

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Three days after Pat Woodrum’s graduation from OU, she began working at the Tulsa City-County Library system as a branch librarian. Woodrum served in nearly every position until she became the executive director of the Tulsa City-County Library System in 1976, where she served for 32 years.

Pat helped establish Tulsa’s Day Center for the Homeless as an alternative to the usage of public libraries for shelter. Woodrum was appointed to the first board of the University Center of Tulsa, and was on on the site selection committee and buildings committee for what is now the OSU-Tulsa campus.

After retiring from the library system, Woodrum went through the OSU Master Gardener Program and helped create the Centennial Botanical Garden in Tulsa, serving as executive director for many years.

In her oral history, Pat talks about digitizing the library system, book banning, and the botanical garden on the podcast and website VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 7:50 The Depression

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling. Today's date is October 1st, 2024. Pat, would you state your full name, please?

Pat Woodrum (PW): My name is Patricia Anne Woodrum, and it was Patricia Anne Hoffman, before I got married and I go by Pat.

JE: And where are we conducting this interview?

PW: In my home which is in Midtown in Tulsa.

JE: Your birth date?

PW: 10-11-41

JE: You're about to celebrate a birthday here pretty soon.

PW: I'd like to say, "Fortunately, yes." But, unfortunately, I wish I was not going to be this old.

JE: And what is your present age?

PW: I am 82.

JE: Alright. Where were you born?

PW: Was born in Hutchison, Kansas in 1941.

JE: Your mother's name: Maiden name, and where she came from?

PW: She was Ruby Schumann before she got married in Hutchison. And her mother came over -- my grandmother -- came over from Ireland. You can actually get the documents when she went through Ellis Island. I've actually seen copies of it.

JE: Why did they come from Ireland? Were they seeking that dream of America?

PW: Yes, most definitely. There was not that much that was available to them. My great-grandmother was married to a man who'd been married the first time -- was very, very wealthy. They had a large home. He died and, unfortunately, before he died, he didn't change the will. So they were left penniless and she felt that she could do much better here. So she got on the ship, and she came and checked in at Ellis Island and married my grandfather, and lived in Hutchison, Kansas.

JE: Your mother, then? What did she do? Was she the keeper of the house?

PW: Yes. She was a stay-at-home mother, but she was very active in all kinds of community things in Hutchison; and then later in Parsons -- clear up to the time that she passed away.

JE: What was your relationship with your mother?

PW: We were both hard-headed. I loved her very much. She loved me, but she thought it was, "Do it my way or don't do it at all." And we didn't always agree on things.

JE: Your father's name?

PW: It was Don. Donald Jewel Hoffman.

JE: And then where was he born? And he -- where did he grow up?

PW: He grew up in Colorado. He grew up on a ranch, and then he later on left, and he went to a junior college in Hutchison. And then he became the head of the Oklahoma Gas Service Company for the state.

JE: Okay. His personality. What was he like?

PW: Oh, everybody loved him. They said he looked like Clark Gable and he made the most of that. But he was very, very -- as all my family has been -- involved in Masonic programs and at different levels of the Masons. But he was head of the Chamber of Commerce in Parsons and things like that.

JE: Well, they would have been living during the Great Depression perhaps in the '30s.

PW: Yes.

JE: And you wouldn't be born by that time. But would they talk about that?

PW: Most definitely. In fact, it was so difficult to get sugar, and flour, and things like that and they kind of hoarded it -- her mother -- to make sure that she had the things she needed. My grandfather had a stroke and was paralyzed at 65, on my mother's side. Always good-natured and everything.

But my grandmother took in boarders in their house and she would get up in the morning and she would bake all of these things for breakfast for the people who boarded there. And so, even many years later, my mother in our basement in Parsons, Kansas always had extra flour and sugar.

JE: Yes. Siblings. Did you have brothers? Sisters?

PW: I most definitely did. And stayed very, very close in touch, as I do now. I have a sister who lives in Florida, has a family down there. She was married to a colonel in the army and she lived abroad a long time -- worked on the base in different positions, using her psychology degree,.

JE: And her name?

PW: Nancy Jones. And I'm still -- we talk about every other week, and she still lives in Florida, and she has two daughters and their family there.

JE: Okay, then. So, you had a sister?

PW: Then I have a brother, Bob Hoffman, and he lives in Parsons, Kansas. He has five children. He has a sense of humor like you can't believe. Everybody's very, very fond of him. He and his wife have an office cleaning company there.

And then my other brother, John, who was 12 years younger and he spent summers with us while he was going to KU. He spent summers with Clayton and me and somehow got a job at the library cutting grass at branch libraries. And he had a law degree, and a master's degree, and he just recently passed away of cancer in California.

JE: Your first touch with the libraries there -- cutting the grass.

PW: Yes! (Laughing)

JE: Grade school. Where did you attend grade school?

PW: In Hutchison, Kansas.

JE: And then you were on to junior high school there?

PW: Correct.

JE: And then into high school?

PW: Yes. Well, actually in Hutchison -- I mean, in Parsons -- you could go to Parsons or you could go to a community high school: County Community high school. And I went to that, I chose to do that. And I rode a bus 10 miles every day, and it was a campus rather than just one building. We learned things like homemaking, and clothing, sewing. And they had a part of the program for a lot of the boys that wanted to farm. So they would actually bring in produce and things. And I remember very well that when we to graduate from that home-ec class, you had to wring a chicken's neck, and you had to pluck it, and then you had to prepare it, and then you had to serve it to members of your family and friends and everything to graduate. And I didn't do well in sewing at all. But my friend did. And so we had to make something, and she kind of helped me make a dress. And then we were supposed to model it and it was at a luncheon with our family. And when I came out, Clayton said I looked like a hawk. It was terrible. "Don't let me ever see you in that again!" And that was the end of my sewing days.

JE: But how were you about wringing the chicken's neck?

PW: Yeah. I actually -- I could do that because I've seen my mother do that all the time and cooking, of course, as you know, and we'll probably talk about later, is a hobby of mine of which I enjoy very much.

JE: So, what year did you graduate from high school?

PW: In 1959.

