

Howard Barnett

Businessman, Governor Keating's
Chief of Staff, OSU-Tulsa President
Emeritus

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Howard Barnett began his career in 1975 as a business lawyer in Tulsa, specializing in securities offerings and corporate transactions primarily for the growing number of entrepreneurial oil and gas companies.

In 1985, he joined Tribune Swab-Fox Companies Inc. as its executive vice president and COO of its daily newspaper subsidiary, Tulsa Tribune Company, eventually becoming chairman and CEO of the parent company.

Barnett entered state government in 1998 as secretary of commerce for Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating and as the director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. In 1999, he became Governor Keating's chief of staff, serving until the end of Keating's term in January 2003.

He was named OSU-Tulsa President in 2009 and became President Emeritus in 2019.

In Howard's oral history interview, he talks about the closing of the Tulsa Tribune, his work in state government, and his work in Tulsa's new form of city government, on the oral history podcast and website of VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 11:05

Family Tree

John Erling (JE): Well, my name is John Erling, and today's date is February 5th, 2025. So Howard, would you state your full name, please?

Howard Barnett (HB): Howard Gentry Barnett Junior.

JE: And we are recording this in the facilities of VoicesofOklahoma.com here in Tulsa. Your birth date?

HB: June 10th, 1950.

JE: Your present age?

HB: 74.

JE: And where were you born?

HB: Kansas City, Missouri.

JE: Now there's a story about your birth. Why don't you tell us that?

HB: I was, as I said, born in Kansas City. I was adopted at birth, and my parents flew up to Kansas City. I was 1 or 2 weeks old—no one ever told me exactly how old—and flew me back to Tulsa, so I had my first plane ride when I was 2 weeks old. And lived here ever since.

JE: Did you ever try to figure out, go back to who your biological parents were?

HB: No, no.

JE: It was no interest to you?

HB: No interest. I mean, and I think with most adopted people I've known, there really isn't an interest. It's kind of a TV thing, and I'm sure if you had a bad problem or something like that, it might be looking for any port in a storm kind of situation, but no, no, it wasn't. I mean, you think about it, John—in post-war, conceived 1949—not likely to be a good story, frankly.

JE: Your mother's name?

HB: Florence Lloyd Jones Barnett.

JE: She had a nickname, didn't she?

HB: "Bisser".

JE: Why Bisser?

HB: When she was born, Jenk Jones, who you have interviewed—Jenkin Lloyd Jones, my uncle—was 2 years old, and he couldn't say "baby sister." He'd say, "bi-sser, bi-ser," and that warped into "Bisser", and that stuck for the rest of her life.

JE: So who was her father?

HB: Richard Lloyd Jones.

JE: And he was the owner-editor of the Tulsa Tribune?

HB: Owner, editor, publisher, yes. He bought it from Charles Page in 1919 and changed the name to Tulsa Tribune. It was the Tulsa Democrat. Stayed in the family 'til we had to close in 1992.

JE: Let's talk about your mother—where she was born and grew up, and her personality. Go ahead and describe her.

HB: Well, she was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and of course the whole family is Wisconsin roots. They all went to University of Wisconsin—you know, both my uncles and my mom, my grandfather, grandmother, everybody went to University of Wisconsin. She moved to Tulsa, of course, in 1919 when her dad bought the Tulsa Tribune and, you know, went to school here, graduated from Central High School in 1930, went on to University of Wisconsin, of course. And then she actually started working in New York and then came back to Tulsa somewhere in the mid-thirties, met my dad. The rest, as they say, is history. She was a very, very, very interesting woman—well-read, well-educated, and just a lot of fun to be around. But she was also very—she volunteered, she did not work outside the home, but she volunteered in numerous charitable organizations. And I remember when she was inducted into the Tulsa Hall of Fame—I'm not sure, but '98 or something like that—and I did her introduction. It was really very much of a pleasure to be able to do that because she deserved it as much as anybody in Tulsa did. And she gave me the best advice I ever got in my whole life. When I was a senior in high school—or junior high school, I guess—I had got admitted to Rice University, early admissions. I was gonna be an engineer, because I liked math and science. And I met a girl, and she was gonna go to Sophie Newcomb in New Orleans, and so I applied and got in to Tulane. And then we broke up. And I told my mom I was gonna go back to Rice—that's my original—she said, "No, go to Tulane. Get a diversified education. Go to New Orleans." And I did, and it certainly changed my personality totally, so it was a wonderful piece of advice. She was a very wise woman. Very wise woman.

JE: And then your father's name?

HB: Howard Gentry Barnett Senior.

JE: And then where did he grow up, and his personality?

HB: He grew up in Gregory, Texas, which is a little town about 15 miles outside of Corpus Christi. His dad was a banker. Unfortunately, his parents died young. He was in school at SMU, and he had to leave school—so he never graduated college—to take care of his younger sisters. His family—he had 3 sisters. One was a little bit older than him, and the other two were like 15 years younger. So he had to do that. Like I said, never graduated college. My dad was a very—I described him when he died in a little brief eulogy—I mean, a man of the highest integrity I've ever known. I mean, honest to a fault. Of course, he became a banker, started a bank in 1949 here in Tulsa—Brookside State Bank—basically ran that until we sold the bank in 1985. Describing his personality is really tough, John. He was not outgoing, and yet he was charming. People really liked being around him, but he really didn't seek out any kind of outward activities.

JE: I wanna go through your family tree—

HB: Oh boy.

JE: Because it's very interesting. It includes—not that you people are not famous—but there is someone here that is known maybe worldwide, so I want to go from that. So let's start with your mother, Florence—

HB: Lloyd Jones Barnett.

JE: And why was the Lloyd also applied to females?

HB: Well, the name was originally hyphenated as Lloyd-Jones, and many people in our wide family tree still use the hyphen. But in my part of the tree, they decided to drop the hyphen, but everybody still viewed that as kind of their name. I mean, all the women took Lloyd Jones as their middle names when they got married. So instead of like today—very often a woman with, you know, Jane Smith marries John Doe, she'll become Jane Smith Doe and give up whatever her middle name might have been—not in our family.

JE: So Lloyd Jones was actually the last name?

HB: Last name, yes.

JE: Then her father, as we said, was Richard Lloyd Jones, owner of the Tulsa Tribune. All right, then he had sons?

HB: Yes, two sons—Jenkin Lloyd Jones and Richard Lloyd Jones.

JE: So Jenkin Lloyd Jones Senior—

HB: Yes?

JE: Had a sister?

HB: My mother. My grandfather, Richard Lloyd Jones, was brother to Frank Lloyd Wright's mother. And they grew up in the same area in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Lloyd Jones were first cousins. About the same age.

