

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Richard Chapman was the head track coach and history teacher at the year-old Memorial High School in 1963.

In 1965, “Coach,” as he became known, was hired as head football coach at Edison High School, where, in his second season, he led his team to win the District Championship title. Coach was named Tulsa Tribune Coach of the Year in 1966. He coached and taught at Edison for seven years before returning to Memorial High School as head tennis coach.

He retired for a year in 1986, before being hired to coordinate the in-house program at Nathan Hale High School, a position he held for several years before retiring completely.

In 1988, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Coaches Hall of Fame and also was inducted into both the Edison High School and Memorial High School Coaches Halls of Fame, as well as the Oklahoma Track Coaches Hall of Fame.

Richard Chapman was 91 when he died May 21, 2020.

Listen to Richard talk about how he lived in a box car, his days in the Navy, why he was fired from a coaching job, and his advice to parents on the oral history website and podcast VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 9:11 Land Run of 1893

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling, and today's date is April 21st, 2016.
So, Richard, would you state your full name, please?

Richard Chapman (RC): Richard Wayne Chapman.

JE: And your date of birth?

RC: September 1st, 1928.

JE: And your present age?

RC: Eighty-eight.

JE: We are recording this interview...

RC: At my home.

JE: In South Tulsa.

RC: South Tulsa, uh-huh.

JE: Where were you born?

RC: I was born on a homestead five miles west of Jefferson, Oklahoma.

JE: So what were the conditions of the facility in which you were born, that homestead?

RC: It was a farm. My grandfather made the Cherokee Strip run, and that's... Then he went to... called to preaching, and my folks moved down from Kansas onto the homestead. That's where I was born.

JE: So let's talk about your grandparents. What was your grandfather's name?

RC: Oliver Beale.

JE: And so he came from Kansas?

RC: He came from Kansas.

JE: Tell us about how... How did he obtain that homestead?

RC: Well, he made the Cherokee Strip run in 1893. And he homesteaded along the Salt Fork River there, along with his brother.

JE: What was the procedure to secure that land?

RC: Well, they had it staked out at 160 acres for each plot. And once you got there, they had an identification stake that you would take up out of the ground. And then after you... had settled there over a night or two, then the government would come out and check.

And then, after you had made some improvements, like plowed some ground, planted some trees, planted a garden, and they had a lot of regulations you had to follow. And once you had those basics, then you took the deed that was on this stake to Caldwell, Kansas, to the government facility, and they would sign the property over to you.

JE: So I'm going back here. He... When he went out there and pulled up that stake, he had to stay there and camp out...

RC: Yes.

JE: ...until the government officials came by...

RC: That's right.

JE: ...and said, okay, you're him, and you've got the stake.

RC: Yeah.

JE: And then, so that, like, improvements, I suppose, they had to dig a well, or...

RC: Well, when they... When they traveled there, when the opening started, on their wagons that they took into that territory...

JE: Covered wagon, I suppose.

RC: Well, yes, and work wagons.

JE: Right.

RC: They put small... They put small metal tanks in there, and then when they decided where their stake was, then they... They were close to the river, and they could do what they call stamp water. If you just stand there and stamp in this sand close to the river, water would come to the surface.

JE: Hmm.

RC: And then they would sink a pipe there, and that was their water source.

JE: Right. But then their first... I suppose they lived in a dugout to begin with.

RC: Well, yes. The men lived in a tent there for a few days until they got it all taken care of. And then when they moved the family down, before he moved the family down, he dug into the side of the hill and made a huge dugout there, probably 14 x 12, and that was their first home in this dugout.

JE: Do you know how long he lived in that dugout?

RC: Until they had the house built.

JE: So that could...

RC: Probably a year, a year and a half.

JE: And it's just hard to imagine, isn't it?

RC: Well, yes. You'd be there, and you'd see a... A centipede come across, and bull snakes like to live in those caves also. And you had to get rid of the bull snakes every week or so. Once you habitated there, then the snakes and other creatures wouldn't try to get in because it was occupied.

JE: So who was living in that dugout? Your grandfather and...

RC: My mother and father, and my two older brothers, who were born in Kansas earlier. And that's the first people that lived in a dugout.

JE: So there were four of them.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: Right. Now, your mother's name?

RC: Zoe. Charlotte Zoe.

JE: And your father's name?

RC: Byron Delvere. Uh-huh.

JE: All right. And we'll get back to them in a minute.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: But you just think about if they lived a year, year and a half, think about the winters.

RC: Yes. Well, one thing about a dugout, it was very warm in the winter, easy to heat or whatever, and it was cool in the summertime.

JE: And so they would heat it? They would just heat it by the wood they found around?

RC: Yeah, just... They had... They put a flue in the ceiling, and they had a little wood stove where the flue would take the smoke outside.

JE: The flue or the pipes, I guess you're calling them.

RC: Right. Right.

JE: And that was the beginning of your family.

RC: Right.

JE: That's pretty amazing, isn't it?

RC: Yes.

JE: And they were hardy, hardy folks.

RC: And all over that territory, there were hundreds of people doing the same thing that made the Cherokee Strip run.

JE: Yeah. Well, that adds pride to your lineage, doesn't it?

RC: Oh, yes.

JE: Your brothers or sisters?

RC: My brothers were born in Kansas, before they made the Cherokee Strip run. My older brother, Merle and Eugene, were born in Kansas.

JE: And then a sister?

RC: A sister was born in Oklahoma, and my brother next to me was born in Oklahoma, and I was born – all on the homestead.

JE: And then when you were born, you were probably born in the house, and obviously they built that.

RC: Yes, yes.

JE: Because you were then born in 1928.

RC: Yeah. My brother next to me, he's five years older. He was born in the house also.

JE: Because they made Cherokee... The Cherokee Strip run in 1893, is what you said, right?

RC: Yeah. Uh-huh. All right.

JE: Your mother, Zoe, what was her personality like? What was she like?

RC: What was she like?

JE: Yeah, her personality.

RC: Oh, she was a Christian woman, and she worked just as hard or harder than the men, and a great cook, and had to make all the clothes. Tremendous seamstress. They had to be – all the women at that time.

In fact, when they finally did go to a grocery store, the grocery stores would buy flour, and these sacks, would have certain designs on them, and the women would take those and make dresses and blouses and shirts for those, and they'd stand in line at the grocery store when the supply wagon came in with the flour, and they'd pick out their designs there. That's mainly the way they made a lot of their clothes.

JE: Right, and for both men and women, I guess.

RC: Yes.

JE: The shirts, they made out of that for the guys.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Yeah. So then your father's name?

RC: Byron Delvere.

JE: And what was he like? Like his personality?

RC: Well, he was a hard-working farmer, big man, strong. He smoked. He chewed tobacco. He was a disciplinarian, I guarantee you that. Because he had, especially with the older boys, and he put them to work.

JE: Yeah. Well, you're a pretty big man yourself, so you're probably as big as your father.

RC: Oh, yeah.

JE: You're probably the same size.

RC: I think I'm about the same size as my father.

JE: And how tall?

RC: 6'2".

JE: 6'2". Uh-huh.

RC: Weighed about 190.

JE: As they say, broad at the shoulder, and slender at the waist.

RC: Not as slender as I used to be.

JE: Right. Right. So then the kind of farming that he did then on that 160?

RC: Well, the main thing they put in, first of all, was wheat, and then alfalfa, and then a feed crop like oats or other grain that they could grow to raise a plant to feed the cattle and horses and so forth.

JE: So they did that all using horses.

RC: Yes.

JE: So do you know then when they got there, they had to buy equipment? They must have brought money with them or borrowed money?

RC: Well, they made money from their crops.

JE: But did they have the equipment to make those first crops?

RC: Yes, they did.

JE: They brought that with them?

RC: Yes. And they had, in other words, machinery to plant the wheat, and they had horses to pull the machinery. Didn't have tractors. Then they had a

threshing machine that was run by gasoline. Actually, I think it was run by coal oil.

JE: Oh.

RC: And, but that was...

JE: Some did steam engines.

RC: Yeah. They had some steam engines there, too. He didn't have one, but a lot of the farmers did have.

JE: So that's the way they did their threshing.

RC: And they would co-op. In other words, one man would have a steam engine, and maybe four or five farmers would use it, and then they'd co-op in harvesting their crop and then also making it proper for market.

Chapter 3 – 11:44

Lived In a Box Car

John Erling (JE): What is your first remembrance living out there?

Richard Chapman (RC): My first remembrance? I think it was the... Coyotes. He had... Everybody had a building out there that they kept their hams and so forth hung at smokehouse. They called them smokehouses. And it had windows and doors on it.

