



Killers of the Flower Moon Extras

Oklahoman Extras in Killers of the Flower Moon

Chapter 01 – Introduction

Announcer: The filming of Killers of the Flower Moon in Oklahoma created many opportunities for Oklahomans to participate as extras and background players. It gave them a chance to be up close to the major stars and the director as they helped tell the story.

Voices of Oklahoma interviewed five extras who were happy to share their experiences.

Marty Smith, Nikki Burdett, Ed Briner, Tamara Lairmore, Scott Woodward.

They all talk about what it was like to be in scenes with the major stars, the long hot days with period garments, and the impact the experience had on them. Through their eyes, we are brought onto the movie set.

So let's listen to these interesting stories on the oral history website and podcast VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 – 17:10 Marty Smith

John Erling (JE): Today's date is October 24th, 2023, as I say good morning to Marty Smith. Good morning, Marty.

Marty Smith (MS): Good morning.

JE: Where do you live?

MS: I live in Edmond, Oklahoma

JE: Why did you decide to participate in the filming of this great film?

MS: A little backstory, I retired in March of 20, and honestly, John, I was looking for something to do. I needed – I needed to get a little bit busy. So I took some acting classes up from a casting agent at Norman, and I got to know the casting agent in the facility there at Norman. They reached out to me to be an extra in the film, and it's that's kind of where everything started.

JE: You did some acting lessons and didn't know you were going to get in the film, or did you do it because of it?

MS: I was involved in background acting, and I done some commercials, and I've been an extra in the movie Reagan. That was when I was in Guthrie doing that, and then I've done a few other things. But I was just trying to get more involved in the industry. And when they were looking for background actors for Killers of The Flower Moon, I just jumped at the opportunity.

JE: Absolutely. Did you stay in Pawhuska or Bartlesville? Did you drive every day, or how did that work?

MS: Pretty well drove every day. It was a bit of an ordeal I mean, I recall many mornings leaving at 3 a.m. in the morning here from Edmond because a lot of times the call time would be 5:30 or 6 o'clock at Pawhuska, so there was – sometimes there was a line of lights going north up by 35 and on highway 60.

We headed eastward to Pawhuska very early in the morning. So what a few mornings or a few nights, I stayed at Ponca City, but most of the time, I drove back and forth. So I made for some long days.

JE: So this would have been over a period of a month?

MS: Yeah, honestly, a little over a month. Actually, I went in for a wardrobe which was actually at Bartlesville. I went there on April 30th, it's about two and a half years ago, '21. Then filming started the next month in May, so I was there for 15 days I was on set, and then that was in a period of about 40 days.

JE: Hmm. Well, you appeared in the film several times in several roles and characters, and you're not Native American, are you?

MS: I am not.

JE: Right.

MS: I am not.

JE: But you volunteered for a smoking scene, and you got to tell us about that.

MS: Well, what they had done, there's an AD – Assistant Director – that many times he had called. He said do we have any smokers in the crowd of background actors? And I've never smoked and people to raise their hands and they would get into the scene. You know, because they had smoked cigarettes before, and I was thinking, you know, "Golly I'm missing out a bit here." So they had a call. It was at a speakeasy scene, and they asked for smokers from the crowd and, John, I decided to raise my hand because I wanted to be in the scene.

Now, again, I've never smoked. So I was in this little crowded speakeasy, and we did many, many takes, and I was trying to smoke a cigarette. In fact, there was three cigarettes I had to go through. My eyes were watering. I was trying to suppress a cough. I was just absolutely miserable I did do it, but they asked later for some more smokers from some other scenes, and suffice to say I didn't raise my hand again.

JE: You've seen the film, though, obviously.

MS: I have, I have. We – many of us went to Tulsa last weekend, and there was actually over 450 of us background actors and spouses and friends that went to Tulsa last weekend to see the movie.

JE: Yeah, that's great. That's the smoking scene in the speakeasy that did make it in the film?

MS: It did not. It did not, and I was surprised how much was cut. There was a scene in a speakeasy, but I was not in the scene.

JE: Well, so then, were you around the major stars? Leonardo and De Niro and Gladstone?

MS: I was around Leonardo DiCaprio. There was a scene – I don't want to give away too much of the movie, but I'll just say there was a steam locomotive scene, and I was sitting across from Leonardo DiCaprio first I was sitting across from his stand, and there was just a wonderful fella named Mike – I don't recall his last name – but that enjoyable conversation with Mike and

he walked through the scenes before Leonardo DiCaprio came on the train so I sat across from him and he was cordial, but he didn't speak a lot and well, he's at work.

You know, he's at work, so I know he had to remember lines and had to do all these things, but I was close to him. I was around Robert De Niro some I think there was a scene in a pool hall. I was a pool player, so I was around him a bit, but as far as interchange and conversations, I really didn't have a lot of that with them.

JE: You say stand-in. That somebody came in and practiced with you – so that Leonardo didn't have to do that practicing. Is that true?

MS: That's correct. That's correct. It's a fella named Michael, and Michael was from Boston. That's all I knew, but he had been Leonardo DiCaprio in many movies he said he started back with maybe called The Departed. And he was a stand-in for Leonardo DiCaprio in that and had been–

He said Leonardo DiCaprio, because of him he had traveled around the world. He's been to South America, he'd been to Europe, he'd been to – Leonardo DiCaprio got him NBA Finals basketball tickets, and they went to Los Angeles and Boston, watching the Celtics together and those type of things.

So he said he's had a lot of opportunities being a stand-in for Leonardo DiCaprio, which I thought was a pretty neat thing.

JE: And the fact that they bonded like that. That was cool. So then, would Mike the stand-in, also appear as a double in the film, or was he just in a practice role

MS: Just in the practice role, as far as I know. I never saw him as a double. He was about the same size, about the same body build as far as the face though, they didn't look alike. So I don't know that he was a body double.

JE: Well, you were a train passenger. You were an oilfield worker. I distinctly remember seeing you you were pretty rough drunken cowboy type.

MS: (laughing) I was pretty rough around the edges, John.

JE: Is that that's not your normal look? Did they make it look that way?

MS: They did. They worked on me. They actually put grime in my hands and fingers and fingernails and I actually had a goatee at first when I showed up for wardrobe and the hair. They told me to shave that and I had longer hair, and they cut my hair. But they told me then not to shave, and they made sure I look pretty grimy, pretty gnarly when I was in these scenes. So I was, I don't know what you'd call me other than just being a basic ne'er do well.