JE: That's because—?

HB: His—

JE: Either his father or his mother...?

HB: His father and Frank's mother were siblings.

JE: We have Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in our state...

HB: Yes.

JE: ... in our city.

HB: Yes.

JE: Westhope.

HB: Westhope. Richard Lloyd Jones built Westhope.

JE: And Richard Lloyd Jones didn't live there, did he?

HB: Yes, he did.

JE: Oh, he did?

HB: Yeah, he lived there till he died.

JE: Oh, really?

HB: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah.

JE: Richard Lloyd Jones Senior.

HB: Yes.

JE: Then we have Bartlesville—the Price Tower.

HB: Yes.

JE: I did a little research on this. You probably know that it comes from Harold C. Price Sr., who was head of the pipeline construction from HC Price Company. You're nodding your head—you knew that. I didn't have to tell you that. And he wanted to develop a headquarters in Bartlesville, so he hired Frank Lloyd Wright to design the headquarters for his company.

HB: Frank's only skyscraper.

JE: Right.

HB: If you can call a 15-story building anymore a skyscraper.

JE: Margaret and I were in Scottsdale several weeks ago, and we saw his winter home there. And his working lab, which—the whole thing was very interesting.

HB: At Taliesin West?

JE: Yes, right. Very interesting place in a nice location. Frank Lloyd Wright died in 1959. You were 9 years old. Were you ever around him or ever see him?

HB: My mother told me that I did meet him, but I did not know. I got to know his last wife, Olgivanna. And went out to Taliesin West, where she still literally held court. That was a training ground for young architects, but she would have, I mean, formal dinner every night. It was an interesting place.

JE: In West, and were you there too? You visited that?

HB: I visited, yes.

JE: What a remarkable man. But we're here to talk about you.

HB: It's all right.

JE: But that's interesting—that lineage that you have there.

HB: Just for the record—I mean, Richard Lloyd Jones Senior’s father, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, was a very famous, probably the most famous of all of them, in terms of “countrywide.” He was the first Unitarian minister west of the Appalachian Mountains, rode on the Hope ship with Henry Ford, and he was a pretty big guy back in the day.

JE: So is the name Westhope tied to your story there?

HB: Unfortunately, I don't know it. It relates back to a place that my grandfather knew in Wisconsin, but I'm not sure exactly what the connection is.

JE: When you were around your tables and eating and dinners and so forth, was there much talk around the table about the Tulsa Tribune and the paper business? Did they talk about that a lot at home?

HB: Not really. I mean, it came up, but that was not anywhere near the focus of conversation.

Chapter 3 – 7:45

Lawyer

John Erling (JE): Your education—where did you go to grade school?

Howard Barnett (HB): Elliot.

JE: Junior high?

HB: Edison.

JE: And that was through high school, and that was junior high and high together, weren't all—

HB: Full six years, yes.

JE: And when did you graduate?

HB: 1968.

JE: That was a remarkable year in our nation, wasn't it?

HB: Yeah, it was quite a year.

JE: Robert Kennedy was assassinated. Martin Luther King—

HB: Martin Luther King—

JE: — was assassinated.

HB: The crazy Democrat convention in Chicago.

JE: And so you were aware of all that. I don't know if people talked about it in school or not. And then you went on to where—college after that?

HB: I started Tulane. Did a couple of years there and then transferred back to the University of Tulsa and graduated University of Tulsa in 1972.

JE: And then, further?

HB: Law school, SMU. Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Graduated in '75.

JE: Why did you choose law school?

HB: You know, I wish I could give you some really neat story about wanting to be a lawyer or having seen some lawyer that impressed me with—it just—I learned early on in my education that I liked arguing, and I don't mean that in a negative sense. I mean just in terms of the logic involved. In school, when the teacher would ask, "Who wants an essay test versus a multiple choice?"—I'm the one kid raising his hand for the essay test. So it just—it, I just sort of gravitated to it. I figured out in college that that's kind of the way my brain worked.

JE: So then when you graduated in '75—

HB: Yes.

JE: Then what did you do?

HB: Practiced law.

JE: And who were you with?

HB: I was with a small boutique law firm here in Tulsa. When I joined, it was called Sneedling and Trotter, and by the time I left it almost 10 years later, it was Sneedling, Adams, and Barnett. It was a small firm—about six lawyers

when I joined it, and 26 when I left. So it grew during those wonderful days—you'll remember the '70s and '80s, the boom days of the oil business—and that's kind of how the firm was built, on these young, entrepreneurial, startup oil and gas companies that needed all kinds of legal work.

JE: So you just had fun doing that.

HB: It was a lot of fun. It was a crazy time—never to be repeated, I hope—because there was a lot of stupid money spent during those years.

JE: You were watching.

HB: It was great to be on the service side and get paid—not have my capital tied up in it.

JE: When did you meet your wife Billie? Is that about in here sometime or—

HB: It was SMU in 1970. We met in 1973, yeah.

JE: So you were in the same class?

HB: Well, she was in nursing school at Texas Women's University. And there was a mixer with the law school dorm, which I wasn't in, but my friend was running the dorm, so he invited me and the nurses, and we met there.

JE: Billie—B-I-L-L-I-E. How does that name come about?

HB: Well, her father's name was William. And he kind of wanted a son. And all he got was three daughters.

JE: So he was gonna name somebody Billie, wasn't he?

HB: Right. (Laughing)

JE: (Laughing) She's probably had some interesting experiences with that name.

HB: Well, she's Billie K, and her mother was Katherine, so they both got in on the first child.

JE: All right. And then you had children?

HB: We do—Adrian and Alison. Adrian's a lawyer. Alison's a social worker.

JE: Is Adrian here in Tulsa?

HB: Adrian's here in Tulsa, yes.

JE: She went after her father's business. And were you influencing that?

HB: Back in the day, with those crazy oil guys, I mean, I was working most late nights. I'd barely get home—maybe in time to put them to bed, but rarely in time to eat with them. And so Saturday, I'd take them to the office. Because I'd always go to work on Saturday. So they'd spend Saturday at the law offices. And then when I moved on to business, they spent the day at the business offices. So, I think it's osmosis more than anything else.

JE: So then it was Alison's husband who died. Can you tell us the circumstances of that?

HB: It was July of 2022, rather

JE: His name?

HB: Was Matthew Simpson. Matt—we called him Matt. He and my daughter and their two children, then four and two, had gone to a children's museum—it was on a Sunday morning.

JE: Where?

