

Betty Boyd

Tulsa's unlikely television personality and state legislator who captured the heart of her community

Chapter 1 • 0:57

Introduction

John Erling: Born in a house in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Betty Boyd became known as the “Queen of Tulsa Television” during a 25-year broadcast career. This self-described wallflower blossomed as a mother, a March of Dimes volunteer spokesperson, broadcaster, education board member and Oklahoma State legislator. Because of her community involvement and charm, she was asked to join the world of television by KOTV Channel 6 in Tulsa and later with KTUL Channel 8. She became director of information for Tulsa Technology Center and later became a board member serving as chairman at the time of her death. She was asked to seek office in the Oklahoma State Legislature where she served 10 years. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame in 1996 and was 86 when she died January 6, 2011. Betty’s story is underwritten by the generous support of our Founding Sponsors and heard on VoicesofOklahoma.com

Chapter 2 • 4:56

Education

John Erling: Today’s date is actually April 1st, 2009.

Betty Boyd: April Fools! I thought maybe you were trying to pull a joke on me when you first called. (Laughter) I’m Betty Boyd. My birthday is December 9th, 1924 and I was born in Tulsa by the way.

JE: In which hospital were you born?

BB: None, I was born at home, therefore I didn’t really have a legitimate birth certificate. When I went to Iowa State University I had to get an affidavit, fortunately a lady who lived across the street from us where I was born, still lived there, so...

JE: Do you remember the location?

BB: Oh yes, the house is still there, I certainly do. It was very close to Owen Park, which incidentally was the first public park in Tulsa, in Irving Place addition very close to the Washington Irving monument on north Santa Fe, which is the first street north of Osage County. So it was very close to the Tulsa Country Club and the Kennedy Golf Course was there also at that time.

JE: So you lived there until...

BB: Well, I lived there until Bill and I-after we were married we lived there with my mother in that same house. In fact, I was married in that house as well as having been born there. Then after Bill got out of the service, we lived with mother and then suddenly he had polio as did our daughter Beverly, and we still lived with mother in this two-story home there on north Santa Fe until 1950 when he and I built a home over close to Gilcrease Hills, and we lived there until we moved to where I am now.

JE: Okay. What elementary school did you go to?

BB: Pershing and so did my children.

JE: And then where did you go for high school?

BB: Roosevelt Junior High, which is now an elementary school by the way. But I went to Roosevelt Junior High and Central High. Bill graduated from Central High and so did our children.

JE: You met Bill at Central?

BB: No, he was two years ahead of me John and by some magic I went to high school very young and I didn't know anybody at Central High School. Well, that's backwards, I knew lots of people, but they didn't know me, because I wasn't interested in boys or clubs or anything of the sort. I was too young when I went to Central High. I graduated at 15. I met Bill when I was 16-we were on a bus coming from the University of Tulsa where we were both students, but he was two years ahead of me at Central.

JE: At 15 you graduated?

BB: Yes.

JE: What age were you when you started high school?

BB: I was 12 almost 13.

JE: How did that come about?

BB: (Laughter) A pushy mother! No, not really. My birthday being in December, as I told you at the beginning here, I could start kindergarten when I was four, because I would be five before the first of the year. At that time, Tulsa had mid-year promotions and so we had a graduation class in January and one in June. Since I started school when I did, I was in the mid-year thing. Well, when I got to the fifth grade, Tulsa Public Schools decided to do away with that. So they gave us all a test if we were going to be January graduates and if we did well enough, they pushed us on up to the next grade instead of keeping us back

where we were. I did well and so I went ahead in that particular instance.

JE: You had to be a good student.

BB: Well, I think so. However, when I was in the first grade, my first grade teacher got up and she said, "We have eight girls in this class whose first names are Betty, that's too much for me to handle. Half of you are going on to the next grade." (Laughter) So, I did that twice. I got double promoted out of the first grade and the fifth grade quite by accident.

JE: Wow. So then you went to Iowa State University?

BB: Yes, after I went to TU. Iowa State and Cornell in New York were the only two schools that offered what I wanted to major in. I wanted to major in the combination of home economics and technical journalism. I was hoping someday to edit *Better Homes & Gardens*. Instead I married Bill. But Mother said, "You can never go to Cornell, it's too far away." I was her only child, and I hadn't had a Dad since I was about a year old, so, it was just mother and I. She said, "No, no." And I don't know why she said that, really, because she got her master's degree from Columbia University in New York City, but it was too far for her little girl to go. She said, "If you'll go to TU one year, we'll talk about Iowa State." I did, and we did, and I did, and so after I went to TU the first year there I met Bill, and we started dating rather steadily but then World War II came along that December and I was a freshman at TU. Bill enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps and I went to Iowa State.

Chapter 3 • 4:24

All Women

John Erling: Your mother had tremendous influence on you in education in a sense. In those years if she went on to get her master's that had to be...

Betty Boyd: Well, my mother and four of her six sisters all got advanced degrees and mother taught school here in Tulsa for about 36 years. She could have taught this table to read.

JE: What was her name?

BB: My mother's name was Marie Carman. Carman was my maiden name. People still come up to me John, grown people with grandchildren in their arms and say, "Your mother had me in the first grade and she was the greatest teacher I ever had." And if you don't think that's a perk for me (chuckle) it's wonderful because mother and I obviously were extremely close. There was no doubt who was mother and who was daughter, but we were extremely close. It was my grandmother's house where I was born and where I continued to live. I was raised with all women with my mother and my grandmother and an unmarried aunt, who incidentally probably was the home economics influence on me, because she was a dietician. She also had a master's degree from Columbia.

The Raytheon Corporation, when they invented the microwave, they called it the radar range. They called on my Aunt Margaret to come and tell them how to use the darn thing. (Laughter) They had it and they knew it would cook, but they didn't know how long, how much moisture if any, how much spice if any, you know. My Aunt Margaret, I lived with her, so I grew up and I didn't know there was anybody who wore long trousers in those days because I was raised in an all-gal atmosphere.

JE: So your interest to major in home economics came from?

BB: Probably from Aunt Margaret because she was an extraordinary dietician and a home economist and a terrible cook herself by the way, but she could get other people to do it.

JE: How about you? Would you define yourself as a good cook, do you enjoy that?

BB: Yes, I am a good cook. Well, I guess I am, I don't do it anymore.

JE: But you were, and then the side then, you call it technical journalism, but you wanted to edit magazines?

BB: I assumed I would work on obviously a woman's magazine, because I didn't know there were men around, except I met Bill. No, I really did want to get into the journalism field, but I wanted it to relate somehow to home economics on the food side, not the sewing side. Gee whiz, I'm lucky to thread a needle, that's not me.

JE: So then you graduated with a degree?

BB: No, well, I do have a degree, I fibbed it's from TU. Bill joined the Air Corps as I mentioned. He flew B24s as a pilot and he flew 50 missions over Germany and came home and was discharged just before the Japanese surrendered. Actually, he was discharged from the air Corps, by then it was (called) the Air Force and he wanted to go back to TU. I said, "That's fine but they don't have what I want to take. I'll have to find something else." So, I just kind of bounced around. Then the next fall I discovered I was pregnant. This was nice. Bill and I had been married four years I guess at that time and it was time to start a family. Besides, I was over 20 by then at that time, so that was good, and I quit TU. Bill went on and Bill, after his polio did finish college. But his polio intervened and we couldn't afford for both of us to be in university and besides that we had Beverly and I needed to play Momma.

JE: How old were you when you were married?

BB: Eighteen.

JE: Okay.

BB: But Bill was not quite 21 and that was our biggest joke. You know, you knew Bill and we joked a lot together. When we were going to get married...we got married the day after he graduated and got his wings as a pilot. In Oklahoma at that time John, girls who were 18 didn't have to have their parents' consent to be married. Men had to be 21. Bill's birthday was in October and we were getting married in August, and he was 20. So when I would

get real ticked at him, when he would say something funny to me, or so he thought, and I would get a little bent out of shape, I would say, "Yes, but I didn't have to go ask my Mommy if I could marry you, and you did." (Laughter) So, we had lots of fun with that.

Chapter 4 •6:46

Polio

John Erling: During the war then when Bill was a pilot, you then were involved yourself?

Betty Boyd: I was. I worked at Douglas.

JE: What did you do at Douglas?

BB: I was not Rosie the Riveter-I worked in the personnel office out at the bomber plant.