JE: You know what you were talking about: home-ec and all that -- that was quite progressive, wasn't it, for that school to be doing that?

PW: It was. But again, this was catered towards farm families where the women cooked for the people that worked on the farm and things like that, so... But I don't know of any programs around here like that now.

Chapter 3 – 7:23
Becoming a Librarian

John Erling (JE): When does the library show an interest -- you show an interest -- in libraries? Are you in high school or when? When does that happen?

Pat Woodrum (PW): I was actually -- it was high school. Parsons has a population of 22,000 and that's what it's been for close to that all the time. We lived two blocks from the Carnegie library. And I got a job shelving books there. And then later I worked my way up to -- actually, they let me check some books out to individuals. And that's why I really formed a liking for public library work. But my family was always readers. And my mom and dad would take us, my brothers and sister, to book sales and we'd collect books. And the favorite thing for me to do in the summer was go down to our cool basement with a book and read.

JE: You were so fortunate to have parents who were interested in books.

PW: Correct.

JE: I mean, maybe you would have anyway, even if they weren't, but it sure gave you a head start, didn't it?

PW: They did. And I don't think I mentioned my first trip to the library. I was four years old and it was an old Carnegie building, and it was on the second floor, and my dad took me up and somebody had given this horrible collection of stuffed hawks -- huge things glaring down at you. And there I looked up at them and I was scared to death, and grabbed onto his leg and wouldn't let go. But after I got over my fear of those horrible stuffed creatures, we started going to the library all the time.

JE: Yeah. After high school. Then you went on to college?

PW: Correct. I did. I went to Pittsburgh. Well, first of all, I went to junior college. There was one there in Parsons and I graduated with an associates degree. And then I went from there over to Pittsburgh State Teachers College at

that time in Pittsburgh, Kansas and worked. I had a couple of jobs while I went to school. Clayton, at the same time, went over there. We already had started dating. I worked for the -- I was a secretary to the head of the English department on campus. And I also worked for the YMCA at the check-in desk -- did both of those things. And Clayton had a couple of jobs too and we put ourselves through college.

JE: So did you start dating when you were how old? 15? 16? 17?

PW: I met him when I was 14 and he was 15.

JE: Okay.

PW: And we started dating shortly after that, and we were married at 20.

JE: Then beyond University -- It's Pittsburgh University or what? What did you call that?

PW: Well, it was Pittsburgh State University at that time. Now, it's just, I think, Pittsburgh College.

JE: Alright. So you graduated from Pittsburgh College. But then you went on.

PW: I did. I went on to University of Oklahoma, and then I went to get a master's degree in Library Science. And, at that time, Clayton and I were already married, and he had a job with a CPA firm in Oklahoma City. And we lived there close to the campus. I received my master's degree in "Library Science" is what they called it then. Now I think it's "Library Information."

JE: So that's the seed of library that really was planted strong, and when you were 15 years old. You knew, all along, that that's what you wanted to do.

PW: That's right.

JE: And how fortunate you were, because too many don't know what they want to do.

PW: That's true. And another thing that was really, really fortunate is when we moved here, they had started building the central library when Clayton and I got ready to move here. We decided we wanted to live in Tulsa because there were so many more things that could be done than in a small town.

And Allie Beth Martin was the director who was absolutely wonderful. She was a short lady -- a little, large, short lady -- with a sense of humor, and you could be a block away and hear her laugh.

And when we moved here, because the central library was under construction, the office for the Head of Branches and the Head of Bookmobiles, and the executive director's office was on Detroit here in Tulsa, in an old car repair shop.

The four of us, not counting Allie Beth, had our desks so close in one little room that one had to get up and let the other one out because you couldn't move -- you had to go sideways. And she had a little office, and you could hear her laugh blocks away; and we could hear her laughing in there all the time.

The other thing is there were some bookmobiles, and the bookmobile collections were out in the actual garage along the wall and everything, so they would refill their books. Well, the problem is that a couple of them weren't very good drivers and invariably would ram into them and all the books would just flood the floor of the garage and had to be put back on the shelves.

JE: And you and Clayton were married when?

PW: March 31st, 1962.

JE: So it was in the next year you applied then and got that job in 1964, right?

PW: Yes.

JE: Then did you become a head of a branch? "New Woodland View Branch Library?"

PW: Yes. When we came to Tulsa, then I was hired to be head of a branch library: the Woodland View Branch Library, which was out in the farm shopping center. It was in a storefront in with a lot of other shops there.

JE: And in that time, we'll follow Clayton along with you, because then he passed his CPA exam in 1965, right?

PW: Correct.

JE: So the two of you were enjoying a little promotion.

PW: Yes, we were. Yes.

JE: But then, speaking of promotion, you were promoted then from the branch library. You were promoted Assistant to the Head of Branches.

PW: Yes. Let me add something kind of humorous.

When we moved here to Tulsa, we didn't really know where we were going to live; and we had two poodles. And a lot of apartments wouldn't take dogs. And so we found this house over on Waverly Drive. They were getting ready to put in 244. And it was owned by the construction company. And so they said, "Yes, yes; you can live there until we get ready to get rid of it."

And it was a beautiful, beautiful house. But it was kind of -- and we felt uneasy -- because we'd go to work in the morning and come home and the house next door wasn't there anymore. And I still think of that when I drive on that highway: "Oh, I'm driving through where our bedroom was."

JE: Yeah. (Chuckling). So: Promoted to assistant to the head of branches.

Chapter 4 – 7:14 New Library

John Erling (JE): And then the new library is finally completed.

Pat Woodrum (PW): Yes. That was a very, very exciting time with the library. It was just beautiful and everybody was so happy to be there in the library. And, again, I was the assistant still to the head of branches in that new new location.

JE: And we should point out that Charles Ward was the architect.

PW: Charles and I were very, very good friends for ... up until the time of his death. Yes. He not only designed the library, but he continued to be very active there and feel like it was his home almost.

JE: Right. And I've interviewed Charles for Voices of Oklahoma, and he had a tremendous World War II record that he tells so exquisitely. He -- such -- so articulate, Charles Ward.

PW: Yes.

