

Jim Hewgley

An oilman who was instrumental in advancing Tulsa's economic and social landscape as mayor.

Chapter 01 - 1:24

Introduction

Announcer: Jim Hewgley Jr. was an independent oilman who served two terms as Tulsa's mayor from 1966 to 1970. In his first mayoral-election victory, he defeated incumbent Mayor Jim Maxwell, who was seeking a fifth consecutive term. And he defeated Maxwell again in 1968. Hewgley had been a registered Democrat until 1956, when he became a Republican and was the first Tulsa Republican mayor to be reelected.

Hewgley was mayor when the city was governed by the Tulsa City Commission. Shortly after his election in 1966, the city doubled in area by annexing 100 square miles of county land. During his time as mayor, the city passed its first 1-cent sales tax and established the Port of Catoosa, following the passage of a \$20 million bond issue to fund it. He was also instrumental in the start of the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority and Tulsa Housing Authority.

After leaving city office, Hewgley ran in 1972 for Oklahoma's U.S. House District 1 seat but lost to James R. Jones.

His son, Jim Hewgley III served three terms as Tulsa street commissioner.

This oral history interview was recorded May 19, 2009. Jim Hewgley Jr. was 94 when he died May 17, 2011.

In this oral history interview you will hear Jim Hewgley talk about his relationship with former Oklahoma University football coach Bud Wilkinson and former President George H. W. Bush on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 6:06**Hewgley's from Tennessee**

John Erling: Today's date is May 18th of '09. If you'll state your name and your date of birth.

Jim Hewgley: My name is Jim Hewgley. I was born on November the 7th in 1916, election day. Woodrow Wilson was reelected to a second term. And thank goodness, my mother didn't name me Woody.

JE: [both laughing] Where are we today, recording this?

JH: The old Philtower building, the building the Waite Phillips built and had his office on the top floor. Then later gave it to the Boy Scouts.

JE: Yep. Let's talk about your background and how you came to Oklahoma. Your mother and father, talk about them and their names.

JH: My mother and father were from a little town in Tennessee, Gallatin, Tennessee, it's right out of Nashville, pretty little town. He was a young, aggressive farmer and he had several ventures in the farm business. And the Depression in the '20s caught up with him and he went West to try to find a different life. So he came out to Oklahoma in the early '20s and worked in the oilfield. I mean, he worked out in the field—just wherever the rigs were, that's where he was.

And after about four years, he came back and got us, the family. I have two older sisters. One of them is still alive at ninety-six. The other one died at eighty-eight.

JE: Did you state your father's name?

JH: My father's name was Jim Hewgley too, so I'm a junior.

JE: Then your mother's name?

JH: My mother's name was Margaret, she was from Nashville, Tennessee. Her last name was Corbett. And they were married in Gallatin.

My oldest sister was born in 1912.

JE: He'd been out here in Texas in the oilfields?

JH: He, well, everywhere, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, wherever the work was. I mean, they just pick up their family and move them to the next town and put them in the next school. This went on for a short while and then finally, he was working in Seminole and he had an opportunity to go to work for Tom Slick. Legendary Tom Slick, who you, I'm sure you've heard of.

JE: Tell us who Tom Slick was.

JH: Tom Slick was the world's greatest wildcatter. He sold out when he was in his early forties for over forty million dollars. And he was the kind of the wildcatters. And I've got a lot of literature on him.

He was very generous, very close. I mean, it made no great show of wealth but he did a lot of interesting things.

He had to come out here from Pennsylvania. He had three children, two sons and a daughter when I was in high school, so it just goes on from there.

My father stayed with him through the Oklahoma City field and when Mr. Slick died, they started a company called Transwestern Oil Company, which later went into Sunway. Transwestern moved their headquarters to San Antonio, so he moved with them but stayed in business with the two boys and myself and made some oil plays. One of them particularly in Mississippi, the Tensby Field. We're close personal friends too—all of them are dead but me.

JE: Your father went back and he moved the family here to Oklahoma?

JH: Yeah, he moved them to Oklahoma, wherever the rigs were. I think I went to school in about four different towns in Oklahoma. He would bring the family into a bigger town and then he'd work in the oilfield. And in the summertime, he'd come back and we'd be close together.

When I was in the seventh grade, we moved to Oklahoma City and I spent my seventh grade through high school and college living in Oklahoma City. And then later in San Antonio. Then I went in the army.

JE: So your elementary school, where was that?

JH: Everywhere.

JE: [laughing] And probably made several moves in one year?

JH: Yeah.

JE: But then your high school, that was in Oklahoma City?

