

Jim Inhofe

The senior United States senator from Oklahoma recounts his life story.

Chapter 1 – 1:27

Introduction

Announcer: US Representative and Senator from Oklahoma, James Mountain Inhofe, was born in Des Moines, Iowa, on November 17, 1934. He grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he attended public schools and received a bachelor's degree from the University of Tulsa. He served in the US Army and worked in aviation, real estate, and insurance for three decades. He was president of Quaker Life Insurance Company before entering politics.

As a Republican, James Inhofe was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 1966, and became a state senator in 1968. He ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1974, and for the US House of Representatives in 1976.

Inhofe was a three-term mayor of Tulsa from 1978 to 1984. In 1986, running again for the US House from the First District, he was elected and reelected three more times. In 1994, when Senator David Boren resigned to become President of the University of Oklahoma, Inhofe ran for Boren's seat in a special election and won. Senator Inhofe was reelected for a full term in 1996, and was reelected to his fourth term November 16, 2014, ending January 3, 2021.

This interview with Senator Jim Inhofe is made possible by the University of Tulsa Foundations and Friends, who believe in preserving Oklahoma's legacy, on voicesofoklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 11:00**Early Family and Education**

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is December 3, 2013.

Senator, if you'll state your full name, please, your date of birth, and your present age.

James Mountain Inhofe: James Mountain Inhofe. I'm a member of the United Senate. I was born November 17, 1934. I just had my 79th birthday.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

JI: In Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the Saint John's building.

JE: In your senate home office here in Tulsa?

JI: That is correct.

JE: The significance of the name "Mountain," what's—you've been asked that millions of times.

JI: Yeah, and people, for some reason, they always have to ask again. You'd think they'd remember. My mother's maiden name was Blanche Phoebe Mountain. Mountain was her name. Her family came over from France, my father's family came Germany, so it was whatever the pronunciation in French for "Mountain," like Montagnes or whatever it was, they Americanized it and changed it to Mountain. So I'm named after my mother.

I have a son who is James Mountain Inhofe the Second, and a grandson who is James Mountain Inhofe the Third.

JE: Where were you born?

JI: Des Moines, Iowa.

JE: So how do you come to Oklahoma?

JI: Well, you know, we were in some level of poverty, I'd guess you'd say. Everyone was back then because that was back right after and during the period depression. So my dad had an opportunity in the insurance business here in Tulsa. And I always remember, because I was only seven years old when we came, and the only thing I remember about Des Moines, Iowa, I was the youngest of four kids—I was in the kindergarten and we'd walk to school—I couldn't see over the snow banks. So I was never so glad to get out of a place as I was to get out of Iowa, in good, warm—we considered it part of the South, at that time.

JE: So then your father's name?

JI: Perry Dyson Inhofe.

JE: What kind of a person was he?

JI: He was a very dominating type of a personality. At that time, the husband made virtually all the decisions, but he was one who really didn't have any doubt about anything that he said being true. Almost to a fault.

JE: Do you draw anything from him in your personality or in the way you think about yourself?

Jl: No, I really don't think so. I think if anything, I'm more inclined to be the opposite, maybe as a result of that.

JE: And then your mother's name again.

Jl: Blanche Phoebe Mountain, then, of course, Inhofe.

JE: So mother and father meets in Iowa?

Jl: Well, this is kind of interesting, I've been a pilot for many, many years, since I was a little kid. I remember every Memorial Day I used to fly my parents back to Cumberland Island. That's where all the Inhofes came from Germany to Cumberland Island. And if you go to the cemetery in Cumberland Island almost every stone is an Inhofe. And we would go there and then go back to his old farm house where, it would have been 1907 when he was six years old, he drew his name in the concrete that they had poured. And I remember picking that up and bringing it all the way back. We now still have it as a coffee table. But in that farm in Cumberland Island, down at the corner was a one-room schoolhouse. My mother was the schoolmarm at that time. There was just a one-room country schoolhouse, one teacher, and that's it. Well, they got together because that adjoined the farm where he was. And so that's how all that happened.

JE: Your mother's personality, describe her personality.

Jl: She was the one to prepare everything so that when my father came home, whether it was a matter of entertaining customers or whatever it was, she kind of assumed that role of doing, I would almost say doing what she was told, but that's not right—doing what was expected of her.

JE: And again, he was a salesman?

Jl: No, he was actually in the claims in of insurance and ended up buying a company that had some level of success. So we went to a more prosperous life than we had in Des Moines. One other thing about Des Moines that's interesting, my dad was a claims adjuster in a building where Ronald Reagan was an announcer for WHO radio, a sports announcer. They played the pinball machine together. He would come out to the house. I always thought he was an uncle or some relative. And when we moved from Des Moines and through Springfield to Tulsa we were not very well off. Never went to movies or anything except if there is a Dutch Reagan movie, which is what my dad called it, we would drive—I remember one time it was way down in Durant or some place, and that was before turnpikes, we drove for like six hours to watch a Dutch Reagan movie.

JE: So you saw Ronald Reagan, as a boy?

Jl: Yeah. As a matter of fact, that's the reason back in the days when you and I were going back and forth during the eight years I was mayor of Tulsa, if you'll recall, Ronald Reagan came into office and I handled his domestic agenda. I would appear on all the TV shows

saying what we should be doing. As a matter of fact, it was Ronald Reagan that used the low-water dam that I, quite frankly, put together, against a lot of opposition, as the largest public project in America that was totally privately funded. That was Ronald Reagan. I worked very closely with him during the years that he was President.

JE: Brothers and sisters you have?

JI: Yes. I have originally two sisters, older, one is deceased and I have one other brother.

JE: And the first school you attended would have been in Iowa?

JI: Des Moines, Iowa. That was just a half-year for kindergarten, but after that there was one interim move before coming to Tulsa. That was going to Springfield, Illinois. It was actually out in the country outside Springfield, Illinois. I went to a country schoolhouse there called Hazel Dell. Hazel Dell is just like you close your eyes and envision what Hazel Dell would look like—it was a one-room, country schoolhouse. We had a guy named Harvey Bean who was the schoolmarm. He was a frightening person, I think maybe seven feet tall, in my memory. There were seven grades in one room and seven grades were in seven rows. So if you missed a spelling word you'd have to go up in front of the class and bend over and he had a great, big paddle and he'd swat you with it. And I was a pretty good speller. So anyway, this schoolhouse burned down. I was at that time in the first grade and they didn't rebuild it so I missed the first grade. When we came to Tulsa, I was in the second grade, but in those days they put you in whatever age you were. So I never went to the first grade. And that's one reason why I've always been kind of a slow reader, at least, that's what we analyzed because I started in the second grade instead of the first grade.

JE: And what elementary school here?

JI: Barnard.

JE: Barnard.

JI: And it broke my heart when Barnard Elementary School broke down. I can tell you almost everyone who went there that I knew later on and many of the teachers. That was a memorable time.

JE: Can you name a person, one or two, that went there?

JI: Oh yes. Jody Shelton was my first girlfriend. Rosetta Robenno was my second girlfriend. I can remember so well because as that time I lived way out, right on the city limits around 32nd Street. That's where the city limits were then. Barnard was on 17th and Lewis. So I'd ride my bike to school, and Lewis, at that time, was a one-lane road and you'd ride on the dirt beside it. Now, it's interesting because the girl that I married lived right across the street from me, but she went to Elliot. At that time, and it was during the tail-end of the war, you went wherever you could get a ride. Because of gas shortages and all that. As it happened that I could get a ride there and she could get a ride to Elliot. So while we lived

next door to each other we went to two different elementary schools.

JE: When did you actually start dating her? When did you know you were interested in her?

JI: Uh, pretty funny because she was born in the house right across the street from where we live now. We bought the house across the street. It's an older section of town. The furthest my wife has moved in her entire life is thirty-two feet, right across the street. We didn't date at all during that time until after I came back from the army and it all started then.

JE: And her name is?

JI: It was Kate Kirkpatrick.

JE: Then your junior high school here in Tulsa?

JI: Woodrow Wilson.

JE: Woodrow Wilson. Then you went on to what high school?

JI: Central.

JE: And then you graduated from Tulsa Central in?

JI: 1953.

JE: Anything memorable about Tulsa Central? Were you involved in activities or that—

JI: You know, there really wasn't—I'd be tested junior high school at Woodrow Wilson, and I'm not really sure why, but I dreaded every day that I had to go in there. But I really liked the high school. It was one of the largest high schools around in Oklahoma. So you didn't go out for a whole lot of different sports. I was a track guy. We had a guy that was a coach that used me as an example that you can make a state champion out of someone with no talent at all if he has the heart for it. I remember just really good things about Central High School, enjoyed it immensely.

JE: So did you become accomplished as a track person?

JI: Yeah, I was involved in the State Champion team. Bill Lance was the coach. He's a legend, he's the one who started, was involved in Kanakuk Kamp over in Missouri. They now have seven of them. It's more of a Jesus-based type of a camp. All of my kids went there and now my grandkids are there. In fact, we sponsor them and have them go there. It all started with a guy named Bill Lance. He was my mentor, in fact, when they dedicated the field, the athletic field, to him, I was in the State Senate and went over there and gave the dedication speech. I always remember that.

JE: Any other names that graduated from your Tulsa Central class?

JI: The Timberlakes, Bob Timberlake was the one that would have been my age. Prior to that we had the King Daze at Central High School, and it may still be the same way even though the building's not the same. The most popular male student was called the King Daze, and the woman was Queen Daze. Buddy Martin and Susie Spencer were the two, and they got married.

JE: Where would you as high school people hang out in Tulsa?

JI: Well, in high school it was called Quaker Drugstore on 18th and Boston area. That was where everybody hung out from Central High School.

JE: How about up in Peoria? Was there a drive-in up there in Pennington?

JI: Well, there was, Pennington's Drive-in. Now, one of the guys, the people whose names would always be remembered as graduating with my class at Central was Bobby Gilbert. Bobby Gilbert married Linda Pennington. Pennington's was the name of the drive-in. That's where that connection was. Pennington's was a very popular hangout that high school people went to.

Chapter 3 – 5:24

Military

John Erling: Then what happens to you as you graduate from Tulsa Central? What do you next?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Well, I graduated from Central and I went to University of Colorado. Not many people realize that, I was only there for three months. They were not very impressive months. That was back when they first discovered uranium. I was bartending up there, Talloges was the largest three-two bar in America. That was in Boulder, Colorado, and I was the head bartender. And I had a guy that came in from the Okefenokee Swamp that was in school there, he convinced me that we could go buy back in what they called the White River Forest area in Colorado, and where they had all the gold mines—you've heard the term "fool's gold"? That is when they say this gold-colored stuff and they'd chip it off and take it out and it was not gold. But what was it? It was uranium, it was carnotite. So I crawled through—it's amazing that I'm not buried under those rocks somewhere. I took my chisel and I went back there for weeks and weeks and weeks. Of course, just dropped out of school. We staked several claims at the Atomic Energy in Denver, but they were never with the quantity to be of value. So that was my glorious career in Colorado. Then I decided, I'd always kind of done pretty well in the Spanish language and I enjoyed it so I decided I was going to go the University of Mexico. Well, I was back in University of Colorado at that time, so if I took my finals early I could have them done before the Christmas holidays because the semester started outside of Mexico City on about the third of January. So that all worked out and I went home and I

got all ready, actually packed my car, I was ready to go and I got a letter from Ike. And it said, "Greetings." I was drafted into the United States Army. Now back in those days, you were drafted you were there. Quite frankly, as a ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee today, I'm the only one on the Armed Services Committee who still believes in compulsory service. Because a lot of the social problems that we have today we wouldn't have if those kids had to go through the discipline that I had to go through. I fought it tooth and nail, I didn't want to go in the United States Army, but I did. Anyway, I was drafted. So what I did is I went to nine different colleges and universities. When they say, "Where did you go to school?" wherever I was stationed I went to night school. Like Washington and Lee, University of Virginia, Virginia Polytech Institute, University of—you know, all those places.

JE: So in 1956 then you were drafted and then two years in the army?

Jl: That is correct.

JE: What was your training in the army?

Jl: Well, I was in the Quartermaster Station most of the time at Fort Lee, Virginia. I was in the Headquarters detachment. Now, the significance of that is, if you're an enlisted man as opposed to an officer you're at the bottom of the barrel. However, that was the first year that they started using specialists, so instead of being necessarily a PFC you'd be a Specialist Third Class. And a Specialist was one where you didn't have stripes on your sleeves, if you were in the Headquarters detachment, and I was. Everybody thought I was an officer. Mine was just the typical Headquarters type of duty. By the way, I was also drafted the same month, I believe, as Elvis Presley. He had a little better duty than I did. I wanted to get to Germany and he got there and I didn't.

JE: Let me jump back here to December 7, 1941, I believe you would have been seven years old. Do you have any recollection of what happened?

Jl: I do, because I was living in Springfield, IL, at that time. And we were a first generation back in Germany, and so we were under suspicion at that time because we were Germans. There is no more a patriotic man in America than my father was. He had bad eyesight. He tried to get in the Air Force, he tried to get in the Army, he was the strongest patriot in the United States, and yet, people were suspicious of us because of our German background. That's what I remember about it. And I remember also at that time, and then, of course, we moved to Tulsa, when you went to a movie—they didn't have TV so kids would on Saturday morning go to the movies and I would go, and all you'd ever see on the news was the war effort, mostly in German and Japan. And one of the things that shocked me after the war was over is what are they going to have on news? What is there to be newsy about? Occasionally I was sent to Chicago to my dad's sister. I had an aunt and uncle that were very close and they lived up there in an apartment house that

I thought was pretty fancy. Now, if you go back it really wasn't very fancy but it was this giant building, it was seven stories high. I remember being there during the surrender, during the D-Day victory in Europe.

