

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: As a dynamic young man, Joe McGraw worked at Kewanee Oil Company during the day and attended the TU College of Law at night to earn his degree. He added duties as the TU Law librarian after his night classes for his last two years of law school, demonstrating the determination and strong work ethic that would lead to his tremendous career achievements in Tulsa’s real estate sector.

McGraw graduated from law school and went to work for a bank briefly before entering the real estate business, where he discovered his true calling. He founded McGraw Breckenridge Company Realtors in 1965, which merged with another company in 1986 to create McGraw Davisson Stewart before establishing McGraw Realtors and McGraw Commercial Properties.

In addition to his real estate enterprises, Joe McGraw worked for his fellow Oklahomans by serving in the Oklahoma House of Representatives (1964-66) and the Oklahoma State Senate (1966-1972). His sense of civic duty also led to his service as a Director of RELO, The International Relocation Network, based in Chicago, Illinois, and on the TU College of Law Advisory Board.

In his oral history interview, listen to Joe talk about his family and the Cherokee land run, President Taft, and the \$4,000 it took to start his company on the Voices of Oklahoma podcast and website VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 5:09 Family Heritage

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling. Today’s date is February 13th, 2018.
Joe, would you state your full name, please?

Joe McGraw (JM): My name is Joseph Robert McGraw, Jr.

JE: And your date of birth?

JM: I was born in St. John's Hospital on November 19th, 1932.

JE: So your present age is?

JM: 85.

JE: And where are we recording this interview?

JM: We're recording this at my office in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

JE: Let's talk about your mother. Your mother's name, her maiden name, where she was born.

JM: Her name was Kitty Ednor, and she was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1902. Her father was Ed Ednor. They moved from Omaha to Tulsa when she was about 11 years old.

JE: What kind of person -- her personality -- and that type of thing for her?

JM: Well, my mother was a saint. She was a beautiful lady. She never judged anybody or anything. She was just a person that loved the Lord and loved her family, loved her husband. She was a mother for many people who were outside of our family because they just wanted to be loved by my mother. She was just a very saintly lady. A wonderful lady.

JE: Any qualities you draw from her, you think?

JM: I wish.

JE: (Laughing)

JM: I think, when I get into a tough situation, I think about my mother from time to time, about being less judgmental and accepting the circumstances, whatever they may be.

JE: Then your father's name.

JM: Joseph Robert McGraw, Sr. He was the only child of my grandfather JJ McGraw and my grandmother Francis Agnes McGraw.

JE: And then he came from where? Where did he grow up?

JM: Okay. He was born on August 21st, 1874 in Leavenworth, Kansas. May I just say this? My son was born on August 21st, 1974 -- a hundred years to the date -- after my great-grandfather, I mean, yeah, my grandfather was born. He had many of the same qualities. My grandfather was a very prominent, a very outstanding person. He was a banker -- came in the land run in 1893 to Ponca City with his father, Thomas McGraw. They started a bank in Ponca City. He sold -- I read a book just recently -- he sold some farms in Leavenworth and he had \$35,000 in cash, and in those days that was a lot of money. And so they started a bank in Ponca City. He also had a lumber company and an oil company. He was a very busy man. He was a very good, excellent businessman.

JE: Was that McGraw Oil Company that he named it?

JM: McGraw Oil Company. He started, actually, he started that in 1921.

JE: Is the McGraw Oil Company still in the family?

JM: It's a Delaware Corporation and it's still in the family. I'm the only stockholder at this time, but made arrangements to where I can -- when I pass away -- I'm gonna spread it back to my 3 members of my brothers' families and my daughter.

JE: Where is the oil company located?

JM: The oil fields were in Carter County in Healdton and in Wirt, Oklahoma. And those were some of the biggest fields in Oklahoma in the early days.

JE: So let's go back again. You said your father and your grandfather. Your grandfather's name was...?

JM: James Joseph McGraw.

JE: And he came to America...?

JM: He was born in Leavenworth, Kansas on August 21st, 1874; but his father came to America from Ireland in 1850, I believe.

JE: And he was Thomas McGraw?

JM: Thomas McGraw. And he was the -- his father was Richard, and his mother was Grace McGraw from Ireland, and they had 9 sons. And one of the sons, I believe it was Hugh, was the great-great-great grandfather of Tug McGraw the baseball player, and Tim McGraw, his son, were related to them.

JE: Wow.

JM: And recently Tim McGraw came to Tulsa about 6 weeks ago to sing, and we went down and sat right by the stage so we could see him. And I gave him one of our family books that I've given you today.

JE: So you have baseball and you have music, can you do either?

JM: I wish. I would not say that I have those same talents.

Chapter 3 – 2:53

Gave 160 Acres

John Erling (JE): But it's interesting about the land run that your father and grandfather participated in 1893.

Joe McGraw (JM): That was the third land run of Oklahoma. There was 6,400,000 acres. It was the Cherokee Land Run and it ran across northern Oklahoma and eastern Oklahoma. There were 40,000 160-acre tracts that were up in the land run. And there was 100,000 people -- it was the largest of all the land runs. Oklahoma had 5 land runs, and this was the largest of all of the land runs.

And the trains in those days would go in different directions from the starting line, and they would stop every 5 miles and some people would hang onto the side of the trains and jump off ahead of the other people inside of the trains, so that they could claim their 160 acres first.

JE: And then, of course, horses, too, were used obviously.

JM: Horses, and wagons, and ... yes.

JE: And, yeah, and so there was that big fight. Those who were jumping off trains and those who were riding horses -- in that instant, they were affecting generations to come.

JM: No question.

JE: Either they got land, and many of them didn't get any land.

JM: That's right. Well, that's an interesting story, because I'm also related to I donahoe in Ponca City. And he went out and claimed a site, which was the bottomland; it was a very good site. A man came by later in the day and he was so depressed, and he says, "I have a wife and 5 children; I was hoping to find an allotment of 160 acres, I can't do it."

So my cousin gave his 160 acres to this poor man that had 5 children and needed to get a landstake.

JE: And what happened to your cousin?

JM: He just moved to Ponca City. He started a mill company in Ponca City and he was very successful; and he built some properties in Ponca City. His grandson and I -- when I got out of law school, I moved to San Francisco and worked for the Bank of America trust department.

And Dan Donahoe, who got out of the Air Force at that time, came and he was working for Kaiser Aluminum and we roomed together. I've had several conversations with him in the last couple of months.

JE: Wow. What a story! He gave 160 acres to a man.

JM: A man who was just depressed and was down and out.

JE: That is wonderful. It's great that all of these stories have been handed down to you, and that you remember them.

Chapter 4 – 9:00

President Taft

John Erling (JE): Do you have brothers and sisters?

Joe McGraw (JM): I have -- I had -- 4 brothers and 2 sisters. I have 3 brothers that passed away and I still have one sister and one brother. And I have one older sister who passed away with breast cancer and she died in 1973. And so I have one brother, younger than I, and one sister surviving.

