

Arkansas Supreme Court Project
Arkansas Supreme Court Historical Society Interview
With Betty C. Dickey
Little Rock, Arkansas
February 20, 2018

Interviewer: Ernest Dumas

Ernest Dumas: I am Ernie Dumas and I am interviewing Judge Betty C. Dickey. This interview is being held at her home at 132 Falata Circle, Little Rock, Arkansas, in Pulaski County on February 20, 2018. The audio recording of this interview will be donated to the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Oral and Visual Arkansas History at the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Supreme Court Historical Society. The recording transcript and any other related materials will be deposited and preserved forever in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. And the copyright will belong to the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Supreme Court Historical Society. Judge Dickey, please state your full name and spell your name and indicate that you are willing to give the Pryor Center and the Supreme Court Historical Society permission to make the transcript available to others?

Betty Dickey: My name is Betty Clark Dickey and, yes, I am willing.

ED: OK. Judge, let's start off at the beginning. Your birth date and your full name as it was at birth.

BD: My birth date was February 23, 1940. I was born in Black Rock [Lawrence County].

ED: Your father and your mother.

BD: My full name was Betty Clark. No middle name. My father's name was Millard Morris Clark of Black Rock. My mother was Myrtle Norris Clark, also of Black Rock.

ED: Black Rock is in Lawrence County.

BD: It is. Lawrence County.

ED: Black Rock. Did you know Thomas Penn?

BD: I did.

ED: Tom Penn was the superintendent of schools at Black Rock for many years and a state senator. A wonderful fellow. When I started covering the state Senate in 1965, he and Bob Harvey were my favorite senators. Two of the sweetest guys. Straight arrows. They were always honest and truthful. You could count on what they told you. Did you know him well?

BD: I didn't know him well. He was a little older than I was. The Penns were all fine people from Lawrence County.

ED: He and Bob Harvey were the Senate conservatives. Of course, everybody in there was conservative by any common definition, but they were fiscal conservatives, trying to cut every penny they could from state spending. Black Rock. How did your folks wind up at Black Rock and tell me something about their backgrounds.

BD: My father was one of seven boys. My grandmother had always wanted a girl, but there were seven sons. One of my uncles compiled a genealogy, and I think they came from Michigan. They emigrated to eastern Canada after the Revolution, then moved to the South, for health reasons.

ED: People usually migrated from the eastern states.

BD: I understand. My mother's family did come from Tennessee. She was born in Poughkeepsie. That is in Sharp County, and she graduated from Sloan-Hendrix at Imboden. Her parents ended up in Black Rock also.

ED: What did your father do?

BD: My dad was a carpenter. In fact, I saw recently one of his check stubs, and I think he had gone to Helena to work that day for, I think, three dollars a day.

ED: Was he a homebuilder?

BD: He eventually became a contractor and built homes—more residential than commercial.

ED: Was there a big market in Black Rock in those days for homebuilding?

BD: Well, George Kell's home in Swifton, which he built. [Kell was an all-star third baseman for the Detroit Tigers and later an automobile dealer at Newport and a member of the state Highway Commission.] And Fred Pickens' home in Newport, who was a double cousin. [Pickens was a prominent lawyer.] Fred said my great aunts married his uncles, or vice versa. So dad eventually built in Lawrence, Jackson, and Randolph counties.

ED: So, all over the area. There obviously was not that much to do at Black Rock.

BD: By the time he became a contractor, we were living in Walnut Ridge.

ED: How big was Black Rock?

BD: Well, Black Rock was on the Black River and had a button factory. At one time it had quite a few people.

ED: So they took mussel shells out of the river and made buttons.

BD: They took mussel shells and made buttons.

ED: That was a big industry in that part of the state.

BD: It was. I remember collecting mussel shells and looking for pearls. So they ended up with a button factory at Black Rock. At that time I'm not sure

what the population was, but at that time it was much larger than now. [Black Rock's population in 1940 was 769.] There were two county seats at that time.

ED: Was Black Rock a county seat?

BD: No, Powhatan was one county seat until they built the bridge across the Black River, and Walnut Ridge was the other.

ED: Tell me a little about your mother.

BD: Mother was an all-state high school basketball player. She was quite athletic.

ED: At Black Rock?

BD: At Sloan-Hendrix, at Imboden. That was before she moved to Black Rock. She was a homemaker. She had a couple of years of business school. My dad, I think, had some drafting education, but neither of them was a college graduate.

ED: Did your dad go to college some?

BD: I think he went to Arkansas State [College at that time] for some drafting training.

ED: Brothers and sisters?

BD: I'm very happy to talk about my brothers. I have a brother named Bob who is two years older.

ED: Robert . . . ?

BD: Dr. Robert M. Clark. He went to M.I.T. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Cambridge].

ED: Is he older or younger?

BD: He's two years older. Graduated from Walnut Ridge High School. Without any prep school, he went to M.I.T. Of course, it was quite a transition for a Southern boy.

ED: Sure.

BD: He graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. He was an electronics warfare officer on B-52s in the Air Force. He got his master's while stationed at Grand Forks, ND, and got his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, then went to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. For a few years, we only knew he worked in Washington.

ED: For the CIA. Do you know what he was doing, or couldn't he talk about it?

BD: Well, for one thing he briefed the president on medium-range ICBM missiles. There was very little he ever talked about. One thing we talked about . . .

ED: He would have to kill you if he told you . . .

BD: Yes, that was the standard line. He was a senior analyst, and has written several books, all of which the CIA has to approve. He later started a company that tracked terrorist groups, working for the CIA as an independent contractor at that time. He got his Ph.D. in electrical engineering, and then while he was at the CIA he got his juris doctorate from George Washington University, with a patent-law specialty.

ED: So he is a patent lawyer?

BD: Yes, but he has never practiced. He is an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University. He goes to Copenhagen every year and teaches.

ED: He's almost as old as I am.

BD: He is your age. He has just turned eighty. He went to Copenhagen for a few years to teach, but now has taped those classes, so he travels less.

My other brother, of whom I'm also very proud, Bill, was two years younger than I and went to Fayetteville with me. He and I were closer in school. Both of my brothers started to school a year earlier than I did. They were born in January and started to school when they were five. I was born in February and I started when I was six. So Bill was one grade behind me.

ED: So, he's Bill, or . . .

BD: William. They were Robert and William and I was Betty. Bill went to Fayetteville with me. He was a grade behind me and Bob was three grades ahead of me. Bill joined the Air Force also. Bill flew jets in Vietnam, came back and was flying A7s. They had a history of crashing. His did, and he died when he was thirty-three, with three young sons. He and I were very close.

ED: Was he shot down in Vietnam?

BD: No, his A7 crashed after he had returned from Vietnam. He was involved in nighttime simulated bombing runs near Fort Walton Beach [Florida], and that night his bombs didn't drop. He said he would turn around and make another run, but apparently the altimeter was not working and he flew the A7 into the ground. The altimeter had been a problem in previous A7 crashes. After his crash, the Air Force sold the A7s to the Navy. He died in 1975, a month after my last child, Rachel, was born. His three sons became a part of my family, to a great extent. They didn't live with me, but they spent a lot of time with me.

ED: So there were three of you . . .

BD: We moved from Black Rock to Walnut Ridge when I was in the second grade. I started the third grade there.

ED: So you spent two years at Black Rock. I assume there would have been only one elementary school there.

BD: Yes, it was right beside the high school.

ED: So why did the family move to Walnut Ridge?

BD: Dad was expanding his business. He had a lumber company at Portia that my grandfather ran. I think he did it partly because of the challenges my brother presented. They had taken him across the state to Fayetteville to have him tested when he was five. We were still living in Black Rock then.

ED: They had this prodigy and they . . .

BD: They didn't know what to do with him. Dad was a contractor and was working a lot then.

ED: So were you a good student?

BD: I was.

ED: I guess all three of you were good students.

BD: Well, some of us applied ourselves more than others. I worked the hardest, because I had the least ability. It was a traumatic move for us, as children, when we moved to Walnut Ridge. Bob was maybe ten and I was eight, so it was February 1948, and we were still living in Black Rock. Bob decided that we were going to burn the Christmas tree we had in our playhouse, and he chose to burn the tree in the mayor's barn, which was an open place where hay was stored, an open, slatted barn. I was his assistant. There was no hay in it at the time, but there were burlap bags. It had a concrete floor. We climbed up the slats and got inside. It was the start of our pyromania. So he set the tree on fire and then set the burlap bags on fire, and the mayor's barn burns. It was half a block from us. There was no fire department, just a water brigade. That may be why we had to leave town. [Laughs] Anyway, we moved to Walnut Ridge. Dad had built us a new home there.

ED: He didn't buy the house; he built it.

BD: Oh, yes. It's still standing. Certainly the school was better. Our gang—Jimmy was the black guy in our gang, and we all played sports together—was integrated as to race and gender.

I was terrified at first, the third grade was such a big change. In the fourth grade, my teacher's grandson was in our class and he kept bullying me, knocking me down the stairs and things like that. And I had nobody to go tell, because I couldn't go to his grandmother. It was not an easy time for me.

