

Charles Faudree

This world-renowned interior designer and author chose to stay close to home.

Chapter 1 - 1:35

Introduction

Announcer: While Charles Faudree was known worldwide, he was a Tulsa-based interior designer and philanthropist. He was best known as an expert in French country décor and kept a shopping studio in Tulsa's Cherry Street district. Over his 35 year career, he worked with clients worldwide and saw his work featured in various books and magazines. A native of Muskogee, Faudree graduated from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah with an art degree. And from there, attended Kansas City Art Institute. He would go on to teach art and sell home furnishings living in Dallas for several years.

In late 1977, he moved back to Muskogee and opened a design studio and antique shop. Within a few years, Faudree was building an impressive list of clients from across the U.S. and Europe and his designs were appearing in such magazines as *House Beautiful*, *Southern Living*, *Traditional Homes*, and *House & Garden* as well as a number of decorating books.

Faudree wrote five books on design. His first in 2003, "Charles Faudree's Country French Signature." In 2008, Faudree created his own fabric line, a first for him, collaborating with Tulsa-based textile brand Vervain, a noted philanthropist as well. Faudree was the guest of honor in March 2013 at Tulsa CARES' 15th annual Red Ribbon Gala which supports people affected by HIV and AIDS. Faudree was a founding member of the organization.

The Charles Faudree Story is made available through the generous funding of foundations and individuals who believe in preserving Oklahoma's legacy. "One Voice At A Time" on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 - 7:13**The Early Years**

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is October 8th, 2012. Charles, if you state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age.

Charles Faudree: Charles Hamlet Faudree, February 27th, 1938, so that makes me 74.

JE: Hamlet, where does that name come from?

CF: My father's name was Hamlet Charles.

JE: And tell us where we're recording this.

CF: In Tulsa, Oklahoma, in my home.

JE: Where were you born?

CF: I was born in Atoka, Oklahoma.

JE: In a hospital or a house? Or where?

CF: Actually a hospital. My folks went to a hospital in Ada, Oklahoma, but they lived in Atoka.

JE: So were you born in Ada or Atoka?

CF: I was really born in Ada, yes.

JE: And then brought you home to Atoka.

CF: Atoka, and then Muskogee.

JE: Your grandfather, his name and his heritage.

CF: My grandfather's name was Henry Oceola Faudree. His father came from France to Virginia and he came from Virginia to the Indian Territory.

JE: And your grandmother?

CF: My grandmother was part-German. That's on my father's side.

JE: And her name?

CF: I never knew her and her name was Frances. I don't know her middle name.

JE: So that's how Frances—

CF: That's how.

JE: Comes into the family.

CF: Yes.

JE: Your mother's name.

CF: My mother's name was Ruby.

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

CF: She grew up in Colgate, Oklahoma which was very close to Atoka.

JE: How would you describe her personality.

CF: I wish I were more like my mother. My mother was a saint. My mother was giving and never asked for anything.

JE: Very encouraging of you?

CF: Yes, always.

JE: And then your father's name and where he grew would've grown up.

CF: He grew up actually in Atoka, Oklahoma. As I said, his name was Hamlet Charles. He was very outgoing and had pretty wild sense of humor, but I lost my father when he was 45.

JE: Perhaps your personality could go back obviously to both your mother and your father. I happen to know you're a very caring, giving person yourself.

CF: (Laughs)

JE: And you also have a sense of humor, so you've just described it comes from mom and dad.

CF: I hope so, yes.

JE: Were you away at college when your father died?

CF: Yes, I was. I was a sophomore in college.

JE: So that was tough to hear about that at college.

CF: It was. Actually, I commuted a lot that semester, you know, to help.

JE: Your father, what did he do for a living?

CF: His title was an engineer for the Katy railroad.

JE: An engineer, actual?

CF: Not an actual engineer. I don't know what he...

JE: But that's the category he carried.

CF: Yes.

JE: And your mother was the homemaker then?

CF: Yes.

JE: Brothers and sisters in your family.

CF: I had a brother and I have a sister.

JE: Your brother's name?

CF: My brother's name was Robert.

JE: And then your sister's name?

CF: Her name is Frances.

JE: We know her as Francie.

CF: That's right.

JE: Still with you today.

CF: Yes.

JE: And we might mention that we have two beautiful members of your family in the room. They are King Charles Spaniels. And what are their names?

CF: Lyla and Ruby. Ruby, the one named after my mother.

JE: I mentioned that because (dog whining) you can probably hear them in the background.

CF: Uh-huh.

JE: A little agitated, I guess.

CF: Yes.

JE: I have no problem with that. How old were you when you first went to elementary school?

CF: I was 7. My grandparents on my mother's side were the ones that I knew and I spend every summer with them in Colgate, Oklahoma. One of my most wonderful memories were those summers and my grandmother, grandfather who I loved and adored and they did adore me as well. I was the only one there so I spend every summer with them in the country, which was great.

JE: But then you started school.

CF: Yes, and I went to parochial school to the nuns.

JE: What school was that?

CF: Sacred Heart in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

JE: So you started first grade at 6 years old.

CF: Yeah, 6.

JE: Do you remember as a child, before school started, what you were interested in? I'm trying to figure if you were interested in flowers in all the way back then? Do you...?

CF: Oh, I was. You know, my grandmother taught me the summers. She had even a cutting garden. You know, it was like rose of zinnias or rose of gladiolus. So I learned a lot from her about flowers. Then I had an aunt that, um, I was always interested in furniture and I didn't know it back then, but I was always interested in furniture. I love French furniture before I even knew what it was.

JE: Where would you have seen the French furniture?

CF: Well, I saw most of it at my aunt's.

JE: That's even as you're going into the first grade in school you had this fascination for flowers and furniture.

CF: That's right. And my aunt had a chaise lounge which I'd never seen a chaise lounge before.

JE: So we get you into elementary school, do you consider yourself a student interested in the subject matter? Were you a good student?

CF: I was a good student, yes.

JE: How long were you there at that-?

CF: I was there 8 years.

JE: At that parochial school.

CF: Mm-hmm (affirmative), under the nuns.

JE: Will you think of them as disciplinarians and that went fine with you?

CF: It went fine.

JE: Then on into a junior high?