HB: In Durham, North Carolina, where they lived. And they rode their bikes. They were coming back home after visiting the museum, and the kids were in one of those little trailers that people drag behind a bike, and Alison was the one pulling them. Thank goodness, frankly. They came to a crossing of a major street that had a stoplight, but it wasn't—they were on a trail that had a stoplight for the trail people to be able to cross this major street. And they waited till the green light, and Matt started out ahead of Alison and was hit by a car running the red light, going about 50 miles an hour. And he never regained consciousness. He was in the hospital for about four days before he died. One of those kind of tragedies you read about in the paper, but you just never think about it affecting your own family.

JE: So the children then were how old? One and four?

HB: Four and two. And they witnessed it.

JE: Oh my. And do they talk about it?

HB: They do. Alison had made it kind of a real point to keep their father alive in their family. There are pictures of him. They talk about him. She encourages us—if we're visiting them and something comes up that reminds us of a story about Matt—to tell that story. And of course, it's an interesting thing I thought about not too long after the time. If this had happened when we were that age—in early 30s—there'd be pictures. But for these kids, they've got videos now. So they can see their father interacting with them. And those will become their memories. They won't have real memories—they'll have memories created by the videos.

JE: Well, that was tough to handle that for sure. I saw them at your—I was at your anniversary.

HB: Yes.

JE: Yeah, they were there. And they're just beautiful little kids. Absolutely gorgeous.

HB: Yup. They're doing fine.

Chapter 4 – 4:33

TSF Communications

John Erling (JE): TSF Communications Corporation. Explain—what is that?

Howard Barnett (HB): 1981—in 1982, January 1982—my uncle Richard Lloyd Jones, who was president of the Tulsa Tribune, died. And he was kind of the business side of the newspaper. Jenkin Lloyd Jones was the editorial, news, newspaper side, if you will. And there was really no one to take Rich—Richard Lloyd Jones, called Dick—no one to take Uncle Dick's place. So they asked me—I was a business lawyer—to kind of come join the board and help direct the Tribune. It was doing very well financially at the time. Those boom times were good for everybody.

And I started investing the money with another company called Swab-Fox Companies. They were primarily early in the pipeline business, but they

were investing the proceeds of that into other things. Unfortunately, they were real estate and oil and gas is what they were investing in—real estate in Tulsa, Oklahoma—which we all thought was great until the bust came. And then everything crashed. But we'd spent so much money together—after about two or three years—we finally decided to merge the two companies. We had so much intertwined. So that became Tribune Swab-Fox. And then Tribune Swab-Fox in 1989 spun off as a subsidiary, took it public on the American Stock Exchange, called TSF Communications.

And so Tribune Swab-Fox still existed, and it owned 63% of TSF Communications, now a public company. And Tribune Swab-Fox was a public company too. So we had two public companies interrelated.

JE: But did you take over at the time when the banks were threatening to pull credit?

HB: Yeah. By 1992, we had gotten—you know, the Gulf War in 1991 was devastating, because most of the businesses that we'd acquired after putting the companies together were in one way or another related to—or required—advertising revenues to sustain them. As you may remember, one of the effects of the Gulf War was to basically shut down advertising, because no one knew what was gonna happen. And we had like a 45% drop in revenues in one year.

And we still had a ton of debt left over from that good old Tulsa real estate, because it didn't move anywhere. No one was buying it. And we had tens of millions of dollars of debt over there on that. And finally the banks started saying, "No mas. You guys aren't gonna make it. You're gonna do this." We had a lot of value in the assets—we just didn't have the cash flow.

So there was a move on to sell the assets, liquidate the company. The board eventually fired the CEO. And I had a team under him that basically worked for me, and we said, "Give us a chance." And we outlined a plan to bring the company out, and it worked.

It wasn't genius—as I told the stockholders at our first meeting the next summer—I wish I could tell you that we were brilliant in our creativity. All we did was sell stuff that was losing money and pay off debt with the

proceeds. I mean, it wasn't like it was brilliant. But it worked anyway, and the company turned around.

JE: Well, the shares—wasn't it at one time pretty low?

HB: Like under \$4 a share when I took over as CEO.

JE: And when you sold it, it was how much?

HB: \$40.25 a share.

JE: So you did something brilliant, didn't you?

HB: Well, four years later, we just did things right. We minded our P's and Q's. We made some acquisitions, made some really timely divestitures during that time, got some luck—like you always do. The economy was good at the time, which always helps. Didn't have to deal with any great disruptions there, so we were able to focus on the company.

JE: But in that time, the paper itself was not doing very well.

HB: It was gone by the time I took over as CEO. I took over as CEO in August 1993.

JE: All right.

Chapter 5 – 16:12

Tribune Closes

John Erling (JE): So that was in '92, then...

Howard Barnett (HB): Yes

JE: ... that the Tulsa World announced that it would not renew their agreement, which—what was that agreement?

HB: It was called a joint operating arrangement, which had been entered into originally in 1941. It was one of the earliest of those. They came to sort of proliferate—I mean, there were like 26 or 27 of them at one time. And that's basically a partnership with your competitor whereby you share a lot of the facility—whether it's building, presses—in our case, circulation, advertising.

All that was done jointly. The only thing separate was the newsroom. Each had a separate news voice, which was why in 1970 that concept of joint operating agreement was blessed by Congress and given an exception to the antitrust laws, to try and preserve dual editorial voices in the market.

JE: And so that was preserved here?

HB: It was preserved here until 1992, yeah. We were an evening newspaper, and evening newspapers—as you well know—were not exactly doing well. TV was kind of the first shot. When you had the evening news going, people would get home, turn on the 5:30 news—here in our time slot—and that's the time they used to read the paper.

JE: You know, there are still some of us around who still miss the Tulsa Tribune in our driveway.

HB: Yes, and I still read the paper—and I very often read it at night.

JE: But we wish we were reading the Tulsa Tribune, because the World and the Tribune did take different stances. And one would be considered maybe more liberal—the Tulsa Tribune—more conservative. Would that be accurate?

HB: Probably, as those terms apply in Oklahoma. I mean, being liberal in Oklahoma is not what you call liberal. But yeah, they took different—and that was the whole intent. Again, the congressional action on the antitrust laws preserved different voices. And I think—I know talking to people at the Tulsa World after the Tribune shut down—they knew they were not as good a newspaper after that. Didn't have the competitive edge, and that really created—because, you know, with the Tulsa Tribune, the first thing people did in the morning when they got to work at 5:30 or 6 in the morning—the early, early crowd—was tear the Tulsa World apart and find a story. And then, if there's a good story, let's find a new angle on it. We've got to get a different angle.

JE: The World paid the Tribune about \$30 million for its share?