JE: Pronouncing each word properly...

PW: Yes.

JE: ... and it was a great interview. So, then, was it 1965 that the central library opened, I believe.

PW: And I can't remember all the details, but it was really unusual. We stood out there on the plaza; it was at night. And they turned the lights on in the building from Washington D.C.

JE: How did that work.?

PW: I don't remember the details. It had never been done before, but we all stood out there, and it was dark, and they were through making the dedication talk and then they said, "And, now!" And somebody in Washington D.C. Pushed a button and it turned on all the lights throughout the building.

JE: Wow; and that's in 1965.

PW: Yes.

JE: Right. Governor Henry Bellmon was there to help dedicate the opening of the central library.

PW: He certainly was.

JE: Did it draw quite a crowd?

PW: The plaza was full of people, yes. Standing room -- not even much standing room. All the chairs were filled and people stood. Yeah, it was a very exciting time.

JE: In the '70s, Tulsa County moved their new computer.

PW: (Chuckling) Yes.

JE: ... to a very large area in the basement of the central library.

PW: Yes.

JE: A little bit about that -- the details of what happened there.

PW: Well, that's when computers filled blocks and blocks of a building. And so it was down there and the county computer staff was down there. And the library, bookmobile, and branch heads were down there. So I was down there.

I have to tell you kind of a funny story because down there, in the basement, there was a ladies room and a men's restroom. So, one morning when I was there, I got there kind of early. It was about 7:30AM, and I went in the women's restroom and there was one of the men who had too much to drink the night before, passed out on the floor in the women's restroom. He was with the computer company. (Laughing)

JE: (Chuckling) Yeah. But that was a big talk of the town then that you had this huge computer. What was that computer capable of doing then at that point?

PW: Not very much. Voting cards and things like that -- counting them, and that's ... I don't remember the rest of them. And the staff was really great. It was that one man that just imbibed too much that particular night. Oh, I forgot to tell you: They undressed him before they left him there and he was covered only with one large pillow.

JE: (Laughing) So then you moved from the branch library system and you became assistant director of the library.

PW: First of all, I left the branches and I became head of the reference department and I did that for a couple of years. And then the assistant, yes.

JE: And then you were named director.

PW: Correct. Yes.

JE: And you were quite young.

PW: I was very young.

JE: You were 34 years old.

PW: But I had an absolutely wonderful, wonderful staff. They helped me and it just all worked out very well. I remember in that office: it had red carpet. Down and across the head of the ... there was another couple of offices and we were on that end; and I can remember when the first little computer came out, and they brought it in, and they put it in the corner of my office, and it took me about a month before I would even try it because it frightened me. I didn't know how to use it.

JE: Right. So how many years did you serve as executive director of the Tulsa City County Library?

PW: 32 years.

JE: Any special memorable moments from your time there as the librarian? Advances that you made?

PW: Well, yes, because that was before the time of computers as small computers. We sent with fax machines. And I remember that we sent the first fax from the Tulsa central library over to OSU library and everybody was gathered around and they were waiting over there, and pushed the button, and the fax went.

JE: And probably somebody on the phone said, "Did you get it? Did you get it?"

PW: (Laughing) Probably so.

JE: Yeah, that's memorable. Were there challenges, maybe, along the way that you didn't anticipate? I would imagine there would be in 32 years.

PW: Well, I want to say a little bit about some of the really wonderful people during that time, and one was Alfred Aaronson. I had an opportunity to meet him and his lovely wife. They were all very old school -- very polite, very helpful. And he was just great. Mark Tower. Mark Tower was wonderful. He was with the bank at that time. Doug Fox -- knew him very, very well. And so it was a lot of leaders in the community that were there and assisted me. And it was very comforting to know that when I came into a problem in that area I could call and they'd say, "Okay, Pat, this is what you need to do."

JE: Aaronson. There's Aaronson Auditorium.

PW: Alfred Aaronson was one of the leaders of the library community at that time, and he was of the old school; and Millicent was his wife, and they were Jewish. And Millicent didn't go to very many things at all, but he was always there to help when help was needed -- financially or just support -- saying, "I'm here for you," and that type of thing. And that's why they named it, the Alfred Aaronson Auditorium.

JE: In the library.

PW: In the library -- in the central library. Yes.

Chapter 5 – 6:47
Dandelions

John Erling (JE): The rise of technology and the internet certainly affected your work. But now we have e-books and audio books; and libraries have begun digitizing historical documents and rare books. Did that happen while you were there or is that after years?

Pat Woodrum (PW): That was pretty much after I left.

JE: Because, now, the libraries are taking on kind of a different feel in the community.

PW: In some ways, yes. Books for the Blind was a big program when I was there; and those were mailed out from the library to the individual's home or wherever they were.

JE: And now people can come into the library, obviously, using the free WiFi -- public computers. So they've become a crucial access point for users who perhaps don't have that at home?

PW: That's right. That's right.

JE: And so that shows you the great progress that libraries have made. Self checkout kiosks, I believe -- isn't that happening now? And all those things that you probably wouldn't even thought about while you were at the library.

PW: Well, it came about before I really left the library, some of those things. And I will say that Books for the Blind program was from the state library and they were mailed back and forth. But we were the headquarters for where they could select what they wanted to be mailed to their home. I also want to say that my oldest grandson is an employee of the Tulsa City County Library. He has his master's degree in it.

JE: Oh? And what's his name?

PW: His name is "Trey": Clayton Eugene Woodrum III.

JE: Okay. Well, that's nice that he wanted to -- he allowed himself to be influenced by you.

PW: He's always been a big reader. Always been a big reader. And, yes, he very much wanted to go on and get his masters and that's what he did. And that's what he does.

JE: great. Do you remember as a child your favorite book or books or series of books?

PW: I can remember that I wanted to buy... In my neighborhood in Hutchison, Kansas, somebody down the block had a book sale of children's books. They're children's books and it was The Bobbsey Twins; and I wanted to buy that so much.

And so my mother said, "Well, if you want to buy it, you dig some dandelions, and I think you can probably earn enough money from me to do that."