- CF:** No, I stayed there 8 years and then I went to a boy's school, St. Joseph, which was a Catholic boy's school.
- JE:** That's in Muskogee.
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** In high school then?
- CF:** In high school, I had no source for art.
- JE:** So—
- CF:** Or any kind of art. I always was sketching or drawing, but the school offered no art in any way.
- JE:** Throughout your elementary grades, there were art classes there, or...
- CF:** Oh, in elementary, yes, you know.
- JE:** And so you flourished.
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** Did anybody comment on your work? Do you remember that?
- CF:** I don't remember, no.
- JE:** Your high school experience. Were you involved in a lot of activities?
- CF:** Not really. I mean I had to be in certain activities and so I was in what I had to be in (laughs).
- JE:** Right. Didn't you work while you were in high school?
- CF:** I did, I did. I worked at a flower shop, a florist, who was not only a florist but shipped plants all over U.S. That was my first job ever.
- JE:** Who did you work for?
- CF:** I worked for the meanest lady I've ever known, Mrs. Harris.
- JE:** Ever...(laughs) What was about her that made you...?
- CF:** Well, I not only did flower arrangements and deliveries and casket sprays, she even had me kill 20 chickens.
- JE:** Why kill?
- CF:** Well, you know, she had a downtown freezer and she was gonna put them in.
- JE:** So you had to kill these chickens.
- CF:** That's right. She asked me to go back in the greenhouse and asked Pearl and myself to kill all the chickens.
- JE:** How did that go?
- CF:** It, um, it was a learning experience.
- JE:** (Laughs)
- CF:** I've seen my grandmother wring the neck, so I tried that, and the chicken walked off.
- JE:** (Laughs)
- CF:** Pearl tried it and it clawed her.

- JE:** Pearl is?
- CF:** The lady in the back.
- JE:** Okay.
- CF:** So then we had to chop their heads off. I couldn't do it today and I didn't eat chicken for two years.
- JE:** But you had to do it to keep your job.
- CF:** Out of fear, yes.
- JE:** Fear, right. And you're talking about it all these years later, but overall, I guess, with the experience you working for this mean lady was good because of the work you did with flowers.
- CF:** Yes. A good learning experience, yes.
- JE:** And you were putting together then bouquets and...?
- CF:** Oh, yeah.
- JE:** And flower arrangements and all that.
- CF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative), yes.
- JE:** So that was the experience that you took from it. So you worked all through high school?
- CF:** Right.
- JE:** And you knew then that design or something was going to be in your future.
- CF:** Yes.

Chapter 3 - 8:57

Charles Opens Shop

Charles Faudree: So I enrolled at TU because I thought they had a good art school and it was close. I had a roommate, did the entrance exams and then my father changed his mind.

John Erling: Why did he change his mind?

CF: Uh, because I was going to room with a Baptist minister student who I had gone to a couple of revivals with and my father being the Catholic that he was thought that was not a good influence, so, I went to Northeastern in Tahlequah.

JE: Okay, talk to us about the drama, trauma that went on at that moment then because you really wanted to go to TU.

CF: I did. I said pretty bad things about my father to my mother as we went to Tahlequah. But, there's always been a flock of guardian angels in my life and I ended up where I should have been. I loved that school, I just went this last week to a reunion. The nifty fifties. We have a group that have stuck together for over 50 years. The Tri Sigs and Phi

Sigs. I was a big duck in a little puddle there, editor of the yearbook and made Who's Who and Tri Sigma Man and the things that I would have never done at TU and I took all the art classes that were there and loved all of them.

JE: Why Northeastern after TU?

CF: Close.

JE: It was close, right?

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: So then that experience there, you just said, you were a big duck in the little pond, but it gave you a whole lot of confidence.

CF: It did.

JE: It gave you some swagger if you didn't have it already.

CF: Yes.

JE: You were editor of the yearbook?

CF: Yes.

JE: Had lots of friends there at Northeastern?

CF: Lots, uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: Would you bring them home?

CF: Oh yes. I had a wonderful mother. I've had as many as 12 spend the night after an after-party and my mother would get up and fix breakfast for all of 'em.

JE: So you were a popular guy then on campus and you're still in touch with those college friends?

CF: Yes.

JE: And they were part of the group maybe that you saw a week ago.

CF: Yes, I had twelve here in my house Friday night and then we went to Homecoming Saturday.

JE: Well there are those who have said about you, you are a great friend, that's part of your reputation and you enjoy being that. You worked when you were in college, yeah.

CF: I did.

JE: What did you do there?

CF: The last two years I was probably the richest kid on campus because I worked for Manhattan Construction. I was their time keeper.

JE: Was that a night-time..

CF: No, I worked three hours, afternoon, I took my classes around that.

JE: And you had to do that because it helped support you being at school.

CF: Yes.

JE: Did your father then, was he...

CF: My father was gone.

JE: By that time.

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: So then, all the money you made from Manhattan was enough to keep you in school.

CF: That's right.

JE: You actually supported yourself 100% in school.

CF: That's right.

JE: Then you graduate from Northeastern in what year?

CF: In 60.

JE: 1960.

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: Then what happens to you?

CF: I had an art degree, but what could I do with an art degree? Really nothing but teach, so I took a teaching position in Kansas City so that I could go to the Art Institute at night. So that's what I did the first year. I went to the Art Institute four nights a week and taught school at Independence Junior High, ninth and eighth grade art.

JE: What about the Art Institute? Were you pleased with the instruction there?

CF: Well I, I, they had one design course. I will say that, I don't know that I got that much out of it.

JE: Did you enjoy teaching?

CF: I enjoyed teaching, yes, and I taught for four years, but after I realized that I really wasn't going to do what I wanted to do the rest of my life, I had a great opportunity. One of the teacher's husband offered to back me in a shop, we called that shop Faudree's, it was in Oklahoma City. I was 25. I don't know if I had no fear or I was just stupid, but I ran the shop, he, uh, was the book keeper. He had his own company so it also was a wonderful stepping stone.

JE: You moved to Oklahoma City.

CF: I moved to Oklahoma City.

JE: To teach.

CF: And taught at Herbert Hoover.

JE: And while teaching there, and somebody backed you.

CF: Yes.

JE: Financially. Wasn't it almost a no-brainer; somebody wants to back me, I should certainly follow the money?

CF: Well, yeah.

JE: So you're 25 years old, you're teaching, and you have this shop-both.

CF: No, I'm not teaching.

JE: Oh.

CF: I knew I was not going to teach. I knew that I wanted to do something else, so I made it known that I was maybe going back to school to take more design and so at this Christmas party, after he said “Would you be interested in opening this shop, this shop is the first mall this side of the Mississippi enclosed?”, and so he thought it would be a great success and he thought I had taste and style, so what could I do? So I went to market and bought for the shop and it was a great, great deal for me. It wasn’t in the end. We had a contract 40/60. I would make 40% of the profits, but when you buy your wife’s car through the shop and furnish the house, anyway.

JE: That’s what he was doing?

CF: Yes.

JE: Yeah.

CF: But I have no regrets there because I learned a lot.

JE: Was that even on your mind when they suggested to open a shop, did you, had it in your head, I’d like to open my own shop?

CF: Yes, you know, I thought I would my own design shop. We didn’t do design, but we sold everything from candles to lamps to furniture, so, it was great.

JE: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That must have been a fun time for you.

CF: It was, I’ve never worked so hard, because you stood at the counter and it was unbelievable, the, the people that came to that mall.