HB: Yeah, over time, yes. Over time. And that was a little bit more than what we had been expecting for the cash flow over the remaining period of the contract. Basically, what happened—they didn't really buy us out. We all just agreed to cancel our joint operating agreement early. So theoretically,

the next day we could have opened a newspaper, if we had things like presses and Eli Whitney around. But I mean, we knew we could—we could theoretically start a newspaper, but that was obviously not in the cards.

JE: No. But we should say that Jenkin Lloyd Jones Senior was a publisher, he was an editor, he was a writer. He was known beyond Tulsa...

HB: Yes, very much so.

JE: ... for much of his travels. He was carried in other newspapers. So that's what the Tulsa Tribune had. And the Tulsa World didn't have that kind of leadership from the top. They had business type. I'm saying that to see whether you agree with me or not.

HB: I would agree with that. And again, I think the reason my uncle Jenk—Jenkin Lloyd Jones—did all those things is that that was his personal proclivity. He was a writer. He thought he had something to say. He wanted to say it out there. And he signed on to get syndicated, did all this stuff. He was actually president of the United States Chamber of Commerce for one year. So he was well known around the country. And the Tulsa World didn't have that kind of people.

JE: The last edition of the Tulsa Tribune was September 30th, 1992. And I can very proudly say that I broadcast my show from the Tulsa World-Tribune...

HB: Yes, you did. Yes, you did.

JE: ... and he was there to visit with us. And I still have that interview. Much to be admired, for sure.

HB: Now, they did—both he and Jenk Jones Jr.—did a really great job of allowing the Tribune to go out with dignity, making the employees feel that they had done something important and worthwhile, even though we were shutting down.

JE: I should bring up my friend Jim East, who passed away last year. He worked for the Tribune, and he became an editorial writer as well, and enjoyed that time very much at the Tribune.

HB: Oh, and Jim was a great guy. He and I were really pretty good friends. I would very often go down to the newsroom and just pop into his office, and we'd just sit there and talk about world affairs—local, national,

international—until somebody would come in and say, “Aren’t you gonna go to work today,” or something?

JE: Well, unfortunately, he died last year at an early age—in his 60s. But it’s interesting—I had interviewed him about two months before that...

HB: Oh, wow.

JE: ...and so I have his interview on VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

HB: Excellent, excellent.

Chapter 6 – 8:35

Chief of Staff

John Erling (JE): So then, you move on in your life—Director of Business Development, The Official Information Company. What is that all about?

Howard Barnett (HB): We sold TSF Communications in October of 1997. And the company that actually bought us was a buyout firm out of New York City that bought us—a private equity firm—and they formed another company called The Official Information Company to hold the assets of TSF Communications they bought. So at closing, I was asked—I was given, I wasn’t asked, as part of the deal—a one-year consulting agreement with them. And we all thought that was gonna be one of those consulting agreements where the ex-CEO gets pushed off to the side and told, “Go home and don’t worry about it.” No—they put me to work. I did acquisitions for them and new product development for a year.

JE: What does that mean—acquisition and new product? Like, for example?

HB: Well, we bought a company in Germany, we bought a company in England, and we bought a couple of companies here in the United States. All related to what TSF Communications had before—add-ons or complementary, theoretically synergistic. I’ve never really seen a good synergy, but everybody still wants them.

JE: So then who was the owner, then, of the company?

HB: It was a private equity firm called Veronis Suhler Partners out of New York.

JE: OK. But then something else happens to you beyond that. I think we've got 1998?

HB: '98, yes.

JE: Tell us what happens.

HB: Well, I'd finished my consulting agreement, and just a few months before that, Ken Lackey—who was Chief of Staff for Frank Keating, the Governor of Oklahoma—called and basically asked me what I was doing. And I told him I was about ready to finish up that deal. And he said, "Well, Howard, you've got some money in your pocket now. You sold your company. It's time for a little public service here." So he asked me to come down and meet with Frank and talk through what opportunities there might be.

JE: You're talking about Governor Frank Keating.

HB: Governor Frank Keating, yeah. Eventually I ended up running the Department of Commerce as his Director and was on Frank's cabinet as his Secretary of Commerce.

JE: Take us through a little bit about what you actually did. What does the Secretary of Commerce do?

HB: Well, that's Oklahoma's statewide economic development arm. On a day-to-day basis, it basically means working with existing companies to help them when they need help—with mostly state money that might be available, helping them with grants. We had a group that worked the federal side to help with money. But when you talk about what the governor wants the Department of Commerce to do—it's all about getting companies in from out of state. In Frank's case, that was a big, big deal.

But he also focused on helping companies already here. One thing he did that no one else has ever done—we had a weekly breakfast with CEOs of Oklahoma companies and listened to what they had to say and what they wanted to do. But we also did a lot of traveling. We went to California and New York, several international trips—all focused on trying to get companies interested in coming to Oklahoma.

We planted a lot of seeds. For instance, Tulsa BizJet here, which is a Lufthansa-owned entity—we met with Lufthansa three or four times. I met once with Mayor Susan Savage. She was over there trying to get them because they were interested. Then I met with them with Governor Frank Keating. And about a year later, that happened. We also got a company—I don't remember the name—out of Taiwan that came. I remember the international ones because that was the big deal. They went to Claremore—I forget what their name is. But it's a long process. Rarely do you just go over there and sign a deal and come back.

JE: Right. Well, that must have been interesting and fun for you—if you could help existing companies in Oklahoma seek funding and all that. That must have been enjoyable.

HB: It was fun. The Department of Commerce at the time, at least, managed the statewide CDBG funds—the Community Development Block Grant funds. Larger cities like Tulsa and Oklahoma City—they get it directly from the feds. But then for smaller cities, the feds just give a lump sum to the state, and then it's up to the state to dole it out to the smaller towns. So I spent a lot of time going to small-town Oklahoma, talking about what they need to do to qualify to get those funds. And that was interesting. I mean, I'd been around Oklahoma, but not at that level and not that often and not that deep. So it was really an interesting time.

JE: I'm sure it was. But then—you resigned?

HB: Well, I didn't resign. I got bumped upstairs.

JE: No, no—the Governor appointed you for something else?

HB: Yes. Ken Lackey, as it turned out—he admitted to me later—when he asked me to come down there, he was not just seeking someone to run the Department of Commerce but looking for a successor.

JE: You didn't know you were being auditioned?

HB: Right. He was tired of government—as all business guys tend to get after a while. He wanted to come back to Tulsa. So he resigned in July, and the Governor appointed me—in July 1999—and the Governor then appointed me as as his Chief of Staff. We got to know each other on some travels and

that sort of thing. I mean, I'd known Frank most of my life, but we were never really close. I was close with his wife.

