

Denzil Garrison

After serving the US in WWII and the Korean War, he served Oklahoma in both state government houses.

Chapter 01 - 1:21

Introduction

Announcer: Denzil “Denny” Garrison served Oklahoma as a state representative and senator from 1957 to 1974 and filled the role of Minority Leader in both houses. In his legislative service he faced many issues but was very proud of his vote to repeal prohibition in the state of Oklahoma. He also served as Governor David Boren’s Legislative Liaison.

A native of Norman, Oklahoma, he attended Norman schools and followed a distinguished family tradition of military service by enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1944. He would return to active duty in 1950 during the Korean War.

Known to friends and family as “Denny,” Garrison also authored two books, *Remembrances of A Redleg*, about his Korean War experiences, and *Honor Restored*, which chronicled his successful defense of an Oklahoma Marine during the Vietnam War.

Garrison was remembered as a character among fellow legislators, and was well-known for his spot-on imitations of famous political figures.

An avid historian, Denny served two terms as President of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Denzil’s story was recorded October 23, 2012. He was ninety-one when he died January 15, 2018.

But now you will hear Denzil tell his story assisted by newspaper journalist Jenk Jones on the oral history website VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 7:20

Dugout Babies

John Erling: Today’s date is October 23, 2012. My name is John Erling. Denny, would you state your full name?

Denzil Garrison: Denzil, D-e-n-z-i-l, and middle name is Doss, D-o-s-s, G-a-r-r-i-s-o-n. The Doss was the name of my great grandfather who was a Civil War soldier; served from Kansas. I'm proud to have his name. And, by the way, I'm normally called Denny, rather than Denzil.

JE: Your date of birth?

DG: November 20, 1926. I was born in Norman, Oklahoma.

JE: So your present age is?

DG: Eighty-five and I'll be eighty-six the 20th of November.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

DG: In my dining room here in my home in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

JE: Does this house have significant historical value?

DG: Yes, this house is 102 years old. And it was here when the Frank Philips home, which is two doors south of us, was built.

JE: We have Jenk Jones with us here to participate in this interview. He is of the publishing Jones family of the *Tulsa Tribune*. Jenk, you were a reporter during Denny's time in our state legislature?

Jenk Jones: Yes. I covered Denny as a reporter and polled some of the races he was involved in. Traveled with him when he was running for governor and have known him for almost half a century.

DG: Yeah.

JE: Jenk will be participating in helping in this interview. Denny, let's talk about your mother.

DG: My mother was born out near Alva, Oklahoma, a little town Capron, C-a-p-r-o-n. She was born in 1899. She has an identical twin sister. At birth, the twin sister weighed two pounds and eleven ounces and my mother weighed two pounds and nine ounces. And they lived in a dugout. They had nothing but a large stove there in that two-room dugout. These two little girls were born very, very prematurely.

And my little grandmother, who was just barely five foot tall, opened the oven of the stove and put two shoeboxes side by side and put one of the twins in each of them and fed them cow's milk. They had one cow, and she fed them with a medicine dropper. That was a very, very tough winter, the winter of 1899. And they were born in October. And she got those two children through there.

And my aunt, who was the split image of my mother, only lived eighty-two years. And my mother only lived ninety-four years.

JE: (laughing)

DG: They lived long lives thanks to my dear little grandmother, who only lived to be sixty-five.

JE: What was your mother's name, maiden name?

DG: Nita Ellen Smith. The daughter of John E. Smith and Ida May Louis Smith. Ida May Louis being the mother of the twins. Johnny Smith was their father. John Smith died out in

Hooker out in the panhandle and they buried him in Alva. He is buried next to my little grandmother, who died when I was in the army in World War II.

I was on KP in basic training and they called me and told me my grandmother had died. And they told me I could have the weekend off to go to her funeral. And I remember thinking that grandmother always did things that were helpful to others. And at least I got out of KP for the weekend.

But I miss her and she was a wonderful person.

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

DG: She was very talented musically. She went to the Chicago Conservatory of Music. She studied piano and she gave piano lessons for many years.

When I was a little toddler I used to hate to see those students come in because that meant that I couldn't be with my mother. And so when John Philip Sousa died and I was just a little toddler I sneaked in where she was giving a lesson. The Saturday evening *Post* had just got there and it had a picture of John Philip Sousa on the front page. I stood on that and I just stood there for a long, long time.

And my mother looked at me and said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I'm standing on Susy."

JE: (laughing)

DG: And that was always a big joke between my mother and I. And whenever she wanted to know where I'd been and so forth, I'd say, "Well, I was just standing on Susy."

JE: (laughing) Your father's name?

DG: Joseph Don Garrison Sr. He was a graduate of Northwestern University and Northwestern State College over at Alva. He came home from World War I as a young corporal. He spotted my mother and it was more or less love at first sight, as far as he was concerned.

Someone told her, said, "I know a man that's just crazy to meet you."

My mother said, "Well, I don't want to meet any crazy men."

JE: (laughing)

DG: But one thing led to another and they went out on the first date. It was the middle of the winter. He had this big old bulky army overcoat on and he had no other coat. So he wore that army overcoat, which is bulky, to say the least, he walked over to her home and he took that overcoat out, hid it in the shrubbery around her house, and he walked to the movie, took her to the movie, and he froze all the way to the movie and then all the way back home. And he found his coat again in the shrubbery.

They always laughed about that that he hid his coat because he kind of felt like that he probably wasn't as sharp as he should have been.

JE: What did your father do for a living?

DG: He was Superintendent of City Schools in Norman. He went to Norman in 1923. While he was there, he went to the University of Oklahoma and got his master's degree at the University of Oklahoma. He became the principal of a grade school in Norman, and then principal of the junior high. Then he became the principal of the high school, and finally, just before World War II, he became Superintendent of City Schools.

He took a leave to go to World War II, which he did. He, at that time, was a major and he was promoted to lieutenant colonel a short time after he got called up. He was on a leave of absence of Norman schools for the duration of the war.

After the war, he became again the superintendent of schools in Norman.

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

DG: Yes, I had one brother and one sister. My sister died last month. She died in Salt Lake City. Her name was Donita, D-o-n-i-t-a, Rae, R-a-e, Garrison Patchin, P-a-t-c-h-i-n.

JE: How old was she when she died?

DG: She was eighty-two.

Chapter 03 - 3:14

Two-Hundred-Dollar Camera

John Erling: And then your brother?

Denzil Garrison: My brother was three years older than me. When the 45th was called up in World War II he was called up with them. He was only seventeen years old and actually a year too young to go, but he went anyway. When he turned eighteen he was happy because he knew they wouldn't kick him out of the army.

JE: His name?

DG: Joseph Don Garrison Jr. He died thirteen years ago. We served in Korea together, my brother and I.

Jenk Jones: Was he in artillery also?

DG: No, he was infantry. He was in the 179th infantry and I was in the 171st field artillery battalion and I was a captain and he was a captain. I was promoted to captain while in Korea. And he was promoted to captain right after his service in World War II. But we served together in Korea.

He had a wife and two little boys at home. And I was getting ready to go on leave to Tokyo. They called it R and R, rest and relaxation. We had other names for it but I won't go into that.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: But nonetheless, I was to leave on a Wednesday, and Tuesday, his jeep pulled up to my battery and he came up and he seemed pretty low. And I said, “What’s the matter, Bud?”

And he said, “Well, I won a chance at buying a Canon camera.” And everybody wanted a Canon camera. Of course, they were made in Japan and they were very nice cameras. He said, “I could have that camera and I would love to have it so I could send home pictures of you and me and everybody else here and the boys could see it.” He said, “But I just can’t do it because I’m dead broke.”

I said, “Well, I’ll tell you, I was going to go on leave tomorrow. I’ve got two hundred dollars saved up and I’m going to loan it to you right here.” And I gave it to him.

And he took one end and he said, “That’s one of the nicest things that you’ll ever do and I really appreciate it.” He said, “Now you don’t mind this, do you?”

And I said, “No, that’s what brothers are for.” So I got a good night’s sleep and I felt like I was the way a brother should be that day. I thought, “Well, I’ll call him,” and I rang him up on the telephone and went to his regiment and then down to his telephone.

Somebody answered the phone and said, “Captain Garrison’s quarters.”

And I said, “Is Captain Garrison there?”

He said, “No, sir, he left on leave to go to Tokyo this morning.”

JE: (laughing)

DG: And I was rather chagrined about that but then I had to laugh because I thought, “Well, I at least got a brother that’s going to be a very adept con man in years to come.”

But when we got home and I told my dad that story my dad was upset about it and he said, “Did he ever pay you back?”

And I said, “No.”

He said, “Well, he’s going to.”

So he was there at OU and he was going to school on the GI Bill. My dad called him over there and he says, “You pay him twenty dollars a month out of your GI Bill until you’ve paid him back his two hundred dollars.”

So he did, thanks to the old man.

JE: (laughing)

Chapter 04 - 6:11

Second-year Algebra

John Erling: Your first education, the first school you attended, elementary school?

Denzil Garrison: I went to elementary school on the wrong side of the tracks down in Norman, over in Jefferson School. The old building was built in 1902, and it held a belfry in it. And it had just been pretty well taken care of through the years but it was strictly, as I said, on the wrong side of town. It just happened to be where my mom and dad bought a house when they moved to Norman.

I learned a lot of things in Jefferson Grade School, a lot of things probably that I shouldn't have learned, but I learned a lot of things that I should have learned too.

