next sentence, you know, "Would you withdraw and I'll be happy?" but he didn't ask that. He hinted at it. And I said, "Well, Don, I am not your problem child. First off, I'm five years older than you are and I'm not your problem child and this is outrageous to say that a glass of wine with dinner is somehow sinful. It's absurd."

Don, at the time, was Catholic, I think he's now Evangelical. But Don stayed the course, I got confirmed, and later became chairman of all the US attorneys in the United States. Tried a lot of county commissioner, corrupt county officials cases here and loved the job. I mean, US Attorneys had a wonderful job.

Chapter 12—2:30

Campaign for Congress

John Erling: But then you gave that post in '83, and you ran for Congress in our first congressional district against James R. Jones.

Frank Keating: Right.

JE: What led to that?

FK: Well, my grandfather was a member of Congress and I thought it would be terrific to be in Congress. At that time, the Republicans were in South Tulsa. They were part of the Second District. Dad used to say he lived in Muskogee and he lived at 71st and Lewis. At any rate, it was a close race, but that district, the First District at that time, was overwhelming Democrat.

I remember I would go to these parades in Osage County and I was never invited to be in the parade. I'd be standing on the street corner and Jones would go by waving at everybody. I couldn't get in the parade, but I was the Republican. Times are really changed.

JE: Well, first of all, I'd say you held Jones to 52 percent of the vote.

FK: Right.

JE: While Reagan carried the district in his 49-state landslide of that year.

FK: Right, yeah.

JE: But you knew you were a real underdog going into that thing?

FK: Right. I think when you run for office you just don't think about that. Because one person can lose and one person is going to win. And you just say, "This is something I'd like to do and I'm going to do it." And you don't think about losing because you intend to win. If you lose you just move on.

But Jim Jones was in my opinion the best congressman the district has had. He was outstanding as a member of Congress, Chairman of the Budget Committee. We're very good friends today. I was president of the Federal City Council in Washington, he was president before, some years before. But Jim and Olivia, and Kathy and I are friends. Jim told me later, he said, "You know, out of all the races I had yours was the best because it was all focused on issues. It wasn't personality, it wasn't nonsense, it was all issues." And he said, "I was glad when it was over."

JE: I've interviewed him for this website as well, and he said essentially the same thing about you, so, you know.

FK: Oh, oh, oh. But Jim is a very fine guy.

JE: What were the issues that you were campaigning on at the time?

FK: I don't recall all of them, but you know, I was a Reagan person and probably tax cuts, reduction of regulation, unleashing the vital spirits of the average American as opposed to focusing solely on the less fortunate. I just think it's better to focus on somebody who can be fortunate. Physical or mental disability can't, that's a safety net situation, but there should be no excuse in this country for not doing well if you put your mind to it. So a Reagan guy.

JE: President, and he appointed you to, again, another appointment to serve as an assistant secretary to the Treasury.

FK: Right.

JE: Later elevated you to US Associate Attorney General, which was the third ranking official within the US Department of Justice.

FK: Right.

JE: That's pretty heavy stuff.

Chapter 13—3:40

Ronald Reagan

John Erling: Tell us about Ronald Reagan, 'cause you obviously would meet him.

Frank Keating: Well, I was by no means an associate or a knowledgeable employee of the President. But as Assistant Secretary to the Treasury I worked for Jim Baker, who was the Secretary at that time. And I had US Customs, US Secret Service, the Bureau of Alcohol and Firearms, Interpol, US Customs under me, so it was about sixty thousand people.

I would travel on occasion on Air Force One with the Director of the Secret Service. So you would see Reagan, the president, up close and personal, as a government official.

And I would go to some overseas trips and see the president, not in a personal sense, but more behind the scenes. And I always thought he was so kind. Whenever I saw him later, and I used to brief the Cabinet when I was at Justice, he was always very focused, very respectful, no cynicism ever. Reagan was always just kind and considerate.

I remember I had a meeting going once with all the heads of the law enforcement bureaus, the FBI director, ATF, Secret Service, all of them, in the Roosevelt Room and he walked through the door. The Oval Office is just through the door and he walked in and he said, "I know you all are here, the law enforcement community," and so he introduced himself around to everybody. He said, "I got to tell you a story. You know, first time I got in trouble with the cops was, now like an idiot, I'm there in Dixon, Illinois." And he said, "A buddy and I were pelting at passing trains going under the trestle, throwing stones." And he said, "Here we are arrested and taken downtown. God, I got a whipping." And he was just so spontaneous and fun. He said, "I'm just glad you guys work for me instead of the other way around."

I just thought the world of him. And, of course, liberating the world from the awful evil of communism was phenomenal. Finish the evil empire, dramatically improve the growth of the economy. Compare it to today there's no comparison. And just do it with a sunny disposition, no cynicism.

You know, Fred Barnes, the other evening at dinner, for example, said, "Have you ever seen any humor out of the president?" The answer is no.

JE: You're talking about the present?

FK: Current president. Reagan was always lighthearted. People would talk about, "Well, he was vacant." Whenever I briefed the Cabinet he wasn't at all. Now he had questions he wanted to ask and he would have no cards. He would say, "First question, let me ask this." But then the follow-up was his, his journals, his letters to Nancy, those are some of the really beautiful writing, and I just think we're very blessed to have had him.

And of my four senate confirmations, three were under Ronald Reagan, which I really am thrilled about.

JE: Would you say in assessing him that as a Republican and a conservative Republican, he really knew who he was. It was at the very core of his spirit.

FK: Right.

JE: He wasn't taking on an election to become a part of a group.

FK: Right.

JE: He knew that from way back when.

FK: He had a magnetic north on his compass. I mean, he knew exactly where he was going. He had been a unit official, he'd been an actor, he'd seen the best and worst. When you're an actor you're also a storyteller and you know the culture, the life of your community.

But Reagan, firing the air traffic controllers, you know, who would ever do that? To say that the Soviet Union would be in the dustbin of history, the evil empire, who would ever do that? Most presidents would be discouraged and talked out of it, but not Ronald Reagan.

I remember I was in my office, I ran some of the life industry for eight years. Constitution Avenue was right in front of the office and his Cadillac went and I remember I just had a balcony in my bag and I just applauded as he went through. I just thought he was great.

Chapter 14—6:40

Assistant Secretary of Treasury

John Erling: As you've alluded to, all these departments were under your domain, US Customs Service, Bureau of Alcohol and Tobacco, Firearms, US Marshal Service, Immigration, must be some stories in there. So by the time you become governor of Oklahoma that had to be a breeze compared to what you had done.