JE: Cathy.

HB: I was in kindergarten through high school with her.

JE: Yeah. So that was 1999 to 2003, I think?

HB: Right to the end. I was Frank's third Chief of Staff. And when he offered me the job, he basically said two things: one, I had to agree to stay to the end of the term—he didn't want to change Chiefs again. And then two—"You are the only person that can tell me no."

JE: Mhm. Did you?

HB: Yes.

JE: Did he listen to you?

HB: Yes, he did. There were only a couple of times. I mean—what, you want a story on that?

JE: Yes.

HB: We were scheduled to go to China. One of those trips to look at companies, trying to get investment back in Oklahoma. And on our way to China, Frank had an offer and was going to make a speech in Seattle. So we flew the state plane to Seattle. Obviously, we were going to take a big plane to China.

Frank did something to his back the day we were leaving. And by the time we got there for that speech, he was in horrible pain. He gave the speech basically hunched over the lectern, holding himself up with it. And then he came off and I said, "Governor, we're going back to Oklahoma." He goes, "No, we have to go to China. There are people over there waiting for us," because there was a big contingent of Oklahomans who had gone before us. We were meeting them.

I said, "No, Governor, we are not. You are going back to Tulsa—or back to Oklahoma City." And we turned the state plane around. We went back to Oklahoma City. And both the doctors and—in particular—Cathy said,

“Thank you, thank you, thank you for bringing him back.” I don’t know what we would’ve done in China with that.

JE: Yeah. Did he have surgery or anything to fix it?

HB: No, but he did have a lot of therapy.

JE: So was that China trip ever made again?

HB: It was again, yes. A couple of years later.

Chapter 7 – 12:05

Legislative Issues

John Erling (JE): So then you're responsible for different issues, I suppose—state policy and working with the legislature.

Howard Barnett (HB): As chief then, and under Frank Keating as chief—and it's different for each governor how they want to use their chief—but in my case, basically, all things that related to the government reported ultimately to me. Obviously to the governor, but I was his surrogate in that regard. So whether it was meetings with the legislature, meeting with tribes, policy initiatives, budget issues—all those eventually found their way to my office.

JE: At that time, the Democrats were still in control of the legislature. So, and since Frank is a Republican, did you have challenges because of that?

HB: Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that they did control the legislature, which meant that anything we wanted to get done, they had to concur. The no part is that we had enough Republicans to sustain a veto. Frank had 305 vetoes, all sustained. Before I got there, there were like 200 and some odd, and they'd finally gotten the attention of the leadership of the legislature that understood that if you wanted to get something done that you wanted to get done, you had to come to us, and vice versa.

JE: Because he'd veto.

HB: And he'd veto it if it was something he didn't like. That manifested itself primarily in budget issues. Before Frank, governors were often—I mean, George Nigh, I remember talking to him—his last year he didn't even submit a budget because he was so disgusted because the legislature would just throw it out.

So it was really an interesting time because you had Frank, in one sense, probably the most powerful governor we had because he had the ability to get something done—because he had the ability to bargain with the legislature and hold them to it. He had something they wanted, which was to get whatever they wanted passed. And he had the veto pen. So it was a very, very interesting time in that regard. Frank never demanded a lot; we usually had a fairly straightforward policy issue. His big deal was income taxes. So we often got a 0.25 or 0.5 point cut off income taxes in exchange for spending some money on something they wanted to spend the money on.

JE: It seems like I recall education was a big initiative for him, and he felt that we were in the lower tier. We still are, I think, but that was of concern to him.

HB: Remember “4 by 4?”

JE: 4 by 4. Tell us about that.

HB: Basically, what Frank's big deal became was that if you wanted to graduate high school, you had to have 4 years of math, 4 years of English, 4 years of science, and 4 years of social studies. At the time, we only had 2 years of math required, believe it or not. There were 4 years of English—that's the only one of those four that did have the four. We got the 3rd year of math required during that. We got 3 years of science required. Never got the 4th year. But that was a big deal because it wasn't just that we were falling behind in terms of support for education, which we always have been, but we just weren't doing a very good job with what we had. That was a very, very big initiative.

JE: Well, in defense of those of us who are math-challenged, I would probably have a hard time getting through 4 years of math. And I don't know if that was ever taken into consideration or not, but there'd be a lot of kids might have been left behind.

HB: That's why also they tried to couple it with a lot of remediation. You had to have remediation to make it work.

JE: Right to Work was big for Frank.

HB: Right to Work was very big for Frank. 2001. You remember the saga. We had been pushing that every year. It was always a treat to go to his State of the State because the union would all come into the gallery and just sit there and wait and wait for Frank. Finally, "Mr. Right to Work," — "BOOOOOOOOO!" — it would move the whole place—it was almost a ritual. But he finally got the legislature pushed into a corner.

You may remember Mary Fallin, lieutenant governor, took over control of the Senate. Finally, Stratton Taylor, the leader of the Senate, agreed to allow a vote because, of course, the Democrats—the unions didn't want Right to Work. That was one of their constituencies.

JE: "Right to work," meaning you didn't have to belong to a union...

HB: ... to work.

JE: ... to work, right.

HB: Right. So anyway, we finally had the vote on September 25th in 2001. Remember what happened just a little bit before that? September 11th, 2001—the World Trade Center got wiped out by planes. That really threw an interesting wrinkle into that contest because, basically, Frank and I were meeting—we were having breakfast with the guy who was running the campaign. I got a call from Billie and she said, "Are you guys in front of a TV?" I said, "No." She said, "Go to the TV." It was about 8:15 in the morning. We got to the TV in time to see the second plane go in.

We were meeting with our campaign manager. We immediately canceled all of our ads. And bluntly, John: Labor, which they were running nationally, didn't. We felt like that was a big mistake for them because their ads—you may or may not remember—were pretty vicious about how Oklahoma was gonna basically be a wasteland and all this kind of stuff if we did it.

Then our first day, I went back up that next Sunday night, and it was basically just Frank talking, saying, "We have an opportunity in Oklahoma to show the terrorists something. It's called democracy. We're the first vote

to happen after 9/11. So whether you're gonna vote for or against—and you know where I stand, I'm for it—please go vote. Show the terrorists that we care in Oklahoma."

JE: And it worked. Wow

HB: It passed. Polls flipped. We were down by 10 points. We won by 7 or 8 points.

You know, John, one of the more interesting things of being chief of staff was tribal negotiations. That was always—you may or may not remember the water compact. We were gonna sell water to Texas.

JE: Yes.

HB: Evil, evil people—selling water to Texas.

JE: Right.

