



## Joe Carter

Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame  
Member, Author, Director of Will  
Rogers Museum

### Chapter 1 – Introduction

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**Announcer:** Joseph Henry Carter has reported for United Press International in Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Dallas, for Sapulpa and Honolulu newspapers and for the Oklahoma Journal.

He was an aide to congressmen and to Presidents Johnson and Carter, and was director of communications for the Democratic party. Carter also was press secretary to Oklahoma Governor David Hall.

After leaving his post as vice president for public affairs at Cameron University, he became director of the Will Rogers Memorial. Among his many books is *Never Met a Man I Didn't Like: The Life and Writings of Will Rogers*.

Joe is one of the final surviving members of the media who can speak firsthand of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22nd, 1963. Joe was a reporter for United Press International, writing in the press bus five cars behind the presidential limousine, and heard the three shots aimed at the president.

Listen to Joe describe in detail what he witnessed on that day and what he went through to tell a stunned nation the president had died and that the United States had a new chief executive. On the podcast and website of [VoicesOfOklahoma.com](http://VoicesOfOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 2 – 6:00 Carter Family

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**John Erling (JE):** My name is John Erling. Today's date is December 15th, 2023.  
Joe, would you state your full name, please?

**Joe Carter (JC):** Joseph Henry Carter Senior, but they call me Joe Carter. I was born July 18th, 1932 in Enid, Oklahoma during the great dust bowl and the Great Depression and survived those. And I was reared in Tulsa.

**JE:** Ok. And your present age is?

**JC:** 91 years old.

**JE:** And we're recording this interview in the studios of Voices of Oklahoma here in Tulsa. Okay; you stated you were born in Enid. Let's talk about your mother, your mother's name, maiden name, where she was born and what kind of personality she had?

**JC:** She was born -- her name was Margaret Alice Wilson. Uh She was born in the Sand Hills of western Oklahoma. She was living in a half dugout situation that they built to survive on the great plains and, and she was born about shortly after the 20th century was done.

**JE:** And what kind of personality? Was she outgoing or...?

**JC:** She was a very religious woman. If I may digress to my father, his name was Dwight Henry Carter and he was born in Lane, Kansas. But later his family took -- migrated to western Kansas and his parents split up and his mother went back. She did not like the Great Plains. She's moved back to Lane and he was reared there by his father and spent his early years getting a little bit of education. There was not many schools in Syracuse, Kansas and he was a wrangler, a cowboy: rode the planes, herded cattle, wore a six shooter and had a saddle rifle which recently fell into the hands of my great-grandson who wants himself to be a cowboy. He rides sheep. He's seven years old. And he gets thrown off.

And my father died on December 7th, 1949. And in the West Tulsa yards of the Frisco railroad when a big he ... He had gotten hired after the dust bowl. Finding any job was a great blessing. And he was hired as a laborer and he painted box cars, and tank cars.

And it was a cold day in December and he had built his fire under the pot of paint that he would spray paint, and it exploded, and he was fatally

burned.

I was 17 years old. One brother was at Oklahoma A&M on a rustling scholarship and the rest of the older children, there were seven in all ... the brothers and sisters, eight, counting me. They had grown up and moved away so I was sort of stuck there with the household in my senior year at Daniel Webster High School.

It's interesting. At that time, I also was president of the Tulsa Inner School Council, which was an effort by Rogers Central and Webster to make peace when we got tired of killing each other after a football game. Those were rowdy times in Oklahoma; and I went to work then for a guy named Kyle Tinny who was some kind of a comedian/journalist and he had bought the West Tulsa Paper. I got my first newspaper job there -- \$20 a week -- in the summer of 1950 after I was graduated.

**JE:** From?

**JC:** Webster High.

**JE:** Oh, so you wrote for a newspaper even before you went on to TU?

**JC:** Yes.

**JE:** Were there things about your father that you wanted to emulate? You wanted to ride horses and round up cattle and all? Was that his life appealing to you?

**JC:** Coming out of the dust bowl out in Enid, and landing the job in Tulsa, he was able to buy a small acreage out in a little community of Red Fork. We had a couple or three acres, and we kept a cow, and a horse, pigs, and all kinds of farm animals. So I was reared with lots of ... we had a subsistence-type farm out there. We raised our own chickens, and our own eggs, and milk, and then there was some things you purchased: coffee and sugar. But mostly it was pretty much like the pioneers who came into the tall grass prairie and moved out into the short grass prairie -- and the no-grass prairie.

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**Chapter 3 – 5:00**  
**Newspaper Writing**

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**John Erling (JE):** When were you showing writing instincts or writing ability? After high school you started writing, but there's got to be a beginning into this. Were you writing earlier in your life?

**Joe Carter (JC):** I was writing for the Tulsa ... The three schools also had a newspaper there and I had various ... I contributed to it through the years that I cannot recall whether that was my junior and senior year. But I wrote for it for quite a few articles and they, you know, seeing your own words and publication, you sort of get to thinking maybe you're a newspaper man. I thought from then on, until I was about 35 years old -- 17 years later -- I figured that I'd earned my spurs and I was truly a newspaperman.

**JE:** But you went through Tulsa schools -- grade school and junior high here. And then Webster High School you graduated in what year?

**JC:** Then I went to Tulsa University and where... Actually, at that time, I don't know the situation these many years later. But at that time, it was basically a technology school. They expected the people on that side of the city to end up being laborers, you know, or people in the trades, building trades, manual labor type jobs. And they tried to teach you those things.

I went to TU without any kind of math background or any foreign language. I've always been a big reader and I read most of the books that were in the Red Fork library when I was growing up, which I thank for my education more than what they tried to cram into my skull when I was a kid growing up. When I got out to TU, I had saved up \$100 and the tuition was \$200. So I put down \$100 and I went with this woman who was an advisor, and she looked at me and said, "Joe Carter, you are not college material."

Well, I did get a degree in economics but I had a break when I went off to the army, came back and then decided that if I wanted to be an economist, I would need a PHD. And I decided, instead, to get the

journalism degree. So I have 2 degrees from the University of Tulsa, 1957 and '59.

**JE:** Well, you must have done something right. You were elected to the Webster High School Hall of Fame. So there was something about your life and all that they honored.

**JC:** Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own home," and that proves I'm not a prophet.

**JE:** Let's go back to December 7th, 1941. You would have been around 10 years old. Do you have any recollection of that day? You were quite young. The bombing of Pearl Harbor?

**JC:** That was a very traumatic time. They were talking about saboteurs that would go around and poison your water and kill you. And so you had to watch out for saboteurs. And I spotted a big, old, metal round thing in the middle of the street. I figured that's where they'd go. Well, it turned out that was a sewer.

So I was not much of -- very alert -- to the dangers of World War Two. But when I was seven years old, one of my older brothers had a newspaper -- Tulsa World -- route, and he would pay me 50 cents a week to get up in the morning and walk with him around on that route. And I'd run up and put the paper behind the screen and he would walk down the center of the street. So when we got through, we always had a newspaper to read. So I started reading newspapers cover to cover. To this day, I read three newspapers: the Norman Transcript, the Daily Oklahoman and the New York Times, which I subscribe to the print edition.