JE: 1945.

JI: And seeing the parades and all of that. So I was right in the middle of the major area when that happened.

JE: The rationing that went on, did that affect you?

JI: Oh that so well, trying to find gasoline. And my mother made all the butter and churned it and all that. Everybody else did too.

JE: Tires were tough to get?

JI: Yeah, rubber was impossible because all that went to the war effort.

JE: And even nylons for ladies.

JI: Yes, nylons was the great swapping material for our troops over in places like Germany.

JE: Tell us why.

JI: Well because, you know, you see a pretty girl, they don't care about diamonds but nylons, they liked nylons.

Chapter 4 – 4:21

Salesman

John Erling: Are you trained to be a pilot back here in the military or where does your—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: No, when I got out of the army, at that time, let's say 1958, you could become a licensed pilot for \$36. It took eight hours and it's \$4 an hour, that was for an instructor, the airplane, and the fuel. I thought why not do it, and I did. For some reason, I've always been in a position where I use aviation. Today is a good example too, I just go all over the state and people kind of laugh about it. I can remember not long ago being down in Alcus and they said, "Are you ever in Washington?" So I've been using aviation all my life.

JE: How old were you when you got your pilot's license?

JI: Twenty-eight.

JE: Did you have an interest in flying for a long time?

JI: I was, I was fascinated by flying and I'd go out to Harvey Young Airport and there are a couple of others, one is Baird, it's not there anymore, you know, watch planes and do things like that. But I was fascinated with flying.

JE: It didn't come from your father or family, you were just born with it?

JI: Yeah, no it didn't, because I didn't have anyone in any of my family that ever flew, but it was always of great interest to me and I was just fascinated by it. And that's endured a lot of years now.

JE: When you come out of the army, then is that when you get into various business related items?

JI: Yeah, well, first of all, I started long before I was in the army. My dad had made a deal with my brother and me, "If you work, by the time you're sixteen years old, whatever you earn I will match and you can buy your first car." And so I went out, I was always, I can say now because enough time has passed, I was really a good salesman. I could sell anything. I was a Fuller Brush man, now people don't know what that is today, but the Fuller Brush man is the guy that goes around from door to door. I lied about my age because you had to have a car license, so I was fifteen years old. I set records that were the best sales records in the Fuller Brush world. Which doesn't mean anything today but did at that time. And anything else that I could sell, I would. I remember our backyard being the city limits. Back there, there are wild blackberries and it's a heavy Indian population that lived back in the woods.

JE: Where is this?

JI: Here in Tulsa. Anything south of 32nd Street was wooded area outside the city limits. But I would go back and hire Indians to pick wild blackberries and I'd sell them around the neighborhood. I was always pretty enterprising in sales.

JE: And so somewhere you knew you could almost sell anything, right?

JI: I did.

JE: Then you worked in the field of aviation?

JI: I did some work in that but that was more of just to support the habit.

JE: Became a real estate developer?

JI: I did some real estate developing. I did insurance work, yeah, I'd say insurance, aviation, and real estate.

JE: And then did you purchase or did you build the Quaker Life Insurance Company?

JI: That was actually started as a subsidiary of a very large property and casualty company. We had it for a short period of time. The year was about the early '80s and almost everything went under. That was the first major recession in contemporary history of Tulsa. So we lost that. That's when I started developing and doing things like that, primarily in Texas.

Chapter 5 – 5:27**God, Gays, Guns**

John Erling: Your political life, what led you to become involved at all? And I think we're talking about back in the '60s then?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Yeah, it would have been '65. I was always, almost to a fault, a conservative, some people would say today an extremist at that time, but I really felt that things were going in the wrong direction. So at the state level I started working in people's campaigns. Then when Dewey Bartlett, not the mayor, but when Dewey Bartlett's dad, Dewey Bartlett, was in the State Senate he ran for governor, and he won. And it was my job working in the party to help find someone to run for the vacancy that occurred as a result of him being elected as Governor of Oklahoma. So I ran for it myself.

JE: In 1967. You said you were conservative, was that through reading or listening or mentors or—

Jl: Well, a lot of it came from different personalities that would give speeches. I was always very partial to the conservatives. For example, in the early years of Reagan, I guess, even before I was involved at that time, I think. And then Bush, a little bit later. I always fell on the side, not because we had that relationship with Reagan but with the conservatives. Barry Goldwater before that. So I have just always listened to and believed that small government is better.

JE: In the state of Oklahoma the Democrats in the '60s ran the state.

Jl: It was laughable to think that a Republican could win anything statewide because it was all Democrats. Gradually it was changing, but 1994 is the big change, that was the first year I ran for the United States Senate. I remember my campaign was critical of me because I was flying, using my flying background, all over the state. The southern tariff counties, about ten of them, there are just no Republicans there at all, none. I spent a lot of time down there and they said, "Inhofe, you're wasting your time. Why are you going down there and spending so much time there?" At that time, I really thought we had hopes down there because the Democrats had become very, very liberal, to the extent that if you go down there the Democrats are all conservative, at that time. I'm talking about pre-1994, in terms of abortion rights, in terms of war, in terms of all the issues. And that's where the saying, "God, gays, and guns," all started down there. That's where it was originated. And I ended up being the first one to carry all those counties down there.

JE: In the Senate race you're talking about?

Jl: In the Senate race—

JE: In '94—

Jl: Yeah, in 1994.

JE: Yep.

Jl: Because I explained to them what we were for. This is significant because there was my opponent, Dave McCurdy. Dave McCurdy was a thing of beauty. He had served for sixteen years in the House, he was a beautiful person. He was one of them that was the darling—he made one mistake and that was he moved back there and never came back to Oklahoma. So during that race, since I'd been there eight years in the House, all I had to do was show people how he and I voted on the same thing. And that's where, I'll always remember, I hesitate to say this knowing that this will be used by some people that are offended, but you know, it's still significant. There was a New York Times lady in Washington, in the capitol with the Capitol Bureau, she hated me with a passion and she loved Dave McCurdy. We started out thirty-two points behind. Keep in mind, this is a Democrat state. Slowly we saw our lines coming up and we knew they were crossing him about three weeks before the election, so I knew I was going to win at that time. She didn't know it and she called me up and she said, "Inhofe, you won't like this any better than I do, but I've got to travel with you one day, 'cause this was a nationwide race, people are all watching." I said, "That's fine, love to have you. Meet me at Riverside Airport at six a.m. in the morning and you can go with me. If you're not there I'm going without you." She showed up. I said, "I've good news and bad news. Which do you want first?" She said, "Well, what's the bad news?" "The bad news is, I was actually flying three different airplanes keeping one working 'cause I was in the air all day, every day. I came back in my big twin engine and I lost an engine last night. So you have to go in a small plane." She said, "Yeah, what's the good news?" I said, "We are going to McCurtain County. There aren't any Republicans in McCurtain County. You'll love it there." So we went down there and I did a barrel roll on the way down, tipped her upside down, knowing she'd never get back in the plane again, and it worked. I never knew what happened to her after she was down there. She may still be down there. But we went to this meeting, and all these people were around, I'd say there were forty or fifty people down there at McCurtain County, and a guy stood up and he said, "Inhofe, I want you to know you're going to be the first Republican in the history of McCurtain County to carry the county." I said, "That's great, why?" Now she was sitting there all this time. He said, "Because of the three G's." I said, "What are the three G's?" They said, "God, gays, and guns." Those are the three driving issues in the campaign of 1994, where the Democrats and Republicans alike were on my side of those issues as opposed to his. That's when we just surged ahead and it was over.

JE: Didn't other Republicans, maybe in other parts of the United States, use that same thing? It came right out of—

Jl: It's two years later they started using it, yeah.

JE: Yeah.

Jl: That's where it originated. I can't even tell you the name of the town. It may not have been in a town, I just know that there was a gathering in McCurtain County.

Chapter 06 - 8:00**Elections, Won and Lost**

John Erling: So that's in '94. Let me come back here to the state in the '60s.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: I interviewed last week, Al Snipes, who began building the Republican party in the late '50s and the '60s.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative), he did. All right, Al Snipes is in the conservative wing of the Republican party. At that time, there was a division between the moderates and the conservatives. It's not quite that true today but somewhat is true. So Al Snipes, he probably told you that he and I were very close. But I mean, we were, we sort of are today. He's still alive.

JE: Yeah, he's now eighty-nine years old.

Jl: Oh is he? So he's older than I was.

JE: But his big to-do was with Henry Bellmon, and Henry Bellmon wasn't as conservative as he was, and you may even have a comment on that. They kind of had a love-hate relationship, is what I could draw from that situation.

Jl: Well, the problem that Henry had, Henry was never really conservative. The Panama Canal vote was the killer for Henry Bellmon. That lost virtually all the Oklahoma conservatives, well, nationwide. That was a huge issue, if you remember. The vote on the Panama Canal went down, as I recall, to one vote. And he cast that vote. And it was characterized as giving away the Panama Canal.

JE: Right. But then, Henry, that was when he was senator, came back then and ran for governor and was elected—

Jl: That's correct.

JE: Even though the state was very much opposed to that one vote. So that's an interesting scenario.

Jl: Yes. Henry Bellmon, and I liked Henry real well, he was never a real conservative. Dewey Bartlett was much more conservative, I'm talking about Governor Dewey Bartlett and United States Senator Dewey Bartlett.

JE: Al Snipes talked a lot about Dewey Bartlett and those two were very close because they

were conservative.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: You run for governor in 1974. You lost fifty-seven pounds during that race.

Jl: But the race was significant for another reason. When Dewey Bartlett won Governor of Oklahoma, four years later he ran for reelection. He was defeated by David Hall. David Hall was corrupt, in fact, I'm the one who took the statements, did the research, and sent him to the Federal Penitentiary. David Hall, it was just a horrible thing that we went through. Well, my closest friend was a Democrat who was elected the same year I was. His name was David Boren. David Boren and I were, well, this gets a little complicated because two years after I was elected to the State House, I was kicked out of the House. And I was still the only member of the House of Representatives who was kicked out. At that time, I was kind of a loud-mouth, and they changed the district so that they cornered me out of the district and put me in a North Tulsa district that was 85 percent Democrat, but I won anyway. So I was in the State Senate, David Boren was in the State House. He was a Democrat, I was a Republican. So we introduced all the reform, like the investment of state funds for the state treasurer and other, none of them ever passed, but we were the authors. We were both offended by David Hall and so we developed something that we can defeat him. David Boren would run for Governor as a Democrat at a primary against David Hall. I would run as a Republican and my primary opponent was Denny Garrison. I would win my primary, David Boren would lose his primary. Who was going to vote at that time for someone who had— David Hall [or Hobbs] controlled the party. So we went through two years of campaigning, David Boren saying nothing but nice things about me; me saying nothing but nice things about him, and lo and behold, he wins the primary. How do you run against a guy in a state like Oklahoma when you've been praising him for the last two years? And of course, it was over.

JE: And I should have said you were elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives from '67-'69, and then you ran and won for the Oklahoma Senate where you served eight years. And some of this, when you were running for governor, you continued in the State Senate. You were still a member of the State Senate. But you lost to David Boren. How did you handle that defeat? Did you ever think you'd run again for office? Was that—

Jl: Oh no, that was all unique because I knew for a fact, that I would lose to David Boren, but I knew for a fact, that if David Hall wins the primary I would win, because that's what we put together. The unexpected that happened was that he won. So it turned out fine in terms that I was still at that time in the State Senate. David Boren and I to this day, in fact, this may surprise you, even though he's the president of Oklahoma University he is supporting me in my reelection bid and he's already contributed and all that. So we maintained that close friendship all these years.

JE: So then we come up to 1976, and you ran for Oklahoma's First District, which includes Tulsa.

You defeated Frank Keating and Mary Warner in the primary. The incumbent then is the Democrat, James R. Jones. A little bit about that campaign that may stick out in your mind, ultimately you lost to him, which may or may not have been a surprise. But he had been an incumbent and for a Republican to come along and to defeat this Democrat would be high stakes.

Jl: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, it was an uphill race. Frank clearly would have the country club set and all that but I beat him like a drum in that primary.

JE: And why do you think you did?

Jl: Well, because I had organization. One thing I learned a long time ago in the Republican party, you can win with organization, you don't really need money. By organization I'm talking about, for example, we used what was called the "Kasten plan." Bob Kasten was a guy from Wisconsin who designed this thing where you have each precinct organized to a level of everybody knows everybody in it. And you have goals for each block within the precinct and all that, as is today. I have volunteers and others don't. They used to joke around. "Well, if the primary had been held in the bar of Southern Hills then clearly Keating would have won." But it wasn't.

JE: That was an uphill climb. Did you think you were going to win?

Jl: Not at all. [time 5:57—not sure, talking at same time] ?? the primary.

JE: You just knew that?

Jl: Oh absolutely, I was absolutely certain of that.

JE: Because you had the grass root support?