I had to dig a whole bushel basket of dandelions to buy my first book, The Bobbsey Twins. (Laughing)

JE: (Laughing) Yeah, that's great. Mine was The Hardy Boys series.

PW: Oh, yes, yes!

JE: Right. That was ... I had every one of them, and I don't know if I dug dandelions or not.

PW: (Laughing)

PW: I probably dug potatoes up in North Dakota. Yeah; reading is so important. People who are readers -- or children who are readers -- are likely, maybe, to have a successful time in their academic world, you would just say?

PW: I would definitely agree with that. Yes, yes.

JE: And so we've got to encourage parents. Now, there are some who are naturally readers: like you are, my wife Margaret was too, but many who aren't naturally readers. And so we need -- how do you encourage them to get involved?

PW: Well, they still have, here, in Tulsa and most libraries, they have summer reading programs to encourage children to read. I remember when we moved to Hutchison, that I was not allowed to go into the adult collection because I was only 10.

And so I said, "Okay." And I started one summer and I, it was a small department. I read every book in the children's department.

And then they said, "Okay. You can go into the adult area now and you can begin to check out books there."

We lived close enough that I could ride my bicycle to the library.

JE: Did you have friends who are readers or were you by yourself on that?

PW: I think I mostly did that. My family were the readers and my sister, and later on, my two brothers.

JE: Well, they say that the language skills -- vocabularies -- increases because of reading. So the very heart of all this is to become a good reader. And if you have a great series -- like there was another one -- The Sugar Creek Gang, I read that as well. I could almost tell you those stories and I'm quite advanced, he said.

But, you know, also, we have -- and you may have some comments about this: about books and concerns today about contents. Books are being challenged or banned because of their content.

PW: I am very disturbed by that. It's censorship at its highest and I disagree with that totally.

JE: Books that discuss race relations and LGBTQ identities.

PW: I think they definitely belong in the library.

JE: Including, you know, such issues like slavery and all. We're banning some of those; we're revising history.

PW: I think it's really, really bad. I was president of the National Public Library Association and was able to travel to lots of libraries around the country. But I am totally, totally against it. I'm against it. I'm very religious, my family is, and I'm very active in my church, but I don't think it's right to put just the Bible into book collections without other religious documents going in there also.

JE: It raises concerns like freedom of speech, and intellectual freedom, and those kind of things. You know, I don't know if this is a phase we're going through now.

PW: Oh, gee. I don't know. Yes; it's probably a phase, and it probably lifts its horrible head every once in a while like that, maybe every 25 years or something. But I think it's awful and to even consider keeping books out of a library because of their titles is just -- it's horrible.

JE: I was in Barnes and Noble recently and they had about 10 books there and they had it labeled "Books That are Being Banned," and there they were for sale.

PW: (Giggling) And they're going really fast now, too, there.

JE: "Ooh! I didn't know that was banned!" Maybe it's made readers of some people.

PW: (Laughing)

Chapter 6 – 9:55
Day Center for the Homeless

John Erling (JE): But we also know that the library, in addition to all the good works it does, somehow, for some reason here in our town -- I don't know if it's unique to Tulsa -- that the homeless seem to congregate around the library. Talk about your experience with that.

Pat Woodrum (PW): I'm one of the founders of the Day Center for the Homeless. And it is because of the library. When I would go to work in the morning, when I was down there at Central Library -- and, remember, the parking is underneath there -- I would find people asleep on the sidewalks and everything waiting to go in.

And I kind of made friends with some of them. There was a couple that was married, down on their luck, had hitchhiked and ended up here in Tulsa; and it was the only place they could go to get warm.

They weren't bothering anybody. They probably weren't checking out books; but it was a place for them to come. And I think there is absolutely nothing wrong with opening it up for people that need a place to go to be warm and everything. They feel welcome. It can change their whole outlook on life, and hopefully help some of them.

JE: The Day Center for the Homeless -- that was funded, wasn't it, by Henry Zarrow?

PW: It certainly was. Henry was a really good friend; and Judy, she was on the library commission. It was funded and I think it's a wonderful, wonderful program. I see what's happening now here in Tulsa with needing people needing homes, a house, or shelter and everything; and I know that the work still goes on.

I worked with the Chamber of Commerce during that time, too, with the Day Center. I don't know. We take things down there and leave them, but I haven't been there inside to see how it goes.

But it used to be that you could go in and, three times a week, a nurse would come in. And if your feet had blisters and things, the nurse would treat them free of charge -- and wrap their feet and give them some socks and things like that.

JE: At the Day Center.

PW: At the Day Center for the Homeless.

JE: Right, right. Is this unique to Tulsa or have you -- since you were in touch with librarians across the country -- were they facing the same issue?

PW: They were, in fact, but we were one of the forerunners of trying to solve the problem. And I remember when I was president of the Public Library Association, I was asked to speak in several different communities across the country about how we were handling this problem.

And it did start other Day Centers for the Homeless. And it, in turn, helped the libraries because people had a place to go other than the libraries. And I think it's something that, in a community the size of Tulsa, is must. You have to have something like that.

JE: So are the homeless attracted to the library because they can come in to -- at least during the day -- for some warmth or cooling? And, so, how did you handle that when you knew they were just there for that and not for books? Were they removed from the library?

PW: No, definitely not. Nobody was ever removed from the library unless they created a disturbance or did something obscene. I remember, back there in the early days, there was young woman and a young man that were always waiting to get in.

And so one day I went down and, and sat down next to him, they were sitting in a chair in the lobby on the lower level by the parking lot. And I said, "I'm just curious about you. Are you from Tulsa?"

And, they said, "No, we're not. We're just down on our luck. We were hitchhiking. We just needed a place to be warm and I hope you're not

going to tell us that we have to leave.”

And I said, “You're always welcome in this public library system. Let me give you the name of somebody to contact that might be able to get you some help.” And so ... some of the agencies here in Tulsa. So we worked together with them and it was a safe place.

JE: Yeah. I suppose, today -- you may not be touched with the day to day -- but they still face that: the homeless are coming into the present library, aren't they?

PW: Yes, yes.

JE: The present library was refurbished. And Charles Ward, the first architect of that, it was his plan for refurbishing the library, right?