One thing I learned was that brains could be carried by anybody who was lucky enough to have them, regardless of their position in life. And there was a little boy by the name of David Harper; he was a shoeshine boy and he shined shoes downtown in Norman every day after school. He was an excellent, excellent student. I had the best regard for him.

His father kept trying to get him to quit school and go full time as a shine boy and he stayed in school. But finally, when we went to junior high, he did quit. And I don't know whatever happened to him but I know that he must have been a very, very smart man because he was such a smart young man.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: And I've wondered through the years whatever happened to him.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). Junior high school, where did you go?

DG: I went to Norman Junior High School. While I was there, my father, who was the principal of the senior high school and then the superintendent, was called up with the 45th Infantry Division and he spent five years in the army. He was down at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Jenk Jones: Did you transfer schools at that time to go to school in Georgia?

DG: Yeah. One thing I remember about going down there, that's at Columbus, Georgia, I was in the Columbus High School. I was in the eighth grade at that time, and that was actually before the war started because he 45th just called up before we got into war, quite a bit before.

I had something happen to me that I've never gotten over to this very day. They put me into a second-year algebra class. When I left Norman I didn't even have Algebra I. And in the middle of the year, well, I got put in second-year algebra class. It was a time that was very, very, very hard on me. I would study and study and study and I was rather slow because I didn't have the first idea of what they were talking about.

But finally, just a little bit of it dawned on me. I had a teacher that she just didn't like me for some reason. She called on me to give the answer to a problem that she had written on the board. And it so happens that that's the first problem that I ever was able to solve in that class. And I gave her the answer.

She says, "Well, I guess you're not as dumb as I thought you were."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: That really upset me and I went home. My dad came to the house where we lived in Columbus at the end of the day, and I told him about that.

And he said, "That really upsets me." He went and called on the principal of the high school, who was a very fine old man, and he told him that story. And I'm quite sure that teacher never did that again. Because he was almost as upset at her as I had been.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: But I stayed down there a while and I went out to Fort Benning with Dad quite a lot and I realized that I wanted to go in the service when I could. They had a junior ROTC unit there and I had the uniform that was issued to me and I loved to wear that. I would volunteer for all sorts of duty so that I could wear that uniform. But that was the first uniform I ever had on.

JE: Did you graduate from high school there?

DG: No, I went back to Norman. Dad was sent to the Advance Course at Benning before the 45th was called up. So I went back to Norman and I went to school. And I always loved football. My junior and senior year I was on the football team.

Of course, the war came along in the meantime and the University of Oklahoma, there was an old coach out there named Snorter Lester, Dewey Lester. He stayed there and Dewey Lester was there when the war was over and he was replaced by Jim Tatum.

Jim Tatum stayed there a year and then he was replaced by Bud Wilkinson and Jim Tatum went to Maryland. That's one of the best things that ever happened to the University of Oklahoma because we got probably the best football coach that ever served anywhere.

But nonetheless, while I was still in high school the coach contacted me. He wanted me to go attend spring practice with the OU team, which I did. Of course, they had nothing but four "S"s, we called them, they were boys that couldn't pass the physical to go in the service. One boy was blind in one eye. One boy had one arm gone.

JJ: Well, remember, TU had an All-American Ellis Jones with one arm.

DG: Yeah, that's right. They decided that they wanted to try to get me in the naval ROTC and I could stay there and go to college.

So finally, he contacted me and said, "Well, I can arrange for that and if you'll come out here and enroll in OU we'll get you in the naval ROTC."

And I thought and thought and thought about that. I decided that that wasn't for me. So I went on and went in the service.

JJ: Did you go in as an enlisted man?

DG: Yes. I went in as a buck private.

JE: What year are we talking about?

DG: Nineteen forty-five, March of 1945.

JE: You graduated from high school?

DG: In 1944.

JE: Okay.

Chapter 05 - 7:43

How Old Are You?

John Erling: So you went in in 1945. Word is you go, what did you do? And you would have been how old then, eighteen?

Denzil Garrison: On my eighteenth birthday, I volunteered for induction and went in the US Army. There's another chapter on that. Actually, I joined the Marines. My serial number was 551617. I joined the Marines in June of 1944, when I was seventeen years old.

While I was awaiting my call to active duty, I already had the orders, I fell very ill. I had phlebitis, thrombophlebitis, in my left leg. And they sent me to the naval hospital there in Norman. It looked like I was going to be something of an invalid.

They canceled my enlistment and sent me home. I was very chagrined because I could see myself having to sit the war out and I didn't want any part of that. When I then turned eighteen, at that time of the war the only way you could enter the service was to go in through Selective Service. You had to volunteer for induction, they called it. And I volunteered.

And when I turned eighteen, I took my oath of office that week. I was sent over to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. I stayed there three days. While I was there, they had me doing odd jobs there around the reception area.

My orders came in and I was to go to Fort Sill for artillery basic training. I was glad about that because I didn't think that I could have handled infantry basic at that time. So I went to Fort Sill. Had a rough time of it because my leg was still pretty well useless for some of the things I had to do. But I did make it through basic training, and I went on a twenty-mile march there at the end of it. And that was just about all I could take.

My buddies, one of them was carrying my rifle, another was carrying my pack. And we finally got to the end of it and my leg is swelled way up, but I made it. And I graduated from basic training.

I applied for Officer's Candidate School [OCS]. I took a test for that and I qualified. I went before this board and the ranking officer on there was a lieutenant colonel. He said, "Sit down and button up your pocket."

And I looked down and I had my pocket unbuttoned, which was a no-no.

Jenk Jones: Oh, yes, I know.

DG: And I buttoned it up and said, "I'm sorry, sir, I have no idea why that happened."

He said, "Before you sit down, do you have a tattoo?"

I said, "No, sir."

He said, "Good, sit down. Because if you had had one you'd be heading right out the door."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: So I never even had an idea about a tattoo all the other years of my life because I just remembered that. I wish that all my grandsons felt the same way but they don't.

JE: (laughing)

DG: At any rate, I got over into OCS, and that was tough. It was tough physically. Artillery OCS was a tough OCS insofar as the studies are concerned but I worked and worked and worked and finally, I graduated from OCS. And I did have a little bit of trouble with my leg during that time.

And a captain over in the medics, when I went over there, he wrote a letter saying that I could do my duty without leggings on that leg. So I was the only one in the whole class that didn't have leggings on both legs. But I had one on my right leg and my left leg was my bad leg. How many times I got stopped by TAC officers during that time that said, "Where in the world is your legging, candidate?"

And I explained to them and I'd show them the letter. I had a rough time making it through with the physical, but I did, and I graduated. Upon graduation, I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, stayed for two weeks. The war was just winding down then. I shipped out and went to Europe to Le Havre on the SS *Lejeune*, which was a troop ship and it had been captured from the Germans during the war. And they had scuttled it down there when the *Graf Spee* pocket battleship was sunk down in Montevideo Harbor. The German liner, which was a German military troop ship, it was the *Windhuk*, w-i-n-d-h-u-k, and they changed it to the USS *Lejeune*, and it became an American troop ship and it had taken American soldiers and marines all throughout the Pacific. We went on the *Windhuk*.

The only thing about it was when they scuttled it in Montevideo Harbor they poured cement into the boilers. They never did get that cleaned up and the top speed of that ship was eighteen knots. So it wasn't too well appreciated by the people that were in it. But nonetheless, it was an interesting ship to be on.

But we went to Le Havre, and from Le Havre I went to the 9th Infantry Division Artillery. They were consequently broken up and I went to the 71st Constabulary Squadron. The constabulary was established upon the order of General Patton before he died. It was his idea to establish the Constabulary and they did establish it after the war.

The commanding officer of it was Ernest N. Harmon, H-a-r-m-o-n. At this time, I was still eighteen years of age. To tell you the truth, I looked like I was about fourteen. People

would see me and see that I was a second lieutenant. I'd get to talking to them and said, "Can I ask you a personal question?"

And I knew what was coming and I'd say, "Yes."

And they said, "How old are you?"

And I would lie and I would say, "I'm twenty," but I was actually eighteen. Anytime anybody talked to me that's the first thing they would ask me, how old I was. The Constabulary—

JE: What was that?

DG: It was a police force that was established to take care of the Occupation army and is all over the American zone. They call it the American Zone Constabulary. They had a lightening bolt painted on the outside and lightening bolt was painted on our helmets and helmet liners. It became a very useful unit because we kind of had that double job: we policed the Germans and we protected them, because the Russians were hard to get along with in those days. We had a lot of problems with them. We were right up on the Russian border of the Russian Zone.

General Harmon came to inspect this unit. He walked by me and he looked at me and he got about five feet on past and he turned around and says, "How old are you, Sonny Boy?" (everyone laughing) And I didn't tell him twenty. I said, "I'm eighteen, sir."

And he said, "Well, study hard and be a good soldier."

And I said I would. I stayed over there a year in the Constabulary and then I came home and enrolled in OU and did after one semester I applied for law school and I was accepted to the law school and I started my studies there.

Chapter 06 - 4:41

Korea Service

John Erling: So then you graduated from law school?

Denzil Garrison: Well, I got up to the senior year of law school, I was just ready to start my senior year and Uncle Sam stepped in and called me to active duty and sent me to Korea.

JE: That would have been what year?