JE: And where did you come? In the beginning, the end, or the middle? Were you the middle child?

JM: I was the 4th child. I had two twin brother older than I, they were a year ahead of me in school, and then I had a sister that was born in 1929. And, again, I was born in 1932.

But we were a very close family and we still are. We still have family reunions about every other year. And even when all my brothers were alive, we used to take family trips.

JE: Wow.

JM: So we've always been close over the years.

JE: And so what a family that's become then, all those people? All those people and all those cousins, you know?

JM: My sister lives in San Francisco. She ran the antique show in San Francisco for 26 years, which is the second-largest antiques show in the United

States; it's after New York. So she had done a very nice job doing that. And I have a brother, Mike, that works for our company, McGraw Realtors.

JE: Okay. Let's go back to your grandfather. I referred to him: JJ McGraw. He founded a bank in Ponca City.

JM: That's right.

JE: Right?

JM: Yes.

JE: And there's a story about President Taft coming to Ponca City.

JM: That's right. Well, my grandfather became very involved in the Republican Party. He also was with the Knights of Columbus and, in World War I, he went over with the Knights of Columbus and he was awarded by a number of different countries for the services that the Knights of Columbus provided the soldiers -- the American soldiers -- in World War I.

My grandfather was the national Republican committeeman from Oklahoma, which was the leading Republican, and he was high up in the Republican chambers. He was being considered to run a major oil company in New York City at the time.

He invited President Taft to come to Oklahoma, which he did, and he stayed in my grandfather's house. And on the day that he was leaving, my grandfather said, "Would you mind going down to the Arcadia Hotel," which was a major hotel -- the main hotel in Ponca City at the time -- "and meeting my father? He's so anxious to meet you."

And so the President says, "I would be delighted."

And so they went down there before the train left that night and my grandfather was not in his usual chair in the lobby; he was out buying cigars on the street. So my grandfather sees his father and says, "Mr. President, can we go over and I'd like to introduce you to my father."

And so he went a little bit ahead and he went up to my great-grandfather and my great-grandfather said, "My goodness! He is so heavy! I don't really like heavy people."

And so then, at this time, the President came up and my grandfather says to his father, "I'd like to introduce you to one of the great Americans in this country."

And my grandfather -- his father, my great-grandfather -- said that he bit off his cigar, he lit it with a match, there was a long pause, and he says, "Sorry; I've met too darn many people already." And he walked away.

JE: Wow.

JM: So that was the end of that story.

JE: Isn't that something? Yeah. Well, it's been an interesting family story down through the years.

JM: I have to tell you another funny story about my great-grandfather.

JE: Name him again.

JM: Thomas McGraw.

JE: Okay.

JM: And there's a book that I just gave you on him. When he was in Kansas, in Leavenworth, Kansas, there was a town derelict that took his life, he was a Catholic and he was devoted to the Catholic church. He wanted to be buried in the Catholic cemetery, but that was against the policy of the church at that time.

And so, my great grandfather took some of his friends down for some drinks and they got lubricated, and so they went down to the Catholic cemetery and they dug a hole, and they put this poor derelict in the hole. He had nothing to give.

And so, the next Sunday, the priest gets up. He's also is from Ireland. He, as we often know, the Irish have tempers. And so this priest gets up there in the church, and he looks out on the congregation, and he says, "Before we go into the sermon today, I want to tell you that there's a person in this congregation that has defiled the sacred grounds of the Holy Catholic Church! And I condemn him! And I curse him! And I curse his children's children!"

Well, that was the last day that my grandfather went to church. And, then, my grandfather died at the age of 53; and, again, he came over to Tulsa and he was running the Exchange National Bank, which is now the Bank of Oklahoma. And my uncle, Henry McGraw, he's James McGraw's brother, died at the age of 53 of cancer. He ran the Gypsy Oil Company which is now the Gulf Oil Company today. And then my father died at the age of 53, but Thomas McGraw lived to be an old man.

JE: You referred to Henry McGraw, your great-uncle, and Gypsy Oil and that building was downtown, wasn't it?

JM: That building is catty-corner from the Guthrie on the Green, the northeast corner of Guthrie on the Green is catty-corner from Gypsy Oil Company. It's a coffee shop in there right now.

JE: And isn't there, on the building, you can still see "Gypsy Oil" the name?

JM: Yeah. At the top of the building, there's "Gypsy Oil." Henry McGraw was in the Thompson Building at that time in his offices. And he would have a temporary... There was a prominent attorney here in Tulsa that went up to see him and Henry McGraw kept getting telephone calls, and so he took the phone and he jerked it out of the wall, and he threw it in the wastebasket. And the attorney -- the attorney in the office -- he said to Henry McGraw's secretary, he says, "Mr. McGraw threw his phone in the trash."

And she says, "Don't worry about that. He does that all the time."

JE: (Chuckling)

JM: (Chuckling) And so...

JE: I know I'm not supposed to laugh at that, but I can't help it. (Chuckling)
And didn't he operate -- Henry McGraw operate -- Oklahoma's division of the Gulf Oil Company?

JM: That's right. And another interesting story about Henry McGraw was that he called the man that owned Gulf Oil in Pittsburgh -- he was playing him in a poker game -- and he says ... I know the man's name, but I just can't think of it right now. He says, "Sir, there is tight oil in the Osage that's going for a million dollars. He has the lease next door, and I think we should buy that."

And so, he says, "Well, if you think so, then that's good enough for me."

And so he went out and bought it and that turned out to be a major lease for Gulf Oil at that time.

JE: Well, Henry must have gotten something out of that, didn't he?

JM: He ran a good company in Tulsa.

JE: And so, a million dollars back in...?

JM: That would be about 1929. So it was a long time ago. 1930.

JE: And then that became a major find, then, obviously.

JM: It was a major find in Osage County. And the Osage Indians, as you know, were the richest in the world at one time.

Chapter 5 – 6:00 Significant Dates

John Erling (JE): Let's go back to you. What part of Tulsa did you grow up in?

Joe McGraw (JM): I grew up in a home at 1110 E. 18th St. in Maple Ridge. And, again, my grandfather bought that in 1821 when he moved from Ponca City to Tulsa to take over the Exchange National Bank.

JE: Was that a big, big -- what kind of house was it that you lived?

JM: It was a 3-storey home, with a basement. We had 7 children. I mean, my parents had 7 children, and my grandmother lived with us. We grew up in that house. It was in the family for over 52 years.

JE: You have fond memories. So did you -- "in the family for 52 years" -- did you end up selling it?

JM: I ended up owning it myself. I bought it from my brothers and sisters; and my mother and and my brother, Paul, and I lived in that house for a few years until I got married. And then my wife moved in with us, and my mother and my brother lived with us. Plenty of room in the house. So then we sold the house and built a new home.

JE: And, as we said, that's in the Maple Ridge area.

JM: Right.

JE: So you didn't know you were a planting seed about older homes and neighborhoods and all of that maybe?