PW: Yes.

JE: And they've done a masterful job there.

PW: And, again: Charles was a really, really good friend of mine. We did a lot of things together and he was often asked -- in other libraries that were considering building or adding on -- him to be a consultant to them, in addition to here in Tulsa.

JE: When you were director of the library, he established an endowment for the library. Talk to me about that and what it meant.

PW: Clayton was very, very helpful in that he's the financial person. We worked with Peggy Helmerich and some of the people that had an interest in making sure that the library continued to grow and everything into the future. But, again, we were one of the first public library systems in the country to have an endowment.

JE: Where did the money come from for that endowment?

PW: Contributions from people in the community that would make large contributions to agencies and groups that were trying to make Tulsa a better place.

JE: And then every year in December, we have the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award.

PW: Yes.

JE: And what is that about?

PW: That is probably one of the best -- still is one of the best -- programs of libraries of that time and type of programs in the United States.

And it brought, um ... I'm smiling because I'm thinking of different things that happened while they were here that brought the author in and they usually came. We brought the author in, and we usually brought the author in on Thursday morning, and the dinner and the program is Friday night. And that gave them an opportunity to kind of adjust and relax and everything. And then on Thursday, librarians -- like school librarians -- had an opportunity to come in and meet the individual, and talk to them, and that type of thing.

And I'm kind of smiling because I've been thinking of some things that happened when they were there. And I think it was Eudora Welty when she came. The night we were getting ready-- and the podium was out there and everything -- I said, "Now, Eudora, we have a glass of water for you up there. Is there anything else that you need at the podium?"

And she said, "Yes."

And I said, "What?"

She said, "I don't want the water."

And I said, "Oh, okay."

"I want gin." (Chuckling) And she stood up there, and did a beautiful job,

and drank that whole glass of gin that night. Not only that. Clayton and I were going to take her back to the hotel. She was traveling with an older woman who went; and we got her in the car and she said, "Would you stop at a liquor store on the way?"

And yet she lived many years afterwards. She always did a beautiful job. But she had her things that she liked to go to bed at night and when she spoke.

JE: Right. Do you remember the books, or book titles, that she may have written? Welty?

PW: I can't remember right now, but they were usually centered or located in small southern towns.

JE: Okay. Alright. And so the honorarium to these people, at first, was not all that much, was it?

PW: No. And I can't remember how much, but...

JE: I think I have it here. \$5,000.

PW: Okay.

JE: And now it's \$40,000 -- probably could be increased, too.

PW: Yes. And another funny thing I'm going to share with you is Toni Morrison.

JE: Yes.

PW: And she was -- when she was contacted and everything -- she was living somewhere in the east, maybe Maryland or so. We had a private jet -- I think it was Walt's private jet -- that would go and pick up these people and bring them back on the jet.

And so with her, she said, "Well, I'll be in Maryland."

And they said, "Okay."

So they sent the jet to Maryland and picked her up and she said, "Oh, by the way, I want you to swing down to Mississippi and pick up my boyfriend." And so, they did that, and then took them all back again at the end (Laughing).

I remember, also, after those dinners, when the garden was really operating well and everything. Peggy always had a luncheon for the speaker just before he or she were getting ready to leave in the afternoon. And Eudora Welty was sitting next to Peggy at the end of the table, and I was down at the other with the boys -- the sons and everything. Oh! And Walt was there.

And Walt said, "Now, I'm going to make sure that we take you down there, we get you on the plane, and we get you home safely, and I don't want to hear another word of it from you because I don't want you to take a taxi or anything."

And she looked at him, and she chewed, and she said, "Ain't-a gonna do it." (Laughing)

And one of the Walt's sons was next to me and he said, "She's the only one that speaks to Dad like that."

JE: "Ain't-a gonna do it." (Chuckling)

PW: Yup. (Laughing)

JE: (Laughing)

Chapter 7 – 6:30

Sam Walton

John Erling (JE): Oh, another thing I used to read in school was The Weekly Reader.

Pat Woodrum (PW): Yes.

JE: Did you ever read that?

PW: Oh, yes. Of course.

JE: The Weekly Reader?

PW: Yes, for sure.

JE: And so that -- now that I think back -- they were encouraging us as children to be readers.

PW: Yes.

JE: Interesting, in your life: When you retired from the library system, you did some other things, too. But you decided to run for the State Senate.

PW: Yes.

JE: And why did you?

PW: I decided I wanted to give it a try.

And so Clayton said, you know, "Fine."

And I had an office. And I had worked through the years with students from ORU and with things for the library. They actually started volunteering in my office, when I was running for office.

JE: Oh, in helping you in your campaign?

PW: Yeah. And they would take the flyers and put them on cars and things like that.

JE: How did you energize them to do that?

PW: Well, because, at one point, people often weren't very nice to students from out of place -- from out of town -- who went to ORU. They didn't agree with Oral Roberts and that type of thing. It was very

small-minded-type things. But we always welcomed them and helped him decide, you know, where do they need to go to do this, and that, and everything. And so, at that time, they decided to help me. And the night of when the returns came in, and I lost, Clayton said, "That's the best news I've heard in my life."

JE: Did you enjoy campaigning?

PW: Um...

JE: And did you knock on doors?

PW: I knocked on doors. In fact, the state librarian, Bob Clark, would come up on Saturday and Sunday and leave flyers in people's door in the areas where they were voting and everything. But anyway, it was just because I thought it would be fun to do.

JE: Yeah, yeah. But I'm sure it was disappointing. Who did you run against?

PW: It was somebody I'd never heard of before.

JE: Well, you had the experience and now you don't have to do that anymore. Your husband, Clayton, made many investments; and I want you to talk about The White Raven.

PW: (Laughing)

JE: What was the White Raven?

PW: It was a nightclub. My husband Clayton is a CPA, and has a CPA firm, and a financial planning firm.

They just decided. One of their clients said ...

Well, there was "Furs by Laura" first. Laura Dasso and she had a furs out here on 71st where it's no longer a shopping center out there, where the hotel is.

JE: Yes.