JE: Okay, at Douglas' bomber plant?

BB: Yes, they were building B-24s, which Bill was flying. They were also modifying A-20s. I worked there while he was overseas.

JE: So did you consciously take that job because it was supportive of the war or it just happened to be a place to get a job?

BB: I can't tell you, but I was very pleased to be part of the war effort. Of course, I felt like I was part of the war effort anyway. I had a husband flying missions in a B-24.

JE: Yes.

BB: And how he did that I'll never know. In fact, my first airplane ride was in a B-24. He was stationed at Muroc, which is now Edwards Air Force Base. It was not (called that) at the time. It was called Muroc Army Air Base. We lived on base. I lived in the WAC quarters, the Women's Army Corps, because we had no WACs out there. Since Bill was an officer, and I worked at the Provo Marshall's office and we lived on base and I got to go up with Bill and his crew one day and we had a lot of fun running of the end of the runway because the shimmy damper went out on the plane. B-24s were not easy to fly and Bill was a little guy. When he was in the service he probably weighed 125 pounds soaking wet. And how he horsed that big plane, they were not easy to fly. B-24s did not have the equipment that the B-17 did to make them an easy machine to fly because they had a much longer range so they could fly greater missions. Bill was stationed in southern Italy and anyway we went up in a B-24 and that was my first airplane ride.

JE: You must have known a lot about planes, you just called it a shimmy damper.

BB: Yes.

JE: Most of us wouldn't know what that is.

BB: Yes. Oh... (laughing).

JE: So you knew parts of the airplanes?

BB: Yes.

JE: There will be young people listening to this and you talk about polio, which is not a threat here today in the United States, but was. Bill contracted polio in what year?

BB: 1948. 1950 was the biggest year Tulsa had. St. John had a few (cases) and Hillcrest had the bulk of them and they were all teenagers or younger, except for Bill and this other radioman by the way from Shawnee. They were the only adults. But Tulsa had the greatest number of people who had multiple kinds of polio. There were three varieties of polio. So, when the shots came along, and incidentally Dr. Jonas Salk got to be a good personal friend, but when the shots came along Bill took the shots and so did Beverly, even though they had both had polio in 1948. She was a year old at that time. Bill was a student at TU. Of course he could not attend for about a year and a half because he was in the hospital and then he took therapy for quite a long time after that. But he had only one variety of polio. He almost had the two-kind variety. They parked an iron lung right outside his door in case he couldn't breathe. But he didn't really have a viable case of bulbar polio, which is the kind that makes it impossible to breathe. But he had paralytic polio and he was totally paralyzed except for his big toe, he could move one big toe, and that was absolutely all. That's tough. And I love to talk to teens now because one of their big first questions is, "How did you get into television?" I tell them that because of my experience working with the March of Dimes on public speaking because my husband and daughter had polio. I get this blank funny look, like "Oh, what's polio?" That makes me thrilled. I want that to happen with cancer. I want us to do away with that as does everybody else.

JE: Is there any way that Bill wondered how he contracted polio?

BB: We know how he got it, now that they know how. You got it through your nose or mouth. This is the reason that so many of the children who had their tonsils removed in the summer came down with polio because polio entered either through your nasal passages or your mouth. If you had an injury, like getting a tooth pulled, or tonsils yanked out, or something. Bill was umpiring kids baseball. He was quite an umpire for many years even after the polio. He could still umpire behind the plate. He couldn't run but he could bend down. But he had been drinking out of the "common cup" that everybody was. You know, we didn't have bottled water then, so he was drinking out of the common cup, out of the common bucket that everybody else was and he had had some wisdom teeth taken out one day and he felt okay and he went on out to umpire. Apparently, that's how he came down with it. I don't know how Beverly got it except possibly from him, but her case was so light and she was just a year old. Her birthday is in July and they both had it in August. He went into the hospital on August 15th, 1948. It was funny John-those were the days that your house was off limits to anybody. So, the Health Department put a sign on your house saying what was in the house.

So our neighbors would walk down our side of the block until they got to the edge of our lot, then walk across the street and down and then back. I guess they thought the germs stopped where our house was (laughter). But, it was not really contagious that way. So I really don't know how Beverly contracted it, but she had such a light case. She has some measurement differences in her legs, and she has no abdominal muscles even today, so...

JE: But wasn't the sign to prevent somebody from coming into your house? Didn't they think it was contagious?

BB: Yes. That's correct. This is before Dr. Salk. Dr. Salk came out with his vaccine in 1954 I believe. Of course, Tulsa was one of the sites that did the testing for his vaccine. Part of the second-grade children in Tulsa, on a voluntary basis, took the regular vaccine and part of them had a placebo that was nothing. So, I did a lot of public speaking for the March of Dimes trying to get parents of second graders to let their children take part in this. They used to close schools. We closed schools for a month here, for a month at a time because they thought that gathering places were places to get polio, which they are not, but they thought that.

JE: Why was Tulsa selected?

BB: I don't know. I do not know except that we were one of the places that really, if it were ranked, Tulsa would be in the top 5 of cities with the number of people with polio.

Chapter 5 · 4:48

Run and Play

John Erling: You said earlier that you became a friend of Jonas Salk?

Betty Boyd: Yes.

JE: How did that come about? Tell us about that.

BB: Well, I did a lot of work for the March of Dimes and in fact this is how I got into television actually. But I did a lot of work for the March of Dimes and as a result became a member of the national board. We would go out to Torrey Pines, which, they do something besides play golf there. (Chuckle) They have the Salk Institute there that the March of Dimes built for Jonas Salk and other doctors.

JE: That's in?

BB: Torrey Pines, California. It's beautiful country. That's where I met him and then we came to know him very well.

JE: What kind of a man was he?

BB: Just what you would expect a research medical person to be. He was pretty serious, and of course obviously a brilliant man, as are all of those people. In fact, I was fascinated

with the Salk Institute, because all over the whole institute on the grounds they had pillars with white boards in them that they could write with grease pencils on. And they were all over, so anytime a researcher had an idea, even if they were walking, they could write it down. It's a fascinating place, fascinating. But I did a lot of public speaking for the March of Dimes because they came to us here in Tulsa. We had, like a lot of people, not much income. Bill's income was that he was a student and he had a veteran's stipend to go to school. Any veteran could go to school on the GI Bill, which we don't have now. That's another thing that kids don't know about today. Well, that was our income, so Bill couldn't go to school while he was in the hospital. The March of Dimes came to us and said, "Don't worry about your bills at the hospital, we will pay them and you do not need to pay us back." This is why Franklin Roosevelt started the March of Dimes, and this is what we use the money for locally and then we send some for research too, to try to find a cure or the prevention measures...so they did pay all of our bills. Bill's folks did pay them back as a matter of fact. We didn't, we couldn't. But I wanted to do something John. I like to help people.

JE: Yes.

BB: I really do. So public speaking, I've never been afraid to get up in front of a group. Now, one-to-one bothers me some. I don't do well at a party if I have to walk in the room by myself, but big groups are great. So I went to the March of Dimes and said, "I want to help." That then actually led to my getting into television.

JE: I just want to come back again because I can't imagine how devastated you had to be... here, your husband had polio.

BB: Yes.

JE: And then you discovered your baby had polio. You're just talking facts right now and not emotion, but that to be horrible for that to happen to you.

BB: Yes, it was and it was no less emotional 50 years later John. We didn't do a lot of things that other couples do, like going to a lot of sporting events later on in his life. We didn't go to theater things, because it was difficult for him to get in and out and climb steps and do stuff like that. But one night he said to me, and gosh this was 50 years after he had polio, he said, "Do you know what I would like to do?" And I thought, who knows, crazy man, what you would like to do? He said, "I would like to run and play." And I thought my heart was going to come out of my mouth. I am not a crier. I don't sit down and cry about things, but I came mighty close.

JE: Right.

BB: Mighty close, because you know all of these years he had worked and you know many people didn't realize how really handicapped he was because it ended up being basically as far as you were concerned, or any passerby, his legs that were concerned, but it was

his arms as well. So, he couldn't fix the plumbing or anything. But, people's question to me then John was, "I don't see how you handle this?" And my answer was, "What else am I supposed to do?"

JE: Yeah.

BB: Besides that I was very busy then (chuckle).

JE: As I remember Bill, he always had an upbeat, positive outlook. I don't know what he was like at home, but in the public he just couldn't keep from bubbling.