JE: Which mall was it?

CF: Shepherd Mall.

JE: Had you started developing your own style at that point. Did you buy for your style or think, I can’t think about me, I think about my customers?

CF: I think both. You know, I always buy what I like in hopes that it will sell and I think it always does. Still today I buy some things that are almost like shipping goods cause the prize is right, but it’s still good in style.

JE: Would you then, or even now, buy thinking, well I don’t really like that, but I know people will like it, or do you only buy it if you like it.

CF: I really buy only if I like it.

JE: You have a style today at what you like, was that beginning to develop then?

CF: It was. The first piece of furniture I bought, I was still in college, I bought a pretty french chair at a garage sale. I knew it was french, but that’s all I knew. I knew even in my mother’s house though, back in high school, when we redecorated, you know in Muskogee the furniture stores were limited. Back then it was called French Provincial.

JE: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CF: And that’s what we did my mother’s living room in because she let me make the selections.

JE: French Provincial.

- CF:** Even in high school we had a dutch door with shutters and every year I would paint the door and shutters. We had blue, one year we even had pink.
- JE:** How old would you have been when she allowed you to paint the doors.
- CF:** Oh, I was in junior high school, so in my teens.
- JE:** Did you finally settle on a color that you wanted?
- CF:** Yes, today I like black doors.
- JE:** All right.
- CF:** I've gone through all those colors.
- JE:** So, painting doors, all this, and she knew a pink door, this is gonna look weird.
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** But, I don't care.
- CF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** I mean, what a tremendous supportive person she was.
- CF:** She was.
- JE:** Wow. She nurtured this talent that you had. We're in Oklahoma City with this shop. How many years was that shop there?
- CF:** I left the shop after four years or five years.
- JE:** Because you didn't like the financial arrangement.
- CF:** That's right.
- JE:** That was developing?
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** What did you decide to do then?
- CF:** I was offered art director for a wholesale company in Dallas that I bought from. They knew the situation, so they offered me a job. I was just a little Okie and this job would take me to LA and San Francisco and Boston, New York, Atlanta, all these places for gift and furniture shows so I took the job and moved to Dallas. I'm gonna speed this up because I was the art director for two years and I would sell on the floor, doing the gift and furniture show. They thought I was a good salesman, so they offered me the salesman job. So, motivated by money, I took the salesman job and I hated it. I hated it for eight years. I had no creative outlet. I traveled. I wanted to sleep in my own bed, but I did make good money. I bought a house and bought what I wanted. Those years were from 30 to 39 and when I was 39 I thought, I can't do this the rest of my life. My sister was in Muskogee. I had decorated her house, her friend's house, her husband's bank, so I thought they were starved and deprived, so I would open a shop there.

Chapter 4 - 6:13**Walt Helmerich**

Charles Faudree: So I sold my house and everything I had in Dallas and moved to Muskogee of all the places.

John Erling: Must have been people in Dallas who wondered about you.

CF: Yes, thought I'd lost my mind. I bought a little house, a little salt box and I lived above it. I have kids that worked for me now and they think that I got where I am always. But I lived in 2 rooms above the house. The first floor was my shop and I really didn't know if I would, I'd buy tissue next week, but again, a flock of guardian angels are always a guide in my life because it sold as fast as I would buy it. I would buy 40-foot containers in England and it would sell, you know, it would go out faster than the money came in almost. Thank God my brother-in-law at that time was a banker so it all worked out.

JE: Your sister, Francie, did she have a shop there?

CF: She did. She had a shop called Fridays at Francies and I would buy for it every Friday night at an auction in Dallas. A friend that was in the book business would bring the stuff to her and she would sell out every week, which was also a good indication that someone needed something. But in my shop, then within a year Tulsa was coming there, I started doing houses in Tulsa.

JE: Okay. Let me stop you there because what was it that was happening in Muskogee that Tulsa was not finding here? What were you doing the containers in from England...?

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: ...and nobody had been doing that, is that true? And is that what made you special?

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative). We were even having parties ever shipment. One time we had a party in a vacant building and we did Christmas trees. We did all of it.

JE: So it was your presentation, too...

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: ...the way that made that exciting?

CF: Yes.

JE: Where did you happen on to the buy containers from England? Was that your experience in Dallas?

CF: No, I had gone to England just as a tourist. No, they didn't do that in Dallas. Actually my first trip to England when I had my money from selling my house and I went to England and the reality of doing 3 times pound price to get retail was shocking. The first day I didn't buy anything. I was so frightened, but then the second day I realized, "I'm over

here. I've got the money, and where else can you get it any cheaper?" So I started buying and it was great.

JE: There are moments in our life we can point to that were definitely at impotence for the rest of our lives...

CF: Yes.

JE: ...So that concept of buying containers right there set you off in a world that you had never known before.

CF: That's right.

JE: Nobody had been doing that. The first container, did it sell right away?

CF: It did, and that was 43 years ago.

JE: Then the word began to spread, "There's this guy in Muskogee. He's bringing in furniture from Europe..."

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: ...from England in this case and that's how it came to Tulsa.

CF: That's right. I was asked to do a house here in Tulsa. Actually it was just to redo a new kitchen and it was photographed in whatever the Tulsa Magazine was. And then I built a little house, a charming house in Muskogee for myself. They photographed it and so with that people kept coming. And then I started doing a lot of work in Tulsa so I was coming here 3 days a week. But yet I'd built my dream house in Muskogee...

JE: In Muskogee...

CF: ...So I thought maybe I would get an apartment here. I'd talked to Walt Helmerich about Utica Square. It was like getting in Southern Hills.

JE: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CF: You know, I had to have references, 10 references I think.

JE: Well here you are, not that I need to defend Walt, but he had never met you. You came from Muskogee. He's thinking, "Who is this guy?"

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: Then you got 10, probably, customer references...

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: ...in Tulsa, which he probably knew, and that's what got you in.

CF: That's right. I was in Utica Square for 15 years and Walt Helmerich was a great, great friend and he always took care of me. There were several people that their lease was up and he would tell them, "If you don't redo your shop and hire Charles Faudree, I won't give you your lease," and I also did 3 models when he built the Yorktown. He hired me to do 3 models. He was a great friend.

JE: Well he saw this talent and I'm sure Peggy was very supportive about (laughs) that as well...

CF: Yeah, (laughs) I think.