But the real problem was domestic violence. I didn't know those words then. I didn't hear those words until I was in law school in 1982. But I knew it, I lived it. Unfortunately, everyone else knew about the domestic violence. The police knew it. My grandparents, too, because one night, when I was about ten years old, my grandfathers were called, as well as the police.

People at school knew it. People knew those things, but, unfortunately, thought it was just a family matter and didn't . . .

ED: That's the way it was in those days. It wasn't uncommon.

BD: I know. But how I lived my life later on, I'm sure, was affected by that. There were things I learned. One is that if something happens between the two people you love most you don't take sides, because if you do you pay for it when they reconcile. Another thing that I learned that did not serve me well, I think, was when my best friend in the neighborhood told me, "I can't come over to your house to play anymore, because your parents fight. My mom says I can't." Looking back later, I think that at that point I decided or unconsciously chose to not to let anyone get close to me, because I didn't want to suffer that kind of pain again.

ED: Of rejection?

BD: Rejection. Anyway, things got better.

ED: So, it was very early on. Did drinking have anything to do with it?

BD: Probably. Those experiences, a lot of them I remember, influenced how I later acted as a prosecutor, the decisions I made, how I treated both defendants and the police, and the victims. I think that had a lot to do with it, and I didn't realize it at the time. I just knew that, as a young girl, I wanted to withdraw from anything like that—not let my feelings develop to the point that I could be hurt by rejection. That was not a good thing in the long run, being a stoic.

ED: Did you sometimes take sides . . . with your mother or something? Did you get hurt?

BD: You can't help doing that as a child. That's why I said you learn from that experience not to take sides, because when they reconcile you suffer again the pain of rejection.

ED: And your brothers, too?

BD: Yes. The older one. The younger one slept through things. But I think we all three suffered to the extent that we all three would have done anything to pacify, appease, or not be confrontational. At that stage. I learned later in life to be more confrontational as a prosecutor. But at that time it was peace at any cost. Things got better, but those experiences impacted our family situation later on.

ED: The relationship got a little better?

BD: Yes, and life in school was pretty good for me. I got to play basketball, which I loved.

ED: I was going to ask you about your athletic prowess.

BD: I was the athlete of the three of us. I loved the competition and I loved to win.

ED: You picked that up from your mama.

BD: I suppose I did. This was before Title IX [of the Education Amendments of 1972] and I played in junior high. I scored twenty-nine of our thirty-one points against Tuckerman.

ED: So you were on the scoring side. They still had half-court for girls then. Offense was on one end and defense on the other. You were a scorer. Did they call you forwards or guards?

BD: I was a forward. The junior high coach wanted me to play on their team, because I was scoring more than his guys were. That was the joke. I loved it, but after the ninth grade there was no basketball; there were no sports for girls.

ED: There were no sports for girls in high school at Walnut Ridge?

BD: That's correct.

ED: You had sports in junior high, but not in high school.

BD: Just for a few years. You know, most girls were taught to be ladies, so they didn't play basketball. I was a tomboy, which was a matter of survival with two brothers.

ED: Well, as I recall now, we didn't have women's basketball at El Dorado before Title IX, and El Dorado was a much bigger high school than Walnut Ridge.

BD: I wish I had taken up tennis at that time. The doctor, a neighbor, had a tennis court. But I became more and more studious. I was valedictorian, like my dad was, like my daughter was. I was homecoming queen. I won a lot of different awards. So I ended up having a good high school experience. I was editor of the school paper.

ED: So you did everything in high school.

BD: I did a lot.

ED: Editor of the paper, homecoming queen . . . Were you dating one of the football stars? I don't know how it was there but often the football team chooses the homecoming queen.

BD: Sort of. I think that's how it was. Sammy Hilburn. He is now a lawyer.

ED: Sammy Hilburn? He was there?

BD: Yes, he was. He was a little younger than I, but, yes, he was on the football team. It was a good year. I was popular. I got a small scholarship to the university.

ED: So you had a great high school career.

BD: I did.

ED: In spite of the problems at home.

BD: And those seemed to abate, and I think they did for several years.

ED: Do you think part of it, with him [the father], might have been the stresses early on of developing a business?

BD: I'm sure it was. You know, you watch the people that you've been around, whether it's legislators who all of a sudden get a lot of power and are heady . . . or prosecutors. I had no idea, until I was elected prosecuting attorney, how much power they have. They have more power than the governor. I can choose to prosecute you or not. You know the old adage about power and money. I think that may have impacted their relationship, and, as you mentioned, alcohol.

ED: Your mother was an athlete, so I guess she was no shrinking violet. She could defend herself, I suppose.

BD: I don't know. One of the reasons I hesitated doing this interview was that those are things that I don't want to recall and relive and to try to explain. I loved my father better than anyone in the world and wanted to please him, which is why . . . you know, living in a family with six brothers he didn't know how to raise a daughter. I felt I had to prove to him that I was worthy. My brothers went off to school, Bob into M.I.T., and Bill to Marion Institute [a military college in Alabama] in order to go to the Air Force Academy. So I think a lot of what I did was to prove to my Dad that, even though I was a girl, I was worthy.

ED: Did he have any sisters?

BD: No. All brothers. Seven disappointments for my grandmother. She taught me to knit, to crochet and to do all kinds of things. We went to the county fairs every year, because she won so many awards. She taught me all those things that she would have taught a daughter. I was one of the older grandchildren. So that was a challenge. I was a valedictorian like he was. My older brother was so much brighter. He was blowing up the chemistry lab in high school.

ED: He blew up the chemistry lab?

BD: He had some experiments that could have. My senior year—he'd just been gone a year—the school burned, and they wanted to know where he was (laughs).

We moved into the new house at Walnut Ridge in 1948, and we had been there five years, and my brother was making jelly bombs out of paraffin wax and gasoline in a huge closet that had a desk at each end where we would study, and where he was experimenting. Again, I was his assistant. He had two gallons of gasoline. He spilled a drop or two. I asked him if it was all right if I cleaned it up. He wasn't listening to me and he said yes. So, when I lit it, it startled him and he knocked the can of gasoline over and the desk was on fire. The whole upstairs burns and, of course, the fire

department . . . My dad and mother had gone to the post office and they followed the fire truck home. The fireman came upstairs with a fire extinguisher to put out the house fire, a small fire. And I said there are two gallons of gasoline in there. They screamed, "Go get the hose." The house burns. It was a lovely . . .

ED: The whole house burned?

BD: It didn't burn down, just the second story. So that was a second pyromania experience. He goes off to college and we move into another house. Dad sells that house and builds another. We're always moving. He builds them, sells them, we move. Once, while he's building one house and we're living in a smaller house, it catches on fire and burns. They wanted to know where my brother was again. [Laughs] I was at school at band practice playing the flute. Anyway, that was an electrical fire.

ED: He made paraffin bombs? Were they bombs that exploded when they dried out?

BD: I don't know. He studied taxidermy. I was his assistant there, too. Which meant that you bring home dead animals and stuff them. It was interesting. I survived it. It may have been fortuitous that he burned a house instead of being a terrorist at that young age.

ED: You mentioned the flute. You were a musician as well.

BD: I was a flautist. I think that's what it is called. They had just started the band and I wanted to play the bell lyre, the xylophone. The band director said: "Your teeth are straight. I think you should play the flute."

ED: Because your teeth are straight?

BD: Not because you wanted to, not because you liked it. The things that I once did because someone else thought I should do them sometimes amazes me.

ED: Me, too.

BD: We all did. We never questioned what our parents said. If that's what you say I should be doing, I'll do it.

ED: I did what women told me to do.

BD: I did what particularly men told me to do when I was a child, until I became a prosecutor.

ED: So you graduate from Walnut Ridge High School in . . .

BD: In 1958.

ED: And you get a little scholarship to the U of A at Fayetteville.

BD: I wanted to go into pre-med because math and science were always much easier for me. English was like a second language when you grew up in the country. And that's what I ended up majoring in. I read books. I'm sure my dad sent me to college to find someone to marry and to have

grandchildren for him. He said it often enough. That's what girls do. I wanted to go into medicine, but I had dry-lab chemistry in high school, because the school had burned. We had no chemistry lab. I was not highly motivated, except to make an A.

ED: So it was your ambition to be a doctor?

BD: I had always done better at science and math, but I started behind the curve and I guess I didn't know how to catch up. One of my professors offered me a scholarship, even in English, to go somewhere and study, and I said I'm married and I can't. You marry and think you're going to live happily ever after.

ED: You get married while you're at Fayetteville?

BD: Yes. We were both twenty.

ED: This would have been Jay Dickey.

BD: Yes.

ED: Jay was a nickname, right?

BD: No. Jay Woodson Dickey. His father, Jay Sr., was orphaned in Texas. Jay, Sr.'s father died before he was born, in a car wreck, and his mother died when he was young, so he was sent to Fort Smith to live with his grandfather on a farm. The grandfather died when he was thirteen, so Jay, Sr. moved to a boarding house and worked in Ft. Smith until he had saved enough money to go to college in Fayetteville. He was later president of the student body at the U of A and eventually on their Board of Trustees.

ED: So Jay didn't grow up in Pine Bluff.

BD: Jay Sr. grew up in Texas and came to Fort Smith when both his parents had died to live with his grandfather, and he became friends with Bill Fulbright and, what was his name, Swanson?