JE: Well And then you're in several street scenes as well. So you ended up being used quite a bit.

MS: Quite a lot, quite a lot. And you know, you know, fortunately, I was in that and then some pool hall scenes I was in some of those which was enjoyable.

JE: Right. By the way, this may be none of my business. I know you got paid – did you get paid because of the number of scenes or was there a flat rate for everybody?

MS: It was a flat rate per day for all the background.

JE: Okay. All right. Yes, let's come to that pool hall scene, and you were playing pool, and there was a wooden floor, and Scorsese is actually there. So tell us about that.

MS: Mr. Scorsese – who I've gained a lot of respect for – he is so quick so bright that he's a perfectionist and they had a floor – this was an actual barber shop and pool hall from I don't know circa 1920s so there's no wooden floor and there's a lot of us cowboys in there with our boots on and the noise was just very loud on this wooden floor with boots.

He said well, “Let's uh, let's glue some rubber on the bottom of the soles of these boots.” So he had people come out and though they had a little rubber strips and they glue them on to the bottom of our boots and he's okay. “Let's try this again. Maybe we'll be a little bit quieter and won't have quite the boot noise on this one.” And we did a few takes.

He said “This is still not acceptable, not acceptable at all. We're just hearing too much, too much noise.” He said “So everyone off with your boots. Take your boots off.” So we proceeded all take her our boots off and this was a cast and crew. The crew members also had to take their shoes and boots

off – people behind the cameras.

So it was I thought a very funny visual of all of us rough-looking cowboy types and looking mean and rough and tough and walking around in our stocking feet.

JE: Yes, yes. So a scene like that, would it be shot many many many times or did that scene get shot a few or?

MS: There were many, many takes on this one and this was a pool room scene again. I won't give up much of the storyline, but oh there would be sometimes a dozen or more takes, sometimes there'd be 20-plus takes. There was a lot.

JE: Well, that had to get trying. Didn't – I mean, get tiring after a while?

MS: It did it physically. It was a demanding, and I had some back issues. So it was demanding walking around in those boots, and we had long, hot days. But again, I think the prevailing idea is that many of us complain like oh, "It was hot. It was tiring. I'm aching." But would we do it again? Oh, absolutely. You know, so.

JE: You probably wondered why so many takes when you thought perhaps in your view it went well, or do you think they just wanted several good takes that they could choose from, maybe?

MS: I think the latter, John, I think they wanted as many takes as they could get. And not only did they do many takes but they would change up the cameras. They'd have someone with a handheld camera and a shoulder held camera. They're not a fixed camera. And on many occasions, I counted up to three drones in the air on some scenes. So they did many many takes from many different camera angles.

I can't imagine how many – it had to be thousands of hours of footage. When you think about all these multiple scenes was sometimes up to at least five cameras and five camera angles and trying to edit it down to about three hours and 20 minutes. It had to be quite a job.

JE: Well, that was interesting perspective you just gave us, because it may not have been the actors that needed to be reshot again. They wanted all these different angles and they were experimenting probably with that.

Yeah, exactly that pool hall is where Bill Hale would go to find his guys to kill the headright owners. Being on time, I don't know if that became an issue for people – how early would you have to be like you knew when a scene perhaps in time was going to be shot. How early did you have to be there?

MS: Well, they would put us on set quite early for that and sometimes we would be there 30-40 minutes early before the scene was shot. Many times – there are many of us that were in the background actors – so they wanted to get everyone over to a position and get everyone in place and then to make sure we all were there and then they would get everything lined up and make sure if thing was shot.

I imagine it was quite a job to wrangle that many people at a time. They wanted to make sure that we were all there together.

JE: I would imagine that Mr. Scorsese was very respectful to you. He knew he couldn't do it without you. Probably showed respect to you as you were close to him.

MS: He certainly was I – I just can't say enough about him. Very kind, very respectful, he would go up and there'd be people say they'd feel an arm around the shoulder and this and that they'd look over and it'd be a Martin Scorsese just saying hello. And there was one Osage – I believe he's Osage – and he was quite tall. I mean, he's a six foot ten and His name was Daniel, Daniel Warrior, I believe he was in Indian dress and Mr. Scorsese who is quite short. I would guess he's maybe 5'5" or 5'6" maybe and walked up to Daniel Warrior and just looked up at him and he just said "You are magnificent." and I just thought that was quite a funny story.

JE: I know you referenced this, but you had a gathering which would be last Friday, on October 20th. The opening for all the extras, were you there for – yes, you were there for that. So that had to feel good to be around them because, as you've said, everybody wants to stay in touch and maybe you'll have reunions.

MS: It was wonderful. It was great to stay in touch. Many of them have gotten together once a month or a lunch or a dinner at different places. Most of these are people from the Tulsa area. I live in Edmonds, so I couldn't make those but it was just wonderful seeing everybody because we bonded.

You know, those hot summer days in '21 it was grueling but we all spent time together and we all went through this together and we – again, we bonded and became good friends.

JE: Yeah. Well, I'm sure something – some of you complain sometimes you'll say who signed me up for this you probably yourself?

MS: I did. There was one street dance scene and we were there, John. We were – I left at 3:30 in the morning I mean – I had gotten to Pawhuska at about 9 a.m. Worked all day all night till after midnight and that the dance scene went and ended at 3:30 in the morning and I tell you what, we were we were limping back to our trucks and that was a night I actually slept in my truck that day. But again, it was long days, it was physical, but we'd all do it again, I'm sure.

JE: You sure would and it's got to make you feel good that you had a part in telling an historic story. You didn't know then, as you were doing it, what you know now to say, "Wow. That presentation is marvelous," but at the moment you couldn't have that feeling.

MS: I was unaware. I had no idea that this went on in our history. I was born and raised in Oklahoma, and I just had no idea this went on.

JE: Yeah, so how did it feel then to see yourself on that big screen?

MS: It was quite enjoyable. It was exciting and, you know for it took two years before this came out and there was a lot of anticipation and I didn't know if I would be completely edited out of the movie or if I'd have a few scenes in it, I just didn't know.