Frank Keating: Yeah, yeah, I know. At the Justice Department I had the US Marshals, I had Interpol, again, I had the Immigration Naturalization Service, ninety-four US Attorneys, and the Prison System. So I was a full-service banker. I had it all. And all those agencies were highly professional people and I was very proud to be with them. Many of those guys are still my friends today.

When the Secret Service got out of that Cartagena mess, you know, the prostitutes, that was just culturally impossible for me to comprehend. 'Cause in my day that would be intolerable.

I remember one time the Assistant Director of the FBI, who was the training guy, each of us had to come and see him. I walked in and I had a blazer and gray slacks and he said, "Do you own a suit?"

And I said, "Yes, sir."

And he said, "Well, then, wear it."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Let me give you some advice. And I'm going to share it with your classmates. You're going to have a partner. If your partner screws up and you don't tell the supervisor that he screwed up, I'll fire both of you."

JE: Hmm.

FK: "You understand that?"

And I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Are you married?"

And I said, "No."

He said, "You're married to your spouse and the badge and that's it. There's no such thing as friendship under the law. You do only what is legally and morally right. Period. You understand that?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

"Good." That was, he said, "Mr. Hoover told me." You know, J. Edgar Hoover was really old and on the way out. He always used to meet with the classes, talk to individuals. Like a couple of years before I was an agent and a couple of years after. Because he died in, I think, '72. You know, I went through the Academy in '69. He was elderly and frail.

JE: You mentioned Jim Baker. He was, of course, in Ronald Reagan's cabinet. What was he like?

FK: Baker was a tough guy and he was my boss, he was Secretary of the Treasury. He ran for Attorney General of Texas once and was defeated.

The issues I handled he hadn't really very little interest. He was focused on fiscal policy, international trade policy. He used to tell me, "Just keep all those problems away from me."

The Customs Service had a very outspoken commissioner who drove Jim Baker crazy. A guy named Willie von Rob. He was a good guy, still living and active. But Baker said, "Just take care of it. I don't want any problems out of that guy."

So I did a lot of international travel, in the Soviet Union, behind the Iron Curtain, lots of interesting stories dealing with communist officials in those days. So it was fun, and Treasury was a first-rate department.

And then I worked for Ed Meese. Baker and Meese didn't like each other. I didn't realize that at the time.

JE: Ed Meese's position was?

FK: Attorney General of the United States. So Meese and I went around the world together. There was a trip to visit a lot of the Interpol people, the drug places, Burma, Myanmar, places like Colombia, Peru, the Philippines, various places.

But in any event, Rudy Giuliani had my job and Giuliani wanted the US Attorney, which was the guy that you reported to the Associate Attorney General. But he wanted to run for mayor. So he left that job.

So Ed Meese called me and he said, "Frank, the president wants you to continue at Treasury but to come over here and be number three at Justice. So you'll have all that enterprise and you'll have all the Treasury enterprise. Would you—" Hell, J. Edgar Hoover never had that much fun, I mean, he had all that stuff.

But it really infuriated Jim Baker because I didn't know at the time that he didn't like Ed Meese. And he thought Ed had purloined me from him and he was not a happy camper.

JE: Well, was that just personality? Were there egos? What was the problem?

FK: I don't know, I think Baker was George H. W.'s guy, Meese was Ronald Reagan's guy, and I think that never the twain shall meet.

But Baker was very smart, very conscientious, he was a very fine Secretary of the Treasury. Meese, I think was a very fine Attorney General, very smart, very conscientious, and the sweetest spirited person I've ever known. I've never heard Ed Meese say anything critical or nasty of any human being. He was always, "Why did that happen? Why would anybody do that?" I mean, he was, if anything, a gentleman's gentleman. He was wonderful.

JE: President Bush elevates you in 1990 to General Counsel and Acting Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, that was under Secretary Jack Kemp until 1993. That experience, tell us about that.

FK: Well, I'd been the acting attorney general of the US, acting secretary of the Treasury. Those are the premiere cabinet departments, Defense and State as well. HUD is third world, I mean, HUD, who would ever want to go to Housing and Urban Development? But Kathy didn't want to come back home at that time. She was working and I was all ready to throw it in.

Kemp called me and he said, "Why don't you come over and be the general counsel? You'll have four hundred and some odd lawyers work for you."

I'd been a title lawyer so I had some of that housing knowledge but this was totally different dealing in public housing, assisted housing. I got over there and I just loved Jack Kemp. He was such a friend to ordinary people. He said, "You know, Frank, the difference between rich people and poor people?"

I said, "What's that?"

And he said, "Rich people have more money. It's the only difference."

You know, big African American tackle saved his life I don't know how many times. You know what I'm saying? I mean, he had no racial animus whatsoever. So he put me on representing him on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday commission. And I became a friend of Mrs. King, whom I adored.

When I was nominated for the 10th Circuit, got left at the altar because Howard Metzenbaum didn't want to confirm me. And Mrs. King came to my office to call Kennedy, Metzenbaum, and Biden to say, "Frank Keating should be confirmed, he'll be a fine judge."

Well, of course, Clinton was going to win, and Clinton said, "Frank and I went to school together, confirm him."

But to have Greta Scott King come to my office and sat there and called. At one point she was talking to either Kennedy or Biden and she said, "They're scared to death."

You know, 'cause Mrs. King, I mean, their knees were knocking. I remember I sent her a dozen yellow roses. She wrote me a note and she said, "Do you know this is the first time anybody ever sent a King a dozen roses."

JE: Wow.

FK: Think about all the people she helped. Did nice things for. And no one ever said thank you, apparently.

JE: But you connected with her because you were on the—

FK: Commission. For Jack. If Jack Kemp couldn't be at the Martin Luther King Jr. Commission meetings then I subbed for him. I thought Mrs. King was just terrific.

JE: So that didn't go anywhere, I mean, you would have ended up being a judge.

Chapter 15—2:10

Bill Clinton

John Erling: You said you went to school together. Did you go to school with Bill Clinton?

Frank Keating: Um-hmm (affirmative). I'm two years older but he was at Georgetown when I was. I was president of the yard, president of the student body, and he was the sophomore class president.

JE: What was your view of him then?

FK: Well, what puzzled me was as a Catholic, Georgetown, it's the oldest Catholic college in America. I wasn't offended. It's like if you or I went to Yeshiva, people would say, "Well, are you guys Jewish? Why are you here?" You know, you're not offended, it's just curious.