**JE:** It's best to hold it in your hand, isn't it? The print edition of the newspaper? I feel the same way.

**JC:** I've got ink in my blood.

**JE:** Yes. Yes, you do.

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**Chapter 4 – 6:25**  
**Harold Stuart**

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**John Erling (JE):** Was it then after TU that then you served on active duty?

**Joe Carter (JC):** Yes. I was two years on active duty and got the GI Bill of Rights, which really financed it. Before that, when I was working and when I was going to TU, I got sundry jobs. I tended bar -- beer bars. They only had beer. I tended bar down at two or three saloons. And I also washed trucks at Baker Truck Rental and we rented trucks to MediGold. They'd come in, and I was out there with a high pressure hose, washing those for a buck an hour to pay my tuition and try to read the books when I got off work. My grade point average was not exceptional. I did not have time to read the books.

**JE:** Did your parents instill in you education and hold that in front of you, or did that just come naturally to you, that you knew you needed to get a good education?

**JC:** My mother did not want me to go to the university. She wanted me to go into drawing and become a bookkeeper so I could work inside. I wouldn't have to work out in the weather. She was not well educated. She had the equivalent of ninth grade and even taught back in the little school out in western Oklahoma where she had gone through 1 through 6. She was very caught up in the Pentecostal Holiness Church and all of that -- all of those strange things they do to worship God. And after my father was killed -- and she was a woman in her late forties, and I'm sure she was very frustrated in having eight kids -- I can imagine what her main interest was for recreation.

But she got finally ordained in the Pentecostal Holiness Church. I am a Methodist who stays at home religiously. I kind of like to look to Jesus if I need some spiritual guidance; I'll look to Will Rogers if I want some good sense in politics and in civic affairs.

**JE:** Well, you got some -- you've got two good leaders there for you.

**JC:** Those are my leaders.

**JE:** That's, that's --

**JC:** And I listen to my wife carefully.

**JE:** And we should say that your wife is Michelle, and she's sitting here at the table with us, and listening to this.

**JC:** She is very distinguished herself, following me as director of the Will Rogers Memorial Commission, she had been Vice President of Fidelity Bank. Director of Public Relations for the Oklahoma Heritage Association and has quite a vitae in advertising and public affairs.

**JE:** When did you two meet? How did you meet?

**JC:** There was a guy from Tulsa named Harold Stuart set that up, and he owned a little TV station here, but he was president of the Oklahoma Heritage Association.

And I happened, at that time, to be Vice president of Cameron University in Lawton. And he came down there to, you know, to find out what happened outside of the Tulsa city limits. And I hosted the deal; and he decided I should be on the board of directors and be on her committee. And that's how we met. And that was a third of a century ago. And it gave my life a lot of direction. She is a very, very good addition to my life.

**JE:** That's great. That's great. And she's sitting here to hear it all, too. So Harold Stuart did a lot of wonderful things, but maybe that was the biggest thing he did.

**JC:** We went to his wedding when he got married at age 80 down in Florida. And you remember his wedding? There was Francis Langford, the songstress, and we heard her sing "I'm In the Mood for Love. And there they were: two 80 year olds. It was wonderful. I loved Harold Stuart. I kind of bumped shoulders with him a lot in Washington and out here in Oklahoma.

**JE:** Quickly about Harold Stuart -- to be around him. Was he charismatic? Outgoing? Or what was he like?

**JC:** I'll tell you that in my judgment, he was just absolutely the model of integrity, you know. He was wealthy; he had married the heiress to an oil company; and he was on a lot of board of directors as they merged. And I can't even remember. But I know that Harold Stuart was a very civic-minded man and honorable beyond words.

**JE:** Then he was in Norway and he adopted two children: John Stuart and his sister.

**JC:** Yes.

**JE:** I've interviewed John Stuart for Voices of Oklahoma, as a matter of fact, and he talks glowingly about his father.

**JC:** He should; he was very fortunate to be adopted by the Stuarts. He and his sisters landed a jackpot because her life would have been very dismal, I think, in Sweden.

**JE:** In Norway.

**JC:** Norway, yes. I've been to both countries and I still get them mixed up. (Chuckling)

**JE:** Well, I'm Norwegian and I don't get them mixed up. (Chuckling)

**JC:** Oh! (Chuckling)

**JE:** Yeah. No, you're, you're exactly right. What they -- if they weren't adopted.

**Chapter 5 – 5:12**  
**Webster High School**

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**John Erling (JE):** A little bit about your service in Korea. What did you do?



**Joe Carter (JC):** No, I never went to Korea. I ended up shipping people to Korea for North Port Louis, preparing people to go overseas. And these were secret movements because they were wanting to sink the troop ships. We had a very -- it was a very sensitive thing, but we had to assemble enough troops to fill up a troop ship and send them to Tacoma in the middle of the night and board them a troop carrier and get out on the ocean. That's what I did most of the time, and in training.

**JE:** And the reserves, after that.

**JC:** I was required to serve two years of active duty, then got the full \$110 a month which paid for my education then. And then I had to serve eight on the inactive duty -- subject to call up -- and never was called up.

**JE:** I got to go back to when you were talking about Webster, you said that area of town people thought those people living in the Webster area would do ... what should I say?

**JC:** They were going to be industrial.

**JE:** So at that time, people actually felt that those kids in that area of town ... would need a trade school, basically?

**JC:** Basically, it was established as a ... It's a beautiful campus, you know, it looks like a small college and ...

**JE:** But I find it fascinating that people would dub an area -- because of their income level? Is that probably why? And they didn't think those people were going to go to TU, or go to a college?

**JC:** That's right. There was a very successful veterinarian and at least two, notably, physician -- medical doctors -- who did well. So there were some people. That was a bad idea -- a bad board of education decision.

One of the great teachers out there -- there were a couple of them -- one of them was a coach that you and I know about. And the other one was a guy named Curtis Turner who was a wrestling coach. And Curtis, by the

way, groomed both of my brothers to be wrestlers and they were collegiate wrestlers and one of them was a national champion, the NCAA champion, Billy Carter.

They did not teach; they did not even offer things like geometry. They had a small Spanish class, but I wasn't allowed to get in it. But I don't know how hard I tried. My long time friend, maybe my best friend for many years, was Jim Hartz who was, later, an NBC anchor. He did all the moon shots and ...

**JE:** And he worked in television?

**JC:** And he worked in television; and he worked here. He was at KOTV. He was news director when he was discovered by NBC. I knew him when I was a United Press correspondent here when I first met him eyeball-to-eyeball. But I knew him when he was at KRMG and he would string for us. He would, in other words, he'd call in stories -- little stories for United Press. But he struck me as the radio guy that always knew how to spell every name. I was impressed because so many radio guys do phonetics and they don't worry too much about what the print word says.

**JE:** No; nobody's gonna see it, no.

**JC:** No reason.

**JE:** Right.

**JC:** But Jim Hartz went to Tulsa Central and he had a very solid pre-med education and was on his way to medical school when he got caught up in broadcasting. And he won Tonys and all kinds of awards, and made lots of money. And we had a very nice public affairs company in Washington for 5 or 6 years. Or 10, maybe -- 5 to 10 years or something. And he did PBS shows: "Over Easy with Mary Martin," and some other shows for PBS after NBC.

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**Chapter 6 – 14:53**  
**Heard Three Shots**

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**John Erling (JE):** Okay. Let's bring you to 1963: November 22nd, President John Kennedy was assassinated -- and you were there.