So to be there in the movie theater and to see myself was quite exciting and In fact, I think many of us are going to go back a second time because we were too busy trying to find ourselves and others during the first presentation I think we're gonna go back and actually watch the movie more the second time

JE: Yes, I'm sure you would because my wife and I have seen it and we intend to see it again as well. So, do you know the number of scenes that you're in?

MS: I'm thinking there was about four scenes. They were very brief. Yeah, very brief scenes, but about four I was – when the steam locomotive came into town I was in that and I was in some pool hall scenes. I think was the other one and then I was in various street scenes.

JE: I appreciate you talking to us and giving us some insight and how good it's got to make you feel certainly part of your legacy of your life and you were helping tell this story in Oklahoma.

MS: John, I appreciate your time and thank you for inviting me.

JE: Absolutely Marty. Thanks for sharing.

Chapter 03 – 14:30

Nikki Burdett

John Erling (JE): Today's date is October 24th, 2023. On the line, Nikki Burdett. Good afternoon, Nikki.

Nikki Burdett (NB): Good afternoon.

JE: Where do you live? What town?

NB: I live in Oklahoma City.

JE: So you were an extra in this great film, "Killers of the Flower Moon." What motivated you to give this a try?

NB: Wanted to act, but I was really, really, I really wanted to be on this movie because I just felt like it was a story that really needed to be told.

JE: Yeah, had you ever had any experience on stage or acting in any sort?

NB: I've been in a couple, a couple other movies before this one and just doing background work. This was definitely the biggest movie though for sure.

JE: Oh, movies here in Oklahoma you were in?

NB: Yes.

JE: Okay, so you kind of knew the drill?

NB: A little bit but definitely not at all.

JE: To this extent, right?

NB: Yes, but I had actually been on my first movie. I'd been on – Pat Healy was in it. So and he's in this movie, too.

JE: So as we go along here, let's talk about your role. Tell us about your role in the film.

NB: I was a middle-class, just regular Caucasian citizen in this movie, and I was in a couple of different scenes, so I didn't have any speaking roles, just for background. It was just really fun. I got to wear amazing costumes. In fact, my hand jacket that I wore was actually in the movie Titanic.

JE: These scenes you were in, how many different scenes do you think you were in?

NB: Well, I actually didn't make it on the actual film, but I was on the train platform scene. I was in the barbershop, and I was on the race scene, but I don't think I made it into the actual film. I had a friend say that they thought they spotted me, but they're not sure.

JE: Right, I guess you're gonna have to see the film several times to see if you're there.

NB: Yeah, and there's just so many extras on set, but it was amazing. I mean, hundreds of people at one time in every scene. It seems like.

JE: How did they do this when they're gonna get ready to shoot a scene. Everyone's in place, and then is there a command where all of a sudden there's no motion and then bingo everybody moves?

NB: Masks off, action rolling, so pretty much, yeah. It was – everybody knew where they were supposed to be whenever the director said action, and then you moved, and you knew where your mark was, and that was how it was.

JE: And everybody made it seem so natural. I would imagine they would take many, many, many takes of one scene.

NB: Oh, yes. It was probably – if we were lucky if we got two scenes in one day, and it was a 12-hour day.

JE: It was very hot too because you were in the middle of summer.

NB: Yes, I started filming. I filmed the last week of May.

JE: And then the outfits you wore were heavy, and that led to an uncomfortable situation.

NB: Yes, I had, of course, I had my turn-of-the-century boot, and then I had very narrow feet. So I wore two pairs of socks with our lovely very, very thick control hose and then bloomers and then our flip and then our dresses and then the coat and then the hat and then the hair with the tongue, the hairspray, and yeah, so we had it a little bit better than the men depending on, you know, what type of outfit we wore. And the mud.

JE: Why mud? Was it because it had been raining, or did they want it to be mud, or what was that about?

NB: Well, they covered all the streets in Pawhuska where we were filming, like up and down Kahika Avenue and over by the train platform with dirt because, you know, back then, they didn't have concrete streets. So they had to fill everything in the dirt. Well, then it started raining and it rained and rained and rained so everything just turned to a stooey mess of mud.

JE: The rain kept you from filming for several days.

NB: No, not when I was there. We went ahead and we filmed in the rain, you know, the show must go on. I don't know how they made it look like it wasn't rainy.

JE: You were around some of the stars. Leonardo DiCaprio, De Niro, Lily Gladstone. Did you see them? Were you around them in any scenes?

NB: I was there whenever Lily and Leo were there. There was one point where we were supposed to, and it's in the trailers. You can see it in the trailer where everybody is glaring at Lily's character Molly. And I was right there by them both. They told all of us extras to go ahead and stare at Molly and just glare at her and couldn't do it. It was so much easier for me to just glare at Leo. The director probably thought, "Wow, this girl can't take direction for nothing."

But I just, you know, I couldn't. You know, those people have experienced so much pain and it was a very emotional week for me, as well. My grandfather – he grew up in Ohio right up until he got married to my granny. All of my granny's family, they called them "half-breed," so I've heard stories about how that hurt them. And, you know, talking to the elders between scenes – that's their actual life. This isn't just the movies. People lived this. And it's very emotional and very heartbreaking. It wasn't just a movie and I think a lot of people are realizing that.

Yeah, I couldn't glare at her in her eyes. It was easier to glare at Leo.

JE: Well, those eyes of Lily Gladstone are certainly amazing, that's for sure. I speak because I have seen the movie and – was it because of her look, and she's Native American, so it was because of, and you felt the emotion of the story while you were acting?

NB: Yeah, right. Yes, and being there. It wasn't like it was a set. Whenever you're surrounded by everybody dressed in costume and living that for a whole week and you're away from home. You can definitely understand how actors go into method acting if they don't come out until the movie is over. Like, I get it. It's not far-fetched.

JE: About Leonardo DiCaprio, you were going to take his picture or not?

NB: Oh, no. No, no, no, that's so funny. And that's actually hilarious. It was before we actually started filming. We were there to practice so that we could kind of, you know, the extras to get their bearings on the train platform and know what we were actually going to do before we started filming. So we were all in our street clothes. I walked to one of the fancy porta-potties in a field with another background actor, and we were coming out of the porta-potty, and I had been in the porta-potty, and I could have washed my face.