- JE:** ...dear lady. So then you sold your dream house, which was...
- CF:** Sold my dream house...
- JE:** ...in, in...in Muskogee, probably made some coins on that, did you...?
- CF:** I did.
- JE:** And then you come to Tulsa and that would've been about 1980...
- CF:** Yes...
- JE:** ...in Utica Square...
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** Then how did things take off for you? Pretty fast, I suppose...
- CF:** Yes, yes.
- JE:** All these customers didn't have to drive to Muskogee anymore.
- CF:** That's right. It was great. It's been a wonderful ride.
- JE:** You were then mixing antiques with new furniture.
- CF:** Mm-hmm. Yes.
- JE:** Had anybody else done that?
- CF:** Yes. I think they had. I think 2 old decorators; one, a lady and one man. One had retired and one had passed away so there was no one doing that...
- JE:** From Tulsa, these 2 decorators?
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** They had been doing it...
- CF:** They had been doing that...
- JE:** But did you know they'd been doing it or...?
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** Okay, so they kind of planted a seed for you?
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** And then it made sense and you're in England this all comes together. I'll bring it in...
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** ...I'll mix the 2...
- CF:** And I was buying French furniture, of course, as well.
- JE:** Did you go to France then?
- CF:** No that first few years I was buying from a couple of French dealers in England.
- JE:** Describe the style.
- CF:** I think it was country French with a mix. It's always been about the mix, you know, mix of English and we always need a little Asian as well.
- JE:** Asian too?
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** Did you bring in...?

CF: No, but it's available.

JE: Country French. That's what you would describe the...

CF: Yes. That's my passion.

Chapter 5 - 6:57

Hearst Meets Charles

John Erling: Obviously people around here discovered you, but how did the nation get to know about this man from Muskogee who lives in Tulsa and he's doing something special?

Charles Faudree: You know, I was photographed not only in, then in *Tulsa Home & Garden*, I was photographed in *Veranda*. I was photographed in *Southern Living*. I was photographed in *Southern Accents*. I was photographed in *Country Living*. Anyway, I was just blessed and fortunate to be published, so that's how people would call.

JE: *Traditional Homes* published you.

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: And somebody from there had to have spotted the story in *Tulsa Home & Garden* or *Tulsa People*.

CF: The editor of *Tulsa Home & Garden* was hired as a scout for *Traditional Home*; Nancy Ingraham. Anything I would do, she would send the pictures and they would take it.

JE: So that's your leap?

CF: Yes. Nancy Ingraham [inaudible 00:01:00].

JE: *Traditional Homes* would have been the first national magazine.

CF: Yes they were.

JE: And then these other magazines that you've just mentioned, then picked up on all that.

CF: Yes.

JE: And I'm sure continued, because when your work was featured, say on cover or whatever, they were selling magazines.

CF: Yeah.

JE: Their fascination then was there's something that you had a certain style for and you were mixing antiques and new.

CF: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JE: A lot of these people hadn't even thought about that or would never have thought of breaking that so-called rule, is that true?

CF: Yes.

- JE:** Tell me then, once the nation is hearing about you, what's happening? Are they calling, are they coming to Utica Square or what are they doing?
- CF:** You know I did a wonderful french house in Abilene. They saw me simply in a magazine and they called and said could we come up and talk to you, we're building a french house. So they came, we got along, you know at this point in your life if the chemistry's not right there's no reason to start a job, but they were great and they liked me and I liked them. Thus, we started the marriage because from doing that house I did a house in Scottsdale for them, I did a house in the mountains for them as well and they have their own plane, which makes it really nice.
- JE:** Is that a famous name that we would know?
- CF:** Not really, they were the Dr. Pepper and Pepsi dealers for Texas.
- JE:** Distributors probably.
- CF:** Yes, yes.
- JE:** For that area. The work you did in Abilene was published no doubt.
- CF:** Yes. And then I did my first book ten years ago. The book opened a whole another avenue because if you have a book in the Theta Antique Show, they want a speaker and they would love to have the speaker that has a book so that they can sell the book and help pay the fee for the speaker. So that started a whole new thing for me because I went to places I never thought I wanted to go, like in Utah, but I found friends everywhere I went, had a wonderful time and have been asked back for the second round for most of them as a I get another book out.
- JE:** Charles Faudree's French Country Signature was your first book.
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** And apparently opened to wide acclaim. So now you're dabbling in areas that you never thought you'd of been in, that had to have been a lot of fun for you. It's gone into, I think its ninth or tenth printing isn't it?
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative). They still sell the first book, it's a good publisher.
- JE:** Who is that publisher?
- CF:** Gibbs Smith.
- JE:** You didn't seek that?
- CF:** Well the truth is I did.
- JE:** Oh.
- CF:** I approached them and they sent me a contract that was not anything that I was interested in, so I didn't. A year later they called me and said we do want to do a book for you and they had a better proposal so, we've been great.
- JE:** Are you also manager? It seems like a lot of artistic people can't manage or set up contracts or handle money and somebody else does that for them. Are you able to do both of them?

CF: No.

JE: But you knew enough that, well I know what I want out of a book, so you knew that?

CF: Yes.

JE: But you have never tried to be.

CF: No, never have tried to be the business end of my business.

JE: Any famous names that we might know.

CF: Not through that. I did a beautiful, what we would call a castle, they call a finca in Spain, for Randolph Hurst's grand-daughter, which was a four-year process. I went twice a year to Spain.

JE: Where in Spain?

CF: Outside of Seville.

JE: What was her name?

CF: Joanne, Joanne Hurst. She just passed away just before Christmas.

JE: But you became close friends obviously.

CF: We became close friends.

JE: So money was no object then obviously?

CF: No it wasn't. We re-did the guest house first, then she moved to the guest house, and in the big house we took up all the tile floors and made heated floors. We made bedrooms, bathrooms, we made bedroom closets, we made it comfortable as an American house would be. This house was done by the same architect that did the Alfonso Hotel in Seville, so it was a good architect and a beautiful, beautiful home. Later, I did a penthouse for her in Miami.

JE: So is this work being featured in magazines?

CF: We sent it and they never ran it. They photographed it for the Hurst company that owns now *Veranda*, was in one of my book.

JE: Okay.

CF: I photographed it for my book.

JE: You get real comfortable with your clients then?

CF: I do.

JE: What's a sign of your comfortableness, if I can put it that way?

CF: Well jokingly, I say if I'm not comfortable opening their refrigerator and helping myself, then I can't work for them. But Joanne, she had a house here because her daughter was living here for a while. We met in France, bought for it, we picked fabrics, and she said, I want you do all of it, fill in all the blanks, and I want the soap in the dish when I come back in nine months.

JE: And so you had the soap in.

CF: So I had the soap in the dish. I didn't hear from her the first night she got back. I didn't hear from her the second night. I became worried, but the third day she called me and she said, it took me three days to stake my claim and feel that it is my home. I love every inch of it. I don't know where you've been all my life. That's when she said, but we will book appointments to start on this job in Spain.

JE: Yes.

CF: So.

JE: That was a great feeling to hear that wasn't it? Yeah.

CF: Yes. I just spent last Christmas with her in Kentucky on a blackberry farm, beautiful place. She had her 70th birthday there. She flew twelve people in and I was one of them.

JE: So she was.

CF: She had her birthday and then she died.

JE: She was 71?