ED: Here you are talking about Jay's father?

BD: Yes. Jay Woodson Dickey, or Jay Dickey, Jr. was his son's name.

ED: When you were a sophomore?

BD: Yes. I was taking second-semester Latin, without having had first semester, because I had done well in high school. He and Joe Giroir and I were in Latin class. Jay had just had a paralytic reaction to a combination polio and Asian flu shot as a basketball player. Jay played for Glen Rose [basketball coach of the Arkansas Razorbacks from 1933 to 1942 and from 1952 to 1966] and had just come back to school after the effect of the immunization had worn off.

ED: Had he been hospitalized?

BD: Yes, they flew him home. He couldn't walk. He had been first in line to have the tainted shot for the U of A basketball team. It was a combination polio and flu vaccine.

ED: I have never heard of that.

BD: I hadn't either. I never heard of it again.

ED: It paralyzed him?

BD: Yes, and after that as far as his military classification he was . . . what did they call it, F?

ED: 4F.

BD: We were in Latin class.

ED: You had met him before he had this reaction?

BD: I knew him. You knew everybody in Fayetteville. It was smaller then.

ED: He went up there to play basketball, right?

BD: He got a basketball scholarship to Hendrix and after the first year he transferred and played basketball for Glen Rose, and he also played number one on the U of A tennis team.

ED: I knew he was a big tennis player.

BD: And then he was the tennis team coach while he was in law school.

ED: Jay was eventually president of the student body up there?

BD: Not Jay Jr. Jay Sr. was. Jay Jr. played two sports and went to law school after three years, like they used to be able to do. We were in Latin class, and at the end of the year the teacher didn't think any of us had earned the right to have an A. I had the highest grade of any of those and I had come in the second semester without the first.

ED: No grading on the curve.

BD: Jay and Joe Giroir wanted to get into law school. Jay went to the professor and said that I deserved an A, because that would raise everybody else's grade. It would raise his to a grade that would allow him to get into law school.

ED: So Jay got your grade raised to an A?

BD: Yes, I suppose, so he could make a C. I don't know what Joe Giroir's was, but I was told everyone's grade was raised.

ED: So Jay was a good politician even then.

BD: He was. He was very persuasive even then. We were married after my sophomore year. When you were twenty, the man had to get his parents' permission because he was not twenty-one, but the woman didn't.

ED: Jay had to get his parents' permission? Was that the law? I didn't know that.

BD: Yes. I didn't either, until I experienced it. I think a woman had to be eighteen. I typed a lot of his Criminal Law papers, so I guess I got a class in criminal law back then. The only non-law school class that Dr. Robert A.

Leflar ever taught was Law and Society. I took that with some lawyers that you would know—Allen Roberts and Bill Patton, and Kay Smith Patton.

ED: I don't know her.

BD: Yes, you do. Her dad was with the law firm, Mehaffy . . .

ED: William J. Smith?

BD: Yes.

ED: OK, at that time it was Mehaffy, Smith, Williams, Friday, Bowen, Eldridge and Clark. So Jay got permission from his daddy, and I guess you didn't have to get your father's. He was happy for you to land a man.

BD: Well, he never said it. He was a man of few words. But you got the feeling. He never talked about getting me in . . . I would have loved to have gone to Wellesley. When my brother went to M.I.T. I visited up there.

ED: Your father could not have had any concerns that he was not going to marry this daughter off, because I'm sure you had all kinds of suitors even in high school.

BD: I don't know about that. He had three children in college at the same time, and I'm sure I was third as far as his concern about educating his children. You know, he was from the Mutt Jones, Paul Van Dalsem generation—barefoot and pregnant. [Guy H. "Mutt" Jones was a state senator from Conway in the 1950s to the early '70s. Van Dalsem was a state representative from Perryville who famously joked once that they didn't have many problems with uppity women in Perry County because they gave them a cow to milk and kept them barefoot and pregnant.] So I majored in English, got a B.A. and a teacher's certificate and went through three years of law school with him.

ED: So did you go to law school with Jay?

BD: No. He started law school after his third year of undergraduate school. I was finishing four years of college while he's finishing his second year of law school. In his third year of law school, I was to teach at Elkins [Washington County, outside Fayetteville] and found out that I was pregnant. I didn't start teaching. I had to go to bed. Eventually, I had a miscarriage. That was 1962.

ED: And this was in Jay's last year of law school?

BD: Yes. And Tom's, too. But Tom may have been a year ahead of him.

ED: Tom who?

BD: Tom Glaze [Thomas A. Glaze was later a chancery judge and then a justice of the Supreme Court.] He was playing baseball.

ED: Yes, he was catcher for the Razorbacks. Did you know Glaze then?

BD: No.

ED: But Jay knew him.

BD: Oh yes, Jay knew him. Tom and Bill Patton. I can't remember the other guys who were in that law school class. Bill Overton [later judge of the Eastern District of the US District Court]. So we finished and went back to Pine Bluff.

ED: Pryor wasn't up there then, was he? David Pryor.

BD: Oh, yes, he was there. At least one Sunday night a month, Barbara and David and Jay and I, and other people would go to Paul Berry's parents' house. Both were working for the university in some capacity, and Guy and Kathleen were wonderful, loving people who would have Paul's friends over for supper on Sundays.

ED: Paul's daddy was a wonderful guy. I don't think I ever met his mother. There was Paul, his brother Bill and another brother who was a doctor or a dentist.

BD: Paul and Bill I knew but not the older brother.

ED: Bill Berry was the one who hired me to come up to UCA [University of Central Arkansas] to teach after the *Gazette* closed [in 1991].

BD: Bill Berry?

ED: He was the provost, the dean of the faculty.

BD: Where is he now?

ED: He's back in Little Rock now. Retired. He was teaching at ASU, and when Win Thompson became president at UCA he appointed Bill the provost.

BD: I have some of the cutest pictures of Bill Berry at our wedding. Paul sang at the wedding.

ED: Paul sang? I didn't know Paul sang, but I knew that music and musicians were the love of his life.

BD: He has a beautiful voice. That was a common interest with Mary and him.

ED: He was a close friend with all those great old country singers and writers. Well, we digress but it's fascinating to know all those common connections.

BD: I loved Bill Berry. He was probably thirteen at the time and I was twenty.

ED: He and Mimi are back in Little Rock and live in the Heights. I see him quite frequently. We were over at their house for dinner not long ago.

BD: Tell him that I would love to see him. I may not recognize him. He was just thirteen years old.

ED: He looks just like he did. He still looks like a thirteen-year-old kid.

BD: So, yes, we knew David and Barbara and had dinner with them sometimes, because we would go up there on Sunday nights.

BD: Anyway, when he finished law school in 1963 we moved to Pine Bluff and I started teaching English at Pine Bluff High School.

ED: So he started a law practice.

BD: One was already there.

ED: His father had a law firm.

BD: Yes, and his uncle Hendrix had practiced with the firm. He was a state senator, but he was not practicing by that point. Hendrix Rowell. [Rowell was a state representative and senator from 1933 until 1947.] Jay Sr. had practiced law with Alexander Hendrix Rowell, his father-in-law, and his brother-in-law Hendrix Rowell. Then Jay Jr. came in. And Richard Mays came in for a short time.

ED: Richard Mays of El Dorado? “The white Richard Mays” as we call him to distinguish him from the other distinguished lawyer Richard Mays who was on the Supreme Court for a time.

BD: Yes, I’m familiar with that. And there was . . . his father was a federal judge and took senior status and he is a federal judge.

ED: Jim Moody and Jay Moody. James Moody and Jay Moody.

BD: Yes. Jim Moody was our busboy at the sorority house.

ED: Jim Moody was a year or two behind me at El Dorado.

BD: We would tease the federal judge, Jim Moody, saying “you’re not the real Jim Mooty. The real Jim Mooty was the football player from El Dorado.” [Jim Mooty of El Dorado was a first-team All-American halfback at the University of Arkansas in 1960.] He went through college being called “not the real Jim Mooty.” Jim Moody married one of my good friends in college, Jo Ann Cooper, whose sister was married to the football coach—not Barry Switzer, but he was the [Dallas] Cowboys’ coach.

ED: Johnson.

BD: Had the big head of hair.

ED: Was it Jim Johnson, who later became a TV football analyst?

BD: Yes, that was Jim Moody’s late wife’s sister’s husband. Not Jim, what was his first name? [Actually, Jimmy Johnson]

ED: Great coach of the Cowboys. Super Bowl.

BD: His hair was frozen in place. He used more hair spray than any woman I knew. So where were we? Jay had a law firm all set up for him. He was trying to decide between being a preacher and being a lawyer. But the law firm was there.

ED: I think he waffled on that all his life, didn’t he?

BD: Well, yes, that’s why I mentioned that. I don’t think he ever really liked practicing law that much. He liked visiting with people. He liked sports law.

ED: I know a lot of good lawyers who hated practicing law.

BD: Well, I can see that—dealing with the miseries of other people. I taught English at Pine Bluff High School as a substitute, and then I taught second grade at Watson Chapel with no prior elementary experience.

ED: You taught second grade. How was that?