BB: He was always like that and much more so in his younger days than when you knew him even. He was a clown. Bill was head cheerleader at Tulsa Central. Even though Tulsa Central had 5,000 students then, they only had three cheerleaders and they were boys, and he was one of those three. He also was a cheerleader at TU, the year before he had polio. So, he was an upbeat fellow, and fun.

JE: Yes, he was.

Chapter 6 • 4:16

KOTV

John Erling: So then, all of this public speaking led you to television.

Betty Boyd: Yes.

JE: How did that happen?

BB: I love to tell teens about this because my big thing is volunteer, volunteer, volunteer. And every job I've ever had, has been based on, although I got paid, not a lot. I didn't get paid big like you did (laughter) and do. But every job I've had television was really volunteering to help people. Because I was a community person and I would promote community things, community efforts, community groups, not only in Tulsa, but northeastern Oklahoma. When I went to the legislature, that's a public service. Yes, you get paid for it, but that is the same sort of thing. So, everything I have ever done has been based on that.

JE: So did television call on you to come on and be a guest?

BB: No, I had a friend who worked in the promotions department at KOTV. She and I had been friends a long time and in fact my mother had been her teacher. She was younger than I, but mother had been her teacher. I thought my mother liked her better than she did me, really. But be that as it may, they had a women's show, which is kind of unusual for television in the early 1950s. They had this 15-minute noontime show that was hosted by Barbara Smith, whose father was a doctor here. Well, Barbara got married and I thought it was very narrow-minded of her, but she went with her husband to Florida. They moved

down there. So this friend of mine called me and said, "I know you do a lot of public speaking, wouldn't you like to come audition for this job?" And I said, "Heavens no... when?" She said, "How about tomorrow?" I said, "I don't know anything about television." She said, "Don't worry, just do anything that you want to do for about 5 minutes, and then do about a minute of a commercial." I said, "I don't know what you're telling me here." And she said, "Sell something to me for a minute." So, shaking and losing my breakfast beforehand, I went down to audition. And they invited me to come back and do a live show, but this was before videotape. They had film, but they only used it for new years' because it was too expensive. You used it once and then threw it away, instead of what we can do now. So, they said, "Come do a live show, and that will be another addition."

JE: The first audition you had, do you remember what you tried to sell?

BB: Oh, I remember exactly. Because Bill when he graduated from the business school he had been in engineering, but this was not going to phase well with his problems with polio. So he changed to business school. He got a job with Kerr Glass in Sand Springs, the fruit jar folks, and he was their assistant sales manager. He had me thoroughly convinced that if you wanted your tomatoes and green beans to last when you canned them, you had to use the Kerr gold lid with the gray sealing compound around the edge. That was the only thing you could use. So I sold Kerr lids. (Chuckle)

JE: So that's the commercial you used?

BB: That's the commercial I used.

JE: And based on that, they called you back?

BB: Yes, and so I did a live show and it scared me death, just scared me and someone else. In fact, I even remember who this someone else was, because she was a very popular lady here in town. She and her husband had a ballroom dancing school. And she was the other person that did a live audition and I don't know whether she moved or died or what, but they gave me the job.

JE: And her name was?

BB: Roberta Keefe and her husband was Jerry Keefe. They were both very good dancers. In fact, he could have been on Broadway I'm sure or Dancing with the Stars, Tulsa-style. (Laughter)

JE: Right, but you got the job?

BB: Wrede Petersmeyer was the general manager. The station (KOTV) was owned by John Whitney, who used to be our ambassador to England-it was owned by Corinthian Broadcasting out of New York, and I think somebody must've had a brain hiccup because they hired me. I don't know why because I was scared to death. And that was on a Friday that I did my live audition, and on Monday, December the 1st, I started to work, scared silly.

Chapter 7 · 4:38
“Live” TV

John Erling: And we should point out that this is KOTV Channel 6.

Betty Boyd: Yes.

JE: We know you from Channel 8 but you started out at Channel 6.

BB: I was a Channel 6 and I will be forever grateful for their fateful mistake of hiring me because that started my career and I was there for about 10 years. And then I had an opportunity to go to Channel 8, and I really wanted to for one thing. Sadie Adwon worked there and I liked Sadie, she was an account executive there. At that time John, I felt like Channel 6 had been the number one station in this area for a long time. KTUL was not in Tulsa. It started in Muskogee because they couldn't get their (broadcasting) license out of Tulsa. The FCC said there were already two TV stations here (in Tulsa) they don't need another one. They had moved to Tulsa and had taken over the facilities of what had been a UHF station, which was licensed by the FCC in Tulsa but didn't make it. I thought Channel 6 was sort of like we all get, too comfortable in our positions. And Channel 8 was running like the dickens to become the community-minded television station in Tulsa and that's where I really wanted to be. Although, I liked Channel 6 a lot.

JE: At Channel 6, for those 10 years that you continued to do this, was it a morning women's show?

BB: At first it was called Woman's Page, who could have asked for anything—I could've stood on my head or been in, black as we used to say with nothing going on, on the screen, and still come out number one for that timeslot. Because I was headed into by the local news, which Channel 6 did very well. In fact, my friend Bob Hower put the first newscast on Channel 6 before I was ever there. But anyway, I had the news as a lead-in and *As The World Turns*, which was the most popular soap opera forever and ever, followed me. So I could have done nothing and still come out with a good rating.

JE: So you were on at 12pm?

BB: I was at 12:15pm. I had 13 minutes really, and there was no limit on commercial time then. Sometimes it seems like there's not a limit now. Sometimes I would have four interviews and five commercials in those 13 minutes. And you had to stop on time because you joined network. I couldn't run over on time, there was none of that, so I learned what timing meant in those days.

JE: So you would do live commercials in addition to the live interviews?

BB: Yes, everything was live.

JE: So then you worked steady the 13 minutes. There's no breaks or anything for you.

BB: None, and it was wonderful. I loved it. And I still always prefer live television to anything

else, even though tape covers up a multitude of mistakes. When it came in, and I think this happens to everybody, my attitude changed a little. Because in the back of my mind I was always thinking well, I could do it over. Well, even when I was going on vacation I taped my shows live and they ran those while I was gone. I had ended up doing taped commercials, but it does cover up your mistakes if you make them.

JE: Yes.

BB: But, somehow or another, I liked the enthusiasm of live television. By the way, remember my aunt who did the Raytheon thing? She was my first guest on television. She was here in Tulsa on vacation because it was December and she had the month for Christmas and the holidays and so forth. And so I wanted her to come tell us about this marvelous microwave cooking, and she was my first guest.

JE: Do you remember any faux pas or accidents or anything that might have happened during that time?

BB: Not that day. I don't. All I remember about that day was shaking and pitching (throwing up) my breakfast, not during the show fortunately. And letting Aunt Margaret with her wonderful knowledge of radar range tell us about it.

JE: So you did that show, did you do other shows on Channel 6?

BB: Yes. I did a public information show always along with it that was played generally on a Saturday or a Sunday. I did other commercials. I did a live commercial following the weekend news on a Saturday night that was at 10:30pm and this was before tape mind you. It preceded wrestling, which went on live in the KOTV studios. So I would arrive at the studio at 10pm and do my 1-minute commercial for Nabisco. I remember selling vanilla wafers while the wrestling crowd was all over here (motioning) and then I would go home because we had no tape.

Chapter 8 • 3:13

Commercials

Betty Boyd: But lots of weird things happened. I used to do the commercials for, they were called Mrs. Marshall's Pies then, it's called Bama Pies now, because it's Paula Marshall Chapman. Her father had the business at that time and they were called Mrs. Marshall's and I did the commercials for them live. And I remember one day, Paul, Mr. Marshall, brought the real pies down to be set up and they had to be kind of slanted or propped up from the back or they wouldn't show because cameras were not as versatile as they are these days, as you may remember, because you did a little early-day stuff up in the north land as I remember.

John Erling: I did, yes.

BB: Without a beard, (laughter) I can't believe that. But anyway, he had set these pies up and I just glanced out of the corner of my eye and the cherry pie, the filling was so good, and so full, that it broke out of the crust and it was running all over everywhere. (Laughter) That was kind of hard to deal with at the time. And then one day on a Sears commercial, I called them Froug's all through the thing. That was fun, and of course you can't take it back when you do it live.

JE: Froug's was the name of another store.

BB: Yes, it was the name of another local department store.