JM: No. And what's interesting about that is that I ended up working for Crouch, Davisson, Moholl, and later I merged -- my company merged -- with Crouch, Davisson, Moholl. And Mr. Davisson, Sr. had sold that house to my grandfather as a realtor in 1921. So I ended up working for the same company that sold the house to my grandfather.

JE: I think a lot of this was meant to be, wasn't it, huh?

JM: It seems like it.

JE: It feels like we'll see more of that as we move along here. What was the first school you attended?

JM: I went to Marquette Grade School for 8 years, then I went on in high school to Cascia Hall, and then after Cascia Hall, I went to the University of Notre Dame for 4 years.

JE: Okay. What year did you graduate from high school?

JM: I graduated in 1951.

JE: Let's go back to April 12th, 1945 and the death of President Franklin Roosevelt. Do you remember that day?

JM: I do, indeed. I was walking home from Cascia Hall, and I was walking down 21st St. It was an ominous day. There was a storm coming up, the sky was black, and it was very, very foreboding. And I came home, and the house was dark, and they said, "President Roosevelt just died." And it was such a shock.

JE: Yeah. Well, then we go back further to 1941, December 7th, 1941. Pearl Harbor Day. What do you remember about that?

JM: Well, my brothers and I, and my sister, were all down at the coliseum ice skating. So, what happened then, is that we got a call from my father. He said, "I'm coming down to pick you up. We're going home." And then after he picked us up, he said, "Pearl Harbor has been raided. The Japanese have raided Pearl Harbor."

JE: And you would have been about 9 years old then at that time.

JM: That's right.

JE: And so, it was probably hard to understand what Pearl Harbor even was.

JM: I just know that after that, my father bought little army uniforms for my brothers and myself, so that when we would go downtown or something, we'd have our army uniforms on. And there was bond drives at that time, so we'd go down and get involved in bond drives.

JE: And what was a bond drive?

JM: A bond drive is where it was money they were raising to pay off the national debt that was incurred by our war expenses, and they were paying at 3% interest on that, and if you bought it for something like \$90 then in 10 years it'd be worth \$100.

JE: Okay. And a lot of people did that, didn't they?

JM: A lot of people did that. Tulsa was very strong on that.

JE: Just out of patriotism, but then, obviously, they got paid handsomely for it.

JM: They did.

JE: As long as we're remembering key things -- the assassination of President John Kennedy, November 23rd, 1963. What's your remembrance of that day?

JM: I was driving down Harvard -- at 36th and Harvard -- when I heard the tragic news about President Kennedy.

JE: Yeah. And that was an awful day.

JM: That was a horrible day. I remember when the first men -- astronauts -- landed on the moon, where we were on that day.

JE: And that was July 20th, 1969. Where were you then?

JM: At that time, I was at our home. I was married and we were watching it at our home, and we watched the first men land on the moon. And, of course, I remember 9/11/2001.

JE: Yeah. Where were you then?

JM: I was in our office, and I was in the back of my office. Our relocation director came in the back and said, "You've gotta come out here and

watch the television.” So we came out there and we saw the second plane crash into the building.

JE: We might just mention here about the moon landing: The first manned mission to the moon was by the Soviets, but that was the man-made object to hit the moon was the first, and then we came with the first manned landing on the moon.

Chapter 6 – 3:45

Downtown Tulsa

John Erling (JE): Let’s talk about downtown Tulsa, and stores, and restaurants, and that kind of thing.

Joe McGraw (JM): Well, Bob Renberg just passed away yesterday. I’m sorry -- his service was at the synagogue yesterday and I went there. Renberg’s was down, in those early years, on 3rd and Main next to Clarke’s. Clarke’s had closed, and up on the corner of 4th and Boston was Brown-Dunkins, and next to Brown-Dunkins was Seidenbach’s; and then the First National Bank was on the northeast corner of 4th and Boston; and Woolf’s was down at 5th and Main -- at the southeast corner of 5th and Main; and then Bishop’s Restaurant was across the street more or less from Woolf’s Brothers; and then about 2, 3 doors down from them is Bishop’s Restaurant.

JE: What about Vandevors Department Store?

JM: Vandevors was at 5th and Boston, between Boston and Main, next to the Thompson Building and across the street from the First National Bank building.

JE: So where were you and your high school mates in Cascia Hall? Where did you buy your clothes?

JM: We could buy them at Clarke’s, we could buy them at Renberg’s. Harrington’s was down -- they had Boy Scout uniforms and such -- down

on 1st and Boston. So we would go there. And there was a little donut shop across the street that we would go to from time to time.

JE: Were you a Boy Scout?

JM: I was a Boy Scout.

JE: Did you last? Did you go all the way?

JM: I was a Life Scout. I had all the merit badges to be an Eagle Scout except one: Bird Study. And now I have 10 feeders outside my breakfast room window, and so I feed my swans every morning and every evening.

JE: I think they should come back and give you your Eagle Scouts reward. Do you remember movies you attended? And in what theaters were here in '51 and '52?

JM: Well, Majestic was at 4th and Main. The Orpheum was at 4th, right off of Boston, and the Ritz was at 4th, right off of Boulder. And Rialto was on 3rd; and there was the Atkins Candy Shop that everybody used to go to.

But my parents would give my brothers and me 25 cents, and that would give us a 5-cent bus ride to downtown Tulsa. We would spend 10 cents going to the movie. We would spend 5 cents getting a bag of popcorn and we'd have 5 cents left over to take the bus home.

So, for 25 cents, we could spend the afternoon at the theater.

JE: Oh, yes! It went a long way. What about radio? Do you remember listening to radio stations and what you would listen to back then?

JM: KVOO was kinda the big radio station. I was sailing back from Hawaii one summer. I was working over there and I was getting a free ride back on a boat. And we could, out in the middle of the Pacific, we could pick up KVOO one evening in our boat.

JE: Yeah. How about KAKC and KELI?

JM: KAKC, yes. Yes. KELI. I remember all of 'em.

Chapter 7 – 7:30

Joe the Boxer

John Erling (JE): So, did you go directly from high school to Notre Dame?

Joe McGraw (JM): I did. So, I graduated from high school in '51; I graduated from Notre Dame in '55; and I graduated from night law school in '59.

JE: While you were at Notre Dame, something happened in your family.

JM: My father passed away when I was a junior at Notre Dame. He went to Mayo's for a gallbladder operation -- a minor operation -- and didn't survive. It was just one of those unusual events that seldom happen. But they corrected whatever it was at the time.

JE: And how old was he?

JM: He was 53 years old.

JE: So you have 3, now, then, in the family -- at 53?

JM: Yes: My uncle, my grandfather, and my father.

JE: Right. And how did that affect you, and your siblings, and your mother? How did that affect them all?

JM: Well, Mother was a strong woman and she managed to keep us going through school and being a support. My brothers were at OU at that time, they were seniors at OU. I was a junior at Notre Dame. And then I had a sister who was a freshman at Oklahoma University.