BD: I learned phonics with my children. I really enjoyed it. But I think the most success I've enjoyed in my life has been as a mother because of the way my children have turned out. I had to learn phonetics, and I had to learn how to teach the second graders to read. That first year I taught the second grade at Watson Chapel. That's the year that [President John F.] Kennedy was assassinated.

ED: November 1963.

BD: Yes. Then I taught the following year at Pine Bluff High School, first as a substitute and then the second semester full time. I was teaching with Miriam Makris, Mother of George Makris, who is the head of Simmons [National Bank]. I didn't teach again. I became involved in the Junior Auxiliary. My mother-in-law was a founding member and they asked me to join. You couldn't work.

ED: The Junior Auxiliary?

BD: It became the Junior League. I really missed teaching, but I did that. I had had another miscarriage. We had taken in children who came with the Hand bell Choir from the Methodist Children's Home.

ED: Were they foster children?

BD: They only came for a weekend. The connection was Methodist Children's Home. One day—the first of July, 1966—they called, without our applying to adopt, and said “Would you like to have this beautiful baby boy tomorrow?” So it was a three-day pregnancy. We got him three days later. So we adopted the first child, John. He was nine days old. We didn't have a diaper, a bed, anything. The minister knew from talking to our minister, John Lindsay, that we didn't have children, and we had taken care of their hand-bell-choir people when they came to town. Doctors had said that eventually I would carry a child to full term, but I hadn't.

ED: This is John.

BD: In 1967, when John was eight months old, I got a call late at night that my dad had been shot. My mother was subsequently charged. I told you earlier about the domestic violence situation because, even though for ten or fifteen years there had been no incidents, the police looked at what the townspeople said about the past, and particularly what some of Dad's brothers said. I can't tell you to this today whether she killed him, or whether it was accidental. Either story is plausible, I suppose.

ED: Her story was that he had struck her?

BD: No, no. There had been no violence. Dad had gotten to know Sam Walton and Sam was going to put a Wal-Mart in Dad's shopping center that he was building at Walnut Ridge. He had sold the house in which they were living, and they were living in an apartment over the shopping center. They had had a problem with people stealing gasoline out of the cars. Dad thought he heard that. He got up with a weapon and went to a window on the second floor overlooking where his cars were, then came back to their bedroom. He had made a box-type piece of furniture that a king-size mattress would fit on. The furniture had a sharp corner. Supposedly, he stumbled on it and shot himself. There was a trial. [Mr. Clark's widow was charged with first-degree murder.] That was March of 1967. There was a trial in '68. By the time of the trial I am five months pregnant. The trial ended in a hung jury and I lost the baby a week later.

ED: That would be your third miscarriage?

BD: Yes. There was going to be a retrial. Fred Pickens was my mother's lawyer. He was my father's cousin, actually double-cousin. He's family. There was one brother-in-law who thought that because she didn't call him first—she called her sister's husband first—she didn't call her husband's brother to come help—he became the instigator behind the prosecution. He said "I know she did it because she didn't call me first." The prosecutor's parents were family friends of Jay's parents.

ED: Who was that?

BD: When you spend years blocking out names and events sometimes the Rolodex in your mind is not working.

ED: Is the prosecutor from Walnut Ridge?

BD: No, he's in Newport.

ED: So it was not Leroy Blankenship.

BD: No, it's . . .

ED: It's not John Norman Harkey.

BD: It's strange that you would bring up those names. Dad wanted me to campaign for John Norman Harkey, because he was for him. Leroy Blankenship Dad hired to do the legal work. No, it was before that. He was from a prominent Newport family that my mother and father-in-law had been friends with . . .

ED: Sam Boyce?

BD: No, this lawyer was before them. He now has cases on appeal. In fact, I had to recuse from his cases on appeal. David . . .

ED: David Hodges.

BD: Yes, David Hodges. When we lived in housing at Fayetteville, David and his wife lived next to us for one semester. Farrell Faubus and his wife lived next to us in the same apartment complex, as well as John Ed and Mary Lynn Anthony. It was an interesting list of contemporaries. Anyway, David had just become prosecutor. He was new and zealous. There were so many tragic parts, and this sounds lame, but one of the things that hurt me so much was that I was going to get to see my dad that weekend. There was no question in anyone's mind that I loved him better than anybody, and I had always tried to make him proud of me. Anyway, I had an eight-month-old, John, and couldn't go see my Dad the weekend he was killed. David intimated at trial that maybe I was part of a conspiracy, which was crushing. I couldn't speak to David for about twenty years. There was no basis, no evidence to suggest what David intimated. I had been honest and said that I couldn't go and had to change my plans. He suggested that changing my plans had something to do with my Dad's death. Painful experience.

ED: But they had no evidence . . .

BD: No. But sometimes prosecutors do that, especially if they have a weak case. They intimate that you are involved so that you feel you have to prove your innocence. Fred wasn't worried about it. It's just the things you say in a trial. And, of course, living through the graphic presentation, learning what a forensic pathologist is and all those things. So I lost the baby and became pregnant again. It was a fourteen-month pregnancy when Laura was born. They had postponed the trial until after her birth. The doctor thinks she's going to be hydrocephalic because her head starts swelling. The spinal fluid was not circulating properly, but that situation eventually improves. When she was six months old I became pregnant again, and Ted was born in June of 1970. In July, more than three years after my Dad died, my Mother was again tried, and found not guilty. The uncertainty of my life from 1967 until 1975 when Bill died in the plane crash...the only thing I was able to do was take care of my children. I got out of all the things I was involved in—the Junior League, Bridge Club, and all social things.

ED: So they have a hung jury at the first trial and then they have a retrial.

BD: Yes, it's [Circuit Judge] Andrew Ponder, who is Fred Pickens' brother-in-law.

ED: Andy Ponder.

BD: Who was a fine man.

ED: What happens at the retrial?

BD: Not guilty. And then she moved to Memphis. After I left the [Supreme] Court in 2006, I took care of her while she lived in a facility in Heber Springs suffering from Alzheimer's.

ED: She died when?

BD: She died in 2010.

[Break]

BD: In February of 1969 Laura was born. She was valedictorian and went to Vanderbilt [University]. She followed my brother's path, electrical engineering. She has a master's. She works in Boston now. Her first job out of Vanderbilt with a master's in electrical engineering was climbing cell towers to make sure the waves for cellphones were strong.

ED: She's scaling poles?

BD: She did that a couple of times.

ED: Was she an athlete as well?

BD: Yes, she ran track for Pine Bluff High School. She went from the technical side putting back-office systems together for Bell South, Verizon, and others, then into sales. She's done interesting things as an electrical engineer. A typical mother, my life is dated by when my children were born. It was 1969, six months later, and they still have not tried the case again. Six months later, I am pregnant with Ted, who lives here in Little Rock. Ted is the one who would not apply himself. He was brighter than all of the rest of us, but he wouldn't apply himself so he graduated from Pine Bluff High School on academic probation because, if he liked the class, he could make an A but if he didn't it would be a D or an F. He went to Fayetteville and finally realizes he needs to apply himself and he becomes a Phi Beta Kappa. He goes to law school but says he doesn't ever want to practice law. He hasn't had to. That takes us to 1970. They had the second trial then and she's acquitted.

ED: So does David prosecute her again?

BD: But not with as much prosecutorial enthusiasm. It was an acquittal, after a short deliberation.

ED: Did you testify in one or both of those trials?

BD: I remember testifying in the first trial. I was on the stand and I mentioned that I was supposed to go to Walnut Ridge that weekend but that I have an eight-month-old and there's no one else to take care of him.

I spent the next few years with the three children I had. About the same time I go back to the Methodist Children's home to give them football game tickets, because we had extra ones. I don't factor in that those kids don't have a way to get to the football games, so we take two of the girls with us that want to go to the ballgame. They became friends and they go to Michigan with us, I think to help me take care of the children. They actually don't know how to change diapers, cook food, or do anything. So, instead of three children, I have five children.

The next tragedy in my life. . . I became paranoid because every time something wonderful happened there would then be a tragedy. I adopted John, and my dad died. In 1975, the last visual I have of my brother is, he's in the Air Force, and he's standing at the foot of my bed in the hospital because Rachel has just been born. Six weeks later, his plane malfunctions and he dies. His three sons became part of our family. Cindy became our foster child—one of those two children from the Methodist Children's Home. She lived with us, and is still a part of my life. She's lived in Alaska and South Carolina and now is in Little Rock.

ED: What is her name?

BD: Cynthia Karen Brechtel McCormick. Cindy came to live with us. She'd actually ride the bus to Pine Bluff and a doctor next door would take her back to Little Rock on Monday morning. She lived at the Methodist Children's Home. The Home sent her to college at Henderson [State University]. She's still part of our lives, fifty years later. My brother has died. At this point I have my four, Bill's three and Cindy frequently . . . a lot of children. When Rachel, who was born in 1975, was a few years old Jay said I had to go back to work. I thought I had been working.

ED: Is he practicing law full time or has he gotten into business by then?

BD: Well, he's in all kinds of businesses—Dunkin Donuts, Baskin Robbins, Taco-Bell, Danvers. I started doing paralegal and accounting work, without prior training. Then I reluctantly decided to learn how to be a paralegal.

ED: This is at the Dickey law firm in Pine Bluff.

BD: Yes. This had to be the late 1970s.