But one night, the coyotes jumped through the window and were trying to cart off hams and so forth. And the dogs, of course, Warren Popp, he always had a 12-gauge shotgun by the back door. And when he chased out there, well, that was all she wrote for those coyotes. He got two of them, and two of them got away.

JE: So you remember that as probably, I don't know how old you would have been, four years old or something?

RC: I was about five years old at that time, yeah.

JE: What did you do as a five-year-old for entertainment out there?

RC: Well, I built my sister. I had to bring my sister in. She was five years older. Mother was cleaning house, cooking, and taking care of everything. And Lois just basically was my surrogate mother. We would go out and play. She dressed me up like a girl, put lipstick on me and rouge and dresses and high-heeled shoes. I was her live doll. And just loved her to death because we went out and built playhouses and went to the river and walked down the river, which was about a half a mile away, and just did everything that kids do. Mom was satisfied that Lois could take care of me, and she felt safe with it.

JE: So you have fond memories as a young boy out there.

RC: Yes. Very, very much so.

JE: Were there trees, lots of trees in the property?

RC: Yes. In fact, the driveway was about, I'm going to say, 100 yards long, and Pop had planted trees on either side of that, and it was a beautiful drive. And then they planted fruit trees, apple trees, peach trees, and so on and so forth. Always had a big garden along the north fence, asparagus, and that would come back every year. We had a lot of fresh fruit. Fruit and vegetables.

JE: Is that land still in your family?

RC: No. We had the, Grandpa went, when he quit farming, he went to preaching in the Methodist church, and then he had to sell the farm for taxes and so forth. And we were homeless. We moved seven times in a year and a half in places where we didn't have to pay rent. And you can imagine some of those places, what they looked, one of them, well, the first place was a reconditioned boxcar down by the river. The boxcar made into three rooms, and seven of us were living in that boxcar.

JE: Well, that's hard to imagine, but we all know what the size of a boxcar is. How long did you live in that?

RC: Well, I'm going to say probably a year. And we, like I say, we moved six or seven times in the two-year span before we went to Pond Creek.

JE: All right. So your grandfather felt called to preach.

RC: Yes.

JE: And that's why he couldn't maintain the payments on the ground.

RC: Right.

JE: And if he'd continued to farm, he could have.

RC: That's right.

JE: So that was a pretty major decision for him to make.

RC: It sure was.

JE: And I wonder how that worked with your mother, but she had to be in on this calling as well.

RC: Yes. Well, it was a sad, sad day because this originally was our home and my mother's home. But he got into financial difficulty and couldn't do anything else.

JE: Was it because of it? Becoming a minister?

RC: Well, ministers were paid chickens and bread and potatoes and very little cash, if any. Yeah.

JE: So do you remember the day you left that house?

RC: Well, I don't remember too much about that because I was really, really young then.

JE: But you do remember all those moves.

RC: I do remember where we moved across the river into the boxcar.

JE: So what church is he preaching with?

RC: Methodist Church. Yeah. He's a Methodist.

JE: Do you remember him preaching or is that too young for you?

RC: I remember one time I heard him preach. I only heard him one time. The rest of the time he was in Old Dalhart, Texas and he was in western Oklahoma and southern Oklahoma, northern Oklahoma. I think he had probably down through his career probably seven different churches.

JE: Right. So then your dad and mother all followed him?

RC: Well, no. They were just my grandmother and he, we stayed on the farm and then when he sold it, we started moving around as nomads to places where we didn't have to.

JE: That had to be tough on the family.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Well, when do you start going to school?

RC: Well, I started there when we moved across the river to what we called Bates Place because that's who owned the place. And there was the Riverdale School there and that was my first school in the first grade. And I didn't finish the year there. We moved before the year was over.

JE: So that would have been a one-room schoolhouse then, I suppose.

RC: A one-room schoolhouse. And my first day, I remember it as clear as day. Of course, all the classes from first grade through 12th grade were all in the same room, segregated by aisles and so forth. And each one of them were

given assignments down through the day.

Well, my first assignment at this school was a ball of clay. I was supposed to make something out of a ball of clay. Well, I was rolling it on the desk. Part of it was hanging over and it would look like a dog's tail. And somebody, one of the big guys across the aisle, started laughing. Well, she thought I was doing it on purpose and disturbing class, so she sent me outside. My first day of school, I got disciplined and sent outside.

Well, that was a beautiful thing because the swings and the teeter-totter was out there. I was having a good time. But my first day of school, I was sent outside.

JE: Yeah. It's hard to believe for youngsters to think about this one-room schoolhouse and she had first through...

RC: ...First through 12.

JE: ...through 12. How many do you think were there?

RC: Oh, I'm going to guess probably 15.

JE: So then you did grade school there?

RC: Yes, but it was just a... I didn't even finish... I don't think I went through the entire first grade there. I'm not sure.

Okay. But I remember one time, Mrs. Kubik was the teacher. A storm came up about the time school let out and it started hailing. Well, she had a car with a trunk and she put three of us in that trunk and took us home. So we didn't have to walk home in the hail.

JE: And how far was that distance?

RC: Well, I had a... Let's see. I had three-quarters of a mile or a mile to walk home.

JE: That's something that kids probably don't think about today.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Where do you finish grade school? Where were you then when you were finished?

RC: Well, when I... After we moved around in 1934, '35, whatever it was, we were living in a place, oh gosh, it's hard to tell. When I started at Pond Creek grade school, we were living nine miles west of Pond Creek in a farm, in a farmhouse. I walked to school that year, part of that year. And then we moved four miles east of Pond Creek across the river. And I was in the second and part of the third grade there. And it was, oh, I'd say, a mile and a half or two miles to school.

JE: What about your clothes? I mean, did your mother make the clothes?

RC: Well, she made a lot of our clothes, mainly our shirts. And then she got something like a dungaree and made trousers out of those.

JE: And shoes? What did you do for that?

RC: Well, we had to buy the shoes. That was... I had three older brothers. Oh, yeah. And I didn't own my own shoes until I was 10 years old.

JE: Oh, the hand-me-downs, right?

RC: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. And that was probably the most expensive thing that they'd buy, because she could make other clothes. She made clothes for all three of the other boys and Lois.

JE: So then you go into middle school or high school? How does that...

RC: Well, grade school and junior high and high school were all in the same building. It was a two-story high school. And...

JE: So in high school, were you athletically inclined there?

RC: Yes. Yes. And as a... I always was, because I learned how to play every kind of ball there is with my brothers. And they took no mercy on me.

JE: And they were quite a bit older than you.

RC: We used to go out in the plowed ground and play tackle football. And my sister played tackle football with us. And she could strike a blow, I'll tell you.

JE: So they were seven, eight, and nine years older than you.

RC: Well, yeah. Merle was born in '17, and Eugene was born in '19.

JE: So you were so young and small, they could use you as a football.

RC: A lot of times they did.

JE: But it was obvious that you were talented athletically, you think, back then?

RC: Yes. And I give most of the credit to my older brothers, because they taught me how to kick the ball, how to throw it, and how to take punishment.

JE: So in high school, what did you play?

RC: Well, I played everything. In football, I played quarterback. Actually, we used a single wing, which is an ancient type of football. But I played tailback, which is considered the quarterback in single wing football. Then I played defensive linebacker. I played both ways, played every game all the way. And I had a helmet that I could fold up and put in my waistband when the game was over. It just had a leather top and some ear flaps. That's all it had.

JE: What about pads?

RC: Well, we had pads. But when we started playing, like in seventh grade, we'd go down to the gymnasium, and the coach would dump all the old pads and shoes out from years past that kids had left there. And we'd go in

there and find something that fit us. I remember taking my shoulder pads and hip pads home, and Mom would sew them together, and sometimes take bedding wire and tie pads onto the shoulder pads and so forth. Repair them, for example.

Chapter 4 – 11:44

Newsreels

John Erling (JE): Okay, what year did you graduate from high school?

Richard Chapman (RC): 1946.

JE: In '46. So we're talking about '42, '3, '4, '5, and '6 then.

RC: Yeah.

JE: And that was in what town?

RC: Pond Creek.

JE: Pond Creek.

RC: Uh-huh. And I was there, of course, when the Second World War broke out.

JE: Okay, December 7th, 1941?

RC: 1941. I was in grade school there at Pond Creek.

JE: And how old were you? About 13 years old, I suppose.

RC: Yeah, I was born 28. Right.

JE: Yeah. So what is your remembrance of that day?

RC: Well, I remember that I miss my brothers. My older brother, Merle, was in the Marines, and he made the landing on Saipan and Okinawa. In fact,

Merle was deaf in his right ear, and he was 4F. Well, he and my sister went to California to work in a defense plant. Because we had some relatives out there that he could stay with.