JE: That had to be a really big funeral. Lots of people would have attended that.

JM: They did and they had a priest come in from Notre Dame, and a lot of people sent wires.

JE: The church? Where was it?

JM: Christ the King.

JE: Yeah. Which has been your church all along.

JM: We were born, raised, and baptized there; and confirmed there. Our Boy Scouts meeting was right there, next to the church, at Marquette School.

JE: Weren't you a boxer at one time?

JM: I boxed at the University of Notre Dame in the Bengal Bouts.

JE: In the what?

JM: They call them the Bengal Bouts. We supported a mission overseas in Africa and, so, we had a boxing tournament. And there were a lot of Tulsans that boxed in that. Ray Siegfried was a boxer at Notre Dame. He was 10 years younger than I. There were several Tulsans that boxed at Notre Dame.

JE: Well, so, then it must have been a pretty active program there that kind of got people who didn't think they were going to box, got interested, because other people were doing it.

JM: I remember the priest that I was taking [unintelligible] from him. He was in charge of the boxing, and he would see people kind of dozing off, and he would take a blackboard eraser and throw it at a student. But he was our boxing coach.

JE: Alright, so how many knockouts did you have? (Chuckling)

JM: I remember one or two. (Chuckling)

JE: You were knocked out? Or you knocked out somebody else?

JM: No, I fought all the way through until I got to the final fight. I was boxing at the seminary and there was the Washington D.C. golden glove champion. And had Neil Warden, he was our Notre Dame fullback -- the all-American fullback -- he was in my corner. But he was -- I had my own style -- but he was trying to tell me how to do something else, so that kind of threw me off, I think.

JE: Mm-hmm (in agreement). So you lost the match?

JM: I lost the match in the finals.

JE: So we're at 1955. The Korean War had been on -- 1950 to 1953 -- somewhere in here you must have had a draft notice. I did in my senior year. I was asked to come to Chicago for an examination. So I went from South Bend into Chicago. I went for the exam and they gave me 4F and I said, "Sir..." They said I had too much albumin or something.

I said, "Sir, there's not anybody in this building that's in better condition than I." And I was boxing in those days, so. But, anyways, I still got a 4F.

JE: They must not have needed people really bad then, huh?

JM: Well, they did. A lot of my friends went.

JE: Did you feel funny about that? That you were 4F and ...?

JM: I did. I did. I just really wanted to go.

JE: Yeah. So then you leave Notre Dame, and then what happens to you?

JM: Well, then I go to work for Kewanee Oil Company for 4 years in their lease records section while I went to night law school. And so I was working at Kewanee in the daytime; I went to law school. And then my last 2 years in law school, I was a law librarian. So I had a busy time at that time.

JE: Well, you had a work ethic, didn't you? Huh? Did you feel you needed to work that much, or...?

JM: My father, I think, kinda instilled that in us and we always -- when we were in high school and college -- if we didn't have anything planned for the summer, my father wanted us to go to the oil fields and work as roustabouts.

JE: So the Kewanee Oil Company here in Tulsa and you worked in the law library, and you worked in the lease records. I wonder if that helped you in the future?

JM: Yeah. Yes, because we examined titles and we had title opinions on the leases, so we'd double-check to see that everything was proper at the time that we would put -- record -- the leases. That was my job. And, so, yes, it helped me go through law school. And then, afterwards, I worked for the Bank of American trust department; and so I managed properties for the trust department at that time.

JE: Alright. But why did you get a law degree? Were you intending to be a lawyer? Or was everybody else doing it, or what?

JM: I graduated from a class of 20 at Cascia Hall my senior year; and 9 of us went through law school; so I just went there defensively. I didn't plan on practicing law, but I felt that it would help me.

JE: Wow. Are there any names of people, that people might know in the community, of those?

JM: Well, Gavin King was our valedictorian and he was in our law school class. Phil Finnegan, he was a first baseman for OSU. Bob Martin, Martin Wyatt, Charlie Bisset, Matt Schumaker, and there's some others that were in our class.

JE: Yeah. But you went to California -- San Francisco.

JM: Bob Brown, and Bob Martin -- excuse me.

JE: Oh, yeah. (Chuckles). Still coming to you.

JM: Yeah.

Chapter 8 – 8:10

Waite Phillips

John Erling (JE): You went to California because your sister was there.

Joe McGraw (JM): Yeah. She was living in -- after she graduated from University of Oklahoma -- she moved to San Francisco with some friends of hers and we were close family, again, and so I went out there and I had an opportunity to go to work for the Bank of America's trust department, so I went ahead and did that.

JE: Alright. So that was helping you, too, for the business that you didn't know you were going to get into.

JM: That's right. Well, then two entrepreneurs from Berkeley approached me and they wanted me to run their office. They had about a 9-man office -- 9-person office, pardon me -- and they wanted me to be the office manager.

They were building properties and they were in their 30s in the Berkeley area. And so I did that and I decided that that's what I really wanted to do, so I came back to Tulsa and went into the real estate business.

JE: Alright. So while you were the office manager, you probably saw real estate salesman making some good money.

JM: Well, California was the perfect place to be. It just seemed like the land was growing underneath your feet. The people were moving from New York and all over the country to California at the time. Real estate was very attractive for people in California, and so we were in the right place at the right time.

JE: So you said, "That's for me, and I need to go home where I'm known..." Or, you probably could have jumped into the market there.

JM: I could have jumped into the market there. I felt that if I was going to start my own company, I would just have a better opportunity in Tulsa.

JE: So you already knew that that was your goal: to start your own company.

JM: I did.

JE: Well, this business legacy, going back to your great-great-grandfather and all, was there, and I guess gave you that kind of thought.

JM: Yes.

JE: If you're going work, you may as well work for yourself.

JM: I just came to the realization that I was an entrepreneur and that I wanted to work for myself.

JE: Alright. Now, let's lay the background here: You worked for the company. What was the name of the company?

JM: Crouch, Davidson, and Mulhall for 4 years, and then at that time, I ran for the legislature.

JE: Right. Alright. But let's talk a bit about Kenneth Crouch and Dan Davidson. And they formed a real estate partnership, which set in motion a great success story.

JM: Kenneth Crouch was the real estate entrepreneur for Waite Phillips. And so he bought the buildings in downtown Tulsa, you know the building, the Philcade Building. I mean, these were the properties that he built. The Junior League building, the Beacon Building, and several other buildings. And, of course, he bought the land that came into Southern Hills Country Club. And the people that Mr. Warren and Mr. Canary -- as I recall, Mr. Canary -- approached Waite Phillips and said that they wanted to get him to donate his land to Southern Hills Country club, and he said, "Well, I'll do that if everyone puts up a million dollars to build a golf course." And so they

went out, and they solicited, I think, 100 people for \$25,000 each and I guess they borrowed the rest.