He was a Southern Baptist from Arkansas, and, of course, I'm from Oklahoma. I knew who he was, he knew who I was. He was in the foreign service school.

A little piece of Oklahoma history, Bill Price, who sought to be governor, was defeated as Republican candidate for governor, was the campaign manager of the campaign to defeat Clinton to be the student body president at Georgetown.

JE: Oh wow.

FK: Yeah, isn't that interesting? So Clinton, everybody knew he was extremely smart, but he was just another student. In those days you don't sit there and say, "This guy's Thomas Edison."

JE: Didn't particularly show any extraordinary charisma at that point? Or—

FK: Um, you know, guys aren't necessarily carried away by other guys.

JE: Right.

FK: You know, I mean, he was a nice, bright guy. He's from Arkansas, and I thought that was great. And he's been nice to me ever since. We always remember that friendship and association.

JE: After a couple of years of private life in 1994, you received the Republican nomination for governor of Oklahoma. That was a three-way race with a Democrat nominee Jack Mildren, and the Independent Wes Watkins. You received 47 percent of the vote—

FK: Yeah, it was not a majority. And I really like Wes, he and I were in the state senate together. I didn't know Jack Mildren, I mean, I knew who he was, obviously, because he was a great athlete. But that was a fun race.

I remember Tom Cole, who is now in Congress. I always used to say, "We're too good to be so poor, this is an outrage. Why are we forty-fifth in per capita income? We've got to do something about it."

Tom said, "God, that's awfully negative to talk about you're going to make people rich and raise per capita. Ew, it sounds terribly Republican."

And I said, "But that's the problem with Oklahoma, we are far better than we look in the statistical tables." Oklahoma City proved that.

Chapter 16—10:00

April 19, 1995

John Erling: So then you come into your first term. Three months into the first term, April 19, 1995, the Oklahoma City bombing.

Frank Keating: Yeah.

JE: We talk about this noting the active terrorism in Boston, April 15, 2013. Last Monday, runners and bystanders were killed and maimed by two explosives. It was Patriot's Day, big celebration in Boston, three killed and hundreds injured. The terrorists were two brothers from Chechnya.

So, as you reflect now, it has been eighteen years since the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. The details have been well-chronicled so we'll not get into that. But how were you first alerted? When did you first know of that bombing?

FK: I went to the prayer breakfast, the mayor's prayer breakfast in Oklahoma City. And then came back to the office. The Governor's Office has bulletproof glass in those windows. All of a sudden, there was a concussion. You could feel whup [sound] something had happened. So my reaction, an explosion had occurred. My immediate reaction was maybe an ammunition dump had blown up a tanker or a plane had crashed or something. But

clearly there was maybe an energy misplaced or something. We went and turned on the television and there was a news helicopter over the Murrah Building, blasted in half, literally.

The initial report was there was a natural gas explosion in the federal courthouse. I said, "That's not the federal courthouse, that's the Federal Office Building filled with people. And that's no natural gas explosion. Somebody blew that up. I mean, natural gas? How do you have that much volume in that space to just completely disintegrate a building?" So I knew we had a terrible tragedy, and it was.

JE: So what was your first action?

FK: It's really interesting. Of course, you contrast the New Orleans experience with the hurricane. Their first responders are in the basement of a building. What? You're twenty-five feet under sea level. Why would you ever have anybody in a basement? If anything, in our case, because of tornadoes we are underground, which is where we should be.

So in the capitol complex there is an emergency management center. And I remember I went over there and President Clinton called me, and he said, "What in the world has gone on?"

I said, "I have no idea. I haven't been down there yet, but apparently somebody blew up the Federal Office Building. It's full of people and I'm sure it's a horrible situation. I haven't been down there yet."

And he said, "Well, what do you need?"

And I had been briefed by Steve Cortright, who is my adjunct general, a Democrat by the way, a blue suit. That was considered high treason to choose a Democrat blue suit. It should be a Republican green suit. Steve had briefed me about what we do in the case of a tornado, earthquake, whatever, so I knew about the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Teams. And I said, "Oklahoma City has about a thousand firefighters and we're probably going to need a lot of help here."

And he said, "I'll take care of it." He was really very authoritative and I liked him.

Then I went down to the scene. Interestingly, I don't know if it were a drive train, I'm not knowledgeable about parts of automobiles but I know that there are confidential VIN numbers on cars. In other words, you have a VIN number, let's say, on your windshield, the number of the car, the factory identification number. But there's also a confidential one on part of the car. And here was this big piece of metal with a number on it.

I said, "Look at that." Somebody had spray-painted around it and I said, "There's a number, we'll get who's responsible." But, of course, mercifully we did, very quickly. But it was awful.

JE: Did your background in law enforcement and all is you had to move real quickly and your association with Justice really helped you, I suppose?

FK: Well, see, for me, it gave me a sense of comfort that I could concentrate on rescue and recovery, families, the public image assurance, because I wasn't worried about the law enforcement piece. I knew the FBI would be in charge of the case. I knew Gary Morris as the fire chief was first-rate. The police chief was first-rate. Federal family was great.

The next morning I was down there, Kathy and I went down. It was cold and rainy, a front had come through. I could see they had all these big spotlights on the building. There was firefighters coming up the street that had apparently finished their shifts. And this I don't think has ever been publicly said, but this guy was not an Oklahoma City firefighter. He had a different color outfit and so I stepped out on him and I said, "Thank you for being here."

He said, "Who are you?"

And I said, "I'm the governor of Oklahoma." And I thought, "You never said I'm the governor of this hill, he'll say, 'Nice to meet you, Governor,' and keep going."

And he didn't. He stopped and he took his finger and stuck in my chest and he said, "Well, you find out who did this because the only thing I pulled from that building were a child's finger and an American flag."

Well, my reaction was, "These guys are all completely freaked out." Remember, 9/11 years later, it was all black powder. You know, everybody was incinerated unless you jumped off the building. So the rescuers and firefighters didn't have an opportunity to really see people up close and personal. I figured I was going to be there, "Thank you," you know, hot coffee, a meal.

I know one guy, God, he said, "It's like a Hilton Hotel." He said, "You know, we have the best food anywhere we go. It's free. The restaurants, they won't accept payment." It's when you're a firefighter. He said, "Hell, in New York, we had to pay five dollars for a sack of ice. You had to pay for everything. But here, God, everything is free, it's amazing." This is an amazing place. And he said, "The only thing missing is a red rose on every pillow."

