

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Adopted as an infant in Norway and brought home to Tulsa, Jon Stuart was educated in Tulsa, and at the Culver Military Academy, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Tulsa.

As chairman of the board and chief executive officer of First Stuart Corporation, Jon is continuing in the family business. He also is the managing partner of Jon R. Stuart Interests, L.L.C., with the primary focus on energy, and is a trustee for the Stuart Family Foundation.

Appointed by His Royal Highness King Harald VI of Norway, Stuart serves as the Royal Norwegian Consul for Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas. He served on the City of Tulsa-Rogers County Port Authority Board for more than 25 years, including five years as chairman.

The Port of Catoosa's Maritime Park is named for him. He has served on the Gilcrease Museum National Advisory Board and Philbrook Museum of Art and served two terms on the University of Oklahoma's Board of Regents.

Jon is a fourth-generation inductee into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, following his great-grandfather Charles B. Stuart, inducted in 1933, his grandfather W. G. Skelly, inducted in 1939, and his father, Harold C. Stuart, inducted in 1983.

Listen to Jon talk about his friendship with the King of Norway, meeting J. Paul Getty, and Jon's famous heritage on the podcast and oral history website VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 8:25 Famous Parents

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling, and today's date is December 9th, 2021. So, Jon, would you state your full name, please?

Jon Stuart (JS): Jon Rolfe Stuart.

JE: And your date of birth?

JS: August 8, 1948.

JE: Making your present age?

JS: 73.

JE: And where are we recording this interview?

JS: At my office at First Stuart Corporation.

JE: And where were you born?

JS: Oslo, Norway.

JE: I just have to interject here. My grandfather and grandmother came from Norway, both paternal and maternal. My grandfather came from Norway in 1890. He was 43 years old. So how did you come from Norway?

JS: I was adopted as an infant. My sister and I, as a matter of fact, were both adopted as infants.

JE: All right, and we want to get into more of that. You were born in Oslo, Norway, and it happen to be that my family came from south of Bergen in Etna, Norway. That's quite a ways from Oslo, but I've been there many, many times. I would imagine you've been to Norway many times yourself.

JS: Several times, lots of times.

JE: Let's talk about your mother. Your mother's name?

JS: Joanne Skelly Stuart.

JE: And where was she born?

JS: She was born in Oklahoma City, I believe.

JE: And where did she grow up?

JS: She grew up in Tulsa.

JE: Okay. What was your mother like? Joanne Skelly Stuart. What was her personality like?

JS: She always wanted to be in the retail business. That was kind of her personality. She really liked it, she wanted to do it, and she did. She was a wonderful mother to me and my sister, and I was very fortunate to have wonderful parents.

JE: We did point out that your sister and you came from different parents, yes?

JS: Yes, we're not related except through adoption.

JE: So then we should point out that your mother was the daughter of what person?

JS: William G. Skelly.

JE: W. G. Skelly was an oilman and a TU icon. We'll talk about that. I was reading that she was described as petite, blonde, and blue-eyed.

JS: True.

JE: She wasn't a very tall lady, was she?

JS: No, she was not.

JE: And in school here -- where did she go to school in Tulsa?

JS: Holland Hall. She was in the second graduating class of Holland Hall, and my grandfather was a part of starting the school.

JE: Mr. Skelly, right. Was she an artist of some sort? Did she study painting?

JS: She did. She liked to paint, and I have a couple of her paintings at my house.

JE: Didn't she go to New York and study painting?

JS: Yeah, she did all the things you would do if you were a well-to-do young lady at that time period. You went to New York, had your portrait painted, etc. That portrait is in the other office.

JE: She got very involved in Tulsa city life, didn't she? With Philbrook and you can tell the others.

JS: She was the Cinderella Ball chairman and did all the things that she felt she was supposed to do in society. She tried to do her best. She also had a

retail store at La Marquis in Utica Square for many years, and that's what she really liked doing.

JE: So that was a gift shop, was it, of some sort?

JS: It was. They sold jewelry, and china, and stuff like that.

JE: So she was very involved and probably worked it every day?

JS: Oh, she went there every day. She went there every day because she loved doing it.

JE: So then she died in 1994. I think I figured it out. You were then 46 years old. And then your father remarried.

JS: That's correct.

JE: And who did he marry?

JS: He married Francis Langford.

JE: And there's an Evinrude name in there as well.

JS: Yes, that was her first husband, Ralph Evinrude. Dad was her second husband. He died, and then that's when Dad married Francis. I was the best man at the wedding.

JE: Tell me about that.

JS: Well, he's getting married in Florida. We're down at her compound in her house. She had a big piece of property down in Florida. I'm at the wedding. I'm the best man, and I look out, and there's Bob and Dolores Hope. They're there. And I'm wondering why I'm up here and he's down there.

JE: He must have said, "You did a great job, Jon."

JS: Of course he did.

JE: But yeah, that was a little unnerving.

JS: That was very unnerving, trust me.

JE: Well, Francis became known as the "GI Nightingale" because she had her trained troops tour with Bob Hope.

JS: Yeah, I think she did 27 movies.

JE: Right. And you have?

JS: I have a couple of her posters.

JE: Yes, you do,

JS: Representing some movies that she did.

JE: She did films like I'm in the Mood for Love, Yankee Doodle Dandy with James Cagney. And she sang Chattanooga Choo Choo in the movie The Glenn Miller Story. We could go on and on about her. So then she comes into the family. What was your relationship with this famous actress?

JS: She was always very, very nice to me. I mean, she couldn't have been nicer. She could have put me on ignore, but she didn't. She welcomed me into her side of the family. She was just a pleasant, pleasant person to me.

JE: I brought up Evinrude because people are going to wonder—was that the outboard motor fame? And it was, right?

JS: Yes.