JE: And you just happened to get Froug's on your mind?

BB: Yes. And of course my coffee story is the funniest one. It didn't happen to me, but that was the funniest one along with the little lady that I had on my show at Channel 8 who was promoting the county fair, she was from Hulburt. She looked like Mary Poppins John, she was a sweet, little old lady about my age now I think probably, if anybody else got that old, I'm not sure. She had a little hat on and I am sure it must have had a little flower sticking out of the top. That I don't remember, but what I do remember is that she was promoting the fair by telling about her craft and so forth and she made rugs. And I said to her, on live television mind you, on camera, "How long have you been making rugs?" And she said, "Oh honey, I have been a hooker all of my life." (Laughter) Well, the camera started shaking. I could see on the monitor that the guys were just having a fit. They were coming unglued and I said, "Oh, yes, my mother taught me to be a hooker when I was just a little girl." (Laughter) So, we had funny things.

JE: Did you start laughing?

BB: I am sure I did.

JE: She probably had no idea. You let it go. She probably had no idea what she was saying.

BB: Oh no, I didn't say anything. In those days I never could have gotten away with saying what they say on television these days. I wouldn't want to. I learned early on you don't say anything anywhere close to a microphone or a television camera. And you don't make any gestures anywhere close to a television camera that you don't want to be seen all over the world. Even if you think it's not going out over the air, you don't know that.

JE: That is right. You don't happen to remember a commercial that you could just jump into right now because you did it so many times?

BB: Oh gosh, there were too many of them.

JE: I understand.

BB: But I became known as the Wilson gal for a while because I did the commercials for Wilson meats an awful lot. I remember those very well and Johnson wax products. It was when Pledge® was first coming to the market.

Chapter 9 · 3:38**Shyness**

John Erling: Do you know what kind of money you made back then?

Betty Boyd: Very little and we had no retirement plans.

JE: But when you did these commercials, you weren't paid for the commercials were you?

BB: No.

JE: You got a salary?

BB: I got paid about \$25 each for doing the commercials. But we didn't get residuals. It could run for six years and you would never get a residual off of it running. I'm not sure what happens today. I still make a few television commercials and I don't get residuals today and I don't get paid very much today. If it's for a charity or an eleemosynary organization as we in the business say, I don't charge them anything, I just do them. I mean this is my contribution.

JE: Sure.

BB: I love to tell teenagers to volunteer. It looks good on a resume. I volunteered for the March of Dimes and I got the best job anybody who had been part of the wall all of her life (could have) I really did. I didn't have any problem with that, that's just the way I grew up. I was timid and quiet.

JE: It's hard to believe that you Betty Boyd were ever timid and quiet.

BB: (Giggle) I am still bashful.

JE: It's shyness that you probably have. I think a lot of performers probably have that. They are shy one-on-one. I understand what you are talking about.

BB: I am sure you do, because you are a wonderful performer and always have been.

JE: Well, thank you.

BB: You carried on quite a tradition. You know a lot of our people in television came from radio. We had a show called Hi Neighbor that I was on at Channel 6 with Lewis Meyer. That was my only radio appearance as I remember was when he was on his show when he was on KTUL radio, Down Boulder on the Park. Sid Lasher did a garden bit. Reba Adams did the ONG cooking bit and I did the rest, whatever it was. I did the commercials and we generally had a community guest and the show was called Hi Neighbor. And I did a show called Plan for Action that was really a 30-minute public service type of show.

JE: Were these all at Channel 6 or Channel 8, or maybe a combination of both?

BB: It was a combination, really.

JE: Was there another one called Boyd's Eye View?

BB: Yes, that was on Channel 8.

JE: All right.

- BB: When I moved to Channel 8, my show had become known as The Betty Boyd Show at Channel 6 and was not really The Women's Page after I had been there several years. When I went to Channel 8, it started out as The Betty Boyd Show. Then it became for some unknown reason Boyd's Eye View and then we also did Plan For Action up there.
- JE: Was that a tough thing to go into the manager at Channel 6 and talk to him? Who was the manager at the time and you just tell him, "I want to leave?"
- BB: George Stevens. I found him on the golf course (laughter) because I wanted to let him know right away. Along with my bashfulness, I wrote him a nice letter and handed it to him. I didn't want it to just go through the mail. I told him that I had a better opportunity and he tried to get me to stay and I did stay. I didn't start until March and I was offered the job at Channel 8 the September before. He wanted me to stay through the fall sweeps (ratings) and through the January ratings sweeps. I agreed to do that, but not to stay forever.
- JE: Was this 1965?
- BB: Well, it was in the fall of 1964 when I was offered the job and I went to work in March of 1965 at Channel 8.
- JE: So then you had programs like AM Oklahoma?
- BB: AM Oklahoma which is the predecessor to Good Morning Oklahoma which is like Good Morning America. In fact, that's what we called it Good Morning Oklahoma, because we were on the air ahead of Good Morning America.

Chapter 10 · 7:30

John Clark

John Erling: Can you just throw out names of people that might have come to you either there at Channel 6 that you might have worked with? Who was doing news at Channel 6?

Betty Boyd: Oh, sure, you bet. We had a whole string of ex-radio people who came to work at Channel 6 because this is where they got their training, was in radio. Let me tell you something funny about you radio guys. I mean, I thought it was funny. We had overhead boom mikes then. The camera did not zoom. They had to move it physically backwards if they wanted a wider shot and a radioman would always start leaning toward that camera which was moving away thinking he had to yell. The boom mike was right here (motions) but his media was going away. He had been used to this microphone right in front of him. They started out generally on the Noon news so I got to know all of them rather well and then they graduated up to the big-time evening news. Clayton Vaughn, Bob Losure,

Tuck Stadler, whose ears stood out so we taped them back with adhesive tape. When the announcer in the booth said at the end of the show, "Portion's of Tuck Stadler's newscast on tape" we all died laughing because we knew where the tape was, it was on his ears, but we were using videotape by then.

JE: Sports or weather guys?

BB: Hal O'Halloran, Mack Creager for sports. Cy Tuma who was on everybody's television show. He started out on KVOO radio and then he worked at Channel 2 for a while and he worked at Channel 6 for a while and he was at Channel 8 when I went out there. In the meantime he had run for mayor and he didn't win and I think he was glad. (Laughter.)

JE: Tell us what Cy did there?

BB: Cy Tuma was on the news. He didn't ever make the evening anchor spot, but he was on the news at Noon and did various other spots. Cy had polio when he was 18 months old and he was quite impaired, much more so than my husband Bill. Because he was a child and he wasn't through growing his muscles. Bill was an adult with polio and was grown up. These people all came, and Jim Hartz, all of these people started in radio. Bob Hower put the first locally originated newscast on Channel 6 and he was also the sportsman and the weatherman by the way. He was multiple everything at that time. This was in 1949 or 1950, I've forgotten. He was a student at TU so he did not come out of radio. He came out of the communications school at the University of Tulsa. He was so good looking and he had a nice voice and he was in communications, so they picked him to do this first newscast. Then he later, as you know, came back to Channel 8.

JE: Some of the people at Channel 8, like John Chick, talk about him.

BB: Today, wherever I go and it doesn't matter, I still do a lot of public speaking, people in small towns and big towns, it doesn't matter, somebody sooner or later says, "Oh, I remember John Chick." John will never be forgotten and he died a number of years ago. He was off of television for his health problems for quite a long time before he died. His show, at first, of course was Mr. Zing and Tuffy. When I went out to Channel 8 he had that show. It was a great kid's show and John could remember every child's first name, not their full name, but their first name. He would talk to them for a few minutes before the show, which is something by the way that I never did. Because if I talked to a guest in the lobby and then got on live on the show with them and asked them a question they would say, "Well, I've already told you that." Well, they had told me that in the lobby, so I didn't do that. But John wanted to know these multiple children that were on his show. And he could remember, he had a photographic memory. I swear he did, because he could remember every child's first name that was on that show. And Shaggy Dog was Tom Ledbetter and A. Wayne Johnson. I had a director that used to play with Johnnie Lee Wills band who was down at Channel 6 whose name was Wayne Johnson, but this Wayne

Johnson at Channel 8 was a character called Tuffy and they had Shaggy Dog and then Al Clauser, who was really the originator of western swing on the radio here in Tulsa. When John stopped that show, or the station stopped it really and swapped it for Uncle Zeb, Carl Bartholomew also a wonderful, wonderful man.