ED: Are you working full-time as a paralegal at the law firm.

BD: Well, when I'm working for the family law firm, I can choose my hours, when Rachel was not in daycare.

ED: So you're juggling all these things, raising the kids, doing paralegal work . . .

BD: And managing Baskin Robbins.

ED: Jay has the franchise for the local Baskin Robbins?

BD: He did. And Taco Bell. And Dunkin Donuts. And I'm doing books for several corporations. I'm doing paralegal work. I thought that I'd just go and take a semester of law school to learn how to be a paralegal.

ED: So you enter UALR Law School.

BD: In 1982.

ED: But your idea was to do just enough to be a paralegal.

BD: That's when I found out that law school was easier than what I was doing. I wasn't that ambitious. I was just trying to make it through. I was able to take my children to school every day. I had help who would pick

them up if I had to be late. I managed, took a lighter load and went to summer school. I somehow graduated, and not at the top of my class. But I graduated and passed the bar the first time.

ED: That would have been . . .

BD: In '82 I started and in '85 I finished.

ED: So now you and Jay are going to practice together?

BD: No. Now, Jay had wanted me to work for him as a paralegal, but he didn't want me to work for him as a lawyer.

ED: As an equal . . .

BD: I didn't say that. You did. For a while—and it was not my favorite thing—what I did was handle appeals. I opened my own office, which is right by the courthouse. Jay's office at that point had lost three lawyers. There was plenty of room there, but I handled criminal cases. My first jury trial was a murder case, as the defendant's attorney. That was an experience.

ED: Can you talk about that trial?

BD: Sure. Leading up to that, I worked for the city attorney, part-time. After I opened my own office, the City called me, so I started doing both jobs. For years, I worked two and three jobs at one time. Then I was City Attorney at Redfield. Jay's dad had been City Attorney at Pine Bluff and had written Dickey's Digest about the Pine Bluff laws. Jay had also been City Attorney and now I was assistant city attorney, working for Bob Tolson. In my first trial, Wayne Matthews [the prosecuting attorney] came out of semi-retirement. He was prosecutor. He was not trying cases but he was going to try this one. He's mad at Jay and he didn't like me. I don't know why, because I've been a homemaker for twenty years, out of the work force.

ED: He's mad at Jay, so he's mad at you.

BD: Yes, so he decided he would try it. Isaac Anderson has been charged with murder. He goes up to pick up his girlfriend after she's again run off with another man. She calls for Isaac to come get her, the man she's run off with objects and hits Isaac with a stick, and he [Anderson] shoots him twice, at least twice. It's hard to claim self-defense when you shoot somebody two or three times. But Wayne never checked to see that. But I go visit Fahmy Malak [the state medical examiner]—remember him?

ED: I remember Fahmy Malak.

BD: Malak tells us enough that I think "Wayne doesn't know this." Wayne was a good prosecutor in the days before alcohol abuse. So Wayne and I try the case, and I'm willing to plead him to five or ten years. Wayne said, no, we're trying him, he'll get twenty years. The coroner starts laughing at the trial at some of the stages, because I start asking the girlfriend questions. And she's kind of enjoying all the attention.

ED: Being fought over.

BD: Being fought over. Being loved that much by more than one man. She gets a stipend from the government, her welfare check. I asked her about how she and Anderson had used it. "I take my welfare check and we go to the Humphrey Motel." She sits up and boasts, "I always has me a man." So the jury starts laughing. The coroner is laughing. The trial ends in Anderson being convicted of a misdemeanor. A week after the trial ends, the coroner walks up from his office down the street while I'm going out the front door of the Courthouse. He says, "Hey, I got my welfare check today. I'm headed for the Humphrey Motel."

ED: So he's not convicted even of manslaughter?

BD: No, for the misdemeanor you get up to one year in prison. He'd already served four months so he was out in a month.

ED: So what was the misdemeanor?

BD: Negligent homicide. The fallout of that is that I get calls from California and other places. "Will you represent my son? He's got drug charges." I said no. I don't do this for the money. So then I go to work full time for the city attorney's office prosecuting misdemeanors and defending the city in different cases. That was an educational experience.

ED: So your career as a criminal defense lawyer was fairly short. You had one trial.

BD: I had one jury trial. I didn't want any part of it. I was much more comfortable, just as in being a mother or a teacher, or a judge, in holding a person accountable for what he had done. I taught my children and my students that there are consequences, that people have rights and responsibilities. I'm not sure I even worked a year. Jay did not want me to practice in their office, because they did not do criminal work. Doing criminal defense work or prosecution is dangerous. But divorce work is also. Jay's dad handled a divorce case where the man wanted to meet with Jay Sr. and the ex-wife in Jay's office after their divorce was granted, and just before she got on the bus to go back to Oklahoma. Jay Sr. refused, and the ex-husband caught her in front of Jay's office, shot her six times in the face, killing her. Another guy shot Jay's grandfather in the leg in the courtroom.

ED: Divorce work is dangerous.

BD: It is dangerous. It is as dangerous as any criminal work. So I went to work in the city attorney's office and that was educational. I defended the city in federal court, which was a steep learning curve.

ED: What kinds of city cases were in federal court?

BD: Discrimination. A city employee had a blood disease, contracted HIV from a tainted blood transfusion and died of it. He had supervised an

employee, a black woman, who wanted to work in an area that required some civil engineering training. The black man who was hired instead of her had the engineer training and had on-the-job experience, while she had two years of business school. She sued us for race and gender discrimination. I defended the city on that. It was another learning experience. I couldn't tell the jury that if they gave her even one dollar her lawyer would get as much as fifty thousand dollars in legal fees. And that's what happened. The jury awarded her a little money to pay her lawyer. I went to Little Rock, because of Richard Earl Griffin, and worked for a Little Rock law firm for a little while.

ED: How did that happen? Richard Earl Griffin was from Crossett [a former state senator and lawyer].

BD: Richard and I took the Texas bar together and I was going to work for him in Houston, but my Rachel, the youngest, was fifteen or sixteen at the time, and I did not want to uproot her and move her to Texas. Little Rock and Houston were not where I wanted to be, so I went back to the city attorney's office for a year and then ran for prosecuting attorney.

ED: So Wayne Matthews is not going to be prosecutor any more?

BD: He didn't run. He thought he couldn't get elected.

ED: This would have been 1994.

BD: 1994.

ED: By that time all your kids are grown.

BD: That's why I waited. I had been asked before, but I didn't want to do it until they were all out of the house. In '94, they were all gone. I knew it was a risk. Remember the woman lawyer in Camden who disappeared? She was shelling peas. [Maude Crawford]

ED: She supposedly was killed, according to legend, by the jeweler down there.

BD: It was a risk, but I decided after years of Junior League, church work and PTA that I would run for prosecutor.

ED: Were you interested from a political standpoint—did you run to get into politics or because you wanted to be prosecutor?

BD: Because I wanted to change some of the things that needed changing. It was altruistic. It was not political. I was just not comfortable talking about myself. Not then and not when I was running for AG [attorney general]. I could do the job. I could fill a void. I thought a state trooper who was a lawyer would run. I hadn't talked him into it. He was going to do it. I was going to support him, happy with that.

ED: He backed out?

BD: He couldn't do it because transferring his health insurance would be a problem. That was his reason for saying no, I can't do it—you need to do it. Wayne wasn't showing up for work. All the prison files, so they said, were at his house, under the bed.

ED: Because of liquor?

BD: That's what I heard, from several people. Tolson, who was my city attorney, said if you call him after ten o'clock in the morning he's drunk. And they were friends. So Wayne hadn't done his job. He had burned out. He was smart and I think he had done a good job early on.

[Dumas recounts a roast-and-toast in 1986 at Murry's Dinner Theater in Little Rock, emceed by Bankruptcy Judge Bobby Fussell, where Wayne Matthews, Gov. Bill Clinton, Sen. David Pryor, Sen. Dale Bumpers, Chief Justice Jack Holt Jr., U.S. District Judge Henry Woods, former U.S. Senator Kaneaster Hodges and others roasted Billy Roy Wilson, later a federal judge.]

BD: That jogs my memory. After our divorce, I was asked to roast Jay a couple of times. [Jay Dickey by this time was US representative from the Fourth District.] One time, Craig O'Neill was the emcee and he said it was the strangest thing he had ever seen. At White Hall, I said to the White Hall Chamber of Commerce, "If I roast him, he'll be charred, and you don't want that." I dismissed it. Well, a month later, or two months later, the announcement goes out with my name on the program. So I do it and it was pretty funny. And then, for a fundraiser at the Convention Center, I'm asked to roast him again with [Governor] Mike Huckabee, [U.S. Senator] Tim Hutchinson and Win Rockefeller [later lieutenant governor]. The four of us roasted him. Again I said, "you don't really want me," but I did it. And when I got through, Win said "I didn't know she was so funny." Of course, Win would say that.

ED: Well, you were funnier than Win.