I had spit all over my face from the train, and I was kind of in the bathroom just laughing, and I didn't wash it because I knew I was just gonna get more spit on my face and who cares anyway. We're wearing masks. Who's gonna see me? Everybody else got spit on their face. So I come out of the porta-potty, and she comes out of the one door right next to me, and we're walking. I have my camera up to take a selfie of my foot and how silly I

look, and she elbows me and she goes, "That's Mr. DiCaprio right behind us. I'm gonna take a selfie," and it's like I was like, "Oh, god. I do not want him to think that I'm trying to, you know, get him in the background of my selfie."

So I just very eloquently put my phone down and I'm like, "Oh. For one, I don't want him thinking I'm trying to take a selfie, and for two, I look like an idiot. You know, I look like a kid that's just been caught in a candy jar and I'm taking a selfie. I'm a grown woman taking a selfie of my dirty face." Yeah, so that was pretty funny, and I just kind of like looked over at him and nod and tried to pick up the pace a little bit. Nobody wants your picture taken coming out of the bathroom.

JE: That sounds like he was so accommodating to everybody around. Maybe he wouldn't even mind it. I don't know.

NB: You know, he probably wouldn't have, but I'm – bless his heart. Yeah, I wouldn't even bother him, you know. I wouldn't wanna bother him, so.. Just let him go on his way.

JE: Well, his performance in that film is so outstanding. It's got to be one of his best. And make you feel good that they're talking Oscar nominations already?

NB: Oh, I know. I and you know, I'm so proud to be a part of it. I mean, I would have been proud to be a part of it if I was serving food, you know. It's just it really is a story that needed to be told, and I'm so happy that Marty took on this huge taking and just everybody involved. And you know, I got to speak with the cinematographers and ask them questions, and everybody was extremely nice, you know. there was some people serving food to the Cinematographers, everybody was genuinely nice – you know, nobody acted like they didn't have time for you and That was a shock for being such a big production and everybody being like such big name people.

JE: Did you actually see Martin Scorsese directing or working on set?

NB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, he was there every day. He was there every day, and he's so cute. I mean, just cute, isn't it? And he's got the most wonderful laugh. So he is definitely a true gem. He really is.

JE: I'm sure he was, you know, he was under a lot of stress to make this right but seemed to remain positive and a smile.

NB: Yes. I mean, he, you know, you could see whenever things weren't going his way, you could, I mean, the smile would fall, but you know, whenever I saw him and he was smiling. And my last day of filming, which is on a Friday, and we wrapped, he took the time to tell us background actors. "Thank you. You did an amazing job," and he stood there and he shook our hands. And that that meant a lot. That really did.

JE: Tell me maybe how long days, months, weeks, how much time did you put into this?

NB: I was there for a week because I do have a regular 40-hour week job at the time whenever I was filming, and I worked for the University of Oklahoma. So I took my vacation time and I used up all my vacation days, and I went and filmed on vacation. That's what I did with my vacation.

JE: Well, it's one of those vacations you've taken right?

NB: Oh, yes. It was the best week of my life. I mean, it really was. I got up at what? 3:34 a.m. in the morning and went to work on vacation, but it was great.

JE: And drove from Oklahoma City.

NB: Oh, no, no. No, I found the cutest little motel to stay at while I was there, and it was close enough that I could walk with that. So I drove in on a Sunday morning, and I stayed there and I drove home Friday night.

JE: Well, Nikki, I really appreciate you sharing these thoughts and then of course giving up your time and taking a vacation and but it's something that will be with you the rest of your life and I don't know if you have children, but great-great-grandchildren can point to that say my great-great-grandmother was in that.

NB: Yeah, yeah, I'm so excited to be a part of it. Like, I don't know if I made, I really don't know if I made the actual screen, but I do know that there's pictures of me in the newspaper where you can see me on set. So that's pretty cool.

JE: Yes, well, you had the experience of contributing to a major, major film that I see over this past weekend the box-office numbers are great including other countries and I hadn't even thought about that that France Italy and Germany and all this they're focusing on a story here in Oklahoma. And Nikki, thank you. I enjoyed visiting with you and I appreciate what you did and what you did for this story.

NB: Yes, well, thank you. I've enjoyed speaking with you as well

Chapter 04 – 11:40

Ed Briner

John Erling (JE): All right, Today's date is October 24th, 2023, and I have on the phone Ed Briner. Good afternoon, Ed.

Ed Briner (EB): Good afternoon.

JE: And you live in Tulsa. Do you?

EB: I do.

JE: All right, so you drove from Tulsa for the filming every day or stay over there. How did that work for you?

EB: No, I never spent the night. They didn't pay extras enough to get a hotel room, but they were not sequential days either. Most of the time it would be two days in a row or been one day and then two days. It was very varied. Yeah, so I came home every day.

JE: So you have to get up pretty early then to meet your mark on those days?

EB: I did, especially a lot of times. You need to be on set by 6 or 6:30, and so it's about an hour and a half to drive to Pawhuska. And I'm old, so I don't just get up and spring out and, you know, jump in the car and go. So it'd be easily to 2:30, 3:30 in the morning many times.

JE: Had you ever been in theater productions before of any sort?

EB: I have. I started doing this extra thing kind of as a hobby. And so I did one day in Reservation Dogs. There was a movie about Ronald Reagan's life

that's coming out; I did a couple of days on that, and just some oddball stuff. That movie, I can't remember now, Kurt Warner's story, American Underdog, so I did one day in there, and that was kind of neat because we were the last day of filming when I was doing it, and Kurt Warner and his wife came because they had an after party. Yeah, so we got to see him. So I've done a little dab of this stuff. I mean, it's just a hobby. It doesn't pay much.

JE: So then that answers my question, why when you saw this, that was a no-brainer for you, then, right?

EB: Yeah, and actually, I submitted for it when that first was announced and never did hear anything back. So I submitted again with a Gmail email address, and then they responded to me and asked if I was interested.

I feel funny talking about this. They actually asked me to do the role of being in the KKK. They said, "You'll be wearing a robe and a mask, and nobody will know who you are – we know by its nature it's sensitive. Since they won't know who you are, that would allow you to be able to act in other scenes."

JE: Oh, so you did that KKK scene?

EB: I did. I did. And really, all it was was we were marching in a parade.

JE: I just remember seeing that scene.