JH: I went to Classen High School, Oklahoma City. Harding Junior High School. Classen is a very famous old school. When—

JE: And then on to college?

JH: Went to OU. Then I got out of OU and went to work for my brother-in-law, who was a drilling contactor up in Kansas and we just moved the rig around there for a while. Then they moved it up to Illinois and over to Indiana. I stayed with that until I got into this thing down in Mississippi. We moved the rigs down there and then I went in the army from there. And stayed for four years.

JE: You remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

JH: Yeah, I was driving from Jackson, Mississippi, to Tulsa. All day long I heard it.

JE: Then at what point did you enter military?

JH: I stayed out because I was working in the oilfields. I could have stayed out longer, but I went in in '42.

JE: So you got an exemption then, because of the oil?

JH: Well, I, I, yeah, for a year. And then I went in and served four years.

JE: You would have been about twenty-four years old then, twenty-five, in 1941?

JH: Yeah, that's about right.

JE: Tell us about your military, what did you do there?

JH: I didn't get shot and I didn't get shot at, that I know of. I just did what they told me to do and it was not very exciting except for the final part of it. I took a troop ship from California, and we got to Honolulu, and they dropped the H-bomb. So we thought we'd all come around and come home, but we kept right on going and got to the Philippines. We stayed there for a while and then went into Japan.

I spent Christmas of 1945 in Yokohama. And then got out shortly thereafter. By then, my family had moved to Tulsa. So I came here and found a pretty little girl that would marry me. [laughing]

JE: And what was her name?

JH: Joselyn Moser. We had three boys: Jimmy, Bobby, and Freddy. These kids were all teenagers when she died. Then I remarried Eileen Warren. Her maiden name was Rooney. She'd lost her husband. She had three kids and they were all about the same age. And we'd been married over forty years.

Chapter 03 - 5:35

Bud Wilkinson

John Erling: Then your business, were you in the oil business then as you came back?

Jim Hewgley: Yeah, all the time, in different phases of it. I operated some rigs in West Texas.

By then we'd moved to Midland, Texas, after we were married. I stayed in the drilling business until times got too tough and I liquidated out before I went broke.

And then just stayed and made land plays and oil plays and a couple of lucky things happened to me.

JE: So you made some discoveries, did you?

JH: Well, I, part of them. I didn't make them but I was close by and managed to do that type of work.

JE: That was your main source of income then, the oil business?

JH: Still is.

JE: And still is today?

JH: Yeah.

JE: How today?

JH: Well, I've some over rider oil interest from royalties, straight out royalty. I do very little operating and just make investments, really.

JE: When did you quit working for oil people? Somewhere along the line you transitioned out of it.

JH: Well, I guess it was just a natural family deal. I'd never thought of it that way when I got out because my dad was killed in an automobile accident and I had to take care of his estate and do a lot of things like that.

JE: Where did that accident happen?

JH: It happened up at Wagoner. We had a place up on Lake Gibson and he had a bunch of kids and grandkids and he got a head-on in the twilight of the evening.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JH: Killed he and his wife. My mother had died, in the meantime, he remarried. Killed them both and a bunch of other kids with familiar names.

JE: That would have been about what year?

JH: Late '40s, early '50s, you know.

JE: Yeah. Following your career then, you're in the oil business—

JH: I really been self-employed most of my life. After I got out of the drilling business.

JE: Talk to us about all that self-employment.

JH: Well, I did a lot of traveling and I always had the office for what little activity I did have. I've done nothing spectacular in the oil business, we'll put it that way, but I've made a good living out of it.

And then I got into politics. [laughing]

JE: Right. You got into politics while living in Tulsa?

JH: Yeah.

JE: How did you get into politics?

JH: I'd always been interested in city affairs. When I lived in Midland, I never did have time to get involved there. But when I came here, Bud Wilkinson was a real good friend of mine, I mean, we visited, I knew him well and knew his family.

JE: Talk about that a little bit. How did that come about?

JH: When we had those drilling rigs on we used to work those football players in the summertime, give them summer jobs. That's the way we originally got acquainted and we just had a lot of other things going, just good friends. He decided to run for the Senate and I was a Democrat then. He decided to run for the Senate and I had done a lot of precinct work and that type of stuff.

I don't know why I decided or he decided for me to run the Tulsa part of it. I don't like to admit it, to have a candidate like that get beat. We made a lot of friends and got involved in politics real good.

While I lived in Midland, George Bush became a real close friend of mine.

JE: Okay.