And the next night we had red roses on every pillow. That was Kathy's deal.

So people couldn't believe, that's the Oklahoma standard.

By the way, after New Town and I did a Skype conversation with all the New Town folks about Oklahoma City. "Should we give away the money that's coming in? What do we do with it?"

I said, "Don't do that. Don't divide it up because you have some people that are going to be real trouble."

Bailey Almond, the little baby that was dead in Chris Field's arms—

JE: Famous picture.

FK: Famous picture. What you don't see is the guy that handed Bailey to Chris, the Oklahoma City police officer who later killed himself. You don't get over this easily. Years later, I

remember, I was out at the site and an ATF guy came over me and he had a knife in his hand and he was trying to cut his shields. "You need to have this, you need to have this," and, you know, he was just freaked out.

And I said, "Hey, you're going to hurt yourself. Everything's going to fine, you need a rest. Take a rest, have a meal, get a cup of coffee or something." Because you'd see all this, you know, these people.

At any rate, there were these slabs of concrete and there was a leg sticking out. And it was a marine officer's leg, blue with a red stripe, and a polished shoe. The marines came, you know, the Secret Service took their people, it was really quite beautiful the way did it, but here this guy was just mashed between that concrete. Well, I never thought about that. Years later, I mean, four years ago, I don't go to the Museum Memorial, I just don't, you know?

And we had some friends, Kathy's on the board of the National ? [time 6:49] and Western Heritage Museum. So I was asked by a couple, that were our guests, to go to the Memorial and the Museum. So I thought, "Well, I'll go." I'd been there, obviously, before, but not really in any detail.

So we went through the thing. At the end there's all those photographs and little mementoes of each person. Well, I turned around and this picture caught my eye. Young Latino marine captain, twenty-eight years old. That was the leg. And I just broke down crying. I just sat there just sobbing.

And the people with me were, "What is the matter? What is the matter with you?"

And I said, "That's the guy."

They said, "What guy?"

And I said, "That's the marine leg." And that's battle fatigue. You know, you don't realize it but that's what it is.

JE: Yeah.

FK: I bet that was fifteen years after the bombing that I had never thought of that marine until I saw his picture.

JE: Wow.

FK: Isn't that something?

JE: Yeah.

FK: True story.

JE: I know you've been asked about Boston now and the correlations here. And there are some similarities, I suppose, to what Boston is going to go through and what Oklahoma City has gone through.

FK: Right.

JE: What are you saying?

FK: Well, I made a comment on MSNBC Thursday on the Chris Jansing Show, I said, “The challenge here is the horror that people saw.” You know, an eight-year-old boy dead, or a little girl with a severed leg, and there were a bunch of them like that. People think these law enforcement guys are hard and these first responders. They’re not, and the counseling needed for them is going to be long-term. They’ll go back to work and they have their families, but some of them are going to start hitting the bottle.

Think of the guys who went into New Town, that’s the problem. There are going to be a number of suicides out of that. You can’t go to bed and just not see those images.

Kind of like me with that marine captain. What? I mean, I just couldn’t believe it. It was uncontrollable. In any event, I didn’t tell that story to Chris but I said, “And you’ve got the Chinese girl and you’ve got people from all over the United States. So you’re going to have to put together an organization, you know, the Boston Marathon Memorial Fund, or Institute, or whatever. Not some bureaucracy but to say, “How is everybody doing?” And follow on to make sure that everybody is okay.

And you’ve got to realize it’s a free society and you’d better make sure you don’t make everything an armed camp. But, obviously, you’re going to have to have dogs right in front of everybody, you know, to smell and stuff. It’s just too bad but it’s the life.

They had dogs, by the way, but they had them out, checked everything out, and then these guys came in after the fact. So.

JE: Those who committed suicide, and you say there might be others, is that because they just can’t get those images out of their mind? Is that what drives them to that?

FK: I think it’s partially that, and it’s also, “How come we couldn’t stop this? How come I’m still here and they’re not?” Like down in West Comma, Texas, those firefighters who were killed. The other guys that survived will say, “How come I got spared? How come that guy has two little kids, and hell, mine are graduated from college?” Or adults, “What the hell? This isn’t fair.”

People’s minds are tricky.

Chapter 17—3:50

Ten Million Dollars

John Erling: After the bombing and days later, you and Kathy coordinated the response. You raised, what? Ten million dollars?

Frank Keating: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: For scholarships for the 213 children left with one or no parents?

FK: Right. I made a battlefield decision. We didn't ask the federal government for money, unlike 9/11 where those victims got from four hundred thousand to seven million bucks. They all became rich. Now it was to avoid lawsuits, that's the reason they did that.

In our case, when the money came in we put it aside for a purpose. And I said, "We want to have enough money, let's focus on the children. We had thirty children who lost both their parents. Both. We had 170 kids who lost one of their parents. So therefore, let's pay medical care, expenses, and put each of them through college if they want to go, wherever they want to go."

Now if a parent lost the kids we buried the kids and gave the parents counseling, but they didn't get a check. Because they can survive. Some poor kid with no mother or dad nor any parents, how are they going to make it? So that's where I felt we should step in and it worked. Has worked very, very well.

JE: But there have been some questions as of recently, and I think you showed some surprise, why so much money was left in that fund.

FK: Right.

JE: And there were those requesting help and they weren't getting the proper response.

FK: I think if you have needs you ought to satisfy the needs. But it shouldn't be dividing up per capita. Because we did, and Kent Feinburg, I don't know if you saw that NBC piece, but Feinburg called and he said, "This is no lie, and it doesn't speak well for, you know, heck, I was a student journalist and you've been a journalist." He said, "Frank, can we have a glass of wine?"

I said, "Yeah. And they sat for this week."

He said, "I didn't know what the interview was about. I didn't know it was Oklahoma City. I didn't know it was trying to compare you to New York. The guy asked me, 'If you got a fund should you as a general rule divide it up among all the victims?' I said, 'Yeah, absolutely you ought to do that.' That was the context. So how many people did you have?"

And I said, "We took care of a thousand people." If you have a thousand people injured in or in serious need of healthcare or mental health services, divide that up with ten million dollars, you get ten thousand bucks apiece. P. J. Allen, whose grandmother was so angry, grandmother. The Memorial Fund has already spent \$325,000 on him. So he'd get his ten thousand dollar check and that was it, "So long, sucker." I mean, it was just absurd.