EB: And I will say this; they asked if any of us would be okay with lifting our masks or hoods, and I thought, well, in for a penny, in for a dollar. And so I said that I would do it, and they said, now you guys are friends with some of these people lying in the streets. So wave at them and smile and all that. And so we were doing that, and it was really weird; the natives that we were waving at and stuff, they started throwing popcorn and giving us the evil eye and all that, and it felt real. It felt very real, the reaction that we had gotten. So I find that kind of interesting.

JE: So you've seen the film, and as you saw that, that had to be really special, impactful to you.

EB: Yeah, well actually, I have not seen the film yet.

JE: Okay.

EB: I hate crowds, but so my wife and I are gonna wait a couple of weeks, let things settle down, and then we'll go see it.

JE: I think you were particularly taken by the attention to detail that they paid. There was a pool hall scene that you were involved in.

EB: Yeah, there was a cigar stand just inside the door of the pool hall. And so they told me they gave me three nickels, and they were from the '20s. So the guy sold me some cigars. And so, yeah, I was really surprised, and of course, you saw it; we were wearing old people, you know, dead people clothes right there were from the '20s.

Yeah, and so it was fascinating just, you know, to get the behind-the-scenes look on this stuff. And because of doing the other stuff, I knew a lot about that, but this was like the attention to detail was unbelievable.

JE: Yeah, so you play-

EB: Nobody's gonna zoom in on that nickel.

JE: No. Right, they could have gotten by with it, couldn't they? You were playing pool, and this would be in the pool hall, I suppose where Bill Hale would go. Is it true you were next there to Robert De Niro and Leonardo DiCaprio?

EB: Yeah, myself and another fella. We're playing fake pool because it's interesting; the pool balls, they're not pool balls because they don't want to make a noise, as I understand. They're handballs painted to look like pool balls, and so they don't make any noise. And they were really; they drove the point home extremely that they don't want us making noise so that the sound guys can insert theirs.

So we were playing at this one table, and across the aisle, DiCaprio and De Niro were; they looked to me like they were scheming, you know, they weren't playing pool. They were just kind of right next to each other talking quietly. And honestly, I don't even know if we got in there because you don't know on camera angles and stuff like that. But it was really neat to be that close to them, and then right beside our table, there was a screen, and the director Scorsese was right on the other side of that screen. So he probably wasn't four feet away from it, shouldn't say, but we could hear

him directing and you know that stuff. And so it was yeah, it was; it was just really cool.

JE: Did it make you nervous?

EB: A little bit. I mean, that our shoes were still making noise on the wooden floor in there, and so they put little pad things underneath them to stop that, and then they still were making some noise so they had to take our boots off. But yeah, it was; it was nice. Most of the stuff I did was like a man on the street walking down that kind of stuff. But that was one that we were particularly right in the middle of it.

JE: I can't remember; did you actually take a pool shot? Were you up at the table?

EB: Yes, yeah, I did.

JE: Did they teach you how to hold your body and arms for that, or were you pretty natural at it?

EB: No, I just I knew how to play pool. I did ask the PA; should I'm left-handed? So I asked him, should I do it as if I'm right-handed because I didn't know if that would mess up the camera angle or something. He said, no, just play pool.

JE: And then they would take, have many takes of that scene, wouldn't they?

EB: Yeah, there was, and I don't remember at this point; I mean, you know, this has been years ago now. It was at least a couple of takes.

JE: There's a great courthouse scene with De Niro, DiCaprio, John Lithgow, and Brendan Fraser. And you were in that as well.

EB: I was, and it was; I was; my costume was really a vest and a shirt and pants. And everybody else in that courtroom scene, the men were in suits; I was the only one that was not in a suit. So I think I got kind of hidden places. One scene; we were up in the balcony up there, and then there was another scene where I would; they had us down in the first floor, and I was pretty much I think I was right in line with the narrow as far as from the judge, De Niro, and all that, you know, again, you don't know if you seen because if it's focused on him, you're probably blurred out past him. But it was really interesting, and that was when they did a lot of takes.

JE: The actors that we've just made, could you tell that they always knew their lines, or they flub their lines and have to start do other takes, retakes?

EB: There was a couple of times when John Lithgow, he worded it differently, which I don't know if that's horrible or anything, but they did do several takes when he was doing a speech.

JE: So if he went off script probably I mean didn't –

EB: That was my impression.

JE: Yeah, yeah, when they were just, I suppose those guys when they were waiting for action, did they stand around and chat and have some fun amongst each other?

EB: I didn't see them doing that in that scene because they would all – they'd leave the set when they weren't shooting. Oh, so so we didn't you know, we didn't really get to see them do that. It's one thing I did kind of figure out is if you were a Caucasian in that movie, you were probably a bad guy.

JE: There were natives around too. You didn't feel that from them?

EB: Oh no, no, no, no, not at all. As a matter of fact, you when you're an extra, you get a ton of time; you're standing around a lot more than you're actually doing. And I got to talk to a lot of Native Americans; I mean, I've been around them all my life here. But it was, you know, they were very gracious; that really was more guilt from – on my side than it was anybody, you know, instilling that at me or accusing me.

JE: Yeah, no, no, it's interesting you felt that feeling while you were actually working

EB: To me; it's almost fake. It's so powerful. Yeah, it's so conniving and so scheming. I told somebody said, man, sounds like something Hollywood would make up.

JE: Your biggest takeaway then from this kind of sums up your feelings?

EB: My takeaway was as I wouldn't trade, you know, we worked in 15-hour days; it was a hundred degrees where what? 1920s clothes do not breathe, and I would do it all over again.

JE: Well, this is a no question; we'll be Oscar-nominated in many categories. That's for sure. And for you to say you were her part of that kind of a film got to make you feel really, really good. And I appreciate you're doing that and I appreciate your sharing your feelings about it and your experience here.

EB: Like I said, you know, the filming ended, what was it, two years ago? So I'm like that, you know, some of that stuff kind of drifted away feelings-wise. But now that the movie's come out, you know, I'm starting to feel that stuff over again, and I'm really proud of being able to be a part of it. I had to be annoying to get into it, but I'm okay; I can do that.

JE: All right. Very good. Thank you, Ed. I appreciate your time with us.

EB: John, it is very good talking to you, and I appreciate it.

Chapter 05 – 14:27

Tamara Lairmore

John Erling (JE): All right, today's date is October 25th, 2023, and I have on the phone Tamara Lairmore. Good afternoon, Tamara.