JE: And I also read something I wondered if you were on. Your father, Harold, and Francis had a 110-foot yacht, the Chanticleer.

JS: The Chanticleer—that was the name of her recording label. That's how the name came up. And on the boat, they had a big glass mirror on the boat, and it had the bars of I'm in the Mood for Love etched into it.

JE: Oh really?

JS: It was written for her by Cole Porter.

JE: Yeah, so obviously, you were on that yacht many times, right?

JS: Many times.

JE: How fun!

JS: It was fun. I thought it was fun.

JE: Absolutely. So where did they use that boat?

JS: They would go up and down the river, and Francis had a lease on an island in Canada for her lifetime because she was married to Ralph. And she gained that when he died. They would go up there and spend two or three weeks. They would go up the inland waterway on the Atlantic side, mostly coastal, and then turned inward and they would stay for a couple of weeks before returning to Florida to her home.

JE: And that's where it was docked, then—in Florida. What a marvelous experience that had to be.

JS: Oh, it was wonderful.

JE: Yeah. And then she died in 2005 at the age of 92. Your father, Harold, passed in 2007 and he was 94. Now, we're sitting here in a boardroom of your company, First Stuart Corporation. On the walls, we have some interesting pictures. Right over here is a picture of your great—

JS: My great-grandfather, Judge C.B. Stuart.

JE: He was a judge back when?

JS: He was the first federal judge of Indian Territory, appointed by Grover Cleveland. I don't remember -- I forgot the date, but...

JE: Bu, "territory," we know when that was.

JS: That was early.

JE: And then we go over here—

JS: Then my grandfather was Bill Skelly -- W.G. Skelly. And then the next generation is my father, and finally, I'm the last picture on the wall.

JE: Yes, and all of you are in the Hall of Fame.

JS: All four of us. Yes, I'm very fortunate to be included in that group.

Chapter 3 – 6:05
William G. Skelly

John Erling (JE): We need to talk about Mr. Skelly. I'm sure he was addressed a lot as Mr. Skelly. He made a fortune in the oil business, and he founded Skelly Oil Company, which was one of the strongest independent producers of oil and gas in the United States. Interestingly enough, you can talk about this—he helped organize the International Petroleum Exposition.

Jon Stuart (JS): Yes, he did.

JE: And what was that about?

JS: Well, I was just a young child, obviously, but he really wanted to do something for Tulsa and to get vendors to come in and show their wares. He thought that would be important, a kind of focal point of the oil industry, and that's one of the things he did to get that started. He also loved the airport. He was one of the founders and signed the stud horse note for the Tulsa airport.

JE: He did, and he continued to hold that position—we called it Expo Center, didn't we? He held that position for the rest of his life. It was at its peak from 1966 until 1979, and it was because of him that it was here in our town. Now, moving to the aviation industry—he wasn't a pilot himself, was he?

JS: He was not.

JE: And didn't he purchase an aircraft company?

JS: Yeah, he did. Spartan Aviation—that was his. He owned it at one time.

JE: And then he purchased the Mid-Continent Aircraft Company, which had a manufacturing plant, and he reorganized it under Spartan Aircraft Company. In 1928, he opened the Spartan School of Aeronautics, which trained pilots and mechanics. The school also sold Spartan Aircraft. Then he sold the manufacturing plant to J. Paul Getty and then Skelly retained ownership of the school. That's a quick overview there. Now, tell us about 1927—you talked about the stud horse note. Tell us what that was about.

JS: Well, Bill Skelly wanted to build -- and he had a lot of supporters in Tulsa -- who wanted to build an airport in Tulsa because there wasn't one. They all had to get together and raise enough money to build the airport, but they had to sign the note personally to pay for it. He was one of the people who did, and the rest is at the Tulsa International Airport.

JE: Right, right. They put up \$172,000 and bought 390 acres of land, and that's how that got started. They named it the Tulsa Municipal Airport. Interestingly, he put it under the supervision of the Tulsa Park Board at first.

JS: I'm sure he did—whatever.

JE: Right? But then, we move along—that's not the end of Bill Skelly. He bought the radio station KVOO. Tell us about how he got into broadcasting.

JS: Well, he had a friend of his who owned the station at the time, and he wasn't doing well. So he would come to my grandfather and ask, "Would you loan me enough money to make payroll?" He said yes he would, so he did. Two weeks later, they came back and said, "I'm still having a little trouble—could you help me make payroll?" And my grandfather did it a second time. The third time, he came back and said, "I'm still having a problem," and he said, "Look, if I'm making payroll, I might as well own the station." That's how he ended up buying the station.

JE: KVOO.

JS: Yes. 1170.

JE: The Voice of Oklahoma. But then there was another radio station, the University of Tulsa's station.

JS: KWGS, which he bought to enhance the University of Tulsa.

JE: KWGS—William Grove Skelly—named in his honor. Then he got into television as well, didn't he?

JS: Yes, they owned the NBC affiliate, Channel 2.

JE: And he, along with his friend, Senator Robert Kerr—Mr. Skelly was a Republican; Senator Kerr, a Democrat— and the two of them founded Channel 2, what we know today as KJRH. Then I should point out that

Senator Kerr was the founder of KRMG, Kerr-McGee. He along with Dean McGee. So that then became his radio station -- these others he was in partnership with Mr. Skelly. The Skelly name is embedded in our town.

JS: I think so—with the Skelly Bypass, Skelly Junior High, and so on.

JE: Right, and the Skelly Mansion at 21st and Madison. For people who didn't know what Skelly was, I want them to understand that this came from this very powerful man. And by the way, there's even a name in Texas—Skellytown, Texas—named for him.

JS: Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was growing up, we would move from our house to the Skelly Mansion right before Christmas for 2 or 3 days. Then Santa Claus would show up. All of us grandkids were there, and we thought it was great. We would go downstairs and see a big tree, and my grandfather and grandmother were there. It was really very much a family deal.