DG: Nineteen fifty. We were the only division that was sent to the Korean War as a division through the Panama Canal. And we shipped out from New Orleans. We went to New Orleans and they gave us fillers and they sent in people to bring each unit up to full strength because as happens, one way or another we'd lose a man here and a man there and so forth for various reasons. And so they filled us up.

We got on the ship, went through the Panama Canal. The ship we got on was the USS *[General William] Weigel*, W-e-i-g-e-l. It was built to be a troop carrier, it just wasn't built to carry as many people as they put on there to go over there because we were really crammed in there. I was in one stateroom that was set up for two officers and we had sixteen officers in there. And I always thought that if I were an officer I'd be down in a hold on one of those canvas cots. And there were six of them, one on top of the other. I never will forget that.

I felt so sorry for my troops. I spent a lot of time down there with them because it was hard on morale to go through that.

We had one boy, his name was Bardwell. Bardwell asked the first sergeant to have me come see him and I went to see him and he had a very infected tooth and it was swelled up until he could barely talk through it.

I went to the navy medics and told them that I had a sick man they were going to have to look at.

They said, well, they couldn't look after army personnel. Said he'd just have to wait until we get overseas to our billet over there on Hokkaido, the north islands of Japan. I went to see General [name indiscernible, time 2:10], Brigadier General [name indiscernible]. I had been his aide in the National Guard before we got called up. He was a very good friend of mine, he was a fraternity brother of mine. So I said, "Sir, I need your help," and I told him about that.

And he said, "Where is Bardwell?"

I said, "He's outside."

And he said, "Bring him in here." And he looked at him and he said, "My God, come with me." He said, "Show me where the dispensary is."

So we went down there and here this naval enlisted man was that had turned us down, said he couldn't do anything for him, and this brigadier general said, "This man will be treated."

And he went in there and they took out the most infected tooth you ever saw in your life. I've always thought that saved Bardwell's life.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: He stayed with us and he was with us all the way through after we went to Korea. And we went to the North Islands, Japan, trained there for six months. And then I went to Korea and I landed on the 7th day of December 1951. Landed in Inchon, it was ten below zero and it was after dark. There was a train sitting there and we got on that train and there wasn't a single window in the whole thing, just holes. I have never been as cold in my life as I was on that thing.

As a matter of fact, I never got warm the entire Korean winter that I spent there. That's the worst part of the Korean service, as far as I was concerned.

JE: So you were there a year in Korea?

DG: Yeah.

JE: The book you wrote, *Remembrances of a Redleg: The Story of a Korean War Artillerymen of the 45th Thunderbird*, is that detailing your experience there?

DG: Yes. Yes, that's the story of my battery and the various things that happened.

JE: Okay, I'm going to refer our listeners to that book.

DG: All right. That book was published by the Oklahoma Heritage Association and they may have some still in their library.

JE: And we can say Amazon has it for sale right now, as a matter of fact.

DG: Good.

Jenk Jones: One of the things that interested me about the book is even in the middle of wartime Denny could find humor. There's humor in the book as well as the usual drama of wartime, so it's a very human book.

JE: I can tell you, Denny, that Amazon has one for sale from \$84.67.

DG: My gosh, \$24.95 is where it started. (laughing)

JE: That's it—

DG: I'm glad to know that.

Chapter 07 - 1:56

Law Degree

John Erling: So then you came back from Korea. And then you went to get your law degree?

Denzil Garrison: Went—I went to law school and did my last year of law school. I graduated, I didn't have an undergraduate degree because they'd given me credit for one year on my military service. I then got my law degree but I never did have an undergraduate degree.

Later on, they changed the LLB, which is the degree I had, to a JD, that's a jurist doctor, that is a famous doctor's degree. And I have a doctor's degree and I graduated with that.

JE: Did you join a firm then?

DG: No, I came to Bartlesville. I went to work for City Service Oil Company. I did legal work for them for about eight months. All the law that I've learned, or at least whatever law I had learned, I could feel it leaving me and I thought, "I believe I want to be a practicing lawyer."

My wife, Barbara, a lady in town is a sorority sister of hers, her husband was a lawyer here in town, Charles Selby. I got to know him and he said, "I wish that you were in practice with me."

And I said, "I wish I was too."

And he said, "Well, you can be if you want to be."

So I gave notice to City Service. Upstairs I still have a letter written by Singer B. Ireland, who was the president of City Service Oil Company, saying that whenever I wanted to come back to City Service, at any time, for any reason, to go to work, I could come back.

But I got in the practice of law—I really did like it. I went into practice with Charlie Selby, and that was a good thing to do, and he was a fine man. He's dead now. He's an OU Law grad, approximately fifteen to twenty years older than I was.

Chapter 08 - 6:43

File for Office

Denzil Garrison: Then it became time to file for office. We hadn't had a Republican county attorney in long, long years around here. So I got a hold of the county chairman, who's a friend of mine, Republican county chairman, and he thought that I ought to go ahead and run for county attorney. So I filed for county attorney against a hometown boy. He'd been here in this county all his life and I had only been here seven months.

John Erling: What was his name?

DG: Jim Laughlin.

JE: What year and how old are you when this happened?

DG: At that time?

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: That was in 1954, I was twenty-eight when I filed.

JE: So you were twenty-eight years old when you filed for county attorney.

DG: Yeah, yeah. We had a spirited race and I found out that I kind of liked that politics business. I've always liked people. I like getting to meet a lot of people. But I knew I had an uphill fight because I was running against a hometown boy.

My mother-in-law, she and my father-in-law lived in Bartlesville. He was in the oil business, worked for Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. He was the manager of the Bartlesville office. They had oil field supplies, pipes and so forth. He'd been here quite a while and they knew a lot of people. They're both very gregarious people. So my mother-in-law made a list of everyone she knew in Washington County. And she ended up with a list of more than a thousand names.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: All summer long prior to the November election she would write a little note, said, "Dear Sally and George: Our son-in-law, Denny Garrison, is a lawyer, a graduate of the University of Oklahoma Law School. We would certainly appreciate it if you could see your way clear to support him. And we think he'd make a good county attorney."

She wrote a thousand of them in longhand and she worked on it all summer long and into the fall. One week before the election she put those thousand letters in the mailbox, which she, of course, paid for. And there are a lot of stamps involved with a thousand letters.

Jenk Jones: A lot of licking.

DG: Yeah. And when those hit my opponent never did realize what hit him. I won the race by 1100 votes. (all laughing) Now I've always thought that those letters did it.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: My mother-in-law did it and I'll always have a warm spot in my heart for her.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: For that reason and lots of others.

JE: You served as county attorney for two years?

DG: Yeah. Then we had two legislators in Washington County and each one of them ran county wide. Carl Staats, S-t-a-a-t-s, who was really a fine man, he was a wealthy independent oilman and he had a lot of shallow productions. This is a shallow production area up here. Six hundred feet deep they started getting oil.

He'd gone to the legislature and made a very good House member but it was time for him to quit, he thought. He came to me and he said, "I'm not going to run for reelection. I'm not going to tell anybody but you for a while. I want you to run for my seat."

And I said, "Well, let me talk it over with my wife." I'd made up my mind I was going to do it but I went to see if she agreed with me, and she did.

And my mother-in-law thought, "Here we go again."

JE: (laughing)

DG: We had the two House seats, of course, both of them, they were a two-year term. Carl Staats had one seat and Clinton Beard had the other seat.

JJ: Was he Republican or Democrat?

DG: Republican.

JJ: Both of them?

DG: When the Democrats came along they had four people that wanted to run for legislature and I thought, "Well, there'll be two of them file for one seat and two of them file for the other seat." But it ends up four of them file for Carl Staats seat. Nobody filed against Clinton Beard. And I thought, "Now what does that mean?" And I thought and thought and thought about it and I thought, "Somebody with quite a swing wants to go to legislature. They don't want to have a race, they just want to have the office." And I thought, "Who could that be?"

Finally it just hit me and I said, "Bill Doenges, that's who it is." I knew that he had gotten a hold of the Democrats and said, "All you all want to run, that's fine, but don't run for office number one because that's my office." And of course, he was very, very well off.

And on the first day of filing, I just went down and filed, in Oklahoma City. That night I got a telephone call and Bill Doenges, he was off in Milwaukee for some kind of a meeting. "Say," he said, "I just got a telephone call that said you had filed for the legislature."

I said, "Yes, sir, I did."

"Well," he said, "I don't know if you noticed it but all those other boys are filing for the number two office." And he said, "Because they want me to go down there because they think that I can possibly be the governor some day. And I just wanted to talk to you and see if you really wanted to run."

I knew just exactly what I was going to say and I said, "Well, Mr. Doenges, you know, you wouldn't even have to raise a dime to run while I'd have to go out and raise all the money." But I said, "I really would think that I could handle that job down at the legislature and I guarantee you that we'll have a good clean race, but I have filed."

He said, "You're not going to withdraw?"

And I said, "No, sir."

And he said, "Oh, let me call you back." He calls me back in a short time and he said, "This is Bill Doenges. I've been thinking," he said, "you're the type of guy that ought to be down there." And he said, "I'm not going to run and I wish you the best. I know you'll make a good legislator."

And I said, "Thank you, Bill." I was right, I had the right guy figured.

JE: The Doenges name we know in Tulsa for the car—is that where he—

DG: He was the father. He was the father.

JE: Right. Did he make his money in automobiles or was it on—

DG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JE: All right.

DG: He went to Oklahoma City University. He was a football player and an All-American in those days.