Jl: Yeah. Yeah. But it was almost a duty. We were at that time trying to key out certain races where Republicans were on the rise. Oklahoma's First District was one of those. Now keep in mind, that was a district race, that was before redistricting took place. And at all of North Tulsa County and none of the Broken Arrow, the South Tulsa County, you know, where all the Republicans were. So when I won that Mike Synar was the one in the Second District, so he always had Tulsa and Broken Arrow and all these Republicans. Well, after I'd won that twice they decided I was going to continue to win it so they all got together and gave him—all of my Democrats gave me all of his Republicans. That's how it happened. So—

JE: So there is another loss, and I don't know what you're thinking about this, "Should I ever run for office ever again?" Did that ever occur to you at all?

Jl: No it really didn't, and people would make fun of me on that. I remember one cartoon in the Tulsa World, when I won the mayor's race, they had a picture of me running and losing in the governor's race, a picture of me running and losing, it was when Simpson was a cartoonist. Remember him?

JE: David Simpson.

Jl: Yeah, he was really good.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JI: And he didn't care much for me so he did a good job on me and showed me. And the caption was, "You finally found one you could win, huh?" And that's true.

JE: Well, that was in 1978. You ran for mayor of Tulsa and you defeated the Democrat, Roger Randall. I particularly remember that because KRMG, where I worked for many years—

JI: That's right.

JE: Editorialized in support of you. I remember the next day after the election, you came up to the radio station—

JI: I remember that.

JE: And you thanked Gary Swanson, or maybe it was Ron Blue, for their support. The door was open from my studio and I can still see you walking by, you walked into that office.

JI: I remember, yeah, I always did that.

JE: You came back and said, "Thank you."

JI: I'd forgotten about that.

Chapter 07 - 8:04

Zink Dam

John Erling: While you're mayor, eight years as mayor?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative). Four years, two-year terms.

JE: One of the most notable things, and you were pretty progressive as a mayor, I believe, was the Zink Dam that you referred to earlier, the low-water dam. Tell me about that and—

JI: Okay, really, I'm still very proud, and I mentioned already that Reagan used that as the largest public project that was privately funded. And this is how I did it. There was a West Tulsa stigma at that time, if you lived west of the river the real estate values were down, you know, it was more of an impoverished area. And it went right along the river, so we had some urban renewal land that we couldn't give away, I mean, there was nothing you could do with it. So I went to the Home Builders Association, I always remember this, I said, "We can buy this land right now for X number of dollars in paper. Now what would it be worth to you in developing that west of the river if we put a beautiful dam there with a beautiful lake and all that?" And they said, "Well, the value would be—" and I took the difference in the value between it as just an old smelly river and it as a lake with all of the really affluent development that was going on west of the river, I used that money to build the dam that gave it its value.

JE: Hmm. How did you come to call it the Zink Dam?

JI: Because we were a million dollars short and he had a million dollars. We had seven million dollars and we needed another million dollars.

JE: Did you personally ask for the money?

JI: Yeah.

JE: Was it pretty easy? Was he—

JI: Yeah if you name it Zink.

JE: No problem with that?

JI: Nope, didn't care about Inhofe.

JE: No.

JI: And incidentally, I know you'll get to this in a minute, but I lost the last race to none other than Terry Young, who is not all that formidable, most people thought. And prior to that I'd already put together something where we were going to have two more dams built the same way. One downstream, one upstream from the current dam. So we'd have that whole thing going across there. That was a doable thing and we had already started it. Secondly, downtown was going down. You might remember that I put together a thing that would be a rail system that went from downtown all the way out to ORU, which is kind of on the boom at that time. Then it came around and it caught all of the developments, stores, for example, with south roads. I went through and asked them if we would establish this as a special assessment district, which at that time, I think it's still on the books you can do in Oklahoma, would you support that? So we could have all these special assessment districts and we're having a monorail go from downtown all the way to ORU and coming back by all these places. All that was in the mill when I lost the race. The best thing that ever happened to me that I lost the reelection.

Chapter 08 - 5:30

Loses Mayor's Race

John Erling: You lost the race to Terry Young, a Democrat.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And why did you lose that race?

JI: The main reason I lost it is because we had a very aggressive street project. When I became mayor a lot of the infrastructure had not been anything done to it and I started the one-percent temporary sales tax for capital improvements, water, sewage, and streets. We are

aggressively building streets. A lot of it is in South Tulsa, that's where the population was going. During that summer, it was a very hot summer, the traffic just stopped and people were stopped out in the streets. And I saw my numbers start going down in the areas that are normally strong Republican. It was become we were too progressive, you used the word, in getting all these things done. But that's what we're supposed to be doing. That actually made the margin of defeat, and we measured that, we knew that was coming.

JE: Was that one of your toughest defeats?

JI: Oh it was the toughest defeat because I had no respect for Terry Young.

JE: Or maybe at that point, almost anybody who could come along as a Democrat to oppose, maybe it wouldn't have done that?

JI: Well, he had a following. He was a weatherman for a TV—

JE: Channel 8, right.

JI: So he had a following. He was attractive, he was handsome, he was pretty well spoken—

JE: Yeah.

JI: So he was not a dog candidate, it's just that he's one that we know pretty much what happened.

JE: You said that was a good thing for you to lose. Why was that a good thing?

JI: Well, it was a good thing because I never liked city issues that much. There's a guy named Richard Siduret. Richard at that time was at Tulsa University, he was a college kid. The guy was a genius in areas in city government. He had worked for John Thomas, who is deceased now, but he was one of the four command—at that time, we had the commission form of government. We had a mayor and four commissioners. It was a real strong mayor form of government because the mayor did all the hiring and firing for all the commissioners and all that. So that's how I was able to get a lot of things done. They had come to me when Bob Dafortune had decided he was going to retire. They ran a poll and they said that Inhofe's the only one that would have a shot at winning that mayor's race. They came to me and I said, "I'm really not interested." And finally said, "I don't know anything about city government and I'm really not interested in city government." The boy genius was Richard Siduret, he came and tried to talk me into it. I said, "Richard, if I did this would you be my administrative assistant? He said, "Well, of course, I have to get the blessing from John Thomas." So I went with him to John Thomas, we caught him at a weak moment, and said, "John, I guess I'm going to run for mayor if Richard can be my chief of staff. He's not your chief of staff, you release him, I'll run." "Well, if that's what Richard wants to do." And Richard said, "Yeah, that's what I want to do." And off we went, which he didn't expect. Now, you have to understand Richard Siduret, and you remember him, I'm sure.

JE: I do.

JI: He had this drone, he was a really boring guy. He was one of the funniest guys in the world

but he talked very slow and very monotonous. So I said, "Richard, you're going to have to make me an expert on city government." He said, "I want you to put on these tapes." I'll never forget the one, History of Urban Renewal in the City of Tulsa. I could never listen for more than three minutes without falling asleep. So I still have his old records around that I used when I'm really in need of it. So Richard started a whole new era and it ended up being an enjoyable job, but a real hard job. Because, you know, there's no hiding. I always tell my friends in the United States Senate, "You want a hard job, be a mayor of a city. There's no hiding place."

JE: All eyes are on you.

JL: If they don't like the trash system it ends up in your front yard.

JE: Is that true?

JL: Yeah it's the truth.

JE: Okay, so you said it was an enjoyable experience. You're glad you had that. Did that serve you, that experience, later on in government?

JL: Oh yeah, it did. It did. And the lesson I learned there was one I kind of carried on from being in the State Legislature and the State Senate because I would do things without considering the political consequences. That's been the best lesson I've ever learned. Now, I lost in that mayor's race because I was aggressively going after and doing the things I thought I was supposed to be doing. But on the other hand, I went from there to the House, and in the House I passed what was characterized by the Wall Street Journal as the "greatest single reform in the history of the House of Representatives in Washington." The Discharge Petition.

JE: And I'm going to get to that. So then in '84 you lose?

JL: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: But then in '86 you run for First District again. Is that because Jim Jones decided to run for the US Senate and you won the Republican primary? Is that something you had your eye on? Did somebody have to coax you into it?

JL: No, no, 'cause I went out, well, I went out of the mayor's—

JE: Defeated in '84—

JL: That was '86 then?

JE: Yes, 1986.

JL: Okay. In '86, yeah, 'cause I just told you I never liked local issues but I love national issues. I like the defense issues, I like the things you can do at that level and that's where most of the spending problems and all are. So yes, I wanted to do that. I was going to run anyway. I actually had announced, I think, before Jim Jones made his mind up. I'd have to go back and research that. I'd already said I was going to run.

JE: I guess when you ran for the last time for mayor you had so many things going that you

thought you wanted another couple of years to make that happen because you really weren't enjoying or maybe you were having fun as mayor, I'm not surprised—

Jl: Well, I was finally, it was hard but two more low-water dams in the track going around Tulsa, those were huge things that I really was excited about.

Chapter 09 - 3:11

US Representative

John Erling: So then in '86 you run, and then in the general, you defeated Gary Allison. A little bit about that campaign.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Gary Allison was a very proud liberal. And I say that because most, most of the Democrats who vote liberal run as conservatives. Now I'm talking about the House and the Senate. But not Gary Allison. He was a university professor. I knew a lot of the people that knew him very well. One was a father of the judge down here.

JE: Current judge?

Jl: Yeah, his son is, I appointed him. He's on the federal bench, really a good guy now. His dad was a conservative law professor at the University of Tulsa. He really didn't like Gary Allison because Gary Allison symbolizes the real liberal at the University of Tulsa on the staff. So that race was a fairly easy race because that was just conservative versus liberal. His agenda was one that sounded real good when you're behind closed doors in the University of Tulsa, but not to the general public.

JE: Plus, your name was really embedded in this community for the elections and what you'd run before, so you had a high name recognition factor going for you.

Jl: I'm not sure what my favorite moves were at that time but they were respectable, I think.

JE: Yeah, and it's a time then when the Republicans are gaining stronger hold in the state and in our district.

Jl: That's right. And then you've got to keep in mind now, that was a race in the old district that was a strong 85 percent Democrat race. That's what it was when I ran. Then the next time it was also that way and I think my opponent at that time was Kurt Lasco and—

JE: Yes, right, and they—

Jl: And Kurt Lasco is another proud liberal. Not quite as proud because he saw the handwriting on the wall, but after winning those two races that's when they decided that they would go ahead and give Mike Synar my Democrats and I'd take his Republicans after redistricting. And after that, like it is today, it's one of the strongest in the nation.

JE: And then you won reelection in '92?

Jl: I ran three times.

JE: Right.

Jl: In the old district. They had three tough races and then they changed the district so it was an easy district after that. But I only ran once in the district as an easy district when it turned out to be just solid Republican, and that was a lay-down.

JE: So when you were a member then of the US House of Representatives in 1987, this brings up President Ronald Reagan. You voted against the President's budget, which included tax increases and no increase for Defense spending.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Here is this man that you've idolized all these years and you voted against it. Tell us what was going on.

Jl: Well, that was my first realization that in my judgment he made some mistakes. And I think in the case of his tax increases, he later on said, "This is something we shouldn't have done." Now, it's not accurate to say that he wasn't a strong national defense because he was. Keep in mind, he inherited the Carter years. And the Carter years were the hollow force, the years of the hollow force when he had to rebuild the military from almost the same as we did right after the Clinton years. You know, we reduced the size of the military by 40 percent. So now, anyway, history's repeating itself now with Obama in there. But at that time, I didn't think he was as aggressive as he should have been in rebuilding the Defense, but he was still very aggressive and he successfully did it.

JE: Did you feel any personal pressure from him? Did he say, "Jim, I need you on this vote," or "I know you're going to vote against me"? Did any of that go on?

Jl: No, no. It's something he never once did.

Chapter 10 - 3:53

Discharge Petition

John Erling: While in the House of Representatives, you came to national attention in '93, when you led the effort to reform the House's Discharge Petition. Explain for our audience, what is a Discharge Petition?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: It's complicated, but way back, sixty years before that, the Speaker of the House was a Democrat from Texas. He had set up the system, and at that time, they thought the House of Representatives in Washington would never be Republican. I mean,

the Republicans had no strength there at all, it was all Democrat. Keep in mind, he was from Texas where they are pretty conservative. They had devised a system that would allow the Democrats to vote straight liberal, and yet, press-release conservative, and get by with it. By hiding from the people back home how they voted on these various issues, gun control in Texas, for example, they had to vote because Democrats are disciplined. They do what they're told. So these Democrats down in Texas had to vote for gun control, but they did it in such a way that the only way that you could get a bill out of a committee was to vote it out, except for a Discharge Petition. So when they wanted to have a Discharge Petition to allow a vote to come out that they would otherwise be against, they would sign a Discharge Petition. It was held in a locked drawer in the Speaker's desk. When you went up to sign a Discharge Petition you could only look at the page where it was. And then you signed that Discharge Petition. When they get up to X number, and actually, it took a majority, which would have been, you know, the majority of the 435, then it was automatically discharged and came to the floor. But then they would go home and deny that they signed the Discharge Petition. So what I did was I worked it out with the Wall Street Journal, the punishment for doing what I was doing was I would be discharged from the House. That didn't bother me a bit because that would create a vacancy and then I'd run for reelection. It'd be a landslide.

JE: They were going to remove you from the House?

Jl: Oh yeah.

JE: How?