JE: Oh yes, so you have great memories when you drive by that house. You said “move to Skelly Mansion...”

JS: Yes, we would actually leave our house and move into the Skelly Mansion. We had a bedroom for us. We just lived in the mansion about a week.

JE: And it was still owned by...

JS: Bill Skelly, yes.

JE: Do you have any remembrance of him at all?

JS: Not very much because I was obviously very young.

JE: I think I figured out that you were probably about nine years old when he died. Well, that's a nice memory of the Skelly Mansion. Now, everyone should know where the Skelly name comes from.

Chapter 4 – 10:26

Harold Stuart

John Erling (JE): So then we come to your father, and his name was...

Jon Stuart (JS): Harold C. Stewart. Harold Cutliff Stewart.

JE: And he—where was he born?

JS: I believe he was born in Oklahoma City.

JE: And I think in 1930 he was born on the Fourth of July.

JS: Yes, Fourth of July.

JE: And he went to school over there in Oklahoma City?

JS: Yes, he did. He was the first elected president of Harding Junior High School.

JE: And then he went on to Classen High School?

JE: Yes. OK. And then he got a law degree...

JS: From the University of Virginia.

JE: All right.

JS: And he did an undergrad and college there at Virginia.

JE: OK, all right. And then when he comes out of law school, then what does he do?

JS: He starts a law firm in Tulsa, and it's still in effect to this day.

JE: And the name of that law firm?

JS: ...was Derner, Stuart, Sanders, Daniel, and Anderson.

JE: Started out as just Stuart and Derner, and that's to begin with.

JS: It did. It did.

JE: Right. So your father—what kind of person was he, his personality?

JS: He was—he was driven. He was strong and forceful. And he didn't like taking no for an answer, as I recall.

JE: Was he—you know, we're talking about how he became a military man. Was he military around you? Everything had to be da da da, or...?

JS: No, not until I went to Culver Military Academy, which is fine. I enjoyed that. But he—no, he was super. I'm very fortunate—he was a super dad to me.

JE: Probably gone a lot. He was pretty busy.

JS: He was. He was busy all the time.

JE: So he was appointed a judge of what?

JS: A common pleas judge, I believe it was. I think that's what he told me, I believe, as I recollect.

JE: Which made him the youngest judge in the state—your father, Harold.

JS: I think he liked being a lawyer more than he liked being a judge.

JE: Oh, is that right?

JS: I think so. Yes.

JE: Yeah. When were your parents married?

JS: 1938, I believe.

JE: All right. You know, when I was preparing this, I was thinking—it took a strong man like Harold Stuart to come to Mr. Skelly and ask for the hand of Mr. Skelly's daughter. Not just anybody could have done that. Can you imagine that?

JS: True.

JE: Can you imagine that?

JS: Yes, I can see that easily.

JE: Yeah, but maybe a lesser man wouldn't dare to have done that.

JS: Right. Exactly. Precisely.

JE: Your father and Mr. Skelly obviously had a good relationship.

JS: That was my understanding. I never saw them have a cross word.

JE: So he enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1942. Tell us what he did.

JS: Because he was a judge, he was offered—because of past judicial experience—he could come into the judge advocate's court, and he didn't want that. He wanted to go fight. So he decided he would just walk into the Air Force, just walk in and sign up. And he did. But he was still too big to fly a plane, so he was not going to be a pilot, clearly. But he moved up quickly through the ranks and retired as a colonel in the Air Force.

JE: I see. He was assigned as director of the 9th Air Force Combat Intelligence section until 1945. Then he—I believe—came back to Tulsa. But then he was asked to go to Norway on a secret mission to save that country's royal family.

JS: He did, and he became very close friends with the then King of Norway. It would have been King Olaf.

JE: It was to protect the royal family in the event of a Russian invasion, and that was the assignment he was given.

JS: Yes.

JE: So, he loved Norway, obviously.

JS: Very much so.

JE: He wanted to take people home from Norway, didn't he?

JS: He and my mother decided that they wanted to have two Norwegian kids. That was their goal.

JE: And they never had biological children.

JS: No, for some reason they couldn't have kids.

JE: OK. So do you know the story then? How they found you and your sister, Randi?

JS: They got a hold of Dad's friend, the king, and they said, "We need—we want you to do us a favor. I did you a favor when I was in Norway, won't you do me a favor now? I want to adopt two Norwegian children." And the king said, "Absolutely."

JE: I'll probably remember that forever: "His friend, the king."

JS: And he knew -- they were. They were friends.

JE: And in that moment, your life was changed.

JS: I'd have to say apparently.

JE: Right. And so you were obviously an infant then.

JS: Oh, I was. I think my sister was the youngest person ever to fly across the ocean at that time, and I was on a boat.

JE: Oh, you came by boat?

JS: Yeah, because that was the way you did it back then. And then my sister, somehow or other, got a flight. We came from Norway but at a little bit different times.

JE: OK. Oh, really? Not at the same time?

JS: Not the exact same time.

JE: But you're about the same age, aren't you?

JS: Roughly, yeah. We're 6 months apart.

JE: OK, so when she was adopted, she may have been a year old or two years or something?

JS: Well, I think she was—she was like seven months old and I was a little younger, but I came along at a little later date.

JE: Right. Have you tried to trace your biological parents?

JS: I have not. I'm not searching.

JE: Haven't tried? Randi either?

JS: I don't believe she's ever—she's never. We had great parents. We're not.

JE: No. Suffice to say that you were born in Oslo, and that's all the information you needed, right?

JS: I was adopted. My two kids are adopted.

JE: OK.

JS: So I have no—I understand the adoption process and how hard it is. I think I get that angle pretty well.

JE: Yeah. Your two children, and their names are?

JS: Susan and Melissa.