Chapter 09 - 7:20

Elected State Legislature

John Erling: So the campaign in on.

Denzil Garrison: I went in without an opponent for the first time I ran for the legislature.

JE: You didn't have an opponent and you were just—

DG: I went in.

JE: Right.

DG: Not very many guys go in without an opponent for the first time. But it wasn't because I was such a great candidate, I was just a little bit smarter than the rest of them, I think.

JE: And this is at a time when, of course, Oklahoma is very Democrat.

DG: Oh, yeah.

JE: And here you come in representing this—

DG: We had been represented by a Democrat in the legislature for years. We had a Democrat senator, Frank Mahan, from over at Fairfax. Of course, that's a four-year term in the Senate. So I went down there. Lo and behold, a young redhead from Tulsa, county attorney, and I was a county attorney here and we worked together on several cases and we got along fine.

JE: Who was that redhead?

DG: Howard Edmondson.

Jenk Jones: Officially, J. Howard Edmondson.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: You were elected first in '56, then you were reelected in '58—

DG: Yeah.

JJ: ...which was the perigee of Republican circumstances because Howard Edmondson had been elected almost four to one for governor.

DG: That's right.

JJ: And there were only nine Republicans in the House, as I recall, and three in the Senate. At that time, Howard came in with all those reforms. He came in with repeal of Prohibition, and trying to get reapportionment and merit system and central purchasing and all those things.

You wound up in a rather unusual position with about 8 percent of the House vote. You were the fulcrum because you could swing those nine votes together, you guys made the difference one way or the other.

DG: Well—

JJ: Tell us about that.

DG: Well, the Democrats in the legislature split right down the middle. The old guard and the new guard. The new guard was Edmondson people; the old guard being rural Oklahomans. We were very, very, very malapportioned in those days. Nine percent of the voting population of Oklahoma elected a majority of both houses of legislature.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: And you can imagine how that was. Well, the old guard, they weren't going to give that up very easy. And of course, one of the great, great members of the old guard was Frank

Mahan, my senator. This was my second term. I'd been to see Howard and I went by his house on a Saturday morning and he was still shaving when I got there. And I said, "I want you to know that I like your program, whatever support I can give you I'll sure do it."

He said, "Thanks."

It ends up there were nine Republicans on the north aisle. We had 120 House represent and all the rest of the House, they were all Democrats, and half of them were against the governor and half of them were for the governor. All the things he stood for, the Prairie Fire, they called it, I thought, "Where have I seen all those things before?" I went to start digging at home and I found the Republican platform, which had been adopted at the last Republican convention. And right down the line, everything that he was for the Republican convention had adopted as a platform.

So I thought, "I'll bet you that if this thing splits like it looks it's going to, our nine votes will be very important votes." So I got my boys together and as Democrats always said, I had a caucus in a phone booth over there.

JE: (laughs)

DG: I told them, I said, "Listen, we can really be a help to the state of Oklahoma. I want to go over the governor's program and the Republican's platform. It's the same thing, even down to reapportionment." I said, "If we can deliver nine votes for the governor's program we can pass the governor's program and we will be in a very, very advantageous position, party-wise."

There were a couple or three country boys that kind of grouched about it a little bit but they soon saw what would be good for the Oklahoma people, good for the Republican party, and good for us members of the legislature.

So I went to the floor leader and I said, "How you coming on the—"

"Well, we got trouble with the merit system and we got trouble with submitting reapportionment, we got trouble with central purchasing." I mean, it just locked up, just two or three votes separated them but they didn't have enough to pass the darn bill.

So I went to see the Speaker, who was Clint Livingston, he's from down in Marietta, and he's a good guy. And I said, "You know, you need to tell the governor that he has nine votes for his program."

He said, "What do you mean?"

And I told him, I said, "Well, my men are locked up for it."

And the first thing you know, I get a call from the governor's office and he said, "I have a daily meeting of my legislative leaders in my office." He said, "Can you be here at ten in the morning? And then we meet every Tuesday morning from now on and we'd like for you to be part of it."

And I told him, "Yeah, that's fine."

So I went down there and I was on his legislative team down there but I was a floor leader for the Republican party. It soon developed that the old guard, as they were called, they'd try everything in the world to kill Howard's program and my nine votes was always enough to bring Howard's support up above what they had against it.

JE: The old guard made up of Democrats?

DG: Yeah.

JE: They were against their own?

DG: Oh, yeah.

JJ: Oh, yes.

DG: They were against the governor.

JE: Who was a Democrat, we just point that out again.

DG: Yeah.

JE: And here you had the foresight then to say, "No, we believe in his reforms. We believe what he's doing."

DG: I—I was just about as lucky as I was when Bill Doenges called me.

JJ: To interject, most of the old guard had supported Bill Atkinson. He was the multimillionaire builder of Bed West City and he was the candidate of the old guard, the stand pat, "I'm not going to mess up your playpen," type of guy. And Edmondson upset him. When he upset him, he swept in a number of people who were his people but they were still, as Denny says, the old guard, which was far, far, far over represented in the legislature per person to the number of people that they had. They were against all these reforms. I mean, they didn't want to mess with merit system, they didn't want to mess with central purchasing.

DG: They didn't want to make any change.

JJ: Yeah.

DG: They had things in their hand and they wanted to keep them there.

JJ: Including a lot of money.

DG: And they kept it a long time. Yeah. Back in those days, those people in that old guard, they took money, I'm sure of that. They took money.

JE: For votes?

DG: Yep. And his dad—

JE: Jenk's father.

DG: Yeah, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Sr. was appointed on the Highway Commission. And I was thrilled to death because I always thought Jenk Jones was the tops.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: But the old guard senators blocked it.

DG: They blocked it. And I mean, we kept in there and we fought them and fought them and fought them, but we couldn't get him approved, so he was not confirmed. And finally, Harold Stewart was confirmed.

Chapter 10 - 2:58**Repeal of Prohibition**

Jenk Jones: Well, like on getting the Emergency Clause on Prohibition. You never would have got that without—

Denzil Garrison: No—

JJ: ...your nine votes.

DG: ...I mean, we wouldn't have had—we would have had a Prohibition in Oklahoma.

JJ: Yeah.

DG: And a lot of us on the floor of the legislature had been prosecutors back home and we knew that the dry business was one of the worst things hanging around our necks because crime was hooked up with it. And Tulsa was one of the worst.

JJ: Sheriffs would take bribes to run liquor through the county and there was total corruption involved in it.

DG: Just practically every county in the state of Oklahoma had that same situation and anybody with any kind of a yen for service that was in the legislature that had been a prosecutor—and that's a lot of people go through legislature after they have been a county attorney—they were right down the line for repeal of Prohibition. We got that done.

JJ: Now you said that Howard invited you in on the leadership meetings. Didn't he also provide a few goodies for some of the Republicans in terms of roads or whatever he could to help you all?

DG: Yeah, he did his best. This was the first two years. The second two years he was—

JJ: He was to help anybody except Howard. No, he was too busy chasing—

DG: Yeah, but he caught a lot of it too.

JJ: He and Jack Kennedy worked together on that.

DG: (laughing) Well, he was in Bobby Kennedy's swimming pool. He got himself appointed as a senator when Bob Kerr died. There were two stories about that. One, he was down at the football game in Miami. OU was playing, was it Alabama?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: They went down there and won. But Bob Kerr died while they were down there and they had taken a National Guard plane down there. So Howard came flying back to Oklahoma City, called George and I, this I didn't hear, this is just the way I think it came down. He said, "I'm thinking about taking the senator appointment. If I resign and you were made governor we're going to have to do it right away. Will you appoint me then to the US Senate?"

And George and I said, "Yeah."

So he was appointed to a nine-day term. He was governor of Oklahoma for nine days. And during that nine days, he appointed Howard to the US Senate.

Howard went up there and he was in Jack Kennedy's swimming pool in full tux clothing before he'd been there two weeks.

John Erling: The national media picked up on that.

DG: Oh, yeah.

JJ: Yeah, but the national media in those days, they didn't go after people like they did in later years.

DG: Yeah.

JE: Well, did the Oklahomans know that he was in the swimming pool with his tuxedo on?

DG: Yeah, because it came out. Well, as far as having the girl friends and all that stuff, they stayed away from it, the press did, didn't they?

JJ: Yeah.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Chapter 11 - 5:55

Reapportionment

Jenk Jones: To go on now, you talk about the old guard and the reapportionment, and I think that the figures were that less than one quarter of the population chose the majority of the House. And that less than uh—

Denzil Garrison: Nine percent.

JJ: I think it was a little higher than 9 but it was awfully small. And then in the Senate less than half the population elected 80 percent of the state senators. We were the fourth worst malapportioned state in the country. Now what was the effect on Oklahoma when reapportionment came in and a lot of the old guard legislators were shown the door?

DG: Right away they started having meetings. Of course, they were not meetings where the Republicans were even invited because they were caucuses. And they'd have party caucuses and they got together and they decided they were going to fight this to the very end.

JJ: This is the old guard.

DG: Yeah. One of the main ones was Tom Tipps. I'll have to tell you more about him a little later. But anyway, I can remember him being on the floor and he said, "I own a P38 Pilot and no damn judge is going to tell me that I've got to be reapportioned. This is my seat and my people elected me (he's pounding a cushion with each word for emphasis). And I'll be here as long as I want to be." He made that speech and it didn't quite work out that way.