JH: And the Liedtke boys from Tulsa, I don't whether you ever heard of them, Pennzoil. The guys that sued Texaco and they got a \$12 billion judgment. They're all dead now, they were Tulsa boys.

JE: Let me bring you back to Bud Wilkinson. How would you describe him? What kind of a person was he?

JH: He was just a super guy, you know, a people's people and he had time for everybody and nothing phony about him at all, he was that straight out.

JE: So you had—

JH: He was almost too good. I think he'd sneak off and drink a little whiskey once in a while, but he was so straight.

JE: He wanted you to be chair of his campaign in Tulsa County.

JH: In Tulsa County, yeah. And—

JE: And you had to change your party affiliation.

JH: Yeah. To vote for him.

JE: And that's how you became a Republican?

JH: That's when I became a Republican.

JE: He ran and then unbelievably was defeated.

JH: Right.

JE: Talk to us about that campaign and why you think he was defeated.

JH: One reason was the Aggies. The Oklahoma State Alumni didn't like him. But the main reason that I think he got defeated, everybody has their own ideas, was when he traveled in political circles, he'd go to one of these small towns. They'd have him out at the country club when he ought to be down at their Kiwanis Club. You know, these big shots, or the bankers, they all grab on to be with Bud Wilkinson and he pretty well couldn't control that. And I don't know how hard he tried to control it.

And then he got off on a high plane of government theory that was way over anyone's head about what can be done and how you do it. You know, he got beat.

JE: Did he not talk about football at all?

JH: Oh, yeah, because he was forced into that. I mean, you know, question and answer.

JE: Right. But—

JH: But he was an old guy.

JE: And he was defeated by?

JH: Fred Harris.

JE: That had to be a terrible shock though for you and everybody else about Bud Wilkinson.

JH: Oh, yeah, oh God, he couldn't believe it, he couldn't believe it.

JE: How did he take it?

JH: Privately, I'm sure it just bugged him, but he handled it just like he did that day Notre Dame beat him down in Norman. [laughing]

JE: Yeah. Is there any major football game you remember with him coaching?

JH: Oh, yeah, the game that broke his winning streak. He had won forty-seven straight games and Notre Dame beat him seven to nothing, in the last part of the game. I'll never forget him walking off that field by himself. He couldn't have lasted forever anyway.

Chapter 04 - 6:38

First Penny Sales Tax

Jim Hewgley: Then I got involved with national politics because of George Bush and other people that I'd met on the way up. And it was a lot of fun.

In the meantime, I'd become real good friends with the now governor of Mississippi, when we was drilling wells down there. His daddy was our lawyer and he was National Republican chairman and a lot of things fit together and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

John Erling: And that name?

JH: Haley Barbour.

JE: Somewhere along the line, someone talked you into running for mayor of Tulsa.

JH: It was, I would say, the nucleus of this Bud Wilkinson group that I'd gotten together.

Maxwell was a good man and he was very popular, he'd just been there too long, I guess. Really, it was a fluke.

JE: James Maxwell.

JH: Yeah.

JE: He'd been several terms, hadn't he?

JH: Yeah, I think he'd been there four or five terms.

JE: Yeah. So you challenged him in the campaign?

JH: Yeah, I didn't have any better sense.

JE: Okay—

JH: And like I told someone, the *Tulsa World* was still mad about it. [laughing]

JE: He was popular, we have the Maxwell Convention Center.

JH: Oh, yeah.

JE: What made you think you should run against Maxwell?

JH: I wasn't thinking very well that day [laughing]. Well, it was just a bunch of these people that had gotten together and they all became real good friends as a result of the Wilkinson election, really.

And we were looking for something to do and about that time I'd had my problems with my first wife being ill. And after she died, why, I needed something to fill that, you know, you can't put your finger right on why, but it all happened together, you know.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Then I ran for two terms.

JE: You defeated Maxwell but you think he'd been there so long that probably the town was getting tired of him?

JH: Well, I think so.

JE: Yeah.

JH: I think so.

JE: Who did you run against in the second term?

JH: He ran again.

JE: Oh? He ran again?

JH: He ran again. I served that term out and then Bob LaFortune took my place.

JE: What were some of the issues back then as you ran?

JH: Well, we were at the heights of some of this race problem. And we were done under a different form of government too, you understand. Commissions forum as opposed to what we got now.

The race thing was a problem. These people were marching and you just try to keep it calm. And we were lucky, we had some good solid people up there in the north part of town and managed to keep it under control.

JE: They were demonstrating on our streets?