Jl: Well, there's a rule, a House rule, that if you disclose the name of someone who did or did not sign a Discharge Petition, and what I did was by going up there, it's funny you'd ask this question because the four of the Big Four, one of them is Buck McKeon, who is the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee today, well, he reminded me—remember he said, "I sat next to you on the floor. And then we'd go up and you'd give me the names of the ones who signed and I'd have somebody else go sign it." He memorized as many as he could on that page and I'd write the names down. Then when we got up we gave those names to the Wall Street Journal. They published those names. That happened during the August recess. That became so popular that we were opening up government, and one man was doing it, and that was me. Where I was getting all the credit for it. When we went back in session, all of these Democrats who had opposed me all along, were lining up begging me because they had to cut it off at 218. They said, "I want to be one of the 218 that signs this," 'cause they're all lined up to do it. I can name some of them, it would probably surprise you.

JE: But is it true that only twice it has been used successfully on major legislation in recent history?

- Jl:** Yeah, well, the funny thing about it is they kind of joke around. That was done at a time when the Democrats always controlled everything. Then the Republicans, when Newt Gingrich came into control. So it was used, not against them, it's still good government, you should not have any kind of a secret way of passing a bill without the public knowing it. So it didn't bother me a bit when Newt had to pay the price for not being able to hide, you know, some of the votes that he would have used.
- JE:** Did it ever occur to you that maybe I'm going too far here? Or they're threatening me and I need to shut down? You're showing your maverick side there, which you've shown steadily, I think, in your role as Representative and Senate. Or were you so certain about yourself that "I don't care what happens to me"?
- Jl:** Well, no, 'cause I really didn't care, I was getting a little tired of that anyway. This was toward the end of eight years of being in the House.

Chapter 11 - 17:00

Pilots Bill of Rights

- John Erling:** In 1994, Senator David Boren, as a Democrat, he announces he's going to resign and he's going to become the president of Oklahoma University. So you were elected to fill that Senate seat.
- Jim Mountain Inhofe:** That's correct.
- JE:** This was a nationally historic election that saw the Republican party take both Houses of Congress and our Oklahoma governorship too.
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Second time in state history.
- Jl:** Keep in mind, I was a month ahead of those guys because it was a special election. So that's why when I got to the United States Senate I had seniority over everybody who was elected that particular year. Because I was sworn in a month before they were.
- JE:** You took office November 17th, your sixtieth birthday, and that gave you that seniority?
- Jl:** I was sworn in, instead of being sworn in on January 1st.
- JE:** So did that help you then from get-go? From time—
- Jl:** Oh yeah. I had seniority—
- JE:** Seniority in the meeting.
- Jl:** Not big seniority, I can't remember the total number, it was a big class that was elected though. It might have been eighteen or so in there, so I was not number ninety-nine.

- JE:** Right. And that campaign, you campaigned using your plane and you visited almost every town in Oklahoma?
- Jl:** That's right. I spent a lot of time in southern Oklahoma. What is referred to as "Little Dixie," even though that's not an endearing, really, characterization down South.
- JE:** In your Congressional and Senate debates you've been very influential involving aircraft regulation—
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Including the Pilot's Bill of Rights. Talk to us about that.
- Jl:** Okay, any bureaucracy going unchecked is a problem. We all know about the EPA and what they're doing with their regulations, just killing business in America under the Obama EPA, Environmental Protection Agency. But it's the same thing with others, they're just better known. The FAA, the Federal Aviation Administration, they've grown to be a giant organization. Just as an example, when they were talking about having to go through sequestration and make some cuts of about 2 percent they're hysterical, "How can we do this?" And yet, their total budget to run their department, to run all the FAA back in 1996, was 1.6 billion. I'll double-check these figures, I think I'll be right though. Today it's almost double that, and yet, their workload is less because there are fewer pilots today. They'd become an overwhelming, overbearing bureaucracy, and my phone would ring off the hook because I was the only licensed pilot, certainly in the Oklahoma delegation, but I was the one who was willing to get into these issues. So people who were abused by doing ground checks or any other thing where someone who has the power of the bureaucracy puts someone out of business, takes away their license without just cause, these things were going on. So I was helping other pilots since I understand the issues better than others do in getting these things done. And then it happened to me in Cameron County Airport in the southern tip of Texas where I'd been a developer for many years. I'd landed my airplanes on that more than two hundred times. I knew every square foot of that. It gets a little bit technical here, but when you are doing work on a runway you have to have it published. They are called "Notams," Notice to Airmen. Notams, by law, are supposed to be published. But it doesn't say specifically where so that they can always not do it and then claim that they were published some place. Anyway, there are no Notams on this and I went into Valley Approach, the approach control, that's FAA cleared me to land on Runway 13 at Cameron County Airport. I was in a big twin-engine plane and the guy sitting next to me had never been in a small plane before. I had dirtied up the plane getting ready to land when I saw them working on the first third of the runway. It was a nine thousand foot runway so you've got lots of room, but it was to the point where I would not be able to do a complete up and go around because you get down to—when you're almost landing you can't do it. So I landed over this and coasted and everything was fine, I didn't think there was a

problem. There was someone down there who really didn't like me. That day they called the New York Times and the Washington Post, dreamed up this story that I almost killed people landing. I went back and I went to the FAA and they said, "Well, you're guilty of doing this and this and this." I said, "Wait a minute. You're accusing me, I've not even heard the evidence used against me." "You're not entitled to the evidence we have against you." I went through this thing where actually they made me take a remedial training, which is one trip with a flight instructor. And I used a guy who I was his flight instructor, just for my own ego because I didn't really need to do that. Then I got to thinking, they could have taken away my license if that was my livelihood. They had done this, we have countless records of people who they've taken away their way of making a living, so I put together the Pilot's Bill of Rights and we took on the bureaucracy. And immediately, well, it's like the EPA, any time you try to pass something to clean up their act, they immediately jumped all over it. They went to a well-known name here, it would Jay Rockefeller. Jay Rockefeller was the Chairman of the Commerce Committee that has jurisdiction over the FAA and they said, "Don't let this bill get out of your committee. We can't have it. There are safety concerns." Besides that, they were God, you know, they were the bureaucracy. So for a year I tried to get a hearing and I couldn't do it. So I went to Harry Reid. He and I have an unusual relationship. I said, "Harry, I've got a bill, I've got sixty-seven Senate cosponsors to my Pilot's Bill of Rights and I can't get a hearing." He said, "That's just not fair." So he and I went down to the floor and we did what they call a Rule 14, when it bypasses committees, it's very rarely used. I can't even think of when else it's been used. And because Harry was willing to help me do that it sailed through. Obviously all the cosponsors voted for it and it would pass the House in one hour after that because they were all ready for it. That happened before Osh Kosh, a matter of a week before Osh Kosh, the biggest thing for general aviation. That was the Pilot's Bill of Rights and it did a number of things. First of all, it says that if you're accused of something you have access to the evidence that is going to be used against you. They say that Notams had to be published in an area that is identifiable and we have the words down so where we know that if there is no Notam that is published we can go and show that there is none. The third big issue, and this is a major issue that didn't affect me but it did others, it might now, on medical certification it was unequal all over the country. I know people have had open-heart surgery like I had who are flying six months later and everything is fine. And I know some that five years later still aren't. Well, now they're changing all that. So this bill was truly a bill of rights in this major piece. People would say, "Well, you know, Inhofe had self-serving, you know." It didn't affect me because that wasn't in affect when—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). We should point to Harry Reid, the majority leader of the Democrat Senate, was your friend then and still is. It's interesting that the two of you can work

together.

Jl: He is. We've become good friends, for one thing, we were both married the same year. His wife went through a thing with cancer, he and I become close. People don't understand that you can have someone who can be a political enemy that can be a very close personal friend. That's what we are. He'd say the same thing.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Jl: In fact, he did. If you remember on the floor of the House, it was when my son died, that he gave a talk on the floor, talking about my son and me. It was a very emotional thing.

JE: And I want to come to that in a moment here, but you're the ranking member now of the US Senate Armed Services Committee?

Jl: That is correct. People who are going through this they need to understand, if you are a majority party such as the Democrats are in the Senate, if you are the ranking Democrat you're the Chairman. If you're the ranking Republican you're the ranking member. Now go across the aisle to the Republicans who are the majority, just the opposite of the Senate, over in the House. So the Republicans would be the Chairman, the Democrats the ranking member.

Chapter 12 - 3:13

Trip Around the World

John Erling: You became the only member of Congress to fly an airplane around the world when you recreated Wiley Post's legendary trip around the globe. How long did that trip take you?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Well, a lot longer than it should. It took seventeen days but four of those days were in Eastern Siberia where we were not incarcerated but forced to stay in a type of a hotel because they didn't think that we owned the plane. I had three good friends with me, all three were pilots but they weren't twin-engine rated and this is a twin-engine airplane. So I had to be seated in one of the front seats during the trip around the world.

JE: Were there any—

Jl: No, I'll tell you too in a Jesus related things, I'm not embarrassed about being a follower of Jesus. I remember going across Siberia. Siberia is unbelievable, I can't even tell you right now how many times you go through and you don't see anything, you don't see any roads, you see nothing but some winding rivers and just wooded areas and bears and mosquitoes. That's it. Hour after hour after hour. I started having trouble with my left engine about

halfway across Siberia but I had a GPS. I pressed for the nearest airport and it was over six hundred nautical miles away. It's kind of hard to explain, but if you're over gross weight in a twin-engine plane it won't fly on one engine. You lose an engine you might as well be in a single-engine airplane. It's going down. The other time, there's an Inhofe, all Inhofes spelled this way, Inhofe, are related, and when we came from Germany they went to three places: Iowa, Minnesota, and Alaska. There's a John Inhofe in Alaska who is a woodcarver. He was from a place and we were recreating the trip of Wiley Post, he didn't go there, but I'd talked to this guy on the phone, I wanted to meet him, so I deviated from the route that Wiley Post took going across the Bering Strait to going down toward Canada. And I went up the glacier, it's the largest glacier, I can't remember what it's called. Now, a glacier, by its nature, down at the bottom it's several miles wide, but as you go up then it gets to about a half a mile wide up at the top. Well, I was watching because the glacier is going up at the same rate of climb that I had so we're just barely able to stay above this thing and went into a cloud bank so I couldn't see that side or that side. But I had the GPS and locked it and I said, "Lord, if you have more for me to do get me out of the cloud." Came right out. So we had a few close calls.

JE: You mentioned that you know astronaut Tom Stafford. Because of your love for flying would you actually had rather have been an astronaut?

Jl: No, but Tom Stafford is a close personal friend and has been for many, many years. I will never forget when I was running against Dave McCurdy for the Senate the first time twenty years ago, he started out thirty-two points ahead of me and everyone laughed at me because, "There's no way in the world you're going to win that." One of the few people who was openly on my side was Tom Stafford. Tom knows that I'd like to be the oldest person to be in space. If you remember, John Glenn was going to go through that and then something happened and it didn't work out for him. So I still might do—

JE: You still are open to that?

Jl: That door is still open. Yeah I would do it in a heartbeat.

Chapter 13 - 1:57

Inhofe's Age

John Erling: About the Senate, I'm just in review that you were reelected then in 2002 and 2008, and you're getting ready to run again now in 2014. You're seventy-nine years old—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

- JE:** You serve a full term now you'd be eighty-five years old.
- Jl:** Eighty-five, yeah.
- JE:** And I was looking at some of your colleagues, Diane Feinstein is eighty-one?
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Chuck Grassley is eighty. Orrin Hatch is eighty. Richard Shelby is eighty.
- Jl:** You know, stop right there, all four of those you just mentioned are running right now for reelection, or did this last time.
- JE:** Okay. And Carl Evan is eighty.
- Jl:** He's retiring.
- JE:** Then there are many of you. Then you started at seventy-nine, seventy-eight, seventy-eight. There are twenty in their seventies, twenty-five, seventy and eighty—
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** So you're used to being around people—
- Jl:** Sure.
- JE:** Who are of your age—
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** So age should never be an issue for you because you appear to be in good health.
- Jl:** No, I've always said, John, I know people that are old at sixty and can't do things, and that's why I use this when I'm too old to fly an airplane upside down because that's a conversation stopper. Where do they go from there?
- JE:** Right, and I doubt that that's going to be held against you as you go into the fall campaign anyway.
- Jl:** Yeah, they'll use it but it won't be used effectively.
- JE:** Right. So as you head into the fall campaign you face people who are probably young enough to be your children.
- Jl:** Yes.
- JE:** And Independent and a Democrat, this could be the easier campaign of your entire career.
- Jl:** Well, that depends on when you come out with your book. I wouldn't want to say that right before the election. It could have been so and I just don't like to do that to people.
- JE:** Right, but I'm saying—
- Jl:** I think you're right. See, I had a primary that was a month ago and I had five people in the primary, four other Republicans, and I won it with 88 percent. Now that's kind of a record in itself. With the general election coming up I have a Democrat and three Independents, so it would be five again, it would be the second time if I—

Chapter 14 - 5:40**Tea Party**

John Erling: They're having challenges in the Republican party and congressional races, senate races, Tea Party has challenged the mainstream moderate Republican candidates and you did not have that challenge at all. Tea Party hasn't really done all that well. What do you see as the future of the Tea Party? Will they exist for—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Well, you have to keep in mind, John, that the Tea Party is not a party, it's a self-identifying group. And a lot of people like to be identified with it because they see that as a winner. The Tea Party just became in existence from people that are saying, "We're tired of politics as usual, and everyone is liberal and they want everything done in Washington." And so the conservatives were, they kind of got a hold of it. Now there are some that have been around for a long time and who really are not conservative, I mean, a good many. Thad Cochran in Mississippi, if you remember, he actually lost in the first time around and then he came and won narrowly in the runoff. So that has been used but not all that effectively as people think. And a lot of the people wanting to break into politics are trying to use that as the way to do it. And it has not been as effective as they would like.