And he started seeing these Marines walking around in their dress blues. Oh, he said, "I've got to be a Marine." And Lois said, "well, you can't." Said, "you're 4F." He said, "it's better." So he got his papers together, went down to the recruiting office, and lo and behold, they gave him a hearing test. And he stood about 20 feet away from a wall, and this Marine was talking to him in different volumes.

And when it come time to hear out of his right ear, he's supposed to put his finger in his left ear. He didn't put it all the way in, so he did all the hearing with his left ear. He couldn't hear, and he passed. Well, long story short, he goes to North Carolina to officer's training school and comes out as second lieutenant. And his first assignment is landing on Saipan. Then he landed on Okinawa. and then Mr. Truman dropped the bomb and they all came home.

JE: So then your memories then – do you remember you said drop the bomb..

RC: The atomic bomb.

JE: ...on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Do you remember that in 1945?

RC: Oh yes. Absolutely.

JE: Tell us what you remember. How did you hear about it?

RC: Radio. Now we didn't have electricity until well we had electricity then and we did have a radio. But the hardware store down Henley Hardware had a TV in the display window outside and there were hundreds of people gathered around in front of that store watching all the news every evening because none of them well very few of the people had TVs at that time.

JE: No. That would be really unusual wouldn't it? But the store had one.

RC: Yeah the store had one.

JE: And so that's how you got your news.

RC: That's right.

JE: Did you what do you remember during those war years after '41?

RC: Well I remember I was one thing I did I didn't wear any civilian clothes. My brother Merle was about the same size as I at that time and he sent all kinds of marine fatigues and so forth home. That's all I wore to school was marine fatigues and boots.

JE: You went to the theater movies I suppose back then?

RC: Yeah we had a probably had the best theater in Grant County and in fact I worked there every afternoon after school when I wasn't in sports I'd go by and sweep out the theater and clean the front windows and I didn't get any money for it I just could see movies free go to the movies free.

JE: Did they have a newsreel with the movies?

RC: Yes, and the newsreel was the main thing a lot of people were going for because it it brought you know the news back to the people.

JE: And they would even show some of the battle going on.

RC: Right it did. Oh, it's amazing. And at those movies the first thing we did before the movie started, everybody sang the national anthem and there's always somebody there quite often a preacher would say a prayer then they'd show the movie.

JE: Tremendous patriotism, wasn't it, back then?

RC: And a lot of the some of the guys were coming back on furlough and they'd park a flatbed truck out in the main street and on Saturday morning these guys would get up there with a speaker and talk to the people and tell them what their experiences were back in Okinawa, Saipan, Germany, or whatever.

JE: So that drew an interested crowd I'm sure.

RC: And they posted the dead, the ones that gave their lives on the post office window. Very sad.

JE: Yeah. And you show emotion on that even to this very day. Sad days. And so did you think is this war as a young boy and others – is this war going to come to an end or are they going to come to the United States?

RC: Well, we, you know the United States was prepared for an invasion as far as that's concerned until Mr. Truman dropped the bomb.

JE: And that pretty well ended things in 1945 the final stages.

RC: Some people you know didn't like Mr. Truman. He ended the war.

JE: Do you remember you listened to the radio? Do you remember listening to presidents on the radio?

RC: Yes I do.

JE: Who did you hear?

RC: Well I remember listening to John Erling for about 10 years.

JE: Yeah but that wasn't in the war.

RC: No. Well President Roosevelt.

JE: You listened to his fireside chats.

RC: Yes. Absolutely. That was one of the big deals in every home that had electricity. In fact a lot of the neighbors that didn't have electricity would be in your living room.

JE: And you did.

RC: Yes. Right.

JE: Do you remember what that radio looked like? Was it a console or a table radio?

RC: It was a console. It was it was a tall you know it was probably three feet high, whatever. Big thing. Sometimes static would interfere and you had a hard time, you know, communicating with it but it was a blessing to be able to keep in contact with what was going on.

JE: Yeah. Do you remember listening to radio programs? Yeah.

RC: Fibber McGee and Molly and Jack Armstrong the All-American Boy and...

JE: Amos and Andy.

RC: Amos and Andy and Lone Ranger and Hop Along Cassidy and Jack Benny. Oh my. all those old shows.

JE: So you'd all sit in front of the radio and just kind of stare at the radio.

RC: And it's popcorn time boy we pop big bolts of popcorn.

JE: That's a nice memory isn't it? Yeah.

RC: Yeah. Yes sir.

JE: Sporting events like Joe Lewis did you ever listen to his fights?

RC: Yes. My father my older brothers were boxers. Eugene, next oldest brother was a national champion boxer and went to Chicago in 1939 to the National Golden Gloves. He got beat because he got careless but anyway he got beat and they started the boxing program at Connors A&M at Warner Oklahoma in 1939.

In fact, Merle and two other guys built the first ring that they had there and they carried this ring built the ring in the gymnasium and when they had boxing matches they put the ring out in the middle of the floor and

put chairs that covered the floor had balconies and that place would be completely full of people.

JE: So these were local guys fighting. About Joe Lewis who was a heavyweight boxing champion..

RC: Yeah.

JE: And you do remember listening to him, his fights.

RC: Oh yes. Max Smelling and all those guys. Yeah.

JE: Any other sporting events or was it baseball or anything?

RC: Yeah. There was football.

JE: Who did you listen to, what football would it have been?

RC: Well OU was on TV and some of the pros were on TV at that time or on radio actually.

JE: Radio, right.

RC: We finally got it. I was coaching in Henrietta, that's my first coaching job when I got out of the Navy. in 1952. Well, I got married when I was there and I had a big old box TV and had to have an outside antenna, you know. So I loaded those up and took them to my folks. We bought us another one and I took that TV to mom and pop and that was the first TV they had.

JE: And you're married, what was her name?

RC: Marilyn.

JE: Marilyn. Yeah.

RC: We got divorced later on. And that's by my kids came from us.

JE: Alright. So you had how many children?

RC: Two.

JE: Two from. And then did you marry later?

RC: Yes. I married again in '80. Uh I joined the Nazarene Church. I was member of Southwood Country Club and I managed the swimming pool at Southwood Country Club.

JE: And where was that?

RC: In Tulsa here.

JE: Oh.

RC: On South it's on South Lewis. It was it was a big housing district there. Now it's right it's the east side of east the first street east of Oral Roberts.

JE: Southwood?

RC: 81st Street.

JE: That was Southwood Country Club?

RC: Southwood Country Club. It's a housing district now.

JE: Wow.

RC: I was a member there and Louise and her husband were a member and they got divorced. I invited her to her dance one time and then the rest is history.

JE: Right. Did you have children with her?

RC: No.

JE: Okay. No. So you have two.

RC: We had grown children ourselves.

JE: Right. Southwood tell us again where Southwood Country Club would have been.

RC: 81st and Delaware. 81st and Delaware. Just on the east edge just across Delaware there from Oral Roberts.

JE: Okay.

RC: On 81st Street.

JE: I've never heard of that before.

RC: Great tennis club. In fact, we used to beat Southern Hills once in a while. I played tennis a lot but I never was a competitor in that league. I just played for fun.

JE: So Southern Hills, how should I say this, economically was for the wealthy?

RC: Yes. They were the more affluent.

JE: And then Southwood?

RC: Southwood was just a lot of people I call affluent there but it was a lot of people there just made the same salary I did teaching. Great family club.

JE: And the strong middle class families that were there then.

RC: Oh man, yes. And we had swimming. I coached the swimming. We beat Southern Hills once in swimming which was a gigantic step in the right direction.

JE: World War II memories. Do you remember rationing and things that were difficult to get?

RC: Yes, I sure do. We had cards for food and gasoline. And some of these folks got gasoline cards but they had put their cards on on blocks because they

couldn't afford to buy the gasoline. They could buy it on a donation from the cards. But what they would do, they would trade these gas cards to people that had cars for food cards.

You had food cards also to buy food. Certain foods, you know.

JE: Anything else that was difficult to get that you – nylons for ladies I don't I think that was rationing.

RC: Yeah, they came in with a different style. It was I think made out of rayon or something, the long socks, the hose and so forth. Yeah.

Chapter 5 – 9:16

Barefoot and Overalls

John Erling (JE): So, in high school, you were a star, I'll call you, in football?

Richard Chapman (RC): Well, I played football and basketball.

JE: And basketball.

RC: And track.

JE: Okay.

RC: Now, we didn't have an organized track team, but I mean, I told you this before. Eight of us guys went to the county traffic in Medford, which was 11 miles north, and just to watch. And we'd see, oh, what's his name out there from Waukega running, and one of the guys said, "I can outrun him," and so on.