But nonetheless, it ends up in federal court. I testified and a lot of the members that thought right testified in favor of reapportionment. Finally, we were reapportioned by Judge Fred Dougherty. He had been a full colonel in the 45th Division and I served with him. And I came home on the ship with him from Korea to Japan and then on to San Francisco. He and I were very, very close friends. Good guy.

We got out there and we were going to get on the ship and they didn't open the gangway where we could walk on the ship. We had to go up scramble that. Well, Judge Daugherty, he wasn't a young boy, he was middle-aged and past, but he was going up and he had a B4 bag in his hand, heavy. And he had his other hand full and he just about to fall off.

And I looked up and I could see that old B4 bag swinging, and I said, "Here I've got a year in Korea and I've made it through and I don't want to be killed by a B4 bag."

John Erling: (laughing)

DG: So I got up there and I got his B4 bag on my shoulder and I said, "Colonel, I've got your B4 bag on my shoulder. Go ahead and crawl up."

So we got up there and we still had an awful hard time. There were about two thousand soldiers getting ready to get on the ship. Most of them were not 45th Division boys, they were from every division. They really rawhided us all the time we were climbing up there.

Anyway, the judge really remembered that. Till the day he died he remembered me putting my shoulder under his B4 bag.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: But anyway, he ended up reapportioning the Oklahoma Legislature in the House and the Senate. The odd number seats in the Senate got a four-year sentence. Even numbers got a two-year sentence.

JJ: Two years the first time.

DG: Yeah, yeah.

JJ: And then four years after that.

DG: They can just get it all set up for years to come. I was getting ready to get a two-year term because I was in Senate District 29. When the order came out that reapportioning reassigned the districts he actually picked out what the Senate districts were and what the House districts were. It's a very, very, very strange way he did it but it worked.

Lo and behold, I looked down there, there I was, District 30. And I thought, "What in the world?"

Somebody out in the Senate gets up, one of the Democrats thinks that, "Here's the kind of a deal this is! Senator Garrison has got District 30." And he said, "District 30 was mine!" He said, "I had District 29, should have had 30." But they gave him 29.

They said, "Senator Garrison ends up with a four-year term."

That's the first I'd even known of it. And I thought, "What should I do here? Well, I sure don't want to take on a US District judge." So I was the only one that had a four-year term.

JJ: When the old guard legislators, so many of them lost their jobs in the reapportionment—

DG: Yeah, yeah.

JJ: ...what did that do to you? You were the first Republican name to chair a Senate committee because they just didn't have enough veteran senators.

DG: Yeah, when we got the new legislature in there were very few of the new senators that really knew what the story was. I was on the Judiciary Committee and Clem Maxfadden was a good buddy of mine at that time, so he was a pro tem. And he said, "I'm going to give you a committee. You can have any committee that you want."

And I thought, "What would be the one committee that I would really want?" And I thought, "The Judiciary Committee." A practicing lawyer would really love to be in on the Judiciary Committee writing the proposed changes and so forth. So I started to say the Judiciary Committee and I thought, "No, I'll just be a little smart here." So I said, "Congressional Redistricting."

And he said, "Congressional Redistricting? You can't have a committee on congressional redistricting because you're not a Democrat." He said, "Well, let me try that with the Rules Committee."

And they said, "No, we don't want to give the Republicans the authority to redistrict."

So he says, "Pick any other committee."

And I said, "How about Judiciary?"

He said, "You got it."

So I ended up with the Judiciary Committee.

Chapter 12 - 8:25

Punishment

Jenk Jones: Well, going back to your getting into the Senate, that was a story because you beat Frank Mahan and you were punished for doing it.

Denzil Garrison: Oh, yeah. When I got there to the legislature, that actually was kind of a bellwether election, as far as the Republican party is concerned because Republicans added to their strength a little bit each time until now, of course, we've got both houses. But it was a bellwether election and I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Mahan was the oldest of the old guard, I mean, he was really a—Joe Bailey Cobb, they were very close.

JJ: This was a two-county district Osage and Washington.

DG: Now—

JJ: Nineteen sixty, I believe.

DG: Yeah.

John Erling: Nineteen sixty.

DG: So in 1960 I was elected. I carried this county here by 11,000 votes. Nobody's ever done that before. But I had an easy way downhill because Frank Mahan got less than three thousand votes in Washington County.

JE: Why?

DG: Because he's an old guard and it's not an old guard town. Howard Edmondson was very popular here when he ran.

JJ: When you got to the Senate though they didn't give you an office.

DG: Oh, well, oh, yeah. I got up there and I said, "Where's my office?"

I could tell this lady was kind of nervous and she said, "You'd better see Senator Tipps, he's in charge of the offices."

And I thought, "Oh-oh." So I go to see Tipps and I said, "Where is my office?"

He said, "Follow me," and he takes me around and here's a desk sitting right in the middle of the hall. He said, "This is your office."

And I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I'm in charge of the offices. This is your desk and this is your office." And turned around and walked off.

I was really upset. You can imagine, the first day of the session we were down there to get sworn in. But there was a guy named Robert Lollar, L-o-l-l-a-r, he was number one man in my law class. I'll tell you a little story about him from back in law school. This is the kind of a guy he was.

He was on law review and they gave him a case that he was to write a law review note on. He took it in to the dean and he gave it to him.

He said, "This is well written and I agree with everything that you say in your note," but he said, "you took the wrong side." It was a case that had something to do with the race of train passengers. They did sue the railroad. They had this case that went up and came down and said that they didn't have jurisdiction to enter judgment against the railroad because the complainant, the person that they didn't let on there, did not receive any physical restraint or orders from any of the people on the train except they just said that they couldn't sit there.

He took the side of the railroad when he got down to the summary. And he was not a racist of any kind.

The dean says, "I want you to take this back and everything above the holding leave it like it is, but on the summary of the thing you say that the case should be set aside and

sent back for another trial because it was unconstitutional,” which it was. But not at that time, nobody knew it. I don’t know if you follow what I’m trying to say.

But anyway, old Bob, he’s a little old skinny guy about that high, but most of it was taken up with his brain because he really had a brain. He said, “Let me have that, Dean.”

Dean handed it to him and he took it and tore it up and threw it in the wastebasket. He said, “I don’t want to sign anything that you wrote. If you publish it like I wrote it, I’ll sign it.” But he said, “I don’t even want to be on the law review.”

And in order to be Order of the Coif that’s the Phi Beta Kappa of orders, you had to be on the law review. He’s the only man that ever graduated from OU Law School that was not a member of Order of the Coif and it was by his own decision. He refused to sign that paper when the dean told him to go change it. And that’s the guy of a guy he was.

JE: Bob Lawler.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: Bob Lawler was a Democrat from Miami.

DG: Oh, yes. Well, I looked up and I saw Senator Lawler on this door. I go in there and I said, “Bobby, I’ve really got problems,” and I told him that they weren’t going to give me an office.

He said, “What!”

And I said, “Yeah.”

He said, “You got an office.”

And I said, “Where?”

And he said, “Here.” He said, “Where’s your desk?”

I said, “It’s out in the hall.”

And he called and had people come and take my desk and put it in his office. He put his desk on the other side. That’s the only time that a Republican and a Democrat had an office together.

JE: (laughing) How long did you coexist like that?

DG: Until reapportionment.

JE: That would have been how long?

DG: A year. But anyway, I had my secretary, Mary Power, she was this fine old lady, she was a Democrat but she was the best secretary I ever had. I said, “Well, how about Mary?”

He said, “She’s our secretary.” So there’s Bob and me and Mary Power all in this one office.

But anyway, Tom Tipps was just livid. He was a great friend of Frank Mahan’s and he was going to make me sorry that I ever beat Frank Mahan, he thought. But he picked the wrong guy because I’m still putting them into him every time I get a chance. I never will get over him setting me out in that hall. That just did something to me.

Anyway, there was another guy that Bob Lawler over in his district that was in the Senate, his name is George Pitcher. And George Pitcher was from Vinita. He was half

Indian and extremely handsome, which was well noted by most of the women that hung around the State Senate. He followed Bob Lawler and whatever Bob Lawler did, that's what he did.

He came in the office and old Bob Lawler said, "Let me tell you, George, Denny Garrison is going to be in here and you and me and Denny Garrison are going to vote the same way on every bill and we'll meet before the vote takes place. If we have an argument and we can't do it, well, we won't, but if we can all agree we'll vote the same way."

At the same time, Everett Collins was president of the Senate and he just ignored me when I got over there because he's a great buddy of Frank Mahan's. So they were trying to pass the new turnpike bill to build the new turnpike down to Lawton. Either that one or the Indian Nation Turnpike and I think it was the Lawton Turnpike. Those turnpike bills, there was a lot of pressure on them. I think there were money involved in those early turnpike bills, but I'm just guessing when I say that.

They got down and they were two votes short of passing that bill. Lawler says, "Okay, here's what we've been waiting for." He said wait until he has the press conference today where he announces that they're not going to go with the turnpike bill because they don't have the votes. He said, "Now you go down there and before he has his press conference. And you go in and tell him, 'Senator Collins, how close are we at passing the turnpike bill?'"

And he said, "Well, we're two votes short. I can't come up with them."

I said, "If you had them would you pass it today?"

And he said, "Hell, yes, I would."

And I said, "Well, go ahead and call the press conference. I have three votes, that's Lawler and Pitcher and me and we'll be for it."