JE: So do you see that arm then, known as the Tea Party, as still being intact ten years from now?

Jl: I think so, but certainly it's not any kind of a party. Now you have to keep in mind, John, in terms of ratings, and I'm talking about the ACU and all these different groups and ratings, I have been rated as the number one most conservative more than anybody else has. Every once in a while it will drop a little bit but always in the top three. For that reason, I can do things that other people can't do and I can be critical. I'll give you an example. If you read the Constitution, read the Constitution, it says what we're supposed to be doing here in Article 1, Section 8. Two things: strong national defense, and roads and highways, that's it. So that's the area where you could say, argue a big spender. But I'm a conservative in all the other areas because I see that as where we're supposed to go. So what practical effect did that have? We have a lot of want-to-be conservatives in the United States Senate who are trying to use any bill that has a lot of zeros in it like a highway reauthorization bill to oppose, to demagog, I might say, on the floor of the Senate. Well, we had, and I authored, the last extension to take us, it was actually a highway reauthorization bill, but a twenty-seven-month bill with the idea we had some time then to do a real one. And there are a lot of Republicans on the floor who really weren't all that conservative but they wanted people to think that they are and they were using that. My argument to them was, "You're wrong, you're just saying what people perceive to be true." In fact, the only alternative to a new highway reauthorization bill is extensions. Everyone will tell you, and it's not even debatable,

extensions take 30 percent off the top. Do a one-month extension, then another month extension, you can't keep the workforce going, you don't get any reforms and all that. So the conservative position is for a highway reauthorization bill. Now, I used that in the Senate to not much avail. But then the night that I passed that in the Senate, I went over to the House and I got all the members of the committee over there, it's called TNI, Transportation Infrastructure, there are thirty-three Republicans, many of those thirty-three Republicans consider themselves to be Tea Party, they're trying to be conservatives. I explained what I just explained to you, the conservative position is get somebody where he can do reforms, where he can have it for a five-year term, and get a real reauthorization bill. The alternative to that cost you 30 percent more. Every one, every single last one of the thirty-three Republicans voted with me on the floor of the House. I've never been so proud, and I said this in the Senate to some of those who were arguing against it. It's kind of complicated but I'm in an enviable position of being able to say that with conviction because I'm considered to be the most conservative.

JE: Do some of those young conservatives argue with you on your stance? Do they think that you have come off maybe even as liberal in some areas?

Jl: Oh no, they never did, they can't take that risk because they know that will never sell. That's why I can do it and they can't. You want another area that is even more sensitive than that? I gave you one of my books, I think.

JE: Yes.

Jl: All right, I want you to go back and read the chapter on earmarks. To me, the most demagog of all the arguments they used is when the Republicans re-came out in the House and put a moratorium on earmarks. Which did nothing more than transfer to the President the ability to do these things that we are supposed to do constitutionally. Rather than to explain it just reread that chapter. Once you read it you can't argue, and all the guys whose names I won't repeat 'cause they get mad every time I do, but they're supposedly conservatives, they all know I'm right but they don't have the courage. Frank Luntz, Fred Davis, and others, said, "Inhofe, you're right but you'll never sell the public on this idea because they've already entrenched the earmarks so bad." They said, "It doesn't make any difference, there's a clear right and wrong to this." And I have, in that chapter, what Sean Hannity called the 102 most egregious earmarks, I'm talking about the Turtle Bridges and all that stuff, in that, the one thing they all had in common, not one was a congressional earmark. They were all Obama earmarks. Since we refused to spend the money in these areas it went back to his bureaucracy and he did it. That's so obvious, and yet, that's why I'm willing to do things like that.

Chapter 15 - 5:45**Perry Inhofe**

John Erling: You said you met your wife, Kay, way back when and now you've been married for how many years?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: We are having this month our fifty-fourth wedding anniversary.

JE: Children from that marriage?

Jl: Four children, two boys, two girls, twelve grandchildren.

JE: Which does bring me to the recent loss of your son Perry in the plane crash November 10, 2013, on a Sunday. And the crash happened near Owasso. If you want to comment on that?

Jl: Yeah, Perry is an excellent, you know, I wish that you would take the time to review the funeral, Perry's funeral. I spoke during that and everyone realized that Perry was an unusual person. Generally people strive for perfection; Perry reached perfection in everything he did. When he graduated, and I used this during my remarks, from his first university he went to, Duke University, we thought he was just going for one degree. I loaded my whole family in our 421 and off we went to Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. And we went to and we were at Electrical Engineering School, the number one broad print Perry dives in off the second. [time 1:12] "And that's great, Perry, we're so proud of you, but we're going to go now." Well, we have another graduation and that was the Biomedical Engineering, still number one. Everything he did, he wasn't happy unless he was the number one. Everybody knows that who knew him in high school, and just a really outstanding young guy.

JE: And an outstanding orthopedic surgeon here in Tulsa.

Jl: Well, he was so good that when I go around the state, I don't care where it is, it can be in Hugo, Oklahoma, if there are more than fifteen people in the room they'll say, "Oh, you're Dr. Inhofe's father." Not "He's a senator's son," I'm his father. And then they want to show me their hand where he did surgery. I don't know how he did as many as he did but he actually achieved Outstanding Orthopedic Surgeon of the Year, he's the very best in everything that he did. He was the best pilot, I was his instructor. That guy flew by the numbers. I can't comment on how this accident happened because we don't know yet.

JE: He was flying a Mitsubishi MU2B25.

Jl: That is correct.

JE: Which I guess had some history of problems.

Jl: It has a history of problems. They've had a total of, I understand, 704 units of which 340-some have been killed. That kind of tells you something.

JE: Yeah. You passed on the love of flying to him and to his son.

Jl: Yeah, Jimmy, my older son and Perry, the younger son, who was killed in the accident both were with me. Perry, I can remember, he ended up being tall and strong and all that, but

he started out being real short. I remember when he was probably six or seven years old, I was on an instrument flight and I was having engine problems and Perry was seated next to me. And it was zero-zero out there, going from San Antonio to Brownsville, Texas. I said, "Perry, try to keep us going straight and level here. I've got to get underneath there and see if I can't fix this electrical problem." So I did, in probably two or three minutes. I came back and he was right on target. Perry had learned to fly, he never could see visually out because he was too short so he learned to fly on instruments. So he was an exceptionally good pilot. The big event every year is Osh Kosh. Both boys, we went, the three of us, thirty-four consecutive years. Our last year was the thirty-fourth consecutive year at Osh Kosh.

JE: That's an air show.

JI: It's an air show. We'd fly in it sometimes, we'd always take different airplanes up there, experimental airplanes. That's the one event where it wouldn't matter what else any of us were doing, we would be at Osh Kosh.

JE: Hmm. And you did that this year—

JI: And we did that in this year. When Perry went up he took his younger son, Cole. He soloed him as his instructor on the way to Osh Kosh in a little Grumman, Grumman Tiger, and it was the same plane that I soloed his father, Perry, thirty-four years before.

JE: That's a great legacy, isn't it? Your faith has sustained you and Kay and the family then through this.

JI: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: There are other who may have lost children, we don't expect to lose our children.

JI: It's not supposed to happen that way. I ended up my talk at his funeral showing Perry all the time since he was in high school how he loved the Lord. And I said, "So this isn't good-bye, this is so-long, see you soon."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JI: That's who we're here about, you know, how it all happened.

JE: Yeah. What was the reaction from your Senate colleagues and representatives to the loss of Perry in the plane crash?

JI: Well, some mistakenly misinterpreted what I said as saying that Democrats were more compassionate. It was more unexpected. I had friends I didn't know were friends in the Senate, do remarkable things. I'm talking about Democrats now, the ones that I had been in opposition to. I think they all responded the same, but I was so surprised by that that transcended any differences that we had before. It was a genuine passion that they were sharing with me. And a lot of them had had similar experiences I never knew before, and it's kind of turned into a club.

JE: Hmm. Did the President reach out to you?

JI: No, but Biden did. And you know why? Because Biden's wife and daughter were killed in

kind of a similar situation.

JE: Vice President Joe Biden, we're talking about, of course.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative). I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with Biden, long, long talks, on the telephone, in person—

Chapter 16 - 2:10

Man of Faith

John Erling: You're known as a man of faith. Where did that begin? Was that from childhood or is there a moment that you—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: No, it's kind of strange the way it happened, and that's in my book also. September 22nd of 1988, see, I was elected to the House in '87, so this would be the second year. There are two events that take place in the House and in the Senate every week. One is the House prayer breakfast, and the other is started by Bill Bright, and it's a Bible study that takes place. I was advised that "You ought to really do this since you're of faith and all that," and so I did. But I've never missed one of those two meetings a year, and now it's been twenty-eight years. That was eight years in the House, and twenty years in the Senate. And I always tell new members, I say, "If you want to do this, do it and just tell your staff it doesn't make any difference if the President is calling you and wants you to come to the White House, just do it." And so I did. Well, anyway, on that day, the guy that was head of the thing for Bill Bright said that he and a member of Congress from Missouri wanted to meet me afterwards and go down to the dining room and they said to me, "Inhofe, we think, and we've been with you now for over a year since you've been in there, you never really accepted Jesus." I got angry with him and here's the little guy telling me, after all the things, deeds, and all that stuff. And they said, "All right, when have you asked him?" I said, "Well, every day." "How long have you and Kay been married?" At that time it was probably twenty-some years. They said, "Do you propose to Kay every day?" I said, "No." "Why?" "Well, because we're already married." And that was the first time I realized I had never called the wedding into place. And so in the members' dining room at two thirty in the afternoon on September 22nd of 1988, that's when it happened.

JE: Acceptance then of Jesus into your life?

Jl: As a personal Lord and Savior by invitation. That's late in life.

JE: But before that, your family went to church and as a child and all did they—

Jl: Oh yeah, yeah, we did that. I was mistakenly thinking that I was already married, but I wasn't.

Chapter 17 - 4:55**Open Heart Surgery**

John Erling: Let me also mention here, because this has been an interesting time for you, in early October you went in on a routine doctor visit and, bingo, they say you've got a serious problem.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Yeah, this is what happened. Your cardiologist will tell you that if you're a candidate for a heart attack that there are four symptoms. One is swollen legs, dizziness, and all this stuff. I never had any symptoms, in fact, just a month before this happened I was in Colorado with two of my granddaughters actually going up the mountain, starting at 10,000 feet and going all the way up and competing with kids. So I never had any problems. But every five or seven years you want to have a colonoscopy, so I had no reason to go other than that I had time to do it. And I went to have a colonoscopy and they said, "Well, there's a way you can do it, if you have a virtual then you don't have to waste a day of your life. If you have a normal one it's a general anesthetic." You've probably gone through it.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Jl: So you lose a whole day, but if you do a virtual, all they'll do is you give a shot and then they fill you full of water and then they run you through the tube and they x-ray. So they see things beyond your gut, beyond your colon, where otherwise they would not have seen. When we came out, he said, "Your colon is fine but you're about to die." Two arteries were 100 percent blocked, now this is the doctor's report that shows it, two that were 90 percent, and then the others 70, 75. So we had to have a quadruple to take care of those. He needed to do it right then, and I said, "Well." Since my wife had gone through this the year before and since all my kids and grandkids were back in Oklahoma, I said, "Let me call Dr. Garrett, who had done my wife, and if he can take me tomorrow morning I'll take the plane back tonight and I'll just get off the plane, hit the table, and do it." And that's what happened. And you know who is to credit for, I believe, saving my life? Was Tom Stafford. Tom Stafford is a well-known Oklahoma early astronaut. He is a very close friend of mine, and when he was talking to someone on my staff he just commented to Tom and said, "Oh, the boss isn't going to be here tomorrow because he's doing a colonoscopy." He said, "No, tell him to a virtual colonoscopy and then he'll be able to be here." So it was Tom Stafford, who according to the doctors, now I don't want to sound hysterical here, but he saved my life. He said, "You couldn't have lasted better, just a few more days." And I didn't have any of the symptoms. There's one doctor up there, he said, "We think you've made medical history because you had no symptoms, and yet, you had all that blockage in there." Only this morning I went back and I'm great.

JE: You had an exam this morning?

Jl: Yeah.

JE: And they said everything is fine?

Jl: Yeah. It's the first time I've gone back to have that particular post-op exam. This is not even only a couple of months ago, yeah.

JE: You said you flew back, were you flying?

Jl: Oh no, no, I didn't have a plane up there, a commercial one.

JE: Well, that had to make you nervous, the time you were flying back and what's going to happen—

Jl: Well, no, I wanted to do it because I thought, the way they described it I might not have made it or it might have been a more difficult operation. I wanted to be where all my kids were born, in St. Johns Hospital. My wife was born there, all of my kids were born there, we know everybody there, and that's where we wanted to do it. So I thought I would take the risk of making it back here. I didn't want to be stuck up there for maybe two weeks, forcing them to go up. Now, as it turned out, I was out of there, in fact, I was mowing my field up at the lake, four days after I had the surgery.