So, we went down as a group, about eight or ten of us, and asked the manager of the track meet, said, "can we enter some of these?" He said, yeah. He said, "you're from a high school, you sure can." So, we entered in different things. We won the track meet barefooted in overalls.

JE: And when would that have been?

RC: That was probably, let's see, I was in the year... 1940.

JE: Okay. And you were?

RC: '41.

JE: I'm sorry, when did you graduate?

RC: I graduated in '46.

JE: All right. So, you're probably about 16 years old when you did that.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Right.

RC: Yeah, I don't want to brag, but one thing I did, I could throw the ball. I won the football throw and the softball throw. We won both sprints. We won both relays. I mean, we just had some good kids.

JE: But you were a good swimmer, too, apparently. You said you were in the swim team.

RC: Yeah, at Southwood, we had swimming races. And my son was out there. He was a good swimmer.

JE: Would you say, then, that you were the real athlete in the family? Others liked to play it.

RC: Well, I'm not going to say that because I'll tell you, Merle and Eugene, the two oldest ones, they were tremendous athletes.

JE: But they didn't pursue that as a career.

RC: No. No.

JE: And you did.

RC: Right. Now, Eugene, when he got out of the Navy in World War II, he came back to Oklahoma City and went into administration in Oklahoma City Public Schools. And Merle came back and started his career in teaching at Wauketa. He was a vocational agriculture teacher. And he taught there for years. And he went to UConn and taught there until he retired. And he won national awards in the agriculture part of it.

JE: So, you graduate in 1946.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: And then what do you do?

RC: Well, I go to Panhandle A&M. Well, no, actually, I go to Tonkawa Junior College on a football scholarship. And it's 16 miles east of Pond Creek.

JE: And tell us, relating to Oklahoma City, where this would be.

RC: This is about 100 miles north of Oklahoma City and then about 25 miles east.

JE: Okay. So, you went to Tonkawa on a football scholarship.

RC: Yeah. 1946. Yeah.

JE: And how did that work out?

RC: Well, it's fine. I went through my freshman year. I was a starter. Then my second year, I just, I don't know. Like a kid, I got discouraged. And I quit mid-term. Didn't tell the folks. But I moved in on a farm nine miles west of Pond Creek and worked for Mr. and Mrs. Coyne and lived in their attic. And folks didn't know I was there yet. I was afraid to tell them.

JE: Because, well, how would they keep track of you on a daily basis?

RC: They don't. We didn't have, we didn't have communication back in those days. When I was at school, the only way we communicated was by letter.

JE: Okay. So, you were in Tonkawa and they weren't there. So, that was quite a few miles away.

RC: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JE: All right. So, then you moved in and for the rest of that year then?

RC: Yeah. And so, I was out there and I was putting up hay and working just from daylight to dark. I was staying in their upstairs room. I remember this. And one night after I took my shower and went, laid on the bed, I asked the Lord. I said, "Lord, is this the way my life is going to be? Working hard like this all my life for somebody else?"

Well, the next day, I'm out putting up hay, baled hay. And my old buddy that I went to play football with at Tonkawa, he lived in the country there west of Pine Creek and he drove his old 36 out there on the field.

And my nickname was Barney, like my father's name was. And he said, "Barney, you want to go play football at Panhandle?" And I said, "Lloyd, I don't know where you're talking about, but the answer is yes."

And it was at Goodwill. So, we loaded up in the old 36. Picked two guys up from Ponca City. Two guys from the Old 36. Two guys from Perry. Went out and tried out for football. Nate Watson was the coach. He played fullback for Oklahoma A&M. Tough coach.

And it rained all the time we were there, so we had to work out in the gymnasium. Well, after about three days of that, he got tired of it and we did too. And he called us in, about six or eight of us, and said, "I've seen enough. You all got scholarships."

JE: And the name of that school was?

RC: Panhandle A&M at Goodwill, Oklahoma. So, we went back and finished out the summer. And then Lloyd and I and Balsler from Ponca City and Jones

from Perry and the Davis boys from Jett all got in this old 36 and went out there and the rest is history.

JE: 36 Ford is what you were talking about.

RC: 36 Chevy, yeah.

JE: Oh, it's Chevy. Okay.

RC: Yeah. Four door. Yeah. And another interesting story about that car. Lloyd, in the wintertime would park it. Parked on the grass of the university's lawn over a steam vent, because we all had steam heat out there, to keep the water motor warm so if somebody wanted to use it at midnight or one o'clock, they'd go out, it'll start. And he didn't have to drain the oil out of it to take it inside so it wouldn't freeze.

Well, the president, Mr. Williams, called him in and said, "Lloyd, what would happen if everybody had a car here to park on the grass like you do?" Well, he said, "Mr. Williams, let me tell you." He said, "there's a lot of guys here that doesn't have a car.

And he said, "sometimes, and some of them are married students," he said, "They may have a medical emergency, their wife or whatever, and have to take them to Guymon, which is 11 miles away." And he said, "my car is out there, it's gassed up, it's got the keys in it, and it's over that vent, and the motor's warm and it'll start." And he said, the president looked around, and he said, "Lloyd, that's a great idea. You just leave it there." That's small school for you.

JE: Right. Your faith became important to you at an early age?

RC: A very early age, because grandpa, like I said, was a Methodist minister, and mom grew up in that family, and she didn't push religion. She wasn't a fanatic about it at all. In fact, Merle and Dale and Eugene very seldom went to church, but I walked to church every single Sunday by myself.

When we first moved in, I was just a little kid, and I stopped by a Tebow Drug and get me a Cherry Coke. The only reason I could buy a Cherry Coke

was because the preacher's son and I would go out on Saturday morning and hunt junk and sell it to the junkman, and that was our spending money.

I would go in the church. Get my program, go up the stairs there was a little balcony up there that only held six people. And I was the only one up there, and I could sit behind my program and chew my bubble gum while the church process went on.

JE: So that was your early introduction – but your church and faith stayed with you the rest of your life?

RC: Yes. And a lot of it had to do with mom – pop didn't darken the door of the church. The only time he went to church was Christmas Eve to get his sack of candy. That's the only time he ever set foot in the church and they made him do that. He wanted to bring it out to the car to him but they made him come in and get it hoping that maybe it'll catch.

JE: Well, that says something about you. Nobody was telling you to go to church but something inside you as a young boy said “I want to go to church.”

RC: That's right and I'll have to say it has a lot to do with my mother and her bringing up and her mother and father, Reverend Bill, and Bessie, my great my grandmother.

Chapter 6 – 9:20

Navy

John Erling (JE): So you're at Panhandle A&M, and you graduate then from there?

Richard Chapman (RC): Yes, I graduated there in 1952.

JE: So you had a notable sports career too, I suppose?

RC: Yeah, I did. And as soon as I graduated, see, I got my draft notice when I was a senior there at Panhandle.

Well, I had a draft deferment and I went into Mr. Williams, the president, and I said, "Look here." He said "They can't do that. Said you've got a deferment until you graduate." I said, "Well, there it is."

He said, "What you're going to do?" And I said, "I'm going home." So I packed up and my brother Merle came out and got me, took me home. That was on a Friday. Sunday afternoon, the president called and said, "Have you unpacked yet?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, I called the draft board, the college draft board that regulates this type of thing and they voted six to nothing in your favor to come back and finish because it was an illegal thing to draft me when I had a draft deferment.

JE: Come back to finish your school, right?

RC: So I went back and finished. Well, as soon as I walked through and graduated, I handed my cap and gown to somebody, walked across the campus, got in the car with my brother, went to Oklahoma City, right down to the naval recruiting office, and joined the navy. I didn't want to be drafted, I didn't want to get in the army.

So I spent the summer at my sister's. She lived in the barracks down in the air base south of Norman. Her husband was in Europe at that time fighting the war and I stayed there all summer working the gas station until, say, August. Then I went to Great Lakes and had my basic training at Great Lakes in Chicago. And then from there, after three months there, I went to Norfolk Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Virginia, and that's where I stayed until I mustered out.

JE: So how many years?

RC: I was just in active two years. Active. Then being a reserve. You had to stay in the reserve for four years in case we had a blowout someplace, they called up the navy, I could they could immediately call up thousands the guys that were in the reserve.

JE: So, by this time we're talking you're into the 50s.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Into the 50s.

RC: Yeah.

JE: And that time, Korean War was beginning.

RC: Yes. Now, what, you know, when I got out of the navy, I went to my first job, there was Henrietta,

JE: Right. That was your coaching. But the Korean War, the uh, was going on, space race and Sputnik one, do those things bring back-

RC: Oh, yes. We used to – in my classes at Memorial, we had a TV in our room and anything that was taking place like that when we not only watched it but I called in the other history classes to watch too.