And Kent said, "Absolutely," he said, "no yours is a totally different situation."

Now, you know, we've got another ten million, a really prudent investment practices, you know, John Kirkpatrick put that fund together. Can we do other things? Well, yeah. They shouldn't give money to other tragedies and stuff. But there's a quid pro quo among those people. And I understand that. But I think Nancy Anthony can be pretty difficult. Could we have handled it with more compassion and care? Yeah, yeah probably, but

there's no evidence that there was any impropriety. And quite truthfully, I'm glad we took care of P. J. as opposed to giving his grandmother ten grand.

On the family fund, the first contribution, just unsolicited showed up. I think it was sixteen thousand bucks from the Moslem community of Oklahoma City. 'Cause you may remember, there was a reporter who said, "I think even Dave McCurdy did. This is Middle East terrorists and all the terrorism."

And I said, "Before people point the finger at somebody let's count to ten. We have no facts whatsoever to suggest that. We're going to create a pogrom if we're not careful." They wrote this note to me how grateful they were that I didn't sic the whole community on them and they sent sixteen grand.

JE: Wow.

FK: So just think, that sixteen grand went to help P. J. Allen and others.

Chapter 18—3:17

Final Jihad

John Erling: Your brother Martin wrote the book *The Final Jihad*.

Frank Keating: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: That's a work of fiction. It was written four years before the Oklahoma City bombing. And in the book a Tom McVeigh was a mastermind in the bombing of the Federal Building. How bizarre is that?

FK: It was, yeah. Yeah.

JE: How many questions were you asked, was he asked?

FK: Well, a couple, you know, some people would ask. And there are people that believed in a conspiracy. I always said, "Fine with me. I mean, there's no statute of limitations for murder. So find somebody else, fine, we'll execute him. I don't care, put the guy against the wall."

JE: There were many rumors behind that bombing. Here's one, that the federal government attempted in 2005, to reach a deal with Terry Nichols to take the death penalty off the table if he admitted to making a warning phone call to the FBI the day before the '95 bombing. Did you ever hear that?

FK: No.

JE: Okay. All right, let's let it go. And here we are in 2013, it's quite like in the next twenty years we're going to have another terrorist attack somewhere along the way. As Boston has been as strong as they say and Oklahoma City was we just have to continue living our lives unafraid.

FK: Right.

JE: There's nothing we can do about it.

FK: Yeah.

JE: There's soft targets all over.

FK: I mean, after I did the Republican deal I had this Chevrolet rent-a-car. Hour and a half on the turnpike and up 99 to get to the ranch. You know, you can be driving on 99 and some guy comes across the middle lane, having too many beers and hits you head on. And what the hell? I mean, there's nothing you can do about it. So you live at your little postage stamp. And part of our postage stamp was Oklahoma City. And question is, Did we in that moment in the dark—it wasn't in the sun—handle it with extraordinary skill and bravery and integrity? And the answer's yes.

JE: Right.

FK: Everybody. That TV, you know, they took half a day in my house? I said, "I don't know if there's a motive here or anything."

"No, no, no, we want to focus on a good message, a good news," and it just wasn't at all. They did start out that way, but their producer called me to apologize.

I said, "Well, why did you do it?"

"Well, I understand there's some controversy."

I said, "Now that's fine."

JE: Just recently?

FK: Yeah, this TV show on the Oklahoma City bombing. It's called *Rock Central*. You know, this is what happened in Oklahoma City and the money should have been divided.

JE: Okay.

FK: That's that deal.

JE: That bombing in Oklahoma City actually brought the city together. Would you not agree? Didn't it help the revitalization of downtown through the MAPS Project?

FK: Well, Maps was before the Oklahoma City bombing, but MAPS II was after the bombing and the Oklahoma City Thunder and the revitalization of North Lincoln, which I did. The dome on the capitol, the Oklahoma River, all of the restaurants and like, those are some Tulsa, I would never have considered living in Oklahoma City. It's that red dirt, flat place, isn't it? But two children of my three want to live in Oklahoma City and they wouldn't want to live in Tulsa.

Now, because of the new civic center and Cherry Street and all this stuff maybe they would. Chip really likes Tulsa. But I would never, as a young person, have considered living in Oklahoma City. I just wouldn't of. And it wouldn't have crossed my mind. It was kind of a gloomy place. But now it's a very, very exciting city.

Chapter 19—7:20**Accomplishments Seen and Unseen**

John Erling: When you moved into the Governor's Mansion I think you felt it needed some tender loving care?

Frank Keating: Right.

JE: And you and Kathy formed the Friends of the Mansion.

FK: Right.

JE: You really upgraded it.

FK: I was always as a legislator seeing North Lincoln with all those shabby motels. Under one motel, the Palomino Motel there was a big chair with springs coming out of it. When I was governor, after I'd just been sworn in, a friend of mine called it the Frank Keating Chair for Public Policy.

But the truth is, I cleaned all that out. Now there are beautiful trees. I raised twenty million plus to put the dome on the capitol. It's a symbol of Oklahoma and freedom and represented government. Cleaned up all the well sites, put the History Center on the capitol grass. Now it's the number one visited site in Oklahoma. People want to visit their capitol.

JE: It's interesting, this seems like no matter where you are in Oklahoma City you always see the dome.

FK: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: It's just amazing how it stands out.

FK: Right.

JE: But then, at the Mansion you also were there for the building of the Philips Pavilion.

FK: Right. As private—

JE: Which is behind the Mansion.

FK: Mansion redo, all private money. Yeah, I made a comment once to a friend that that Governor's Mansion now and who knows, will it be continued? But when I was there we had on loan from Gilcrease some of the most beautiful art. I mean, just lovely antiques. Charles Faudree, we sent Charles out to find period pieces, and we had the money to do it because it was privately donated.

And many Tulsa people were contributors to that effort, as well as many people from all over the state. But it became a symbol, you know, we opened it to tours, people packed in the place. And I think that's really important because it rarely was done like we did it.

JE: You can point to things you can see, like the dome, and the Mansion, the Phillips Pavilion, you were limited by term limits. Would you have run for a third term if you could have?

FK: Probably, but I figure it would have been a mistake. What I did, and it was actually a very smart thing to do, but I didn't know it at the time, Democrat House and Senate, I knew Stan Taylor and Glen Johnson, but out of the blue I just thought, "Well, we'll have the state chamber pay for it." We had OU and OU's economics departments examine where we pour, why are we forty-five per capita income?