PW: And so she approached Clayton and said, "Would you put up some money to help me get this started?"

And he said, "Okay."

He talked to me and I said, you know, "It sounds kind of fun."

And so he helped her open the store out there. Well, it had pink carpet. It was just really, really great. I'm still down here at the library and everything. And I decided one Saturday to go down there and just see if I could sell a fur coat. I'd never done anything; I'd never been a salesperson.

So I went down there and, like I said, it was on the weekend, and this man came in and he had his daughter, and his wife, and they were very, very poorly dressed. He had on jeans and cowboy boots. I said, "May I help you?"

And he said, "Yes, I want to buy a sable coat for my wife and my daughter."

And I said, "Okay, sir." And I went back to the person that usually was there and I said, "He says he wants to buy a sable coat. I don't think he can even afford a short coyote."

And she looked at and she said, "Come here, Pat."

And I said, "What?"

"That's Sam Walton! He could buy this old shopping center and everything else!"

I sold two stables that day. (Laughing)

JE: Oh, how fun! Oh, wow! (Laughing) And he, of course, was kind and nice?

PW: He was a real gentleman.

But back to the White Raven. Again, Clayton and some of his friends

decided that they wanted to open this nightclub that was like no other nightclub. And it was out on Memorial, and it was a high-end nightclub. You had to have a gold membership card to get into it. And it had several rooms when you actually got into it. And I can't remember the building now, but it kind of curves the window on the end out there on Memorial and that's where it was.

So people would come to that nightclub after they'd been out to fundraisers and you would see limousines lined up all the way along there, waiting. And when you got in -- it opened at four o'clock in the afternoon -- and they had free snacks and things, and you could have a glass of wine. Crystal chandelier over the dance floor -- two big crystal chandeliers. And then they had a bar here, and in another room, etched glass. Just beautiful.

I thought this was very unfair: Right outside the men's restrooms, they had the phones and you could dial your background. Like, "Honey, I've got held up at the office and I'm going to be late tonight," and you could hear typewriters in the background.

JE: Wow...

PW: Or, "ZOOM!" Planes going. "Honey, my plane's been held up. I'm going to be late coming home tonight."

JE: Oh, how wild.

PW: And so it was a lot of fun and everything, but at the end of these fundraisers, you see these limousines lined up. People would come in to have the last drink or something. It was not unusual to sell a \$1500 bottle of champagne to people those nights when they came in there.

JE: White Raven. So, approximately, when would that have been? '80s?

PW: Probably the late '70s, early '80s.

JE: Where was it located again?

PW: On Memorial, between 61st and 71st, on the west side of the street. And, again, if you drive in there, now it goes around like that and I don't know what's in there.

Chapter 8 – 12:39

Botanical Gardens

John Erling (JE): Also, beyond your library days, you've had many interests. You decided, for some reason, to be a master gardener.

Pat Woodrum (PW): Yes. Let me say, first of all, I loved my time at the library -- loved it so very, very much -- but decided, after 32 years, that I wanted to do something else. And so Clayton and I, as you well know, really like to garden.

And so I took the master gardener course that Barry Fugett offered through OSU. It was one afternoon a week and it was so interesting and I don't know if you've ever heard Barry, but he is just great. He's so knowledgeable and well spoken and everything. And when he'd recommend a plant sometime during his talk, some of us like to stay in the back row because when it was over, everybody's rushing out to the garden places to buy that plant and we wanted to be the first ones to get there.

But he kept saying, all the time, "I have a dream: Someday, Tulsa will have a true Botanic garden."

And so after it was all over, I went up to him after I'd gone through the course and everything, and I said, "Barry, if you really mean that, I will be glad to do what I can to help you find and get a botanic gardens started."

And he said, "Pat, that'd be great."

And I said, "But who do we need with us?" And there were two other people: One was the man who no longer lives around here and I can't remember his name. He was from Tulsa, but he was head of the OSU Foundation. And then there was another individual who was head of the

agriculture department at OSU. So we decided to join up and begin a plan to develop a botanic garden. And so that's how that whole thing got started.

JE: So this would have been early 2000s, I think, 2001. So, what? Did you hire a planning firm to begin with?

PW: Yes, we were able to do that. We had some money and we brought in a person who does that type of thing, a woman. And we were trying to locate the place where we wanted it to be located. And, so ... I can't remember who funded it. I think it was Burt Holmes. Burt funded it; and brought her in, and she actually got up in a helicopter with a couple of people and flew over all the vacant land in and around Tulsa, and found -- located -- a piece that she thought was ideal. She wanted to hike it then. She did. And that's how we came to where we're located now. It was 170 acres.

JE: Tell us the location now.

PW: it's just north of Gilcrease Museum. It's in Osage County, but it's in the Tulsa fence line -- just the most beautiful land.

And we had the dedication and we had the governor came down. We had a lot of officials and the head of the tourism department; and we had the assistant chief of the Osage dance and bless the land. And that really got the attention of the state tourism department, and that's how we got started.

And then Gentner, who's been a good friend for many, many years...

JE: Gentner Drummond?

PW: Gentner Drummond arranged to purchase some land out there. And he and they formed a partnership. He and another person gave us the land that we have for the Tulsa Botanic Garden.

JE: Because he has the POSTOAK Lodge.

PW: He has the POSTOAK Lodge, yes.

JE: And then next to them is the Botanic Garden.

PW: Yes. And my office was in a storeroom for a couple of years there at the top of POSTOAK Lodge. I have to tell you a funny thing. It was really great going out to work in the morning -- and it was volunteer. But I went out there, and you drive in, and you park behind POSTOAK and there were deer that were everywhere, just friendly. They'd look at you and just keep on eating grass. And one day I went up there, I was going to go in there through that door, and I was looking around, and I reached for it and I looked down and there was a rattlesnake draped all around the handle.

JE: Oh, wow.

PW: So I decided to go in the other door.

JE: Good choice. So you were the first executive director then of the garden, weren't you?

PW: Yes, I was a volunteer.

JE: Burt Holmes showed interest from the beginning. I think it was \$25,000 he gave you. And then didn't, as he called it, "Dialing for dollars?" You guys would just start calling people for money. And he was involved in that, wasn't he?