JE: Isn't there something to the story -- some of the youngsters in the community had gotten into trouble and mischief, and the powers that be thought, "We need to get our kids into doing other things, like swimming, and tennis, and all that," and that's part of what was in their head when they went to speak with Waite Phillips?

JM: Probably. Tulsa was always civic-minded. And Waite Phillips was -- before George Kaiser -- Waite Phillips was an extraordinarily generous philanthropist. So, he gave so much to the Junior League, to the Boy Scouts, to the Community Chest, to the various other causes that were around. And then he moved to California and he lived in Bel Aire, and he bought a lot of property that he gave a lot of money to the University of Southern Cal.

JE: Mh-hmm (in agreement).

JM: So he, of course, started Philbrook.

JE: Right. And we have the interview with his son, Chope, on our website, VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

JM: Yes.

JE: But you said Kenneth Crouch bought up all of this land?

JM: Well, he was Waite Phillips' ...

JE: And he was buying land for Waite Phillips?

JM: That's right.

JE: But then Dan Davidson joins him...

JM: In 1938, Dan Davidson joined him, and after the war, Lee Mulhall came and he was a builder of that addition by Circle Theatre. There were 4 additions in there that Lee Mulhall was instrumental in building then.

JE: Is there any other story about Philbrook or Waite Phillips that comes to mind?

JM: Well, when we were growing up, my closest friend was Phillips Breckenridge, and he was the son of Helen Jane Breckenridge, and she was the sister to Choep Phillips and the daughter of Waite and Genevieve Phillips. During the war -- Phillips kind of sluffs it off, he doesn't think it really happened -- but he had a little... The story was, at Philbrook, during the war, young Phillips -- he was like, 5, 6, or 7 years of age -- he had his Lloyd Fonteroy suit on. He would go to the gate, and as people walked up and down Rockford, he would say, "Would you come in and play with me?" He was just a lonely boy at the time.

JE: Are you talking ... who?

JM: That was Phillips Breckenridge; that was the grandson of Waite Phillips.

JE: Oh.

JM: Helen Jane, his mother, and his brother, Peyton, who started the company with me, McGraw Breckenridge -- we started our company in July 1st of 1964 -- they lived at the Phillips residence in Tulsa during the war.

JE: Oh, okay.

JM: And their dad was with the 45th artillery.

JE: "Their dad," meaning who?

JM: Bill Breckenridge, he was a baseball player for the -- I think it was the Philadelphia Phillies -- and he was also a football player in high school, so he was a real prominent figure. And he was an attorney at the time that he married Helen Jane.

JE: Okay.

JM: But, anyway, we would go out to New Mexico and stay -- as we were going through high school and college -- we'd stay at Choze Phillips' ranch. That's Waite Phillips' son.

JE: Right.

JM: And so we'd go out and stay at the ranch out there and we would -- Philips and I -- we could be throwing up 60-pound bales of hay onto a stack. And one of the workers out there on the field, a big, barrel-chested guy, he'd just take one and toss it up on top. And the two of us would be doing the same thing.

JE: That's you and Choze?

JM: No, that's Phillips and I. But we were working for Choze.

JE: Oh, you were working for Choze?

JM: Yes; just while we were there and helping out.

JE: And it was you and?

JM: His nephew, Phillips Breckenridge, the grandson of Waite Phillips.

Chapter 9 – 7:36

State Legislature

John Erling (JE): So then we come and you leave the company of Crouch, Davidson, Mulhall, and that's when you partner with Peyton Breckenridge.

Joe McGraw (JM): That's correct.

JE: Wow.

JM: And we both ran for the legislature at the same time.

JE: Yes. And what? Were you sitting on a park bench one day and you say, "You know, we both should run," or how did that come about?

JM: Crouch, Davidson, Moholl had an office at 820 in the First National Bank Building, so I would go down and work in the evenings at their office, and Peyton was working for First National Bank on the night shift. So he and I would go over to Bishops, and we were both ardent Republicans, and I said, "Peyton, there's a lot of things that need to be done. I think that you should run for the legislature."

And he says, "On the contrary, Joe," he says, "I think you should run."

So we talked each other into running for the office.

JE: Okay. And you ran for the House of Representatives?

JM: House of Representatives in 1964.

JE: And your first campaign -- tell us about that for both of you. Were they difficult, or...?

JM: Well, that was the same year that we had re-apportionment, and so I decided that I'd give Peyton his first choice of what he wanted to run against -- a certain person who I wanted to run against -- but I said, "Okay, fine."

So I decided that I would run against the incumbent who was a former FBI retiree. So I announced against his post, and he -- In those days, you could jump posts -- so he decided not to run against me, even though he was the incumbent. So he ran in another post, so I was automatically elected for the general election, so I didn't have a primary.

And then Peyton had a primary against two other fellows, and then hit reapportionment, so we went from 7 house seats to 15 house seats; and at that time, I ran again, and I announced early, and nobody ran against me,

so I got through the primary. I ran against one fellow who was later a judge from Vinita for the legislature in the fall.

JE: Okay, so you're about 32-years-old, I think, at this time. When Dewey Bartlett became governor, then you served out his two years in the senate.

JM: I did, and I served 4 more years after that.

JE: Okay. Were you appointed to that position?

JM: No, I had to run in the special election.

JE: So then, beyond reapportionment, what were some of the issues between '64 and '66 that you would have dealt with?

JM: Well, our first session in the legislature in '64 was the second-longest session in state history. That was when they indicted Justice Corn for malfeasance. Roy Grantham was a senator and head of the judiciary from Ponca City, so he handled the trial of Justice Corn and they impeached Justice Corn, Supreme Court Justice Corn. They impeached him and they delayed our session, so we lived in a little motel across the street in the capital, so we played a lot of cards in those days: bridge, and hearts, and those kinds of things.

JE: So this trial held everything up?

JM: This trial held everything up while we were in the session.

JE: The governors that you served under, who would they have been?

JM: I served 2 years under Henry Bellmon, our first Republican governor; I served 4 years under Dewey Bartlett, and Dewey Bartlett was responsible for me getting involved in politics, to be honest with you. And then I served 2 years under David Hall, who was a classmate of mine at TU Law School.

JE: Okay. And then who replaced you in the House when you went to the Senate?

JM: Steve Wolf ran for my House seat and then when I retired from the Senate, he ran for my Senate seat.

JE: So was it true that Senator Inhoff, who's a United States Senator now, he replaced you in your House seat?

JM: That's correct. And then he ran, when I was in the Senate, he also ran for another position in the Senate. We served together in the Senate. Actually, he and I had one bill together that's well known. We had the bill so that you could put your name on the license tags. So I handled it in the Senate and he handled it in the House. So we had one bill that we worked on together.

JE: So we could have vanity plates. So you could put your name on your plate?

JM: That's right.

JE: And how did that ever come up. I mean, who ... ?

JM: That became very popular and they raised a lot of money as a result.

JE: Because you had to pay an extra whatever-it-was.

JM: Yes.

JE: Were you Republican from the get-go?