They came back and said, "You don't have the right to work." They could have come back and said, "You need more teachers," or "A better union bus," but they didn't. They said, "You don't have right to work. The trial works around this place, your transportation infrastructure sucks, the kids don't take hard enough courses in school..." They went through the list.

So I went to Glen and Travis and said, "Well, here's the deal." Well, they couldn't say that OU and OU's economics departments didn't know what they were saying. So we first passed Tory Form Limited Punitive Damage to Double Actuals. We got rid of welfare. We connected and Swartz finished every town of ten thousand or more by a four-lane highway to the interstate system. In other words, you're big enough to matter and now we're going to connect you up so you can be in Congress.

You know Right to Work took a while. It's the only state in fifty years that has put it in the Constitution. That's hugely important. And we moved from forty-fifth to thirty-eighth in per capita income. And oil never went above eighteen dollars a barrel.

Remember, I used to take a photograph of eastern Oklahoma, western Arkansas, north Texas, southern Oklahoma, and all the lights in Arkansas and Texas, all the darkness in Oklahoma, like North and South Korea. And now, you take that picture, south Oklahoma and north Texas are all lighted. That was just huge to me. Right to Work, Oklahoma City bombing reaction, those are big deals.

JE: And then you've answered my question, "What is it you're most proud of?" And you have just named them.

FK: Yeah, I think Right to Work was very significant. The Oklahoma City bombing, the reaction to that, obviously, was very significant. And I really think the reform agenda did, of course, I had a Democrat House and Senate, you couldn't abolish civil law suits. We tried Worker's Comp Reform, we got some but the Democrats, they weren't fixing to go as far as they have now.

But I think all of those things were significant.

JE: You did focus a lot on education.

FK: Oh yeah. I want to mention, that to me was the most important. And that's the most disappointment for me because the only thing that separates a child in the poorest circumstances and a child of the rich is a public education that is better than a private school.

People don't realize this, John, but when I was at Cascia Hall, the kids that couldn't make it at Edison went to Cascia. Think about that. Look today, if you couldn't make it at

Memorial you got sent to Kelly. In those days, that's the way it was, because we had kids that were complete losers that came to Cascia that were disciplinary problems, academic problems, because they couldn't make it at Edison or Memorial. So I wanted four years of math, four years of English, four years of history, four years of science. We got three years of math, four years of history, four years of English, and four years of science.

And then, God love Brad Henry, whom I like. His wife, you know, was a teacher's union official and they watered it all down. I don't understand it. I mean, people used to tell me, "Well, why do these kids need to take a course like this? They're not going to college."

I said, "That's the point. If they're not going to go to college they ought to be like Harry Truman, brilliantly educated at age eighteen. 'Cause they're not getting any more. You can't say, "Ah, we'll take care of trig. Oh that fourth year of English, wait until you get to OU then you'll be fine."

JE: Well, then the argument is, What about those who cannot accomplish that work? We have to find training for them then.

FK: Right.

JE: And you understood that, of course.

FK: Right. I think it's a mistake to put nursing home residents in public schools. It's one thing to say the kid's autistic or the kid's a slow learner. You know, I have a grandson that's way and he works at a different pace. Okay, you're going to take four years of math, but we have several tracks. Cascia had 8-A and 8-B, 9-A and 9-B. You can do that in public education.

I had the head accounting cause in Oklahoma tell me with a straight face, "They can't do it."

I said, "Who's they?"

And he said, "You know who I'm talking about." He was talking about the African American community and Latino community.

That's bull****, I think, but kind of more of a democrat, small "d" than most people. I mean, I think, "What?" The only reason I went to Cascia was I had a successful mother and father. How come some kid from north Tulsa can't have the best school up there? We ought to teach for America, send them all up there. Or down there, or wherever that may be. I just feel very strongly.

JE: The tragedy is that both white or black, we have some students coming to school who don't know their ABCs, they don't know numbers when they walk in the front door. So that goes back to the family and what we need to focus—

FK: And then promote them? Think about this, and I give Penny Williams credit for this. A lot of people don't remember, Oklahoma schools' science and math on my watch was number one or number two on ACT scores in the United States. One is OSSM. Half the kids then had to come from towns of five thousand or less.

So they're largely rural kids but you had professors, you had rigor, you had no nonsense academics, and it was a boarding school. So they kept you corralled. In the Catholic system it's called *en loco parentis*, you know, in the place of the parents. Where the nun or the priest, you know, "By gosh, we're going to make school tough."

Chapter 20—9:45

Dick Cheney

John Erling: You know, I feel like I've interviewed you about these issues before.

Frank Keating: Oh I know.

JE: Because when I was at KRMG and you were in office I interviewed you once or twice a month. By the way, I tell everybody that you were the most interesting and entertaining of all my interviews. You had the great opening to our interview. Here you are the governor, having fun with this.

I don't know if you remember how it went, but you'd say, "Under the beleaguered, besieged city of Oklahoma City." Do you remember that pattern?

FK: Oh, you know, it was—

JE: Can you redo it?

FK: It was, "We got a Morse Code, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep," and it, "We're beaming the truth into the occupied city."

JE: Right.

FK: And the occupied city was Tulsa dominated, you know, it was kind of like Peong Yong, there's only one voice, which was a voice not of reason and not of excellence. But it was basically a low-wattage voice of the *Tulsa World*. It was the—what was it we called it? The monopolistic newspaper. Remember that?

JE: Yeah.

FK: But I mean, it was fun. I mean—

JE: Yeah.

FK: But you might as well have a laugh. It was radio free Oklahoma beaming—

JE: That's what it was.

FK: ...into the occupied city.

JE: Right.

FK: Which was Tulsa.

JE: Right, right. There hasn't been any—

FK: The lords were not happy, you know.

JE: There hasn't been anybody who has been as creative or as fun to do that. Because you did become involved in national politics. You campaigned for President George Bush in 2000. You're on the short list to be Bush's running mate before Bush actually chose Dick Cheney.

FK: Right.

JE: I will say the story has been that Dick Cheney was in charge of finding possible candidates and then somehow he became it. Do you have a story there?

FK: Well, what's interesting, there's a book by a guy named Ron Gellman, which you ought to read sometime called *The Angler*. That was Cheney's call name as vice president. The Secret Service referred to him as Angler. But anyway, Ron Gellman won the Pulitzer Prize, by the way, and wrote a book called *Angler*. The first two words of chapter one are: Frank Keating. And the whole chapter is on me, which really stunned me.