JE: In southeast Oklahoma, there are basically six river basins that all empty into the Red River. The Red River is salinated as it goes through the salt plains out west—renders the water essentially non-drinkable. You can use it for some purposes—agriculture and whatever—but not for drinking. And we'd done hydrolysis surveys that showed you could drop a city the size of Chicago in southeast Oklahoma and still have water to burn. A lot of water.

But that's also the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations—now reservations, thanks to McGirt. So we had to negotiate with the tribe before we could negotiate with Texas. It took us two months to get the deal cut with the tribes, and that was the toughest negotiations I've been in in my life, bar none. But we did get a deal done. We had to do it in private. Tribes are not transparent, not public.

Well, by the time people knew what we were doing, the opposition had already gotten organized. Basically, selling water to Texas was akin to killing babies on the south steps of the Capitol. It was really too bad because that would have been literally billions of dollars that could have gone into the poorest part of our state in southeast Oklahoma.

JE: So were we afraid we were gonna run out of water, or what was the opposition?

HB: Oh yeah, it started out that way. We had all kinds of studies that showed that was ridiculous. When people say, "There are people down here who don't have any running water in their house." Well, that's not a water problem—that's an infrastructure problem. And as I learned, water is just a very personal, contentious issue. And of course, selling water to Texas didn't help.

We—I was at an Academy town hall we had on water a couple of years later, and I chaired it. I told the people when we started, "We're gonna talk about selling water to Kansas. Let's take Texas out of this equation."

JE: We do not like Texas. Right. So when you talked about it and negotiating, was that you? Or did you—you were negotiating with the tribes to do that?

HB: Yes, yes.

JE: You and representatives from those two tribes.

HB: The tribes. Yes, exactly. Sometimes it was just three of us. Sometimes myself and the two chiefs—on particularly thorny issues like sovereignty. One of the biggest problems in a lot of those compacts is verification. The tribes, rightly, are concerned about their sovereignty, and they don't want to just open their books up to everybody. So how do you figure out if everybody's on the up and up?

And then you've got jurisdiction. They want their courts to apply, we want our courts to apply. How does that work? You've got to find some tricky, tricky ways through it.

JE: Well, you were called on to do a lot of dancing there, and so you were probably thinking back to your business life and all that was preparing you for this moment.

HB: Oh, I think—yeah, everything. Lawyer time? Certainly, the legal thought process went into almost everything that you did at some level. And then of course just business—having done international business and that kind of thing, you negotiate, you buy a lot of companies, did a lot of deals.

JE: So the three of you kind of bonded then over this, probably.

HB: We really did.

JE: I mean, as you came around.

HB: Yeah, we did. We did become friends. I mean, it was not without contention. I remember one time, John—we had one particular issue. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I'm sure it was probably sovereignty or something like that. I'd come up with what I thought was an elegant solution. I presented it to the two chiefs, and one chief goes, "That would work. That solves the problem. I wouldn't get reelected, but that's OK."

We often forget their politics. We talk about our politics, but their politics are just as interesting as ours.

JE: Right.

Chapter 8 – 7:03

Politics

John Erling (JE): So then we talk about these initiatives he wanted. We have a Capitol building that does not have a dome on it. And you were part of all that.

Howard Barnett (HB): Yes. In fact, Frank, once—see, in January of 2001, Frank called Mike Hunter, who was our legislative liaison. He was also Secretary of State, and myself in the office and said, "OK, I got a couple of years left here. Two things gotta get done: Right to Work. Dome on the Capitol. Go, guys, go." Frank raised most of the money to build the dome privately.

JE: Came under the Oklahoma Centennial Act.

HB: We finally got some money out of the legislature because that became kind of—as we neared the end of the fundraising—that became a deal. Everybody going, "Where's the state? This is a state building. How come the state isn't in on this?" So that was one of the tougher negotiations with the Democrats because they didn't—not that they didn't want the dome—they just didn't want to give Frank the victory of saying he built the dome. And then we had all the problems of getting, you know, finance, because all the money was coming in on pledges, which are over years,

and had to go finance that. So a lot of my business life came back into play to try and get that money up front so we could build the damn thing.

JE: Wasn't it over \$20 million?

HB: It was over \$20 million, yeah. It was built very fast by two Tulsa companies—Flintco and Manhattan—partnering.

JE: Well, Frank did get credit. He should have gotten credit for it. It was his idea, and he wasn't apologetic about walking around raising money for it.

HB: Absolutely not, no. I mean, he always talked about, you know, during the Civil War, Lincoln finished the dome on the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., as a sign of the nation rising. And he said, "It's time for Oklahoma to rise."

JE: And then those who contributed get their name in...

HB: If you put a million bucks in, you get your name on a ring there inside the dome.

JE: OK. So then after you leave the governor's office, then what happens to you?

HB: Just got a couple of friends of mine and I from our old TSF Communication days. Formed a little company which we called TSF again—TSF Capital—and it was just a little boutique. We did consulting, some investing, we formed some syndicates and bought some companies, mostly turnarounds, and spent our time doing that. So it was just, like I said, a consulting investment company.

JE: But then you got into politics.

HB: Yeah. I mean, I always said I wanted to run for office at some point, but then having been in the government, you kind of feel like, OK, I kinda know that now. Maybe I can do something. So I looked around, and the state treasurer's office—Robert Butkin had actually approached me before he decided to run again in 2002 and said, "I may not run again. -- Robert and I were friends. -- "This is an office I think you might be good at. You might like it." And so I started looking at it. Robert eventually resigned to take the law school deanship here in Tulsa. Governor appointed Scott Meacham to be the treasurer.

JE: And then you ran for the Republican nomination.

HB: That's right. Ran against Frank's twin brother, Dan.

JE: So how did that go over?

HB: It was interesting.

JE: I'll bet. Did Frank support you?

HB: I remember I talked to Frank, obviously, about running and all that. And then in early December of 2005, we were in Oklahoma City. Frank was inducted in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. We're having a drink with Frank and Cathy and Dan—Dan Keating and his wife Kathy, also "Cathy", with a K. Dan suddenly announces, "I'm gonna run for treasurer next year." And Frank goes, "You can't do that. Howard's running. Howard's running." So Frank was basically totally neutral during the primary, which, you know, did not make his brother happy.

JE: But you defeated him.

HB: I defeated him, yes—soundly. Sixty-forty.

JE: And what—people didn't want another Keating in there, or what?

HB: No, no. My first poll, he was leading me 48 to 9. But Dan had had some financial problems and had some tax liens on his house. I told him the week before, finally I said, "Dan, don't file, please. I've got this and I, you know, I'm going to have to use it, because I can't beat your name. I've got to beat you." And he said, "Oh, you won't do that. Not with Frank." And Frank had told me, "Hey, everything's fair in politics." And we did use it. It flipped the switch.