JE: You were talking about the launch of Sputnik, and yeah.

RC: Right, right. Yeah.

JE: So that and then that anti-communism feeling and red China and all those things were very strong.

RC: Very strong. And it was, we had a lot of literature on that too, and we studied their philosophy and could see the counter-revolutionary type things that we needed to do to combat it.

JE: Did you ever have a bomb test when kids get under the desk?

RC: Oh yes, we had air raid drills, yes, and we had to get up against the wall, sit and cover our heads. We got in the hallway because the hallways were supported more sometimes in the classrooms and you go out there and you do the drill. Every student would be out in the hallway.

JE: You sit on the floor, pull your knees up and your head down.

RC: And cover our head with our hands, yeah, and then they set a signal off and then we go back to class.

JE: Yeah.

RC: So routine.

JE: After you graduate from Panhandle A&M with what kind of a degree?

RC: Bachelor of Science. Actually, I majored in history.

JE: So, your first job was?

RC: My first job was Henrietta, 1952.

JE: And you went there as coach?

RC: I went there as an assistant football coach and track coach.

JE: And then I suppose you taught history as well?

RC: Yeah. Then the head coach moved, Lyle Berryhill moved to Cleveland.

JE: When you were first at Henrietta, you were assistant football-

RC: And head track coach.

JE: And head track coach.

RC: Yeah, yeah. Then about five years, Lyle, the head coach, went to Cleveland as principal.

JE: So, how many years were you with at Henrietta?

RC: I think nine years.

JE: All right. What schools, who would you play at what other...

RC: Well, we played, we had a Sooner Star League. It was Wewoka, and Seminole, and McAlester. But there were seven teams in the Sooner Star.

JE: So were you enjoying that, this was your first coaching experience?

RC: I really did, yeah. I really did. I had some great athletes there.

JE: You remember the names of anybody?

RC: Well, Jim Harjo was one of the all-staters, and Mike Greenlee was my halfback. He was the fastest man in Oklahoma his senior year. He ran the hundred in nine-eight, but he was only five foot seven. But you wouldn't know him today, he weighs 302. But anyway, had some good athletes. And I coached both track and football.

JE: Back then in the '50s, Oklahoma was still very segregated.

RC: Yes, that's another thing. We had one family in Henrietta, this black preacher and his family lived five miles west of Henrietta. Gundy was his name. The children went to Henrietta, that was the only black students in Henrietta all the time I was there. I may be in the history of their school, we went to Oak Mogyey once to play football when he was a freshman and played Sapulpa.

And on the way home that night, the parents drove cars we were going to eat at a cafe six miles south of Sepulpa on highway 75 and Timothy and I were the last one to get there because I had to do some detail work after the game. So we were late and we came to the door of the restaurant and the manager met us at the door greeting us and he looked at Timothy and says, "Is he with you?" and I said "Yeah, he's a member of the team." and he said "Well he'll have to eat in the kitchen. So we don't serve colored."

And I said, "You what?" he said "We don't serve colored in the dining room." And so I went around and most a lot of the people already finished eating still in their booths and I passed the word around what took place and they all got up as one and walked out. Did not pay a bill, period.

And so the superintendent called Dr. Battles called me in, oh, some weeks later and said "I got something here." And he had a ticket, a bill that this cafe had sent him that we owed so he taped it on the edge of his desk and when school was out, I came back and it was still taped there about two months, three months later.

So he took a match and burned it, of course, they never heard from him again.

JE: Yeah.

RC: That was a sad thing.

JE: Do you recall black students playing on the other teams?

RC: Yes. Oak Mulkey had a black school and then when they integrated they won the state championship two years in a row and then all the others – Holdenville had, well all of them had, a large black community. We woke up, Holdenville, McAlester they all had..

JE: But they were school for blacks, weren't they or were they?

RC: Yes, they were. They were black, they were black.

JE: Right, right.

RC: And they integrated. They closed the black schools and all the black kids went into the to the regular public school.

JE: Yeah. Were those schools tough, those all-black schools?

RC: Oh you tell them that Oak Mulkey Dunbar was uh – was they were undefeated a couple of years while I was down there. Yeah, they were in class b or something like that. I don't know what.

Chapter 7 – 14:39
Did Not Recruit

John Erling (JE): So you were at Henrietta. The Henrietta Hens.

Richard Chapman (RC): They were the Hens then. They're Knights now, yeah, for nine years.

JE: Then what happens to you?

RC: Well, I get fired.

JE: You get fired for what?

RC: Well, last couple of years there, we didn't win. But, seven games, I think, out of the two years. And I see it coming. I would have fired me too, you know. But I took it as a coach. I said, "Well, you can't win the Kentucky Derby with a mule," you know, that type of thing. But I didn't fight it. I just... I didn't want to make a spectacle. I did all I could do down there, and that's it.

JE: So, parents and all, everybody, because that's a big deal, isn't it?

RC: I had a lot of parents that were making little protests to the school board and so forth.

JE: In your favor.

RC: In my favor.

JE: However, there were others who wanted you out.

RC: Oh, yes, right.

JE: And so we point out that in a small town as it is today in 2016, that's the biggest thing that's going for 'em.

RC: And you as a coach, you know it. You don't get flustered by it. You don't... You don't call names. You don't cuss them out. It's just if I was in their position as a parent, I would do the same thing because I want my kids to be in a winning program.

JE: And you had been successful there.

RC: Yeah, but those things don't count when you're with my kids there. Past history doesn't count.

JE: Yeah. So in the last couple of years, what do you think your record was of winning as compared to losing?

RC: Well, I had a plus on between winning and losing. I won more than I lost..

JE: but it wasn't good enough. Wasn't good because you weren't able to play in the finals, I suppose, or for championships.

RC: So, I had made good friends with Doug Duggar, who's a coach and athletic director at Memorial High School at that time, and I came up to a track meet at Skelly Stadium and I talked to a bunch of coaches. I said, "You know Coach Duggar?" "Yeah, he's right up." So I went up and talked to him and told him my history about what was going on and so forth.

And he had met me before because I refereed a lot and I refereed some of Memorial's games. In fact, I made more money my first two years in Henrietta refereeing than I did coaching. Well, anyway, I talked to Doug. He said, "Well, just come by, take a day off or two, and come by and we'll go out and talk to the principal and so forth." Went out on a Monday, talked to the... He and the principal, and before I walked out, I had a job.

JE: At Memorial High School.

RC: Memorial High School.

JE: And that was just new, wasn't it?

RC: Yes, in fact, I was there at their first graduating class, '63. Yeah,

JE: Okay.

RC: A beautiful program and a lot of enthusiasm, you know.

JE: So you were two years in at Memorial, and you were what there?

RC: I was track coach and assistant football.

JE: And then world history, I suppose.

RC: Yeah, and world history, right.

JE: So was that a good experience there?

RC: Great experience, great experience. I got... I got noted for my coaching. I got in track and football. I was defensive coach. Then, Edison fired their coach, and the first thing Jim Sellers did was talk to me, and I was hired at Edison.

JE: And how long were you there as head football coach?

RC: I was there eight years.

JE: And you were fired?

RC: Yes, I was fired at the end of eight years. That's right. I didn't win enough games.

JE: All right.

RC: But I had won many games. I had really great seasons. And I had two All-Americans and 25 All-Staters. Mac Fanning was one of them. He made All-American at Notre Dame and All-Pro for the Rams.

JE: Anybody else that did that went on to college?

RC: Oh, yeah, a lot of them. I had... My second year over there, I had 17 that got full scholarships.

JE: That's various colleges,

RC: Yes, yeah, right.

JE: Any beyond the one that you just mentioned that went on to the pros?

RC: Um, I don't... I don't remember. No, I think Mike was the only one.

JE: You remember any other names at Memorial or Edison that would come by, come to recall as athletes?

RC: I just... I was kind of few and far between now, but we had many of them in both schools that made full scholarships. Notre Dame and... And Creekmore went to Knox College on a full scholarship. Shoemakers, two of them went on a full scholarship to TU.

JE: When you were at Edison, you played for the state championship?

RC: Yeah,

JE: And so, uh, did you win?

RC: No, we didn't win the state championship.

JE: : Who did you play in the state championship?

RC: Uh, I think it was... Bent West City.

JE: So was that, you said you were there eight years, the state championship came in the first three, four years?

RC: Yeah.

JE: And then things started going downhill, is that it?