And I read it and I couldn't believe it. The selection process by Cheney and Bush put him in charge, guess who his staff was? Cheney's staff? According to Gellman who won the Pulitzer Prize was Cheney's daughter and son-in-law. All of the others who could have been selected were found wanting. Not only that, but those others were pretty well purged. Cheney didn't want anyone around the president that could have a negative impact on him. And his authority and ability to rule.

That's the thesis of *Angler*. And Gellman wrote a hell of a book. I read that and it's really kind of sad because I think Cheney was an awful vice president.

George Bush, I didn't vote for him in 2002, I couldn't. I could not vote for him.

JE: Did you vote?

FK: No. I just skipped it and went on to the next. You know, the Senate, House.

JE: So you haven't voted for a Democrat for president then? You skipped it?

FK: No I don't know about that. I don't remember, maybe.

JE: Yeah.

FK: Maybe not. I just don't remember. But I've always supported [inaudible] races and stuff. I had no problem [in] Congress voting for a Democrat. But in the case of Bush, to bankrupt the country, fight a war in Iraq that I never felt was wise, it just was awful.

Think about this, because I'm Chairman of the Board at Mt. Vernon, the advice board of Mt. Vernon, from 1789 to 2000, from George Washington's first term to the start of George Bush's term, the country had amassed five trillion dollars national debt. From the start of George W. Bush to the end of George W. Bush, in eight years, 217 years for [inaudible] it was doubled from five to ten, and this guy's added another seven.

So the country's on an unsustainable fiscal path. Bush was the architect of it all. Oh.

JE: Was Bush or was Cheney?

FK: Well, I wouldn't know. See—

JE: If Cheney was not the vice president, do you think we would have ended up in Iraq?

FK: I don't know, I mean, I would have been of the view that we should not. We should focus on Afghanistan. Now, was that unwinnable? Who knows? But at the time, that's where the problem came from.

But in my view, Iraq, from minute one I would have said, "The President didn't ask my opinion. We never should invade a country that's not a direct threat to us." You can say, "Well, they are, they've got weapons of mass destruction." Well, don't the North Koreans? We're not invading them. The Cubans probably have a lot of mischief down there. We don't invade them. I mean, there's only so much you can do.

JE: And then it turns out they didn't have weapons of mass destruction.

FK: That's right. Yeah.

JE: When Mitt Romney ran were you considered for anything with him?

FK: No. Interestingly, I'd had dinner the night of the inaugural ball of Obama, had dinner with John McCain's mother, who said, by the way, "The best education I ever heard of anyone receiving and the best I could have possibly received was in Muskogee public schools." Can you imagine that being said today?

Mrs. McCain, who was born in Muskogee. I mean, that's what she said. She was just, "Those schools were the best ever. Are they still?"

And I said, "No." But in any event, when I was leaving the dinner there were like twelve of us at dinner. Poor John, I felt sorry for him because I really worked hard for him.

JE: For John McCain?

FK: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Yeah.

FK: He said, "Hey, Frank, I want you to know something."

"What's that?"

He said, "If I were elected I was going to make you Attorney General."

And I said, "Can you put that in writing?"

He said, "Why do you want it in writing?"

I said, "I want it for the obit."

And he laughed and we had a good laugh.

Romney is a very fine guy, but I just, you know, I've met with him several times. Gave him my views of things, but there was never, I mean, on the Catholic stuff he wanted me to help and that's fine, it's kind of easy. But, no, I didn't have the same feeling of warmth and affection. Romney was a business guy, he's a hard guy.

JE: Is he different from what he saw him on the campaign and speaking than as you saw him apparently on one-on-one?

FK: Yeah, I think he's much more personal and open, but he was very tightly controlled. You know, he's a private equity guy and how does that compute? You know, as opposed to saying, "That doesn't make any sense."

“But, yeah, actually it does.”

“No it doesn’t, well, I don’t know, but it didn’t sound right.” You know?

JE: You were considering a presidential bid yourself, I believe, in 2008?

FK: Well, I had a number of people ask me to go down to South Carolina, and give a talk, which I did. But my feeling was, where was I going to get thirty or fifty million dollars overnight? I mean, I just thought, “Why should I bankrupt Kathy and the kids?”

I did know one thing that someone was going to ask me somewhere, somehow about Bush. And I think George W., you know, he’s right up there with James Buchanan. It was a very, very disappointing presidency.

I’m a social and economic conservative but I think that Bush was a terrible mistake. And this guy’s a terrible mistake, in my opinion.

JE: When you say “this guy,” you mean President Obama. The state of the Republican party today, and we have the Tea Party, which seems to be opposing most any legislation that comes along. Is it your view that the party is going to have to become more moderate? Come closer to the center? Or how do you see this playing out?

FK: Well, I think, there is no question, minorities, women, and young people and key constituencies of any political party that you belong to. I mean, we only have two parties in this country.

The Latinos, I think, are fairly easy because if we can immigration reform done where you do have a secure border and you have a process of citizenship and you have H1B visas. And, you know, you do like the Mexicans do in Canada where they have temporary work permits and then everybody wants to go back to Mexico. If I’ve paid my life savings to crawl through that barbwire fence—I told Valerie Jarrett and all that crowd at the White House just about a month ago to come to that barbwire fence and I take my life savings to pay some guy, you think I’m ever going to go back? Where am I going to get another life savings? So I’m going to stick it out here, no matter how miserable.

If you had a temporary work permit you’d go do the apple picking or whatever and go back home. Come back in and go back home. That would be fine. Latinos are generally evangelical Christians, they are pro-life, they’re hard-working. They’re not here for welfare, they’re here to work. They’re a natural Republican constituency.

The gay situation is a little bit different. I mean, I just as a Catholic, I just, states out to be able to handle that. There shouldn’t be one size fits all because, you know, New Hampshire is much more of a liberal state than Oklahoma. Oklahoma would, certainly in this generation, not go for gay marriage. Maybe fifty years from now they might, or twenty, something like that, but, you know, that’s another deal. All the social issues.

I’m a pro-life person. Rape and incest, save the life of the mother were always exceptions in the pro-life community. Now they’re not exceptions. Well, can you imagine if

your daughter's raped and you have see this child through the full term?

You know, Kathy told me, she said, "You know, I'm pro-life," but she said, "whatever happened to the rape, incest, save the life of the mother exceptions? If I were raped and I had to have that baby to term, every time it kicked that guy would rape me again."