**Joe Carter (JC):** Yes, I had been with the United Press International in Tulsa and starting in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Kansas City, and then promoted to what they call overnight editor, which was to prepare what we would put on the wire for your early morning radio broadcast and put on the wire stories that needed to be in the afternoon edition. And that was my day to day job. I was responsible for news out of seven states that came to Dallas. I edited them, and the ones that I approved went on to New York for a second judgment and editing, and then they went on the wires, on the broadcast wires, and the news wires. That was my regular job.

It happened that Al Spivak was number two White House correspondent for United Press International. The number one was Merriman Smith and, nominally, Al Spivak would have been following -- would have been helping traveling around with Kennedy those two days that he was doing a very desperate campaign swing through Texas.

His re-election, a year out, did not look rosy. Al had decided to take vacation at that time. And so we had to pick up a local reporter at each of the stops. I was assigned for Fort Worth and Dallas. That morning, after I'd worked all night long from 10 o'clock until 6 in the morning, I decided that everything was okay in Austin -- I mean, pardon me in Fort Worth. And the plane was going to hop over and the logistics of getting over there and getting back to get my car just ... I made a personal decision not to go to Fort Worth. And I don't think it made any difference. Instead I met the plane, Air Force, and the follow-up press plane at Love Field; and I was right behind Kennedy, maybe 10 feet behind him, as he toured the line of people that were on the fence to shake his hand. And I was mostly looking for onward signs or some blast of profanity, but it was all very cordial and nice.

**JE:** But you were on a bus, weren't you?

**JC:** Then I got on the White House press bus. Merriman Smith was in what we call a “pool car” and he was in the front seat. There was a driver who worked for Southwest Bell and there was a Smith and then the acting press secretary was sitting in the front seat. There was an associated press reporter in the back seat, a magazine guy and a radio guy.

They had a ship-to-shore radio in these pre-cellular days. So Smith was on the phone talking to my boss, Jack Fallon, back when the shots rang out -- I had no way to communicate. I was on the bus, I heard three shots -- three haunting shots, I might tell you.

And I got off the bus as quickly as I could when we finally got to the Trademark, which was where Kennedy was to make the luncheon speech. And I raced in and told Fallon that I had heard three shots, that I saw somebody run up a green grassy knoll, policeman, and I didn't know why.

In fact, I tried to get off the bus there and they restrained me. They said, “No one gets off the press bus!”

Then he didn't follow and said, “Smitty's following him; he's on the way to Parkland Hospital.”

So I ran back out of the Trademark, where our bus was parked, and all of the other cars that were in the parade had jammed in around it. There's no way it was getting out of there. So I ran over to the interstate that was right nearby and there was a limousine sitting there with a rider and a driver and I said, “The president's been shot and I know where they've taken him! You want me to show you the way?”

I did not know where Parkland Hospital was. As a matter of fact, it was a little, old, dumpy hospital. There were so many emergency vehicles going there that we were able to get there. I went up on the second floor and there was a window where you could look out and watch the parking lot where they had brought the limousines and the other people were out there.

I was there and I was able to use my dime to open up a telephone. I had

five dimes that morning. I converted two quarters to five times and I didn't know how precious they were. But by this time I had got this phone, I called Fallon, and I said, "I'm here, and there's a crowd out here."

And I described the crowd and -- whatever -- he answered whatever I said, "I need to keep his phone open." There are not many phone lines in the hospital and I could only find this one pay phone. And he sent a young guy out -- a first year reporter out of the university -- named Bill Hampton. And Bill drove out, and came up, and kept the phone open.

Then I went back in this room. Then by this time, the busload had arrived and all of the press was in the room. I'm standing, you know, maybe 5 feet from Malcolm Kilduff, who was the acting press secretary. And he announced Kennedy's death, saying he was pronounced dead at 1 o'clock.

I raced down the hall and I told Fallon that. Then I went back to the window and watched them bring the coffin out of the emergency room; and Jackie Kennedy was right behind the coffin. So her dress was covered with brains and blood and her face was wiped clean. I didn't see any blood on her face, but her clothes were a mess -- and it was ghastly. And she was composed, which I was trying to be composed, too.

This young guy that I told you about went out after I got the phone. He went back to his car and he said he sat down on the curb and cried. I never did that. But then we followed back out there to Love Field in the bus. We did not know where LBJ was. We did not know who was running the government. We did not know if this was a mass conspiracy to wipe out ... All of the secret service, and all of the enforcement agencies, were carefully, you know, in the "Plan B" -- whatever that is.

Then one reporter got off the plane and came over to the group of us there on the tarmac, and briefed us on LBJ taking the oath of office. Everybody then, necessarily, that was traveling with the press corps got back on the plane, but I was going to stay in Dallas.

So I ran into the terminal and there was a very well-dressed black woman there with a pay phone in her hand and a dime. And I said, "Ma'am, I need to use that phone."

She handed it to me very politely. And then I fetched a dime in my pocket. I did not have another dime; and I said, "Ma'am I need your dime." So I called, and I was able to call, and tell the world that LBJ had taken the oath of office. And that was, you know, long, terse minutes had passed from the time that we knew that the other president was dead and we had a new sworn-in president.

**JE:** Didn't UPI make the announcement before the Associated Press? You were the first ones, weren't you?

**JC:** Yes, but that was because of Merriman Smith that had that ship-to-shore radio. There was a kind of an ugly battle, and the AP man came crawling over the seat and reaching for the phone and Smitty would not surrender it. Mike Kilduff, who later became a very good friend of mine, said, "He started trying to slug Merriman and hit me!" (Laughing)

**JE:** I was working for a small radio station in Fargo, North Dakota when that happened. And we were United Press International. And I remember the day when the bell started ringing, ringing, ringing, ringing, ringing, ringing. And I went out there and I saw what you and Merriman had produced; and I used to have that, I don't know where it is anymore, but I distinctly had that memory and wouldn't imagine I'd be talking to somebody who was involved with the story for United Press International. It gives me chills even to say that -- how life has its come-arounds.

**JC:** Were you an early-morning broadcaster and --

**JE:** Not all the time, Bt at that time, I was early on in my career and I made that announcement. And, then, we were a small station -- I'm sure everybody went to a bigger station and listened to it. But, anyway...

**JC:** I always wrote your scripts, so I'm your ghostwriter! (Laughing)

**JE:** Yes you -- (Laughing)

**JC:** I want the world to know that I was the man that made this fellow articulate. (Laughing)

**JE:** Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. I've lost count. Where was President -- or Vice President Johnson, at the time -- at the moment of assassination? Where was he?

**JC:** He was in the car behind. He and Ralph Yarborough were in a terrible political fight. When LBJ became vice president, he still wanted the right to make things like appointments that fell to the senior senator from that state. And he and Yarborough were really at odds; and JFK had put them in a car together. They were a few cars back. They were by ... The secret service was right behind the limousine, and then right behind it was a cop car -- another cop car -- then it was a pool car where Merriman Smith was. So Merriman Smith, actually, when he got to Parkland Hospital, actually went over and saw Kennedy was dead in the car -- because he was dead when Lee Harvey Oswald hit him in the back of the ... blew his brains out.

**JE:** Yeah. But when you heard the shots and knew something bad had happened, you didn't know for sure that JFK was assassinated.