RC: Yeah, just, you know, it does have, from my standpoint, it doesn't have all that much to do with coaches. It does mainly do with your personnel, with the people you have. Just like they say, you can't win the Kentucky Derby on a mule. Although the mule is a good athlete and he's a tough worker, he's not gonna beat Whirlaway or people like that.

JE: So you didn't have the players.

RC: Right.

JE: ...at Edison. What good schools in Tulsa were good at that time?

RC: Rogers was great. They always... Oh, Bill Eubanks always. We fought each other for the championship when I was at Memorial.

JE: How about Tulsa Central?

RC: Central had some great teams earlier, but when I came, they were gradually going downhill.

JE: Booker T. Washington,

RC: Booker T. was strong, very.

JE: So they were all good competition.

RC: Yeah.

JE: And then things went south. How was that for you and your wife, this pressure that comes on you and her too, and you're not winning games, and it's a big deal to win, and are we gonna win tonight, and how do you handle all that?

RC: We, uh, intelligently. Like, we got our heads together. And when you coach, you're hired to win. You're not hired to lose. You need to win a certain percentage in order to be viable. In other words, if you're just going to win two and lose eight, that's not going to get it. You've got to turn that around.

And now, you can't control the ability of the kids coming into your program. You just take what's there. And sometimes you have a weak link here in your process.

JE: Sometimes, I think some high schools are accused of recruiting, bringing kids into their district. Did that go on at your time?

RC: All the time. In fact, it was going on in Henrietta. I had a quarterback club down there, and I had to watch them all the time. Those guys went down once, south of some little old town, I can't remember, and moved an Indian family in, the Walker family. Had six boys. And the oldest one had already made all-state.

And he played for me one year. They rented a house for them, paid their rent, filled it with furniture, and loaded up all their utilities, paid for their groceries, and so forth. And I didn't know this at the time. And I got ahold of the quarterback club president. I said, "Look, you're going to get us all fired if you keep this up."

Well, it didn't happen because Dewar, the little town east of us, a small B-class school, and they hired the father as a head janitor. And all the family moved to Dewar, which was five miles east of Henrietta. So we lost them anyway.

JE: And all that work had gone into it.

RC: I know.

JE: And money.

RC: Yeah. But they actually went out and recruited, which if they could have proved this, the state would have put us on probation. We probably would have been ineligible for a couple of years.

JE: So then here in Tulsa, did you sense some of that recruiting?

RC: Oh, I didn't sense this. I know it happened.

JE: And to your knowledge, that didn't happen at your school, at Edison?

RC: No, not in my... No, I didn't recruit anybody. In all my time, I never recruited anybody.

JE: I suppose somebody could have encouraged a family to move in without you knowing it.

RC: I always told the quarterback club, I said, "My win and loss record will recruit kids. But I won't go out and proselyte. It's just against my way of doing it."

JE: And do you think some coaches in your time at Memorial or Edison were doing that?

RC: Absolutely.

JE: They were directly talking to families, come and live in our district.

RC: Yes, sir. And parents. Some of the parents that have business had an edge there. They could hire somebody and they could get away with so-called recruiting that way.

JE: So didn't it make you want to do the same?

RC: No, I never did. I never did, truthfully. I never did. No, sir. I just couldn't do it.

JE: Right. And so, how many times did you come to a game and you said to yourself, "I know we're going to lose this game?"

RC: Well, I tried not to be that pessimistic. But I can... The handwriting is on the wall. Here's Rogers. They've got this tradition. They've got these families. They've got this whatever. And McLean had a stretch there where they were powerful. Booker T. was up and down with their team.

But boy, when they were strong, you know, they were strong. I know Muskogee, the old coach there. I can't remember his name now. Young.

Paul Young. He was there for a hundred years. I know he was a tremendous recruiter.

JE: So many people just kind of look at this. It's a fun night. It's Friday night. How big could Friday night lights be? But in Oklahoma. And so you were all part of that. And they're just, you know, go see a game and then they go home. But you, you're living it. But however, it is what you signed up for. And you knew that. And so it had to drain on you.

RC: Well, it does. But you don't dwell on that because if you dwell on it, it takes your concentration away from what you need to do. Like the colleges today. That's one of the biggest jobs that they do is recruiting. They have to.

JE: Right.

RC: But they've got rules. They've got rules to go by. They've got certain rules.

JE: So tell me about your waning days at Edison. You too then saw the handwriting on the wall.

And would you have fired yourself then too?

RC: Yeah. And I'd talk to the coaches. My coaches I had there. I had five of them. And I said, "You've got to realize that if this continues, if we don't get the kids in here to win with, to coach, then there's going to be some changes." And they would pick up a job here and there, you know, and change. So there's just a big mix there.

JE: It must have been awfully tempting to try to find some good athletes to come into your district.

RC: Oh, yeah. I don't know. I may be a white elephant. I never recruited a person. I never talked to a parent. I never took a kid aside and tried to psychology with him or whatever. I just did it on my own.

JE: Who would have been some of your better athletes football as you were head football coach at Edison? Who would have been some of the better?

RC: Well, Mike Fanning has to be the top of the list. He played, he was 6'7", weighed 240. And he just looked like a man among kids. And he could play any place. He played tackle on offense. And I could play him defensive tackle. I could play him at linebacker. And he was a great kid. Clean cut.

Just like on backward week where the girls are supposed to go take the football players out for breakfast. He'd lock his door. He wouldn't let them in.

JE: Too many of them.

RC: Too much of a distraction. But then he goes, gets... I was in the room in the athletic office when Notre Dame came back and talked to him and his parents where he signed for Notre Dame. Well, he made All-American. In fact, he was an All-State wrestler. Heavyweight. He won the heavyweight championship three years. And he started wrestling at Notre Dame but decided two sports in college was too much so he dropped wrestling.

But he made All-American there and then they recruited him to Los Angeles Rams and he played there for 10 years and retired and made All-Pro two or three years while he was there. Now he has a small horse ranch over here by Chouteau. I don't know whether he's still there or not, but I've visited him a couple times and that was his dream was to have a little horse ranch and a wife and kids and that's what he did.

Chapter 8 – 9:28

Chapman Fired

John Erling (JE): As we say, when things were going south on you there, and you're out in the community, do parents see you and say nasty things to you?

Richard Chapman (RC): Well, you can hear it from the stands. I say you hear it. I can't tell you if I ever, because I didn't pay attention to it then.

JE: Did you get booed?

RC: Oh, yeah. And some of the, my family was sitting, you know, behind the bench up in there, and they could hear what was going on.

JE: And here you were there, and you had played for a state championship. You had a good record, and they considered you a good coach. That didn't make any difference, because you were two and seven or whatever.

RC: Because their kid is on the field. They want him to make all-state. They want him to play with a champion. They don't want him to play with a loser.

JE: Right, right.

RC: All that stuff. And I can see their point. I can see their point.

JE: But you never began to question your coaching ability?

RC: No. No. Never did. I just did what I did, and I worked hard. I put in hours upon hours. A lot of times I'd be watching film up until three or four o'clock in the morning. And we went, I had to pick the film up after the game about 12 o'clock downtown, and I'd take it by the coach's office, and I would run it through a couple of times and make notes on the big mistakes that we made.

Then I'd take it home with me. And on the weekend, like after church, all afternoon, instead of watching games, games on TV, I'd be watching our film and editing. And I had them, I had the talking point there. When we had our squad meeting, they looked out, boy, they were ready. Because I knew every step they took, and every wrong step and every good step.

And film is a very strong coaching device.

JE: When you pointed out to these kids, "This is what you did wrong," A, either it didn't sink in, or B, they didn't have the athletic ability to correct it.

RC: If they're a good athlete, and they have the right foot forward, it's a great aid to them, because they can see. And I wasn't brow-beating them. I just put the facts there, and I said, "Your first step is wrong. All you've got to do is change your first step, and you'll get there quicker." And it worked.

JE: For some it did, and for others, obviously, it did not.

RC: Oh, yeah.

JE: So then, the day you were fired. You were called into the office. You knew. How did that come about?

RC: Oh, I went at Edison. The secretary came down to the coach's office, said, "Mr. Sellers and Mr. Lewis wants to see you." I knew exactly what it was. So I just walked down, and there they were, sitting in the office. I said, "You guys having a good morning?" "Yeah, everything." I said, "I know why you're here, and I know what you want to say, and I understand why you have to say it, but I've got to get back to class. I've got a world history class that I need to get with, and whatever you do here, let me know later."

And so, athletic director, at six hour, I talked to him, and he told me what went on. I said, "Fine." And right then, I went to Memorial High School, talked to Coach Duggar. He hired me back. He hired me from Henrietta, then he hired me back here.

JE: So right away, the next day, you went over there.