Tamara Lairmore (TL): Good afternoon. Thank you for having me.

JE: Yes, and where do you live?

TL: I live in Claremore. It's about 30 minutes from Tulsa.

JE: Yes, and so then for the filming, did you drive each day from Claremore to Pawhuska? How did you set yourself up for that?

TL: Yes, I drove about an hour and 10 minutes each day back and forth. I'd be driving about five o'clock, get there at my call time. So sometimes it'd be 6:30, and I try to be there a little before, about 20, 30 minutes before my call time so I could be ready.

JE: All right. So overall then, how many months do you think you devoted to the film?

TL: About six and a half to seven months.

JE: They were sure they wanted you at the very beginning?

TL: Well, I went to the casting call, and it was just an open casting call. They took my information, took my picture. I got a call for an audition. They wanted me to audition for a driver and for the movie, so I went to my audition for that, and I passed. They were pretty impressed, and I got to drive a 1915 Ford Model T, and that was pretty cool, pretty crazy. But that was awesome. And so I passed, and they let me be a driver.

JE: Okay. So when we say you're a driver, an Osage driver, would you then in that role actually be working for a wealthy Osage person, and you, as a white, would be working for them? Is that the way it would have been?

TL: No, I was just gonna be one of the rich Osage drivers.

JE: Are you Native American?

TL: I am. I am Cherokee Creek and Choctaw.

JE: Okay, so then you have the appearance of Native Americans.

TL: Oh yes,

JE: Okay. All right, now I get it. And then you may be thought you'd be just in a few scenes, but maybe it developed into more than that?

TL: Yes, I thought I would be there for just, you know, driving for a day or something. But then I got a call, and I was told I needed to go to a fitting and then a rehearsal. So while I was at my fitting, "Hey, you're gonna be a shinny player," which shinny is an Osage game. It's almost like a field hockey, almost like lacrosse, but, you know, no hockey.

That was new to me. So I was like, okay, I can learn this game. And they dressed me for that, and then they dressed me to be the wealthy Osage driver. So right then and there, I thought, okay, I'm gonna be in more scenes. Maybe a few more scenes than what I thought. Then we went to rehearsal for the shinny game, and they said, okay, we'll need you back tomorrow for a church scene.

And I'm like, "Okay. All right. That's good." So these things just kept coming. They were like, "We're gonna need you for this, for that," and I was a princess at one time. And I was like, okay, I can do that, but yeah, I had

about 13 costumes, four wigs, and the same pair of shoes, heels that were awful.

JE: Hmm, but weren't you—you could have been cast as an Osage tribal member, like Molly Burkhardt's family member. Would you have been part of that?

TL: Yes, yes. And they said I was a part of her family because I was at the wedding. I was in the wedding scene, the funeral thing. So I was there. I was a part of her family. And then I was a part of the Osage Council where she went to Washington DC, and then they took a picture at the train scene. So I was a part of that.

JE: So then you were around Lily Gladstone, correct?

TL: Yes.

JE: And how was that experience for you, and then you would, in the shooting too, you would have been close to her?

TL: Yes, I was pretty close to her, and then I actually talked to her, and she was very humble. She was the sweetest person. And she never talked like she was a diva or anything. She was just a sweet soul, sweetheart.

JE: And I've seen the film, and you have too, more than likely, right?

TL: Oh, yes. Yes, I have.

JE: You would have been around in the wedding then because Molly marries Ernest Burkhardt, played by Leonardo DiCaprio.

TL: Yes,

JE: So you were around him too then, close to him?

TL: Yes, yes, I was. And yes, I actually danced. I was a dancer as well at their reception. So that was pretty fun. He came over to see how we were dancing and everything. And I made a comment to him, and I said, "Come on, Leo, let's dance." And he said, "No, my character doesn't dance." So that was pretty funny. That was a fun day.

JE: But he seemed fun and—

TL: Yeah, yeah.

JE: ..easy to be around?

TL: Oh yes, he was very fun. He was humble too, and he was very respectful. Yeah, he was a pretty good guy. I got to see him on his last day of filming. And it was me and another extra, no two more extras, and we were the only ones there for his last day. So I got a picture with him. That was pretty cool. He took my phone, and he was like, "Here, let me go ahead and take it because I don't want—I can't get my costume in the picture." And I was like, "Okay." So he took my phone. I still have that phone.

JE: Well, he's a good-looking guy, but in person, I mean, sure, he's even maybe more handsome in person.

TL: Oh yeah, yeah. He was—he is. Whenever he doesn't have you know, the the prosthetic teeth that they give him and he's a little – he's a little shorter than what I expected but yeah, he was great.

JE: And I think I noticed that – the prosthetic piece was that in his jaw and his mouth?

TL: They were fake teeth. Yeah, there was in his mouth.

JE: Then did Martin Scorsese was he directing that wedding scene so he would have been there, too?

TL: Yes. Yes. He was and he was actually fond of the camera. There was a photographer there and she he was he just loved that camera. He wanted to see how it worked because it was kind of old-time is of course old-timey.

And that was that was pretty cool. That was probably the closest I got to him. Well, I did get close to him at one of the dances in Pachuca he was there, and I got to actually personally thank him for letting me be in his movie, and he was like, "Well, what's your name?" And I told him my name, and he shook my hand. He was like, "I'm so sorry," He said, "There's just so much going on during the days." That he couldn't really, you know, talk. So I'm like, "No, that's fine. That's fine."

JE: We forget that he's 80 years old.

TL: Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. He was better than me. I could say that

JE: So those were hot days with hot clothing, heavy clothing, weren't they?

TL: Oh my goodness, yes. Yes, I had on some legging-like hose. Then I had on a—what is that? I had on, like, a little—I had another layer on. It was just like another dress, underwear dress. And then I had on a skirt, a shirt, the long-sleeve shirt, and a blanket, a wool blanket. And it was so hot. It was—it was like 90 something degrees.

Almost a hundred degrees. And I was getting—I was actually getting darker. And we were told not to get darker than the girls, the main actresses. But I mean, I'm Native American. So, of course, I'm gonna get a little darker.

JE: So they said don't get darker, meaning you had to stay out of the sun?

TL: Yes, yes. They try to apply sunscreen as much as they could. And we had to have umbrellas. I'm like, "All right. I'm sorry. I can't help it. I'm getting dark."