JH: Well, they were marching through town. They'd camp outside of town. One of the reporters asked me if I was going up to see them. And I said, "No, I wasn't invited." I said, "I don't go where I'm not invited. They didn't come to me, they didn't come to town." We just managed to get through that period with some good friends, really, on the north side.

JE: Yeah. You were involved in a number of discussions, I'm sure, with the north side and all, to calm people down.

JH: Yeah, I went to every church over there, I think. We had some good solid leadership over there. And I think we do still.

JE: Anything else that you dealt with? Streets?

JH: Well, as long as you have streets they're going to be an issue [laughing]. But you see, the way it ran then, you had a commissioner in charge of streets, that was Bob LaFortune. Well, he'd take care of all the problems in that deal and have them solved and have them resolved before we had to make a decision in the City Hall.

We were fortunate enough to have several people like Bob LaFortune. Dean Langenheim and Jack O'Brien, and people like that that looked after their deal, so there

was very little politics involved in running the city. And really, the mayor was more of a referee than he was originating, except general policy, maybe. All these federal programs were coming. The Housing Authority, for instance, was started under our administration. For all this low-cost housing we have.

So I think it's been a fairly successful program. Seemed like everything went pretty calm. I had some nice trips to National Conference of Mayors in Honolulu [laughing]. But it was a fun time.

JE: Was the city building anything back then?

JH: It was sort of strange. City Hall and that complex down there had been bid out and the bids came in too high. They had to rebid them after I got in. That's when it was let, and this was about 1966, '67. We didn't have any sales tax; had to pass a one cent sales tax. Most of the revenue the city was running on was a revenue the Water Department made by selling water. Old Dean Langenheim had been a professor at TU, engineering professor. He'd pray for these draughts, "Sell more water. Sell more water, build more streets."

JE: That was one of the sole sources of revenue?

JH: Yeah, yeah.

JE: Selling water?

JH: Yeah.

JE: Who did you sell the water to?

JH: To the City of Tulsa.

JE: Okay.

JH: All these surrounding towns still buy water from us. But the system, your water bills—

JE: Yeah.

JH: ...you could raise a little money, raise your water bill.

JE: Then you come along and propose a penny sales tax.

JH: I appointed a committee of leading citizens to go over our whole deal and figure out what we had to do. We were reaching a crisis. We were running out of enough money from the Water Department and the city was expanding. As a matter of fact, from the time I started running until the time I was elected, the city did that big annexation, about doubled the size of the city. So we had that problem to deal with.

The only thing we had left were the sales tax. And that was not too popular. Of course, people had to vote on it.

I'll never forget the year that we passed that I was in the city parade and I got booed all the way [laughing].

JE: But it passed?

JH: Yeah.

JE: The first time around?

JH: Yeah.

JE: What was your campaign? I mean, why did you feel the citizens needed a penny sales tax? What was it going to go for?

JH: Police and fire, mainly. That's something you can really hang your hat on. That was the main part of it.

JE: So you sold it as public safety?

JH: And we had some really high powered leadership on that program, the heads of all these major oil companies and the public utilities. We had lots of help.

JE: Well, to pass the first sales tax.

JH: Yeah. That's not a very good legacy, is it? [laughing]

JE: Yeah.

JH: I'd like to try it now.

JE: We're now eight cents. That was a major undertaking. So were you booed long after that or did they get over it?

JH: Well, they got over it in a hurry. But it was a lot of fun, those four years. We got to do a lot of things.

Chapter 05 - 7:50

Port of Catoosa

John Erling: Talk about the annexation a little bit because that was an issue.

Jim Hewgley: Well, it was an issue and I really don't even know what I'm talking about because I didn't even know there was such a thing as annexation. Oklahoma City did a big one over there. At one time, it was the largest incorporated city in the United States.

Then a lot of these other cities were going around, they were incorporating all these little cities and making it a city-county government. This was on the ballot. It passed to annex all that area down at Jenks. It took in a lot of streets, which we immediately had to service, had to take care of. That was the transportation part of it. Of course, we were selling water anyway.

JE: And to the west, in the Sand Springs area, you took in land there?

JH: I don't remember just how that came down.

JE: As we go south, you would have been annexing land at 71st, 81st, up in there?

JH: Yeah, clear on out there. See, out there somewhere, they all run together, you know, about where that Jenks bridge was?

JE: Yeah.

JH: I don't know enough about the geography but Yale and all of them sort of run together and the river bridge there. And you get into part of the city that we did annex. Probably out about St. Francis Hospital, clear out beyond there.

JE: So that was land that probably a lot of people thought, *Well, nothing will ever happen out here?*

JH: Oh, yeah. Of course, it all happened out there, that's how it turned out.