PW: He had a really good method. He'd call and he'd say, "Betty? Burt here. How you doing today? Great." I know you're raising money for such and such. And I'd like to make a contribution, but I'd like to come out and talk to you first."

And Betty -- whoever Betty was -- said, "Fine."

And so we would go out and call on this individual and he said "Here, I'll give you such and such. Now I want you to give me..." And it would be much more than he made the contribution for.

JE: Well, that was exciting. (Chuckling)

PW: It was. He was -- and he still is -- a very, very good friend.

JE: But you got some major funding because the Oklahoma Centennial Commission, observing the 100th anniversary of our state, and some budget money came from that. Tell us about that.

PW: When I was with the library system, there was a lobbyist. I can't bring up his name right now, but a lobbyist for libraries. And he was great, and he was a good personal friend.

I called him and asked him if he would help on this whole thing. And he said he'd be glad to. So it was Burt, and this other individual, and me. We went down ... The lobbyist and I -- and Burt too, Burt, too -- called on every member of the legislature in their office, during the session, telling about what we wanted to do, and this is something that there was nothing like it around what we envisioned, and so on, and so forth, and met with the governor. We did that for two years and then they came forth with a major contribution that was formed with the others.

JE: Well, you had a \$2.2 million contribution.

PW: Well, what happened was, that was a centennial year and Blake Wade was head of the whole thing. I got a call from the lobbyist one day and he said, "Pat, can you put together a budget -- a \$1 million budget -- on one page for the garden, and get it to me before the end of the day?"

And I said, "Oh, sure."

And we had a fax here and I faxed it to him. And so then I didn't hear anything. Then I went to the mailbox...

At this time, I have to back up, and I'm sorry to keep doing this. But four of us had opened a bank account -- \$200 a piece. And that's what we had in a bank here.

And so I went to the mailbox and, I opened it up, and there was a check for

\$2.5 million. And I thought, "Oh, my gosh!" And I called Clayton and I said, "What should I do?"

And he said, "Get to the bank as fast as you can and get it deposited."

So I walked into the bank nonchalantly and the woman that was there said, "Hi, Pat! How are you doing?"

I said, "Fine. I want to leave this check with you and have you put it into the garden account."

And she looked at, "Oh, my gosh!"

So that was 2.5 million. And then -- it was about a week later -- the very same thing happened: another check.

JE: Well, you had one for 2.2 million and then one for 1.2 million.

PW: Yeah, nothing. No contract. Nothing.

JE: Absolutely amazing for a startup is what it was. I mean, you didn't have anything on the ground. You had acreage and all, but that shows you the community enjoyed flowers and plants and you tapped into that interest that was just sitting there and hadn't been tapped into yet.

PW: The whole thing was just ... I say it's a God thing.

JE: Yup.

PW: It just all went together and it was wonderful. I remember one day when I was out there with the office in the top of the lodge, and I just needed to stretch my legs a little bit, and I got out and started walking down this dirt road towards where the land was. I wasn't going to go very far. And then I stopped and looked around and thought, "Oh, this is just so beautiful." But I sensed something like something was watching me -- somebody. And I looked around, and I looked up, and there was a wild cat laying on a branch right above my head. And the cat looked to me, and I looked at it, and then I ran as fast as I could to get away.

JE: It's wonderful. The wild is so much fun to observe. And didn't you build a big lake out there?

PW: Yes, we did. Gentner arranged to give us the land and everything. And then it's a 7-acre lake and it is 100 feet deep in the middle. And that was the first thing that we had built out there.

And then, after that, we began to do some other gardens. But when ... We still had just a temporary visitor's center, as you probably know. But as you went out from the visitors center with some of the land that we gained, there was a place where we didn't have a bridge and we couldn't get from here to across to where all this was going to happen.

And the construction company -- I can't think of the name right now -- that builds turnpikes and high rises and things. They had been helping us build some of those roads down there. And so I talked to the man that was in charge and I said, "We're in a terrible situation. We don't have any more money. We don't have a bridge."

And he said, "I think I can help you."

And I said, "Okay."

And he said, "We just built a high rise parking garage in Oklahoma City." And he said, "There's a big concrete pillar that we have extra; we'll bring it down and we'll install it."

And that's what's there today: that big concrete. You go down, and you turn to your right from the visitors center, and you walk across a bridge. That's a pillar from a parking garage in Oklahoma City.

JE: That's a good story. Christmas time. You light up the place, don't you? Beautiful decorations?

PW: Many, many decorations out there, yes; it's a fairy land. Plus, we have so many programs going all the time out there. It really draws a lot of people there. Right now, time is the scarecrow contest that we have out there

every year and you can enter your scarecrow and then they judge and see which ones. I don't know if they're doing it this year. I'm sure they -- relatively sure -- but they usually have something like, I don't know, 500 pumpkins and they just spread them all out in one place and it's the pumpkin garden, and you go in between little trails there.

And then I forget ... Oh, there was some pig farmer north of the garden out there. And so, after it's over, he comes over with his pickup and he takes all of them and gets them and throws them out to his pigs and they eat them. So they don't just rot and go away without a use.

JE: And we should say that you were selected as one of three individuals in the United States to receive the 2021 Award of Excellence from National Garden Clubs. You're the first Oklahoman to receive the award, the highest honor given by National Garden Clubs to a non-member. Congratulations. That had to make you feel good.

PW: I didn't even know that existed -- that group existed -- but it was wonderful.

JE: Yeah. Your library work. This, just alone, the botanical garden getting started, had to make you feel good.

Chapter 9 – 6:36

Joe's Boys

John Erling (JE): I should say your backyard is almost a botanical garden.

Pat Woodrum (PW): Thank you.

JE: You've done a lot of work out there between you and Clayton, and you gave me a tour of that and you've done a lot of wonderful things. You drive by your house, you'd never know that that great little garden is out here.

PW: And I probably told you at that time, we have two acres here and when we moved in, there was nothing but dirt -- not soil, dirt. And so we kind of started from the beginning and we've been working on it for a number of years. We enjoy it very much. We've had, like I said, we've had weddings back there and we've had engagement parties. We've had fundraisers, we've had baptisms in our swimming pool.