RC: Well, that same day.

JE: That same day. But that becomes newspaper story, doesn't it?

RC: Well, yeah.

JE: "Edison coach, Chapman, is fired."

RC: Oh, yes. It was headlines.

JE: Do you have any of those? Did you save them?

RC: I've got them. I've got scrapbooks this deep in there.

JE: All right. So then, when you were fired there in '72, who did they hire as head football coach?

RC: Oh, I think Tom Langham.

JE: And how did that go for him?

RC: Oh, good. Yeah.

JE: Did Edison ever?

RC: No, they, after, you know, a few years, things changed. Things started to level out, because other schools were starting to feel the pinch, and integration was taking place, and all this. It's just a teeter-totter type thing.

JE: So then it had to really feel good to, for A, to have a job, but B, to go back to a school that you liked.

RC: Oh, just great feeling. And Coach Duggar just, we were good friends, but that wasn't the only thing. I think he knew that I was doing everything possible to get the job done. And that's what an athletic director asked. He said, "Just do whatever you can. If you don't have the kids to win, I'll know it." He knew exactly the ability of the kids, because he was a coach himself. He coached basketball when I was there. And so he was, he knew the ability.

JE: So you returned to Memorial, then you were a head tennis coach?

RC: Yeah, I was a defensive coach. Assistant football coach.

JE: Defensive coach for the football team.

RC: And I coached boys and girls tennis.

JE: And then, obviously. The classroom history teacher.

RC: And I, when I went back this time, I started my own class, Contemporary Affairs. It's an honor student class. Started out as an honor student. You had to have a B plus or an A average in order to be in the class. Later on, I changed that, because I had a lot of kids that were B, C, whatever, that were good students, but they wouldn't be A or B.

So, instead of having lined up chairs in my history class, I got tables and just made a big circle of tables. When I opened it up for all students, rather than just honor students, I got a room full. I had 56 students at one time in there. And they represented, they were representatives from different states.

Like, this group would take five states, this group, whatever. And then they'd write their senators. And their senators and their representatives in Washington, tell them what we were doing.

And like, we'd like to have some samples of legislation that you're working on right now, bills that you're working on. And we're trying to build these things ourselves and learn how to write bills. Well, we got boxes full of stuff from Washington. And they just responded tremendously. And it's one of the best experiences in my teaching.

JE: That had to give you a great deal of satisfaction. Well, let's just point out here, the Chargers went on and they won the state championship, football championship.

RC: Yeah, 1980.

JE: In 1980. And you were the defensive coach on that team.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Who was the coach then of that team?

RC: Richard Eddy. Richard Eddy. He passed away here just a few months ago.

JE: And in tennis, were you able to play for a title then?

RC: Well, tennis is a little different. We didn't win any team titles, but I had seven state championships. Okay. I had a two-state championship doubles team. And I had... I had one girl that won the state in number one singles. And I had a boys team that went to state in doubles. Tennis is just a little different.

JE: Right.

RC: Actually, it's individual sport, what it is. You get there, you add up your team points, but individuals do the point making.

JE: So it sounds like you had a lot of tennis talent there at Memorial.

RC: Yeah. And they got all their teaching from pros at the country clubs. What I did, I conditioned them. And I conditioned them. I run sprints, and I did the calisthenics and so forth. But all the technique of hitting the ball, they knew that before they came into the program.

JE: So this was a wealthier crowd then that came to Memorial.

RC: Oh, very, very.

JE: And they had the benefit of Southern Hills tennis.

RC: And even at Rogers, McLean, other places, a lot of these affluent families in those schools had their kids in tennis programs. And golf programs, because they could afford it.

JE: Did you ever play golf?

RC: My wife got me a set of clubs in Henrietta. And we had a golf course out south of town, old hilly ball club. And we did have some sand greens. That's where you take a drag and drag a path through the hole and so forth. And I just about tore them up out there and missing the ball and hitting rocks.

But I wasn't worried about that. I just loved to get out there. I'd end up

with, oh, half a dozen or a dozen balls in my bag, because I was out there in the grass looking for mine.

JE: Right.

Chapter 9 – 9:04

Classroom Satisfaction

John Erling (JE): What gave you the most satisfaction? I mean, you just talked about this recent classroom experience that you invented, you created.

Richard Chapman (RC): Right.

JE: And it became very successful. You had satisfaction from that, then you had satisfaction from coaching a certain team or championship. Tell us what rises to the top.

RC: Well, I'll tell you one thing before I go any further. It's the association of adults, the good people, the athletic directors, the coaches, and the teachers that were in the program.

JE: So that was very meaningful to you, the good people.

RC: Oh, man, we had some good ones. We sure did. And they were teaching our athletes how to academically survive. And I was teaching them how to athletically survive. And it was a teamwork. We didn't fight. Now, some coaches and some teachers were different. In other words, they had some friction.

But I found out friction doesn't gain very much. If I hadn't have worked psychologically like I did, I probably would have won half the games I won as I was coaching.

JE: How did you, okay, you said psychologically. How did you mean? What did you mean by that? What did you do?

RC: How I worked with the teachers and didn't gripe about so-and-so. And I didn't beg about I got to have him on Friday or whatever. They had to do it on their own. And the teachers and I had a pact about that. And I said, if you want him to play, coach him in studying also. And I did that. And I think it helped a great deal.

JE: Were there times when you had to set a boy aside because he wasn't academically?

RC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And it hurt a couple times, too.

JE: Might have even hurt a win or loss of a game.

RC: Oh, yeah. True. That's true.

JE: Yeah. All right. Then bringing you back to your satisfaction moments. The school, I mean, the academia in the classroom, on the field, kind of what pops in your mind?

RC: Well, the first thing I enjoyed about that life was the teaching, the classroom teaching. That I enjoyed. Because you have more winners there. I'm not poking fun at the footballers or anything, because that's a different story. When you're using your muscle rather than your brain, there's a lot different direction you have to take.

In other words, if I was a big ox and you were small, I could just crush you and that's it. But if we're equal. Now, education is going to have to come in so I can outthink you. And if you can't outthink them, you're in trouble. That's for sure.

JE: So it's your classroom experience that ranks higher than even your athletic football.

RC: Right. Yes. If I had to go back as a career for the rest of my life, I'd want to be in the classroom. Rather than on the football field. Although that was my life for years, football.

JE: Right. Right.

RC: I liked the classroom.

JE: Okay, let's talk about the athletes back there in the 60s and the 70s, and then the athletes today and the way football, let's use football, is being run. Major differences? Comparisons?

RC: Well, I think the main difference between the kids today and then was the distractions. Today there's so many things that are distracted, like the electronic era has come in. And the things that are fed these people today, these young kids today, through electronic devices is criminal to me.

Now, on the other hand, it's very beneficial, too, because they use that for a positive way in getting their studies and doing their research. So it's not all bad. But, you know, a person that is weak physically or mentally. And he's easily induced into certain areas that are negative, electronic devices just enhances that.

JE: Is it fair to say athletes today can be faster, bigger?

RC: Yes.

JE: And so there's an evolution going on here, isn't there?

RC: Main thing down through the years is training and diet and many other things. And facilities, we've got facilities like weights and swimming pools and saunas and all kinds of things that cause you to be stronger and more mentally alert that we didn't have when we were going to school, period.

JE: So kids playing today aren't necessarily bigger, stronger, faster, but they had the facilities to make them faster and be bigger and lift weights and have more muscle?

RC: That's true. Just like me, I wasn't, the only way I muscled up when I was young was lifting baled hay and shoveling wheat and working on the farm and so forth. We didn't have a weight program. We didn't lift weights. The only way we lifted were bales when we were throwing them on the truck.

JE: Right. You know, we also hear today about performance-enhancing drugs. And did you sense any drugs for performance or of any sort back in those days?

RC: All my coaching career, I never even, it never even come in contact. Yeah.

JE: Do you think it was even around back then? We're talking 80s.

RC: It's hard telling how much of that was there. It might have been some, but it was just, and another thing that we had then that I don't know how it goes on now. I know it was kind of waning, is saying prayer and bringing the Lord into our locker room. Nowadays, people are afraid sometimes to do this because of the repercussions that may come back.

You're not supposed to be teaching religion. You're supposed to be teaching football or whatever. And that's reverse psychology there. That's reverse positive living. It all goes in. And we always said prayer on the bus. To the game. And we said prayer after the game. And when we got through showering, before we dress, we met around in a commune of prayer and concern for people that were hurt.

JE: Did you do that in both schools?

RC: Yes.

JE: As a head football coach, you brought that in. And nobody complained about it.

RC: No. Now today, you probably couldn't get past some of these things that we did.