BD: I know that. But I get up and I say that the family is concerned about what we're going to do with him if you don't re-elect him. Remember, one of his phrases in talking to black farmers was "you people," which was a nonstarter. I said feel free to contribute and "raise your white napkin" if you remember this event." Well, the first one was when he was a congressman . . . well, there were three points. One is, on TV when he was talking about we were having too many "C sections" he said "there are entirely too many C-Spans." Rex Nelson has written about that. The other was that "if you people don't re-elect him, we thought he maybe could go out to UAPB and teach Jaybonics." Some people appreciated that more than others. Then I said we thought . . . If you remember the basketball game (and Tim did) when he

went into the game and was going to take off the bottoms of his warm-ups and took off more than the warm-up bottoms. I said, “We thought if you people don’t re-elect him he might be one of the Chippendales.” Jay turned to Rachel, who was on the dais, and said, “I thought that was a piece of furniture.” Tim Hutchinson knew immediately the incident I was talking about. Jay didn’t know what a Chippendale was.

ED: Nobody mentioned the incident when his dog drove into the radio station?

BD: They have used that enough. Where were we?

ED: You’re running for prosecuting attorney in 1994, and as a Democrat, right?

BD: Exactly.

ED: You couldn’t be elected then at Pine Bluff except as a Democrat.

BD: Well, I was a conservative Democrat, fiscally conservative. When you talk about gender discrimination, when you . . . The father of one of the judges down there said (and, of course, they came back and told me), “All we are running against are a few . . .”—he used the N word and the B word for women—“and they won’t be hard to beat.” That was the rallying cry. My supporters were women and blacks—and quite a few men.

ED: This was the Democratic primary. Who was your opponent?

BD: It was Wayne’s chief deputy, John Cone.

ED: And there had never been a woman prosecutor in Arkansas.

BD: That’s correct. There were a lot of demeaning comments. The sheriff of Lincoln County [the district was Jefferson and Lincoln counties] hated Wayne so much that he worked hard for me. I did better in Lincoln County than I did in Jefferson County. And I won. It was a surprise.

ED: Were you surprised?

BD: No. I’m surrounded by people who tell me I’m going to win. My son called me just as I was getting dressed to go down to celebrate a victory and said, “Mom, you’re behind.” I thought, well . . . Just like in your book *Waiting for the Cemetery Vote*, we were waiting for the Lincoln County vote and the Lincoln County absentee vote. And we win. Then, later we go down to Lincoln County, where John Cone is contesting—I don’t remember, maybe the absentee box. Sam Hilburn was representing me, as well as Bob Brooks, who was Jay’s chief of staff. When we arrived in Star City we were met by the sheriff who had removed his ring because he was going in to fight with Wayne.

ED: Really!

BD: The election is crazy. The quorum court finds in our favor. There was not a recount. Wayne doesn’t show up, so the sheriff doesn’t get into a fight

with him. Lincoln County helped me win the election, and I'm sure they regretted it later on when I had to prosecute the mayor of Gould for giving water to his friends and also for telling Lincoln County that they had to have their own deputy prosecutor. I uphold the law. I'm naïve enough to think that's my job.

I pick a staff that is diverse, that works hard. Several of my deputies are now judges. Waymond Brown is a judge on the Arkansas Court of Appeals, Jodi Dennis is a circuit judge, and Kim Bridgforth is a district judge. Joy Cook was my victim-witness coordinator, which Wayne didn't have because he didn't want to deal with them. Joy was Skeeter Dickey's daughter. [Skeeter Dickey was a professional baseball player, as was his brother, Bill Dickey.] We had an excellent, diverse staff, black and white, male and female. And I think they knew a lot about changing the landscape as far as dealing with abuse at home—whether it is child abuse or any form of domestic abuse.

ED: So you prosecuted a lot of domestic abuse cases.

BD: Cases that he [Matthews] wouldn't take, I'm told. Incest, or whatever was going on in the home, he considered a family matter. If you were beating your wife . . . I told you that I had never heard the term, "domestic abuse," before I was in law school. Police officers had a habit, some of them, of saying, when they had to stop domestic abuse and arrest somebody, "you can go to the prosecutor's office and have the charge dismissed." I would say, "If we can prosecute a case, such as a homicide, without the victim's testimony, then we can prosecute a domestic violence case without the victim testifying." So instead of the bull's eye being painted on the woman's chest, it was painted on mine. There were some horrible things that happened, and then there were some funny things. The county drug task force would bring me "love" letters, they called them, from one drug dealer to another. "If you don't do 'so and so' I'm turning you in to the State Police, the FBI and Betty Dickey." The sheriff complained, to other people, behind my back, that he felt it was a more serious crime to kill a good hunting dog than to break your wife's jaw with a tire tool. That was an actual case; a guy broke his wife's jaw with a tire tool. Gene McKissack came to me and said, "The only reason you're prosecuting him that is that she works for a white doctor." I said, "No, I didn't know she worked for a white doctor." I didn't know what color these people were. You just don't break your wife's jaw with a tire tool. About that time the law changed saying that law enforcement officers who beat their wives or girlfriends, who are convicted of domestic abuse can't carry a weapon. And if they can't carry a weapon, they can't be a police officer.

ED: They passed a statute to do that?

BD: They passed a statute. I had a class of approximately fifty sheriff's deputies and police officers, teaching them about the new law.

ED: Did you promote that law in the legislature?

BD: No, I didn't know about it. I had my hands full prosecuting the law in Pine Bluff and Lincoln County—and prison crime. Because of [state Senator] Knox Nelson, the Twelfth Judicial District, West, was responsible for prosecuting all the prison crime in Arkansas.

In the class with police officers and deputies I told them about a little girl sitting on the stairs listening to her father beat her mother and listening to her brother say that he's going to get a gun and kill his father. That was from personal experience. And I said, "If you beat your girlfriend ... and I looked at the head of detectives, who was doing that at the time ... or if you beat your wife, not only will I not protect you, I will prosecute you. You will lose your gun, you will lose your job." All these people were armed with at least two weapons. Here I am, the first woman [prosecutor] saying that you can't do that. The abusive detective knew that I knew what he was doing. I just couldn't prove it.

ED: He knew you were talking about him.

BD: Yes. He knew I was talking about him. They knew that I wouldn't cover up for them. So another bull's eye was painted on me.

I had two interesting cases then. Well, I had a lot, but I had two that were especially significant. One was the Boy Scout leader, a pedophile in Lonoke County, Jack Walls [Charles "Jack" Walls], whose father [Governor Bill] Clinton had appointed, as a chancery judge. It was a prominent family. You know some of the people in it. [U.S. District Judge] Elsjane Trimble Roy was from that family. The Prosecutor Coordinator's office called and asked if I would do it. I'm still the only woman who was an elected prosecutor at that point. That prosecutor [for Lonoke County] couldn't handle it. I took Jodi Dennis and Joy Cook with me. We interviewed probably fifty boys and young men. Jack Walls was their Boy Scout leader. He had molested them, given them pornographic literature and liquor, programmed them to kill for him, and some of them had.

ED: They killed for him?

BD: Yes. When his molesting of Heath Stocks became known, when the family found out, they talked to their minister in Furlow, a town near Lonoke. And Heath told Jack that Heath's parents knew. Jack had told Heath, an eighteen-year-old who was now at Henderson, "Heath, I taught you that when you have a problem, you fix it. If you can't fix it, you kill it." From all reports, Jack followed Heath to the Stocks' home, to make sure that

he killed his father, his mother and his sister, who had just been awarded a scholarship to Rhodes College [at Memphis]. A fine family, but besides molesting him, Jack had poisoned Heath's mind against them. Heath either killed them by himself or with someone. Someone in Missouri is writing a book about this. I didn't prosecute the earlier case, to which Heath had pled guilty and had been sentenced to three life terms. Jack Walls's molestation of his nephews and other people has just come to light. We're there as special prosecutors, because Lonoke's elected prosecutor says he can't handle it. We have about fifty boys that we've talked to, and we figure there are over a hundred. It was on court TV. Jack has a lawyer defending him who wants him to plead, to avoid a prolonged trial. Jack has transferred all his property to his wife. He has three daughters. I have thwarted his ability to have the state defend him and pay for everything, in that I have filed to get access to all the transfers of property. It was like a chess game.

ED: As soon as he learns that he's going to be prosecuted, he starts transferring everything to his wife.

BD: Yes. His attorney said he had paid him \$500,000. This was his supervisor's retirement. He was a supervisor at Remington [Arms Company at Lonoke]. He had access to guns and ammunition, which he showered on the boys, as well as obscene material and alcohol. The depths of his depravity are unimaginable. My brother, Bob, who was still in the Air Force Reserve, was on a training mission in Colorado from D.C. during the time of the prosecution. The Jack Walls's story was on TV there. They were talking about how horrible it was, one officer saying, "Can you imagine knowing somebody like that?" And Bob said, "Well, I happen to know the prosecutor." We returned from a trip and read it in the Florida papers, *Florida Today*. The Texas Boy Scouts called and said, "How should we change our rules to prevent this from happening here?" And I said, "All you have to do is follow your rules, which include the requirement that you always have two adults with your boy Scouts, never just one." What Jack Walls did to those little boys was horrifying. And what he tried to program them to do for him was even more so. Jack was diagnosed as a sociopath, someone who lacks human warmth. He would look at me when I walked into the courtroom and start smiling as if we were friends.