CF: Mm-hmm (affirmative). 71.

JE: Was that a shock?

CF: It's still a shock and there's no closure, you know, because she died in Spain.

Chapter 6 - 6:19

Fabrics and Friends

JE: When you're working with a client and they show some hesitation for something that you're suggesting, how do you handle that?

CF: It depends. On some cases I would say trust me. If you don't like it, I will put it in the shop and sell it, if it's that kind of situation. Or, just trust me and if you don't like it we'll redo it, if I really feel adamant about it.

JE: Because there is that line of, well I want them to be happy, but they also hired you.

CF: Yes, and they must be happy and if mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy. But some clients I know they will be happy, you know, I know them well enough, that I've worked with them, that I know when they see it done they will be happy with it.

JE: And for some of them they kind of have to get used to it too, don't they?

CF: Yes.

JE: And then they feel comfortable.

CF: I have a job I love and I consider it a God-given talent.

JE: Yeah.

CF: And, uh, I love what I do everyday. **JE:** Have you ever had a client where you get a

quarter of the way into the project and it just is not working because he or she is always saying, no I don't like that, I want this, and nah, nah, nah and you wonder why you're even there, does that happen?

CF: Yes, very seldom. I've only fired one person in all these years. There's situations where I work with the lady, she takes it home to show the husband, and the husband doesn't like it. Honey, I say, don't come back until you bring your husband. Tell them that, then the husband likes it right away.

JE: I believe Armand Hammer too.

CF: I did, I worked with Drew. Drew is the wife of Michael Hammer, who is the grandson of Armand Hammer and who is head of the Hammer gallery and all of the Hammer, and I've helped them with six houses. They've moved almost as much as I have.

JE: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

CF: But they've always moved up. She should have been an architect because she loves that part of the move. The only really sad situation, they bought the house that Batman was filmed in. It was a beautiful, beautiful house. We were scheduled to move in in three weeks, they had oiled all the walls and anyway somehow there was combustion and fire and burned to the ground.

JE: Oh my. You started your own fabric line. Is that in here somewhere or is that.

CF: It's right. I always wanted to do a furniture line. I never thought about doing a fabric line, but it was very strange. Several years ago, in the same week, Lee Jofa came to me and said would you be interested in doing a fabric line and I said I've never thought about it but I would love to talk about, so I talked to them about it. The same week, Vervain came to me and said would you do a fabric line? And again I was up front. But Vervain is based here. Actually their salesman out of New York that was talking to me was pushier and I thought I could do a better job with it being here. It sounds interesting. I'd have to go to New York every other month, that sounds good, but is it really? So I went with Vervain, which was a great choice because I did a fabric line with them, which has been very successful and I have done another line which will be presented in February, a fabric line for them, which I'm very excited about. I also did a trim line, you know fringe, and a trim line, and also did a wallpaper book for Stroheim, all of that's coming out this Fall. It's been a joy doing that.

JE: So the designs for fabric and trim line and wallpaper, are you conceptualizing?

CF: Some, yes, some you do, some you take off of maybe an object. Some I've bought documented fabrics in France that are out of print that I love that we could reprint. We did a cavalier toile on the first one, which was drawn with my two dogs in it with the whole scene. Cavalier toile will be documented forever. I love acorns and oak leaves, so I've done some fabrics with that.

JE: Somewhere in here you also redid Southern Hills Country Club.

CF: I did, I worked on that four years and I have to say, like quoting the president said, for the first time the club is at the quality of the golf course and I do think it's beautiful. They've asked me now to help them on another four-year plan, but, you know, I'm not able to commit to that, but I think the club is beautiful. I hope it doesn't change.

JE: They want to redo...

CF: The tennis club and part of it has to be maintained and freshened too, so.

JE: You worked for a princess?

CF: A house I did in Jamaica was on the cover of *Veranda*. So I get an email saying, we loved your house in Jamaica, would you be interested in helping a member of the royal family in Abu Dhabi? Well I have a prankster friend, David Easton, who sends me telegrams and letters. I thought it was him, so I threw it away. And so, I get a second one and I still think it's David, so I say send me pictures and they did and I'd also said, I cannot start any job until after the first of the year. Well they wanted a schematic, as they called it. The truth is, they wanted me to plan it, pick all the fabrics, pick all the furniture, and then they would get someone there to do it. But it was a wonderful experience. They flew me over twice. I stayed in the outrageous hotel in Dubai. I got to see Dubai. I had tea several time with the princess who was gorgeous and I did what they wanted and they paid me and gave me a \$7,000 watch as a gift, so.

JE: As a tip. (laughs)

CF: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: You've named all these other magazines. Would *Architectural Digest* ever be interested in your work?

CF: You know, I've never sent anything to them. I was in it, just a part of it, when they did the Governor's mansion, because I did several rooms in the Governor's mansion.

JE: When Governor Keating was there?

CF: That's right.

JE: So they did some of that.

CF: Yes.

JE: And there hasn't been any other relationship there?

CF: No.

JE: Is that because your style wouldn't necessarily?

CF: Oh no. I think now they have a new editor. I think it's more upbeat, it's fresher now.

Chapter 7 - 2:35**Books**

John Erling: Then let's just pursue the books here because now you have five books. Charles Faudree's Country French Living was released in 2005, third and fourth books, *Charles Faudree Interiors*. You did the *Charles Faudree Country French Florals* and *Interiors* with Tony Garner and Tony, as we know here in Tulsa, has her own flower shop.

Charles Faudree: I love Tony. She's one of the most generous, nicest people I know. She's the most humble person I know. She's so talented, she would have never done a book on her own, so I talked to the publisher. The motivation was to get Tony out there.

JE: That has done a lot for her business.

CF: Yes.

JE: I would imagine.

CF: I hope so.

JE: Here we are in 2012 in October and you've just released a book, I believe last month. And what's the name of that book?

CF: It's *Charles Faudree Home*. And I also did a book, *Details*.

JE: Okay.

CF: It was released last year, which I think sold 60,000 the first six months.

JE: So you've been on the New York Times Best Selling List.

CF: It was, once.

JE: High up?

CF: Third after Barbara Streisand.

JE: So here we are today, you get a lot of invitations either to design homes or to speak? Are they coming in over the transom as we used to say?

CF: Well yes, they still do. I'm not starting any new jobs til really after the first of the year. I've got a lot going. I've got a great job.

JE: Right now you have your shop and then the books, speaking, fabric line, trim line, wallpaper line. How many staff are helping you with all this?

CF: I have seven. But you know once the book's done, it's done. All we do is just sell it and that's sort of the way with the fabrics too, and they're done, I just can't wait for them. I'm waiting for them to use them in my own house.

JE: How long ago was it the fabric line came out.

CF: Maybe, at least four years, maybe five.

JE: Where do people find this fabric line? Is it in...