JE: And then we have more different religions introduced into it.

RC: That's true.

JE: In our community now.

RC: That's right.

JE: Than you did then. Everybody was basically of the Christian faith back then.

RC: Yeah. The old saying was, “you leave the religion to me”, the Father says, and you do the coaching. Well, that's fine with me. But I didn't have any, any gripe or any, in all those years, nobody said anything about us saying prayer or whatever.

JE: Yeah.

RC: In fact, John Capehart, he was a Phi Beta Kappa. Straight-A student. And he's a neurosurgeon right now in Dallas. He'd walk up and down the bus on the way to school or way to the game and preach and look at them and tell them and this. And if we, especially if we lost the game, he and two or three others were up and bringing in the Lord and saying, what is the most important thing? Losing this ball game is not. So that's the kind of kids I had.

Chapter 10 – 11:52

Advice to Parents

John Erling (JE): You had to give, well you did, you gave a lot of pep talks.

Richard Chapman (RC): Oh, yes.

JE: Even when times were really tough.

RC: Especially.

JE: And at halftime when you knew you were behind 36 to nothing and you had to go out there, what kind of talks would you give?

RC: Well, I'm glad I took psychology in college. But halftime, some of them called it BS sessions. But you had to get in their head. You had to get inside of them. You can't stay outside. You got to get in and speak their language.

JE: Do you think that there were times at halftime you did get into their head and gave them a positive thought and it turned the game around?

RC: Absolutely. Yes. And you watch, I learned some of this from Bud Wilkinson.

JE: That's a great coach of Oklahoma University.

RC: You betcha. And how his demeanor was. He was neat. He was dressed well. He never, as far as I know, I didn't, I wasn't there. But I would doubt whether he ever said a curse word on the field. But he was tough. He was tough. He worked your tail off. And you can see what the results were. One of the top coaches there ever was in the history of coaching.

JE: Right. Well, some of this could be said about you. I'm sure you were tough too. But you seemed to have, as I'm sitting across here from you, that demeanor that you talked about Coach Wilkinson.

RC: Yeah. Well, I think it's just a, it's a reaction and it's something that's in your heart, you know. I've been there. I played and played sorry sometimes, played good sometimes, had some good coaches sometimes and some bad coaches. And I'll say this, I can't even, I wouldn't even label any of them as a bad coach.

JE: Yeah.

RC: But sometimes philosophy is something that I wouldn't have done, but who knows.

JE: Let's give some advice here to parents. And right now I have a grandchild. His name is Lars and he's eight years old and he's involved very much in baseball.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: They're playing tournament baseball on the weekend. Yeah. And we're sitting watching this and my son used to be a coach, not professionally. But we see things going on that we don't like. Or why is Lars always

playing, why is he always catching or playing third? And we have all this stuff going in our head.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: So what is your advice to parents? And then I hear parents yell at their own son. And do this, do this. And then there's another one who yells at Lars. Lars, move over there. And so, you know, we have all this stuff going on. Yeah. And so what's your advice?

RC: Well, my advice is, and being on both ends of this now, because I was a parent too. I say I was up in the stands. I always had a clipboard. I tried to be on the sideline. But anyway, you have these people that are coaching and teaching. And if they are doing an outstanding, poor job, you know, everybody can see it.

You can't let this drift over into your son or your daughter. And you don't ever want to speak negative about the coach or teacher in front of the student. You just don't want to talk to the student. You just don't do it. The way you speak negative is to go talk to that person face to face. And if you've got anything negative to say, say it to him, not to somebody behind his back. Or especially don't talk about it with the kids. That doesn't approve anything.

JE: Yeah. And how many times have we heard that parents got in fights in the stands? I don't know. Did that ever happen to you?

RC: Yeah. Yeah.

JE: There'll be fights break out in the stands?

RC: Oh, yeah. That'd be talking about what some player's doing, what they're not doing, and not knowing who's sitting down. And yeah. That would kind of get me going if somebody was sitting there running my kid down. No matter what he was doing, right or wrong.

JE: Right. And then as a coach, you saw it happening in the stands as well.

RC: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I'd always made it a point that if I saw anything like that, I'd call the parent or talk to him personally and try to point out how to approach it in my way and not physically do something that you'll regret later on.

JE: Did you have someone who rebuffed you and said you were wrong?

RC: Oh, yeah. Especially two mamas. Not just men. But the mamas.

JE: The most aggressive, huh?

RC: They can chew you out pretty good. That's for sure. I won't mention names.

JE: But you could.

RC: I could.

JE: And maybe names we know.

RC: Yes. That's for sure. But bless their hearts. They're tied up in their flesh and blood. And although I can't excuse them for that, I can see why they're doing it, you know? You can't... You can't overlook it.

JE: Yeah.

RC: And you can't agree to it either.

JE: Well, despite some of the hardship you went through, you had a lot of victories and a lot of joy as well. And yes, you spoke being fired two times. But you were inducted into the Oklahoma Track Coaches Hall of Fame in 1987. You were inducted into the Oklahoma Coaches Hall of Fame in 1988 and Edison Coaches Hall of Fame in 1988. And I believe, were you inducted in the memorials?

RC: Yes.

JE: Hall of Fame as well.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: So you did get a lot of compliments and results of good work.

RC: Well, I must have been a good psychologist. I don't know.

JE: Well, no. They saw that you were a good coach is what they saw.

RC: Well, these schools that you're talking about there, they're top class schools. Of course, any school. They're all top class to me. The way they're working with kids. But yeah, there's a lot of pleasure in coaching. It's not all tears. There's a lot of pleasure in it.

JE: Here you are, 88 years old.

RC: Uh-huh.

JE: And it's hard to believe that you're 88 years old. Yeah. You're in good health, I presume.

RC: I just thank the Lord every step I take.

JE: And through your entire life, you were...

RC: Yes.

JE: You didn't have any major, major health problems?

RC: Well, I've had two knees replaced. I've had both shoulders operated on. I had my back operated on twice. But other than that, my heart and my blood pressure and all this has always been normal except right at the close of a game when I think we might lose.

JE: Right. So...

RC: This has to go back, I think, to my heritage. I always mention Grandpa Beale, giant of a man, 6'5", white hair, red face, inch thick glasses. And when he preached, he'd been known to break many, many pulpits with his fists. Truly. If he saw somebody reacting in the audience favorably to what he went to advertise, he'd walk down.

I remember this for sure. Jefferson, old Charlie, sitting on the third row with his overalls. Grandpa walks down, and Charlie's just praising. He reaches down and grabs a bit of the overalls and pulls him up. He said, "are you with the Lord, Charlie?" He said, "amen, preacher." That type of thing, you know? Yeah.

JE: Yeah. You talked about your mother. And you have a poem here, and you had it sitting out. But I wanted you to read it, because how old were you when you wrote this poem to your mother?

RC: I was in the fifth grade.

JE: And so you were...

RC: Twelve years. Eleven years old.

JE: About eleven years old. And this is what you read to your mother and wrote to her. Let's hear it.

RC: "Hundreds of stars in the pretty sky. Hundreds of skills on the shore together. Hundreds of birds that go singing by. Hundreds of bees in the sunny weather. Hundreds of dewdrops too great to greet the dawn. Hundreds of lambs in the purple clover. Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn. But only one mother the wide world over." Fifth grade, 1938.

JE: Wow. Yeah. That was great to hear you read that.

RC: Yeah.

JE: Well, you've got tears, and I, so do I.

RC: Yeah. Yeah.

JE: That's something. So then, you have reason to believe you can be 95 or 98.

RC: Well, I told my grandson Timothy. I said, "when you graduate, I'll be 108 years old. And I'll be there."

JE: And there's no reason why you can't be. How would you like to be remembered?

RC: Oh, just a fair person and with a good attitude.

JE: Yeah. Well, I know through sports, many, many lives today are living wonderful citizenship lives because of sports.

RC: Yes.

JE: And you were right in the middle of that. Yeah. And you can take, I know, a lot of pleasure from knowing that if these kids didn't have sports, you don't know what they would have turned out to be.

RC: That's true. That's true.

JE: Well, I want to thank you for this time. It was fun to visit with you about it.

RC: Well, thank you. And all the years that I followed you at the KRMG, I want you to know I enjoyed the great raft race and the truck driver conversations that come through.

JE: The Tulsa Mountain truck drivers that you're talking about.

RC: Such humanistic stories of your time on the radio.

JE: Well, thank you. Thank you.

RC: Nobody's matched it and nobody ever will.

JE: Thank you. Thank you. Well, this was fun. Thank you so much.

RC: Thank you, John.

JE: As we shake hands.

RC: Appreciate it.

JE: You bet.

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