JM: My grandfather was National Republican Committeeman in Oklahoma in the late teens and early 20s. And my father ran for Mayor as a Republican.

JE: Who did he run against?

JM: I think this guy by the name of Price.

JE: Okay.

JM: But, then...

JE: But Price won.

JM: Price won. Tulsa was a Democratic town in those days.

JE: Oh. And to run as a Republican was difficult.

JM: Yes. My father ran as a Republican.

JE: But he was well known, obviously.

JM: He was well known. It was a good race. I remember my brothers ,and my sisters, and I going out and passing out pamphlets about Dad here and there.

JE: Yeah. I bet that was disappointing when those election returns came in.

JM: Yes.

JE: You said that Dewey Bartlett got you interested in politics. Did he come to you?

JM: No. When he ran, I called him up and said I'd like to work for him because I had such a high regard for him. I knew him kinda through the oil business and the real estate business. He worked hard; and we went out and knocked on a lot of doors throughout the neighborhoods in his district.

And then when he was elected to the State Senate, Jack Nelson, the County Chairman, came to him and says, "I want your best worker."

And Dewey says, "That's Joe McGraw."

And so he asked Jack to call me. And they called me and they said, "We want you to be involved in the Republican Party coordination and in the operation."

And so I said, "Well..." There was 4 districts at the time, and I said, "Which district do you need the most help in?"

And they said, "That's the West Tulsa district."

And I said, "Fine."

So I got a lot of young Republicans and we worked hard to get that district organized.

JE: Wow. What was motivating you through all of this? You were going to correct the problems of Oklahoma, or Tulsa, or what was it?

JM: I just felt that I had an obligation to family. My father and my grandfather were that type of person and so that I just felt that I had a mission in life to try to help the community.

JE: Mm-hmm (in agreement).

Chapter 10 – 3:11

Four Thousand Dollars

John Erling (JE): Joe, so, then, how really did you start your company? Did you have the money for it, or what did you do?

Joe McGraw (JM): My partner, Peyton Breckenridge, put up \$1,350. I put up \$1,350, and I had a business partner, Carol Vanschoick put up another \$1,350; and so, the 3 of us put up \$4,000 together and we started at the building down at 720 S. Main. It was a garage -- a parking garage -- with an office next door to it, which we took over, we took the office. It was a large room upstairs and a large room downstairs. And that was our start of our company.

JE: So how did you use that \$4,000?

JM: Well, we just used it to pay rent, to put ourselves into the real estate board, to start advertising in the newspapers, to solicit people. You know, we were salespeople. We sold properties right after that and that brought in more money.

JE: Do you remember the first salesman you hired?

JM: Well, Jack Braswell was my first salesperson. He was very successful. We had Anna Thompson, she's married to Dr. C.T. Thompson, she was one of my early-day stars, and she did well with our company.

JE: And I've interviewed Dr. C.T. Thompson for our website.

JM: Well, he's a dear friend of mine.

JE: Good, good, good, good. So it just took a lot of hard work, but also the times were different then, too, weren't they, for startups.

JM: No question about it. Properties were selling for hardly anything today. You know, those were the days that buying/selling 20, 30, 40-thousand-dollar properties. We could lose a sale of somebody took a light fixture out of a living room, the buyer might back out of a sale, so we always bought the light fixtures if we had to. Those were different days. And then the realtors always worked close together in those days; that was always kind of a -- we got involved with the board with our fellow realtors. And then at that time also, Peyton and I ran for legislature. That was the same year we both ran for legislature.

JE: It didn't hurt that your name became public too, and maybe business grew because of that. It could have happened that way. But back then, I mean, there were fewer people and probably more opportunities for somebody to start a real estate company. Today, it might be really difficult.

JM: In those years, there were more opportunities to start businesses. There were less people around, Tulsa was a smaller community at that time. The fact that you didn't have all the high-tech work and all the equipment that goes into buildings today, and so you could just start with a one-page contract and go a long way.

JE: And a lot of hard work. Many hours. I mean, it was not an 8-hour job.

JM: We would work 7-days-a-week, too.

JE: Right, right.

Chapter 11 – 3:48

Housing Costs in the Sixties

John Erling (JE): So we're jumping across many years here that you've become successful. You became the largest independent real estate company in Oklahoma. You had more than 500 sales associates.

Joe McGraw (JM): We have over 400 now.

JE: Oh! And so, that growth -- particularly from '72 to '86 -- tell us all about that. What was going on in the market?

JM: Well, Crouch, Davisson, Moholl were the premier company in the sense that they were highly respected and highly regarded and they were gentlemen. They had a very high professional attitude.

So when I left them, I tried to carry on the same type of thing. So the people that I drew here were... I encouraged them to carry on to the public with how to handle properties, how to sell... We were kind of a family, too, when we started out -- as we still are, as a matter of fact. We have gatherings once a month for lunch and things like that. I think that the way that you treat the public is so important in our business.

JE: That actually made you stand out. Isn't that interesting? You'd think everybody would have the same idea.

JM: Ehhh... Well, the reputation is so highly important in our business.

JE: Yeah. Let's bring this back to, oh, in the '60s, say '64, and the times that you were in the legislature. Let's talk about the cost of homes back then: were condos a concept, and kind of the overall of the market.

JM: Those days I bought my house at the corner of 19th and College for \$10,000, and I spent \$6,000 of my own money just fixing it up. You know, putting air conditioning in it, and a new kitchen, and new carpet, and painting, and so on.

I bought a property from the trust department of one of the bank -- 2 duplexes -- at 13th and Utica for \$19,000, two duplexes. Of course, I refurbished them. You know, I went through and put new siding on the outside of the building and I put new kitchens, and carpets, and painting, and such in each duplex.

In the early years, the most expensive house in Tulsa was the old Mabee home and it sold for \$125,000. It was at 29th, 30th & Zuni. And now Roger Hardesty moved into it about 40 years ago after Dick Hughes had lived in it for a few years. And he now, Roger Hardesty, still lived there.

JE: Alright. The Mabee name, we know that now because of the Mabee Center at ORU. And, about Mabee, he was an oil person?

JM: He was an oil person and he was very, very generous. Their Mabee Foundation has given so much to Tulsa.

JE: And it's in ...

JM: It's still in Tulsa.

JE: They're still doing that.

JM: Actually, they just gave my wife ... My wife started the Brush Creek Boys Ranch 40 years ago in Jay, Oklahoma. The Mabee Foundation said, "If you will raise \$800,000, we'll give you \$200,000," and they just achieved that.

Chapter 12 – 6:00
71 First Street Corridor

John Erling (JE): I'm going out to, what we would call, the 71st. St Corridor, and you developed -- you bought land out there -- like 71st and Garnett.

Joe McGraw (JM): That's right.

JE: Tell us about it and why you went out there, because that was way out in the country.