JE: OK. When you were growing up, did you wonder about, “Well, who are my real parents?”

JS: You know, just a very little bit. I mean, it would be nice to know, but I'm not one of those adopted kids that are searching.

JE: Right. President Harry Truman appointed your father assistant secretary of the Air Force, and then he got involved with Douglas Aircraft Company, didn't he?

JS: Well, yes. He liked Douglas Aircraft Company a great deal and wanted it to prosper.

JE: And he got them to move the aircraft manufacturing back into the abandoned Air Force Plant #3 in Tulsa. Just think about this. Did he talk about this? He played poker with Harry Truman.

JS: Yes, he did. He told me he did. Yes, he did.

JE: He did. Any story about Harry?

JS: He never told me any stories about that. And I didn't ask him about it because I figured if he wanted to tell me, he would have told me.

JE: And then he was a counsel to several generals—George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley. This is the man...

JS: He knew all these folks well. They knew him well.

JE: To you, he was just Dad, right?

JS: Exactly:

JE: Is that what you called him—Dad?

JS: Right.

JE: And then he practiced law in Washington, D.C.

JS: True.

JE: And then—that's when, maybe we mentioned this—Mr. Skelly asked him to join him in the deal to start KVOO Channel 2. So we kind of touched on that, didn't we?

JS: And then Dad started a law firm in Tulsa also. So there were two places where he worked, and we would summer in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

JE: Why there?

JS: We had a house on the oceanfront.

JE: All right, makes sense, doesn't it? So your father ran the TV station. He got involved in running it?

JS: He—we had a professional manager, but he was the boss.

JE: When he settled into Tulsa, he got involved in all things outdoors.

JS: All things.

JE: Like the American Wildlife Federation?

JS: Big Lake Club, all the various ones. He was a duck hunter extraordinaire. He went hunting in Canada quite a bit, dove shooting in Texas. He was a hunter. He spent a lot of time in his spare time hunting.

JE: Nature Works.

JS: He loved that too.

JE: And he worked for a long time in the law firm, didn't he? Even when he was 80 years old, until he was 92. Did he make a hunter out of you?

JS: No. I was tired of going on those cold hunting days as a young kid. I just said, "I'm not doing this anymore."

JE: So he did take you hunting?

JS: Yes, oh yeah. At Big Lake. I'd be in this blind, cold as heck, and I'd say, "Dad, is it time to go in?" And he'd look at his watch and say, "There's a flight of ducks coming in at 8 o'clock." "Oh, really? OK, whatever."

JE: So how old were you when you said, "Dad, I'm not gonna go"?

JS: I never told him I would never go again, but I just kind of slowed down going. I always had something else to do.

JE: Right. It was cold. You know, some people think—"Well, you didn't grow up in Norway," but some people think if you're from Norway or I'm from North Dakota, we're supposed to be used to the cold. And we're not.

JS: I don't think so.

JE: And I'm not.

JS: I'm not either.

JE: My grandson, who's 13—his name is Lars—doesn't wear a jacket in the wintertime. He says, "I don't get cold because I'm Norwegian."

JS: Wow, congratulations.

JE: Right, right.

Chapter 5 – 4:35

Native American Collection

John Erling (JE): So then he continues to work with you through this company. Tell us about setting all that up. What is First Stuart Corporation?

Jon Stuart (JS): Yes, we're in the investment business, the banking business. We had a lot of different things going on. I've been on lots of different bank boards because of the positions that we owned in the banks.

Dad had two brothers. One brother was a doctor—Royal Stuart—and Charles B. Stuart was his other brother. Chuck was a banker. So they had a lawyer, a banker, and a doctor—the three brothers.

JE: And were they in Tulsa?

JS: Royal was, the doctor, was. Dad was. But Chuck lived in Oklahoma City and was at Fidelity Bank. I took his place on the board because of our share positions. I remember I had to meet with Dean McGee to get it approved.

He met me and liked me. It was the day Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States.

JE: How about that. So your father and his two brothers—your uncles—were they close?

JS: They were close. They really were.

JE: How about Christmas holidays? Tell us about a favorite Christmas time and the families that would get together. Who would be there?

JS: Christmas time was really more of a family get-together—just our family. We had cousins and nephews over from time to time, but it was mostly around the family unit.

JE: Was there ever big family reunions or anything like that?

JS: No. I've never been to a family reunion.

JE: Established in 1961 by Harold and Joan Stuart, the Harold Stuart College of Engineering and Natural Sciences Fund supports the general budget and operations for the College of Engineering and Natural Sciences at the University of Tulsa.

JS: That's correct.

JE: You've got to be proud of that, and that still is an ongoing thing?

JS: I am. Yes, it is. Yes, sir. My sister was on the board of trustees at the University of Tulsa, and I was on the board of regents at the University of Oklahoma, so we kind of covered the state.

JE: Your Sister Randi, right? And what's her name now?

JS: Randi Whitman. She married Fred Whitman, who just recently passed away, unfortunately.

JE: And she was involved with the Gilcrease Museum. And so have you been.

JS: Absolutely.

JE: And still are, aren't you?

JS: Yes, we're very fond of the museum.

JE: In fact, you told me before the interview you're donating something. Tell us what you're donating to the museum.

JS: I've got a collection of American Indian pipe bags from the 1700s and 1800s, and my wife and I are giving the entire collection to Gilcrease. They have 30 pipe bags, and I've got 31 pipe bags, so they're...

JE: All right. It would be interesting—what is a pipe bag?

JS: A pipe bag is what, in the early days, the Indians would use to smoke the peace pipe. They would keep the pipe in the pipe bag, and the steam would be outside the pipe bag, and that's how they transported it because it was important to them.

JE: Where would you obtain these? Where did you collect them?

JS: There's a market for it in Santa Fe and New York. They have auctions of this kind of material.