CF: In, it's in every showroom. Vervain has a show room. They have sales reps even in Europe.

JE: Have you ever stopped to look back and say “Wow”.

CF: Oh I do. I think if God would have asked what I wanted out of my life, I would have really short-changed myself. I would have, because, you know, I’ve done more than I ever thought I would. I’ve gone more than I ever thought I would. I’ve met more people than I ever thought I would and my life has been unbelievable.

JE: Because God gave you that talent that you were born with and you knew it from an early, early age that we’ve already talked about.

Chapter 8 - 4:34

Cancer

John Erling: So you’ve had a lot on your plate, including your health right now, we’re talking about cancer. When did cancer first come into your life?

Charles Faudree: I had cancer 20 years ago at the age of 53. I had prostate cancer. I felt great. So I had surgery, three surgeries. I thought all was well and ten years later it came back and I had seven weeks of radiation. Then five years later it came back in my shoulder. Now it is back in the bone in five places.

JE: So it’s bone cancer.

CF: And it was in my shoulder. My shoulder was by itself, so they could radiate it, but this time they can’t radiate all those five places.

JE: So how are you fighting it now?

CF: I think I’m doing well.

JE: With what?

CF: With chemo. I’ve had chemo since March and it’s October.

JE: How often do you need to have chemo?

CF: I have chemo every 21 days. I get it this Friday.

JE: Is this curable?

CF: No, it’s incurable.

JE: Which means, you will have chemo.

CF: I will have chemo the rest of my life unless I wish to stop and just. The radiation makes me really, really weak. The worst part of it is acceptance because I’m used to, if I see those gutters, I want to clean em, or get up and jump up and do something. The hardest part is that I can’t do what I used to do.

JE: You don’t have the energy for it.

CF: I don’t have the energy and can’t do it. I’m out of breath when I shower and dress.

- JE:** After you've had a chemo treatment, then you're weak particularly for how long?
- CF:** Well it's 21 days and it's sort of downhill. You're lowest, the bottom. But contrary to what they say, the worse days are three days after I have chemo so far.
- JE:** This has taken on another form of pain for you then hasn't it?
- CF:** Yes, through, uh, treatment that I took for bone density, it did some bone damage, which started this, I can't say it, it's Trigeminal Neuralgia. It's a nerve that is in your head. It causes my jaw, my ear, my head to ache, so we're dealing with that nerve besides the chemo, which is worse than the chemo, but I had Cyberknife surgery on it two weeks ago, so hopefully that will take care of it. They said it may take as long as three months.
- JE:** Has it felt better since then?
- CF:** It felt better the first week and then I had a bad week, but I'm afraid to brag on it because it's doing good now.
- JE:** So they really focus in on that area then.
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** You're not the first to have had this side effect.
- CF:** No.
- JE:** It's known as, I think you've called it a suicide disease.
- CF:** Yes, it is, and when I went to get my MRI, that's what the lady said, oh you're here for the suicide, which shocked Francie, but, you know, it's the only thing, it sort of confirmed the degree of pain. I have a book on it now, one out of three commit suicide cause they don't know there's help for it or an answer.
- JE:** They figure, yeah I may be beating cancer, but I can't live with this pain.
- CF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** For the rest of my life.
- CF:** That's what I'm thinking.
- JE:** Right.
- CF:** If I could get rid of this pain I could deal with cancer.
- JE:** Do you fight depression?
- CF:** No.
- JE:** Really?
- CF:** I don't.
- JE:** You've never fought depression?
- CF:** I maybe have when I took seven weeks of radiation, you know, I didn't care if I got up, but I don't now. I believe in the power of prayer, positive thinking, and good medicine.
- JE:** Well it's gotten you through so far hasn't it?
- CF:** It has. I'm 74, I'll be 75 soon, I'm gonna try to make it to 80.
- JE:** And beyond.

- CF:** Because I'm gonna paint and do the things I want to do, smell the roses.
- JE:** When you say you want to paint.
- CF:** Oil paint, I want to paint.
- JE:** Have you ever done any oil painting?
- CF:** I did, I have. Course I did in college, I did after college, and I did even, maybe ten years ago, I took a class just so I would paint, but I haven't since and I'm dying to do it.
- JE:** You're there now.
- CF:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** You want to do that.
- CF:** I'm gonna do it this summer.
- JE:** What will it be, landscape?
- CF:** Or still life, or both.
- JE:** In the meantime, your shop and everything else is going too, so you have a lot happening that is probably some taken care of while you don't always feel up to the task.
- CF:** That's right.
- JE:** And you've never felt like giving up?
- CF:** No, no. I hope I don't get to that, not to say that it couldn't happen, you know, with radiation because he says chemo is like radiation, that it's accumulative, so it will get worse, but, I'm not afraid to die, but I want to live more than I ever wanted to live.
- JE:** Of course, our maker put that into us, thank God.
- CF:** Yes.
- JE:** We want to live.

Chapter 9 - 2:51

Tulsa Cares

- John Erling:** You've been very involved in the Red Ribbon Gala, fundraiser for AIDS. Have you lost friends to AIDS?
- Charles Faudree:** In the beginning, I lost a lot of friends to AIDS and that's the reason that I started really, before the Red Ribbon for ten years, we did the candle light tour. I started that 20 years ago when Liz Taylor was doing her fund reopening but this is Tulsa and it's not New York, and I wasn't Liz Taylor, so it was frightening in a way.
- JE:** And the attitudes about gays and lesbians.
- CF:** Sure. Yes.
- JE:** Would not have obviously been has open as in New York.

CF: But I met with four women and told them that I'd like to do a home tour, candle light tour, and that would be fundraiser for AIDS, Saint Joseph Hospice then and Tulsa CARES, and all four said you may have my house, so a lot of transformation that was.

JE: And they were...Homes obviously the people would love to see.

CF: Yes, yes, with Nancy Reinburg being one, and my sister being another. We didn't know what we're doing. We've sent the wrong envelopes to the wrong letters and fumbled, and made \$40,000 the first year, and the second year we did a \$100,000, and within the five year, we made over a million. So I go around speaking in these places, people will say, "You are from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Where would you live if you could live any place in the world?" And I say, "Tulsa, Oklahoma. It's because things like what, they step up and do, and it's a wonderful place."

JE: Tulsa CARES, tell us what Tulsa CARES is.

CF: Tulsa CARES is the only, cause there was rain, I was on the rain board, I was on the Saint Joseph board, Saint Joseph's clothes because the need is different now, these people are living longer, but people are still becoming infected. The young people are not safe at all. And Tulsa CARES has a wonderful, beautiful food pantry. They even have housing for people that have no place else to live.

JE: When you say Saint Joseph's...

CF: It was total hospice, hospital beds and all, and we decorated it, uh, beautifully, but it has closed.

JE: But Tulsa CARES is very functional today.

CF: Today, yes.