JE: So then Scott Meacham was the incumbent.

HB: He was the incumbent. And he beat me. Beat me like a drum. That was the year that Brad Henry ran against Ernest Istook for governor. And Brad won like 64–36. I mean, the top of the ticket wasn't just no help—it was a drag. So all Republicans lost across the board. Remember Brenda Reneau had been elected four times—she lost. I mean, every Republican lost, thanks to Ernest Istook.

JE: So could you not take it personally? But you did? But you knew you were in the wrong party, I guess?

HB: Oh, I mean, I remember running against an incumbent, and particularly an incumbent like Scott Meacham, who was best buddies with Brad Henry, a very popular governor who was going to go coasting to a landslide victory. I mean, you know, it was an uphill fight, but it was fun. I got over it fairly quickly. I even hired Scott as president of i2E when I was chairman of that board.

JE: Which board?

HB: i2E, which is state support for tech companies in Oklahoma. I was chairman of the board and actually hired him—much to my wife's chagrin. She still hasn't forgiven me for that. Losing a race is harder on the spouse than it is on the candidate.

JE: I suppose.

Chapter 9 – 9:45

OSU Medical

John Erling (JE): Let me get you into university work—about 2009, Oklahoma State University. You're chief negotiator for the OSU Medical Center Trust. How did that come about and how did you move into that capacity?

Howard Barnett (HB): Well, I became president of OSU Tulsa in 2009 and was made president of OSU Center for Health Sciences in 2010. And the hospital—OSU Medical Center—is the teaching hospital for the osteopathic, OSU Osteopathic Medical School, which is part of Center for Health Sciences. The first negotiation was to take control of the hospital away from Hillcrest, which was managing it for us. And then we had to get state money worked into that situation—got state money for the first time, any significant amount of money.

JE: Let's just go back. OSU Tulsa—that was actually for the professional workforce, wasn't it? Allowing mid-career professionals to advance their education at OSU Tulsa?

HB: Yes and no. I mean, it was...

JE: They could go to school without leaving their jobs.

HB: OSU Tulsa was, you know—we call our student body “place-bound.” I mean, they were in Tulsa because they either worked here, their family was here, and they couldn’t leave. I mean—and we would say this to potential students—you know, if you can go to Stillwater, time-wise, money-wise, do it. That’s the full-blown college experience. Don’t come here. We’re just a commuter school. Now, it was great because we offered the same degree—the OSU degree. There wasn’t a little asterisk or something saying “matriculated in Tulsa.” So yeah, no, it was a very interesting time.

JE: So then you resigned, I think in 2013, to accept the position of Chief Executive Officer of the OSU Medical Authority and OSU Medical Trust, which owns OSU Medical Center—which is confusing to me, and I hope you can clarify it.

HB: I will try. In 20...—won’t be the exact dates—but 2011 was when we got the first good tranche of state money: \$13 million. And one of the conditions at the time to receive that from the state was that it not be owned by the state, okay? They didn’t want it to be owned. So we talked—and the reason for that is back in the ’90s, they had sold the University Hospital, and that was one of Frank’s big accomplishments, getting out of the hospital business. They didn’t want to go back in the hospital business. So we had to create an entity that could own the hospital. And we talked to the City Council and got them to approve us creating a city trust to own it, and that was OSU Medical Center Trust.

So we formed the city trust, got the state money. Fast forward a couple of years—2013—we needed a lot more money from the state. So I was down there a lot, spending a lot of time down there. It became a situation where I needed the position to say why I was down there and what I was doing. So that’s why I took that position with the trust. I was still president of OSU Tulsa at the time, but I did resign from OSU Center for Health Sciences. That’s when Kayse Shrum would become dean. She’s running the medical school—that’s the main function—that’s fine.

New legislature, new head of appropriations—they would fund us the money we wanted, but it had to be owned by the state. So we went

through the rigmarole of transferring this to a state trust and transferring the hospital to this state trust to finally get that money. So my legal background—I spent a lot of time on that.

JE: Review again—what do we have in Tulsa that’s OSU medical now? The hospital?

HB: The hospital, obviously. Still the osteopathic medical school. And of course, the new VA hospital being built here is also going to be affiliated or run with OSU. So OSU will man—it’ll have the doctors in that hospital. So it’s becoming a real serious medical center—not rivaling, you know, Oklahoma City OU center—but it’s becoming something very substantial.

JE: We always hear about competition between OU and OSU on the football field. But the competition goes beyond the football field. Am I accurate on that?

HB: Yeah. (Laughing)

JE: (Laughing) Are you hesitant to say it? I mean, if you're over asking for money, OU's going to come along, "Well, you're going to give them that, well you're going to need to give us that."

HB: I'll go back to my time as chief of staff too. I mean, if we wanted to give a million dollars to OU for something, we had to give a million dollars to OSU, and half a million dollars got split among all the other schools. OK? So to get \$1, you had to spend \$3, right? I remember when I was chief of staff—I was literally at the George Bush inaugural, riding in a limo in my tux to an inaugural ball—and my cell phone rings. It's David Boren. He goes, "Howard, I figured out how we could fund the weather center." You may remember they were trying to build this big weather center—well, that required some state money too. So we had to call OSU and say, "OK, we're going to give you \$8 million. What are you going to do with it?"

That was kind of a sad example, but that's kind of how the deal works. And, obviously, we compete for students. And particularly here in Tulsa, we don't compete that much—OSU Tulsa does not compete that much with OU Tulsa—because OU Tulsa focuses mostly in the medical areas, social work, pharmacy. They've got all that kind of stuff—obviously the medical school. We don't do that. But there still is that rub there always is in everything.

I guess I can say this now since I'm not working for anybody, but I mean—OSU alums really have a chip on their shoulder. Always kind of the second fiddle to some degree. There's a joke about the football teams: if you're an OSU fan, you're an alum; if you're an OU fan, you're an Oklahoman. And that really kind of sums up a lot of the feeling that OSU has.

JE: But you can't really blame them. "If OU is going to get a million, why didn't we get a million?"

HB: Exactly. No—well, it's a comprehensive research university just like OU is. Comparable student body.

JE: You were working for OSU, but Gerry Clancy was president of OU Tulsa then. Did the two of you actually get along and try to work together?

HB: Yes, yes. No, we were friends before that, but yeah, definitely then. Gerry was a great guy, and yeah—we tried to work together.