JE: John also hosted The John Chick Show?

BB: When he quit doing the children's show, they didn't want him to go away, they were just going to swap shows. He had The John Chick Show. He was the host of this western music show, which was on at maybe 6am or 6:30am. Because I was eventually involved in a news and public information show that came on at 5 in the morning and it had a farm bent to it because we gave the farm forecast and the outlook for the crops and all that. I didn't, but Gene Wheatley did that. But John had on these awful (laugh) it was all local talent. Some of them were really good and some of them really weren't. But John enjoyed them all and hosted them all beautifully. They were all just wonderful people. He amazed the ABC executives who came down to find out why we weren't carrying the first hour of Good Morning America, which was their brand new baby at that time. We said, "Come look at what we are putting on." They said, "We know what you are putting on, it's a silly local western show." Well, John outdid them. John out-rated everything they could ever come up with on Good Morning America first hour. He was just a magic man on television and people have never, ever forgotten that man. Usually, when we are off the air for a while somebody will ask about us, but not everybody. But I really never go anywhere John that somebody doesn't bring up John Chick in a favorable way.

JE: Yes. It's been 35 or 40 years since he's been gone?

BB: Yes, I have forgotten how long ago he died.

JE: He came from radio.

BB: Yes, in fact he was up at your old stomping grounds at KRMG and he got mad at the station and got offered a job in Oklahoma City. And he and the then station manager, not Ken Greenwood, a predecessor of his who shall remain nameless, threatened to fire anybody who played a certain song. They were playing records. John had told him he was leaving because this man was not pleasant to work for evidently. I never did work for him, so I don't know, but that was the word anyway. So John decided that he was going to take the job in Oklahoma City and instead of writing a letter like I did to Mr. Stevens, he just put this record on that his manager didn't like and walked out the door. And that record just kept playing over and over (laughter) and he went to work in Oklahoma City. But he did work at KRMG for quite a while. Then we captured him somehow or another.

Chapter 11 • 7:50**Bob Hower**

John Erling: Then Uncle Zeb's Cartoon Camp that Carl Bartholomew hosted...

Betty Boyd: Yes, he used to say, "I'll be looking for you!" Carl came to us from the business field. He came to Channel 8 as a cameraman, but he came out of business. He was vice president of the company here in Tulsa that fell apart when he had married the boss's daughter, and they "unmarried" so he left. He came to work for Channel 8 as a floor man first, and then the cameraman then he was Uncle Zeb. He was extremely successful at that and did a good job. It was different than John Chick's kiddos show. They both were excellent, but I really don't think Carl had any formal training to do all this. I think he could just do it, and he did.

JE: He became a promotion person there too didn't he?

BB: Yes, he did. He had wonderful ideas. We didn't have a promotion manager for a while at Channel 8, so with the help of the promotion manager from Little Rock, the station was also owned by Mr. Leake at that time. So with the help of that man, they decided that I could be the promotion manager and fill in until they hired somebody. Well, fortunately for me it didn't have to last too long, although we did do badly then. But they discovered Carl had a bent, he was working at the station then. He's the one that came up with "8's The Place!" as the theme, and did all of the wonderful things with Don Woods falling off the horse. It was so successful that they kept it. That was a boo-boo that turned out well.

JE: 8's The Place! And then I think you promoted The News Guys as another promotion that you had for Channel 8?

BB: Yes, it was also based on the 8's The Place! theme.

JE: Okay. But you mentioned Don Woods and that's the first time that we've talked about him. Talk to us about Don Woods.

BB: He drew "Gusty" (a weather-inspired cartoon) that was his main thing.

JE: And he was the weather guy?

BB: Don was strictly a weatherman and should have been. He was a good weatherman and Gusty was a good gimmick for him, which he still holds onto and he still does some things. I don't see Don very often, he's still around but I don't see Don very often. He came from radio in Wichita.

JE: But then Bob Hower came to Channel 8?

BB: Yes.

JE: Where did he come from?

BB: Chicago, but he had been in San Diego. When he left Tulsa after his little stint with Channel 6 early on, he did no more television in Tulsa. And I don't really know what year he went. Here again, I need to have my little book that I wrote about all of these folks

JE: Yes.

BB: He went to San Diego and worked there very successfully. In fact, he worked with all of the “big folks” who loved to go to San Diego and Cardiff-by-the-Sea and all of these places out there. I think his main claim to fame though was that he fired Raquel Welch one day in a moment of madness. (Laughter)

JE: She was a performer at the TV station?

BB: Yes.

JE: And he fired her?

BB: Yes, I don't know why, I didn't ask. But then he went to Chicago. He was a program director in Chicago and our station manager hired him to come down here to Tulsa as our program director. Not as our on-the-air person, but as Channel 8's program director. His love of really being in front of the microphone came out in him. It was obvious that he would make a very acceptable newsman, which he did. I might say that he was lucky, I know Bob well enough to say this, because Bob and I started junior high together, so we have been friends for a very long time. He was lucky because his first co-anchor, when he became an on-the-air news anchor for Channel 8 was Barbara Allen, who I consider to be the best woman that Tulsa ever had on television. She was good when she started and she was excellent when she finished. She never stopped growing. She was wonderful. And the one thing Bob had trouble doing at first was ad-libbing, which kind of surprised me because he had hosted a show kind of like Dance Party here in Tulsa, out in San Diego and I'm sure it took a lot of ad-libbing. I was amazed at Bob Hope when I interviewed him one time because he was going to be here for the golf tournament. He wanted to do the interview, but his answers were “yes,” “no,” “no,” “yes.” And I had to ask him something that he couldn't answer with yes or no in the first place. I got him to talk about his grandchildren, and then he opened up. But without somebody to write that script, a lot of news folks don't time well nor do they ad-lib well, because they don't ever do it. They read what's written for them. And Bob had a little difficulty, occasionally in live television, even if it's news with a script you have to throw in an ad-lib to cover a “little technical difficulty that we're having at the moment and will have it for you later” type of thing. Bob was a well-liked anchor here, and he was happy to give up his program directorship to go on the air live and he enjoyed it.

JE: He had the Waiting Child segment?

BB: Oh, I'll tell you what. He wrote the words to that song which they don't use anymore, but I wish they did. Because you talk about something that is a heart-throbber. Bob wrote the words and Oleta Adams wrote the music and sang it. They used to use that and I wish they still would, because the words to it are a real grabber. Of course that feature is still going, and this was not his idea. Waiting Child was already in Oklahoma City as

Wednesday's Child and in several other markets as Monday's Child or Tuesday's Child. When they asked him if he would like to do that in Tulsa, he decided to change it into Waiting Child and he wrote the words to that song.

JE: And you might briefly tell them what The Waiting Child was.

BB: The Waiting Child has remained on the air. Carole Lambert does it these days. It was, and is, a cooperative effort with DHS to place difficult to place children for adoption. And when I say difficult, I mean most people want to adopt a baby. There are lots of babies around for adoption. Most people want to adopt, certainly if they're going to adopt, a child that's older—one without any physical or mental disabilities. Most people want to adopt somebody that looks pretty much like they do. And there are a lot of other children who need homes. So the Department of Human Services has these children who are adoptable and they would tell all about them. Bob told and Carole tells and the DHS certainly tells anybody interested in adopting them what these children's difficulties are if they have any, and some of them do. Some of them (difficulties) are kind of obvious and some of them are not. But, the adoption rate has been fantastic among these children who are taken by first Bob, and now Carole, to someplace where they want to go. They'll take a girl for instance to get a manicure and pedicure if she's interested in beauty shop stuff. They will take a boy out to a baseball game or a sports shop. "What do you like to do?" "Oh, I like the outdoors." Or they will take them to the zoo. If the child really wants to be adopted into a family with other children, they tell that kind of information. If the child would do better as an only child, they tell that. It's just exposing the public to adoptable children who otherwise would not have someone to call mom and dad.

JE: There have to be thousands and thousands of children who were placed through that program who are living...

BB: Yes, that's correct. I don't know how many here. I wish I did. I should call and ask sometime. DHS probably could tell me right off the bat.

Chapter 12 • 8:23

The People

John Erling: Other names at Channel 8? Chris Lincoln was sports?