JE: You know, were they very—I suppose making sure you were hydrated and giving out water a lot and concerned about—

JE: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, they were. And gave us cold washcloth. So, you know, just keep ourselves cool and everything and get into some shade. But yeah, they were—they had their little catering person, they had craft come around and give us water, make sure we were hydrated. We were good. They gave us electrolytes. So yeah, they took really good care of us.

JE: There were emotional days. I think you've described the whole experience as blood, sweat, and tears. What do you mean by that?

TL: Let's see. The basically, the blood was from, let's see, where the house exploded, there were—we'd have to walk through the wood debris and everything. Some of the wood, if you stepped on it right, it would hit you in the leg. Or if you're running through it, you'll fall. And it's like, I've got—I had wood to the shin. And it was painful. It was very painful. But I just kind of had to act. Of course, I had to act like, you know, it didn't hurt. And I'm just, like, oh my gosh, shocked about the explosion.

JE: And we should say that house was exploded but then the – you're talking about how they created what have been the remains of the house and you were around that explosion scene, then, as well?

TL: Yes.

JE: So that's the blood. What about the sweat?

TL: The sweat was just from all the hot days that we were there and having to be in those dresses and with the blanket. So yeah.

JE: So then it became tears and emotional for you at a specific point?

TL: Yes, whenever I heard Molly scream, when I heard Molly scream, that's whenever it hit me.

JE: Because she had seen Anna's body, her sister.

TL: Yes.

JE: And when you heard that scream, that resonated with you?

TL: Yes, yes.

JE: Because?

TL: She just found this—she just found someone near and dear to her, and that was her sister.

JE: And you related that to your own experience?

TL: Yes, I know. I personally didn't find my aunt like that. My grandmother is the one that found my aunt, her daughter. So I could just imagine how both felt. And it's just—it took a toll on me that day.

JE: While that was moving. Then you saw the film, you felt the enormity of the film. And, by the way, since you were playing in Osage families, weren't there Osage people in it around you who maybe were descendants of the victims? Is that true?

TL: Yes, yeah, I was around a few of them. But a lot of them didn't talk about a whole lot. So I didn't really get a lot of the history. I made some pretty close friends that would talk about it. And then I actually found out that my stepfather, who is Osage, he is a descendant of Byron Burkhart. So that was pretty crazy to find out.

JE: Is he still around?

TL: Yes, my stepdad. He is still around.

JE: What an experience. And I know you're so glad that you could have been part of it, which will be an Oscar-winning movie and maybe other categories as well. You extras bonded so that maybe you get together. Maybe you've already gotten together.

TL: Oh, many times. A lot of the time I couldn't really go to their gatherings because I have my family, and we were on the move a lot, too. So, yeah, I'm just glad everybody can still get to be in contact with each other and talk to each other and be excited for each other, especially about this movie,

JE: Right.

TL: And I've always heard, you know, there's no such thing as small parts, only small actors. So, you know, we're all in the background. We're all with each other. We all can see each other. We're like, "Hey, there's me. There's me. There's you. There's her," you know?

JE: So as you looked at the film, and you may need to see it again, obviously you're going to. You don't know how many times you actually seen in the film. Do you?

TL: Yeah, I counted about four or five times.

JE: How fun for you to see that. Amazing. Wow. Well, you've given us a good description here of what you did and what you went through, and I thank you so much for sharing. Thank you for doing it. We're all proud of this. And then to think that this is being seen in international countries, France and Italy and Germany, they're all looking at this story out of Oklahoma. It's pretty amazing.

TL: Yeah. Oh yeah. I'm ready to see the reviews, a lot more reviews internationally and everything.

JE: Yes, and so far the reviews we have here, of course, are very, very good. Tamara, thank you. This was fun talking with you. I sure appreciate it very much.

TL: Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

JE: All right. Bye. Thank you, Tamara.

Chapter 06 – 13:12
Scott Woodward

John Erling (JE): Today's date is October 25th, 2023, and I have on the phone this afternoon, Scott Woodward. Good afternoon, Scott.

Scott Woodward (SW): Good afternoon.

JE: So you live in Tulsa, do you?

SW: I do, yes.

JE: All right. Why did you choose to get involved in this film?

SW: One of my daughters submitted my information and photographs to the casting company unbeknownst to me, and then they called and said, are you interested in being an extra in the movie? Knowing the story and my background prosecuting violent crimes in Indian country, to make it very interesting. Also thinking that it's for Scorsese, DiCaprio. I thought, you know, it's probably going to be very well done, and it's an important story that needs to be told in a way that's impressive.

I just saw the movie the other day, and indeed, it is impressive. It's everything that I thought it would be.

JE: Had you been in the theater or acting in any way?

SW: No.

JE: What possessed your daughter to submit your name? I wonder.

SW: You know that I've been asking myself that. I have no idea. Maybe it's my background being a United States attorney and prosecuting crimes in Indian countries since 1990 in this part of the country. I'm retired, and you know, perhaps she thought I needed something to do.

JE: Well, I know you're grateful to her for doing it, that's for sure. So what roles were you given?

SW: When they first contacted me, they asked me to be a cattleman rancher, and subsequent to that, they called up and asked me to come back in and

also be a Fort Worth cop in a scene in downtown Tulsa. So those two were the roles that I played.

JE: Okay, when you said downtown Tulsa, they filmed at the federal building or and Phil tower both. Were you in one of those two scenes?

SW: Yes, I was in the scene at Phil tower. They make an arrest inside Phil tower. I'm not in that picture, but as they're bringing the arrestee out of the building, the cameras focused on the front door, and you see them bring out the arrestee. And I'm right behind them peeling off to the right in a navy blue police officer's outfit, so I am in that scene for just, you know, a couple of seconds.

And I was very pleased to be in this next scene, which was the courtroom. Having tried lots of cases in federal court involving violent crimes in Indian country, I really wanted to see how they portrayed that in the movie. And so I'm on the second row on the De Niro side of the courtroom. And you'll see in a scene where the place erupts, people are yelling and screaming and all this, and they have me get up and run down the center aisle. And so that's where I'm in that second scene, and that all made it.

JE: You saw the film and you saw yourself in that?

JE: Yes, both of those. I'm in both of those scenes. There was another scene at a place called, or they purported to be the Fort Worth stockyards, and on that day I got there, and they said you're a preferred hail, and I don't know what that is. And they said, "Well, wherever De Niro is going to be in this scene, you're going to be next to him." Well, okay, that's really neat.

So we went through and we did the practices and practices and practices. Probably six, seven, eight times. Just before they were going to do the final picture, they took me and moved me to the right-hand side. So in the movie, you don't see me in that scene.

JE: That had to be awfully interesting to be that near and watching De Niro act. Must have been pretty impressive.

SW: Indeed, it was. And let me add this: the only thing that I'm aware of from the movie where all of the major actors are is in the courtroom. And so I'm in the courtroom, not 20 feet from Miss Gladstone, Jesse Plemons, Lift Gal, Fraser, De Niro, and DiCaprio, all in the same room. That's the only place in

the movie where they're all together.

You would be very, very—I was very, very impressed with the level of detail, how meticulous they are between scenes. They want to make sure that everybody is in exactly the same position. That everything's exactly the same so there's no variations. They did some really special things with the lighting to create light beams coming into the courtroom, and they had vapor that would make it look like it was smoky in this courtroom.

Now, I've been in a lot of federal courtrooms, and the design people who took this church and made it into a federal courtroom did a masterful job. I mean, the floors look like marble, the columns look like marble, the grates on the windows look the way they are, and many of the federal courtrooms. It was pretty impressive and a great opportunity for me to see behind the scenes, you know, how do they work this magic? How do they do this?

JE: Right and to be around all those stars at the same time? Between takes, did they visit with each other or they just were silent and remained in their character? Or was there any back-and-forth?

SW: No, not that I saw. The scene where you see me run out, DiCaprio has just said that he's willing to talk to De Niro's lawyer Fraser, and the Indian side, the Native American side of the courtroom erupts and just goes very, very loud.

And the hail side, the De Niro side, is also getting agitated, and that's when they have me run out. We had done that and done it and done it. Finally, they got to take that they wanted, and DiCaprio came off of the witness stand and acknowledged everybody in the courtroom, you know, basically saying what a wonderful job everybody had done for that scene.

JE: Wow, that was really nice of him.

SW: Yeah, very, very nice. You know, it's interesting because right after that, he reaches in and he pulls a prosthetic out of his mouth. Yes, so you may be wondering. You may be wondering why his jaw looks like it does in the movie, the whole thing. Well, he's got a prosthetic in his mouth. So anyhow, it was a very interesting and gratifying to be a small part of it.

JE: And I thought the performance by John Lisko is pretty strong.

SW: I did too. And of course, I was very interesting to see how they portrayed a United States attorney in the movie. Another colleague of mine who was also the United States attorney after I was, a fellow named French Orders. He was the legal consultant on that movie. I got together with Trent, and I gave him a vintage badge that they gave the US attorneys back in the late '20s, early '30s, which is about this time frame. We agreed to give that to Lift out to show him our appreciation for what we thought was a very fine job that he did.

JE: So it was a US attorney's badge that you gave him. Where did you obtain that?

SW: Well, what's happened is they have started reproducing those. Not giving them out but reproducing them, and they, when they give out awards now for a time, they would have those badges in the frame. And I had some of those. I thought, "You know, this would be something nice that Lift out can take with him and remember his time in federal court."

JE: How many days or weeks did you spend on this project from start to finish?

JE: Probably a month. There be days when I didn't go up there. There'd be days when I went up for, you know, several days at a time. Interestingly, it was during the heat of the summer, and, you know, we're in three-piece wool suit. No air conditioning in that courtroom. It was pretty interesting.

You spend—it was also during COVID, and so we would end up having to take a COVID test here or go up to Bartlesville and take a COVID test, come back to Tulsa, then go up there the next day and take a COVID test where we would meet up where we were getting our costumes on and having makeup done and all that business. There was all that time back and forth.

And then when you're up there, you spend hours during the day in trailers waiting to be called out to go do the same. And then you go and do the scene, and that you may do the scene four, five, six, seven, eight times. And then you're done. There was one day where we were going to do a scene that involved us being in a barroom in downtown Pawhuska, and it was afternoon hot sun. We're waiting outside in the hot sun probably for two or three hours. Finally, they get us all lined up, and they tell us it's too late in

the day. Let's go home. And from my recollection of looking at the movie, that scene never made it in the movie.

JE: Hmm.

SW: So I guess they ever came back and did it again. Anyhow, that's kind of how it went. You would, you know, you would spend a lot of downtime. And then you would go, and they, they would do a thing over and over and over again.

JE: Impressive then to also watch Mr. Scorsese in action.

SW: Just fascinating, you know, when we were doing the Fort Worth Stockyard scene, Scorsese would come out and talk to the director, and De Niro would go over and talk to Scorsese. And I have this image of the two of them, of course, I didn't know this at the time, but I noticed that De Niro was really hobbling, and he looked small and was really having trouble making it over to where he was going to talk to Scorsese. I later found out that offset where he was staying, I guess in Bartlesville, he twisted his knee, did something to his knee, and he had to go up to New York and have it looked after. That was kind of a moment for me when I see the two of them together.

You know, they've done things together before, and they were obviously having a conversation about how they wanted this thing to look. And it was an interesting thing. In the movie, you don't see this, the whole scene. You just see one picture of him standing with this rodeo star with a crowd of people around them in the whole scene. I guess they cut it out, but he was supposed to come in behind me and kind of push me out of the way to get to this rodeo star.

And you don't see any of that. You just see the still. It's almost like a still shot of the two of them and with a crowd of adorers.

JE: What are your feelings about the story, the filming, your participation, kind of an overall that you're probably going to carry with you now for the rest of your life?

SW: Reading the book, knowing who was going to be involved in it, I thought this is really worthy, and it's a story that needs to be told. I was also pleased

to see that they incorporated into the movie footage and storyline regarding the Tulsa Massacre slash riot.

JE: Yes.

SW: I was very fortunate from a variety of standpoints.

JE: Well, I'm just really pleased for you that you had this experience, particularly because of your background. And I do appreciate your sharing this story with us here for Voices of Oklahoma. Thank you, Scott, and relish in the story for the rest of your life.

SW: Okay, John. I'm greatly honored, and thank you for including me.

JE: Yep. Absolutely. Thank you.

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