JE: And the Red Ribbon Gala comes under Tulsa CARES.

CF: Yes. Yes.

JE: And they recently had a big tribute to you.

CF: They did.

JE: Which had to make you feel good.

CF: They said, they were honoring me. I thought I would get a little glass table ornament, but it was beautiful. It was a wonderful, wonderful honor it was a big deal, and humbling, and it was the day after my first radiation. It was great.

JE: You're close to this fundraising and it's the first time that our city knows about a fundraiser to help AIDS people. Were there in the community who pushed back to you or said, "Why are you doing this?" or "We don't have this problem here," or did they give you any negative reaction?

CF: No, no.

Chapter 10 – 3:49**Sexual ID**

John Erling: Our discussion and would lead obviously to your own sexuality.

Charles Faudree: Uh-huh.

JE: Going back in your life, when do you think you noticed first that there was something different about me, in my sexual preference?

CF: I knew there was something always wrong in my life but I never knew exactly what it was. But at 25, that's when I, as they put it-sort of came out. You know, today, it is such a little part of my life. I never think about it but I can tell you at that time in my life, I thought about it. I thought about killing myself except it speed up my trip to hell because that's what I believe, I would go to hell. So I had about three months of sleepless nights. And one day, I just got up and thought, "I'm a good person." I never missed mass in my life, and I didn't go to mass and lightning didn't strike, so I lived with myself. You know, I thought God was Catholic, I think, so I sort of turned my back on God for a long time. I have to say that I found the God today of all places in AA.

I went AA to learn how to drink because I was getting blackouts and I thought I need to figure this out. I never thought I'd stay sober, but I thought learned how to drink. And I went there and not knowing it was a spiritual program but that's where I found the God that I know that made me exactly how I am, and that loves me. You know, I think I'm the best person I've ever been, and it's because there's a God in my life. He's with me, and with my health issues, I don't know what I would do if God was not in my life.

JE: You went to AA to learn how to drink?

CF: Yeah.

JE: Because most people go to AA to learn how not to drink.

CF: Well, I didn't know what AA was.

JE: You know who's about alcohol.

CF: Uh-huh.

JE: You probably went there for the wrong reason and came out with the right reason.

CF: That's right, exactly.

JE: And when you were a child, did you notice anything at five or six years old?

CF: Oh-no, but I enjoyed playing with Francie, shop or house. You know, there's always that tendency that I would, would rather play with her than have a football.

JE: Francie, again, your sister. The two of you are very, very close even though you're seven...

CF: Seven years.

JE: Seven year difference.

- CF:** Yes, yeah. I've, I've loved her the minute she was born, and she is the bestfriend I've ever had in my life.
- JE:** Well, a lot of siblings can't say that about each other but you're fortunate.
- CF:** She's sort of become my mother now. She's with my health...
- JE:** Watching over you.
- CF:** Yeah.
- JE:** Both of you are so much a part of each others life, it's huge. But when you came out in 25, that was in Oklahoma City.
- CF:** Yes, and that was '74, so that's a long time ago.
- JE:** And you had your shop?
- CF:** I did. I had my shop.
- JE:** And so were you afraid, "Uh-oh, what's going to happen now?" And how did you make this known? You say you came out. I mean, we don't stand on the street corners some place but...
- CF:** No. No, but, you know, I went to market. I met some buyers there that were gay. I opened this shop in Utica Square. There was a florist across from me that was gay. I never been to a bar. I hope I never have to go to another bar, but this one friend would take me to a bar, but back then, everything was almost underground, and it was frightening.
- JE:** And so doing that, then the word was out.
- CF:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Were you worried about your business?
- CF:** No.
- JE:** That it would hurt business or anything like that?
- CF:** No.
- JE:** But that had to be a freedom that came when you decided, "I don't have to hide anymore."
- CF:** Uh-huh.

Chapter 11 - 4:36

ID Advice

John Erling: What do you say to young people who are asking questions like I'm asking questions now, what do you tell them and the mothers and the fathers of daughters and sons who announce to them that they're gay, and they don't know how to handle that. Do you have some comment?

Charles Faudree: You know, I, I would tell the young person, “Understand that, it’s hard for you to realize and adjust to it. So you have to know that it would be hard for your parents to deal with it.” But that’s the greatest part of teenage suicide is just people not dealing with it. Thank God I never went that way, because it’s like I said, it’s a part of my life, but it’s such a little part of my life. I wouldn’t change anything about my life today. From the beginning, I wanted to be normal. I wanted to be married and have children. Well, I’m very happy today with my life and lifestyle and everything about it, there’s nothing I would change.

JE: Now they’re assuming that support groups too like for parents...

CF: Yes.

JE: ...Of these children.

CF: We have the greatest equality center here in town that’s one of the two greatest in the US for kids to go to...You know I had no place to go, I didn’t know what to do.

JE: How about your mother? Was there a point where you announced to your mother?

CF: I never announced to my mother. My mother was smart. She understood. My friends see, we discussed it. I was with someone 10 years when I was 25. My mother treated him the same as myself.

JE: The two of you never had a real discussion about it?

CF: No.

JE: It was just...She knew all along, didn’t she?

CF: She knew all along. And yet, the greatest affirmation, I go to a little church here, St. Jerome’s that has a gay priest. That’s Anglican. We have a mixture of whites and blacks, and gays and straights. Uh, very small parish. My mother being the catholic that she was said, “I’ll go to church with you Sunday.” And she went with me and she took communion. I said, “Mother, you know that’s not catholic church.” And she said, “I know that.” So she started going with me. She joined that church and she was buried in that church. They loved her. She was the oldest member of course of that church ever.

JE: She has died in the last?

CF: 10 years.

JE: 10 years?

CF: Yeah, she died in 2001.

JE: How old was she when she died?

CF: 88. She went to that church for the last three years of her life and it was the best years. She was the matriarch, and they all loved her.

JE: About the alcohol, you had a drinking problem obviously?

CF: I did.

JE: When did you start drinking?

CF: I started drinking in college.

JE: The life of the party?

CF: Yes, I was a funny drunk and could do things that I could never do sober. I could swing from trapezes, I jumped on and swing from one beam to another. People encouraged me to drink, but then sliding down the bannister at the Cinderella ball when you're 50 is not so fun.

JE: (Laughs).

CF: So, I had to look at myself. Plus, I was having blackouts. I'd get home and be in a tux in my bed and think, "How did I get home?" So it was time to do something about it. I really thought I'd just learned how to control it, but I went to AA and it's strange that first meeting- I came home and I didn't drink the next day. And I didn't drink the next day.

JE: You didn't have a relapse?

CF: I have 24 years of sobriety.

JE: Were you going to meetings every day or every week?

CF: They said, "Go to 90 and 90's." So I tried to do that.

JE: So then it took. Do you do AA today?

CF: I do. I do try once a week. Since I've been sick they've been bringing me meetings here.