JE: Wow.

Jl: They didn't know it but I was.

JE: But you said Kay had a bypass surgery as well?

Jl: She had, and this is the interesting thing that I think fits into what we're talking about here, right now, what's the big issue? It's Obamacare.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Jl: Ted Cruz did his thing, it technically was not a filibuster but he was up all night long and I wasn't willing to do that, but I spoke that night and the next morning. What I talked about the next morning was, my wife, and I know she was a little upset with me because she hadn't told a lot of people back in Oklahoma that she had had open heart surgery, hers was in a valve, an aorta. My wife, who is a year younger than I am, if we'd been living, keeping in mind that what they want is a single-parent system, Obama, Harry Reid, they've all admitted that they want a single-parent, that's socialized medicine. That's just like Hillary Healthcare was in 1992. If we had had any of those systems, and we checked in Canada, she would have had a six-month waiting period. In the UK it would have been a two-month waiting period, because that's what they do, they say if you're over a certain age you can't have this type of surgery. And one of the reasons they do it, they know you're going to die anyway. And so, she is alive and healthy today, I said on the floor of the Senate, because we didn't have Obamacare. Not knowing that just a matter of two weeks after that, I was going to have open heart surgery.

JE: Wow.

Chapter 18 - 4:05**Brush with Death**

John Erling: Well, you've had several brushes with death. You were flying and got shot at Iraq when, I believe, four US lawmakers were on that plane.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: It was an old C1, an early C130—

JE: Came under fire from three rocket-propelled grenades, as you left for Jordan.

JI: At that time, it was in Iraq and we were working out from the Capitol. And one of the guys with me, he's retired from the Senate now but he was from Florida—

JE: Senator Mel Martinez?

JI: Mel Martinez, yeah. I was sitting up in the driver's seat. I like to do that with the pilots and listen to them talk about the problems they're having, what kind of equipment they've got, what their needs are, because I'm the ranking member and we were trying to wind down those early H model C130s. And I was building my case, when, all of a sudden, it hit. There was a flash and they sent out the flares, because these are heat directed surface to air missiles. The first one hit and then after that the flares went out and that drew them away from the airplane. And that's kind of exciting. And I went downstairs, and when you get on the plane you always take all of your body armor off. You don't want to be riding on the plane with that. I looked over and Mel Martinez still had his body armor on. I said, "Mel, what are you doing?" He said, "Well, I promised Kitty," that's his wife, "that if I went I would never take my body armor off during that time. And if something had happened and we'd been killed—" the words he used, "she would kill me." So anyway, that was an exciting trip.

JE: That whole ordeal kind of jostled the plane around, didn't it?

JI: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: So, coming under fire and surviving—

JI: Remember when my prop came off?

JE: I'm glad you mentioned that.

JI: 'Cause that was earlier, and I had forgotten about that. But when you said surviving, when the prop came off it was the last year of Clinton, and that was right after the first Moore tornado, it was actually the second one, but the one before this one, the town was really damaged. So the President was coming into Tinker Air Force Base, which part of the tornado hit that too, people were expecting that Inhofe would be the only member of the delegation who won't show up down there because he doesn't like the President. And I wasn't going to let that happen. Well, I happened to be at our place up at the lake, we have a little grass strip up there, it had been raining the day before, so instead of taking the little plane I took the kids' plane and I was flying just to the other side of Claremore when this huge vibration took place. I did a mag check and find out it wasn't that and then I realize

it had to be the prop that was broken off at the tip. The good news is, when you feather your prop then, you can coast a lot further. And I was only at 3,000 feet, I think, and I was able to coast back to the airport at Claremore. What I didn't know was, this was a fixed-gear airplane. When the props came off it also took the landing gear, the nose gear off. And I didn't know that until I landed. They said, "That's pretty good landing." I dropped down where I was upside down. Well, anyway, there happened to be an AT guy there, and we still to this day don't know why he happened to be there, and he was taking pictures. I knocked Bill Clinton off the front page of every newspaper in Oklahoma and I didn't have to go down to Tinker. But I was answering the phone because all these calls were coming in. One guy called up and said, "Is this Claremore Airport?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Did somebody up there lose a propeller?" I said, "Yeah." "Well, it darn near killed me." I said, "Well, put it in your truck and bring it up here." This guy drove up, he looked at me, and he said, "Well, Jim Inhofe." I looked at him, and I said, "Well, G. W. Curtis." I had not seen him since we graduated from Central High School together. I came within a yard of killing him with three hundred pounds of my engine and prop landing right next to him.

JE: Wow. What goes through your mind when you're losing a prop? What's—

Jl: Well, you know, it's a consistent thing that we do that for some reason, I have this thing where I say, "All right, Lord, if you've got more for me to do—" and then it's not my problem, it's his.

JE: You have prayed that many times, haven't you?

Jl: I have more—

JE: So apparently he has more for you to do since you're running for reelection—

Jl: Yeah.

JE: As a matter of fact.

Chapter 19 - 5:05

Earmarks

John Erling: I'm just going to throw some issues at you that you've been on record for. First of all, you're a longtime supporter of our five military installations. You've defended the use of congressional earmarks. What is an earmark?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: The most misunderstood thing is, an earmark, by definition, is anything that you vote for that is specific but it has some benefit to your state or your district, if it's a House member. Now, if you read the Constitution, there's a reason that was set up and

it says, and I'm paraphrasing now, but anyone who is listening to this go look it up and they will find that in the Constitution it says that this what we are supposed to be doing. They specifically said this should not be done by the President. And when they're talking about the balance of power, you go back and read any of the Justices back in the early 1800s and they said that we should not ever take this away from Congress. Because when you deny something that is thought of as an earmark today, that is, something that then goes back and the bureaucracy does it. That's the President, the President does it. It doesn't save one nickel, and yet, for example, things that would have been good for Tinker Air Force Base, they'll deny that and that'll go to Fort Drum in New York, or some place politically the President does better. Now, everybody knows this, but quite frankly, the Republican conservatives are not courageous enough to admit it. That you're really doing a great disservice if you don't take your constitutional responsibility, and that is, to do these things. The founding fathers said back in the informative years, "We are better informed of what the needs are around the country than the President is." So what I've done is I've come up with a solution. I said, "Define an earmark as an appropriation that has not been authorized and I'll vote against every earmark that's out there. Because that's what we're supposed to do, authorize." We have authorization committees and then we have appropriation committees, that way it has to pass judgment. And if there is any self-serving on there it won't pass, I mean, it just doesn't happen. But it's all based on need in those committees. So I introduced that and one of the guys, quite frankly, has been exploiting that issue for years who was John McCain. And some others whose names I won't mention. But I went to John and I said, "John, why don't we just kill this issue by defining an earmark?" And he agreed to do it. He cosponsored it with me, and later withdrew. Everyone, I can't think of one person who didn't agree that that was the answer. But the problem is, how do you explain it to the public? As a result of it, we have a lot of things that have come and I have—now, listen, this is very significant. I'm doing this to try to sell my book, but in the greatest hopes, the book that I wrote, I have one whole chapter on earmarks. If you read that chapter, I even listed the 102 most egregious earmarks according to Sean Hannity, and I did this on the Senate floor, I read all 102 of them. When I was through with them, I said, "What do all these 102 earmarks have in common? Not one is a congressional earmark. They're all presidential earmarks." I'm talking about the Turtle Trails and all these things that people find so offensive. The President did them all, the public never understood that. But it's all documented in my book.

JE: You sponsored or cosponsored, is this right, in '95 earmarks?

Jl: Well, it depends on how you define an earmark. I don't know that, I don't know what the source of that is, because there is no definition of an earmark. And that's just something, yes, almost everything that happens in the military I'm a part of. I'm a cosponsor of almost

every bill. Of course, a lot of those are in Oklahoma. We do some things in Oklahoma that other states don't do. We have five major military installations. We've gone through five BRAC rounds, that's Base Realignment and Closer Commission. They're set up to cut down the number of bases and military installations in accordance with their performance. We're the only state that all five of ours, with all five BRAC rounds have increased in numbers and in missions, employees and in missions. Because we do it better here. Yeah, I'm not embarrassed about that at all.

JE: Was it in 2010 the House Republicans put a one-year moratorium on the earmarks?

JI: The dumbest thing the Republicans could have done and I said that to them. And if you talk to one of the more responsible House members, Congressman Tom Cole, Tom Cole from Norman and Moore, he will tell you that he led the fight to try to stop them from doing that because it's so irresponsible. He'll tell you that if you call him up and ask him. And that took a lot of courage. In fact, they said, "You're right on this, Inhofe, but you'll never be able to explain it." Frank Luntz, who is probably the best known real political mechanic in the country, said, "Inhofe, you are dead right on this but you'll never sell that to Boden." And Fred Davis, the same thing. And I said, "I don't really care because I know I'm right on this thing and you know I'm right too." And so—

Chapter 20 - 7:00

Climate Change

John Erling: Climate change, you repeat the claim that human influence climate change is a hoax and impossible. You're probably known nationally because of your stance on this and you oppose scientists and all.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: It all started back in the Kyoto Treaty. That was back during Clinton/Gore, and Gore went down to South America. They all got together with United Nations, it's all driven by the United Nations that we're having global warming and everyone is going to die. I believe, everyone believed it at that time, so they started introducing bills. The first bill was the McCain/Lieberman Bill. Well, McCain's a Republican so it's not just all Democrats. Some of those involved with the professors at Wharton School had a separate little group that said, "If you pass Cap and Trade it's going to be the largest tax increase in the history of America. It's going to be between three and four hundred billion dollars every year." Now that translates in Oklahoma as just under three thousand dollars a family. I thought, "Now, I want to make sure the science is right on this." So I started and got the word out there that

scientists that were not afraid to do so, let me know. And they started calling in saying, "No, there's nothing to it." And I can debate this with anyone and show that global warming is not taking place and we are not going to be passing it. No one would debate me on it anymore. The only reason they're using climate change is because we won the battle in global warming so they're now renaming it. The United Nations, I have a whole chapter in my book on this, it's the longest chapter in the book, and we put in a lot of research. And it goes all the way back to several decades ago. The United Nations is very offended that they have to be accountable to United States or any other country. They want to be completely self-supporting. There is a liberal view that agrees with this. So how are we going to do it? Well, if we can come up and do it through global warming we can be the group that sponsors that. So the whole thing started down in Buenos Aires when they passed the Kyoto thing. Then the United Nations sponsored the biggest party of the year at December of every year. And that was to get all the countries to come in and any of them who would go along with the global warming thing, they had the biggest party of the year. I mean, caviar, and everything else, in the most attractive places in the world. One of the more recent ones, they had all gone over to Copenhagen, John Kerry, he was a senator at that time, Hillary Clinton, she was a senator at that time, Nancy Pelosi, Barbara Boxer, Obama, all of them had gone over and lied to them and said, "We in the United States are going to pass Cap and Trade." And I went over after they came back, I went over on the last day, the big climax of the thing, to announce that they were lying to them. Deliberately. These top leaders in America were deliberately lying. A hundred and ninety-one who were represented, all 191 had one thing in common, they all hated me. But I told them the truth, that there was no way in the world that they could get over thirty-five votes in the 100-member Senate to this, and it's true. So then Obama was trying to do through regulation what he could not do through legislation. Both John Barrasso and Roger Wicker, that's Wyoming and Mississippi, are on my side on all these issues. So it's been a long thing, and there are still some people upset with me on that, but it was a lonely fight the first six years. I mean, the threats and the whole works.

JE: Threats? What do you mean?

Jl: Oh people are saying, "You're destroying America, you're going to die for this." You know.

JE: How do your colleagues treat you on this issue? You'd mentioned John Kerry and others, Hillary Clinton?

Jl: Well, there'll be some like them who really believe it. Hillary Clinton. Another one is Ed Markey. Ed Markey came over from the House, he was elected to the Senate this last time. He's the one that I debated more than anybody else, but he actually believes it. And he, by the way, is a real close friend of mine. When I had my heart surgery he was the first one to call up and say that his dad had the same thing and told me the positive results that he got,

and all that. But then there are others, the Republicans, who are still on the side of climate change and global warming, because they know that's the popular side to be on. Every one of them knows better, every one of them. And they'll admit to me that they do. I'm more of a maverick than I thought I was.

JE: Well, you don't mind being alone? It doesn't seem to bother you any, or does it?

Jl: No it doesn't, no. If the cause is one where I know I'm right, just imagine passing a tax increase when they admit that it would not do anything. I mean, they all know that CO₂ is not responsible for any appreciable amount of change in the weather. They know that now and they didn't know it back during Kyoto. And now they're trying to do a new Kyoto and their parties are still going on. They're still going over there and trying to get America to do this, but we're not going to.

JE: You're not going to give up that fight?

Jl: Oh no.

JE: 'Cause you could easily walk away from it.

Jl: Oh no, not that one.

JE: So here you have the scientists, the Union of Concerned Scientists stated that your statement was in error. So you have all these scientists—

Jl: Yeah but they have a position to take where they benefit. Let's take all of these various foundations that support all the scientists, they're the ones who dictate it and they get it, of course, from the United Nations that if you don't agree with this—the IPCC is the Intergovernmental Paneling Planet Change, that's the United Nations. They formed that to bring all the scientists in to perpetuate the fraud of global warming. And they were successful in doing it, it was brilliant the way they pulled it off. You know, it would have been a reality.