Betty Boyd: I was at Channel 8 when he came. As you may remember, Hal O'Halloran preceded him in that job. Chris Lincoln was doing radio at the University of Missouri. He had applied for the job at Channel 8 but he was considered much too big, too heavy. Of course, I don't know what he weighed when he first came to Channel 8 but probably at least 350 pounds. He's tall anyway, and he lost tons of weight in order to get the job at

Channel 8, but he was still a big man and he still is a large-boned and tall man. But he was a wonderful addition to the staff and then he quit to go into business for himself, and now he's back there, (at Channel 8) looking pretty much the same except he looks thin in the face, which always startles me. He was a wonderful addition to the Channel 8 staff. For some reason, to me, all three stations here attract the best of the best. Well, there are more than three now, with Fox. But, they all attract the best of the best. We are a market that's a steppingstone. You really can't get a job at one of the Tulsa television stations unless you have worked in television in another market, you just really can't. And of course now you have to have a college degree, which I did not have. I would probably never be hired today. Besides that, my hair is gray. (Laughter) I think here all of the stations have an ability to attract talent, but because we are a middle-sized market, so people go away too. When they get too good, either they go away on their own, or somebody hires them away because a competing station here has sent them a demo tape and says you really ought to look at this guy or gal because they are good. Tulsa has an amazing ability to attract good talent.

JE: When did you decide to retire from broadcasting?

BB: Well, I thought 25 years was long enough for one thing. I'm kind of a stay-putter. I've only lived in three houses in my life, all right here in Tulsa. The one I was born in, married and lived in for a long time, saw my first television in. I saw it from across the street, because we didn't have television then, but the people across the street did. On nice warm evenings they would leave their front door open where we could see it and listen to it on a radio. We can't anymore, but we could hear Channel 6 on the radio then. Anyway, I'm a stay-putter, except I thought, you know, there's something else out there that I'd like to do. I love television, I still do. I still love to do commercials and I am flattered as heck when somebody asks me to do one these days and I still do some. But I had the opportunity because the public relations director out at Tulsa Technology Center retired. And I had told then superintendent Joe Lemley, "If she ever retires I want to apply for that job." I still have the old writing bug inside of me. I really wasn't doing any writing in television except I did a lot of writing up here (in her head) because I did a lot of ad-lib, live commercials. They would just give me the facts and I would do what they wanted me to end up saying. But I had the writing bug, so I applied for the job and got it out at Tulsa Technology Center. So I left television on my own. If I had been fired, I would miss it. People ask me that all the time, "Don't you miss television?" No, not really. Of course I still do some of it. But I wanted to do this other thing, so I did that for 10 years.

JE: What year did you retire?

BB: 1980.

JE: 1980 and you'd been in television 25 years you said?

BB: I had been in television 25 years and so in 1980 I went to Tulsa Technology Center.

JE: What part of your broadcast career gave you the greatest satisfaction? Was there some promotion you did...or what made you feel good about what you did? Anything special?

BB: The people I had on the show, and I mean the local people. Now, I did get to do lots of things, I won't kid you. I enjoyed every one of them. I enjoyed landing on and taking off from an aircraft carrier. I loved that. Who would have ever thought that a little girl from the wrong side of the tracks would get to do something like that? Who would have ever thought that I would get to have tea in the White House with the president and his wife?

JE: Which president?

BB: A couple of them, Lyndon Johnson and the one that got impeached. (Laughter).

JE: Richard Nixon.

BB: Nixon.

JE: And how did you get to do that?

BB: Well, because I was in television. I was invited to be on this 30-member committee called Women in the Services. What we did involved women in the military. There were only 30 of us and you could only serve three years. They can only have two people serve from each state as a maximum and you could stay three years. I guess because I was in television, I was chosen from Oklahoma to do that by the Defense Department, because I worked with the Defense Department. We would have meetings at military bases of all of the services. We always started in Washington, D.C. and then they would take us by plane usually, depending on where it was, to an Army base or a Marine base or a Navy base or whatever for the rest of our meetings. So we always had the big gatherings in Washington, D.C. Part of it was at the White House of course and part of it was at the home of the Secretary of Defense, whoever that happened to be at the time. Clark Clifford comes to mind immediately. We really got to know all of the higher-ups in the military. As a matter of fact, during my three years John, we made it possible for women to become field grade officers. That means generals or admirals. Before that, women could not do that. The billets were there but Congress wasn't filling them. So I do know personally, and got to know very well, the first female Air Force general, the first female Army general, the first female Army nurse general, the first admiral in the Navy and the Marines. It was wonderful.

JE: Any highlights from having tea with Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon? Any reflection on what they said? Or did anything happen?

BB: Not particularly, except for a little girl from the country...Tulsa has never been a little town. Even though I told you I was born in 1924, it was not tiny then. I think the population was over 100,000 then, so it wasn't tiny. I probably had my jaw dropped, but I enjoyed the very friendly atmosphere from both of these people and their wives. I

truly did. They're just folks like the rest of us. And that probably sparked my interest in politics, which I had never had. Which became obviously quite an interest to me later. But here again I was serving the people and it's the people that I had on my television shows. But it's not the big stars, because I got to go to Hollywood lots of times for movie premieres and interview the stars on the set and stuff. They were fine and I enjoyed that, I won't tell you I didn't, I did. I enjoyed that a lot. But, I got to go overseas. I got to go on a press trip to Morocco and a press trip to France. Yes, I enjoyed all of these things, but really it was the people from northeastern Oklahoma that I really loved talking to. I felt like I was really helping them somehow. I hope I did, I tried to.

JE: Because they came on.

BB: Advertising something that they were interested in, something that was going to help somebody. They were going to do the helping, not me. I was just their platform, but I loved doing that. The people that I got to meet from around here and from abroad, anywhere. I call California abroad, so. (Laughter) It was just wonderful, actually. That's what I enjoyed most about my television days, contact with the people and the confidence sponsors had in me to hand me a fact sheet and say, "Do our commercial." That was very, very gratifying and I enjoyed that. As you say, it did let me do a little bit of my writing, because I would write it in my head. I didn't write it down, but I would write it in my head from what they just handed me.

Chapter 13 · 1:53

Hollywood

John Erling: You said you were in Hollywood, was there any outstanding interview or something that happened with some name out there that we might know?

Betty Boyd: Oh yes. In fact, one of the wonderful, perceptive things that happened to me, we were interviewing at one point, people who weren't stars yet, but who were expected to be because they were doing bit parts on television or in the movies, or something. My family had gone with me because we were going to the amusement park after I had finished my work. And I got back to my hotel room and I said, "Well, most of these people have been just really nice, and I think that people that become big stars are really nice. But this guy that I just got finished interviewing is never going to amount to a hill of beans. He is brassy. He's brash. He's a little bit rude." They have laughed at me about my observations of Burt Reynolds ever since. (Laughter) But yes, lots of fun things happened. Harrison Ford was fun to interview although he was so bashful. I thought he would never say anything. This was during the Star Wars days. Gene Wilder was a hoot. He's the only

one of them that I have ever asked for an autograph. I just can't bring myself to do that.

JE: Right.

BB: Except my son wanted it. He loved Gene Wilder and I did too. Of course, I love him even more since he was involved with *The Producers* and that's since my days in television. That was fun, but I still like the local people best. I'm not blowing smoke, I mean that, because I felt like I could really help them. How could I help anybody in Hollywood except maybe to get people to buy tickets to see their movies? But local folks you could really help. Local causes you could really promote and I liked that.

Chapter 14 • 3:54

Politics/Tulsa Technology Center

John Erling: Then you came to be public relations director for Tulsa Tech?

BB: Yes.

JE: You did that for 10 years and you enjoyed it and got to write and you ended up as a board member of Tulsa Tech. Did that come right after your 10 years?

Betty Boyd: No, after I had been out there 10 years and thought I would be there the rest of my life, someone called and asked me to run for the legislature, because this someone had moved out of the district and was going to run for Senate, and did and won. And I said, "For heaven's sakes." Just like I said about being on television. You've got to be kidding. Why would I do that? I had no political interest and I told you before we started this I think. I had a mixed marriage. I was in one party and I slept with a man who was very devoted to the other party. (Laughter) So I thought, oh gee, yeah sure. It never occurred to me to get into politics, but I was asked to file and I thought, well, I've been here 10 years and that might be fun. Because even though I am a stick in the mud about housing and staying in the same place and never moving away from Tulsa, I had opportunities, but I'm not liberated enough to go home and say, "Bill boy, we're moving. I have a job in wherever."

JE: Because you were asked no doubt in television to go to bigger markets like Chicago?