JM: Well, it was 1972 and we went out, and there was 160 acres. And another fellow and I started -- decided -- that we would put up a general partnership and go out and see our interest in it. So we got a law firm to take 10% and we got some other attorneys to buy into it, and then my family bought into it, and some others, so... That was 160 acres at 71st and Garnett and then our oil company bought the 80 acres right south of the 160 acres, so we had 240 acres.

The State of Oklahoma came in and they took the Mingo Valley Expressway off. They took 16 acres, approximately, off of the west side of the property for the Mingo Valley Expressway. And then we sold the 80 acres to the Union Middle School district. And then we sold the front part to John Helmerich and Ed Kallay into the Albertson's -- the shopping center -- the movie theater, and the restaurants along 71st St.

JE: 71st and...?

JM: This is between 71st and Garnett, between Mingo Valley Expressway.

JE: Right. Okay. But then the land that became Woodland Hills Mall, 71st and Memorial, whose land was that?

JM: Well, that was the land that Tom Grant Jr. sold to John Sublet, the northeast corner of 71st and Memorial. And John later developed that into the Woodland Hills Shopping Centre.

JE: That was pretty far-thinking for you, wasn't it? For you to go out there into that land area, but then you knew that 169 was coming through there.

JM: It was a future project. It was early stages, you know. Nothing had happened on that, but we knew eventually it was going to be taken as an expressway. And, actually, 71st turned into the Golden Corridor because of the businesses that developed all along 71st St.

JE: You know, I was asking you about early in the 60s about houses. The concept of condominiums -- did that come to Tulsa? When and where?

JM: It came to Tulsa as it kind of approached the rest of the country. It came to Tulsa and we were involved in buying some condominiums around Tulsa at that time.

JE: Did that become very popular?

JM: Very popular. Lots of people bought condominiums. It was something that people could afford to buy, you know.

JE: The interest in that -- has that waivered? Does that come and go?

JM: It doesn't seem to be... Yeah, in recent years, condominiums are not what they used to be.

JE: We mentioned ORU, and maybe we should mention, talk about, ORU and Oral Roberts because what that school did for real estate in this town has to be enormous. For all the people who work there, and then students who eventually stayed and bought houses and all, that must be a big real estate story there.

JM: There is. I wish -- You interviewed Oral Roberts, right?

JE: Yes, right.

JM: And I'm sure that he's told you the story. I'm not quite familiar with all of that. I've always wanted -- when I was growing up -- we would go out to

that land and I thought to myself, “What a wonderful place to buy a piece of property and have houses for my family around it.”

JE: That same property?

JM: Same property.

JE: What made you not...?

JM: Well, he was way ahead of me.

JE: Oh (Chuckling)

JM: So he went on and did it and he did such a great thing for Tulsa.

JE: Right, but I’m thinking, even beyond that university and the economic contribution that it has made to the city just in real estate and people who bought houses and lived here because of him.

JM: Absolutely. The staff that they have, the management that they have, the Greene family, now, you know, has underwritten it.

JE: Let’s talk about how the business of real estate may have changed, and your businesses philosophy. And here we are in 2018. We’re talking about real estate going back to the 60s. Do you have an overall view of how it’s changed?

JM: Well, in my early years, we had a one-page contract and that was all that we needed. And I handled our closings, so it was a very simple procedure. Now, I dare say, there must be 20 pages in a contract with all of the exclusions and all of the covenants and different things that you have to put out. In the early years of the real estate business, it was one of the least-sued businesses in the country, and today, now there’s the high amount of lawsuits that goes in real estate, so you want to be very protective.

JE: And why so many lawsuits now?

JM: I just think that there are so many restrictions to property, and they want you to be sure you're going to put down everything that you know about the house. So if there's any problems with the house, you have to recite that and you have to protect the public. And that's good. That's very good.

JE: Right. Well, I just went through selling a house and buying a house, and I know all about the seller's disclosure, the termite inspection, the roof and structural examinations, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing certificates that we have. But isn't that a good thing that we have those?

JM: Absolutely. It's for the protection of the public and we need to have the inspections. We need to have all of the termite work done, and so on and so forth.

JE: Because, even in the real estate business, there could be unscrupulous people who are selling and don't disclose.

JM: That's true.

JE: The person who comes through to inspect your house for the value, that can be a tough ordeal.

JM: It does. And my son builds houses, and the codes are very strict. He builds a wonderful house, so he has a good reputation in the building business.

JE: Yeah. There have been highs and lows in the real estate market. Here we are in 2018. Are we in a high or a low? Where are we right now?

JM: Our last year was our best year we've had in the business, so real estate is doing very well right now. And at one point, there was no enough listings. The listing market was down, so... The market is very -- as you see today -- we have a sales meeting and every parking space around the building is taken up. Our people are so much more knowledgeable, you know, with all of the... My daughter, if I want to find out on a piece of property, she can just connect to the courthouse right now and find out everything about a piece of property.

JE: Right. Was there ever a time, when you started your real estate company, that you had a low, wondering, "Am I even going to be able to exist and continue on?"

JM: I never had that feeling. You know, it's just one of those things.

JE: You always had business?

JM: I always had business and I never had, really, a bad time for myself. I always watched what I was doing. But, yes, the market, one time, you know, in the late 70s, the interest rates were at 16.5% and in 83 there was a recession and there was a number of different highs and lows in the real estate business over the years.

JE: And some of this is also tied to the price of oil in our state, I would imagine.

JM: Absolutely. Absolutely.

JE: All right.

JM: And, of course, oil's coming back. But, you know, that's good. Oil, now, is at \$55/barrel.

JE: Here it is 2018; what would be the average price of a house today? You talked about it in the 60s you were paying \$19,000. What do you think it is today?

JM: Oh, I'd say, probably -- I'm just guessing -- somewhere around \$150,000 to \$160,000.

JE: Okay. So then let's go to the other end: the most expensive houses we have in Tulsa right now.

JM: Well, we have many in the millions of dollars.

JE: 4, 5, and 6 million?

JM: 4, 5, and 6 million.

JE: We don't have to name them. Do we have anything in the 10 millions?

JM: We probably have one property that's around \$10 million.

JE: And you'd be involved in the sale of that, I suppose. (Chuckling)

JM: We handle that market better.

Chapter 13 – 7:36

Why Was Joe So Successful

John Erling (JE): What does it take -- I'm talking about salesmen, now... And, do you think a lot of people would say, "Well, I don't know what else to do, so I think I'll go sell houses."

Joe McGraw (JM): Yeah.

JE: And they think it's simple. What does it take to be a good real estate salesman?

JM: It seems like I'm probably projecting too much, but it seems like they were working 6 days a week, 15 hours a day at it. Successful real estate people are very, very busy and very, very covered. They really dedicate themselves to a strong market. They're busy 7 days a week. If you are going to be successful in our business, it's a very encumbering, hard-working challenge.

JE: But you've worked those hours yourself.

JM: I did, in my early years.

JE: You've sat in open houses on Sundays.

JM: Every Sunday.