JE: Were you a collector of other Native American items?

JS: Yes.

JE: Like what?

JS: War shirts.

JE: How about headdresses? Did you ever obtain any of those?

JS: Yes, all kinds of stuff of American Indians. I'm very fond of the American Indian movement. I think I understand it, and I'm sympathetic to it.

JE: Why do you think you were drawn to that?

JS: I don't know. Probably through Gilcrease.

JE: OK, right.

JS: It makes some sense.

JE: When I'm out there and I see those Indian headdresses, I just stand there and marvel at them. Do you have one in your home? You're a collector of art too, aren't you?

JS: Yes, the California post-impressionists and early Western material—sometimes referred to as the Taos Founders. Probably got that love from my mother.

JE: How was that?

JS: Well, she was an artist. She liked to paint. I've got some of her paintings hanging in my house. She was always an art person.

JE: Did you try to be an artist yourself?

JS: No, I don't have any talent.

JE: (Laughing).

Chapter 6 – 10:25 Honorary Norwegian Consul

John Erling (JE): Let's then zero in more on Jon Stuart—you. You were born in 1948. Tell us about your education, the first school you went to.

Jon Stuart (JS): Oh, the first school I remember was in Washington, D.C., where we lived. I went to Peter Pan Elementary School, I think it was called. Yeah, I believe that was the name of it. I was shocked to find that out later. Then, when we finally did move to Tulsa, I went to Holland Hall, then a public school—Edison—and then Culver Military Academy. After that, I went to the University of Oklahoma and the University of Tulsa.

JE: OK, let me bring you back to Culver Military Academy. Why there?

JS: My dad knew a lot about it. I think he knew the superintendent—they were very good friends. And he thought I'd really like going to school there, and he thought it would be good for me. So I said, sure, I'll go.

JE: And that was your high school?

JS: Yes.

JE: Right. So four years?

JS: Yes, graduated in '67.

JE: And if he thought it was going to be good, did you think it was good?

JS: Oh, yes and no. It's a different experience—it's a lot different than going to Barnard after school. And then Holland Hall. But it was fine. It was fine.

JE: Because you went away to school, then—you were what?

JS: Yeah, I was 14. Right. Exactly.

JE: That had to be quite an adjustment.

JS: It was. But I enjoyed it. It was OK.

JE: You did like it?

JS: It was OK.

JE: And where is that located?

JS: In Culver, Indiana.

JE: OK. Your sister, Randi—where was she at school?

JS: She was at Holland Hall her entire time.

JE: OK. They didn't send her to a military academy?

JS: No, I guess not.

JE: Do you think your father wanted you to be in the military as a result of that?

JS: I don't think so. I mean, he wanted me to join the military at some point in time. And then the draft came along, and I decided I better join rather than get drafted. I was a freshman in college, so I joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard at Tulsa Airport, and I was stationed out there. That was my military career.

JE: Oh, really? At Tulsa Airport?

JS: Yeah, that's where it was.

JE: Well, that's almost shocking, isn't it?

JS: I thought it was great.

JE: So what year would that have been?

JS: Oh, this was—I think I joined in 1972 or something like that, whenever the draft was. I forget the actual timing of ...

JE: The Vietnam War...

JS: The war was happening right around that time. So rather than be drafted, I said, "I better join something," so I joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard.

JE: I did that, and I did the Army Reserve. I always tell people I dodged the draft. So did you. But people say, "Oh, you didn't dodge the draft—you joined something."

JS: Yeah, I joined. I was in the Oklahoma Air National Guard. My dad—I told him what I was thinking about, and he said, "That's a great idea. I'll call the head of the National Guard of the United States, General Wimpy Wilson, and I'll tell him I got him a new recruit." And he did.

JE: So what did you do? How many years were you in?

JS: Six years. Yeah, you have to do a six-year term.

JE: Yes.

JS: You sign up for it.

JE: But there were only two years of active duty?

JS: Oh, no, no.

JE: Oh, it's reserve. That's right.

JS: Yes, it's six months of...

JE: Six months, right?

JS: Active duty, Yeah.

JE: And you'd perform that?

JS: And you're stationed at the airport.

JE: Right, right. And then you had summer camps?

JS: Two weeks of camp every year.

JE: And then you meet once a month. Very same thing I did.

JS: Right. Exactly.

JE: It's the same thing I did.

JS: Precisely.

JE: Right, right. Well then, you've been back and forth to Norway many times. You have a special title that goes back to Norway. Tell us about that.

JS: I'm the Consul of Norway, as appointed by His Majesty, the King of Norway. My wife and I went back to Norway and had some private time with the king. He's very nice.

JE: Yeah? So that would have been when?

JS: Oh gosh, that was probably six years ago.

JE: So what does that mean, "the Consul?"

JS: That means I'm representing Norway officially for the four states—Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas. I report to the consul general in Houston, and I'm the official representative of the country of Norway.

JE: So are you called upon occasionally?

JS: Occasionally, to help someone. Most of the time, the problems here involve a Norwegian national who comes to Oklahoma, gets injured at work or somewhere else, goes to the hospital, and tells them, "Oh, Norway's going to take care of this." Then things slow way down—you can appreciate the problem there. I end up writing a letter explaining that Norway will take care of this, but there's a procedure. It's very strict, but it's fair, and the bill will be paid by the country of Norway.

JE: Let's talk about that a little bit. So if somebody came from Norway and is living here—but not permanently?

JS: Right, right. Or maybe his wife is a Norwegian national perhaps. I've even given a test to verify if a child is Norwegian. So I would give a saliva test, I'd put it in a FedEx envelope, send it to Norway, and they would process it to

make sure it was a Norwegian child —because if you're born Norwegian, you receive healthcare.

JE: So no matter where you are in the world, and you need healthcare?

JS: You have a liaison from Norway in every state in the United States.