He was just beside himself and he calls the press in and he announces that they're going to run the turnpike bill. So we passed it and he started calling us the Kingston Trio. I mean, we could do no wrong for the rest of the session.

JE: But you did vote that way because you thought it was for the good.

DG: We were for it.

JE: It wasn't anything that you thought you may get out of it.

DG: That's right. Not a one of us would commit because we used that—

JJ: For leverage.

DG: Yeah.

Chapter 13 - 1:17**Henry Bellmon**

Jenk Jones: You witnessed Henry Bellmon's first election as governor.

Denzil Garrison: Yeah.

JJ: Any way you want to look at it that was one of the most interesting things that happened in Oklahoma.

DG: Well, I think it was one of the best things that ever happened to Oklahoma. Henry Bellmon was the absolute correct person to run for governor. He's entirely honest and he's a very, very brilliant guy, in his own way. He had gray matter. He had a pleasing personality. He had a kind of a way about him of being a little bit shy, but he wasn't really shy, he was just smart.

JJ: Well, it was much more than Henry winning an election or even in the Republican party winning their first statewide office. It broke the whole mold and changed the whole history of state politics.

DG: Absolutely. He went down in Little Dixie; he carried Raymond Gary's home county. Marshall County.

John Erling: Raymond Gary being?

JJ: Former governor.

DG: He was the former governor.

JJ: And the head of the old guard.

DG: But Raymond Gary loved Henry Bellmon and Henry Bellmon liked Raymond Gary. By the way, Henry Bellmon was elected governor by...was it 88,000 or—

JJ: Seventy-seven thousand.

DG: Seventy-seven, yeah. And they never did get very close to beating him.

JJ: Hmm-hmm (negative).

DG: He ran for the senate, was elected...

Chapter 14 - 4:58**Supreme Court Scandal**

Denzil Garrison: But one of the things that the Judiciary Committee had to do that year, there was a scandal in Supreme Court. Nap Johnson was the chief of the Cherokees, name of Napoleon Johnson and he was the Chief Justice of Supreme Court. At that

time, it was apportioned the same way as the legislature. If four or five state senators that represented a big part of the votes in the Senate would back a judge that was running for the Supreme Court he could do that and get elected.

So Nap Johnson came up through that particular system. And there was a lawsuit that started here in this county. It involved the Select Investments case. That was a big corporation in Oklahoma, Select Investments.

Jenk Jones: Well, they supposedly owed the state over half a million bucks in taxes.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: The charge was that they had paid \$150,000 bribe to another judge, who then brought Nap Johnson and a third judge, paid them—

DG: Yeah.

JJ: ...to rule in the favor of the company.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: They figured if they spent \$150,000 and didn't have to pay \$500,00 plus, that they were going to come out ahead.

DG: They finally got somebody to break and they testified that they had delivered a cashiers check for ten thousand dollars to Judge Johnson.

Of course, he denied it. And he had plenty of backing in the State Senate because of his Indian blood.

So the Senate got the charge from the House and Jim Connor, from here, was the House prosecutor. And he prosecuted Johnson before the Senate. And the Senate sat as the jury. The Judiciary Committee had to set forth all the rules of conducting the impeachment trial before the Senate. And we hadn't done it for years and years. So we had to do a lot of research and everything.

My committee wrote up all the rules that were used in the impeachment trial. Connor did a real good job. He found this cashiers check, it had stamps on it from various places, but it was for ten thousand dollars.

When we got Johnson on the stand, Connor started asking him about large checks that had gone through his bank account at that time. And he got down, there was three hundred dollars here and a five hundred dollars here and so forth and so on. And he got down finally until he was over nine thousand dollars. And they kept going at it and going at it. Finally he got up where he was thirty-five cents from where that ten thousand dollars was.

I was sitting over there and all of a sudden, I saw this smile on his face. And he said, "Did it cost you anything to get this largest check changed into a cashiers check?"

And he said, "Yes."

He said, "How much?"

And he said, "Thirty-five cents." That did it, boy.

I've never told this to anybody. The guy's dead now but the Chief of the Cherokees after Johnson was Bill Keeler. He was president of the Philips Petroleum Company and he was kind of a devious guy.

He called me on a Sunday morning and said, "Listen, I'm calling you on behalf of my friend Nap Johnson." He said, "We're depending on you to vote 'Not guilty' on that."

"Bill," I said, "you know, among other things, you're committing a felony calling me when I'm sitting as a juror and telling me that I ought to vote to acquit that fellow who I'm quite certain from the proof is guilty of what he's charged with."

"Well," he said, "I want you to vote."

And I said, "Well, you don't need to worry about that because if there was ever any idea in my mind to acquit him, you took care of that." I said, "I'm going to vote to convict him." And I did.

From that day forward, I had a deadly enemy out of Bill.

JJ: But didn't they have Nap Johnson's granddaughter or somebody you'd gone to school with?

DG: Oh, they had her. I went to grade school with her. And they had her sitting right over me. She just was watching me the whole trial.

JJ: It was decided by one vote.

DG: Yeah. I mean, it was down to the last vote and they figured that old John Young would vote to acquit. But John Young was one of the most honest members of the Oklahoma Senate that I ever served with. And little old John Young, he voted to convict.

And they couldn't believe it. They just couldn't believe it.

John Erling: Bill Keeler, you never did report that phone call? You could have turned him in.

DG: I know I should of but I didn't.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: Boyd Cowden was one of the state senators who hid out all week.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: That...I'm sure that had a lot of comment in the Senate.

DG: Oh, yeah. I don't think he ever showed up—

JJ: No.

DG: ...for the vote.

JJ: No, he didn't show up for anything.

DG: Yeah. (laugh)

Chapter 15 - 8:14**Legislative Names**

Jenk Jones: You could work across the aisle with people in both parties.

Denzil Garrison: Oh, yeah.

JJ: And that's a lost art. Can we restore some degree of that?

DG: Yeah, I think so. I'll tell you who I talk to every week: John Massey. John Massey was a little old boy that was a *Daily Oklahoman* delivery boy. But he had a lot of moxie about him. And he got elected to the House and then he ran for the Senate and he got elected to the Senate. And he got a hold of a little old country bank and built it up. Now he owns twenty-five banks.

John Erling: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: We talk every week and he's a Democrat. Now he's the president of the State Board of Higher Regents. And he's done a bang-up job. He's as good a friend as I ever had outside of Bob Lawler.

JJ: You said that you felt that Henry Bellmon had many assets. What about David Boren? Because you worked closely with him too.

DG: Well, yeah. Bellmon was a guy that once he made up his mind it was made. And if you said, "Henry, you're looking at this wrong," and if you could give him the reason why he was headed up the wrong trail, why, he would change, if you could show him where he would not correctly stand. He's one of the only two governors I ever worked with that had a photographic memory. The other one being David Boren.

David Boren and I had worked together when he was in the House and I was in the Senate. We got along well and he was an honest boy, as best I could tell. He called me on a Sunday. I was just coming home and going back into full time law practice. He called me and he said that he wanted me to be his chief legislative aide.

I said, "I'll have to think about that." And he called me four times that Sunday.

The fourth time, my wife says, "You know you want to go down there. Call him and tell him you will."

So I did. And I became his chief legislative aide as a Republican. I got along fine with him. And he's the other senator that I knew that had a photographic memory. If they read something once they could just quote it right back to you.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JJ: Just pick a couple of members of the old guard to talk about. And I'm thinking maybe Ray Fine and Joe Bailey Cobb.

DG: (laughing) Some of the old guard characters you knew are Ray Fine, Joe Bailey Cobb, Tom Tipps, Leroy McClendon, and Boyd Cowden. Ray Fine was an old guy from Gore, Oklahoma.

JJ: Gore.

DG: He's big, tall fellow and he had a big bass voice and he was a natural little Dixie politician. He had been captured in World War II as a sergeant in the infantry. He'd spent two years in a German prison camp and he was nobody's fool.

One thing that he wouldn't do, he would not go back on his word. He ran Eastern Oklahoma and he was one of the main ones that fought your dad.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: And his appointment.

JJ: I remember when they tried to bring secret ballots.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: They had no voting booths in a lot of Eastern Oklahoma, Southern Oklahoma. You voted on the table in front of the people, so they tried to bring some voting booths in and Ray Fine through them out.

DG: Frank Mahan did the same thing over here. Ed Clockman, a guy from here, he and I built enough we could have two voting booths in every precinct over in Osage County. We gave them to them and they wouldn't even use them.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound then laughing).

DG: Anyway, Joe Bailey Cobb, he was a fellow. He said, "I'm a college graduate."

So one time, I think it was Leroy McClendon, he said, "What college did you graduate from?"

And he said, "The So-and-So Barber College." And he was a barber. (all laughing) All these years he would always tell me he was a graduate.

JJ: He was known as the biggest belly in the Senate, as I remember.

DG: Yeah. He gets up and he says, "Gentlemen, when this bill came through here last session I told you what would be did if we passed it. And it has been did." I never will forget that.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: Who was the state representative who always had the wooly boogers?

DG: John Levergood.

JJ: Levergood, yeah.

DG: And a little fat guy from Shawnee.

JJ: And what was a wooly booger? Could he ever explain?

DG: A wooly booger, it was just his way of saying, "This is a wooly booger. You've got to watch it 'cause it'll sneak up and bite you after you vote for it."

JJ: Now you worked under the most powerful man in the legislative history, J. D. McCarty, who was the four hundred pound Speaker of the House.

DG: Yeah.