JE: The Vietnam War was on.

JH: Yeah.

JE: During that time—

JH: Yeah.

JE: ...I didn't know if there was war demonstrations in Tulsa.

JH: No, we didn't have any, nothing.

JE: I noticed there was a presidential visit by President Johnson; came in August of '66. And you're pointing now—

JH: Right there, see?

JE: Oh, yes.

JH: Get up and look in that picture, you can see Johnson and there's Page Belcher and there's Fred Harris, Mike Monroney and President Johnson and I.

JE: Well, why did Johnson come here?

JH: There were dedicating something down there. It was really, I think, Edmonson was running for Congress over there, and he came down as a favor to him. And then he came to the airport and then they went off to some park or something that they were dedicating, or interstate, some damn thing.

JE: And here you were a Republican welcoming this Democrat president. You remember anything about Johnson? Did you speak to him?

JH: Oh, yeah, just briefly, he's an arrogant son-*****,[beeped out] he was not one of my favorites.

About that time, shortly after George W. began to come into play, and I went to the Republican National Conference, the first one in '68, and I went to every one of them until, well, the one in Philadelphia when George Junior was nominated. We always had pretty good accommodations, you know, being the mayor, the former mayor, you know, and having known some of the mayors from surrounding cities.

JE: Let's come back here to the Port of Catoosa, the Authority there. How did you get involved with the Port of Catoosa?

JH: This guy named Ehrlich Cash, he was sort of the granddaddy of it, you know. And we became friends politically. And he's one of the few Republicans. When they got that thing started out there, I don't know, somehow he got me on that board. And I stayed on it for over thirty years, I guess. And I was chairman from time to time.

JE: But that was a pretty important bond issue that was passed in '67.

JH: Yeah.

JE: Seventeen and a half million dollars—

JH: Yeah.

JE: ...for the Port. Was that a tough sell?

JH: It seemed to go pretty well. I don't remember any controversy over it. It was pretty well spelled out. See, you're in the project with Kerr-McClellan, it was probably one of the great things that's ever been done in this town.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Some people have taken boats and gone all the way down. And the Delta Queen was in here twice.

JE: The Port was dedicated in '71.

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Richard Nixon came to town.

JH: That's right.

JE: Where you there then for that dedication?

JH: Yeah, that's up there somewhere too.

JE: You've got a picture of that up here? There it is, right up there on the right.

JH: Yeah.

JE: Well, that's with Bellmon.

JH: There's with Tom Stafford when he was coming home. There's Romney up there. I thought I had a picture of the Port of Catoosa, but I don't guess I do there.

JE: You were very active on the authority. I believe you built some local businesses working your contacts in the Pentagon?

JH: Well, you know, maybe they gave me credit for it. We had some good contacts up there, and I can't take credit for something that I really didn't do anything except be part of.

JE: Well—

JH: Of course, when Henry Bellmon was in the Senate, we got lots of attention.

JE: Okay, yeah. You had a good relationship, didn't you?

JH: Yeah. He's a super guy, by the way. He's probably the best politician I've ever known. Old country boy. I remember when he started out, he'd speak from cards. He'd have about three cards, and when he ended, he had a whole stack of them he'd go through [laughing]. He's not well, he still lives out there in Brown Rock.

JE: And I interviewed—

JH: In a parking center or something.

JE: Yes he does. I interviewed him—

JH: Oh, did you? Recently?

JE: About a month ago.

JH: Did you?

JE: ...at his farm.

JH: How was he? Wasn't he sort of fuzzy?

JE: No. In fact, I spent about two and a half hours with him. He was just very anxious to talk.

JH: Well, he used to come over here to all of our functions, but he hadn't in a long time. He was very, very special. He really taught those senators some different habits. Yeah, he was down at the office about five o'clock every morning like he was out on the farm [laughing].

JE: Back at the Port Authority though they thought enough of you they even named a tugboat after you, the Hewgley.

JH: Yeah, I see it.

JE: There it is. Probably your work with the Authority and the Port of Catoosa, you look back on and say, "I'm really proud, or proudest of my work there"?

JH: Yeah, that, and then I did some private stuff that I was pretty pleased with. Like St. Simeon's, I was on their board for about thirty years. The retirement home out here.

JE: Right.

JH: And also I was very active in Holland Hall School, when they went from little girls' school to girl/boy school. One of the reasons was because those three boys. In those days the schools really weren't very good. A lot of people were sending their kids to Culver, to Kemper, and Andover, and Exeter, and Oklahoma military.