**JC:** Oh, absolutely not. I did not know. I was not long out of the army. And it happened that ... Just funny thing, but, Lee Harvey Oswald and I were both sharpshooters, which is a rank they give you when you're in the army. I was Army Infantry and he was Marine Corps and he got kicked out; and I got the GI Bill.

**JE:** But you knew...

**JC:** I knew they were rifle shots.

**JE:** And that they were fired at the motorcade.

**JC:** Well, I didn't know...

**JE:** Oh, you didn't know that either.

**JC:** No, I couldn't, I didn't. I just knew I heard three shots, you know, and I've heard them for 100 times or thousands of times, you know, in times after that, when I finally realized, you know, what those shots did to civilization, you know, it was a real tough thing to swallow. Real tough.

**JE:** Yeah, I'm interested. I mean, you instinctively knew then, because of that experience, that something bad must be happening because it is these 3 shots. Somebody else might have looked around and say, "Oh, what was that noise?"

But because you had that experience, it kicked in for you and set you on your sprint to get your story. Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. That's true. I really knew. And people were scrambling down along the street. You know, they were scrambling on that grassy knoll. And I didn't know if an angry husband had gone there and shot his wife or something. It didn't occur to me that somebody had just murdered the President of the United States.

## **Chapter 7 – 7:57**

### **JFK Open Top**

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**John Erling (JE):** Okay, that grassy knoll produced a lot of controversy that people felt a shot came from the grassy knoll. So, as you reflected on this, and people talked about that, what were your thoughts? You had no idea that they were coming from the Texas schoolbook depository. You had no idea it was coming from there.

**Joe Carter (JC):** Nope.

**JE:** So, at the moment you didn't know and couldn't make a judgment.

**JC:** But they all came from the same place. I could tell that. They were identical; and it was "bang, click, bang, click, bang." That fast. 6.2 seconds. I'll bet you could time that. And that's what it took for Lee Harvey Oswald to cock that rifle, and to pull -- to squeeze the trigger -- cock, squeeze, you know? And he only had to do it twice and you got three shots off.

**JE:** So then when they're talking about shots from the grassy knoll, you're saying, "No, that couldn't happen from there."



**JC:** No, it didn't make sense that we would have heard it so clearly where we were. We were directly below. He was on the sixth floor. Our bus was in a 45 degree angle turn to get on -- it was a very hard left turn to get on Dealy parkway, and get around Dealy Square, and to get on the parkway. So we were going slow and we're just in perfect, you know ... Many times I've been there, and looked at it and, you know, when you were here, you know, and so it was -- they were so plain. And then that there was any other shots -- I did not hear them.

There happened to be a guy named McGruder who was shooting some eight millimeter film that also came up. But I think it was the basis for the 6.2 seconds. People have interpreted that film wrong. I do not believe that there were any other shots. I believe I would have heard some more shots. And then, second, when I got off that after Air Force one and the Washington -- the White House Press Corps -- had flown back, you know, then I spent months in Dallas investigating, as that I was the editor -- one of several editors -- but I had the editing job, like I said, for morning newscast, and afternoon newspapers.

That was my time and I had numerous reporters running down leads and following up on allegations, and lies that you cannot disprove because when they're cut out of the whole cloth, you know, and there's the guy -- just a baldfaced liar. You can't. How do you disprove him? And it's almost -- I think Mark Twain that had said, "A lie will go halfway around the world while you're trying to put your shoes on." (Laughing)

And we spent a lot of time running down lies and there is no question in my mind that what Lee Harvey Oswald...

Well, wait a minute. There is one question in my mind that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. And that question is: as sure as you are something could be, you could be wrong. I could be wrong. But I don't think -- I say I'm 99.9% sure. You know, maybe something happened. It's improbable. But I am comfortable that I don't think... I got earlier this year as Bobby Kennedy Junior, who was just a kid at this time, and he surely lost his father and his uncle to assassins.

And he was in Washington running for president saying that that the CIA

had killed his parents, his father, and his uncle, and I got in the Washington Post saying, you know, he's full of crap -- and that I did not use crap, because that's a naughty word, but there's even a naughtier word I could have used.

But the guy -- he is really off base. No basis, in my judgment; we ran down all of the things. Were there people who were secret service agents who were involved? You know, they could have done it.

But it was only one man made the key decision that day. And that man, I'll tell you who he was. It was ordained that the president would get in the limousine and it would have a plastic top on it, which would make his assassination virtually impossible in my judgment. Although it's kind of classified how tough that plastic dome is, but it was John Kennedy himself who said "I want an open car."

Now, was that part of a plot? You know, the guy, you know, I'm terminally ill and I'd rather go out as a martyr instead of some squabbling old man. Now, that's pretty ... To me, that's obscene, almost. But that's the only thing I could ... because he did make that decision and there was nobody that supported it.

The secret service guys said, "Please don't do it."

He said, "I'm running for re-election. You are not. You know, you've got a job with this, whether I get re-elected or not."

I don't know if he'd have been re-elected or not. I wrote Texas politics prior to that rap story, you know, and you talk about not having a copy of that piece of paper you read. All the stuff I wrote about this -- I have no copies. It all went in the wire, went in the wire, and was in papers around, and radio, and TV stations around the world. I do not have one copy.

Carter Bradley, the UPI boss here in Oklahoma, got a full set and brought it over and gave it to the anchor of Channel 2 News, who I'd later have some chili with him once a week, and he said -- I said -- "I'd like to have that."

He said, "If I can find it, I'll give it to you, Joe. I never looked at it."

And I would love to have it because I don't know how much of my dictation made the wire because when I went in there, I was working about what's going to be in tomorrow's newscast and tomorrow's newspaper.

**JE:** But we should say the Warren Commission came out and subscribed to the single bullet theory. And then for those who are listening, way back when we should say, the two other shots struck Texas Governor John Connolly. So those were the three bullets.

## **Chapter 8 – 2:36**

### **Jack Ruby**

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**John Erling (JE):** But were you on duty? It was a Sunday when Jack Ruby shot.

**Joe Carter (JC):** I was home in bed. My friend Terry McGary, a UPI correspondent was there and watched the murder -- the fatal shooting -- and did a very good job of reporting on it. And then I went in at 6 o'clock that night and took over editing.

I'll tell you the sad thing about the assassination and the stories that now say that there is a mystery about what happened in Dallas 60 years ago. When that hoodlum, sleazebag, Jack Ruby fatally shot Lee Harvey Oswald and he later died in the same emergency room where John Kennedy was pronounced dead.

That guy denied Lee Harvey Oswald a right to a trial by his jury and he would have ... the evidence against him is so overwhelming. It is just fingerprints, casting, you know, the bullets, the cartridges that were ejected, you know, everything they got -- he left a rifle. He absolutely went out and shot Officer JD Tippett and there was a witness that saw him do it and directed the arresting officers to the movie theater where he was arrested and he tried to shoot them; but they managed to ram their hand down the pistol barrel. I mean, he was a crazy man on a rage and nobody knows why he did it. And now that's a mystery.

And then, because there was no jury to say guilty, like they did say guilty on Jack Ruby for murdering him, but it was up to the media -- and that's guys like you and me -- to convince the people that we've done a thorough investigation and that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin. Period. Now to keep ourselves out of court, we say he's the alleged assassin and not just --people just stop when they hear "alleged."