JE: And nobody came sometimes, or maybe one.

JM: That's right.

JE: And, "Well, I'll just pick up and move on."

JM: Well, in the paper -- and people can read the paper quite often; if it's an open house it's in the paper. So they can see that or they'll drive through the neighborhood and they'll just spot a house and they'll call on the house when driving through the neighborhood.

JE: Used to be that it was only men that were in the real estate business, and so the females came along. Talk to us about that.

JM: Well, I'd say that it seems like to me that 70% of the people in the business now are women. The men are very successful if they're in there, but the women are the top salespeople, too. Women have the ability to sell women houses and the other women are quite often the ones who buy the houses.

JE: Does that go back to -- when do you think the women started coming into the market? 70s? Or 80s?

JM: Well, in my early years, most of 'em were men. You know, we'd have 3 or 4 women in our company when I first got into the business. They were well-known in the industry, too. They were very successful.

JE: You stuck with the residential real estate. Did you ever branch out into the business of tall buildings?

JM: Yes. This building is the commercial area of our business. John Woolman that runs the company, he's in a development group. So they -- we have a few, several people that are involved in the development.

JE: So now you're 85 years old. And how much are you working the business?

JM: Well, I still come to the office every day, in the mornings. I try to work every day. It keeps me going.

JE: Why do you think you were so successful?

JM: I think that I was blessed enough to attract the right people. My success, I believe, is that I attract the right people at the right time.

JE: There's a lot about a person's personality that makes them a good salesman. Now, you, obviously, are really easy to talk to. And you come across here very sweet, and you have that demeanor about you -- your very personality that you were born with -- that has played for you.

JM: Well, I was blessed. Again, I was raised in a family of 7. We loved each other and my father went to church every morning -- mass every day. And we just believed in getting along and enjoying life and working together.

JE: And then you were born with a business sense because we talked about your grandfather's grandfather, great-grandfather -- they all came with business sense. And you obviously were born with that. Does the Mayo Hotel have any memories for you?

JM: Well, I used to go down on Fridays with my godfather, T. Austin Gavin, we would go down to the Mayo for lunch every Friday together. He was my mentor. He was a prominent attorney here in Tulsa -- T. Austin Gavin. And his nephew was in my class: Gavi King was his nephew, and we went through school together. We went through grade school, high school, and college, and law school together. We used to -- in the early years in the real estate business -- we used to have our luncheons at the Mayo Hotel, once a month, for several years.

JE: That's back when the Mayo Hotel was the class hotel. Everybody wanted to go there, whether it was for lunch or to stay there, right?

JM: Absolutely. And, of course, Birch Mayo lived out on 31st and Birmingham Place and he was the one that had so many beautiful flowers around his house, right there on the corner of 31st and Birmingham Place.

JE: We also know that J. Paul Getty was a name that -- he stayed...

JM: He stayed at the Mayo.

JE: ... The Mayo Hotel.

JM: He lived at the Mayo Hotel.

JE: When he had Spartan Aircraft out here.

JM: That's right. During World War II.

JE: Right. I don't know if you ever saw him or anything.

JM: My brother, Pat, had dinner with him in England one time. And he and his wife brought -- my brother Pat -- brought a cane to him, to J Paul Getty and his wife brought some grapes. They were there for his birthday and it was just a small group, and not very many people. He had my brother's cane with him for the entire evening and he was eating my sister-in-law's grapes.

JE: (Chuckling.)

JM: They said that he had a pay phone in his house, but I don't know if that's true or not.

JE: Right. It's a rumor. Or even outside his room at the Mayo Hotel, they wondered if he had a pay phone there, right. Okay, so that's a story: Your brother Pat -- how does he get to have dinner with J Paul Getty?

JM: Well, Pat was in the oil business in a way. I'm not quite sure. His wife, Lady Miranda -- my brother Pat's wife. So I'm not quite sure how they got invited to the Getty home for this small evening with a small group of people that evening. My brother, Pat, also went up to talk to Kachockee. Kachockee was the richest man in the world at the time, and he lived in London, and he had a beautiful office on the top floor of this building, and he had a gigantic desk, a large desk. And Kachockee would put his feet on the desk and I was always shocked to know that my brother Pat would put his feet up on the same desk talking to Kachockee. That's the stories that you hear.

JE: I've never heard the name Kachockee.

JM: Well, he was the richest man in the world. He was a Saudi Arabian. This was way back in the 60s and 70s.

JE: So your brother was in the oil business?

JM: Well, he was also in the Girl Scout cookie business. He and the fellow by the name of Luther Lane, Judge Lane's son, Luther Lane, he was my football coach when I was in high school. Luther Lane and Pat went over to London to start the Girl Scout cookie business. Pat had married -- my brother had married an English lady. They lived in London and so they started the Girl Scout cookie business. But Pat was in the oil business, too, so he'd go back and forth.

JE: So did he start the Girl Scout cookie business that came here?

JM: In England.

JE: In England.

JM: Not here in the States. (Chuckling)

JE: (Chuckling) It's like, man... I can throw a dart on the board and you can come up with a name of some people. Why didn't you end up in the oil business?

JM: Well, I own the oil company...

JE: I know, but you haven't pursued that.

JM: My brother, Jim, worked for Skelly Oil Company and then he worked for Texaco and then he worked for Getty. And he was in international oil. And Pat worked in the oil business. He first went to work for Gulf Oil and then he went out as a lease broker from... I just felt that I wanted to do my thing.

JE: Yeah. You know, back in the 50s, when you were in school and the 60s, we didn't talk about blacks in Tulsa. Were you -- you were living your life. Were you aware of Greenwood and what was going on?

JM: My brothers and I would go down to Greenwood periodically, regularly for barbeque in those days, but my grandparents moved over here in 1921 and, at the time -- I was told, at the time of the riot -- that they gathered a lot of black people and put them down in their basement.

JE: The 1920 Race Riot you're talking about. So you heard stories about that from your childhood, maybe? And how your parents helped protect. Even though, at the time, if blacks needed to ... because they were pretty well self-contained in Greenwood and they could shop there, but if they came downtown and went to some of these department stores that you talked about, that, they couldn't try on clothes and they couldn't do certain things.

JM: Using their own -- different restrooms, and...

JE: Right. So maybe you were unaware of some of that struggle that was going on?

JM: We were. We didn't feel that there was any differences between ourselves.

JE: So, looking back, you've got many things to be proud of. Are there any one thing or two that you're most proud of?

JM: Well, I've been involved in the Tulsa Botanical Gardens. I'm always glad to see that growing and doing well, prospering. I just enjoy life. I enjoy reading. I enjoy our friends, my family. I'm close to my family. I just have so much to be grateful for. I'm blessed. Truly blessed.

JE: How would you like to be remembered?

JM: Just being there for my family and my friends. You know, just being able to be involved in the community and help people when we can.

JE: Well, Joe, you did a great job. Or, as we say, "Ya done good."

JM: Well, thank you. Thank you.

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