JE: And the country of Norway will pay a Saint Francis Hospital bill?

JS: Exactly, if you're a Norwegian national.

JE: Tell us about their healthcare program. What does that entail? And maybe what percentage of a person's salary goes to the government, and what can they keep for themselves?

JS: It is hugely expensive to live in Norway. The prices are high. It's a high-tax place. The United States has high taxes, Norway has higher taxes. But they do a lot of help to their Norwegian nationals. It's a good system, I think.

JE: What percentage do you think of a person's check goes to the government?

JS: Like 30 or something. I think it's a little smaller than that.

JE: I remember when my wife, Margaret, and I were there, we ended up talking to a national, and he told us about this. And he had no problem with the government taking as much as they wanted because he was being taken care of, and he liked that.

JS: It's born-to-dead healthcare.

JE: Right. We didn't establish your wife's name.

JS: She was Mildred Diane Lindsey. And she goes by Didi.

JE: And how did you two meet?

JS: We met at the University of Oklahoma when I was a freshman and a brand-new member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, and she was a Kappa Kappa Gamma. I think I had known her or just passingly knew her when we were both together at Holland Hall. I didn't know her well—I just kind of sort of remember her. I think the bus picked us up on the same route going to school. But we've known each other a long time, and my

two girls both went to Holland Hall and then went to OU. They both are Pi Phi, and my wife got over it.

JE: Time to move on.

JS: Time to move on.

JE: By the way, did your parents try to preserve for you any of the culture of Norway? At Christmas, it's such an important time in Norway, so I'm gonna bring up things like Lefse and Lutefisk. Did they try to keep that with you?

JS: They did not.

JE: OK, so they didn't raise you in any...

JS: Any Norwegian setting or thought process at all.

JE: At all. OK. So what you learned then about it—because these terms are familiar to you, Lefse and Lutefisk.

JS: I know what that is, yes.

JE: Right? You learned from your travels back to Norway and...

JS: And being part of the Norwegian government, yes. And through my friendship with the consul general, etc. And my wife and I—like I said—we've been back to Norway and spent time with His Majesty the King, and he was very nice to us, extremely nice to us.

JE: Right. Norway right now is a very wealthy nation, isn't it, because of the offshore drilling? There's always that tension between Sweden and Norway.

JS: That's probably been diminished a little bit. Yes, it has.

JE: May 17th is Syttende Mai Day.

JS: Yeah, I think that's correct.

JE: Right? And that's when the Norwegians got their freedom, separated from Sweden. And so May 17th is always a big day, and I still remember to this day that's what they call Syttende Mai Day.

JS: I've heard the name, but I never really paid much attention to it. But I know that there are some interesting things between Sweden and Norway that are probably best left unsaid.

JE: Well, then I'm going to say this—we've always heard it said that 10,000 Swedes ran through the weeds chasing one Norwegian.

JS: (Laughing) Well said. Well said, John.

JE: (Laughing).

Chapter 7 – 8:08

Meeting J. Paul Getty

John Erling (JE): OK, I gotta get us back on track here. Your grandfather, yes, Mr. Skelly, and your father, Mr. Stuart, I call them. There was a point in time where they were just Dad in your house, but there was a time when you realized, Wait a minute, they're bigger than life out there in the real world. Did that settle into you at some time, and you understand that?

Jon Stuart (JS): I'll tell you exactly when it settled in. I was pretty young. My sister and I and my mother and dad all went to Europe. We were in London, and my dad says, "Well, Jon, good news, we're gonna get in a car, we're gonna go have lunch with J. Paul Getty."

And I said, "Well, who's that?"

He said, "Well, he's the world's wealthiest man."

I went, "Oh, well, that'll be fun." And we did. We got in the car, and we had a driver take us up to J. Paul Getty's home. We had lunch with J. Paul Getty and his son George. It was a very, very, very pleasant lunchtime.

When we got to the house and rang the doorbell—great big house, 444 years old at the time.

JE: In London, now?

JS: Outside London, north of London. We got to the house, rang the doorbell. J. Paul Getty comes to the front door, sees Harold because they're old friends. He said, "Why don't you meet my kids?" And he said, "Harold, I want you to come meet my lawyer."

So first thing we do, we walk right through the house, go right to the back door. And here's this beautiful young babe in a bikini. And he did it for shock value, but she was a lawyer. And I was just, "What is going on here?"

JE: How old are you?

JS: Oh, I was like 12. I'm just, "Whoa. I got to pay more attention here."

JE: And so then it began to dawn on you...

JS: I began to dawn right then. I never heard of J. Paul Getty. I know who he was. I had no idea who he was till then.

JE: And then afterward, you knew, of course. Oh, what a fun experience. Do you have any more memories of that experience with Mr. Getty?

JS: He was very nice. He and my father got along great. His son was there—one of them, George, I think. Dad, as you know, went on to be on the board of Getty Oil Company, Skelly Oil Company, then Getty Oil Company. So there's a good connection there, I think.

JE: Well, Spartan Air School—it was pointed out that J. Paul Getty became his and so he went back to your grandfather as well, didn't he?

JS: I think so.

JE: ... With that. And that's when J. Paul Getty lived in Tulsa for a while.

JS: Yeah, quite a while.

JE: And lived at the Mayo Hotel.

JS: He also had a house over on York, over where Yorktown and Victor come together.

JE: Oh really? Do you remember meeting any other famous people when you were 12, 14 years old?

JS: I was told they were famous. I wouldn't have known as a kid, but yeah, they did a lot, entertained a lot.

JE: Your parents?

JS: Yes, my mother loved doing that. My dad was enjoying it.

JE: They were good hosts.

JS: I think so.

JE: Both in Washington and here in Tulsa. So you had many gatherings.

JS: Met a lot of different folks.

JE: What's the first house you remember living in?