JE: You told me a cute story about Joe's boys. Tell us that story.

PW: Joe was a teacher at Edison. He never married. He really felt that a lot of the students weren't making the most of their lives. So he would go -- and he loved to garden -- and he would go down by the central library and he would see boys and girls just kind of sitting on the planters there doing nothing.

And he'd say, "Hey, come over here!"

And they'd come over to his car, "Tell you what: You go with me and help me do some gardening. I'll buy you lunch."

I guess it was his truck and they'd do it. And so he taught them a vocation because they liked him so much and they got a free lunch, and so they would continue; and a lot of them continued on and did things like that.

And a sequel to that is Joe has been gone now for 14 years. He's deceased. And, again, he helped us lay out this garden that we have here and everything. And Clayton and I came home one night from a fundraiser. It was dark. We have some outside lights out here on Lewis. And we had just come into the house when I saw a truck -- a pickup -- drive into our driveway.

And I said, "Clayton, there's somebody out here." And he said, "Oh, they're probably just getting ready to turn around."

It was a new one; I could tell. And I said, "Okay." I went back, changed my clothes and looked, and right here in front of our dining room window, on the other side, was a man in a suit on his knees, digging.

And I said, "Clayton, come here. What do you think's going on?"

He said, "Well, I have no idea." And so he went out and he said, "Sir, can I help you?"

And he said, "Oh, hi." He said, "I was just driving by your house. I was coming home from a function and Joe talked to me and he said -- I'm one of Joe's boys -- he told me I needed to go and do some weeding here for you tonight."

He was not drunk.

JE: No.

PW: He was on his knees, and he went clear across the driveway and he got the weeds out and put them in a little pile in the concrete, and drove away.

JE: All because of Joe.

PW: All because of Joe.

JE: Yeah. And all that work when he went to get those people from the library, they came out here and did much of your work, and now you have gazebos out there.

PW: Yes. And the greenhouse.

JE: The greenhouse -- all very nice. Right. You like books, you like gardens, but you like cooking as well.

PW: That's right.

JE: And it's not just now-and-then cooking, that's almost every day. And then you came up with cookbooks. Tell us that story.

PW: Well, again, Clayton and I enjoy cooking, and we have always, since we've been married. And we've collected many, many cookbooks. In fact, in our kitchen we have 90 cookbooks. And he's always experimenting. His thing is

mostly breads, different kinds of breads and things like that.

And so during my two years at the public library, the staff association published two cookbooks, and the first one was titled "Ready Reference Recipes." And the second one was "The Open Cookbook," on the anniversary date for the public library.

And then in 2016, Clayton and I published our first cookbook. It was called "Family Favorite Recipes," with our wedding picture on the cover. In 2022, we published a second cookbook titled "Tulsa Botanic Garden," which contains a history of the garden, and then we provided the garden with 400 copies to sell in the gift shop with all the proceeds going back to the garden.

And now we're in the process of producing our third cookbook, which will contain pictures of our home and the plantings in the garden as the dividers. So that's pretty much what we do in cookbooks because we enjoy cooking so much.

And then I would just say one other thing, if I may add, that I was the first woman to serve as the chair of the lay board of Trinity Parish in 100 years. And I served in that position for six years and Clayton and I are still very, very active at Trinity today.

We have one son, and two grandsons, and one grandson works at the Tulsa Public Library.

JE: Yup, yup.

PW: Our son's name is uh Clayton Eugene Woodrum II. Our grandson is Clayton Eugene III and we call him Trey.

JE: Okay. Alright. Honors that have come to you: Tulsa City County Hall of Fame, Tulsa Press Club's Headliner Award, Women in Communications Newsmaker Award, Leadership Tulsa's Paragon Award, Pentacle Award. And then, as you said, first female senior warden at Trinity Episcopal Church and then the co-founder of Tulsa Botanical Garden.

Whatcha you been doing with your life anyway, Pat?

PW: I have been enjoying it very, very much.

JE: Yeah.

PW: I like to get up in the morning. Clayton and I like to go out and have coffee outside in our backyard. And then I just enjoy the day. I'm very fortunate.

JE: Right. Here you're 82. Soon to be 83. And you have a lot of livin' life to do, don't you?

PW: I think so. I hope so.

JE: Edgar Guest probably said that in a poem, "A lot of livin' to do?"

PW: I think you're right. Very good!

JE: I don't know where that came to me, but you're --

PW: You're talkin' to a former librarian!

JE: I guess hangin' around you brings that out of me. (Chuckling)

PW: (Laughing)

Chapter 10 – 2:00

Library Advice

John Erling (JE): So what kind of advice would you give to someone maybe considering a career in library science today?

Pat Woodrum (PW): If they enjoy literature, if they enjoy working with people, if they want to make a difference, they probably would very much enjoy going to library school and becoming a librarian.

And, of course, you don't have to go to library school. You can get a job in a library -- we have all our branch libraries here in Tulsa and the central library and different departments. But if you really want to get in and be a supervisor, like head of the reference department, or a branch librarian or a regional library -- we have four regional libraries in different parts of the county -- then you'd need to go on and get a master's degree.

JE: Here's a question I can insert earlier: What about cataloging books? And how did that change? And then the digital era came in -- that had to change. Cataloging.

PW: It did, a whole lot. You'll still find in some college libraries, high school libraries, they'll have the card boxes where you pull it out and it has all the information. But in a place like the City/County library system, it's all online and all that information is there.

JE: That took a lot of work, didn't it, to put that all on there?

PW: A lot, yes. But now it's a fine art. Now it's just easy to do.

JE: So how would you like to be remembered?

PW: Making a contribution to make other people's lives better.

JE: Well, you certainly did that.

PW: Thank you.

JE: You can reflect on that every day, if you like. I want to thank you, Pat. This was fun -- the journey of your life and a very accomplished lady. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

PW: Thank you, John. It's great to be with you again, and to see you, and have an opportunity to talk with you, and to share the information that you've asked for.

JE: Alright. Thanks!

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