And so we failed.

## **Chapter 9 – 6:00 Stopped Talking**

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**John Erling (JE):** In the years following that, were you reluctant to talk about it as an experience of yours?

**Joe Carter (JC):** You know, I could function very well, I felt, at the desk, but I got sick of it and got a job offer out in Honolulu for a little newspaper and it was like stepping out of a fiery furnace into a place of nothing -- no news out there. I almost went nuts. And I came back. I quit and came back to Oklahoma and went to work as a police and politics reporter over in Oklahoma City. And I worked for the Oklahoma City paper. I'm sure you've interviewed James R. Jones.

**JE:** Yes.

**JC:** Well, I knew Jim when he was a student -- an assistant sports information officer at OU. And suddenly this man is calling the shots in the White House. Peter Benchley was one of the writers over in the writing pool. And Peter was a well-known, third-generation writer and he said "I want out of here, I don't want to go through the 1968 election 5 years later."

He quit and went out to write Jaws. Well, they were looking for somebody to fill his shoes. And that's when Jim Jones had recommended me.

**JE:** You were so immersed in this story and as you said afterward, you stayed on to write, I don't know, a month or two afterward. So, we forget the emotional states of writers and how it lingers with them and we just read their stuff and we don't ask ... You probably have to get to know a writer to realize. "No, this affects him." That's what happened to you.

**JC:** When I married Michelle, years later, we were running the Will Rogers Museum. Kuralt had a Sunday show called "Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt."

He sent a producer and a cameraman down to interview me about Will Rogers in the wake of the Will Rogers follies. And I had my first book was out and it was making, you know, a lot of sales.

This guy came down after we talked Will Rogers. I said, "Would you like to go to dinner?"

So he and his cameraman, and Michelle and I, went to dinner; and I'm sitting across from him and somehow it came up, and he said that he had been in Dallas.

I said, "Have you ever done reporting out here?"

And he said, "Yes," he said, "I'm a producer and I travel and find some talent."

I said, "I was in Dallas when Kennedy was..."

So we started talking about it. Bernie Bernbaum was his name -- Bernie Bernbaum. He was a Fulbright scholar and he'd come back and got hired as a producer at CBS. He went down to Dallas and did some of the best reconstruction reporting at the time. Well, we talked about it.

She had no idea that at that time that I had been out there. I just did not. And the reason I didn't, every time I'd start talking about what really happened, then some jerk at the back of the room, you know, that has 4th grade education but all the answers, would jump up and say, "That's not the way it happened. You're wrong!" You know, call me a liar. You know,

and I'd want to go down, you know, to the neighborhood where I was raised -- we settled a lot of disagreements with our fist.

I wanted, you know -- the animal came up in me. And so finally I said, "No more. I'm just not gonna face down idiots that have their own views or they read something in Popular Mechanics about what happened."

I quit talking about it, maybe for, you know, 15 years.

**JE:** Oh, so you were asked to speak publicly about your experience? They wanted you -- and you were called on -- to speak all. Alright. And then, so, you hadn't even shared it with Michelle. I don't know how many years ago. Has it been recently or when have you been more open about it?

**JC:** I made it a practice after ...

Bernie and I sat there and talked about the lies that were circulated. And Bernie said, "Joe," he said, "You're a writer, I've read your stuff." And he said, "I'm, you know, I can do the research and let's write a book -- one by one, you know -- countering these lies."

We were in the middle of that. And I was doing it when I get off work at the Will Rogers Museum. I'd start reading the stuff that Bernie was sending me.

Suddenly, he called me on the phone. He said, "We've been upstaged, brother; and there has been a book out and it's called 'Case Closed' and it was written by a New York lawyer and he does a fine job, one by one, dispelling the lies."

And we abandoned the project.

## **Chapter 10 – 14:40**

### **Former Gov. David Hall**

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**John Erling (JE):** Talk about Governor David Hall.

**Joe Carter (JC):** Yes.

**JE:** This is from Tulsa and you were press secretary for him. You wrote speeches, State of the State messages and all. Talk about how he tapped you for that job. He was governor from 1971 to '75.

**JC:** I was doing consultancy in Washington. I had left working in Congress and was trying to build up a consultancy when he called me and offered me the job as press secretary. I had known David when he was a prosecutor in Tulsa, and I was a UPI reporter.

And I was impressed with him. I never had a beer with him; I mean, he didn't drink at all. But I never had any kind of a social life with him, but he asked me to come back.

So I arrived here at Christmas before he took office and we were in the United Tower Building, the United Tower in Oklahoma City. I asked him, "Well, where's your inaugural address?" He did not have one.

I had been a political writer around at the Capitol for a number of years, and I knew the protocols. There was nobody else on the staff that even understood that. They were all campaign workers that had just -- you picked them up.

I wrote his inaugural address, and I wrote not only that. This first one, where we raised tax taxes, I actually formulated that in the words. GM Fuller, who was a tax lawyer in Oklahoma City, and had hired on as David's legislative assistant during this period, actually formulated the final draft of the laws that we were changing.

And men like Stratton Taylor and Howard of Tulsa, you know, there were several very bright, progressive, Democrats in there that would come in and talk about this tax bill.

We raised taxes on oil and income taxes and made a lot of people hate David Hall. But we spent 50% of all of that new money went to common schools, 25% went to higher ed, and 25% was spent on necessary

government operations.

What we should have done at the same time was raised the sales tax on gasoline, and matched all that federal money, and would have far better roads today. But we didn't do that and that was, what I felt, like was a failure. We took a lot of heat. A lot of people hated us and including Buddy Fallon, who was a district attorney here ...

**JE:** Buddy Fallis.

**JC:** Fallis, who took care of me -- tried to send me to prison.

**JE:** Why?

**JC:** Yeah. He said I lied to a grand jury. I did not.

**JE:** Over what issue?

**JC:** He did. He was not a nice man.

**JE:** Let me bring you back to the grand jury. What was -- what were they investigating?

**JC:** They were investigating a tax accountant who had gone into a bar. He was an alcoholic. And the guy that managed the bar came over and said, "Look, here's my tax return. Can you file it for me? And so I won't have to file it."

And he put it in his pocket, and he went home, and the next morning he got up, and he wore a different suit and he forgot to file that. So when he did put that suit back on, when it rotated back, he found it and he went in and he had to change the numbers for the penalty for being late. And that was the extent of the crime.

And Buddy Fallis was investigating that. He had a snitch who had been the accountant guy at this bar. And this guy had got a guilty plea and made and suggested that he would testify about this dastardly crime -- this poor guy with an alcoholic problem.



So when I heard about this, as executive assistant, I had investigated it. I went to the tax commission, we talked about his personal life and about his drinking, and how minor, you know -- state did not lose a penny in this thing.

It just went in a different column and he should not do that. And so they ostracized him. They put together something in his files saying, "You're a bad boy," slapped his wrist, as the law and order people said, but it was humiliating to him. And I had felt like that was ample. Well, this guy, that Buddy Fallis said open grand jury report and I said, "I'll come over and tell you what we did to this poor guy, and he's now in dry-out." And he went to his grave a sober man.

And I testified. And so it happened in the course of the conversation that one guy that had been a big friend and supporter of David Hall -- wealthy man -- had been in a divorce situation and, during the divorce, his wife told about him carrying a briefcase with \$50,000 and a big pistol in it.