I decided that I'd rather have mine at home, so I helped build a school. And it's really an outstanding place, if you've ever been out there, ever checked it out. It's among the top schools in the Southwest.

JE: So you gave many years to them.

JH: Yeah, I was on there for at least twenty-five years. It was a lot of fun too.

JE: When man first walked on the moon, you were there for the launch, July 16, 1969.

JH: When Paschal Twyman, one of air force deals, flew us down there, Paschal was president of the University of Tulsa then.

JE: Yeah. Why was it that you were there?

JH: Because I was invited. They would always have a bunch of people in, that was a big entertainment, that was one big party.

JE: Four days later then, after the launch, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong stepped out on the Sea of Tranquility to be there for that launch and—

JH: Yeah.

JE: ...watch that happening.

JH: It was just an honor to be invited down there. That was a pretty close operation.

JE: As you stood there and watched that launch and someone asked you, “What do you think of the status of the space travel would be in 2009?” what would you have said?

JH: I’d have said, “We’ll probably be back to the horse and buggy. [both laughing] They wiped everything else out and started all over again. It was just unreal what has happened in a lifetime.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 06 - 6:30

George H. W. Bush

John Erling: Talk to us about the presidential conventions. Your first one you said was in?

Jim Hewgley: ‘Sixty-eight, I think.

JE: ‘Sixty-eight.

JH: Yeah. It was in Florida. Nixon was nominated and the guy from Maryland.

JE: Spiro Agnew.

JH: Yeah, he’s up there too. He was the Vice President. We took all the family with us.

JE: Did you get involved in those conventions to any degree?

JH: Yeah.

JE: You were a delegate, obviously.

JH: Yeah, I was a delegate and then that one year, I think it was in Kansas City, I was on the Finance Committee for the convention.

JE: In ‘68, Ronald Reagan got a few votes too then, didn’t he?

JH: Yeah, he did.

JE: Were you always a Nixon person?

JH: Yeah, I always had a great deal of admiration for Nixon. I just don’t understand how he ever got into the switch he did, as smart as he was.

JE: Then in ‘76, Reagan and Ford—

JH: That was in Kansas City. I think we were for Ford. He got it.

JE: Bob Dole was his running mate. Then Jimmy Carter be—

JH: Carter, yeah. Then Reagan came back and beat Jimmy Carter.

JE: Yeah. Let’s talk about George Bush, because you developed this close relationship with him because of the oilfields.

JH: Well, I met him in Midland right after the war and it was right after I got married. I was married in ‘46. Around ‘47, ‘48 is when it was. He came out there with a bunch of Easterners who came out and tried their luck and get out and get going, get away from the old folks. It was quite a mixture of people, remarkable people.

Dole, of course, stood out, and I happened to be involved, when he came out there, in the supply business, for a conglomeration of companies that he represented. Of course, he didn't stay that way very long. But he was a fun guy. His first time to Tulsa, I don't know what year this was, he stayed with us at my folks' house and played in the Southern Hills Swing-a-roo Golf Tournament. Remember again?

This is a funny story because it's a big party, is what it was. I mean, you played golf and had bars and, you know, big party. After about two days, I came down in my back, had a little back trouble and I had to get a substitute, and I got Bobby LaFortune. I talked to him when he was in town the other day.

JE: To George Bush?

JH: Yeah, he really doesn't look very good on TV. He's a super guy and, of course, she is a real tiger, boy, I mean it, Barbara, you don't want to mess with her. We saw them all socially and I was mentioning the Liedtke brothers before.

Later, George went into business with them, they were real entrepreneurs, they were really sharp guys. And they made him some money, made George some money.

His father, at that time, was senator from Connecticut; he used to come out and visit. I think I was out there seven or eight years, then moved back to Tulsa when my father died.

JE: So those were good times for you in Midland, weren't they?

JH: Yeah, all my times have been good, I didn't have a bad time yet, except when I lost my wife.

I'll get to talking about dying now, and someone will say, "Well, one thing about dying," he said, "you won't know it happened."

And I said, "Well, I'd like to have about fifteen minutes to look back over and see who came to my funeral." [both laughing]

JE: When George Bush decides to run for President, you were obviously a big supporter of him.

JH: Yeah, yeah, well, we did a lot of stuff for him. He had us to the White House, we had dinner up in the inner sanctum a couple of times with him.

JE: In the residential?

JH: Yeah. And he's included us in some real nice things. Sent us on an international trip one time. We've seen quite a bit of him, he's really quite a guy.

And this young one is too, regardless of the press, he's a hell of a kid.

JE: Did you get to be around him much?

JH: I used to take him to Sunday school.