Jack eventually pleaded to four of the rape charges and in the sentencing phase we presented testimony, which the Circuit Court allowed, and which the Supreme Court later said was reversible error, that the sexual molestations that occurred were motivation or intimidation for the boys to commit these crimes. Jack sent the boys to stalk and attack one brave Scout at Carlisle who was willing to tell what Jack had done to him and how he

had been able to get away from Jack. His father, who was also a scout leader, had encouraged him to do so. Jack was having the kids do violent things to this kid. It was just an endless pit of depravity. The judge sentenced Jack to four life sentences and twenty years, to run consecutively. Jack tried to withdraw his guilty plea when he saw how badly the judge treated him, but the Supreme Court refused to allow him to withdraw the plea. The Circuit Judge reheard the sentencing phase, because earlier testimony had been allowed about the murders, and the Supreme Court had reversed and remanded. Jack was resentenced to three life terms and three forty-year terms.

In prison, Jack had access to a phone and he started calling the victims again. He had molested even his nephews who lived across the street from him, and when asked why, he said, "I like the outdoorsy type." I called the head of the prison and said, "Larry, he's doing it again." None of his family ever came to the trial. I can understand why. During this time I'm asked if I'll run for AG [attorney general].

[Heath Stocks, then 21, confessed to killing his father, mother, and sister in the family home on January 17, 1997, and was sentenced to three life terms. Walls pled guilty to five counts of rape and no contest to another count. He was sentenced to two 40-year terms and to four life terms, to be served consecutively. The Arkansas Supreme Court in 1999, in a four-to-three decision, reversed the judge's sentences, because he considered implications, without proof, that Walls was behind the Stocks murders. On resentencing, he was given three life terms and three forty-year terms, all to run concurrently, which were upheld by the Supreme Court in 2000.]

The other case was Murray [F.] Armstrong, of Star City. This was a landmark case. He had an abstract office but most of his work was in criminal prosecution. He was a habitual gambler. He gambled with his clients' money. In a Ponzi scheme [based on a non-existent timber contract] where he sold the same acreage to more than one person, he bilked his clients out of what, at that point, was a record amount of money for individual fraud, eight million dollars, to support his gambling habits at Tunica [Mississippi] and at the track at Hot Springs [and at a casino in Shreveport, La.]. He thought he could bet more and recover his losses. One of the victims owned a sawmill in Star City. He and his wife were very frugal, she sewed their clothes, they never took vacations, they saved all their money for their grandchildren, more than \$900,000. Murray gambled and lost it. We were prosecuting him in three districts. This was a problem

because Murray said “I’ll plead guilty.” Well, they first said—Sam Perroni [his attorney]—“Don’t worry about this, I’ve got it handled. He’s going to plead guilty tomorrow in federal court. He admits he’s done it.” I had already started filing charges in state court. The sawmill owner who had put his wife in a nursing home would call me regularly saying he was going up there to the jail and kill Murray. Then I would talk him down. Sam was saying, “I’ve got it handled—he’s pleading in federal court.” That meant he would get five years for a white-collar crime.

ED: So he had been indicted in federal court at Little Rock?

BD: No. He was going to plead to Paula Casey [U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas], who had taught me in law school and who is my friend and who had been Dale’s [U.S. Senator Dale Bumpers’s] chief of staff. Sam was taking Murray up there and I had already filed a few charges. So I called a state trooper friend and said, “Go up to Little Rock and listen to what he’s pleading to.” I don’t know much, but if I had been Murray’s attorney I would have asked to exclude anyone else from the courtroom. The trooper wrote as fast as he could, listing all the people that Murray had swindled out of their life savings. Ultimately, there were thirty-two families. Thirty-two retired people who couldn’t go back into the workforce. He had lost it all in the casinos and at the Hot Springs racetrack. We file charges, and Paula and I agreed that I would prosecute him in state court, because it was more likely that he would get a longer prison sentence. In federal court, he would have gotten five or more years. In state court, the special judge, who was a wonderful guy and who was so offended by what this Star City lawyer had done to so many people, that he gave him the minimum sentence and then he ran it consecutively, so it was a hundred and fifty-six years. The problem was that I’d asked my chief deputy to research whether or not a person could plea in one jurisdiction for acts that occur in three Jurisdictions, because Murray had said he would plead if he could be sentenced once, instead of three times. The chief deputy supposedly researched it and thought Murray could, but on appeal the Supreme Court said no. Again, the Supreme Court sends it back for resentencing. The one jurisdiction in which he pleads holds, but not the other two. So he gets less the second time when they resentence him. By then, I’m no longer the prosecutor. He ultimately gets out in ten years. But at least he’s a felon now and he can’t . . .

ED: He can’t get his law license back.

BD: It was landmark law in the sense that the bankruptcy lawyers went after the casinos, saying that they knew, or should have known, that Murray was not playing with his money. While we had never expected to get the money

back, the victims ultimately did get back a percentage of what they had lost. So it had a fairly good outcome there.

ED: But the Supreme Court said ultimately that you had to try it in three separate jurisdictions. That seems kind of crazy.

BD: I can understand it if you were doing it to protect an uneducated person. This was a lawyer who had extensive criminal law experience. He knew exactly, which may have been why he and Sam Perroni decided to do that.

ED: Sam is a cagey lawyer.

BD: He is.

ED: But Murray got ten years.

BD: I don't remember exactly how long he spent in prison. I was in McCrory, at a restaurant, a home-cooking place. I walked in with my husband-to-be and Murray is sitting there. I didn't know he had gotten out. This was in 2013. He swindled his family and friends, helpless people who trusted him, all because of his habit.

ED: You served two terms as prosecutor.

BD: Two terms. I have two defendants who are now on Death Row; those were tragedies. When the chief deputy and I completed one of the death penalty cases, and should have been celebrating, we were both crying, because it was just another wasted human life. This kid had told his girlfriend if she broke up with him he'd kill her and her whole family. She did, and he did. He kicked in the family's apartment door a day after Christmas. He shot her sister while her two babies were holding onto her legs. He shot her stepfather. He shot the mother. The girl had hidden in the closet and he missed her, so she was able to testify.

The other one on Death Row goes by two different names, a Muslim name and his birth name. He killed a Little Rock businessman, stabbed him, ran over him with his own car, and left three little girls fatherless. He went to prison and made a shiv or a weapon out of a metal door. He was trying to stab another inmate and the guard stepped between them and he killed the guard. So there were three more innocent children who were left fatherless. When he came to court they had to not only put manacles and leg irons on him but they had to make sure there weren't even pencils around. He got so mad at my chief deputy that I thought he was going to get up and try to stab him.

ED: Were the two guys who went to Death Row executed?

BD: They have not been. The one who killed the UAPB [University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff] cheerleader and got out of prison on a sloop tank and killed a farmer in that area has been executed. He was a coldblooded killer.

There were some pretty awful cases. I hadn't even gotten unpacked at the prosecutor's office before a character came in and said, "Well, I have an AK-47 and if you don't take care of this drug problem I'm going to." He was a Vietnam veteran. Months later, a woman came in, just off work from Tyson's and she has boots on because she's been doing chicken rendering. She brings in her two children, one in a stroller. She wants us to take care of them. She's going to jump over the railing and kill herself. So you're dealing with mental-health issues every day. They just walk in.

ED: So what did you do with the woman who was going to kill herself?

BD: You try to talk them down. When I was asked, in the middle of the Jack Walls trial, or while I was preparing for it, if I would run for AG, I said "I'm not sure what he [the AG] does is more important than what I do," because in many cases you're trying to save lives before somebody gets killed. That happened over and over. We were trying to stop violence before it happened. We had a great staff. I thought that the work that we did, particularly as far as domestic violence is concerned, was important. The victim-witness coordinator's office tried to prepare victims to be able to testify at trial. The witnesses don't know anything about the procedure. And then we tried to give victims the emotional support to get over the tragedy and move on with their lives.

ED: So, four years of that. By the way, were you opposed for a second term?

BD: No.

ED: Had you decided that I've had about enough of this?

BD: No, I'm in the middle of a trial and was planning to do this for a while. And then they asked me to run for AG . . .

ED: Do you care to say who asked you to run?

BD: It doesn't matter. I didn't want to do it. But I said if this trial, the Jack Walls trial, pleads . . . Because I know that I don't like to shake hands and talk about myself. And that's part of the reason that I delayed this interview for five years. Parts of it are so painful. What I experienced as a child helped me be able to stand in the gap and wear the bull's eye, to say "you can't do this to a child, you can't do this to a woman." Whatever it takes, and whatever the toll is for me—and there was a toll . . . Anyway, I did it. It [the Jack Walls case] ended in February and I did run for AG. You know the story on that.

ED: Did you announce that you were becoming a Republican, or how did that happen?

BD: I grew up in the Church of Christ. That tells you a little about my spiritual conservatism. Probably what I skipped over was that in those days

of domestic violence, the only strength and security I had was in my faith. I went to church three times a week and studied my Bible, so I could survive and be optimistic. So, fiscally, I'm more conservative. I don't like to put anybody in a box and don't like to be put in one. I am a rabid environmentalist when it comes to the Buffalo River and all the rivers. One of my best experiences has been rafting rivers, canoeing, rafting and kayaking. Well, not kayaking.

ED: You've gone out west and rafted on the rivers, the Grand Canyon . . . ?