JE: And out of that you found a spiritual connection that you hadn't felt before?

CF: That's right. And it's like drinking, I wanted more. That's how I found a church that I love as well.

JE: Somebody told me that the thing that really kicked in for you to quit drinking was you were at a party and you slapped fat Gordon in the face?

CF: Yes, who told you that?

JE: I can't remember now.

CF: That's true.

JE: Is that okay to say that here?

CF: Oh yeah.

JE: So you went...

CF: He said, "Hi, Charles. Merry Christmas." And I just slapped him across the face.

JE: Did it?

CF: I didn't know it till I was told.

JE: So that was more mortifying to you?

CF: Yes.

JE: And then that was it for you for drinking?

CF: Well, it sort of was.

JE: He just brushed it off and then...?

CF: Well, he talked to me the next day about it. I had no recollection of doing that at all.

Chapter 12 - 3:06**Fried Chicken**

John Erling: There's a story about you in Muskogee and you loved fried chicken?

Charles Faudree: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: How did you get that fried chicken?

CF: Well, I joined the Elks Club.

JE: (Laughs).

CF: They have the best fried chicken on Wednesday night. My brother-in-law was going to join the Elks Club. His father belonged. But the stream house I built was along with about five houses on 40 Acres. So, I was going to join for all the five of us. Then, I heard that the initiation was pretty bad.

JE: What was the initiation?

CF: I'm not gonna say. It was pretty bad. But anyway, I went. And my brother-in-law decided he didn't need to go if I was going. So I went. It wasn't bad except today, I would have walked out because it's pretty redneck.

JE: That's what threw you off is their attitudes about blacks?

CF: Yes. They said there'll never be a black in here and if there were, they'd be working behind the counter, but they're not and so don't ever embarrass yourself by bringing one here. So then, we had to go around the room and introduce ourselves and tell them our occupation and family situation. Can you imagine me with this voice standing up? I felt, "What I'm gonna do? I'm not gonna say I'm a decorator." So I stood up and said, in the deepest force I could get, "I'm Charles Faudree. I'm self-employed and I'm single and sat back down." Then I got the fried chicken.

JE: (Chuckles). Did you go back then on a regular basis?

CF: Oh, yes. We all went Wednesdays. I hadn't built my house when I had my groundbreaking, we did a flat bed, hay ride and we went from our house to the Elks Club on the wagon and had fried chicken.

JE: But you got in to the club without doing all these bad things or did you have to ... ?

CF: Oh, I didn't have to. That was my brother-in-law scaring us.

JE: I have another note here that somebody said, "You never charged enough in your shops or whatever or for your design work." Was there something to that?

CF: Well, I don't know. Mary Cooper would say that.

JE: And then, what about a purple Christmas tree in your life? Was there a purple Christmas tree?

CF: There's a pink one. It was the year after my father died. I bought one of those spray kits and sprayed the tree and burned up the vacuum sweeper and sprayed the patio pink. It was not a good Christmas tree.

JE: Why pink?

CF: The year my father was dying, Mrs. Harris, the mean lady sent a little pink tree. And so, I felt, "Well, it's a start."

JE: A start?

CF: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You know we liked it.

JE: And so everybody comes around for Christmas to this pink Christmas tree?

CF: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And you probably thought, "Hey, it's kinda cool. It's different."

CF: Well.

JE: "It's breaking the tradition?"

CF: Yes.

JE: And then there are those who say that you've been very helpful in helping them get started in shops and all that? Have you enjoyed doing that?

CF: I hope so.

JE: So you've given off beyond yourself and design work, but those people who come to you and say, "I want to do something," you enjoy helping them?

CF: Yes.

Chapter 13 - 3:50

Furniture & Francie

John Erling: Is there one piece of furniture that is a must-have piece of furniture?

Charles Faudree: My favorite pieces of furniture are chairs. That's my addiction, are chairs. And next to that are commodes which are French chest.

JE: Would you design a room around an inspiration piece or begin work with a fabric or a rug? Is there some inspiration piece that you begin with?

CF: Oh yeah.

JE: Is there some inspiration piece that you begin with?

CF: Yes.

JE: And then work out from there?

CF: It's always surprising what it is.

JE: You don't know exactly which piece it's going to be?

CF: I mean we could start this room with that rug, but we could end up with it the last thing.

JE: French Country. Can you do French Country on any budget?

CF: I think you can.

JE: You'd have to work at it though.

CF: We'd work with disguise and deceit.

JE: (laughs) Disguise and deceit?

CF: Yes.

JE: Can you embellish on that?

CF: Curtains take a lot of fabric, so we find a cheap fabric for that. That's why I say never discount a real expensive fabric cause we just may use it on one chair or just two pillows. That's what make them look good.

JE: You can do that with clothes too, disguise and deceit.

CF: Uh huh (affirmative)

JE: I think ladies are buying something at Target and then mixing it with something else. So, disguise and deceit.

What are your favorite collections?

CF: Well probably my dogs, I have a collection of dogs, little bronze dogs.

JE: Cavalier?

CF: Well, in the mass it is.

JE: Describe validity your relationship with Francie. I think you have a little bit, let's do it again here, because she's helping you so much now.

CF: We've always been a big part of each other's lives. We talk to each other every day. We see each other almost every day. I can't imagine life without Francie. It's like I said, she's my best friend and she's the best friend I've ever had.

JE: She said some of this knack of design that you have...

CF: She's very talented. She worked for me for quite a few years and she has great style and flair.

JE: Would you ever use her as a sounding board?

CF: I would, but she's very happy with her life taking care of her body parts, as she says. (laughs)

JE: (laughs) You have probably made me laugh more today, and harder, than any interview I've done. (laughs)

You've already indicated what a great life you have now, what God has given you is really the way you see it. Isn't that true?

CF: That's right.

JE: And he gave you that talent? So, we ask how would you like to be remembered?

CF: I've used every bit of the talent God has given me and more important, that I'm a good and kind person.

JE: I have some quotes here from people I've talked to. "You're hilarious." I think we've learned some of that here. "You're kind." "You're unpretentious." "You're a rock star because the world knows about you." All of those things are being said and thought about you. That's gotta make you feel good.

CF: Thank you.

JE: And that you are a great friend. It sounds like I'm talking to and about a saint. Do you have anything that's wrong with you?

CF: Oh, I do. I could probably give you some numbers to call, but...

JE: (laughs) Well, is there anything that you would like to say now that I haven't brought up.

CF: I think you should be a therapist, you pull it out of everyone.

JE: Well, I want to thank you for your time, what you've given us today and to the community. You tell people wherever you go when they ask you, where you want to live? You want to live right here in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Thanks for letting us come into your home here today.

CF: I want to thank you.

Chapter 14 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: (music) 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 everyday to these great Oklahoman's share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on VoicesofOklahoma.com.