JE: Where?

JH: Midland. Not very regularly but a few times.

JE: Why did you take him to Sunday school?

JH: Because I was going to church and his daddy wasn't, I guess. I had about four kids I'd take, all about the same age. And I'd just take them to Sunday school and then downtown for breakfast.

JE: So you remember George W. since he was about six, seven, eight years old?

JH: Yeah, yeah. He might not remember that, but I do. [laughing] He's the one that got into baseball business, you know.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Made the money in baseball.

JE: Did you know him as an adult? Did you get to visit and be around him at all?

JH: Very little. We left there and came up here and Big George went to Houston.

JE: Are you surprised, as you look back, where the Republican Party is today in 2009? What are your thoughts about that?

JH: Well, I'm not very happy about it but I don't know where we got off the track.

JE: Well—

JH: We had things going real good there for a while and then we got to acting like Democrats. Instead of saving money, they started spending it just like the Democrats. And I don't know where we stand now but I think we've got some pretty bright stars. I think Newt Gingrich is the smartest one of the whole bunch up there. I don't know whether he can overcome his early problems or not. As a matter of fact, I don't even remember what they were, when he was Speaker. But they might celebrate that sort of thing by now.

JE: As you look back and the accomplishments, I guess I kind of asked you this before, but you can say it again: The accomplishments that maybe you're the most proud of, what would you say?

JH: I don't think I've done anything that I'm the most proud of. It's probably my relationship with the Hall and Hall School because I saw it really from nothing to really something. Well, I did the Port too, but it became more of a personal thing because my children and grandchildren. It may sound a little snobbish but it's a hell of a place.

JE: You watched Hall and Hall grow then, when they integrated boys and girls?

JH: Yeah, from the time they started taking in boys, around the fifth grade, and they brought them right up one year at a time until they graduated.

But my first wife had gone there and, I think, she graduated in the class of '38. I think there were eight or nine girls in there. Then after the war, this demanded that I—the Tulsa school system wasn't very good and some of us decided we'd do something about it and that's the way it came out.

Then we got this huge grant from the biggest foundation in town, you know, the Chapman and Walters group. They have an endowment out there now. Before this stock market, you know, they had about an \$80 million endowment.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

Chapter 07 - 7:40**What is Special about Tulsa**

John Erling: Students who would be listening to you talk now, advice to students as they set out in the world, wanting to decide what they would like to do: politics, government, do you have any words for them?

Jim Hewgley: Well, I still think there's some good days left out there. It's so different, I don't know how I would advise anyone except, "Keep your nose clean." But the morals have gone to hell, that's what bothers me more than anything. These people are having babies without getting married and switching around. I mean, I can see that in an overview from some of our acquaintances, friends, and what not, that's what bothers me more than everything. Going to have to have a spiritual revolution and I don't know how you get into that.

JE: Did religion play a part, a big part in your life?

JH: It has, yes. I'm Episcopalian, got to St. John's.

JE: Okay.

JH: I've done everything out there too. I've been on the Vestry and the board and gone to their conventions. They don't always do things the way I would do them [laughing]. They're harder to change than anyone.

JE: What about Tulsa? What's special about Tulsa?

JH: You drive up, coming up from, say, the Fairgrounds, that way, and look at that skyline, these buildings—you never think of it. These buildings are gorgeous. This Tulsa Club next door is a beautiful building. The Will Rogers High School, they're just treasures you can't replace.

JE: And the Fairgrounds.

JH: I was out there placing a bet on the Preakness the other day. Have you ever been out there?

JE: Yes.

JH: I can't believe what they've done to that fairground.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Or where all the money comes from that goes in those machines [laughing].

JE: You remember in the '60s, downtown Tulsa was just a bustling city.

JH: I know it. The Main Street, Vandevors, Bishops.

JE: Clarke's Good Clothes.

JH: Yeah.

JE: Renberg's.

JH: Then they built the Williams Tower and all that. I can't tell you what happened, technology maybe?

JE: How—

JH: Oklahoma City didn't amount to anything in the oil business and now they've got more activity over there. We've still got some fine smaller companies here that really do well and prosper and a lot of money in this town. And the most generous people that ever lived. I just can't believe the things that they do, the wealthy people that I knew all their daddies like Travis and Keiser. Their fathers were really good friends of mine when I was a young man.

And that Chapman Estate, that thing is massive, maybe foundation and all the good those people do. It's just a special, special deal.

JE: Back in the '60s, would Bill Skelly have been part of your life then?

JH: Harold Stir was a good friend of mine, you remember Harold?

JE: Yes.