BB: Yes, but I was not going to do that. By that time Bill owned his own business here in Tulsa. People would say, "Well, aren't you a liberated woman?" Well, I don't know. I work and I have always worked all of my life, but so did all of the women that I grew up with. They worked and they had to. They had no husband around or no grandpa around to work and make money. These women had to work, so I thought all women worked. I knew all women didn't go into politics because there were only seven of us in the House out of 101 when I first got elected to the House. But I truly enjoyed legislative work. I don't miss the

legislature. I wouldn't want to be in it now. I may give a little political speech here, but I don't like term limits. I think it's a bad deal because you are in the process of learning all of the time you are there and you are not there long enough to really have learned that much. But I really have missed legislative work. I love policy making, so when I was not in the legislature anymore, Bill, my husband had had this board seat at Tulsa Technology Center, and when he got so ill in 2000, he resigned his board seat. Then he passed away in March of 2000 and I was still in the legislature. He was replaced by Laymon Jones, who had had the seat before, but had to retire because of his health, but he had gotten well. So, he was replaced by Laymon Jones, who had to retire because he got sick again, not of the board, (laughter) he had heart trouble. So I applied then to replace him. I didn't have to run then because his term was more than half done. The law says that if the term is more than half done you are appointed by the sitting board to replace them, but you have to run in the next election, which I did, and I won. So I was policy making again. So I am still doing pretty much what I did in the legislature just on the other end of it. Now, I am asking for help from the legislature on things, or less help from them on things.

JE: So here we are in 2009 and you are still serving nearly 10 years as a board member?

BB: Yes. They have long, long board terms set in our constitution incidentally.

JE: Five years?

BB: Seven years. Frankly, I think that's too long to ask anybody to commit to a job, and I think it's too long to ask the other members to put up with for seven years. But that's what it is. It's seven years. My term will be up in 2011.

JE: You came out of House District?

BB: House District 23.

Chapter 15 • 7:28

Glass Ceiling

John Erling: Reflect on your work as a House member, any bills that you authored or helped pass that you are proud of?

Betty Boyd: Oh yes. I guess that sounds very self-serving.

JE: No.

BB: I am pleased with them let me put it that way, very pleased. One, I was the house author on setting up OSU-Tulsa. That pleased me very much. It originated in the Senate and Charlie Ford was the Senate author and I was the House author and I worked on that sucker until I thought I would go crazy. But we got it passed. I also helped all of our compass point regional universities because they all got part of the pie as well. In fact,

that is how Northeastern State University is in Broken Arrow because they all got some of the money when we started OSU-Tulsa. The other one of course that I was so pleased about was the setting up of the then Fund for Breast Cancer Research and serving the uninsured or underinsured women with mammography and trying to do a lot of education about early detection. Now it includes other kinds of cancer, but at that time it was the Breast Cancer Bill. I really had to struggle with that one, but in the end, I had no struggle at all with it because everybody but one nincompoop (laughter) supported and was for that bill in the House. John, you've visited the Capitol and you know what House floor looks like when we are in session. People talk to each other when somebody else is talking. They get up and go out because their constituents have called them away, or they have a telephone to answer. It's a busy, busy place. During our debates on that Breast Cancer Bill, you could have heard a pin drop in place. It was so gratifying. And there was only one lone hand that debated against that bill in that House and we finally got it done. Don Ross and I worked really hard on a bill to help set up a fund that would assist blind people and people who had sight problems. We set up an endowment fund through the legislature so they could get educated and have more materials to help them also in school and enhance the Braille program. And the other bill that I was exceptionally proud of was that I separated the Department of Rehabilitative Services out at DHS because it was a stepchild. DHS is so large, and it still is very large and it covers so many subjects. It's like trying to eat an elephant in one bite. So the Department of Rehabilitative Services was not getting its due diligence. So I finally got the House and Senate to pass a bill separating them out, and they have been extremely successful with people with rehabilitative needs and they are doing very well. Yes, I was pleased about that and since I'm in a bragging mode, I never lost a bill that I got heard in committee, never.

JE: Wow.

BB: And I was so pleased. I had one vetoed and it disappointed me.

JE: So that just came down to hard work on your part? You picked the right bills or the right issues or why didn't you ever lose a bill, because that's common?

BB: Well, I played wife a lot. I asked for a cashmere coat when all I wanted was a wool sweater. (Laughter) You guys are fun to work with. (Laughter) No, I think it had to do with my public speaking and my work in television a bit, because I learned how to debate and I learned how to listen. And listening is a great part of legislating whether people want to believe it or not. If you just listen to what's going on around you, you can become a good debater. You need to pick bills that aren't foolish or frivolous. I mean there's no point in authoring something that's silly or frivolous or not worthy of being a law. This is not to say that I didn't do some resolutions that never intended to become law, but they were good resolutions. Those were fine, as long as you don't intend these things to become

law, that's fine.

JE: Did you feel a glass ceiling ever in the legislature or gender-bias for those not knowing what "glass ceiling" is?

BB: Not really, except I know that's true. Like I've said, we only had seven women in the House and I was the only one from Tulsa in the House. The Senate had two from Tulsa. But I was the only female House member from outside the Oklahoma City area. As such, when I tried to park when I first got down there in the House parking lot, the wonderful sergeants who are the loves of my life, I think every sergeant who is down there is great, but they would come up the window and tap on it and say, "I'm sorry Ma'am this is just for House members." And I would say, "I know." And they would say, "Well, are you the wife of a legislator?" And I would say, "No, I'm a legislator." (Laughter) You know. I had media people asking me all of the time, "Are you going to play in the golf tournament that House member so- and-so is having, some male House member. And I would say, "No." And they would say, "Why, did they not ask you?" I would say, "Well, of course they asked me, but I don't go hit something and chase it myself, I'm not going to play golf." (Laughter) So, little things like that. And much of our legislation was written for him. Now, I didn't mind being called Madam Chairman, I really didn't when I was chairman of committees. That was fine. I'd rather be called chairman than chairperson, or chairwoman. I'd say, "You can call me honey if you want to." I don't care. That didn't matter to me. So there was some of that there. And in television, there was no doubt I was not paid as much as my male counterparts were, but that was common practice. I liked what I did. I wasn't starving. I wasn't the only breadwinner in my family. But I didn't feel that I was held back and I certainly didn't (feel that way) in the legislature, because I had extremely good luck there. Nobody fired me in television, so I felt just fine. So, no I didn't feel the glass ceiling, but I do recognize that it's there. But I am a girl and I grew up with all women and that's fine. I enjoy being a girl quite frankly, so I never felt left out, or that I wasn't making the money that I deserved. Although I would have enjoyed making larger salaries and I knew that I was not. Now in the legislature, I made as much as anybody else, except the Speaker and so forth. But I didn't ever feel that it was because I was a girl, and maybe John, it's because I started all of this a little later in life than most people do. I didn't start television until I was older than most people are when they start, and I'm still doing it, I'm 84 and I still do it some.

JE: You were in your 30s then when you started television?

BB: Yes, and that's a little older than most people start.

Chapter 16 · 6:57**Listen**

John Erling: But it must make you feel good because you've laid down an example of what a female can do in these areas here as a board member and in broadcasting and in the legislature. So there are young females who can look at this life of Betty Boyd and say, this can be done.

Betty Boyd: Yes, but you still have to clean out after the elephants, no matter what you do. You have to do some things you'd rather not do. It doesn't matter if you are a guy or a girl. I don't know about anybody looking at me and thinking anything, except what in the world is that old broad doing here? (Laughter) I do think maybe starting later in life made a difference to my outlook on things. I didn't expect very much so I was willing to take less I guess. I don't think anybody ever hired me because I was cheap. (Laughter) I hope not.

JE: Nor were you out for women's causes just for women?

BB: No, oh no.

JE: Right.

BB: In fact, I don't look at things that way. And I don't look at things that way politically either John. I don't think that one political party is always right and the other one is always wrong. I don't believe that. I don't think that you should vote for something just because it's carried by your own party. That's not me. And, guests on television, I didn't always believe in the same things my guests believed in. I listened and let them tell their story. A good example of that was when ERA was trying to be ratified in Oklahoma. Unlike you, I refused to have people with different viewpoints on the same program. I would have them both on, but on different programs. Because it was my feeling, this was my prejudice, that they would start yelling at each other and my listeners would be the losers. Come state what you believe and tell me why we should do this. Come tell me why we shouldn't do this. That was a real tussle because if I was to have somebody who was for ratification of the ERA on the show, I wasn't off the air two seconds when my phone started ringing with the other side saying, "We have to be on the show." You certainly can, just not on the same day, but you certainly may.