And this became a story that was circulating around. David Hall had then, himself, was under a big investigation. So he had hired a tax guy, and this tax guy hired a detective to try to interview this guy named Sonny Jenkin. He was from Tulsa. He owned a truck line -- and a wonderful man -- he'd also been a Bush pilot and I'd flown with him. I knew him well. But he was rich, and he did go around with a lot of cash and a pistol, which was not against the law.

**JE:** But Buddy Fallis...

**JC:** ... In the course of this thing said, "Were you in the room?"

And, oh! And this detective called me up and said, "You know, this Buddy Fallis wants to talk to me. And the governor wants me to talk to him."

I said, "Give me a minute."

And I called Sonny. I said, "Sonny, come in my office."

I had a long office -- 20 feet long or so; and I had a sofa down on the far end where I'd interview job applicants or senators that want to talk privately.

I said, "Sit down there and tell him about your briefcase."

And he laughed. He said, "Sure, Joe." If that's what you want me to do. We're friends."

He was there, but he brought another guy and I'm setting up in my end of the room trying to do my job while that's going on down there. And I knew I already knew everything. I knew the facts of the matter.

I'm drinking coffee. Well, right around the door was a men's room and late in the day after gallons of coffee, I often had to go around the door.

And Buddy Fallis asked me: "Were you there?"

I said, "Yes."

"Did you did you hear this?"

And I said, "No." I said, "I was in and out of the room at the time," which meant I went to the men's room, because the conversation didn't last more than 10 or 15 minutes.

But the other detective was sitting here next to my chair. I don't even remember his name. I don't remember either of their names. This guy testified that I never left the room and I had to have heard every word.

And I said, "Buddy..." I knew Buddy Fallis well -- or I thought I did. I did not know, you know, his demotic side.

But I said, "Are you talking about that briefcase and the money?"

"Yeah, what about?"

And I told him all about it. I said," Buddy, Sonny Jenkin carries a lot of

money on his person because he likes to make opportunity purchases. I mean, that's the type of guy -- he's an entrepreneur." I said, "And he carries a pistol just to make sure that he has that money whenever he needs it."

And I left it and they indicted me on one count of perjury for saying I was in and out of the room at the time. Well, perjury, by definition, means that I would have need to have said, "I never left the room," and then I came over here and said, "I was in and out of the room." Now that's lying. You know, one of those is a lie and that somebody else said something else does not constitute this being a lie. It's a controversial -- but he did that. And after that put me on page one of all of the papers in Oklahoma. Headline stories across the Tulsa World that never were printed -- never once came to my defense. I had been a paper boy for that paper for 10 years when I was a kid, you know? I was out in the cold getting it on people's porches or otherwise their work would have never been read.

And I went to Travis Walsh and I said, "Travis, did you read that transcript?"

He said, "Yes, Joe. And you, you know that's too bad." And he was very belligerent.

I went to his funeral for different purposes than ordinarily you'd go. But, anyhow, I thought it was something that was horrible to live through. As a matter of fact, the mother of my children at the time was in the advanced stages of cancer and the emotion of this thing -- because David Hall being a weasel, demanded that I retire from my job.

Well, I was out of work and my insurance was phasing out and was ending and I can't ... People, you know, some guys hear "Under Indictment", bad headlines about what a crook he was. Nobody thought I was innocent, you know, except the people that knew the facts.

I couldn't find a job, and my wife was in the hospital, and Joe Hall was coming during the day to visit her when I was taking care of the kids, and sending them to school, and picking them up.

During the day, David Hall would not return my calls. And I got a call from my old boss in Washington, a wondrous lady named Congresswoman Julia

Butler Hanson -- perhaps the smartest lawmaker I ever knew, including Gene Stipe.

She called me and she said, "Would you come to work for me? I hear that you've had some problems down there. Carl's people tell me it's just a dirty political trick," which it was.

I said, "Well, I don't know."

So she called me the next night. She said, "I found another \$5000. Now, will you come?"

So I went up and she was chairman of what was known as the Hanson Committee. So there I am, under indictment in Oklahoma, and I'm the staff director for the Hanson Committee that rewrote the rules for the US House of Representative.

Now, if that doesn't make you grow up with ulcers, nothing will. Can you imagine sitting there on the floor of the house? And somebody is saying, "Are you -- is that aide under indictment?"

**JE:** But we should follow up by saying Governor Hall left office and he was convicted of bribery and extortion so ... and did time for it; and I've actually interviewed him for Voices of Oklahoma.

**JC:** I've got to say this: I know not all of the crime that he had with the Secretary of State. You know, he was a big talker, you know, and I've heard him spin tall tales about all the things he was going to make: Saudi Arabia selling RVs; and I've heard him spin tales, you know, he was, you know, and he's a big talker -- and the Secretary of State was wearing a wire.

He thought the guy was his friend and he went to prison and that was a sad thing. He probably did things that, you know -- I'm not saying it was above reproach by any means. You know, when he was trying to write his life story, he called me and wanted me to give him 20 -- or "loan him," which he never paid back loans, by the way -- he wanted me to loan him \$25,000.

I said, "You know, Governor, I just don't have it; and I'm not loaning money anyhow, you know, I got kids to go to college." And so then he wrote that book and the things that I ... Other guys sent him money. Guys I know that told me they sent him money. He wrote nice things about them.

**JE:** Right. Right.

## **Chapter 11 – 5:22**

### **L.B.J. Ranch**

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**John Erling (JE):** You worked in the President Johnson administration. You drafted documents including speeches, plus working trip advance assignments. You joined diplomatic missions to Central America. In July of '68, the summit of President Johnson and South Vietnam President Thieu in Honolulu. Were you ever up close to LBJ?

**Joe Carter (JC):** I've been around him and have my photos with him. But the most wonderful time was that Governor of Arkansas and David Hall, they both got elected at the same time, and LBJ called him up and said, "I'd like for you boys to come down and spend an afternoon with me!"

You know, "Young Democrat," You know, "You're going to save the party."

And so Dale Bumpers and David Hall, and Dale's right hand guy and I, flew down on a private jet, and landed at the ranch and spent the day with him driving around. And he's driving this big, big Mercury convertible and telling stories. And the secret service is following us and they opened up the back of their truck and it was a full bar. So we'd all stand around there. LBJ had to have some fresh water and bourbon. But it was really scotch that he drank out of a bourbon bottle because Joe Kennedy was a scotch big-man, and he did not like Joe. But that's the story that went around.

We would sit around and he would tell things, and then we went back and we sat in the house. Free conversation with 5 guys and all of us considered ourselves just good old yellow dog, Democrats. I said, "Can I use your phone?"

And I called. Then, the mother of my children was in the hospital having a lump taken out of her leg. Well, it turned out it was a malignant lump -- a lymph node. And she answered the phone. I said, "How are you doing?"

And she said, "Well, I'm okay; I'm coming out of the thing. I'll be okay. You can enjoy yourself."

I said, "Mr. President, do you want to talk to Beverly?"

"Hello, Beverly! How are you?"

And Beverly said, "Who is this?"

He said, "Well, this is the president."

You've got to be kidding! This is the president?!" She doesn't believe him, either.

She went to her grave thinking about that. But he was charming. God, what a great guy he was.