So I told Ralph Reed that and he said, "God, I hadn't thought of it that way."

I said, "Well, it's true."

But at any rate, I think that debate has to be joined. I don't know about your family but my kids, the girls are more tolerant. Boys are, like Chip's pretty hard down conservative on some of this stuff. But girls are much more tolerant of lesbian behavior. Men, you know, I chair the Catholic Review Board and it was this horror show. And those were not pedophiles, they were actively practicing homosexuals who went after those boys.

JE: And you're talking about the priests in the Catholic church?

FK: Oh yeah.

JE: You get in trouble with your church there too, because you referred to them as Costa Nostra.

FK: Yeah, I made the comment, which Kurda Mahoney thought I was talking about him and I didn't know that he was a problem, but he was. You know, we're not a La Costa Nostra, we're a faith community. We're open, transparent, we tell all. And I didn't choose my board, you know, Leanne Panetta was on my board, Bob Bennett, the lawyer. Transparency, zero tolerance, and criminal referral, that's what I did. And some of these guys didn't like that.

But at any rate, I'm a stronger Catholic today than even before then. But all these issues, to your point, need to be thoroughly debated and discussed. I'm not afraid of debate.

Chapter 21—5:10

Author of Children's Books

John Erling: Let's just remind people that you are the author of children's books. George, George Washington, our founding father. I was at Mt. Vernon this past year in the summertime and I walked out and saw the bookstore. There was my friend Frank Keating's book sitting there.

Frank Keating: Oh yeah, yeah, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: *Teddy Roosevelt Theater* with Mike Wimmer and *Trial of Standing Bear, Will Rogers, an American Legend*, and Mike Wimmer. This must be a source of real pride and accomplishment for you.

FK: Yeah. It is. *Standing Bear* and *Will Rogers* won the Westernizing of America Best Children's Books in the years that they came out. *Theodore* won the English professors' gold medal for the whole world, English-speaking, for a children's book.

It was a source of real pride for me last Saturday night. George, Simon and Schuster, Mike won the medal for illustrations and I won the medal for children's books.

JE: Um.

FK: From the Oklahoman Book Awards. Which I thought was glorious.

JE: And you're on a commission on Mt. Vernon.

FK: Well, the regents, and Bonnie Hinkey from Oklahoma is the vice regent from Oklahoma, the women own Mt. Vernon. It's called the Ladies Association of Mt. Vernon. They have a board, I'm the chairman of the board. It's a really very interesting group of people and we just say, "Yes ma'am." 'Cause the regents owned it. But I'm like a prime minister and she's the queen.

JE: When you left office you went to Washington and you worked for the insurance industry and now the banking industry. Right?

FK: Um-hmm (affirmative). I went from four hundred happy, state-regulated life insurance videos to 5,500 unhappy federally regulated banking CEOs. But it's been great. I earn a living, learn about financial services.

Two industries that are hugely significant. But when this is over I'm moving home.

JE: Well, that was going to be my question. You're now sixty-nine, what do you see for the rest of your life?

FK: Well, I've got two years, two and a half years, actually, left in my contract with the banks. You know, I was thinking about coming home and being a college president didn't present itself. Boone Pickens talked to me about OSU and I said you needed to have somebody who went to OSU. And I really believe that Burns is fabulous.

And then I was interviewed to be Oklahoma City University president and Robert Henry, who is wonderful, got it, which is fine with me.

JE: But you would have taken that?

FK: No, no, I was asked by Ron North.

JE: Yeah.

FK: But I just don't know. Whatever Kathy wants I do.

JE: Right. Advice to students preparing for the world. They'll be listening to this for their research whether they're in politics or not. Do you have any comment for them?

FK: You have to realize that breathing in oxygen and breathing out carbon dioxide is not a way to live a life. I mean, to sit around and bellyache about an opportunity that didn't present itself. Well, move on. You got a bad meal? Go order something else, 'cause you only stand on your little postage stamp once.

I see older people and you wonder, “Did you do what you really wanted to do? And if you didn’t, why not? Why don’t you just go out there and do what you want to do?”

I read an article the other day that said that the sadness of most older Americans is they didn’t do what they wanted to do.

JE: Yeah.

FK: And I think that’s unfortunate. Maybe you want to be a great hockey player and you can’t skate, well, that’s a problem. But that’s where school is so important, because if a kid is a senior in high school, and he says, “You know, I want to be an astronaut,” and he’s never taken a math course or a science course. Really? Forget it. That’s where adults come in to say to kids, “Hey.”

That’s what I loved about doing these children’s books. Abraham Lincoln had one year of formal education. One. And, you know, the Gettysburg Address is the only American words chiseled on the wall of Westminster Abbey. Brilliant prose, and he had one year of formal education.

So to young people today, there is no excuse for failure. There is every opportunity for success. You may have less than other people but there is no excuse for failure. In my opinion.

JE: How would you like to be remembered?

FK: Um, as Kathy Keating’s husband that tried to do reasonably well in her shadow. Kathy’s been an example of a person who is always optimistic, always focused on doing good for other people, and never complains about anything. And I think that if everybody can be like that that’s great.

JE: So are you—

FK: You know, I mean, you know, it’s kind of like being bumped from *Meet the Press*. People say, “Now when was the Oklahoma city bombing again?”

I could say that passing Right to Work and seeing Oklahoma through the Oklahoma City bombing, and doing all the things that I did, isn’t that all great?

Well, yeah, but fifty years from now people will say, “Do we have a governor in Oklahoma? Don’t we have a Commissioner now?” In other words, some day the dome will collapse into dust, you know, the architect of the Parthenon is the only person who can say, “Hey, I did that and it’s still up.” But it’s fact, I mean, you know, you just have to do your best day by day. And move on.

JE: So are you Mr. Kathy Keating?

FK: Yes, I’m Mr. Kathy Keating that is a fair statement.

JE: Well, Frank, this was a delight. I appreciate this very much. And this will linger for years and years to come. When the dome crashes you’ll still be heard on this, on the Internet.

FK: Well, I think it’s wonderful that you’re doing this. You always were, for me, a first-rate professional and we always did have a lot of fun.

JE: Yeah, yeah, we did.
FK: Yeah.
JE: Very good.
FK: Okay.
JE: As we shake hands—
FK: Thanks, John.
JE: Thank you, thank you, Frank.

Chapter 22—O:33

Conclusion

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