JS: Oh, in Washington, DC. We had a home on Foxhall Road. Pretty house.

JE: How long did you live in Washington?

JS: We would live in Washington in the summer and then go back to Tulsa. And then we'd live at Virginia Beach for a while, then go back to Tulsa. He went back and forth. He had a law firm in both those states.

JE: OK. All right. So as a teen then, or as a youngster, what did you do for entertainment—movies, radio, TV?

JS: TV, we'd go to movies occasionally.

JE: What about food served in your family? Was there a special kind? Were they very conscious of the type of nutritional food?

JS: I didn't see my mother cook very much. They had help, and they would serve dinner, and it was a big deal to be at dinner. The time was set—you were there at dinner, or you didn't get dinner.

JE: And you cleaned up, probably had to dress for dinner?

JS: A little bit. Not a tie.

JE: But it was important.

JS: You were supposed to look the part.

JE: At dinner.

JS: At dinner, it was important to them.

JE: And they taught good table manners.

JS: I would think that's where I got my manners from, I would think.

JE: Remember any favorite songs and music as you were growing up? First car you may remember?

JS: Nah. No. I remember that it was a 1964 Pontiac GTO, Yorktown Blue. But other than that, I could barely remember.

JE: Was that your car?

JS: Yes.

JE: So tell us, First Stuart Corporation is a family investment company.

JS: Yes, it is.

JE: And you are the managing partner of Jon R. Stuart Interests.

JS: Interests, LLC. That's an oil and gas company.

JE: Oil and gas.

JS: I keep that separate. For insurance issues.

JE: What part of the business of oil and gas are you involved in?

JS: We have—my wife's the same way—she has a lot of mineral interests, which we're constantly leasing on. We are not active in the rig business. We're not drilling ourselves, but we always enjoy when someone else drills on our property.

JE: I'm trying to trace—your wife has mineral interests. How did that come about?

JS: Her family was from Wewoka, Oklahoma. They lived down there for a long time, several generations, and then her dad was with Shell Oil.

JE: Oh, really? The plot thickens.

JS: The plot thickens, yes.

JE: Her dad—what was his name?

JS: His name was James O'Lindsay.

JE: With Shell Oil.

JS: Yes, he was with Shell.

JE: So this is all married together here, wasn't it, huh?

JS: That's right.

JE: So she retained and inherited that down through the years?

JS: Absolutely. They lived in Wewoka, in the Seminole area, and that's—as you know—a really good area for oil and gas exploration. They've been there, they're like third-generation people there, so they owned a lot of real estate.

JE: So, Didi—does she have brothers and sisters?

JS: No, she was a single.

JE: So then everything came down to her—the mineral rights.

JS: Yes.

JE: And now it's under Jon R. Stuart?

JS: Well, no, she has her oil and gas too.

JE: Oh, really?

JS: Yeah.

JE: And then you have the Stuart Family Foundation.

JS: Yes.

JE: And who heads that up?

JS: We have three trustees of the Stuart Family Foundation, and then there's the Commonwealth Foundation, which is my sister's. We do a lot of giving through those entities. That's what we should be doing. We like to give back whenever we can. It's important to us.

JE: Did your father and mother teach you about giving back to the community?

JS: Yes, I think so. I would say maybe my grandfather—I follow his lead.

JE: Mr. Skelly?

JS: You can see that which he did. In many ways.

JE: Money and time.

JS: He was one of the original people at Southern Hills Country Club when the club got started. My daughter Susan's a member of Southern Hills. That means we're fourth-generation members of Southern Hills Country Club. That's kind of fun.

JE: Yes, it is.

Chapter 8 – 10:04

King of Norway

John Erling (JE): Mr. Skelly's picture in this boardroom is the biggest picture in this boardroom. What a man.

Jon Stuart (JS): He was.

JE: Did we talk about—where did he come out of? Pennsylvania?

JS: I think so. I believe so.

JE: Yes, I think so.

JS: I believe so.

JE: Do you sense that Mr. Skelly and your father ... who were just—bigger than life, weren't they?

JS: Yes. To me they were.

JE: Well, they were in our community. And I was gonna say, Mr. Skelly could probably be called, really, Mr. Tulsa for all he did. And you're pointing where—

JS: To that engraved silver tray, calling him Mr. Oklahoma and Mr. Tulsa.

JE: Oh, is that true?

JS: Bill Skelly.

JE: Right. Oh, and there, I see a microphone—it says KVOO.

JS: One of the original microphones from the early days of KVOO.

JE: I have that style microphone in my own home, but I don't have KVOO on it. How much can I pay you for that?

JS: It's not for sale.

JE: It's priceless.

JS: But thanks for asking.

JE: What a great piece of a microphone to have.

JS: Yes. And remember, the station when it first started was KRFU—Kind Friends Remember Us.

JE: OK, I didn't realize that.

JS: That was when Granddad bailed out the station because it was doing so poorly. He ended up with the station because, like I said, if he's gonna make payroll, might as well own the station.

JE: And then he came up with the call letters, apparently.

JS: The Voice of Oklahoma, yes.

JE: That came from Mr. Skelly. OK, well then, when I called him -- the imprint that he made in this community is still felt.

JS: Absolutely, I think so—from Skelly Junior High to Skelly Bypass.

JE: Thoughts of your father and Mr. Skelly every once in a while have got to come through your head.

JS: It does.

JE: You know, maybe when you make decisions, you say, "Well, I wonder what they would do."

JS: Yeah. "I've got to give some back here. We gotta make sure this works."

JE: You have given to the community and in service too: The Tulsa Rogers County Port Authority—the Port of Catoosa. Tell us about first going there.

JS: That was when—well, like when I said that I was—my father said, "Jon, we're dedicating the port. I want you to go with me out to the port."

And I'm going, "What port? What are you talking about?"