**JE:** You must have had a hard time getting in a word edgewise with David Hall, who was charming, Lyndon Johnson -- and Dale Bumpers.

**JC:** Dale Bumpers, too, had his charm. I don't know if you knew Dale. He was my man for president. There was a guy that really should have been president. The mongrels that I've known that have gotten there and a few of them that haven't...

**JE:** You are a witness to a lot of history, aren't you?

**JC:** I was. I look back on it, you know, at 91, you know, you reflect, I look back and I think it's amazing that Jim Jones, that guy in sports information, would end up being the right-hand man for the president of the US.

And they'd say, "Would you guys be understood in talking to this guy Peter Benchley's job?" I didn't know Peter Benchley, you know, he later got

famous with Jaws.

And so I went there and wrote all kinds of stuff. I was in El Salvador, San Salvador at what they called ODECA which was the economic organization of those banana republics down there.

And we were trying to hold them together and build their economy. And I wrote one of the speeches there. They sent it to the typing pool; they cleared up a bad typing and they sent it to him and he sent it back: "Shorten." S-H-O-R-T-E-N.

And so I went through and edited down, sent it back to typing. They retyped and the next day, he's standing in a schoolyard, reading a speech that I wrote. You know, and I'm telling you, you know, it's a good day to be wearing the pins. I'm telling you, it was really a -- if you want to feel strange... I mean, you feel strange when you're driving home from work, listening to the early news and they're reading the stuff that you wrote. You're right on the air.

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## **Chapter 12 – 11:28**

### **Will Rogers with Quotes**

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**John Erling (JE):** For 17 years, you and Michelle served as directors of Oklahoma's Will Rogers Memorial Commission. You operated the Nine Gallery Museum in Claremore -- 400 acre, 1879 living-history birthplace of Will Rogers. How did that come about? That you even became a director?

**Joe Carter (JC):** I was vice president of Cameron University. And, actually, I had taken the initiative to endow chairs, which is a secret to building a real university. And I would raise a half-a-million dollars. The state would match it with a half-a-million and you had a million dollar endowment. And say it made, you know, 4% a year. Then some professor would get that 4% each year to do research or to hire aids, you know, and it's a secret to really hiring good-type people at a university. I endowed, I raised the money to endow several of those.

And in the process, my very great friend and dear friend to me is Jim Hartz was at Stratton Taylor; he called me and said, "Would you be interested in running the Will Rogers Museum?"

Well, I said, "Wow, you know, Will Rogers."

And I wasn't a big student of Will Rogers at the time, but I got up there. I said, "You bet. I really would like to do that."

And I went up and ran it until I had a heart attack and died. And that was 25 years, 26 years ago last Thanksgiving.

**JE:** And so you were resurrected?

**JC:** I was risen from the dead. Damn right. I'm the only born-again S.O.B. you know.

**JE:** Joe "Lazarus" Carter.

**JC:** Yeah, maybe I am a saint. I was having lunch with Stratton Taylor and Gene Stipe at the Hammett House and I crumbled out of my chair with ventricle fibrillation, which is not an uncommon way to die. Pretty nice way to die. I didn't feel a thing. I was just dead, and fell in the floor. It happened, there was a physician, an MD, in the house. He jumped on me and started tearing off my clothes. And there was an ER nurse that kind of jumped down and helped him and then the guys arrived in the little screaming ambulance ...

I'm telling you hearsay that I heard that, because I was dead at the time. I didn't know what the hell was going on. They hit me with a paddle and my heart started again. Now they've implanted a defibrillator at Oklahoma Heart, you know, a sainted place if there ever was one. It happened to be in the same hospital where they announced my father's death. But that's where they implanted this thing. And I've been wearing one for the last 26 years.

**JE:** And look at all you did in those last 26 years. The man upstairs wanted you alive, didn't he?



**JC:** You know, the wonderful thing -- there were three things that happened up at the museum. One: I just plain raised money to fix it up. The roof leaked. The birthplace House where Will Rogers was born looked shabby. It had about 25 coats of paint on it. I hired painter from Tulsa named Jack Ryan and he came up and said, "Joe, we're going to have to have power wash this house."

And it's called "The White House on the Verdigris". And it's built over the logs, but they put white house clapboard siding on it. So we started washing it all and the clapboard siding collapsed.

So we had to re-mill boards to put on that house, and painted it, and it's redwood now. So it'll last a long time. And we added Texas Longhorn to the ranch and got a full-time cowboy out there.

And then we fixed the museum up. We expanded it to nine galleries; we did a lot of -- raised about 5 million over those 17 years. That was very important for Oklahoma, and as a landmark.

But one thing: the little room where Will Rogers body rests, had a level of mud about six inches deep on the floor. So I had to go in; we had to clean that out, and we had to waterproof it. And they had a garden right over it and, and when the water would go down, you know, finally, it would seep through. Well, we took away the garden and put stone work around it. And so it looks still dignified. And then we also put a little room out in front of it so you could have access. It's got a locked door on it, but you can go down and actually see the crypt where he's buried, his wife's buried, his baby son's buried over here, and his son and daughter are in there and they were cremated, but they're setting up in little vaults there. People that really care could go down. That was hard.

We created a children's museum which has turned out to be very popular. And that was because of a guy named John Little who now lives up in Claremore; and he did the hard work and we just bought it out and got it done.

The second big that Michelle and I did: We got the Will Rogers papers

published by the University of Oklahoma Press. And that's a five volume papers of Will Rogers. They should have been done 50 years earlier. And he would have been bigger in the textbooks and bigger in whole world of academia, from whence all true fame-ness flows. They should have done it earlier, but it's done now. And they are a prize and that cost a million that we had to raise and it was very difficult.

Third thing we did was the Will Rogers Follies and you're going to read that thing from the book. Do you want to read it?

**JE:** I will. But you were credited in the playbill for helping with the 1991 "Will Rogers Follies: A Life In Review," which won Tony Awards. And weren't you cast in the role of Will Rogers?

**JC:** Never in that show. It played 982 times on Broadway and it had many guys playing Will Rogers from time to time. Then, and on the tours, I would play Wiley Post, which was a minor, minor role.

It happened that I was in it later with a guy named Jim Whitmore -- James Whitmore, the actor -- who did a one-man Will Rogers show. Michelle and I were up at Point Barrow at the site of the crash and we were there. We feel very emotional about Will Rogers and Marley Post. But after the show closed and I played Will Rogers at a one-man show at Branson and I wrote it myself. It wasn't very good. It drew big crowds.

**JE:** You did 80 of those one man shows at Branson?

**JC:** Right.

**JE:** So you're dressed up like Will, and you talk like Will?

**JC:** And even did some rope tricks, which I've forgotten how to do now.

**JE:** And you've done everything. I didn't know you were -- you're an actor, you're everything. Everything.

**JC:** I used to play in The Drunkard here in Tulsa.

**JE:** Oh, did you really?

**JC:** I played for five years when I was in college. My entertainment was Saturday night. I'd go down and I played, uh, Sample Switchel -- the Toby character in the play -- and I had a lot of fun. It got good reviews.