JE: I am thinking today as you watch cable television especially, MSNBC and CNN how they always present both sides and how they are both talking over each other and sometimes you can't even understand what they are saying.

BB: No--and don't you get the feeling sometimes that the one who isn't speaking isn't listening? They are thinking about what they are going to say when it's their turn. To me, that's cheating my listeners. I don't mean to sound critical of the people that are doing that. Well, I guess I do (Laughter) but that's not the way that I prefer to do it. I prefer to

do it so that you talk and tell me how you feel and I'll listen. I never put a political sign in my yard when I was in television. I still don't, just because I never have. I don't think I even put one of my own in my yard. I'm not sure. I think anybody in the media needs to be the vehicle that other people with something to really say can get it out there. I felt that way when I was in television and I felt that way when I was in the House of Representatives. I felt that I should listen and see what the other side had to say. This is why my mixed marriage worked so well. Bill and I would discuss things. He came down quite a bit to the House and would sit up in the gallery. He would sit up there and go (motioning thumbs down) and I would vote green and just smile. (Laughter) But we would discuss at home a great many of these issues and I would get his viewpoint on things, which wasn't always like mine. Sometimes, not even remotely like mine—and sometimes it was. Each of us was able to take the best of this side and the best of that side and put them together and try to make something happen out of what was really good and I think that's statesmanship. I think a lot of good politicians do that. A lot who don't, don't become very good politicians. They don't listen to the other fellow's point of view and see if there is something that they can take away from them that would make their ideas even stronger and better. But on television, I wanted to hear what you have to say, unlike today where I'm doing all the gabbing (laughter).

JE: We should mention you've authored two books: *Travels in My Green Country and Beyond*, was that your idea?

BB: I wrote a column called *Travelchatter*. I'm half Ogden Nash. I make up words all the time. I made up *Travelchatter* and it was printed weekly in about 30 northeastern Oklahoma newspapers, never in the *Tulsa World* or *Tulsa Tribune* because they didn't like television people very much in those days. Two or three of these editors said, "Why don't you take some of those columns and put them into a little book?" So I did and it became *Travels in My Green Country and Beyond*. It had a lot of pictures in it. Yours is in it two or three times. That's how I know you didn't always wear a beard. The other book was called *If I Could Sing I Would Be Dangerous*. It was about all of my friends in the media, radio and newspaper and television. It really wasn't about me it was about them. Do you remember what you wrote in my book?

JE: I don't.

BB: Of course you don't.

JE: And you probably do?

BB: Yes. (Laughter)

JE: What did I write?

BB: Are you sure you want me to tell you? We had a party for all of the people that were in the book and all of the media people that would come. About half of them were scared

to come. They came, but they were afraid it was like the National Enquirer and it was going to be a tell-all, be-all, you know. Oh no-it was just about the fun things and the good things. I don't even buy the National Enquirer. I don't like that kind of journalism, no thank you. My book was about everybody that I had known or known of, and what they had done up to that time. The title came from a friend of mine with the Smithsonian who said to me one day, "You know Betty, if you could sing you would be dangerous." I thought, what a book title!

JE: Yes.

BB: I can always think up book titles, but I had trouble filling in the middle. But what you wrote, I'll show you after a while okay? (Pause) You really want me to tell you?

JE: Yes.

BB: You wrote, "You're wonderful." -John Erling

JE: Wow.

BB: (Laughter) Thank you, John.

JE: You bet.

BB: But everybody signed that book. I had a lot of fun with it because I was home. I was recuperating from breast cancer the first time when I wrote that book. In fact, I wrote it partly to occupy my time. I wasn't in bed, but I didn't go back to work for a couple of weeks. So I started it and finally finished it. I enjoyed doing it. However I don't know now what has happened to all of you in the media, this was back in 1983.

JE: I think you can find that book in the library and maybe Steve's Bookstore (in Tulsa) has it still?

BB: I don't think so. The people who bound it didn't do a very good job and it's coming apart. (Laughter) So I took some of them and had them re-bound.

Chapter 17 • 5:32

Advice

John Erling: As students listen to this and they want to know how do I choose a career? How do I get into this or that? What kind of words do you give them?

Betty Boyd: Well, actually I think my hubby said it best when I said to him one time, "Gosh, I guess I was just at the right place at the right time when I got that job in television." And he said, "Honey, don't forget, chance favors the prepared mind." And I think you have to prepare yourself for what it is you want to do. Now, how you choose what you want to do-I don't try to tell anybody that, because I never would have picked me to be on television. (Laughter) I never would have thought about doing that. I really didn't.

Of course, we didn't have television classes when I was going to university. I didn't and don't have the kind of college degree that today is necessary because it's in the job description. It doesn't mean you can do a better job. It doesn't mean you can't. But the more you learn, the better you are. And I think you should be a lifelong learner. I don't care how old you get, you never need to stop learning, or reading or doing things. So prepare yourself for what it is. Don't expect to be the boss the first day. When I was in television John, I had the opportunity or the responsibility of hiring assistants at Channel 8. Nine out of ten of them would expect a huge beginning salary. No, it doesn't work that way. I don't care if you are a woman or a man, you don't step in to being the boss the first day. Be willing to sweep out after the elephants as I said, because everybody needs to do that some time. But learn as much as you can and be as interested in things as much as you can and read, read, read. I'm going to sound like your lovely library lady now, but I have more books in my house than I have pennies in the jar. I really do. Because I love to read and I think this has helped me tremendously because it's helped me know about something you may be talking about and I can ask you intelligent questions or fair questions because I have read about things. I think anybody that doesn't read a lot is not only missing a lot of enjoyment but they are missing the opportunity to learn more about enough things that may be ancillary things. The second thing to do besides be prepared, is to volunteer wherever you can. Because, this gives you a different outlook on people, you know. Be quick on your feet and think on your feet while you're listening. Then I don't care what you do, I think you'll succeed.

JE: Any mentors as you look back that you really looked up to or that you felt helped you?

BB: Everybody I met. I am very serious about that. I learned something from everybody I met. I think we all do, we just need to recognize it. I was very sick as a child that caused me to start reading. I haven't been very sick as an adult. I've had some rather monstrous things like cancer twice and so forth. But take those times when something unfortunate happens in your life to enrich yourself somehow. Whether it's reading, whether it's listening to radio or television or reading all that you can. Read every word of the newspaper, not just the funnies, but read the funnies too. Sometimes I think when I go to school board meetings that I am the class clown. But every once in awhile, when things get a little tense you have to say something funny. Somebody has to say something funny, now not out of place, and not instead of what you are talking about. But say something funny and be ready to do that and you'll get along just fine. Play wife a whole lot. Ask for more than you really want and you'll get what you want, probably.

JE: What a life you've been able to live, if I can use the phrase a blessed life—because here you started out and you described yourself basically as a wallflower.

BB: Oh, definitely.

- JE: You were a very timid person and you blossomed to be this flower.
- BB: To be an adult wallflower (Laughter)
- JE: And you are still blooming here at 84?
- BB: Yes.
- JE: And as we sit here I think you are going to California in a few days for a board meeting, is that true?
- BB: Yes, and the Governor has asked me to be a Trustee for the OSU-Tulsa organization, but I have to be approved by the Senate and I suspect they are going to take a look at this old lady and say, "What is that old broad doing still trying to do things?" If you have the dedication, the intelligence and the energy to do it, I don't think it makes a dog-gone bit of difference, what your age is. I can't tell how old you are, but I know that you are an adult and I know that about anybody whether they are a child or an adult. You are not as old as I am by a whole lot, but you still have a lot of energy for what you do. You are dedicated to what you do, no less then when you were back in Grand Forks or wherever it was. Age makes no difference really.
- JE: You've got a great memory. Well, thank you for this interview. It was my honor to do it.
- BB: Thank you, John.
- JE: You're welcome.

Chapter 18 • 0:24

Conclusion

Announcer: You have just heard Betty Boyd tell her story of community involvement, a television career, service to education and legislative work. Remember her words of advice: Chance favors the prepared mind. Read, read, read and volunteer. Share this story with others and thank the Founding Sponsors of VoicesofOklahoma.com.