JJ: What was it like, particularly being a minority man?

DG: Well, let me tell you what, Happy Camp and I, we got along with J. D. McCarty better than anybody in the House. He loved Happy Camp.

JJ: Happy was a twenty-year Republican representative from Waukomis.

DG: Also he went to Congress.

JJ: Yeah, for three terms.

DG: J. D. and I got to be very, very good friends. I got a story to tell you about that. When he got out—

JJ: Vondell Smith beat him.

DG: Vondell Smith was a funeral home director and he beat old J. D. who is the strongest legislator in the legislature at that time. But J. D. was nobody's fool; he was plenty smart. He would raise money from law bits and put them in one account and then he would spend it on taking care of House members, buying them furniture for their office and so forth and so on. He never did use any of the money himself. That twelve thousand always went to members of the legislature.

But the IRS said, "That makes no difference, you should have reported it." Of course, they should have.

Old J. D. finally had a trial and he was convicted. The words that he said, I don't really want to be quoted word for word about this because he was a good friend of mine, but he said, "I feel like a guy that's been stealing cattle all his life and he gets sent to the pen for stealing a little old scrawny bull calf that he didn't steal."

JJ: He could control the House like no one else, couldn't he?

DG: Oh, here's what he'd do. He had these kids from little old country counties. They'd come down to the legislature and he'd spot them. He'd go by their office and he'd go in there and he'd say, "Willie, that's an awful looking desk you got there."

And he said, "Oh, yeah, I can make it with this desk."

And he said, "Let me see what I can do." He'd send the sergeant at arms down to buy a new desk someplace around Oklahoma City and then he'd move it in.

And this kid, he'd just say, "Oh, that's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. I never dreamed of having a desk like that." But from that instant on, he voted everything that J. D. McCarty told him to vote on and it could be something that was directly against what his district wanted and needed.

But once he did that and once he had them hooked up they found out that he would do things for them. He was a natural-born scoundrel, as far as legislature was concerned.

And for some reason, he kind of liked me. And I served in the House over there with him and then I went to the Senate.

When he heard about my desk being out in the middle of the hall he went over to see the president of the Senate, old Everett Collins. He said, "Everett, I want to tell you something. You're screwing a damn good legislator," and then he told that he'd worked with me and said that my work was my bond and that I had the welfare of the state of Oklahoma at heart and one thing another.

And Everett said, "Well, he's in the wrong party as far as I'm concerned."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: But when the turnpike bill came along he was mighty glad to meet the Kingston Trio, I guarantee you.

JE: (laughing)

DG: Here's what Everett would say when his floor leader would come to him and said, "I don't know if we can pass that or not," he'd say, "How about the Trio? What are they going to do?"

JE: (laughing)

Chapter 16 - 5:06

Gene Stipe

Jenk Jones: Just real quickly let's hit a few of these little stories you like to tell. Like, tell us the story of Gene Stipe at that trial in Vietnam.

Denzil Garrison: Oh, Gene Stipe was probably the best trial lawyer that this state ever saw, as far as being a real antagonist in the court. Before he got problems with his brain he was one super trial lawyer. He and I had gone to law school together; we were very good friends.

When we went over to Vietnam together we defended that marine over there, Randall Herrod. Stipe had a way of putting things into evidence by just getting up and saying, "Your Honor, in order to cut down on the time involved here..." and he would come with his theories on what was admissible and what wasn't, and he could usually prevail on that issue.

But he said, "There's a few things that we ought to agree on. The village is so many kilometers away," and so forth. And they were all wrong.

And I got this yellow pad and I said, "Stipe, facts are wrong on stipulation. Ask for a short recess."

I showed them to him and he just shoved me aside and he went on and on and I said, "Gene, you're still wrong. Get a short recess. You're misleading the court."

Finally, he says, "Your Honor, can I have five minutes to talk to my co-counsel here?" The court said, "Yes. Court will adjourn for five minutes."

So we get alone in there and he says, "Damn it, don't interrupt me when I'm trying to confuse this court."

And you know, there wasn't anything you could do but just die laughing.

JJ: Do one about Stipe and the stewardesses.

DG: Yeah. We got on a military airplane to go to Vietnam the first time we went over there. They had a deal that members of the US Senate and of the US House of Representatives could sit up in first class. So this steward comes in and she says, "What's your name?"

And I said, "Garrison."

And she said, "And what's your name?"

He said, "Senator Stipe."

And she said, "Senator, are you a US senator?"

And he said, "What do we look like, Mexicans?"

John Erling: (laughing)

DG: So she moves us and puts us in first class.

JE: By the way, we should say that when you were with Stipe in Vietnam that has been chronicled in your book.

DG: Yeah.

JE: You wrote about this in *Honor Restored*. That's when you defended, as you said, Randall Herrod, who was charged with the deaths of Vietnamese civilians—

DG: Yeah.

JE: ...during the Vietnam War.

DG: Yeah.

JE: So we refer our listeners to that book and you can see that in our bookstore.

DG: That is published by the Tate Publishing Company of Mustang, T-a-t-e.

JE: Doesn't Oliver North have a forward in this?

DG: He wrote the forward to that book. Oliver North was the main witness for our side or in that trial. Randy Herrod saved his life twice in one night. He took two Purple Hearts in order to save Ollie's life because he was knocked unconscious by RPGs, rocket propelled grenades.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: And twice he got him and put him in the hole and got on top of him.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: He was lying on top of Oliver North when he took one of his Purple Hearts. He just did what he was supposed to.

JE: Herrod was acquitted then?

DG: Yeah, on all sixteen counts.

JE: There are other volunteer attorneys too, I think, that helped on that case.

DG: Yeah, they're both dead. I think Harry Brown is dead; I'm not certain of that but I was told that he had died. Another was a little crippled fellow named Dick Miller. We'd go to the mess hall to eat over there during that trial. He had to crawl all the way up.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound). What drew you to that story?

DG: Well, I got a call from Randy Herrod's uncle that I served with over in Vietnam.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

DG: And I was in Korea. I was in a liaison plane and we got shot down into a minefield, the edge of a minefield. It was right next to the airstrip, they had this marked minefield. And we were shot down. And this pilot, who was really a nothing—it's in that book—but he sold out and got out of that plane and left the engine on with me in there, strapped in there, and here this plane was knocking up dirt and I knew it was going to explode in fire at any minute.

I looked up and there's this great old big guy, an old friend of mine, old Gene Short, and he was picking his way through there and he got me and carried me out of there.

And he called me and he said, "I got a favor to ask of you." He said, "I want you to represent my nephew." And he said, "And the family has no money. We can't pay you. But he is charged with sixteen murders with a night patrol over in Vietnam at Da Nang. He's a very great kid and he told me about it."

And I said, "Well, Gene, how can I tell you no?" So I went.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound), wow.

Chapter 17 - 2:37

Denny the Mimic

Jenk Jones: Do you have any other Stipe story you'd like to share?

Denzil Garrison: Oh, (laugh) I know some that we couldn't put on here.

John Erling: (laughing) About Governor Boren, when you were his legislative aide, Jenk points this out, you were quite a mimic and you could make—

DG: Oh, yeah. I could mimic first, last, and always David Boren. I can mimic David Boren so that it would fool even him. I've always been a mimic all my life and I've never made a dime out of it. But I've really had a kick out of it.

When Stipe ran for the US Senate against Boren, Boren and Stipe and George Miskovsky all ran for the US Senate. Gene's brother Francis, he's really a good guy, he was an old 45th Division soldier too. He ran Gene's campaign.

So I called him and he said, "Quarters."

And I said, "This is David Boren. Could I please speak to Francis Stipe."

They said, “Yes, Governor, this is Francis Stipe.”

“Oh, I’m glad to talk to you, Francis. I just want you to know that in the paper this morning George Miskovsky has said that I was a homosexual. And I want you to know that I am not a homosexual.” I’m a little hoarse, I can do better than that. But I said, “And I know that Gene Stipe didn’t have anything to do with getting Miskovsky to make that allegation.”

He said, “Well, glad to know that and I’ll get it to Gene and we appreciate very much the fact that you knew that we didn’t do it.”

I said, “Now wait just a minute. That doesn’t mean that I don’t think your brother’s a chicken shit.” (laughing)

And then Francis said, “Everybody’s entitled to their own opinion.”

I hung up and I never told him otherwise.

JE: Oh, my.

JJ: Tell him the Henry Kissinger story.

DG: Oh. I went up to Boren’s office when he got in the Senate. David was, of course, in his inner sanctum office. I was helping watching on some kind of a deal and I had left—David told me about this the next day, what happened after I’d left—they said, “Senator Boren and Mr. Henry Kissinger is on the phone and he wants to talk to you.”

“Oh, I’ll bet. I believe I know who it was.” And he gets the phone and he says, “Hello, Denny Garrison. You’re not going to fool me. You’re not Henry Kissinger.”

This voice says, “Who in the hell is Denny Garrison?”

JE: (laughing)

DG: David himself told me that.

Chapter 18 - 11:08

More Good Stories

John Erling: Since you served in public office, what stands out the most to you that you’re the most proud of?

Denzil Garrison: Well, Jim Connor and I were the authors of the Modified Missouri Appointment bill for state judges. That’s been a distinct step forward for the state of Oklahoma.

Jenk Jones: That took it out of partisan elections.