JE: Did that go over with the upper echelon? Did they like to see—

HB: You know, John, you know this—there's always been an agitation in Tulsa to get a four-year university here. And what we've ended up with is a whole bunch of basically two-year—because OSU can't teach the first two years, neither can Langston, neither can Northeastern. So we all just teach junior, seniors.

JE: And we have the community college, of course.

HB: Which is why we can't—and Tulsa Community College has been very strong. That relationship—one of the things I take some pride in is, I really got that relationship a lot closer. And it's flowered even more since I left.

JE: With the community college?

HB: With the community college. Because they're our feeder school. I mean, 80% of the students we had at OSU Tulsa came from TCC. Their student body is basically the same as ours—they're place-bound students for the most part. So that's a very, very important relationship.

But Tulsa's always wanted a four-year freestanding university. It was talked about when OSU Tulsa came into being. It's talked about periodically now

and then. And so Gerry and I spent some time trying to figure out if there's some way—we even talked about it. Are you familiar with IUPUI? Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis. It's a four-year school that's jointly run by Indiana University and Purdue University. And we talked about that model and whether that might be something we could do here in Tulsa.

That ran into problems—one, cost—but two, you've got TCC. So how do you deal with that? If you start a four-year school, then you're competing with TCC. Everybody in Tulsa may want a four-year school, but they didn't want that. OK. How do you plan to make those two things work together?

Chapter 10 – 4:50

New Form of Government

John Erling (JE): With all your work, you got involved in government—and that was a city charter, I think?

Howard Barnett (HB): Correct.

JE: Which ultimately did what?

HB: Changed the form of our city government from a commission form, which is five commissioners—mayor, roads, water, finance, don't remember the fifth one—to a council form, mayor-council form. Strong mayor-council form.

I started out, I chaired a group that the Tulsa Chamber formed. Chaired it with Budge Lewis, a lawyer here in town. We studied for a year and had people from all over the country come and talk to us about different forms of city government. And made a recommendation to adopt the strong mayor-council form of government, as opposed to a weak mayor, which is where you have a city manager typically.

Then a group—the Tulsa Chamber, the AFL-CIO, League of Women Voters—formed another group to implement that recommendation, and I chaired that as well. We did it for a year and a half. We had public

hearings—really some interesting, interesting public hearings, particularly on the north side, who were sure they were going to get screwed again somehow out of all this, which they did not.

And eventually, Roger Randle, who was then mayor, signed on to this and took our report, and essentially that became the blueprint for the new Tulsa City Charter. February 14, 1989.

JE: Why was there a move to change the charter?

HB: Well, there was a potential lawsuit under the United States Voting Rights Act that our five commissioners were all elected from about a three-mile square area of Tulsa in South Tulsa. And it was not representative, and there was some—well, the feds were threatening they were bringing a lawsuit. That was the impetus.

But as we got into it, we realized that it really wasn't a very fair form of government. We needed representation from all parts of the city in our city government.

JE: But you said North Tulsa was a little nervous about this? But that they actually ended up better?

HB: Well, in my opinion, they did. They ended up with what amounts to really one and a half districts, for the most part. You know, the only city commissioner from that part of Tulsa had been appointed when there was a vacancy, and then he ran for election the next time and won as an incumbent. But that's the only time they've ever had any representation, to my knowledge.

JE: Meaning a Black candidate and officeholder, right?

HB: Yes, yes.

JE: Isn't it frustrating, though, to try to convince people? No matter what you put out there, there will be somebody who's for it or against it. And I guess if you go into that mindset, you know the table is going to be set. But then it's to convince these people to come your way. Are you a sweet-talker?

HB: No, but I do know how to make my point and convince my side. I remember a public hearing at Rudisill Library, and they were basically

shouting us down. And I just got—there's a stage there in their meeting room—I just got up on the stage and said, "Come on, let's talk. Let's, you know, give me the questions." And actually had a front-page picture in the Tulsa World of me up on that stage.

Tulsa Tribune hardly covered it. That was one of the funniest things—they really wouldn't cover me very much.

JE: Really?

HB: Yeah.

JE: Why?

HB: I don't know. I always thought it was a little bit of jealousy or—I don't know what the right word is.

JE: You were related to the --

HB: But I mean, we'd have—I'd have a front-page story in the Tulsa World maybe once every three or four weeks, and that same story would be on, you know, page A13 in the Tulsa Tribune.

JE: Well, that would be Jenkin Lloyd Jones Jr. then, wouldn't it?

HB: I—I don't know. I don't accuse him of it by any means. There was somebody making an editorial choice. It wasn't Jenk. I'm confident it wasn't Jenk.

JE: Yeah. Bless his heart, he's no longer with us now. But we've interviewed him too, as a matter of fact.

HB: Yes, yes.

JE: He was a great historian.

HB: Absolutely.

JE: I, one time, drove from here to Bartlesville with him, and as he drove along, he'd say, "See that mound of dirt over there? In 1892, Pocahontas..."
(Laughing)

HB: [Unintelligible] (Laughing)

JE: He was a great man.

Chapter 11 – 2:25

Advice

John Erling (JE): Today: What are you running today?

Howard Barnett (HB): I'm retired. I've got some nonprofit boards that I serve on.

JE: I should say you and Billie are one of our great philanthropists, and you give to a lot of good causes in our town. You have a trust?

HB: We have a trust, we have a foundation—yes.

JE: And so you take delight in doing that, I'm sure.

HB: Oh yeah, yeah. And I give Billie most of the credit. She spends a lot of time making that work.

JE: You were such a leader in so many areas, and students listen to this. What would be your advice to students who actually want to be in leadership? What would you advise them?

HB: Beyond getting a good education? I think that's absolutely vital. I'd think about what areas of leadership. Because obviously the only job I've had that I was trained for was a lawyer, okay? So everything else was, you know, you learned on the job or osmosis or something.

Look around, understand what leadership means. Because leadership is not—I've never really understood the teaching of leadership. I haven't really delved into that much, but it just seems to me kind of an odd concept. Because to be a leader, you have to prove yourself, that you know what you're doing in a particular area.

But having an expertise within areas and bringing that to bear is not looked at as often as it should be. This is gonna sound self-serving, but I highly recommend courses that require you to think. Don't take those

courses that do multiple choice tests—I never did. Always take courses that are essay questions, because they require you to think. And that will serve you better than almost anything else that leadership training is gonna give you.

JE: How would you like to be remembered?

HB: I would like to think that I'd be remembered as someone who did make a contribution to our city and to our state.

JE: Nobody would argue with that, I'm quite certain. So, Howard, I want to thank you for this. Fun to go down some memory lanes with you and all of that, and gives good background to the history of Oklahoma as we followed your life.

HB: Thank you. I've enjoyed it.

JE: Thank you.

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