And he told me there was a port, and he showed me how it worked and kind of explained it to me. I went out there—I was just a little kid—and the president was there.

JE: President Nixon.

JS: As you pointed out. I was kind of shocked that this thing developed right in the middle of Oklahoma.

Then, I was offered a slot in the Port Authority. And I said, "I can do that." So I went out there, and I enjoyed going. I enjoyed seeing what they were doing. Gosh, they had a lot of employees out there. 4,000 people working out there. That's a lot going on out there.

JE: How many companies now do you think are out there?

JS: Oh, there's probably 50 companies out there. It's a really unique asset to the state of Oklahoma. When I was with the King of Norway, I started telling him about the largest inland port in the United States. He couldn't believe it—he started asking questions. He wanted to know all about the port, so he was talking to the right person.

JE: The King of Norway now—what's his name?

JS: Uh, King Harald.

JE: Harald, right. How old would he be?

JS: Harald would be—he would not be my age. He'd be younger, probably 15 years younger.

JE: OK. Has he made several trips to the United States?

JS: He's never come down here, but I don't know how often he gets out of the country.

JE: Has he been in the United States, you think?

JS: I'm sure he has. The last time I was with him, he asked me, "Jon, my son is at—I think it was USC—and I can't get him to come back. How can you help me get him to come back?" And I'm going, "I can't help you there."

JE: Maybe it had something to do with the weather.

JS: Maybe.

JE: Maybe University of Southern California.

JS: Yeah, maybe. I just said, "That's a family thing, and that's out of my jurisdiction completely."

JE: Did he have other children, Harald?

JS: I believe so, but he was only talking about the one. He was trying to get some advice from us on how to get his kid back to Norway.

JE: The sense I get from the country of Norway is that the king and queen are held in high esteem.

JS: Very high esteem. Well, when Didi and I were with the king, Didi said, "Would you mind if I get a picture of you and Jon together?" And he said, "That'd be great. Did you bring a camera?"

So she reaches in her purse, pulls out a little small camera—back in the day before cell phones. And he goes, "Wait a minute, I got that same camera Saturday. Tell me, how do you work this?" And they're over there powwowing on how to use the camera. And he and she got some nice pictures of the King and I.

JE: Yeah, The King and I—seems like there was a musical.

JS: I believe there was.

JE: You were in the residential part of the palace.

JS: Which is not open. You know, the palace is never open to visitors. It is private, and they strictly adhere to that. You're invited in—period.

JE: And you were invited in.

JS: Oh yes, because, well, I was the consul, so I made arrangements. And I said, "Could I bring my wife?" and they— I made it all arranged.

JE: And it's got to be beautiful.

JS: Beautiful doesn't quite say it. It's stunning. But it is not open to the public whatsoever.

JE: They don't give tours like they do in England.

JS: They do not.

JE: Like they do in London.

JS: No, there are no tours. It's private. "Sorry, no tours. Thank you for asking." That was my experience.

JE: How is Norway dealing with immigration now? Do you recall?

JS: I think it's a problem, and it's getting worse. They're wrestling with it also. Because if you're a Norwegian, you're a different level of a member there. They have cradle-to-grave healthcare. They take care of their Norwegian folks. It's a great country.

JE: But they do allow immigrants in, do they not?

JS: As far as I know, they do. I didn't get into a conversation about it.

JE: Well, we strayed a little bit there.

JS: Way strayed.

JE: No, but it's fun. It's interesting that you still have that connection. I mean, if you wanted to pick up the phone and talk to the King of Norway right now, you could do it.

JS: Right. Well, I work for him.

JE: Right. Where's the phone? Let's call him. I've got another Norwegian—third generation—sitting here.

JS: That's right. I got my friend here who wants to talk to you about a couple of issues.

JE: His grandfather came from over there. That's funny. But then you've given your time to the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents.

JS: Yes, I have.

JE: And how many years did you do that?

JS: Fourteen years. Two seven-year terms. Enjoyed it immensely. David Boren was the president, and we got along fabulously.

JE: Yeah. We often ask people their advice to the young who are listening—they're listening back to these stories. You've had these great men in your life and all. Do you have any advice to young people graduating from high school or college?

JS: Look around Oklahoma very carefully. There's a lot to do, a lot to enjoy. We're a very fortunate state, I think. I'm very pleased to be from it. There's a lot going on in Oklahoma. I'm not saying there's not anything going on in other states—there clearly is. But I think in the totality of it all, Oklahoma holds up beautifully well to other, bigger, more populous states.

JE: And because it's a young state and it's not as populated as others, I think it's easier to make a name and a way for you in this state

JS: I agree. I think you're right, John. There's opportunity, which is what I think you're getting to.

JE: So then I ask people—how would you like to be remembered?

JS: Have to think about that a minute.

JE: Nobody's asked you that, have they?

JS: I don't think so.

JE: But at this young age of 73, how would you like to be remembered?

JS: Probably as a good parent.

JE: Yeah. Do you know any Norwegian phrases? Did you speak any Norwegian? Did you pick up on that?

JS: No, I don't speak any Norwegian.

JE: All right. I want to thank you for this.

JS: Oh, of course. It was my pleasure.

JE: I think we say in Norwegian takk for sist. Have you heard that term?

JS: I have heard that term.

JE: Takk for sist, meaning thank you for this, right? And then you would say velbekomme.

JS: OK, velbekomme, ja.

JE: And I can go into the accent of Norwegians pretty fast, and you probably can too.

JS: If you end any sentence with the word ja, it probably works. But that might be a little shortsighted.

JE: Right. So I could say, ja, ja. And Merry Christmas to you.

JS: I've been fortunate enough to have been associated with Norway—let's put it that way.

JE: Right. Thank you, Jon. This was fun.

JS: Thank you, John. Appreciate your kindness, sir.

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