DG: Yeah. That and I think to vote to repeal Prohibition. I haven’t had a drink for fifteen years but I know that that was a good thing for the state of Oklahoma because he was a

corrupt state. And that was at the bottom of all corruption, because the lowest common denominator of the people that controlled it were the bootleggers and—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

DG: ...they didn't do what was right.

Oh my gosh, Gilmer Caps. Jimmy Carter was President. He was coming out to Burns Flat, Oklahoma, to a big Democrat deal. And all those guys out there were really moved by the fact that here was the President of the United States coming to Burns Flat. They were all trying to get in on the ground floor.

Little old, I say little, he's a tall fellow, but he wasn't overly burdened with gray matter, just between you and me.

JE: (laughing)

DG: His name was Gilmer Caps. He reminded you very much of Gomer Pyle. He's just the same kind of a guy; he's a good guy, but his wife was intensely jealous of him. She would sit in his office. If we had eight hours here she'd be in there eight hours a day. She hired all of his secretaries and everything. You can imagine what they looked like.

But anyway, Gilmer, he was just the kind of a guy that he just wanted what was his and he felt that as a state senator he ought to have certain prerogatives. And he was upset because they didn't have a place for him on the receiving stand when Carter was coming to Burns Flat. Everybody was laughing at about how upset he was.

By then, I was working for Boren. I was up there and they told me about it. So I go to a telephone and I called him out on the floor. The operator told him that, "Senator Boren wants to talk to you."

He said, "Oh, he does? Well, put me through, put me through." So he said, "Hello, Senator."

I said, [in a mimicked voice] "Hi, how are you? They tell me that you're not going to sit on the reviewing stand out at Burns Flat?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Just give me a little time to work on that; I'll call you right back." So I waited for about twenty minutes and I called back. "Oh, I've got some good news for you. Air Force One will come through and will land at Tinker Field at 6:15 next Saturday night. And you're to be there, not at 6:14, not at 6:16, you're to be at the gate at 6 o'clock because you'll be checked in and out."

And you know, he really watched after the press then. He said, "Oh God, thank you, Senator, I don't know whether to call you Senator or Governor," I remember he said. He said, "But I know one thing, I'll never forget you doing this for me."

I said, "You can't tell this to anybody. This has got to be between you and me and the President."

He comes back in and he gets out on the floor and I go up in the gallery so I can see him. He's got this smile on his face like, "God, this is the greatest thing that's ever happened to me," you know. He'd just look at people and smile and he was just on Cloud Nine.

So I let him dwell on that a while and I called up and I said, "Oh, Gilmer, I've got the worst news. You've been bumped off the plane."

He said, "Bumped off the plane, what do you mean?"

I said, "Well, you know, they say, 'Once a congressman always a congressman.' You're been bumped off the plane by Victor Wickersham."

JJ: (laughing) Oh my God. One of the worst congressmen—

DG: Well, I don't know if you know anything about him, he was the most hayseed of all the guys that ever served in Congress. He lived over in Weatherford, or in around Weatherford. He was a moving target.

JJ: (laughing) Yes he was.

DG: But anyway, he said, "Oh, that son of *****, he's been in my hair forever and ever." And he said, "I'm going to contact him directly."

I said, [in mimicked voice] "Well, I don't think it'll do any good but if you do find out, well, let me know and we'll see if we can get you on again."

He called over to Victor Wickersham and he didn't get him. It was Thursday, and on the way home that night, he calls Victor Wickersham. "Hi, Victor," he said, "I've got a very, very important thing that I want to ask you a favor on."

Victor said, [mimicked voice] "Very well, you know me."

JJ: Right wire a call. (laughing)

DG: Yeah, I said, "I'm always available. Victor Wickersham is well-known to be available all hours."

Gilmer said, "I want your seat on Air Force One."

And he said, "What?"

He said, "Well, I was on Air Force One and they bumped me off. They said that you were going to fly in with the President to Burns Flat."

And Victor said, "Hell, I don't have a ticket to the meeting."

So Cliff, he figured all out right quick and he knew where to get a fold-up. But you know, he didn't get mad. I mean, he's a hero down there because they tell that story always. And that's exactly the way it happened.

I was at Stock's funeral the other day and I looked way out there and there Gilmer Caps was and—(all laughing).

JJ: I might add, he was the third longest serving senator.

DG: He was. His wife died and he got to hire his own secretary after that.

JE: Well, that's a great story.

DG: One other story I want to tell you.

JE: Okay.

DG: Another guy that I could really mimic was Don Davis. And Don Davis left the legislature.

He was a newspaper reporter and a lawyer. He worked for the *Daily Oklahoman* and he's smart. Kind of a fat little guy. He talked like this [mimicking]. If you could hear him talk, he sounded about like this.

So I was walking by the telephone operator in the House, and she says, "Well, J. D., I don't know where Don is. I'll see if I can't look him up and I'll have him call you." Chris was her name. She's a good lady, been there forever.

I said, "Is that J. Dean Carding? Don't tell him who it is and put me through."

So I go to the phone and I, "Hello." [mimicking]

And he said, "Did you kill it?"

And I said, "What are you talking about?"

And he said, "Well, you know, that chiropractor bill, did you kill that amendment?"

I said, "Hell, no, I didn't kill it. And I'm not going to do it until you get out here and you bring your black bag out here with you."

JE: Bring your what?

JJ: Black bag, which means money.

DG: Bring your black bag with you.

JE: Their moneybag.

DG: So anyway, he said, "I'll be right out." (all laughing) I thought, "Oh, man," and that's when I was in Boren's office too. And I thought, "Man, I could be in trouble here." So I go in and I say, "Don, I want to talk to you." And I told him just exactly what happened.

And he said, "And what did he do?"

I said, "He's on his way out here."

And Don just died laughing. And he said, "You mean he's on his way out here?"

And I said, "Yeah, and I'll bet he's got his black bag with him."

He said, [mimicking] "Well, when that son of a ***** gets here he'll find out."

So we sat there and we were talking and laughing between ourselves. All of a sudden, here comes big, heavy J. D. and he's got a black briefcase. And he said, "Don, is it all right to talk in front of Denny?"

And Don says, [mimicking] "Hell, no, it isn't. This is just between you and me."

J. D. says, "Can you kill it?"

He said, "No, I can't kill it. I got to find out what you've got in that black bag."

So I got up and I said, [mimicking] "Well, Don, I got to go."

J. D. sat there a minute and he looked at me and he said, "You son of a..." (laughing).

JE: That is so great. (laughing). And we believe there was money in that bag?

DG: No.

JE: No?

JJ: No.

DG: No, not any that I saw. And I don't think—

JE: But he did bring in the black bag?

DG: It was a black bag.

JE: That's something.

JJ: There was something in it. It could have been gifts or—

JE: Right.

JJ: ...some sort of a deal.

JE: Yeah.

DG: Here's a good story. We went to Washington, DC, and one of the guys that he got a new desk for, he just would run wherever J. D. told him to go to do this or that. He was his gofer. We were all getting on a plane getting ready to fly to Washington to a committee meeting up there. His name was Doug Bynum. He'd of had to study to be ignorant.

But anyway, (they all laugh) he comes running up to the plane and we all saw him coming in, and he looks around and he says, "Has any of you fellows saw J. D.?"

And everyone of us sitting there said, "We haven't saw him."

JJ: Yeah, there were a lot of guys in the legislature that were not uh—

DG: Oh, yeah.

JJ: ...Rhodes Scholars, shall we say.

JE: Well, I don't think that's necessarily changed.

DG: Somebody I tell you you ought to go talk to is Tony Massad. He was one of the reinforcement centers, Massad, M-a-s-s-a-d. He's lost his eyesight and he can't practice law anymore. And he lives out at one of those western Oklahoma towns.

JJ: Somebody in the Senate would know.

JE: Yeah, I'll find out.

DG: But anyway, he's a good guy.

JE: Yeah.

JJ: A Democrat too, wasn't he?

DG: [*indiscernible*]. Ed Verone, Ed Verone—

JJ: Another Democrat.

DG: Yeah. He was always one of these guys that was lily white, to hear him describe it. When a bill came through there that was really bad I'd always go over and I'd say, "Ed, did you see this House bill 443?"

And he said, "Oh, that's the worst damn bill I've ever read in my life. Have we passed it yet?"
"Well, it's coming up pretty quick."

He said, "That's a horrible bill. I wish to hell I didn't have to vote for it."

JE: (laughing) Well, I want to thank you for taking this time.

DG: Well—

JE: I want to thank you for your service to your state. Thank you for your sense of humor.

DG: Okay.

JE: And we got to thank you for being one of so very few Republicans standing up for what you thought was right against your own party.

DG: Yeah. Well, I'll say this, never in my life did I ever cast a vote that I didn't believe in.

JE: Yeah. And that can be your legacy right there.

DG: Yeah.

JE: How you'd like to be remembered.

DG: Yeah.

JE: I thank you. And, Jenk, thank you for bringing us together and your input into this and your guidance to it. I appreciate it very much.

Sometimes we ask at the end of these interviews, Denny, there are young people listening, there are students listening, what's your advice to them? Maybe some of them want to be in public service.

DG: Well, conduct your business in the office so that you're not ashamed of anything or any votes you ever made or anything you ever did in your office. You'll find out that you'll have good memories about what happened. And you're going to have pride that only you and the Lord know about.

JE: And you have that pride.

DG: Well, I do.

JE: Good. Thank you so much, Denny.

DG: Okay.

JE: This was fun.

Chapter 19 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience.