

Melvin & Jasmine Moran

A story of humility, compassion
and, always, good cheer.

Chapter 1 - 0:58

Introduction

John Erling: Born in St. Joseph, Missouri to European Jews, Melvin Moran grew up in Oklahoma. He attended schools in Tulsa and settled with his family in Seminole, Oklahoma in the oil business. He met his wife Jasmine while serving the United States Air Force in London. In this interview, Jasmine will tell you about her walk to elementary school while German bombs were falling during World War II. Together they raised three children as Melvin donated his time to public service in Seminole and various state boards. The couple's dream of a children's museum became a reality in 1993 and has made a major impact on children from across the United States and more than 60 countries. The Jasmine Moran Children's Museum in Seminole is a major Oklahoma educational facility that will impact the lives of children forever. Listen now to this remarkable story made possible by The Williams Companies Foundation, one of the founding sponsors of VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 - 7:06

The Start

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is August 19th 2010.

Melvin Moran: My name is Melvin R. Moran. Melvin Robert Moran.

JE: Were you named after somebody special?

MM: Yes, I was named after my grandfather. In the Jewish religion, a Jewish child is named after a deceased person, and I was named after my grandfather on my father's side.

JE: Your birth date and your present age?

MM: I am 79 years old. I was born September 18th, 1930.

JE: Tell us where we are recording this interview.

MM: In the offices of Moran Oil Enterprises and Moran-K Oil in Seminole, Oklahoma, one block off of Main Street.

(Office door opens and a woman enters.)

JE: Hello! Well, this would be Jasmine?

MM: This would be Jasmine, and this would be John.

Jasmine Moran: It's very nice to meet you.

JE: And it's very nice to meet you, too.

JM: Thank you.

JE: Thank you for joining us.

JM: I apologize for being late. My two dogs decided that one was going out and the other one wouldn't go.

JE: Oh, I know.

JM: And she's so stubborn.

JE: They do run our families.

JM: Yes, they do.

JE: We have three dogs so we know what dog life is about.

JM: We have to do what they want us to do.

JE: They're in control.

JM: Indeed.

JE: Now when we're talking, and Melvin says something and you want to add to it, just jump in and do it.

JM: Okay.

JE: Now, where were you born Melvin?

MM: I was born in St. Joseph, Missouri. At the time of my birth, my parents lived in Maud, Oklahoma, but I was born in St. Joseph because that was the home of my mother's parents. My younger brother Sydney was born in St. Joseph for exactly the same reason.

JE: And your mother's name and maiden name?

MM: My mother's maiden name was Elsie Fine. She was one of seven children. I'm not sure where she was born. She always told me that she was born in Poland. Her sister, however, said no, that wasn't accurate, she was born in Russia. Her brother said, no, that was not accurate she was born in Latvia. She was brought to this country when she was two years old. And brought to St. Joseph, Missouri where her family lived for many, many years.

JE: So she grew up in that community?

MM: She did. She graduated from St. Joseph, Missouri high school. She went to business school after that, and later became a secretary for my father. When she met my father she was living in Kansas City, Missouri. And my dad proposed her on their third date.

JE: What was your mother like? Describe her personality.

MM: She was the most, gentle person I've ever met. I mean she never ever raised her voice. She was always a peacemaker. Everyone loved her. She was just a delight.

JE: Did she have a big influence on your life?

MM: She had a huge influence on my life. I would like to think that my personality approaches hers at least in some respect. Because she was a person that I loved dearly, and I think everyone who knew her loved her dearly.

JE: Your father's name?

MM: My father came to this country in 1921. He was 18 years old. He did not speak a word of English. He came from the country of Latvia. In fact the ship he came on was the SS Latvia. My father's name was Meer Maron. Because that last name was so close to the word "moron" and Dad learned what that meant, so he switched the "o" in the "a" around and changed the name to Moran. And we are grateful that he did.

JE: And then he became Meyer?

MM: He changed Meer to Meyer by adding a "y" between the two "e's". He came by himself. He was the first one. And each time that he was able to earn enough money, he would send the money to Europe and another family member would come over. Eventually, his parents and all of his sisters and his brother came over except for one sister. He sent her the money to come over and that was during the time that World War II broke out. She was not able to leave Latvia to come and she ended up spending the war years in Siberia. After the war was over, she moved to Israel and spent the rest of her life in Israel.

JE: When he first came here to the United States, what city did he go to?

MM: His first stop was Muncie, Indiana because he had a family member there. And he stayed there only a very short time and then he came to Nowata, Oklahoma. He had an uncle in Nowata that had a scrap yard. He sold scrap. So, Dad went to high school and learned English in Nowata high school. And learned a little bit about the scrap business and then decided to set out on his own. Meanwhile, this was a busy and fairly booming area. He went to Maud, Oklahoma. He didn't have any money at all. So he went to the First National Bank of Seminole and he borrowed \$1,000. He was certainly not credit worthy, but they loaned him \$1,000. He used that money to purchase a pickup truck. He did not have money for the truck and a place to live, so for some period of time he lived in his truck. He would go to various oil companies and buy scrap from them that they didn't use anymore from the various oil wells. He became very friendly with a man by the name of Bill Larue who worked for Phillips Petroleum. Bill was very good to dad and let dad know about scraps that Phillips had, which was quite a lot.

From that he had a scrap yard, and from that he went into the pipe business. And from that he went into oil field equipment of all types: tanks and pump units and so forth. And after spending about five or six years in Maud, he came to Seminole to start off a scrap

yard here and then a pipe yard-

JE: Somehow he found his way in 1929 into Kansas City?

MM: Right. It was in Kansas City that he met my mother, Elsie Fine on a blind date, and she was a secretary there. And he started dating her and on the third date he proposed to her. She accepted, and they were married not long after. A year later I was born.

JE: Her family, the Fine family actually lived in St. Joseph?

MM: Yes, the Fine family lived in St. Joseph, Missouri and they had a small grocery store. The family lived in the store. In fact two of my mother's sisters, my aunts, they bedded on top of a piano that they had. It was very sparse, frugal living. But my mother's parents spent the rest of their lives in the grocery store and the sisters all worked in the store until eventually they got married.

JE: From that marriage, from your father and mother, there were two sons?

MM: I was the oldest. I was born in 1930. And my brother Sidney was born in 1932. Five years later in 1937 my sister Ethel was born. She really hated the name Ethel. My mother had told her that she had planned to name her daughter Jeannie, but my father's sister who was still in Europe, died in Europe and her name was Ethel. So my father decided to name his daughter after his deceased sister. But, after my sister Ethel became an adult, she changed her name back to Jeannie, which was the original name that was planned for her.

Chapter 3 - 4:23

Oil Boom

John Erling: So, you lived in Maud, how long did you live there then before you moved?

Melvin Moran: Sometime when I was about four or five years old we moved to Seminole. And then I attended kindergarten in Seminole up through the first half of the seventh grade in Seminole schools. By this time I was 11 years old. A Jewish child has a Bar Mitzvah when they are 13 years old and it takes quite a bit of study. And my dad was very determined that I would have a Bar Mitzvah and that it would be a proper one. So he decided to move to Tulsa simply so I could go to Tulsa and study for my Bar Mitzvah.

JE: So, they moved to Seminole--was that about the time then that the oil boom was on in the Seminole area?

MM: The oil boom in the Seminole area actually started in 1926, but it was still pretty hot and heavy during the time that we were there. Seminole, because of the oil boom, became the oilfield supply center of Oklahoma. Supply companies and service centers were here and virtually every major company had an oil camp here. And this was quite an oil business community. For a period of time, this field here in Seminole produced one third

of the world's oil.

JE: Even though oil had been discovered in Oklahoma, certainly in various parts of our state going back I think in 1902—despite all those other very famous oil wells in Glenpool and Tulsa, this area was producing more oil?

MM: It was. Actually wells in this area produced earlier than 1926 in different formations. But in 1926 about 2 miles east of Seminole a well was drilled and it was called the Seminole City Number 1. And it was a very big well. It was making about 5,000 barrels a day and wells from this formation came in and many of them were flowing wells, (producing) 5,000 or 10,000 barrels a day. That's huge. Especially when you consider the fact that today the average oil well in Oklahoma only makes about two barrels a day.

JE: Do you have any estimate of how many wells were in operation in the 1920s and 30s? Hundreds and hundreds would it be? Or?

MM: It would be thousands and thousands. There are just so many wells. I mean even today there are 90,000 producing oil wells in the state and probably 10,000 or 15,000 gas wells. But at that time, oil wells were being drilled absolutely everywhere and very successfully. It would just be a huge boom. Oil was struck in July 1926 in Seminole City field. In early 1926 the population of Seminole was 864. By January 1927 the population of Seminole was approximately 30,000. There were 100,000 people in the immediate area. It was a crazy, wild boomtown.

JE: And then that produced other towns around, it wasn't just Seminole?

MM: Maud became large, Earlsboro, Wewoka and New Lima. There were dozens and dozens of schools, sometimes a school on every section, because they were just so many people. It was really amazing.

JE: So your father had Moran Pipe & Supply but then he bought his first oil well?

MM: He bought his first oil well in 1927, but he didn't buy it as an oil well. And the equipment that he sold was used equipment. You can't call a manufacturer and say, "Send me so many feet of used pipe." It doesn't work that way. At that time, in order to acquire equipment, there would be wells that were about to be plugged and abandoned. So he would buy those wells and pull the pipe out and the other equipment off. Well, he bought a well called the WC Davis in 1937. This well was located about halfway between Maud, Oklahoma and St. Louis, Oklahoma. And this well was making about five barrels of oil a day. But at that time the price of oil was very low, so for the company that had it, it was not profitable. Dad bought it simply for the purpose of salvaging out the equipment. But he decided to go ahead and try to produce this well, and he did. Again this was in 1937, it's now 2010 and that well is still producing, and still making as much as it was when dad bought it, that many years ago.

JE: Is that what we call a lucky buy?

MM: I think that would be a fair description.

JE: I mean he didn't buy it for the oil, he bought it for the equipment and it turned out to produce oil?

MM: Right. Exactly. And we've had cases when Moran Pipe & Supply was buying wells to salvage out—we've had cases that happened very similar after that. Wells we intended to plug out but we would try to produce them and found out they did produce and we were able to improve them and they are still producing today.

Chapter 4 - 6:03

World War II

John Erling: What is the first house that you remember living in?

Melvin Moran: The first house that I remember living in was in Maud, Oklahoma. It was a white frame house and it had a fenced-in yard. I remember it was fenced because we raised chickens in the backyard. That was when I was just a kid, two, three or four years old. Then we moved to Seminole when I was four or five years old to a house on Wilson Street. It was a little wooden frame house. And I've tried to find the house today, but I can't. And then we moved to a house at 317 West Seminole Street, which is on the corner of Seminole and University Street. It was a brick house. We thought it was a very nice house. And I remember my parents paid \$5,000 for that house.

JE: Your home was kosher?

MM: Our home was kosher.

JE: And what does kosher mean?

MM: Well, there are certain laws of kosher, certain things we cannot eat. We can't eat anything that came from a pig. I mean, no lard, no bacon, no pork, no ham and no shellfish. We had a strictly kosher home in that we did not mix meat and milk together. With kosher meats the animals are slaughtered in a certain way. And there was nowhere in Oklahoma where we could get the kosher meat, so we would get it from Kansas City and the meat would come in by bus.

JE: Did you get any of your kosher meat from a butcher shop in Tulsa?

MM: Occasionally. And when we moved to Tulsa, so we bought the meat from there.

JE: Your brother Sidney was two years younger than you?

MM: Right.

JE: There's a point where he seemed to have a disagreement with Albert Einstein?

MM: When I was 14 years old my reading material was mostly comic books. When he was 14, his reading material was more scientific, including the writings of Albert Einstein. He was

reading one of Einstein's books and he came to a part where he surely felt that Einstein was wrong.

JE: How old?

MM: He was 14. So he sent a letter to Einstein and discussed the point where he disagreed with Einstein's statement. Very soon after that, he received a response from Albert Einstein saying that there are two ways to look at this particular thing. The way that Einstein expressed it was correct but the way my brother expressed it, was equally correct. I remember in the Tulsa World there was a very large headline: Tulsa Boy, 14, Gets Draw With Einstein. It was an Associated Press story. And my father kept that letter framed in his office for the rest of his life, and now my brother has that letter.

JE: Name some of your friends while growing up.

MM: When I was growing up I had really three particularly close friends. I had a lot of friends, but three close friends. Two of them lived on the same block. On the block I lived in, there were four houses. Two doors away, there was a man by the name of Joe Schneider. Joe was two years older than I was, and one year ahead in school. He was very active on the speech and debate teams. In fact he was Seminole's first national champion. He later became a lawyer and he founded one of the largest Oklahoma City law firms. And next-door to Joe, was a woman Joe's age in the same grade as Joe and her name was Donna Pollack. The three of us along with another young man who lived one block away in the same grade as Joe and Donna, his name was Robert Hammons, also a Seminole high school debater. He came from a pretty religious family and he became a preacher. He was the minister of the first Baptist Church in Seminole for about 40 years before he retired. We were all very good friends. Joe passed away a number of years ago. But Donna, and Robert, who now calls himself Bob, we have still remained friends.

JE: What did you do for entertainment? Did you see movies?

MM: We used to do that. Movies cost 10 cents at that time. I remember we used to have rubber gunfights. These were rubbers that were made out of inner tubes from tires and (stretched) over sticks, and you let them go and they sting a little bit when they hit you. I don't know why we did that. And we also used to play Monopoly.

JE: And then grade school started here in Seminole?

MM: Yes. I went to grade school here. I went to kindergarten up through half of the seventh grade here in Seminole.

JE: And then you moved Tulsa in 1941?

MM: We moved to Tulsa in January 1941. My parents actually moved a couple of months earlier. They wanted me to finish the first semester of the seventh grade in Seminole because I had started it. So, in January of 1941 we moved to Tulsa.

JE: And you were how old?

MM: I was 11 years old.

JE: In 1941, we all are aware of the date December 7 and Pearl Harbor. At 11 years old do you remember hearing about that?

MM: Well, I do remember hearing about that. As a matter of fact, I heard it on the radio. And for some reason, I was in Seminole at the time, and I remember the exact block that I was on when I heard that on the radio. And I was just absolutely terrified. I remember that very well.

JE: Do you remember during those years rationing or that type of thing?

MM: Yes, absolutely. Most everything was rationed, gasoline especially, but sugar and meat. And I remember mother with the various rationing stamps and I recall the stamps had numbers on them depending on what your allotment was.

JE: You could only buy a certain amount of any one of those products?

MM: Exactly. Right. In those days it seems severe to us, but later finding out what rationing was like in other places, especially England—I mean, we had no rationing at all compared to what they did.

JE: You said, allotment, what did that mean, “depending on your allotment”?

MM: It depends on the type of job you had. If it was a defense job, they made sure you had enough gas to get to work every day. Or if you were a doctor and had to make other calls, you got a higher allotment of gasoline. They did that, but not many gallons were sold to you just for pleasure trips.

JE: Didn't your family take in soldiers during the war?

MM: They did. My father would go to synagogue every Friday night. Every week there would be soldiers from Muskogee who would come to services and my father would bring them home for the weekend and my mother would prepare meals for them. She never knew how many were coming. But, she always smiled and took care of them graciously. Over the years we had a lot of soldiers stay with us.

Chapter 5 - 6:40

Tulsa Tribune

John Erling: So you entered junior high when you came to Tulsa?

Melvin Moran: I did. I attended Horace Mann and I enjoyed it. Of course, Horace Mann is no longer there. I really liked Horace Mann and then most of the students I attended Horace Mann with went on to Central High School. It was just a few blocks away. I had three really nice years at Central High School.

JE: You would ride the bus with your mother and she taught you something on those bus rides?

MM: Well, here in Seminole we didn't have buses. So my first experience riding a bus was there in Tulsa. Very often mother and I and usually my brother Sidney and occasionally my sister, we would be riding the bus and on the front of the bus were the words: Colored people use rear seat. That enraged my mother. I mean she was very gentle, but it's just that she hated discrimination so much. And so regardless of how many seats were at the front of the bus, she would always sit at the back of the bus with the African Americans. And whenever the backseat was full, well then the African Americans would have to stand. And so regardless of how many seats were empty she would stand with them. That was her way of expressing her chagrin and her unhappiness with the whole thing. And that was before the days of Martin Luther King, so she was really the first civil rights activist I ever saw.

JE: Back in Seminole there was some segregation too?

MM: There was. I think it was pretty much all over the state. There were black schools and white schools and so we definitely had segregation. And I think segregation ended here at the same time it ended all over the state.

JE: But here in Seminole, would you have been the only Jewish family here in Seminole?

MM: Not the only Jewish family, but the only Jewish kid in my class. My mother used to tell me when I was very young, she said. "Melvin, you've got to be a good person because you will likely be the only Jewish person that many of these children have ever met, and may be the only Jewish person that they'll ever know. What they're going to be thinking about Jewish people is how they perceive you. So it's important that you be a good person."

JE: Did you or your family feel any discrimination for being Jewish?

MM: I never did. I mean I didn't even know what anti-Semitism was. If there was some and it could've been swirling around me, but if there was, I was not aware of it.

JE: Did you feel it when you moved to Tulsa?

MM: No, I didn't, not at all.

JE: You were a worker way back when, one of your first jobs was you delivered papers for the Tulsa Tribune?

MM: I delivered the Tulsa Tribune after school for years. I used to deliver it on my bicycle. The area that I had was around Philbrook Museum, and in fact Philbrook was one of my customers. It was a beautiful area with beautiful homes. I was so dumb that I didn't realize that I had a terrible paper route. Because, they paid you by the number of papers you delivered. When you go a block to deliver one paper, it's not nearly as good as delivering 10 papers on a block. Now I delivered papers for years and I remember whenever we would go a week without-they called it a "kick" which meant complaint. If we would go a week without a kick (complaint) we would get a free movie pass. And I loved to get free movie passes. As I would throw the papers from my bike, I really wasn't

very good, and occasionally I would throw them on the roof of the house, so I would give them another paper. I had exactly the right number of papers that I would need to fulfill my route, so I would be short one paper. And this happen quite often, so I didn't want to get a kick. The Tulsa Tribune usually came in two sections and so I would carefully take the paper apart and give one section to one person. And I would lay it out on the lawn and give another section to another person. Usually I would do these a block or two apart. But one day I didn't realize I was going to be short until it was right at the very end and I had one paper and two houses next door to each other. And so I did my usual thing and then a few days later, it was time to collect. Every month we would collect money for the paper. And this particular night I was collecting and this one person said, "Please don't give half of my paper to my neighbor. We are not speaking right now. Please give me a whole paper in the future." So, I still did the same thing, but I made sure the house were quite a ways apart before I split up the papers. (Laughter)

JE: You've had other jobs. You worked at a drugstore?

MM: I worked at a drugstore at 18th and Cincinnati. It was called Page Drugstore. And actually I was hoping to be a delivery boy. And I went in there and instead they needed a soda jerk. So they made me a soda jerk. That's while I was in junior high school. I wasn't really very good I don't think. And I looked especially bad because the one young man that worked beside me he was very efficient. Until one day I remember he had a bottle of Dr. Pepper extract and he dropped it and splattered all over in the drugstore and the drugstore had that Dr. Pepper smell for weeks after that, and then I didn't seem so bad. But I really enjoyed it. And I didn't ask how much I was going to get paid. We worked seven days a week eight hours a day, and worked until 11 o'clock at night. The drugstore was open until 11 PM and by the time we cleaned up it was well after that. My salary was \$12 a week, and that was before the deduction for Social Security. I really thought that I was worth \$20 a week, but \$12 a week with my salary. And Mr. Page the owner of the store said, "Now if you want to get a drink every once in a while you can go ahead and we won't charge you." So I figured out how many milkshakes it would take to raise my salary from \$12 to \$20. And so, I started drinking milkshakes and I gained a lot of weight. Finally Mr. Paige offered me a longer lunch hour. (Laughter)

JE: And then I believe there was a drugstore at 21st and Utica?

MM: Yes there was, right in the area where St. John's Hospital expanded. Because I had the experience, the years of experience as a soda jerk, I was able to get a job at \$20 a week. And we worked six days a week. Again, I really liked the job except I hated doing milkshakes and malts. The reason is we had to wash the dishes. There is no dishwasher or anything. We had to wash them by hand. And if you made a milkshake or malt you had the glass you served it in, plus the metal container that you stirred it in. So you had to

wash two items instead of one. So I thought one day, I wouldn't have to make so many milkshakes if I got rid of the milk. So, when people came in I would say, "Can I sell you some chocolate milk or Coca-Cola milk?" I offered all sorts of different milks. And I sold out the milk really quickly. So we couldn't make milkshakes that day. But the next day my boss ordered extra milk so—(Laughter). That one day I was kind of proud.

JE: I don't know if the word is conniving or not (Laughter).

Jasmine Moran: Very, very conniving.

JE: But I think there was some conniving going on here.

MM: Yes, I think so.

Chapter 6 - 5:23

Bobby Riggs

Melvin Moran: After working in the drugstore for a few years at 21st and Utica, my next job was at Streets department store. I sold men's clothes to there.

John Erling: And where was that located?

MM: That was located as I recall around 5th and Main Street. It was a department store. Today I have to ask my wife what goes with what, and she's wondering how in the world I could have ever sold clothes and tried to get people matched up. And I remember distinctly one day a lady came in and she said, "Hi Melvin how are you?" I had no idea who she was. She started talking about playing bridge with her aunt Sylvia and said, "I saw your mom yesterday and your sister and" so-and-so and she obviously knew my family really well. So I sold her something and then I was hoping that she would pay for it so I wouldn't have to charge it and ask what her name was. But she said, "Please charge it." And I could only think of one thing to say, to maybe get me out of the predicament I got myself in. And I said, "Now how do you spell that last name?" And I remember it very distinctly, she said, "S-M-I-T-H." (Laughter) I loved working there and I think I got \$25 a week and I worked there for several years.

JE: Were you a saver? Did you save your money?

MM: I did. I was always pretty frugal and had a savings account and I did save my money.

JE: Did you buy yourself a bicycle or any of those types of things?

MM: I had a bicycle, I imagine my parents probably bought it but I really can't remember.

But, I got a fairly small allowance it seems like it started at 25 cents a week and I think the maximum amount I ever got was two dollars a week. I always enjoyed working after school and in the summers I worked and I just enjoyed being productive.

JE: What synagogue were you attending at that time?

MM: The synagogue was B'nai Emunah synagogue located on 17th and Owasso Street in Tulsa. You know I had my Bar Mitzvah there.

JE: Are there names that you remember today of people that attended your Bar Mitzvah?

MM: Some childhood friends, I had a lot of good friends in Tulsa. We had a club of Jewish friends. A lot of us were known as the five M's. There was another Melvin and there was a Marvin and there was a Mervin and a Maynard. And it just happened to be that way. And we were all very close friends and one of them is deceased now, but the rest of us still remain good friends.

JE: Maynard was that Maynard Ungerman?

MM: Yes. He turned out to be a lawyer. He went to Stanford University and then became a lawyer. I was best man at his wedding. The experience I remember was that he married a woman that was also a Stanford student and they had their wedding at the Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. We stayed at the hotel because the wedding was there. In those days I played table tennis pretty well. They had a table tennis table next to the swimming pool. Guests were playing and the winner was staying on and people were challenging him and when it was my turn. I had won my game and several people were challenging me and I had won several times. Finally a man, probably about 10 years older than me and no taller than me, maybe even shorter, it was his turn. He said, "How about let's go (play) for a malt?" And I said, "Sure." We played and I don't remember exactly the score but he won and it was like 21-19 and we had a really good game. And he said, "Let's go again for a dollar?" And I said, "Sure." And we played and he wiped me out. I mean the score was 21-2 or 21-3 or something, and he just really killed me. I paid him and he walked off and somebody said, "You know whom that is don't you?" And I said, "I have no idea." Well it was Bobby Riggs. I mean not only was he the table tennis champion of California, but he was a professional tennis player and he was hustling people that many years ago. So it was worth the experience to pay the buck for it.

JE: And then we know he went on to play Billy Jean King in that famous male against female match and he was defeated.

MM: Exactly. I'm glad. (Laughter)

JE: So back to Tulsa Central high school, you had a good time? You were socially active there?

MM: I was fairly socially active. I used to date quite a bit. I wasn't a very good athlete. I played tennis with little bit, but I was not good enough for the tennis team. We had 1,000 kids in my graduating class, so it was pretty hard to get on a athletic team with that kind of competition. The extracurricular activity that I had-I wrote for the school newspaper. In those days there were only three high schools in Tulsa. There was real Will Rogers and then Daniel Webster and then Tulsa Central. Our class did the newspaper covering all three schools. I used to write news stories but I also had a humor column. One day,

without my knowledge, they sent my column off. There was a national contest with school papers submitted from all over the country and my column won 1st prize. That made me think well maybe I have some talent along that line. I did not have any interest in the business that my father had started. And I thought maybe I should go along that line, in humor. The University of Missouri was known for its Journalism School. So I went to the University of Missouri because of the Journalism School and at that time the University of Missouri had a policy that they charged their out-of-state students the same thing that they were charging in-state students. And because Missouri is contiguous with Oklahoma, Oklahoma was only charging students from a contiguous state \$50 a semester, so that was my tuition. Now I loved the University of Missouri. I wrote for the school paper there as well. But while I was a sophomore and taking some of my pre-journalism courses, one day a teacher said, "Today a beginning writer can probably start at about \$25 a week." And I thought there must be something better than that. So the next day I got out of journalism school and went into business school. I guess I was kind of a mercenary, but it was a good choice.

Chapter 7 - 4:10

England / Israel

John Erling: Now your father operated the Moran Oil Company in Tulsa while he was there, and then who operated it here in Seminole?

Melvin Moran: Well, going back to Seminole Moran Pipe & Supply bought oil leases. And some of them they bought the plug, and would go ahead and produce them, and others they bought to produce. So Moran Pipe and Supply had a group of wells, and my father had started Moran Oil Company, so he had a group of wells. So he had two groups of wells. My father operated the company from the Tulsa office. And from the field office here in Seminole, I was the one that worked with our superintendent to operate those wells. Later on, after dad died, all of the operation was brought back here to Seminole. As I mentioned earlier, my father brought over his family, including his sister Ella. She was married to a man by the name of George Kahn. George became my father's partner in Moran Pipe and Supply and he was a partner until he died. And so he actually, while he was living, ran the supply business, and I pretty much took care of the oil part of it.

JE: During your summers then, while you were in college, you said you worked at Streets department store. Did you work for any other business as a college student in Tulsa?

MM: No, I don't think so. While I was in college, I went into ROTC. And meanwhile the Korean War had started, so at graduation I came out as a Second Lieutenant. About 60 days

after that I went into active duty as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

JE: You were 16 when you graduated from high school?

MM: Right.

JE: And how old were you when you graduated from the University of Missouri?

MM: I was 20 when I graduated from the University of Missouri. I was 16 when I graduated from high school because I started school a little bit early. And then the teacher decided for me to skip the fourth grade, so I went from third grade to the fifth-grade. As a matter of fact my brother did exactly the same thing. He also skipped the fourth grade.

JE: So you were commissioned to Second Lieutenant, and you were 20 years old?

MM: I was 20 then.

JE: Where did you go?

MM: Well, I was first assigned to Sandia Base in Albuquerque. This was an atomic area originally. Then, from there, I was supposed to go to Newfoundland. Our squadron was issued all the parkas and all the heavy equipment and then they decided to send me to England. Before going to England, I was supposed to have gone to supply school. They wanted to make me a supply officer, but our orders were to go to England before I had time to go to supply school. So while the squadron went by boat across the Atlantic to England, three of us were sent as part of the advance party to get things ready for everybody else when they came. As a supply officer, I was part of that advance party. So three of us, the captain, myself, and a sergeant went to England first to get everything ready for the rest of the squadron.

JE: Is it while you were there with the Air Force in England that you actually made your first visit to Israel?

MM: I did, it was in 1952. It was a chaplain squadron tour. There were eight of us, seven chaplains and me. The state of Israel became a reality in 1948, so it was just four years after it had become a state. It was a two-week trip. The trip was supposed to cover Israel and some of the Arab countries, but the Air Force decided it would not be wise for me to go to the Arab countries because of me being Jewish. There might be an incident where they would not let me out. So while the chaplains went to the Arab countries alone, I was given a private guide to go around Israel a little more. But my recollection of Israel at that time, it was just one vast desert. It was not built up at all. It was very, very sparse.

JE: Did that have any major impact on you? Here you got to go to Israel and-?

MM: Well, it did because of my heritage. Even though it was such a sparse country and such a desert country it was just an amazing experience. To think of things so old, and here in America if something is 100 years old, it's really old. And in England if something is maybe 200 years old, that's pretty old. But there, you are talking about 1,000 or 2,000 years old. And to see things that old still standing was absolutely amazing.

Chapter 8 - 8:45**Meeting Jasmine**

John Erling: But then in England you did some dating.

Melvin Moran: I did some dating, and dated a number of English girls. But the way that really got started is that we were at Lakenheath Air Force Base. Our squadron consisted of 25 officers and about 200 enlisted men. We were in an area that did atomic stuff and all of us had top-secret clearance and we were in a separate area with fences 25 feet high and air police standing every 10 feet around to guard us. There is not room on the base for officers to live, so we had to find our own lodging anywhere we could. And so we went and lived in the little English villages in the area. I was living in a place called Harraton House in Exning, which is a suburb of Newmarket. Newmarket is a big racing community in England. And we lived in this big house. The other two officers in my squadron whom I lived with, one weekend they had gone to London and they came back and said they had a wonderful weekend. And they had met a man in London and his name was Peter Miles. Peter Miles, they said, worked for the American Embassy. He had been an Air Force officer who had graduated from UCLA and he invited them back and to bring me back and said he would show us around London. And so for many weeks after that whenever we could get leave we would go in to London, which was about 60 miles away. He would take us to theaters and restaurants. He had an apartment with two extra beds and so those two officers stayed with him and I would stay at the American Officers Club, which was called Winfield House and was formerly owned by Doris Duke. You know, it was a really wonderful place. He knew a lot of the women that were actresses in the theaters and he introduced us to a number of them. One of them was a lady by the name of Lillimore Knudsen. I had several dates with Lillimore and later on she represented England in the Miss Universe Contest. But after having several dates, she decided she wanted to dump me, but to do it in a nice way. She had gone to drama school with Jasmine Lindsay, so she arranged for me to have a blind date with Jasmine Lindsay. We had this blind date and as Jasmine will tell you, Jasmine thought it was awful and I thought it was wonderful.

Jasmine Moran: It was the worst date I have ever been on. (Laughter)

JE: It was the worst date you would ever been on?

JM: Yes, it was the worst date I have ever been on.

MM: Well, I thought it was wonderful. Surely.

(Laughter)

JE: All right, so let's pick up from your side here Jasmine.

JM: Well, Mel had arrived late. We were supposed to meet outside of the theater. I had no

idea what he looked like because he was completely unknown to me. And my mother was very much against me even going on the date. But fortunately for me, my mother was in the hospital, having just had surgery. So she could do very little about it, except express the fact that she thought this was absolutely ridiculous to go on a blind date. But anyway, I said, "Well, you know it won't do any harm, if we don't like each other we will just walk away." So I went and it was about mid-afternoon and I was to meet him at the theater that I was working at. Melvin said he would be in his uniform so I would recognize him that way. I was standing there waiting for an American to appear, and one did, and he was probably 350 pounds and 5'2", and in a uniform. And I thought this was not the way that he was described to me under any circumstances. (Laughter) So I thought this cannot be. But he walked toward the theater and I thought gee whiz here I am, you know exposed, because I was wearing my black suit with a red rose in my lapel. And I thought if he recognizes me I'm sunk. So I thought, well I'll go around the other way. The theater was sort of like a quadrangle. So I started walking in the other direction turning my back so you wouldn't be able to see that I had the red rose on and my suit was black. A lot of people wore black in those days. So then I thought well if it's him, he would definitely approach me, but if it's not, then I am all right. So I was looking at the pictures in the theater and he came over to the theater and started looking at the pictures but didn't look at me. I could see him in the reflection of the glass. I thought well, maybe I'm lucky-maybe this isn't him. So I thought, well Melvin was late. And I thought, possibly I'll give them a few more minutes and then if he doesn't turn up well then I'm going home. So I walked around again and several more times and had just about decided to go back home when a black limousine came up and this man jumped out all wet and in an American uniform, and he was soaking wet. And said, "Are you Jasmine?" And I was so taken aback I didn't have time to think and I said, "Yes, I am." And he said, "Well, I've had an accident." There was a man and a woman in the car. It was a beautiful car. And they said, "Come on in." And I said, "Well, where are we going? He has to change clothes. He's soaking wet." And they said, "We are going to take you back to the Officers Club and he will change clothes and then you will go on your date." So I thought well there's safety in numbers at least as a man and a woman there, so if anything happens you know surely they will help me. So we went to the Officers Club and Mel said, "Come on in. You can sit in the foyer while I go upstairs to change clothes." So the man and the woman bid me adieu, they were going home and they were married couple and they were friends of Mel's. They were going back home to be with their children in their apartment in London. So they said goodbye and left and I went with Mel inside the Officers Club. It was a beautiful foyer that we walked into and there were a lot of people swirling around all over the place and of course Melvin was given very strange looks because he was

soaking wet. He explained that he had been boating on the River Thames and the boat had developed some problems with the propeller. And there was greenery that had gotten caught in the propeller and had stopped it. He was with another man, another American. Both of them had had to jump out of the boat to try to get the greenery off of the propeller and get it started again. The other fellow had just gone off back to the base. And Melvin had to come back to meet me. He didn't have a chance to stop anywhere because he was already late. And he had to pick me up so that was why he was alone and wet and I didn't know anything about the other man until later. And so he said, "Would you mind waiting down here and we can have dinner here because there's a very nice restaurant and then we'll go off to the theater and see a movie?" And I said, "Fine." So I'm sitting downstairs and then I remembered...I had a very good friend who had told me she had never heard of a blind date like this either, where you had just met somebody on the street and you aren't actually formally introduced. So she said to me, "The first phone you see, you must call me, because if you don't I'm going to be angry with you all day." So I said, "Okay, I'll call you." As we were walking into Winfield House I noticed on the left side was a windowed area and there was a man standing talking on the telephone. So that connected of course with my peanut brain that I must get to that telephone and call her. So as soon as Melvin started up the stairs to go to his room and get dressed, I headed for the telephone. I walked through the door, there was a gentleman coming out and he sort of gave me a startled look but he didn't say anything. I walked through the next-door and there was the telephone. There was a beautiful, big armchair and I sat down in the armchair and I called my friend and she said, "Where are you?" And I said, "A place called Winfield House. It's a gorgeous place and we're going to have dinner here tonight and then we're going off to the theater." And so she said, "Well, what do you think of him?" And I said, "I haven't really had much time to think of him. I only saw him in the dark of a car, the limousine and then he was sopping wet. We walked sopping wet into Winfield House and everyone was giving him strange looks and that's my only impression of him. I guess I'll find out more over dinner." (Laughter) I said, "I've got to leave it's getting a little embarrassing here." And she said, "What do you mean by that, embarrassing?" And I said, "I don't understand this but gentlemen keep coming through and they are zipping up their pants and giving me the strangest looks and everything and I can't figure it out." She said, "Good heavens where are you?" And I said, "Honestly, I don't know you know I just saw the telephone and I came in here." So I started out of the door and another gentleman came in and he gave me a very startled look and I walked out of the main door and it seemed like the entire foyer froze. That's what it appeared to me. It was like being in something really peculiar, everybody was looking at me. And they sort of froze, including the desk clerk and everybody. And I thought what's everybody

staring at me for? You know, so I tried to be as dignified as possible as I walked to the nearest sofa and sat down while everybody's still staring at me. And then I turned casually back to see where I had been. I had missed a neon sign that said "Gentlemen". I had been in the gentleman's room calling my friend. (Laughter) So that's the explanation. And that was the beginning of our date.

Chapter 9 - 7:40

War Days / England

Melvin Moran: So I met Jasmine as a result of Lillimore and I met Lillymore because of Peter Miles. A month or so after that, my Commanding Officer called my two fellow officers who I lived with and me into his office and he wanted to know everything we could tell him about Peter Miles. And then he told us that nothing that we thought was factual. That Peter Miles had never been to UCLA, never been in the American Air Force or worked in the American Embassy. He wasn't even an American, he was a Brit posing as an American and he was the head of a really large car theft ring that would meet Americans and steal their cars. I had a little car, why he didn't take it, I don't know.

Jasmine Moran: I can tell you why. (Laughter)

MM: But it would be fair to say that I met my wife because of a car thief, although she had never met Peter. If it hadn't have been for Peter, I'd have never met Jasmine.

JM: In those days, in England you had to park, in fact I'm not sure, you may still do, but you had to leave your lights on. Your headlights had to be left on all night, the dim part of your headlights. And of course it would run your motor down if you had a very small motor. Well, Mel had a small car, which did not have a large motor. So every time that he would leave his car for any length of time it would kill the battery and the only way that he could get it started was pushing the car to get it running again. Because I don't drive, or I didn't drive then, whenever we were anywhere I would have to be the one to push the car while Melvin started the going. After we had dated quite a bit, I lived in London and Mel would come to my home and stay with me. My mother and my father and my sisters all were there, so it was quite on the up and up. But anyway after spending a night there, the car would not run again. In our house, we were not very well to do. We were just barely making a living. My mother was a widow during the war. She was raising three children during the actual bombing. My father had been one of these spendthrift people who went through life thinking that money would always appear in his pocket. It didn't matter if you worked for it or not. So he left my mother in very dire circumstances with three children. So mother had had a hard time with us all. But we were very fortunate. I

was blessed with a very good singing voice. I wasn't a particularly stand out looker, but I had a really good voice and I knew that when I went to sing that I would win generally whatever the thing was. My mother decided that since we did not know at the time when I was a child that I was dyslexic. Dyslexia was unheard of and everybody thought you were a dunce if you didn't know how to do math or if you couldn't read. Well, I taught myself to read during those years but I was very, very poor with math, dreadful. And my mother came to the realization that I would never be able to make a living by anything that had to do with money. So once we discovered that I had a singing voice, which, I have to go back a little bit. During the war I was in a small town called Hornchurch. I was born in Hornchurch and it's a really small town outside of London, about 35 or 40 miles outside of London. And during that period of time our school was in an area and there was a small air base there. And the base was just a nondescript base, where young people who wanted to learn to fly would come into Hornchurch, learn to fly for a few pounds or whatever it was. I don't know what they charged but anyway they did learn to fly and that was it. Well, when the war was declared, Hornchurch suddenly became a strategic airbase because it was in a very vital area between London and the coast. It just sort of mushroomed overnight to an airbase of fighter pilots. And anyone who could fly anything was brought to Hornchurch to fly it, and to try and protect London from the German Luftwaffe. They were adamantly trying to get into London to smack London to pieces because that was the way they were going to arrive and make England theirs. So it really became a very, very bad area to be living in during that period of time. So I spent a lot of my very early years of schooling, very early years because we started school at 4 in England, I didn't go to school at 6, I started at 4. So I was sitting in air raid bases day and night because the bombings were right over where we went to school. Because of that, teachers were trying to distract the children from the bombing and the noises that were carrying on outside of our area. And that became very important you know the teachers did whatever they could, whatever they could come up with to make noise would be wonderful. And I happened to have a nice loud singing voice.

Chapter 10 - 7:21

Bombs / Machine Guns

John Erling: I've got to go back to the headlight business. Why did the headlights have to remain on low beam?

Jasmine Moran: Because of the fact that the lighting was very minimal in a lot of the areas of London. England was at that time stretched out quite a bit. And in the area that we lived

in, Hornchurch you didn't have a lot of headlights on. And of course, during the wartime you know, you didn't have any. They managed to keep all of the lights off so there were no lights on. It was a dangerous thing to leave lights on because you gave yourself (away) as a target. So the norm was to put the smallest low-beam lights on and then if there were air raids coming in, whoever owned the car, had to run out to their car and turn off those lights during that period of time. Because they couldn't be seen by anyone, you know going around driving.

JE: The lights were left on so other cars wouldn't run into them?

JM: Yes.

Melvin Moran: English cars were manufactured with the understanding that they would be on the street, possibly 24 hours and parked. And the battery would sustain them okay but the car that I had was an export model. Just like you cannot leave an American car on with the lights on all night the battery would die, so that was my situation.

JE: So after that night that you probably didn't make a great impression on Jasmine after your first date-

JM: No, no. Well it wasn't his fault. It truly wasn't. We had a very good dinner, a wonderful meal. I had never seen such a large piece of meat in my life because rationing in England at that time was 2oz of meat per person per week. Two ounces. Everything was rationed. Your bread was a loaf of bread per family of four. So we got about a loaf and a half because we were a family of five in our family. It was that sort of situation. You know, you lived literally from hand to mouth. Most people who could afford it, dealt in the black market. But we couldn't because my mother was struggling to put food on the table as it was. So we grew vegetables and what fruit we could at home. Mother was a Scot and one of the most, canny people. She could make a meal out of nothing and you still felt you had a marvelous meal no matter what it was. There was just no way of getting around it. I mean you had what you had and you did the best you could. However, my mother was very much like Melvin's mother. She attracted people that just-she was a Scot and she had a wonderful sense of humor. She was a fun Scot and so people would bring food to her. My mother was working for this one lady in town in a small knick-knack shop. And they knew that my mother was raising three children and struggling like the devil to get us fed and clothed. People would drop by and they would say, "Well I just took all of the apples off of my tree and made two pies and I brought you one of the pies." And that short of stuff, so you know we were always brought things. We were a very fortunate family I'll tell you.

JE: In the United States we didn't feel the fear of bombing like you did. In England you had fear and nerves every day and you're in your teens then?

JM: No.

JE: You're younger?

JM: I was born in 1934, so that should tell you. England declared war on Germany in 1939 because of the problem that was with Czechoslovakia and Poland. We knew we were going to war in 1939, which was when my youngest sister was born. My mother was now giving birth to her last child and my father had just died in the hospital from pneumonia. I had been in the hospital with pneumonia and my mother had lost another child younger than myself in the hospital with pneumonia, so.

JE: So you are like six or seven years old when this bombing was going on?

JM: I was about six, I guess. Well, it started about 1940 or 1941 and then they evacuated the children out of London. The children were forced to evacuate. At certain ages, if you were under the age of 12 you had to go in the evacuation.

JE: But you were already outside of London, so-

JM: No, we were in a very bad area so I was one of the ones forced to go in the evacuation.

JE: Where were you evacuated?

JM: I was evacuated to a place called Birmingham, which was the worst place you could send children, well, not the worst. That was the major place where all of the manufacturing was done. Motors and everything else, metal and sheet works and all of that kind of stuff, was made there in Birmingham. So, it was not a good place to send children. However, I didn't see the bombing there as badly as of course I had seen it in London.

JE: Were any friends of yours killed as a result of the bombings?

JM: Well, one little girl I remember. I really don't remember her name because we were so young. I was probably about six, maybe seven years old at the time, but we walked home from school together. They had a lot of these bombs that were on a timer, or they had to hit a certain kind of heaviness (hardness). They were called incendiary bombs. And they would hit the roof of your house. They would burn their way through the roof. Most houses in England were two-story. They would burn through the second story if they didn't meet anything solid. Then, when it hit the concrete, it would explode. And both of us had walked home. She lived about three blocks away from me and we said goodbye at the end of the road where I went one way and she went the other. I got to my house and was putting the key in the door just at about the time I heard the bomb, but I didn't know (at the time) that it was hers. She was apparently doing exactly the same thing. Putting the key in the door of her house when the house blew up. I found out she was dead when I went to school the next day and they said they never found all of her body she was just blown to pieces.

JE: But what an impact that had to have on your young life?

JM: Oh, it was awful. It was one of many. Every day going to school you saw the results of the bombings that had been happening during the night and the early mornings. You

were walking past homes that still had people in it screaming. And the home guard was trying to dig them out. They would have the St. John ambulances there and people who were just doing anything they could for the people in the house. People were just scrambling and trying to get through the debris with their fingers and their hands while the people were screaming inside. So, this was an everyday occurrence. The best way to go I discovered then was not going down through the highway. The way the school was—it was in such an odd location from where I lived that you had two choices. You could walk down this major street and past a big building where they had the fire department. You could walk past that, and on to the major street down past all of these houses. That was a dreadful thing to do because those houses frequently were bombed and people were screaming and it was awful. Or, there was this big field that this farmer had, and he had been trying to grow crops in it but they were not very successful. Apparently the land was not good there. So the kids started walking across his land and he decided that since the kids were walking across his land there's no point in fighting it and trying to grow crops. So he finally put a pathway across there. And then there was a little tiny stream that ran between two of his fields and he put a little bridge across it. And then we would climb over that and then to the other side and we were much closer to the school. It cut off about a mile of the walk to school. Well, that was when we discovered also then that when the Germans were coming back from the dropping of their bombs in London, and they still had a lot of machine gun bullets, they would dive low over us and start shooting at us because we were moving targets. They would shoot at the children climbing the bridge and running in all directions you know to avoid being hit. They had their gunnery lessons every day with us.

JE: Was any of this machine gun activity near you or close to you?

JM: I would hear bullets splattering but I was never hit. I was so blessed I could not tell you.

JE: But it was near you?

JM: Oh yes I'd hear them. I mean I'd hear—have you ever heard a bullet hit the dirt?

JE: No.

JM: It's an odd sound. I can't explain it, but I still have that in my memory and of course I hate guns, so we don't have them around our house.

Chapter 11 - 6:10

Sean Connery

John Erling: So after that dreadful blind date Melvin, how many dates did you go on before you proposed marriage?

Melvin Moran: If I had to pick a number, I'd say maybe 20 or 30. I would come in any weekend that I could. She would have Friday night or Saturday night theater. I would meet her at the theater and I got to know all of the cast members because I was there so often.

Jasmine Moran: I was in two different shows while he was there. I was in one show called Excitement, which was a variety show. I was a dancer and a singer in that show. Melvin knew all of my friends and everybody that I worked with. They were his friends too. And then I auditioned for South Pacific, which was playing at the Royal Theatre, the Theatre Royal in London on Drury Lane during that time because our show was about to close, and I needed another job. I was very fortunate. There were only two roles. The show was in production and it was already open. The girl that I ended up filling the role of wife was expecting (a baby) and so she had to leave. I auditioned for one of two roles and I was very fortunate to it.

JE: Which one did you get?

JM: Lieutenant Pam Whitmore who was one of the nurses. As an aside, and this is really true, Sean Connery it was his very first show. He was a chorus boy in the show and he had never done anything in his life and he was a chorus boy. I earned more salary than he did during that period of time. Of course he went on to great things (Laughter).

JE: Nobody thought of him being pretty special at that time?

JM: Oh, no, no. He was very skinny as a matter of fact and had one of the hairiest chests I believe I have ever seen. Actually, he was a muscle man in that particular role. He lay on the stage flexing his muscles and would stand up and periodically pick up things like barbells, and he sang with all of the boys. Although, they said his voice was not particularly melodious, so they tried to keep him singing not too loud. He was very nice and I remember him. Everyone in the cast we were all friends with each other. I was friendly with the girls, and I was already dating, so I wasn't interested in being particularly friendly with anybody, but Sean was not an outstanding man. In fact the very first show he made was From Russia With Love. As a matter of fact the young lady that played the lead in it was a friend of mine too. She had gone to one of my earlier theatrical schools and I knew her then. Her name was Shirley Eaton. I don't know what happened to her since because a lot of water has gone under the bridge since then. However, in those days he (Connery) was very, very thin and then not particularly noticeable and then I saw him in the show called From Russia With Love. All of the publicity had already said that he'd been in South Pacific in London and I said to Mel, "He's a liar." And Mel said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "He wasn't in London in my show. I knew everybody. I worked with them on that show almost 18 months. I know we had people coming and going and the cast changed, but I don't remember him." Mel said, "Why would he say he was in South Pacific when he wasn't?" I said, "I don't know." Well, he took his shirt off and I said,

“Melvin, I recognize him!”

JE: The hairy chest. (Laughter.)

Melvin Moran: Another one of the nurses in that show was another young woman that Jasmine went to school with and her name was Millicent Martin. She went on to do a lot of things but she's probably best known in this country for the television show *Frasier* where she played Mrs. Moon.

JE: Oh, okay. Yes.

JM: Daphne Moon's mother.

JE: So the two of you were getting along fine and then tell us about when you asked her to marry you?

JM: I'm glad that you asked, I'm going to see how good your memory is.

MM: We were sitting in a car as I recall.

JM: No, we were not. (Laughter)

MM: I have no idea.

JM: It was New Year's Eve and we were in the Winfield House having dinner. See, he does not remember. It's been too long ago—55 or 56 years.

MM: I'm not sure that she ever was sure that it was really going to happen. Because I was being discharged, my term of duty was up and I was being sent back (to the states). Jasmine still had a contract to fulfill in the show *South Pacific*. And actually, at the end of the run in London, she was also contracted to go on tour. She agreed to stay until the end of the run and London. But then they allowed her not to go on tour and so I came back to America in June of 1953 and then Jasmine was able to come over in October of that year, and then we were married in Tulsa on November 22, 1953.

JE: What was it like for you to come here to the United States and to Tulsa?

JM: Actually, I tried to talk Melvin into staying in England. But he said there really wasn't much in the way of oil business in those days, which there wasn't there, so I said, “Well, you know, I can keep us alive. I'm beginning to get into so show business, people know me and I'm beginning to get a little known, you know until you can get going.” But he was not happy with that so anyway he met me in New York. It was a dreadful time because Queen Elizabeth was being married, and getting any kind of vehicle in or out of England was dreadful, you just couldn't. I had to book on a ship to come out here. The only thing, what was it called? The *Italia*? Yes, it was a very small ship called *The Italia*. This thing was barely seaworthy. In fact I don't think it really was. And I was supposed to be in a cabin with one other person, which was fine. Then I ended up in a cabin with three other ladies, and one very small cabin, below water. The three of them were all really very sick. They had started out from France and they had had terrible weather across the coast from France to England, so they were all ready seasick when I got there. Then about two days

out, it was like a cork in the ocean. We bumbled around so badly that I was getting pretty seasick too. So about the third day out I was pretty sick myself. We ran into a hurricane at sea, it was the wrong time of year to come across the ocean. They tried to drop anchor, which they were far too deep to do it. It just wouldn't hold but it was dragging, so it did slow the ship down. We bobbed around for about two more days and then finally we were able to start the engines up again and take off. But we were about nine days I believe on the ocean and I arrived having lost 9 pounds onboard the ship. I looked like a skeleton. But anyway, I was so glad to see the United States I didn't care what it looked like. It was just the most marvelous place that I could set my feet down and not be seasick. I arrived in 1953.

Chapter 12 - 5:27

Seminole

JJohn Erling: So you came to Tulsa and you made a conversion of your faith?

Jasmine Moran: Yes. I did that while I was in London. Melvin had arranged for me—we had a very dear man who was Jewish, he was a cantor actually and a rabbi, but his actual work was cantorial singing and he was quite prominent in his synagogue in London. He helped me with Judaism and to convert.

JE: Because you were a member of the state church of England?

JM: Yes, I was Episcopalian. Although, you see, another thing, during the bombing and the war, it was frowned upon for too many people to congregate in large groups. So, it was very difficult to go to church particularly where we lived in Hornchurch. Because if you got a large group in a church and it got bombed, the decimation would be dreadful. So what they decided to do was to break you up into small groups. So you went in small groups to the church services. Well, my mother, working as hard as she was, was not able to fit into the grouping that she was given and she tried to change with somebody else, but she couldn't. So we ended up going to church very sparsely. So I really was not very well terribly well schooled in the Church of England. However, I had aunts and uncles in other places that were, but I was not.

JE: So by the time that you came to the United States then you had been schooled in Judaism?

JM: Yes. Well, I'm going to tell you though, in all fairness, this friend of ours, he said, "Jasmine, you'll do very well in America." He said, "You wouldn't be considered kosher." That's the way he described me and I said, "What does that mean?" And he said, "Well, I've done the best I can with you, but you will do okay in the United States."

JE: Did your mother have a problem with this?

JM: No. My mother never had a problem. My mother was very broad-minded. My oldest sister had ended up marrying a Roman Catholic and who renounced Catholicism for her. My youngest sister, as it turned out later, after I did, married a Lutheran, a German. So she belongs to the Lutheran church. So we feel very blessed that we can all get along with each other.

JE: So then Melvin, you were married in Tulsa?

Melvin Moran: We were married in Tulsa at B'nai Emunah Synagogue. The rabbi there, his name was Arthur Kahn. He had a brother in New York City that was also a rabbi. Jasmine was schooled in all of the things that she needed to do and to learn in England. When she landed in New York it was important to my family that she already be officially converted to Judaism before we were married. So, we landed in New York and went straight to the Rabbi Kahn in New York who performed the conversion ceremony.

JE: Then the conversion was officially made?

MM: It was officially made in New York.

JM: You have what they call a mikvah, which is like being baptized. You go into water and you are given the formal invocation I guess you might call it into the service.

JE: Then you came to Tulsa and you were married at the synagogue?

MM: Yes and then after we were married, we went on the honeymoon in California and came back to Seminole. Before we were married I had already purchased a small home, so Jasmine moved to a home she had never seen before. A year later we had our first child and two years later our second, and our third five years after that.

JE: So this was quite an adjustment Jasmine to come to Seminole, Oklahoma?

JM: Very much so. I found when I first arrived-I'll be very honest with you my awful thoughts were...good heavens I've died and gone to the bowels of the Earth. I really did. It was so hot here. It was 100 degrees when I arrived. Every day it was sweltering and we had one tiny, little air conditioner in the house that we finally moved into. We didn't put it in the kitchen, which would have been much smarter-we put it in the living room. So, I would do anything I had to do in the kitchen very quickly and very early in the morning and then spend the rest of the day in the living room because I couldn't come out of there it was so hot. Being English and coming from a cold climate, I was told that my blood was like that of an Eskimo. Therefore you've got to get your blood thinned out more before you can be comfortable in that climate. How the pioneers made it across this country I'll never know.

JE: People in Seminole had to say, "Did you hear this English speaking lady down the street?"

JM: Everybody. I mean people almost came out to see me. I was really considered quite strange.

MM: And there were a lot of words that Jasmine used that were English words that they didn't

understand here, so they have a different connotation.

JM: Oh yes. My very first shopping trip was for some saucepans. You know, to cook with. And so I didn't use the words saucepans, which would have also been odd. But I asked for aluminum pots.

MM: Actually, you asked for alu-min-ium pots.

JM: Yes, I pronounced it differently. The person that I first asked said, "What in the devil is that?" I said, "You cook with it." And he said, "I've never heard of it before." (Laughter) Anyway we got that straightened out and I managed to buy some. And there were strange, silly little things like when I was looking for nappies (diapers) for my baby. We now call them diapers, but they called them nappies when I left England. And so I went to the store and told the lady that I wanted to buy some nappies and she said, "What are those?" And I was so shocked by the fact that they didn't know what they were.

JE: So let's name your children.

MM: Our oldest daughter is Marilyn. Our second daughter is Elisa, she was named after my mother Elsie, and our son is named David.

Chapter 13 - 4:00

Corruption in Seminole

John Erling: Melvin, you saw the need to serve your city. You were on a grand jury. There was a whole lot of corruption going on in Seminole County.

Jasmine Moran: Dreadful.

Melvin Moran: When I first came back to Seminole I worked in the oil field on a well services Union and as a roustabout. I worked seven days a week from morning till dark. I didn't know very many people and I had no time for activity. And then suddenly a grand jury was called and by the luck of the draw my name was one of the 24 names called. The judge needed to get 12 of the 24 on the grand jury. I remember the judge's name was Bob Howell. He lived in Holdenville. At first he said, "Everyone over 65 may be excused if you wish." And several did. He said, "Any woman that has children at home may be excused." And several did. He said, "Anyone that is sick may be excused." And they did. That left nine people and they needed 12. So it wasn't a question of getting the best 12 out 24, it was a question of who was left. After the judge talked three of the people that he excused into coming back, it turned out that they were 12 of the most dedicated people that you could possibly imagine. And they were absolutely intent on cleaning up the correct corruption and some really bad things that were going on. And they did

all sorts of investigations of their own. We were in sessions for a month. I remember we interviewed 90 witnesses. We ended up indicting a number of people and a number of officeholders. We recommended disbarment of five lawyers. A grand jury has two officers, the clerk and the foreman. And I was elected as the clerk of the grand jury. So, when there were trials for some of these people, I was one of the people that they called upon to testify. When we met with the Oklahoma Bar Association's investigators to discuss disbarment I was one of the people involved in that. So, I was very involved. Going through that experience, I realized that if people don't get involved in their communities and their government that this is the kind of bad government that they are going to have. So a few years later, a city councilman's seat for our district in the city opened up. I ran for it and had two or three opponents and I was elected. They were two-year terms and I served seven terms as a councilman. For six of those years, I was selected as vice mayor. During those years a number of times people came up to me and said, "Why don't you run for mayor?" And I had no desire to be mayor. But finally, somebody that I really, really respected, his name was Milt Phillips. He was a publisher of a newspaper. And he came to me and said, "I would like for you to be mayor, would you please run?" He had done so much good for the community I feel like I couldn't say no to him and that's when I agreed to run for mayor. I served two terms as mayor.

Jasmine Moran: Going back though, he skipped several things. During the period of time when he was on the grand jury, they were sequestered in the hotel in Wewoka. So I was alone in the house expecting my first child. I had all kinds of phone calls during the night with people saying "if your husband doesn't vote the right way you are going to be in trouble" and this sort of stuff. I didn't know who it was but I really thought I was in the middle of Chicago. I kept thinking I wonder if I've made a dreadful mistake and I should go back to my mother. It was a very, very difficult period of time that we both went through.

John Erling: I'm sure you felt that feeling many, many times coming here. (Laughter)

Jasmine Moran. I did, but more so during that time.

John Erling: So are we talking about the late 50s?

Melvin Moran: Actually, I don't know the year of the grand jury but if I had to guess I would say probably in the mid-50s, 1955 or 1956.

JE: How many Jewish families were in Seminole at this time?

MM: At that time in Seminole, maybe four or five in the community. Today we have three. And I'm very proud of the fact that Seminole has a synagogue here. In fact we are the only city in Oklahoma outside of Oklahoma City and Tulsa that has a synagogue. We maintain it not just for the three families here, but for families in the area who come down. We have a roll of probably 20 or 25 families.

Chapter 14 - 3:55**Good Deeds**

John Erling: You've been very helpful, both of you, to people in the community. Is that because you think you should be or is that because of your religion?

Jasmine Moran: It's a combination. I watched my mother when I was a little girl and there were times when it was very hard, especially during the war. And I had seen people come by and try to sell something to my mother. The Salvation Army people would come by and try to sell tickets and my mother would always try to help them and buy from them or whatever. It was a case where my mother was a very good woman with very little circumstance to be good. But she had this need to help people. And actually I've seen her give her dinner away on several occasions to people who obviously needed it worse than we did. And we were really struggling during the war years. It wasn't an easy time for us. I mean, goodness knows how she even put food on the table. I don't know, but she always managed to. And Melvin went through the same thing. His family was poor and they came from very poor circumstances originally. His father had had a very difficult time. And so, this is inbred in you. You realize the need and you don't turn away from it when you see it.

Melvin Moran: And I would agree with Jasmine's statement. It was definitely both certainly part religious and that a Jewish person is supposed to do a mitzvah, a good deed every day. You can translate that however you wish. But, I translate it as you're supposed to help people every day that you can. And so we've always tried to do that. We've been involved in things that have helped people. As an example, we started the idea of a community Christmas dinner. We do it under the sponsorship of the Seminole Rotary Club. In the very beginning, at our first dinner, Jasmine was the cook.

Jasmine Moran: It's frightening how I didn't know how many people were coming.

MM: Now we serve 700 people every Christmas Day and I am proud of Seminole Rotarians because they give up their Christmas Day to serve dinner to 700 people. About 500 come to the place where we serve the dinner and we deliver about 200 meals. This is our 31st year to do that.

JE: What is it Shepherd's pie?

JM: Oh, I wish I had the ability to make a nice Shepherd's pie. I was one of these young women who did not spend much time in the kitchen. My mother was a marvelous cook and she could cook anything. She tried her best with me but pastry was not one of the things that she managed to get through to me.

JE: So you didn't make Shepherd's pie for the Christmas dinner? (Laughter)

JM: No, no. They were very lucky to get turkey and anything else that was edible.

JE: You were a Jewish family getting involved in the Christmas dinner?

JM: Well we decided, you see everybody was home together and we noticed the need. This town had a lot of elderly people who were on their own on Christmas Day, sitting there in front of the television eating may be a ham sandwich if they could put it together or possibly something they had bought from the store. But, generally they were on their own. And we thought this is so sad that there are many, many people who are just not celebrating their own holidays and festivities. We decided to do something to help them, and this how the formation got started. We read about Red Andrews. He had already started the one in Oklahoma City. So we thought this would be a really nice idea to do something here in Seminole. We didn't know how to get started and we didn't know what the funding was, but we had the Rotary Club behind us and they were really good about it. The Rotarians were marvelous. We all came together as a group. There wasn't just one single person. We sat down with people and talked with people and they thought it was a jolly good idea and so that's how it got started.

JE: You still use your English phrases don't you? (Laughter) So does that continue until this day in 2010?

MM: It continues till this day and every year we have a raffle. We sell tickets to win a trip to Las Vegas. That's mainly the money we use to go ahead and do the dinner. Not only do the Rotarians give up their Christmas Day, we have 20 volunteers from the community. When we deliver 200 meals it takes a lot of people to make the deliveries. There's a lot of work to it, but we are never short of people.

JM: We've always had volunteers come from the fire department and the police department and those that are working are usually the ones to have helped us to the food to carry it out to people who are shut-ins.

Chapter 15 - 4:05

Moran Oil

John Erling: Meanwhile Melvin you moved up the ranks in the company. In 1981 your family sold their interest in the Moran Pipe and Supply Company?

Melvin Moran: Correct and the reason we sold, frankly, was because business was so good. When I went to work for the company initially our sales for pipe and equipment totaled \$300,000 a year. By the time we sold out in 1981, our sales were \$2 million a month. But it was a seven-day, 24-hour a day job basically. If somebody is drilling an oil well, they don't order the pipe for it until they know that they've actually struck oil. And then they want it immediately because every hour that you delay costs them thousands of dollars. So you

are on-call all the time and meanwhile still trying to run an oil company. So we decided that we had best just do one or the other. I decided to stick with the oil company and we sold Moran Pipe and Supply.

JE: In the 80s your oil business hit a rough time. But somehow the company was able to see it through and you didn't have to lay anybody off.

MM: In January 1986 the price of oil collapsed. Going into January 1986, the price of oil was \$28/barrel. When the price collapsed it got as low as \$9/barrel. The average price for the year 1986 was \$14/barrel. The cost of lifting a barrel of oil just from the ground to the surface was more than we sold the oil for. Basically, for every barrel of oil we sold we lost money. Going into that time, and this is a Chamber of Commerce count so it might be exaggerated a little bit, but we had 200 oil-related companies. After several years of this depression of the oil business, we were down to about 20 firms, and those that were left were just shells themselves. We were I think the only company that I know of that didn't lay anybody off, because they're good people and I am an optimist by heart. I always felt that the business was going to come back. So we borrowed money to make payroll and we kept going. And sure enough after a few years the price did come back and we prospered.

JE: You've been invited as an expert lecturer, advising Presidents. Bill Clinton invited you to the White House three times. That's pretty heady stuff.

MM: Well, actually I was invited to the White House three times but to meet with the President twice.

JM: Hillary, once.

MM: Yes, I met with the First Lady once. And of course I don't kid myself that they really needed me for advice, but I was very honored to go. One time had to do with President Clinton and a program that he was promoting. Another time it had to do with economics and tax rates. The third time was to meet with the First Lady and it had to do with her healthcare plan. The time that I met with Hillary, there were eight of us at a table and I was seated directly across from Hillary. I well remember that the first time I had gone to meet the President, Jasmine says, "Where's your camera?" and I said, "This is an economic discussion, that would not be appropriate." I didn't take a camera and I was the only one there who didn't. And then the second time was with Hillary, so that time I took my camera and I was right across the table from Hillary. When there was a pause in the conversation I got my camera out and I focused on her and she posed and I clicked and there was nothing because the battery had gone dead. (Laughter) But I am certain that the reason that I was invited is that I had a good relationship with then Senator David Boren. I am certain that the White House had done some research and thought maybe if they could influence me I would say something positive to Senator Boren on

that particular issue. But I never did because I felt that Senator Boren had a lot smarter people to advise him. But I treasure my trips to the White House.

JE: Yes, and to speak before the President. How did you find him to be?

MM: I was amazed by him, I thought he was eloquent and a wonderful person. The first time that I saw President Clinton was actually through an Oklahoma Hall of Fame that they had. He was the presenter, the one who introduced Governor George Nigh because they were both governors at the same time of Oklahoma and Arkansas and they were friends from that. He had been eloquent then, but I think he's been very eloquent since.

Chapter 16 - 4:08

David Boren

John Erling: You got into politics back in the 1950s and early 1960s, among other things known as the McCarthy Era.

Melvin Moran: Yes, and I hated what Senator Joseph McCarthy was doing.

JE: Tell us what he was doing.

MM: He was accusing everyone of being a communist and he was doing it for his own political gain. I thought that was terrible. I remember being in college one day and I was reading a TIME magazine. I read that Senator Mike Monroney from Oklahoma was denouncing Senator McCarthy on the floor of the Senate for what he was doing.

I was thinking good for him, what a great man he is. Then several years later Senator Monroney was running for reelection and his campaign manager called me and asked if I would be the Seminole County Campaign Chairman. I was very honored to do that. Through those experiences I met a lot of people who were political and then over the years I have either been County Chair, State Chair or State Co-Chair probably for 7 or 8 or 10 different candidates who were running for U.S. Senator, Governor or Lieutenant Governor or Attorney General or other offices. I've always felt the need for great government. And going back to the Grand Jury days, if good people don't get involved then we are not going to have good government, so I've continued to be involved one way or another ever since.

JE: What kind of a guy was Senator Mike Monroney?

MM: I thought he was a fine senator. I liked his principles and I liked what he did. You're not going to agree with any public official on every issue. I can remember very well when Governor Nigh was running for governor. During both of his campaigns I was his County Chairman. The first time that I was his County Chairman he called all of his County Chairmen from around the state and spoke to us all together. He said, "You are not

going to agree with everything that I do and everything that I say. But I am hoping that you'll agree with the overall body of my work. And I hope that you will keep that in mind and that you will still do this work for me and help me be elected governor." I've always remembered that because he was so right. Even today on government officials that we really admire, there are issues that we are not going to agree with every time and I think everyone needs to remember that.

JE: Yes. Mike Monroney ran for senator?

MM: He ran for senator. I am not sure how many terms he served, but it seems like maybe he served three terms but I am not sure. His last time to run when I was his Seminole County Campaign Chair, I was pleased that he carried Seminole County, but he lost to Henry Bellmon.

JE: Also back then you were impressed with a young state representative named David Boren?

MM: David Boren was very young. He was in law school running for state representative. It was a very close race. There were three people in the race and the top two were in a run-off election. David Boren was not the forerunner at the beginning but he eked out the election. It was very, very close. I was a city councilman at the time. When you have a small community, there is a tendency for elected officials to get to know each other and to work together for the betterment of that community. So I was in office as a councilman, I may have been vice mayor then. David became my state representative, so I got to know him in the political capacity working together for our community. And then several years later David and Molly Boren became personal friends of Jasmine and mine. When you are a personal friend of David Boren, things happen. I mean things like we just mentioned, three invitations to the White House. Things like being invited to speak at a banquet in Washington, D.C. with 2,000 people present. I remember being introduced to him by Senator Sam Nunn-I followed Senator Howard Baker. For me it was like a Forrest Gump type of moment. During the times that David Boren was in Washington, Jasmine and I made a number of trips up there and had dinner with Molly and David and saw the sights. For me it was kind of a heady time and I was pleased that I had a small part in helping David be elected. David is such an outstanding person. He did not need me at all. But to feel like I was a part of his political family was a very good feeling.

Chapter 17 - 5:28

Representative Edwards

John Erling: You have met with many Israeli dignitaries and you have met with Israeli Prime

Minister Shimon Peres, can you tell us about that?

Melvin Moran: I met with PM Peres several times and during the times that I met with him he has been prime minister, he's been foreign minister, and he is presently president. But the first time I met with him...going back before that there was a well-known Israeli journalist that was in Oklahoma City to make a speech. I attended the speech made by a woman and visited with her afterward and I started corresponding with her. And she said, "The next time you are in Israel, please come and see me." So, the next time we were going to be in Israel she invited me to have dinner at her house along with Jasmine and Jasmine's sister Helen. The three of us went to her house. The only other dinner guest was Shimon Peres. I remember sitting next to him and I asked Shimon Peres, "Have you ever visited Oklahoma?" His response was the most staged response I've ever heard. I remember it very distinctly. He said, "Yes, many times." Visiting America without visiting Oklahoma would be like visiting Israel without visiting Jerusalem. And so I said, "The next time you come to Oklahoma, I would love to take you around the Oklahoma oil fields." He said, "I would much prefer to see your agriculture." The next time that I was able to see him the congressman from OKC was Mickey Edwards. Mickey Edwards was important to Israel because on the committee that decides on foreign aid, he was the ranking Republican. Israel arranged a trip for Mickey Edwards to come to Israel and Jasmine and I were invited to go with him and his wife and also another couple from OKC. I had never met Mickey Edwards before we were at the airport in OKC getting ready to fly out to Israel. We paid our own way and the government of Israel paid for Congressman Edwards. It as a VIP kind of trip, we visited all of the historic places. We went to the equivalent to our congress and met the leaders of both parties. We went to some secret bases and then we met Shimon Peres in his office, and we met Yitzhac Rabin in his office, and we met the main officials of Israel. It was a very heady experience. Mickey Edwards at the time was not as appreciative of this free trip that he had as I thought he should have been. One of the places that he didn't want to go—he got invited to go but did not want to go—was the Holocaust Memorial in Israel. They had made all of these plans and he said, "No, I'd rather visit some churches in Israel with my wife." And when we met with some of these officials, he wasn't as friendly as I kind of thought he should have been. And so finally Jasmine was upset with him for not being as friendly. So one morning at breakfast I was making a phone call and Jasmine finally had kind of had it with Congressman Edwards and said, "You know you are getting everything free and it's a wonderful experience and you have been grumpy and you haven't been a very nice person and..."

Jasmine Moran: Sorry, but I have got to say it as it was. I said, "You're what is known as an ugly American and I am very disgusted with your behavior. As long as you continue to behave like this I am going to disassociate myself from you." And he was very shocked. No one

had ever spoken to him like this before. It was in the middle of the hotel and everybody was listening including the old lady who was our leader and our guide.

MM: She was an Israeli.

JM: Yes, she was having a fit because she thought I ruined everything and that I was now making a big bridge between the United States and Israel and it wasn't a good one. And she was throwing her hands up in the air and looking upwards. And I said to him, "If you were my child, I'd turn you over my knee and I would spank your rear end right in public because you really deserve a jolly-good thrashing and I've had it with you." And he turned off and he stormed away. His face was red and he was so angry and he just walked away. The guide said to me, "What have you done?" I said, "If he thinks over the words that I have said to him, he will realize just how ugly he has been. When you walk through these various countries and we behave so ugly, that's the impression that we leave behind. Unfortunately there are wonderful, wonderful people in the United States who are kind and gentle and helpful and you get people who represent them like him." She was just shaking her head. She didn't know where to go. And do you know that night, he had walked around all day apparently all on his own and he came back and he said to me, "What you told me really was a rude awakening. I just didn't realize how I've behaved and I'm just so very sorry. I can't undo all of the things that I have done, but I can go forward from here and be better."

MM: And then he went to the Holocaust Museum there. He was born Jewish and had converted to Christianity, but he was born Jewish and he signed the guestbook with his Jewish name. And he went back and he became Israel's biggest supporter in Congress and I really attribute that to Jasmine's lecture to him.

JM: I couldn't let him get away with that, it was just too much. I had gone day after day seeing him be so arrogantly rude and ignorant of his own behavior and what it was reflecting on our government. And I didn't want the government of Israel to think that everybody was like this. We have wonderful people here, not only in higher places but in lower places too.

Chapter 18 - 5:00

Near Death

John Erling: Was it over there that you had a near death experience?

Melvin Moran: Yes it was over there in Israel but not at that time. My father had been a big financial supporter of Ben-Gurion University. Now the main campus of Ben-Gurion University is in Beersheba, in southern Israel. It's a desert city. David Ben-Gurion lived on the Kibbutz maybe 10 or 15 miles from there. The David Ben-Gurion Library was built

in this kibbutz. They built a new wing of the library and it was named after my father in appreciation for what he had done. It was a big event. Jasmine and our oldest daughter went, and my brother and his wife, and my sister and her husband. We have family living in Israel and they were all there. Basically, the government in Israel is kind of like one big family. All of the government leaders were there and it was a big event. The morning of the event, we were in Jerusalem and I woke up and I felt really sick and I was sweating and it was awful. I went downstairs for breakfast all dressed up because we were going to go and I was to make a speech on behalf of my family as the oldest and first child and all of that. I passed out and I was taken back upstairs and I had a temperature of 106 or 107 degrees. The hotel called a doctor and he came and gave me shots and pills. Jasmine wanted to stay with me and I said, "No, we've come all of this way and I want you to go." And so they went to the dedication and I was asleep or whatever, I can't say for sure. They called the hotel to check on me from where they were. It was several hours away from Jerusalem down to where the library and dedication event was. They were told that somebody had been taken out on a stretcher or something like that and taken to the hospital and they were scared to death.

Jasmine Moran: No, they said someone had had a heart attack or a stroke. They didn't know what it was but someone had been taken out on a stretcher but they had no idea whom the person was. Marilyn was on the phone at the time and she asked, "What hospital?" And they said they didn't know. So we were really scared to death by this time.

MM: I honestly felt that I died that day. I know that there are two possibilities. One is that I did and one is that I didn't. I felt that I had died and then I spoke to God and God asked me and I said, "I'm not ready to die there are things that I would like to do." God asked me to make a promise and I did. Several hours after they had gone I woke up and I felt fine. I mean I didn't feel sick or anything. I went downstairs and got some orange juice and I think that's when my family called the room and nobody answered and they got very nervous.

JM: No, actually when you went downstairs was when we were arriving back at the hotel. We were walking in and you were walking back to your room with the orange juice in your hand. And we were about ready to kill you. (Laughter) We had been worried all of the way back. It was a dreadful drive back from Beersheba all the way back across the desert never knowing what had happened and where you were. We thought, what are we going to encounter? And there, Melvin is, walking with orange juice. (Laughter)

JE: The man you thought had gone to the hospital had not gone there at all.

MM: Right.

JM: We don't know who it was but it was definitely somebody else.

JE: But it wasn't your husband.

MM: If I was to take a lie detector test, and get asked, "Did you die that day?" I would answer,

“Yes.” If I was asked, “Did you have a two-way conversation with God?” I would answer, “Yes.” I would pass it because I really believe that. The other possibility is that number one the doctor gave me some pills or a shot, I don’t recall which one and it could be that the medication suddenly cured me. And we are in Jerusalem, the holiest city in the world, and to have thoughts of God would not be that unusual. But having had that fever and as sick as I was, to have felt completely well, and not weak at all was amazing. And when they got home we went out to dinner. I honestly do believe that I died that day and that it changed my life.

JE: What was the promise?

MM: Well the promise was that I would be more charitable than ever. I had always been somewhat charitable. But just to be more charitable than ever and to really try and help people more than ever before.

JE: So has that been a driving force in addition to your religion that you kind of made that pact with God then didn’t you?

MM: Absolutely.

JE: And that’s driven you to this very day?

MM: It has.

JE: So then I guess there’s a point here where I want to ask about your Jewish faith and what it means to you. Do you want to comment on that? Or do you feel you’ve already commented on that?

MM: My mother and father had both come from very religious families. Both families were kosher and all of that. In fact Jasmine and I kept kosher as long as we could, but finally there wasn’t any place in Tulsa or Oklahoma City where one could buy kosher food and we got ours in Kansas City on the bus and in summertime it would all be spoiled. We now eat meat that’s not kosher, but we still keep the kosher part of religion as best we can. We’ll never eat anything that comes from a pig or shellfish or anything like that. We’ve always believed in God and believed that Jewish people are supposed to do good things. So we try to do that and try to teach our children that.

Chapter 19 - 7:22

Children’s Museum

John Erling: There’s a wonderful facility here in Seminole known as the Jasmine Moran Museum. Both of you comment on this, how did you come up with an idea for a children’s museum in Seminole?

Melvin Moran: We were on a vacation trip with our oldest daughter Marilyn and her two

children, Allison and Julie. Allison and Julie were ages five and seven. Our vacation destination was Mackinac Island in northern Michigan and the five of us were driving. As we crossed the Michigan border headed toward Mackinac Island, we knew we were going to be one day ahead of our reservations, so we felt like we would kill a day someplace somehow. We stopped at a Michigan tourist center and there were hundreds of brochures about things to do in Michigan. And one caught our eye and it was advertising the Flint, Michigan Children's Museum. Until that moment we had never heard of a children's museum. We went to Flint and checked into this motel and took our children to this museum, which was in the basement of a bank. When we saw the concept, we thought what a neat concept. We could do that in Seminole. We talked to the director of the museum and she told us that they had 20,000 visitors a year. So we thought wouldn't it be neat to have 20,000 people come to Seminole? So I went back to the motel and got my video camera which I had there for Mackinac Island vacation purposes and I took a video of the entire museum with the director's permission and I brought that back to Seminole. That was in August 1988. In October 1988, two months later, I invited 15 people to come to lunch. Now this was in 1988 and the Seminole depression was in 1986 when the price of oil collapsed. So Seminole was in a depression. I thought that if I contacted city leaders about this project that they would want to have me committed. And so the people that I thought would be interested in this type of project would be educators and young mothers. So almost all of the people that I invited were educators or were young mothers. And even with them, I thought if I tell them that we want to do a big project I thought that nobody would come, so I just didn't give any hint as to what to lunch with about. Fourteen of the 15 people were friends of mine and when they got my letter they decided they would come. The 15th person was a schoolteacher whom I had met one time, but she had impressed me, so I invited her. The 14 people that I knew- planned to come. The 15th one, the schoolteacher, had no intention of coming. She went to the school cafeteria for lunch with her class and they were serving beanie weenies, which she hated. And she thought to herself something is bound to be better than this at the luncheon. So she left the cafeteria and came. I told them about our experience in Flint, and said to them, "Why don't we do something like this here in Seminole? We can get all these visitors here and that would be great for the economy and all of that." I didn't even think about the fact that the Flint, Michigan is 20 times the size of Seminole. That never crossed my mind. This group said, "Yes, let's do it." And they agreed to be the first Board of Directors. They elected officers and the teacher who came for the food, her name was Marci Donaho, and she became the president of the board. She is now our executive director of the museum. After we elected our officers I knew that the big task would be fundraising for the project. So I asked for a volunteer to head the fundraising

committee and there was none. So at that point I knew that if I didn't volunteer there would be no museum and the project would stop right there. So I volunteered to head the fundraising committee although I have never ever done fundraising before in my life. I purposely stayed away from it because it embarrassed me to ask anybody for any money. Our goal was to duplicate this very small museum in Flint, Michigan. But then our board started visiting other children's museums around the country, and there were about 50 in the country at the time. We discovered that the museum in Flint that got me excited was the least elaborate of the ones that we saw after that. And every museum we could find was in a metropolitan area. So then we decided it for going to be successful we can't duplicate the one in Flint. We have to build an extra-special museum, so we thought let's just built the best one that we can build in the country if we can. Our goal was just to build an extraordinary museum. So the board of directors had much more vision than Jasmine and I, because we were thinking small and our museum is probably six times the size of the one in Flint, Michigan.

Jasmine Moran: And we are fortunate enough to have found the building. We looked around at buildings and none of the buildings we looked at were the correct thing. We didn't want a building downtown where he would have limited parking. We knew that it needed to be a facility where you could be able to park easily and that would bring more people in.

MM: There's a company called Power Transmission and Equipment Company, it was really an oil entity. But because of the depression of the oil price, this company was going broke. The bank that had the mortgage on it foreclosed on it, and the building had been empty for a year. The bank was trying to find a buyer for it.

JM: Of course it was filthy on the inside and it really needed cleaning and to be gutted. I mean there was oil all over the floor. It was unbelievable. So we got a group of volunteers in there with brooms and mops and buckets and everything else and cleaned it all up. We were all covered in mud. Of course I made a lovely spectacle of myself by slipping on one of the slick areas. When I got up I was absolutely covered in oil. You talk about oily birds. I was an oily bird. We had a lot of fun because it was camaraderie, besides the fact that we were all in this together. But I've never forgiven Melvin quite for the name. We agreed a long, long time ago that we were going to call it the Moran Family Museum. I had an incident in Colorado where I became very ill and I ended up in the emergency room of a hospital and then I was admitted to the hospital itself. I had put two medications together that didn't go together. I ended up having to have my stomach pumped and I was a real mess. During this period of time, my blood pressure kept falling and the doctor told Melvin that he was losing me. He said, "I don't know why but I'm losing her. I've done everything I can and she's not coming back. I don't know if you believe in prayer or not,

but I'm a very firm believer in prayer and I suggest, we have a little chapel here, go to the chapel and pray and see if that will help you. I think it will." So Mel apparently went to the chapel and when he came back the doctor said, "Her blood pressure has started coming back. I haven't done another thing. Did you go?" And Melvin said, "I did." And the doctor said, "Well, it's working." So that was how my name got put on it, without me wanting to. Melvin came back (to Oklahoma) while I was still in the hospital in Colorado. He came back and named the children's museum the Jasmine Moran Children's Museum. When I came back and found out what he had done, I was not a happy camper. Because everyone's is going to say, "When did she die?" (Laughter) I very nearly did die, so this is not right. But anyway, it is now the Jasmine Moran Children's Museum. Usually things are named for you after you're gone, not while you are here.

JE: Well, it couldn't have been better named, that's for sure.

JM: Thank you but I don't know about that. It causes quite a few little battles here and there about him doing this to me.

JE: But I am sure you are over it by now?

JM: I'm over it. We have an awful lot of girls named Jasmine in Oklahoma now.

JE: That's fun.

Chapter 20 - 7:53

Fundraising

John Erling: Just a little bit about the early founding foundations Melvin that you went to. You had to go to some of those and only pitch a dream that we want to build a children's museum in Seminole. On the face of that, it doesn't sound like, oh I can get really excited about it.

Melvin Moran: Well, that was exactly right. During the years before, I had served on a lot of various boards and commissions around the state so I know a lot of people. I had always been just a good member of a committee or board and just did my yeoman's work. But I found out that meeting people makes a whole lot of difference. When we were going to start our fundraising, here I am the chairman of the fundraising committee and I needed a plan. I was thinking about fundraising and I thought I'm a pretty good writer, so I would compose a wonderful letter about what a really good project this is. I would send out 200 copies to 200 companies and people that might send some money. I thought we'll have the money that we'll need in two weeks and we will build it in six months. Well I ran into Nancy Anthony and Nancy is the director of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. I was telling her what I was planning to do. She said, "Melvin, if you follow

through with your plan you'll be lucky to raise enough money for those 200 stamps. What you have to do is go to people you know." Again, I knew quite a few people. The first thing that I felt was that you had to have something to show them what a children's museum is, because there were none in Oklahoma. There were very few in the country and most, probably not one out of 1,000 Oklahomans had ever heard of a children's museum, much less seen one. So we needed something visual. I had this video that I had taken of the Flint Children's Museum. Meanwhile, there was one in Denver where we have a daughter living. So we went to Denver and we took a video of that one.

Jasmine Moran: Marilyn, our daughter, was also working on the video production company.

She was building her little business for herself in the video production company in Indiana. She knew a lot of people there and she was very good with visual things. So we asked for her help and she came and helped us. She made us an actual video.

MM: She took my two videos together, the one I took and Flint and the one I took in Denver and she composed a video for it. My video was so bad and so amateur, that she had some little four and five year old kids with a camera shooting pictures because she said that the video I took was like a four- or five-year-old would take. (Laughter) And she put them together and she composed theme song for us, and her children sang the theme song.

JM: It had a little jingle to it.

MM: It was an excellent video and we needed to show it to people. And those days not a lot of offices had a combination TV and VCR to show a video. So we felt the only thing that we could do, would be to buy one that we could take with us. Well I was so proud of this video that I didn't want them to see a little video the size of a postcard, I wanted them to see a big video. So I bought a TV VCR combination and a console, you know a really big one. One of the first presentations that we made was to Kerr-McGee. We picked them thinking about what Nancy Anthony had told me. Frank McPherson was the president of Kerr-McGee and I served with him on the board so I knew him a little bit. I sent him a letter and I said, "We have this project and can I have an appointment with you to see if Kerr-McGee would like to participate?" A few days later we got a call from the chief counsel and vice president of Kerr-McGee, a gentleman named Tom McDaniel, more recently he was the president of Oklahoma City University. He said, "Frank got your letter and he asked me to see you about your project. " He made an appointment with Frank and with this TV-VCR, this really big one. I barely got it in the trunk of my car. I mean it was so big that you couldn't close the trunk at all. You just had to wire it shut. I drove to Oklahoma City by myself. The nearest place I could park to the downtown Kerr-McGee headquarters building was two blocks away. Somehow I got this big piece of furniture out of the trunk of my car and I started carrying it to the Kerr-McGee building.

(Laughter) I would go two or three steps and then rest and then continue and it went like that all that way. All the way up in the elevator I have this big piece of furniture with me. And I got to Tom McDaniel's office and as soon as I get into his office he said to me, "Melvin I've got to level with you, our giving budget for this year is already completely gone. But if you will come back next year we will try to help you. And I said, "Tom, I've carried this all the way up here, can I show you this video? It's about a 10-minute video and if you could please give me the time?" And he said, "Sure." As we played the video I could see that he was getting emotionally involved in it. At the end of any video he said, "Melvin, tell me how Kerr-McGee can help you?" And he gave us a very nice grant. We used this particular grant to buy a robot. We found the robot in Dallas and the robot was wonderful because you can have someone out of sight, a considerable distance away and make the robot move. It could move its arms and it could walk and could talk and kids were amazed. We took this robot around with us to advertise the museum. Kerr-McGee had some functions and we took the robot to their functions. We named him "Kermy" for Kerr-McGee. That was probably our first success.

JM: Then Molly and David helped us a great deal and also Robert Henry. I don't know what we would've done without the dinners and the invitations to meet people that he would invite to his dinners.

MM: It was amazing the number of people that helped us, and the number of people that gave us money, and lots of money. They said later, "We didn't know how to say 'no' to you, but we never ever expect the doors to be open. We didn't think that this project could ever come about."

JM: At the beginning of Southwestern Bell helping us, Molly and I were very good friends. We had a lot in common and our husbands are overactive nuts, they never stay still. She's always worn out and so am I. So we used to talk about our problems together and she had me join the board of the Oklahoma Arts Institute, which has a summer camp. I don't know if you've ever been to it down at Quartz Mountain, but it's a beautiful place. I was on the board for quite a number of years. When I first went on the board at my very first meeting, most of the board members were there already. A man came across and talked to me, his name was Ted d'Andriole. He said, "Oh, new blood. I'm going to put you on my committee." And I said, "Oh, new blood for you too. I'm going to put you on my committee." So I went on his committee and he came on mine. He helped me with the children's museum and that's how we got Southwestern Bell. There were wonderful, wonderful donors and sponsors.

MM: He was a vice president of Southwestern Bell and then he got the president involved. Since that time every president of Southwestern Bell which is now AT&T has been one of our board members. They've been wonderful supporters.

JM: What about our little Ford, our Model T? That was David Boren that got us that.

MM: We were out an OIPA Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association meeting in Shangri-La before the museum opened. David was talking about this place that was coming to his hometown. And shortly after the meeting, a woman from Bartlesville, her name was Claudine Green came over to Jasmine and me and said, "My father died last week and his pride and joy was his 1921 Model T. Our family would like for you to have it to put in the children's museum for kids to enjoy."

JM: We asked what we had to do. Did we have to put a fence around it or what? And she said, "Oh no. Our family has all played on it and pretended that they're driving in it and they've done everything to it. We want it to be used." And they have put it in our museum and kept it refurbished all the time. Every time it starts to look a little tacky, they take it out and get it refurbished and bring it back to us.

Chapter 21 - 10:25

Kim Henry

Jasmine Moran: This has been a joy to us. It's done so many things for so many people. We didn't know how we were possibly going to start all of this because it costs a lot of money. We had probably the most wonderful volunteers from here in Seminole that you could possibly wish for. So many people would say to me, "My grandchildren are away and I don't see them very often. Would it be okay-I can only volunteer about four hours a week. If I came down with that be all right?" And they have come and they have volunteered for us and they have loved it themselves so much that they find another four hours a week to volunteer, and so on and so forth. And then there were many children that wanted to join the staff to and they said, "Can children volunteer?" Under the age of 12 it is a little difficult. But most of them anyway did manage to volunteer and we had some wonderful stories come from this. The children were very nervous and some of them would not speak to anybody else and now because of working in the museum they now have confidence and feel comfortable talking to people. It's done so much not just for us, but for other people who work there it's become an unbelievable entity.

Melvin Moran: It was kind of a unique experience the way the volunteer program started. We knew we would need volunteers but none of us had any experience or knew what to do. So eight of us sat around a table and each of us had the Seminole phone directory in front of us. So we simply went down every name in the directory and discussed every person in the phonebook to determine if they worked, or if they would be good with children and so forth, and we made a mark by their names and we called them and that's

how we got a volunteer program started.

JM: And in our summer months we have to have at least 250 volunteers available, and we never have a problem. This is a town of 7,500 people and we have that many.

JE: The Museum has a hands-on area, and a courtroom, name some of them.

MM: By definition a children's museum contains hands-on educational exhibits for children aged 3 to 12. We expanded that and we believe that we are good for children of all ages. Most children's museums around the country simply have the definition of various hands-on exhibits but not necessarily connected to each other in anyway. But we are career-oriented. When we give children the orientation we tell them that we want them to be thinking about what they want to do when they become older. We tell them to go into our Kid Town and go into the courtroom and role-play as a judge or a lawyer. Or go into our healthcare exhibit and role-play as a doctor or nurse, become a railroad engineer, a teacher, a dentist, an oil person or paleontologist and on and on. It has proven to be very successful and now we've been open long enough, we opened in January 1993 that parents are coming to our director and saying, "I remember when my children first came to the museum and spent most of the day in the courtroom and now he's in law school." And someone else says, "I remember my daughter was coming to the healthcare exhibit, and now she's in medical school." But one of my favorites, and to show that it really does work in a way, is there was a little nine-year-old girl who came to the museum with her mom. Her mom was a doctor and her dad was a doctor and her grandfather was a doctor. Ever since this little girl could walk or talk she wanted to be a doctor. Well, she spent most of the day in our grocery store at the museum and her mom says now she wants to be a grocery checker. (Laughter)

JE: Kim Henry has been very helpful to you.

JM: She's been wonderful.

JE: Why don't you tell us about that?

JM: My association with the Henry family started a long time ago in the theater. I've done some local theater in Shawnee and some in various theaters in Oklahoma City. And through this connection I was once in a play called A Man For All Seasons with Robert Henry. He played my son-in-law in the show. And through that connection we became very good friends. We remained friends over it because Roberts always been very enthusiastic about anything English and historical and stuff like that, so I was right up his alley. He had all kinds of questions to ask me when we first met. I was constantly picking my brain trying to answer his questions. Anyway, through that association we became friends with his cousin who is Brad Henry and then also Kim Henry who is the governor's wife. She is a wonderful lady and of course education is her field too. She was delighted to know that the museum was in existence and brought her children there several times

prior to us really getting to know her. And then before we had the expansion, she came up with all kinds of ideas for what we could and couldn't do. She's been on our board and a wonderful, wonderful member.

JE: And there was that instance when Kim reached out and was raising funds for you, and I believe she asked Integris Hospital to contribute is that true?

MM: Kim was a member of our board and Kim and Brad have been helpful from the very beginning. Kim told us, "My children grew up in the museum." They lived in Shawnee 20 miles away. One morning Kim called and said, "Give me something to do." Well, receiving a call from the First Lady I'm certainly not going to tell her there's nothing we want her to do. So I thought for a second and told her that we have our hospital exhibit and we always wanted to put a surgery suite in there. And then Kim said, "Have you asked Integris to help you?" I said, "No." She said, "Do you know Stan Hupfeld?" He was the CEO of Integris, but I had never met him. She said, "I'll make an appointment for you and Marci to meet Stan Hupfeld." She called back in a couple of days and she said, "The appointment is made. The meeting will place in my office. I will be there and you and Marci come at such and such time and date." So we come and Stan Hupfeld was there and very early on he says, "I've never been to a children's museum, I don't know what one is, there's no way I could commit to anything when I don't know what I'm talking about. I want to see the museum." So we made an appointment for Stan Hupfeld to come to Seminole and Kim came also. Marci and I gave Stan a tour with Kim along. At the end of the tour I knew things were going well Wednesday and said, "I can't wait to come back with my grandkids." Finally he said, "Now what do you want from us?" I said, "We have always wanted to put a surgery suite and our healthcare exhibit." He asked, "What would it cost?" I gulped hard a little bit and I said, "We do have some plans for it and it would cost about \$100,000." His response was, "Melvin you are thinking too small, why don't you ask me for \$500,000 and I'll raise that for you and you can put in a state-of-the-art healthcare exhibit?" I said, "Yes, please." He and Kim raised \$100,000 each from five hospitals. In Oklahoma City...Integris, OU Medical Center, St. Anthony's, Mercy and then Saint Francis in Tulsa, those are five of Oklahoma's biggest and most major hospitals. So we had the money for the healthcare exhibit, but we still had to build the wing. Meanwhile, the Oklahoma Museum Network came into being and it was decided that we needed room for science exhibits, so we figured out how much we needed for the science exhibits and for the healthcare exhibit and it was several hundred thousand dollars. We went to a number of individuals and corporations and foundations and we raised that amount of money. And for the number of square feet that we needed it was going to be a floor and a half. The Children's Museum does not like to borrow money, and we've never been in debt. So we don't do a project until we have the money. So we

had raised the money for the construction of the wing and construction started. The construction manager said, "It would be a lot better for you if instead of building a floor and a half, you build two complete floors. Eventually you might need to do so and it would be much cheaper to do it now." He convinced us that that was a good idea so we were going to go into debt and we told the construction manager to go ahead and we built two floors. Meanwhile, there was a lawyer who was actually raised in Seminole but he had never been in the museum. He was a very prominent lawyer and Oklahoma City and his name was Reggie Whitten. I had invited him to come to the museum a number of times and never got any response. A friend of mine said, "He's very fond of Kim Henry and if Kim invited him you might get a different response." So Kim Henry invited Reggie to come to the museum. He has a foundation, and he came down with all of his trustees. They toured the museum with Kim and at the end of the tour Reggie says to me, "How are you doing financially?" I said, "We're doing fine except we do need some money because we're building this new wing and we don't have all the money for it." He asked how much we were short and I told him \$200,000. And then he left. The next morning Reggie called and asked, "When are you next coming to Oklahoma City?" I said, "I'm coming today because I have a meeting there." He told me, "When you finish your meeting come by my office." I went by his office and he gave me a check for \$200,000. On most all of our major exhibits, we have plaques up and we've named some of the areas after people who've donated most of the money. So we told Reggie that for his generosity we would allow him to put a name on the new wing. We expected him to name it the Whitten-Newman Foundation because that was the name of the foundation that gave us the \$200,000. We had our next meeting in the Phillips Pavilion which is adjoining the governor's mansion. Kim was there, and a support member and for governor was there. We had a really excellent board meeting at the end of the meeting we invited Reggie to come up and name the new wing. And he named it the Kim Henry Science Suite.

JE: Wow.

MM: And Kim had no idea.

JM: No, she didn't. She was really shocked.

JE: Did she get as upset as you did about it when your name was put on the Museum?

JM: No, I think hers was quite different. (Laughter)

MM: She said it was the nicest honor she had ever received. She said it was the best moment of her life except for the birth of her children. (Laughter)

JM: That was nice.

Chapter 22 - 6:37**Atomic Bomb**

John Erling: Would this be your lasting legacy then as you think about your lives or what would you want people to remember about the both of you?

Jasmine Moran: Well, yes and no, because I'm a mad animal lover from the get-go. As a child there wasn't an animal that I didn't rescue in some form or another. Unfortunately, when I was quite young, I came upon the end of a foxhunt in England, which was very popular. And I was so disturbed by what I saw and the screams and cries of the animal being killed that I determined I was going to try to do something about this when I grew up. So my goals through life, my early-beginning life was always to help any animals or all animals in distress or need or anything else. So we formed the Seminole Humane Society. We've got a spaying and neutering program going. We pick up the spaying and neutering for the animals if it is adopted from our local shelter which I helped build. We've done a number of things with the animals because I am so determined to see them have a better life than the life of living in the backyard on a chain.

JE: Well then between two of these entities then, the Humane Society and the Children's Museum?

JM: We fight each other over the money. (Laughter)

Melvin Moran: Seminole is a very unique little city. It has amenities that no other city our size has. We have a lot of really wonderful people here who have made it a wonderful place to live. The community has been wonderful to us and so we want to give back and the Children's Museum is just one of those ways that we hope we are giving back.

JE: I can't imagine the economic impact it's had on this town and I'm not sure a study has been made of that, but you know it has to be huge. Because not only will they come here and fill up their tank with gas, they'll have dinner and lunch and stay in motels, so a study needs to be made of this.

MM: Virtually every retail storeowner that I have talked to has said "thank you" for the customers that have come in who are coming here to visit the museum. So I think it has made a significant impact. But, no, we have not made a study.

JE: You and Judge Robert Henry have a long relationship don't you?

MM: Ever since the show Man For All Seasons that Jasmine was in. My part in that was I was Jasmine's chauffeur (Laughter) I took her to all of the rehearsals and as a result I got acquainted with the cast. Jasmine and I both bonded with two of the members of the cast, Judge Robert Henry who was the President of Oklahoma City University and Gerald Adams who was the governor's chief of staff. They both had parts in the show. So we've been great friends ever since and Robert has been on the board almost from

the very beginning and he has been extremely helpful although he was one of those that didn't expect it (the museum) to go either.

JE: As a result of that friendship you have been invited to his house and you have met some notable people.

JM: Very.

JE: And there's a story about how you met Vice President Al Gore's father at Judge Henry's house and Senior Gore told a story about before the atomic bomb was dropped in Japan. Can you tell us that story?

MM: Well, initially, one day I had a call from Robert's secretary. This was during the presidential election when senator Al Gore was running for president. Robert's secretary called me and said, "Senator Gore is going to be at Robert's home on Saturday and he would like for you to come and meet him." I thought to myself it would be kind of neat meeting a presidential candidate. So I went to OKC and immediately found out that it was not Senator Al Gore the presidential candidate, it was Senator Al Gore, the father of the presidential candidate. He was also from Tennessee and he was very prominent in Congress. He was the democratic leader of the Congress and he was a U.S. Senator. However, when I met him he was 84 years old and out campaigning for his son. There were about maybe 10 of us there and he was telling us the story about one day he was called by President Roosevelt as well as other leaders of Congress to come to the President's Office. The President said, "I have just received a letter from Albert Einstein. He says that the Nazis are working on a terrible new weapon. If the Nazis are able to corral and develop this weapon before the Allies do, Germany is going to win the war and you must do it first." So the President said to these legislative leaders, "I want you to appropriate the money for us to do this work and no one on Earth must know what we are doing. Appropriate the money in a secure bill so no one will know." The legislative leaders did as the President asked. Then fast-forward to 1945. Senator Al Gore, Sr. and two other senators were on a fact-finding trip and they went to Guam. Senator Gore commented he said, "When we landed in Guam there were troop ships and troops everywhere as far as you could see." General Stilwell was in charge of the forces in that part of the world. He took the three senators to his office and on the wall of his office were maps. General Stilwell pointed to these maps and said on such and such date, and it was two or three weeks from the day when the senators were there. He said, "We will be invading Japan." These are the points that we are going to land to invade Japan. Senator Gore said he asked General Stilwell, "What kind of casualties do you expect?" And General Stilwell said, "We expect to lose 500,000 men. The Japanese are fierce fighters and we are going to have to kill a million Japanese." A few days later, the same three senators went to the Philippines where General McArthur was. General McArthur took them into his office and

said, "Senators, by the time you get back to the United States to the mainland the war is going to be over." And the senators did not know what to think and one general said, "We are about to invade Japan and lose 500,000 men and the war is about to be over." A few days later they landed in San Francisco and there was a newsman at the airport where they landed and on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle the letters were so big there were only three words on the whole page. It said "Atom Bomb Dropped". Senator Gore said, "Until that moment I never heard the word Atom Bomb. He said, "I helped get the money. That was the first I knew about the atom bomb.

Chapter 23

Israel

John Erling: Just a comment about your love, both of you, for Israel and what you think about peace in the Mid East. Do you have any comments along those lines here in 2010 for what you might project about it?

Melvin Moran: Well, Israel is an amazing country with all of the high-tech stuff and an amazing number of Nobel Prize winner and Pulitzer Prize winners and things that have happened in this little, tiny country. They are just like a dot in a sea of countries that are not so friendly to them. You know we keep hoping that some day, there will be peace. It is hard maybe for us to understand...when they are getting shelling all of the time, why don't they want to give up their land and put Israel back to its original United Nation partitions that were like 15 miles wide. And of course they are interested in their security, as we would be. We think that they really are interested in peace. We met a lot of their leaders. We have quite a few family members there from my father's sister, the one that ended up staying there and raising a family there and then her children, and their children are there, so we do have quite a bit of family there. Israel became a state in 1948 and I don't know if there will ever be the peace there that we hope for. It's easy for us to say give up this and give up that. I think if there was some sort of security that would be promised, I think they would say, "Yes, do it today." But there's no way that we can guarantee what other countries are going to be doing. And of course you don't know what's going to happen with Iran. Because it's being run by some people who are...(Pause)

Jasmine Moran: Frenetic.

MM: Frenetic, crazies, I think. We hope and pray that they are going to be okay. I've been to Israel seven times and Jasmine has been there six times and we really love the country.

JM: And we love the people. They are not at all the way that you might think they are. They are not always ready to go to war. Our very first trip there we were on a tour. We were

on a bus and the young man on the bus, there was one who drove the bus and one who was our guide who spoke to us. Out in the middle of the desert whenever they would see a young man standing there in a uniform, they would stop and pick up the young man and take him on with them. They would say, "Where are you going?" And take him on a few miles because he was on leave from his camp and he was maybe going home or sometimes he was going back to camp. And so they would stop and pick them up. I said, "Isn't this dangerous to stop and pick up soldiers like this?" So the young man on the bus just smiled at me and turned around, raised up his shirt and he had a whole rack around his stomach of bullets scars. Then he reached under the bus seat and pulled out his M-1 and said, "Well, would you want to deal with me?" And I said, "No, I don't think so, thank you." (Laughter) So they are prepared. I told them, "Anyone can dress himself up and put on a uniform and pretend to be a soldier." And he said, "No, I know a uniform when I see one." So it was that sort of situation but they do help each other and they did help each other. There is a camaraderie that is unbelievable around the country. You just felt it. That very first time we went we noticed this feeling of we've got to get together and stay together in order to make this work. That's the only way anything will work, is if you take a group of people willing to put their backs in no matter how embarrassing or sweating it's going to be, do it, and it will come to be.

JE: Yes.

MM: We've walked around the streets of both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem at midnight and never felt insecure. Israel is probably more secure than most any major city in America. There is hardly any crime and security is everywhere and we never felt afraid when we were there at all.

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Conclusion

John Erling: Persistence and hard work have made this story of Melvin and Jasmine Moran such an important part of the history of Oklahoma. For more information about the Jasmine Moran Children's Museum in Seminole, please visit their website at JasmineMoran.com. Thank you for visiting this Oklahoma oral history website, VoicesofOklahoma.com.