JE: So to kind of recap that, do you believe in any global warming?

Jl: No, no, not as most people understand it. There is always going to be change in climate. We can go through that and I have it all plotted out in graphs, and I've done this on the Senate floor and I've done it in debates, and I've shown when it was hotter than it is now and we've gone through the little ice age and the medieval warming period. And this has been going on throughout recorded history, of hotter times and of colder times than we have. The interesting thing now, we're actually going into a cooling period. Let me be specific so that anyone who is listening to this will—if you start with 1895, they went in at that time, it was a cooling period and an ice age was coming. We were all going to freeze to death. Then in about 1918, we came out of that ice age thing and went into a warming period that went up into the middle '40s. In 1945, they started into another ice age that lasted through the middle of the '70s. Here's the interesting thing, and no one disagrees with this, in 1945, at the end of the war, was the largest release of CO₂ worldwide in the recorded history of

the world. And it precipitated, not a warming trend, but a thirty-year cooling period that sustained all the way up through the '70s. We went into the warming, now we're going into another cooling period.

Chapter 21 - 1:34

Immigration

John Erling: Quickly, undocumented immigrants today, here we are in 2013, we're wondering what should take place—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And how should they become part of our society? They already are, they're here—

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: They're going to stay. What do we do about it?

Jl: Okay, my position is formulated because of two things, one is, I've been privileged, I think, now I can't document this but at one time I think I was asked to speak to the naturalization ceremonies, some in Oklahoma City, some in Tulsa, more than any other members have. Because I have this passion, maybe it's because of our family, but the people that come over and do it the right way, they become better citizens. I can point out people from Mexico who have gone through this naturalization process, know more about the history of America than John Erling and Jim Inhofe put together. And these people did it the hard way, they learned the language and did it the way it should be done. So I have always opposed a way of short-cutting that so that we are slapping them in the face. Because I think that's a process we need in this country. Now, on the other side of it, let's go to Southwest Oklahoma in the cotton country down there, they can't bring in a crop without the people. So there's a way of documenting workers totally different than becoming a citizen. It should not be a road to citizenship. They're still willing to come up as documented workers, even about the Panhandle now, where we have hog country and all the things that are going on out there right now. There's a lot of undocumented workers but they could police that up so that they have to be documented. And that shouldn't be that difficult to do.

Chapter 22 - 4:20**Passing a Bill**

John Erling: Give us a civics lesson. You have come up with a bill and you want to sponsor a bill. How does that make its way through—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: I'll give you the normal way it happens. We have a bicameral legislature in Washington, here in the House and the Senate. And there's a reason for that. You go back and study the Constitution and you think it had to be divinely inspired the way it has worked out. But we have both the House and the Senate. People generally know the difference between the House and the Senate. So for a legislation to pass and become the law you've got to go through the process of both the House and the Senate. So a bill can be introduced in the Senate and, at the same time, one identical be introduced in the House, they can both pass, one in the Senate, one in the House, and they can become law if they're exactly the same. They never are. So they go to a conference. The House and the Senate gets together in a room and they say, "All right, we both passed a bill." It can be a highway bill, to build highways, but it's different because you're putting money in different areas. One's stronger on bridges and so forth. So they go into a conference and the conference committees are made up of the leadership in that particular interest area, like transportation or in defense, if that's the case. They get in one room and they iron out all the differences and it's sent back then to the House and then to the Senate and it can't be amended at that point. So they have to vote for it or against it. And then, in most cases, by the time it goes through that process, they reluctantly vote for it or they're still mad that their thing didn't get in. Now, that's normally what happens, but this is very interesting that you've asked this question because I've spent all day yesterday, that would have been on December 2nd, yesterday. On December 2nd I left here at six a.m. in the morning, left Oklahoma, went to Washington, and I got back around midnight last night. That all happened on the 2nd. The reason I went, is because the House passed a Defense Authorization Bill called the NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act. The House had to pass one, the Senate, and then it goes into conference, but the Senate refused to pass one. Now, if we go into January and we haven't passed one we can't pay our kids that are out there risking their lives, we can't move equipment around, it's absolutely imperative that we pass one. Well, they wouldn't pass it. There are several people who didn't want it unless they could have their amendment on something that has nothing to do with defending America. It might be on minimum wage or something like that. So, they have the Big Four. The Big Four are in the Senate, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and then the ranking member, that's me, and then on the House, the Chairman of the House Committee and the ranking member there. So we had four of us coming in doing the job

that 535 people would normally be doing, but we were not able to do it. So we, throughout the day yesterday, went through every contentious issue and made hard decisions and I can't tell you, I will not tell you what they are now because I was waiting for this call. And Mitch McConnell doesn't even know this, he's supposed to be, he can call me back. But we'll go back and what I think will happen is that the House will take a bill that originated in the House and then went to the Senate and was changed and is going back to the House. Now I don't know what bill that will be, and they'll put this on as an amendment and pass it. And then it comes over, it may be amendable, but in this case, Harry Reid will be criticized for it. But he would put it in a position where there can't be amendments. He'll fill the tree, it's called, with amendments so there's no room for any other amendments. There's a saying that there's nothing more repulsive to see made than sausage or laws. This is a good example of that. Why should four people, in fact, one didn't even show up, so there was three of us did it, be able to do some. And I anticipate that that will become the law for this year's National Defense Authorization Act, and that will cause us to start paying attention and doing what we should have done months ago in passing one the right way. I only use that because there's the ideal picture of how things are supposed to work. But if they don't work there are other things that can be done. This is a good example of that, which happened on December 2nd, of 2013.

Chapter 23 - 3:25

Government Shut Down

John Erling: From October 1st through October 16th of this year our federal government entered a shutdown and pretty much curtailed most routine operations after Congress failed to enact legislation. So this funding gap was created when the two chambers of Congress failed to agree to an Appropriations Continue Resolution. And this was to defund the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It was led by a conservative senator such as Ted Cruz.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Did you think that was the proper way to try to attack the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act?

Jl: Well, I think it's something that forces people to take a position on something that's controversial. However, I'd have to tell you that this isn't really the reason that this happened. Every year, as we all know, and as everyone who is listening to us now knows,

that the reason that we are in such heavy debt in this country is that we always will get right up to the end of a fiscal year and say we have to increase the debt or have to we have to renege on our obligations. I said, I think it was six years ago, that some day we're going to have to stop this. We're going to have to say, "Fine, if it means that we're going to have to not pay our obligations as a nation, if that's what it takes to get beyond this point where we live within in our means, then we should be doing it." That was the big issue and we're going to be voting on this again on February 15th, of 2014. Now, going back, yeah, that was part of thing 'cause this was someone who felt so strongly about Obamacare, and keep in mind, the issue here is socializing medicine. Everyone admits that Obamacare is aimed toward a single-payer system. By definition, a single-payer system is socialized medicine, such as the HEB in UK or in Canada. So he felt strongly enough about it and several of the rest of us did that we took that step to do it.

JE: When you say he, that's Senator Ted Cruz?

Jl: Well, there were twelve of us, I was one of the twelve.

JE: Okay.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative). I'm guilty.

JE: The public doesn't know what goes on behind closed doors, do they? The back and forth you might have with senators, your caucus meetings, and by the way, here's a question: What's the difference between a caucus meeting and a committee meeting? How are they different in the way they're operated?

Jl: A caucus is geared toward membership. The Republicans have a caucus every week, the Democrats have a caucus every week, on Tuesday during the lunch hour. It's called the Weekly Republican Caucus and the Weekly Democrat Caucus. Now that's strictly just the members, just Republicans and just the ones that Republicans agree in terms of staff who is invited in. Who do they trust? And the committee is something that generally speaking is public, it's televised, people will know when you have a Defense Authorization Bill you have that, except for what happened yesterday. Those are all public, they're live on TV. You can go into Executive Session in a committee. It's rare that they do it but they do it in such cases that address personnel problems, things that they don't want out in the public because someone's life can be ruined by accusations that they find out later on were not real. But a committee deals with subjects; a caucus deals with membership.

Chapter 24 - 3:05**Pose as Conservative**

John Erling: Did you ever in your days, way back when in the State Senate and House, think that you would become a United States senator? Was that a goal of yours?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: No, it never, never once. In fact, I've always said, when people talk about term limits they should really talk about a person before that person is qualified to run for the Congress, either House, should have to live in this real world for at least ten years and make a legitimate living to know how tough it is on the outside. We have too many people who've gone straight from the fraternity house to Congress, so if there's a problem what do they do? Just regulate it more. So I've often said that you should have to be beat up by the bureaucracy for at least ten years before you can run. In my case, it was twenty years, and it was evident when I got there initially to the House how few people had ever worked for a living. More today, a higher percentage than used to.

JE: So then the—

Jl: But no, I didn't have any idea. I ran for the state legislature, that's a part-time job. Never did a full-time job until I ran for the United States Congress because they're always part-time jobs. Even the Mayor of Tulsa was. So I enjoyed being in the real world, competing at the same time part-time political position.

JE: Does it bother you when you see people who are posing as conservative? You know they're really not but they're posing to get elected? I think you kind of referred to this earlier, and then you're dealing with them. Does that cause you a problem?

Jl: Let me share with you, there is a person that was a very, very liberal person, it's Mike Synar. Mike Synar is deceased now. I liked Mike Synar; he was a very, very liberal person, he admitted, he even enjoyed being liberal. He was an honest liberal. One time I said, "You know, Mike, how can you vote for these things and still be from Oklahoma?" He said, "It's easy, you vote liberal and you press release conservative." Well, he's being honest with that because I can name names in the United States Senate of very liberal Democrats that you never hear anything except conservative stuff back home. Look what's happening—and I won't mention 'cause the 2014 election will be coming up—there are quite a few senators you read about every day that are Democrat incumbent senators who are trying to paint themselves as conservatives back home because they're from states that are called "red states." Now here's the fallacy in that argument: the majority determines who is the leadership. So if you want Nancy Pelosi to lead the United States House of Representatives you want to send a majority of Democrats in. But the Democrats who pose as conservatives back home you have to ask them this question: "Who are you going to vote for to be the Speaker of the House?" And they have to say, "Nancy Pelosi for a liberal Democrat." So

yeah, there are a lot of them out there that follow that theory. And while it's interesting, and this is a good thing to pose to a lot of the students and people that consider themselves as students of politics, there are a lot of them who vote liberal and press release conservative. I don't know of one, nor can I remember of one, in the history of the time that I've been there who votes conservative and press releases liberal.

Chapter 25 - 2:20

Tulsa Mayor's Race

John Erling: You recently interjected yourself into the Tulsa mayoral race. You supported Dewey Bartlett. You and other Republicans thought enough to come to a mayoral race in the city of Tulsa.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And why did you do that?

Jl: First of all, I did not get involved in the primary. Bill Christen was running as Dewey Bartlett and I told both of them I was not going to be involved in the primary. When Bill Christen came out and supported Kathy Taylor in the general election and the Keatings also, I thought, "Gosh, I should have gotten involved in that." Several of them thought she was going to win and she was kind of the money candidate so they kind of wanted to be in on the ground floor. Having been a mayor I did it for two reasons. One is, of my twenty kids and grandkids all but six live in Tulsa. So I've got a dog in this fight, I mean, I really want good things to happen. I want to be in a position where I can advise the mayor to do a lot of things through the private sector that they have not been doing. So I had that prejudice, and in this case, because it was Kathy Taylor and she's someone who doesn't have the roots in Oklahoma and was spending huge amounts of money, I got involved in the race because in my household alone we'd get as many as two and three a day from her full color stuff and all that. So I got involved.

JE: Well, here's a case and you referred to this earlier where you ran against Frank Keating and he had the country club then, but you had the workers.

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Because Kathy Taylor spent three million dollars on this race, and as I recall, Dewey Bartlett spent nine hundred thousand. So it's an interesting case for anybody who studies political science that money doesn't always work.

Jl: You can overspend, and I think she was guilty of overspending and it became visible to people. So it's a fine line. If you have unlimited money to spend you have to decide where is that point where it's going to be obvious that I'm buying an election? And that's the easy way. You go out and you organize every precinct, you do that and that's hard work. People would generally fall down on the easy side. So I just think that people now are aware of it and I think that probably in that particular race she was perceived as buying the race.

Chapter 26 - 2:25

Another Senate Race

John Erling: Now you're gearing up for another race?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: I am.

JE: Should be the last one that you ever have to run again. You've already started, I would imagine, we're a year away from that election.

Jl: I'll tell you when I started and I think it fits into your conversation here. I was not going to run. Kay and I had talked about this. We did some developing down in south Texas, we like to go down there, we have a place at the lake that we built in 1962, we really enjoy that. And what I do is not as easy as people think, it's really long hours and it's hard. But a year ago in the November election of 2012, I was the dumbest guy in town. Up until seven o'clock that night I was on national TV saying there was no way in the world that we were going to reelect Obama. Now the people know that he has rejected those things which made America great. And I'm talking about such things as a strong national defense, such things as being totally energy independent, which we could be, but he has a war on fossil fuel. Such things as over-regulation that's running the people into the ground and I thought it wasn't going to happen. But that night when it happened we decided we were going to run. And one reason, there are areas that I'm willing to do things that no other senators are. I don't know why it is, but no other senator is going to say that Obama has disarmed America through his policies and what he has done through the military. I can document that, everybody knows that it's true, but they won't take that position, it's not a popular position. The second thing is, taking a position on total independence for running ourselves in terms of energy. And it's because a lot of the far left environmentalists want to do away with fossil fuels and you can't run the machine called America without it. And the third thing is, talking about the regulations. So I would say to you or anyone who happens to be listening to us, find a senator that's willing to take on those three issues. But I wasn't able to do that so I

thought, “I’m going to do that,” and I’m heading of those three houses today.