**JE:** If I ask you any quotes of Will Rogers, do they jump to mind right now? Anything that, you ...

**JC:** Oh, I love "I never met a man I didn't like." I love that quote, because it's a sound statement of brotherhood without boring you with something that sounds too academic. "Never met a man I didn't like." And all of us are the same, you know. I may detest Donald Trump and his lies, but that doesn't mean that you can't like the guy. Some people like him, you know, and some people don't, but we've got to give everyone a second chance. And that's what it is that I like. "I like you until you really betray me."

**JE:** Yup. You know, The Tulsa World carries a quote from him every day. And you would think that those quotes were made in the last year or two. They're so relevant to today. It's absolutely amazing.

**JC:** He is absolutely timeless. I've written two books that were printed about Will Rogers plus, you know, a dozen or two magazine articles. And it's so easy to write about him because he was so many. There are so many different personas about him.

**JE:** I have a list here that you have published. "Never Met a Man I Didn't Like: The Life and Wisdom of Will Rogers," "Gibb Smith's, the Quotable Will Rogers," "Will Rogers: A Pictorial Tribute to an American Legend. Amazon e-books that you authored are "I Heard JFK's Death Shots: The Unique Challenges of Writing for LBJ," "President or Precedent: Carl Albert's History Changing Choice."

**JC:** When I wrote those last three e-books, I regret that I just could not hustle up a publisher and I'm not going to pay for it by having a book published myself. So I made a e-book. Not many people read e-books.

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**Chapter 13 – 5:53**  
**Carl Albert**

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**John Erling (JE):** Carl Albert, Speaker of the House. And were you around him?

**Joe Carter (JC):** Yes.

**JE:** And just talk to us about him because a lot of the people, perhaps, have forgotten him. He was one of our more powerful -- Senator Kerr was powerful too -- but Carl Albert, just talk about him.

**JC:** Carl Albert was a very disciplined legislator. First, you get elected to the US House of Representatives and you go from the representative of a half a million or 800,000 people out here to one person. And you go into a room with 434 other people just like that. So then you start having to get elected again.

So Carl Albert had a very, very, very disciplined public relations thing. He got stories in those little newspapers down in what we call "Little Dixie," and they were just stories that they write because Carl Albert sent them out.

But his main constituent was those people that elected him first as a whip, then as a majority leader, or minority, and then Speaker of the House.

And he did not want headlines. He got on the cover of TIME, but it didn't impress him. You know, what he'd rather have is his picture in the paper in the Eufaula News. And he didn't care. I really highly respect him and many of the great programs that matter today to your quality of life in America -- civil rights for one, the dams that we build that control the waterways.

Brookside doesn't get flooded anymore because of Keystone Reservoir. And that was a big program and I admire him and I love him. I had talked with him, you know, made the long trip down to McAllister, and paid my own way talking to him about writing his biography.

And he said, "Well, I want a Horatio Alger story."

I said, "You're Carl Albert." I knew and he did not want to talk about that stuff; and he did from time to time when we were talking and it's all in that book, but I labored over it, and then I think he should have taken the presidency. The devil take the hindmost.

And then of course, Jimmy Carter just kicked the butt out of Gerry Ford. You know, the American people were ready to get rid of the Republicans. Then you had a corrupt president and a corrupt vice president. You got a pretty good reason to say there's problems with the party they represent -- both of them were Republicans.

**JE:** Carl Albert came from a very meager background, didn't he?

**JC:** Yes, his father was a coal miner. He actually was an underground. There's some wonderful coal resources in that part of Oklahoma. And he -- finally, at his wife's urging -- became a subsistence farmer at Bugtussle. And they lived in a little log cabin and Carl went to a little school there that was financed, largely, because the railroad went through and they paid ad valorem taxes where they had rails.

And he got a good primary education; and he was endowed with an incredible wisdom and brain -- his mind. And I don't disagree with his mind. My old friend Alex Adwan told me about sitting in the house gallery one day.

He said, "Carl," -- they were debating prayer in school. That's something that Republicans think is going to save the nation. And Carl got down on the floor, dismounted, surrendered the gavel and asked for unanimous consent to revise and extend his remark.

Alex said, "It was the strongest speech I'd ever heard of defending the right to not have prayer in school."

He said, "I thought he said I was so spellbound. I didn't take a note, but I thought 'there's my Sunday column.'"

But I thought the world of Alex. And he got the congressional record the

next morning, and it said, "Speaker Albert dismounted and surrendered his gavel, and dismounted, and asked for unanimous consent to revise and extend his remark -- and it was blank. He had blacked it all out.

**JE:** Who blacked it out?

**JC:** Carl.

**JE:** He didn't want it in there?

**JC:** No, he did not want --

**JE:** Why?

**JC:** He didn't want that going back being read in the Baptist Church, the Nazarene Church, Pentecostal Holiness, the Church of Christ, all of those Republicans down there.

**JE:** There are rhymes and reasons to everything, aren't there?

**JC:** Some hypocrisy, I ought to say.

**JE:** Yeah.

## **Chapter 14 – 3:57**

### **In Reflection**

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**John Erling (JE):** So here you are, 91, and you've reflected. Your heart is working for you now. You have years ahead of you. But what, as you reflect back and look, maybe, immediately and highlights or projects that you're really proud of? Do you have any thoughts about that?

**Joe Carter (JC):** You know, when you're 91 you live vicariously with your offspring. I have one son, a grandson, who was just promoted from vice president to managing director of Goldman Sachs Bank down in Dallas.

**JE:** And what's his name?

**JC:** His name is Matthew Carter. He is an Oklahoma State graduate. His sister is in partnership with my son at Oklahoma Equine Hospital. They own two hospitals along I-35, south of Norman, and they work all of the shows are related to the sport of reining; and he's on shows on TV every Sunday night on RFDTV called "Horse of the West," which is a very fine show. It's a boomer for Oklahoma, but only horse people watch it, but they have a very big operation.

They do embryo transfers, they rehab, they do all of the horses that are on the TV show Yellowstone. Those guys are all their clients, all of those horses. And if you see them doing the fancy circles, running and stopping on a dime, you know, and these are the horses that my son and granddaughter work on day in and day out.

**JE:** Students, listen to this and they listen to the research of what we do. What kind of advice do you give to students these days as they come out into a far different world than you did?

**JC:** My advice is to drink moderately. Sometimes I did not. And that was a strike. Sometimes I would drink too much whiskey. I think that it does damage -- and avoid drugs; and try to stay sober; and read, read, read.

**JE:** And then we asked the question, how would you like to be remembered?

**JC:** I'd like to be remembered as a guy who had integrity like Harold Stuart. And if I had the smartness, and married the kind of money he did; I might have traveled more. But I don't have any regrets about the road I took.

And since Michelle and I have left the work world, we visited 70 countries and quit only when the COVID thing hit. And we were living in Florida where it was easy to travel the world. We moved back to Norman because the grandkids were having great-grandkids and we wanted to kind of look in on that a little bit.

**JE:** I've heard so much about you and it was finally time to meet you. I respect you a lot. This story you've told... My, how proud you should be, and I know

you are. So, thank you, Joe for giving this documentation of your life for Voices Of Oklahoma.

**JC:** Let me tell you, I'm an old friend of yours because I used to listen to you every morning -- you know, deciding whether to get out of bed or not. You know, you were the deciding force.

**JE:** I probably left you in bed sometimes. Thank you. Thank you, Michelle, for bringing him here and we appreciate it very much.

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