JH: Well, he married a Skelly, Harold's wife was a Skelly. His two children and my boys were about the same age and good friends. I don't remember ever seeing Skelly but I remember Ms. Skelly. She lived there at the end with Harold. And the kids were there a lot.

JE: The oil dollars like the Skellys, did they play a big part in the building of Tulsa?

JH: Oh, yeah, they all did. It seems like in those days, if you found an oilfield you came into Tulsa and built a building [laughing].

JE: Texaco was here then?

JH: Yeah, they practically had this whole building.

JE: So anytime there was a need, those people stepped up, didn't they?

JH: They all did.

JE: What occupies your time these days, at eighty-three?

JH: Okay. On Monday, I have lunch at the Summer Club. This is Tuesday. On Wednesday, I go to the White River Catfish. And on Thursday I play bridge. And Friday, I just sit on my butt.

JE: We're sitting in our office here and it's filled with pictures of the past. You're maintaining a family business here.

JH: Yeah, I'm looking after it. We've got a trust I've set up trying to leave something for the kids. And I take just a little piece here and there, if something's going on, just to keep your finger in it.

JE: Yeah.

JH: Nothing major.

JE: On the wall there you have this plank—

JH: Yeah.

JE: ...from the platform from which the Honorable Dewey of Bartlett took the oath of office as the nineteenth governor of Oklahoma on January 9, 1967.

JH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: You knew him quite well, apparently?

JH: Oh, yeah, they used to live next door to us.

JE: Here in Tulsa?

JH: Yeah. Frank Keating, he was a good friend of mine, so I guess he still is.

JE: Can you talk a little bit about Dewey Bartlett, what kind of person he was?

JH: Well, he was very intense, I mean, he was a tiger. He got a hold of you, he won't let go until he gets it done. He's a very bright guy and very able and very personable and people-oriented.

I remember taking George Bush by to see him when George was running first in the early primaries. When he was dying then. And his kids are around here. Dewey Junior is about sixty, I guess. Then Michael lives up on the north side with the hippies. And then there's a girl.

JE: And you say, where does Michael Bartlett live, up on the north side?

JH: Yeah, up on Reservoir Hill.

JE: Oh?

JH: Don't you know about Reservoir Hill?

JE: I do, I do.

JH: You live there?

JE: But you said up there with the hippies. [both laughing]

JH: I don't know. One day I didn't have anything to do and I said, "You know, I never can find Reservoir Hill but I know it's right over there somewhere between Cincinnati and Tisdale Turnpike." Said, "Well, we'll just go." We just started turning up streets. I finally found it, there is a big spring up there right on the very top of Reservoir.

Have you been up there lately?

JE: Yes, um-hmm (affirmative).

JH: I think it's fascinating. I've got several friends that live up there.

JE: It's a beautiful view of Tulsa.

JH: Oh, yeah. Tulsa should have been over there. If it hadn't of been in Osage County, I think. You got about three or four counties that come together here.

JE: How many grandchildren do you have?

JH: We just had a new great grandchild this morning, as a matter of fact. I got eleven grandchildren. This is going to eight or nine great grandchildren.

JE: Wow.

JH: See, my wife's a Catholic. [both laughing] She didn't have them all but her kids are doing better at reproducing than mine are.

JE: Of your three sons, the grandchild that was born today, that came from?

JH: Her side. I have four sons, see, she had one and I had three. She had two daughters.

JE: Okay.

JH: Six of them.

JE: When they all get together that must be a good family time.

JH: It's a lot of fun.

JE: So how would you like to be remembered?

JH: I don't know, just remembered [laughing], at least for another generation. Probably the low point in my life, all three of my boys were hippies, real hippies.

JE: In the '60s, while you were mayor?

JH: Part time, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Where were they living?

JH: Well, they were in college. I had four of them in college at the same time. One of them was at Duke, one of them was at Westminster in Missouri, one of them was at OU, and the other one was at this little school in Mobile, Alabama, and I can't think of the name of it, never can. And then the girls were in Catholic school somewhere.

JE: They were attending school?

JH: Oh, they were going but—

JE: But they were?

JH: Bad boys.

JE: They caused you problems?

JH: Well, we solved them as we went along. One of them's been in the AA for fifteen years.

JE: Well, that's good.

JH: Yeah, it is.

JE: You've got a great image in our town and you've got a huge family and it's got to make you all feel good.

JH: Well, I feel good, I'm not complaining.

JE: I appreciate your time here today very much. Thank you for doing this.

JH: Well, I enjoyed it.

Chapter 08 - 0:33

Conclusion

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

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