JE: So you’re saying that if Mitt Romney was elected President and defeated Obama—

Jl: I probably would not have run. I don’t say definitely because I would have been tempted, because if we had won a majority that would have changed things. But if he had won and we had not won control of the United States Senate I probably would not have run, even though we won the White House.

Chapter 27 - 3:30

Mayor’s Support

John Erling: As a former mayor of Tulsa you have the endorsement of forty-five mayors across the state in your campaign.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: They did that some time ago and I wasn’t even aware of it, but it would be natural that mayors would be supportive.

JE: I used to interview you every Wednesday when you were mayor.

Jl: I still have every tape.

JE: We ought to include that, at least one of them, to hear how we would talk.

Jl: The one I would enjoy the most is when my son Jimmy was arrested in Pryor for speeding, going up to Grant Lake. He has the same name that I do so you assumed it was me. I led you down the path all the way on the interview and I said, “Let me tell you the good things about my son James Mountain Inhofe the Second instead of just the bad.” And you were noticeably taken aback.

JE: Well, I was alarmed at that.

Jl: Do you remember that?

JE: No I don’t. So I went into this and asked all the questions of a senator thinking that—

Jl: Thinking that I was the guy that was arrested for speeding. It was my son.

JE: Okay, you got me. And my—

Jl: But most of the time you got me, but nonetheless, it was at least enjoyable.

JE: No, no. You said flying upside down, I have flown upside down with you, you may remember that, yes. And when you landed it was enough for me.

Jl: You didn’t want to go back. Most people do walk away and decide, “I’ve done that now, I’m not going to do it again.”

JE: I know, but you’ve done it so many times. Reflecting then as mayor and now senior senator, how do you see the senior senator as opposed to the young mayor?

- Jl:** Well, I enjoyed the young mayor. First of all, being a mayor is a lot harder job than being a senator. I mean, there's no hiding place in a city government, they know where you are, they know where you live. If they don't like the trash system it ends up in your front yard, and it did. So it's a lot harder job. But the reason I like the Senate more is 'cause you're dealing with the huge issues, not the trash in the front yard, you're dealing, in this case, with what's happening in Georgia, what's happening all over the world, with the serious problems North Korea, Iraq, Iran, and you're dealing with things that are life-threatening and they're huge issues. I've always enjoyed that more.
- JE:** Capturing this moment in time for history, here we are dealing with Israel and Palestine right now.
- Jl:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** We do have Syria, we do have Iraq, Iran is lurking. And then, of course, Putin and Russia, there are all these hotspots that are going on—
- Jl:** More than ever in history, and it's much more dangerous because I said today in three different speeches, I look wistfully back at the days of the Cold War because we had two superpowers. We knew what they had, they knew what we had and mutual assured destruction meant something. It doesn't mean anything any more. And you have crazy people who want to die who are rapidly developing. Our intelligence has told us since 2007 that by 2015 Iran would have not just the weapon, but the delivery system. And they're crazy people. I think right now that North Korea has a lot more than intelligence thinks that they have. So that threat is so much greater than any threat during the Cold War.
- JE:** And then we have ISIS in the story now in the last twenty-four hours in Iraq who beheaded an American journalist.
- Jl:** He's probably at this moment doing another one. And the problem we have now is we have a President who has drawn lines in the sand on a daily basis but never backed them up. So now if he were to say, "We will bomb you off the map or your major city," or something, no one is going to believe him. Because I think what he's done now, and this hasn't been printed yet, he said on the second journalist that if, "The President doesn't do this your head is going to be cut off too." And they mean it.

Chapter 28 - 1:10**Tom Coburn**

John Erling: So James Lankford will be the new junior senator from Oklahoma.

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Are you happy about that?

Jl: Um-hmm (affirmative). I would have taken either one of them. The other one was T. W. Shannon. I stayed out of the primary because I really didn't think it was fair for me in my position to be trying to determine who the next senator is going to be. And either one of them would have been great. I would have been happy with either one of them, it's going to be good.

JE: The junior senator from Oklahoma Tom Coburn is retiring because of health. You might have some comments about him and how he's served the state.

Jl: He's served very well and the regret, he's had a horrible history with cancer. All different types of cancer and he's gone in and out of remission and all this, and it's been an agonizing thing for him. But he's been really a great guy.

JE: The two of you sometimes have not always been eye to eye but then have been too.

Jl: Yeah, well, we haven't been on transportation and military, the two areas where I do spend more money. I know I'm right on that and he knows that we're both pretty strong-willed. There have been several times when we have not agreed with each other.

JE: Yeah.

Jl: Of course, in other areas, area of earmarks, he's on the popular side of it but I'm on the right side of it.

Chapter 29 - 4:45**Advise to Students**

John Erling: Advice to students, would-be politicians, they want to get into this world, would you suggest they do it or what—

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Yeah, let me suggest, John, and I know I'm right on this but some people won't appreciate it. A student, say someone in college, first of all, decide what you stand for. And once you do that you decide whether you're a liberal or conservative, and those are not dirty words. A liberal means that government should be involved in more of our everyday life. A conservative believes that government is already involved in too much of

our lives. It's very simple, you decide where you are, what the role of government should be. Then once you decide that, start looking around for state races like state legislative races. Before you run yourself you have to pay your dues, you have to get out and start helping someone run. You love them, you stand for what they stand for and you get involved in those races. Then the opportunity will come if you're one who really believes and is willing to do that. That's why I believe the party system is so misunderstood, but in a way, there's no other country in the world that has a system like we have. The Democrats in what they stand for and the Republicans in what they stand for all starts in some living room in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, where they have their gathering. It's called a little caucus where people get together and say, "All right, we're in this precinct. I'm a Republican in this precinct, I think Republicans should be conservative, I think they should be for a gun owner, second amendment rights and all this stuff." Now, across the street the Democrats are having theirs. They're saying, "We're a pro abortion, we don't believe in gun owners' rights," and they decide what they stand for. They do something very significant at that block meeting, they decide, "Who's going to go to the County Convention?" And when the County Convention gets here it's made up of people who have sold themselves and others in that neighborhood on a way of government. So they decide at the County Convention who goes to the District Convention. Every other election is a District Convention, and that is of the six congressional districts. This is the interesting thing, then they decide who's going to go to the State Convention and who's going to go to the National Convention. Each level that goes up the Republican party becomes more conservative. Because they're the activist. On the other side, you find the Democrats, their activists are the liberals. So by the time you get to a National Convention we know clearly who stands for what. That's the long way around the barn but I'm saying the system doesn't happen anywhere else. So those people who go there and are the ones who represent the philosophies are the extremes on both ends. And it works. The worst thing the Republicans do would be to have a third party come in and say, "Well, you're not conservative enough." That happened, that's how Ross Perot threw Bill Clinton, and he wouldn't have won if it had not been for a third party.

JE: That's interesting in the state of Oklahoma, a red state, meaning a Republican state, there still are more Democrats registered than Republicans.

Jl: Yeah.

JE: So you're asking Democrats to vote for you, and they obviously have. It's interesting that that phenomenon—

Jl: Because the Democrats in Oklahoma and in most red states, it's kind of a religion, they've always been Democrats. So you can still go to some counties in Oklahoma where it's really lopsided but they're very strong conservatives, but they're very proud Democrats. And if you were to say to a Democrat, to most Democrats, "Well, you're a Democrat in

Oklahoma. Do you believe in the second amendment rights?” “Oh yeah, yeah.” “But wait a minute. When it’s adopted by the Democrat party they don’t believe that. So you’re really not—” “Oh yeah, but I am.” “Well, do you believe in the death penalty?” “Oh yeah.” “Well, wait a minute. Go read what the Democrats stand for.” Look at Arkansas, it’s the same thing as Oklahoma except they’re two years behind us. I can remember when there was one Republican, John Paul Hammersmith was the only Republican in the congressional delegation in the state of Arkansas and he was pretty moderate. I love the guy. He’s still living, he’s a good guy and all that. Now they’re all Democrats.

JE: Al Snipes, who I referred to earlier and really got the Republicans going back in the ‘60s, he said, “I still want a two-party state.” And I said, “Oh, you want even registration.” He said, “Yes, but I want one to be Republican.” So it would be one more. He’s eighty-nine years old and he still wants this to be a two-party state.

Jl: Well, I agree with him, otherwise, what is a party? What do you stand for?

JE: Yeah.

Jl: And isn’t that amazing though that it starts in two living rooms and it goes all the way of to National Convention? And the philosophies are all in what they pass in resolutions, what do we stand for?

JE: Yeah, it’s a great system, isn’t it?

Jl: It is, it’s a great system.

Chapter 30 - 5:45

How to be Remembered

John Erling: How would you like to be remembered?

Jim Mountain Inhofe: Oh, you know, probably a father first.

JE: You have a great reputation of being a family man. Nobody can deny that whether they are for you or against you or been violently opposed, even voted against you. There’s no question about that. So that would be—

Jl: Yeah, because I think the family unit is what it’s all about. And then consistence because you have so many people who will change their position because the public has changed its position. And there is no better example of this than global warming. How many people that are so afraid of that issue, scared to death, and yet, it’s easy. I can remember when I did the Discharge Petition in 1993 in the House. That was the most single, significant reform. Almost every Democrat in the final analysis had to vote for it. One of them literally held his nose

and voted for it. I remember that because I was watching.

JE: Any particular names, like Hillary Clinton? Do you have relationships with her, friendship at all?

Jl: Not so much with her because we had an office next door to each other when she was in the Senate. And with that, a lot of staff-driven animosity was there in this issue that I've mentioned. The Kyoto Treaty was one that has driven us apart. But there are a lot of them that we're really close to. I mentioned Harry Reid, and Republicans get upset with me sometimes, but I understand his job, what he has to do to be the leader. And I think he's light years better than Tom Daschle when he had that job. But it's still a personal thing, you can have a personal relationship with someone and truly love someone who you disagree with philosophically.

JE: Yeah. There's such contentiousness in Washington now in 2013—

Jl: I can name some other names. Who comes to the mind of most people that are listening to us right now? It's the most liberal member of the United States Senate, a Democrat. It would be Bernie Sanders from Vermont. He is on the ballot as a Socialist. And yet, if you were to ask him who his favorite conservative Republican is I'd bet he'd say me.

JE: Hmm.

Jl: I'll tell you something that happened. This is a true story. We had Obama in the White House, the first year, so you had the House and the Senate, that means, anything that he could pass in there. And what they were trying to do was do something really punitive on oil companies. It was right after the tragedy in the Gulf and they were trying to do something that would have actually done away with all of America's participation and the only countries that would be able to drill would be China and Venezuela. That's how serious it was. And so they're down there and Bernie Sanders had a giant check on how much money Exxon made this last year and look how they're rich and they're ripping off—it's class warfare. They were getting ready to vote on this thing that he introduced as an amendment. And if that happened it would have sailed through the House. That was Nancy Pelosi's House. And the President would have signed it. I ran, I literally ran down and then challenged him on this thing. We debated this thing, we ultimately had a vote and I won by almost 2 to 1. But if I hadn't gone down it would have passed. After that was over, he came up to me, not all that privately, and said, "Inhofe, I want you to know in the years I've been in the Senate that was the healthiest debate I've ever been involved in. Because we both believed in our cause." Barbara Boxer and I are close. So I've got a lot of people that are philosophically entrenched on the other side.

JE: Presidents, any presidential stories, presidents that you've personally engaged with that you can go back—Gerald Ford I know came here and he campaigned for you. But are there any presidential stories, personal ones that you have?

Jl: Well, the personal ones all go back to Reagan because of the early relationship that we had. But then George II became pretty close to him. I didn't so much George the First because that was back when there was a conflict when he was the more moderate of the two, going all the way back to Reagan. But George the Second was one that I became very close to. One reason was, I have something that I do every weekend that I'm here. Now, generally on every fifth or sixth weekend I would be someplace like Africa or Afghanistan or someplace like that. But the rest of them I'm back in Oklahoma. And I pride myself in wanting to do something that I know other senators are not doing. I know that Chuck, our friend from New York, is not doing.

JE: Chuck Schumer.

Jl: So I will go up with all my kids and grandkids, I supply them with all their wood. I cut down the trees, split all the wood, and do that, because I know that Chuck Schumer is not doing that. And the reason I do that is because that allows me to do something that is normal. The problem I've seen, and this happened with Abe McCurdy, he just moved to Washington and he became one of them. When people forget they forget where they came from. And so, the way I remind myself where I came from is I cut all their wood and I do all that stuff. That's why I was mowing my field four days after my open heart surgery. I wanted to get out of there.

JE: Well, I want to thank you for taking this time for this website, which is recording voices and preserving Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time. And yours needs to be preserved on it. Thank you.

Jl: Well, no, I agree with what you're doing. I think that no one has done that before and I'm glad that you are. I would have felt left out if I had not been a part of this so that's why we scheduled this time.

JE: Very good, thank you, Jim.

Jl: You're welcome.

JE: Appreciate it very much.

Jl: You bet.

Chapter 31 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will

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