BD: Growing up on the Spring River, the Black, the Strawberry, the Eleven Point; rafting the Colorado River; rafting the Ocoee River where they did the summer Olympics; the Pacuare in Costa Rica, which was a wonderful two-day rafting trip, with the natives standing up on the cliffs watching you, reminding you of *Deliverance* [the 1972 movie filmed on the Chattooga River in North Carolina]; and the Snake River. The only complaint that I have about Mike Beebe and what he says is his biggest regret is what he let happen to the Buffalo River and what the current governor [Asa Hutchinson], who is a dear friend, hasn't stopped. [She refers to the approval of the C&H Hog Farm near a tributary of the Buffalo River.] You start those online petitions to raise money; I would raise the money to buy the hog farm so they would move where there is not such a terrible thing happening to our national river. I believe in global warming. So I don't take a set of spiritual values that you tell me I'm supposed to follow—or political values—and say I must adopt any of those wholeheartedly. I can't.

ED: But you are going to run for attorney general and this is still an era [1998] when women and Republicans are not getting elected to many statewide offices. Of course, there was Mike Huckabee . . .

BD: I know that, but I know that I'm better qualified. [The Democratic nominee for attorney general in 1998 was Mark Pryor, who had served two terms in the state House of Representatives.]

ED: OK.

BD: But I don't have the political family history. No, in fact, I have a family history that Bill Simmons [a former Associated Press reporter who by then was political editor of the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*] . . . Your job as a journalist is to be fair and to be just, to expose bad things, but, like Vince Foster [deputy White House counsel to President Clinton who committed suicide in 1993 after repeated editorials in *The Wall Street Journal* attacked him], it's the gotcha mentality. It's unfortunate. One of those experiences was with Bill Simmons.

ED: So what did Bill Simmons do?

BD: The first debate that Mark Pryor and I had was at Camden, in David Pryor's hometown. Interviewers are supposed to let the Chamber of Commerce approve any of the questions they're going to ask. That's what the Camden reporter said. Bill Simmons is on the panel with Channel 7 and his first question was a question that he shouldn't have asked and he hadn't had cleared. He asked Mark and me, "Mark, why did your parents divorce and, Betty, why did you and Jay divorce?" Mark had to go first. Poor thing. ED: Why your parents divorced?

BD: Why your parents divorced, or separated. Did they divorce or separate?

ED: They were separated briefly not too long after David became governor in 1975.

BD: That's right, separated. So, why did they separate and, Betty, why did you and Jay divorce? Now, how is that relevant? Mark struggled. So I said, that's not a fair question to ask a man who was a child then. Jay is in the audience, as is my youngest child.

ED: That's Bill Simmons.

BD: That's the first incident. The next one, he storms up to me at Little Rock, with hatred in his eyes. He doesn't know me. I didn't know him. I haven't said anything. But he said, "When did you get a divorce?"

Demanding to know, with a meanness that is not a rational, objective man. Third time: A reporter for the *Democrat Gazette* has to write a story about me. Bill takes it away from him. He writes what he wants in it, and it's mean and vindictive. It's not about me. It's about my mother. It's about one of my sons having a drug problem, and he did. He admitted to anybody, and he went through treatment, spoke about it to try to help other people. Bill wanted that in, but he didn't want it in under his name, which was dishonest. He made this reporter put it in . . .

ED: He was the political editor of the paper and handled all the political stories written by the staff.

BD: I understand. And he made this reporter put all that in, under his byline—and he happened to be from Pine Bluff, and whose father delivered my children, and whom I had known since he was a child. So the reporter said "I've had it" and he quit and went to law school. And then I saw Simmons' grandfatherly attitude later written about, and I wondered, "Where was that when I saw him."

ED: Well, I know a little more about Bill. He also was deeply religious. He GOT to be a deeply religious person, but of a strange kind. He led a group that split off and he became pastor of a tiny congregation. It was a Calvinist group. One of its central doctrines was that women must not speak in church. There was a line somewhere in the Old Testament, maybe Leviticus,

that women must be silent, and that was a central tenet of their beliefs. I remember Gloria Cabe was in the state legislature and there was an effort to resurrect the ERA, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Bill would confront her and others about it with some hostility. A reporter should never have done that. So he was sort of a preacher for this little congregation.

BD: I've prosecuted preachers. That helps me understand a lot. Uppity women.

ED: Those congregations followed all that old Mosaic law.

BD: I know. I bought into it. I wasn't an uppity woman. Not then. Not until I was a prosecutor.

ED: Those things are hard to get past.

BD: I didn't know he was a misogynist.

ED: Yeah, he was.

BD: The way he acted, which bordered on being irrational.

ED: He became a very holy person. It carried over into his news coverage, unfortunately. Bill was always my friend, but that was the way he was. I didn't know about those things you told me, but I'm not surprised. That would have been Bill. He was a righteous avenger.

BD: Unless it was just me personally. But I didn't know him.

ED: No, it was not you.

BD: I should never have run. I should have stayed barefoot and pregnant. One of the officers that I worked with, from Altheimer, said "I can tell that you are independent. You are an emaciated woman." He meant emancipated. He was trying to impress me with the big words. I said, "Yeah, I wish I were." Well, those were some of the discouraging things about politics. You offer yourself for public service and you come to understand why good people don't do it. I'm not putting myself in that class. People who care about good government don't do it, because they have to deal with the visceral, nasty attitudes. Hey, give them a choice.

ED: Looking back on it is as a former political writer myself, I thought it was a lost cause on your part because, first, you were running as a Republican. Now you wouldn't run as anything else.

BD: You never know.

ED: You were getting near the cusp, because Mike Huckabee had been elected lieutenant governor [in 1993], so things were changing.

BD: Well, I was also offered the job of running for governor against Mike Huckabee. The Democrats were desperate at the time to get somebody to run against him. Who was head of the Democratic Party when the Jonesboro lawyer [Bill Bristow] ran for governor?

ED: Was it Gibson?

BD: Yes, what was his first name? His sister married . . .

ED: The Arkansas Arts Center director.

BD: I was friends with her and with him.

ED: Bynum Gibson. He was the state chairman. [Later a circuit judge]

BD: Bynum came by the prosecutor's office. He said, "Betty, we have a proposal for you. We want you to run for governor." I said, "Bynum, if it's down to you or me, you're in trouble." I wouldn't consider it. By then the [Republican] party had asked me to run for AG. And my son said, "Mom, if you run, it's a win-win situation. If you lose you win, because we get you out of Pine Bluff." But I didn't do it for that reason.

ED: You're running against the son of perhaps the most popular politician in modern Arkansas history.

BD: But I knew that, as cute as he is and as likeable as he is, that he wasn't qualified, he wasn't committed. I knew that it was an uphill battle but with the influence of Mike [Huckabee] and Fay [Boozman] . . . Of course, Fay lost. [Boozman was the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate and lost to U.S. Rep. Blanche Lincoln in 1998.] And then the tide turned after that.

ED: I'll have to look up what the vote was in your race.

BD: It was about 60-40, because that was the general split. Fay may have done a little better.

ED: He was running against Blanche.

BD: So I lost. In the last stages of the race, I went to see the doctor and she said she would see me again in two months. . . I don't know. This was just before the race ended. Maybe it was a week after. When I lost, Mike [Huckabee] appointed me to the [state] Public Service Commission. My health insurance supposedly was seamless, because I'm a state employee, before and after, same health insurance. I find out I have breast cancer. I have to start radiation and chemotherapy and all that. Then Carrie Rengers, who did the gossip column for the *Democrat Gazette*, called and said "How are you feeling?" I said, "Fine, how are you?" And she said, "I hear you have breast cancer." I hadn't told anyone, except my fellow PSC commissioners. I hadn't told Mike. Max Brantley [editor of the *Arkansas Times*] calls me. I didn't take the call. I didn't take any of the calls, except from Mike. I said, "Carrie, the worst thing about this is not the disease but the fact that the insurance companies say they don't know me." I don't tell her who the insurance company is. And they [the insurance company] calls the next day after it's in the paper. They said, "What can we do?" The next thing, of course, is that I'm going to say their name and how horribly I'm being treated after I've paid insurance all these years. They said it was a computer glitch in Texas. So what would it have been like if it had been

somebody who doesn't get her name in the paper? So the ten-thousand-dollar bone scans and MRIs that I'm having are going to be paid for. So that was the experience for the next few years.

ED: So did you have surgery?

BD: Yes, I had a lymphadenectomy, where you remove the lymph nodes to see whether it has spread, lumpectomy and all that. Max said, "Well, you ought to be talking about it." Somehow, in all this I had forgotten to tell you that I was earlier hired to represent the [state] Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

ED: That's right. You were attorney for the Soil and Water Conservation Commission from 1991 to 1993. That was before you ran for prosecutor.

BD: Yes, and I went back home to the city attorney's office and to run for prosecutor. I worked for the Soil and Water at the same time and had gotten their permission to continue working as Redfield city attorney. At one point I had a private practice, was city attorney at Redfield, and was working for Soil and Water.

ED: What kind of law was involved with Soil and Water?

BD: Well, one of my friends called it dirt law. Well, you go to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. It was one of those things where you try to learn it and then forget it as soon as you leave. I helped write some of the rules and regulations. I really liked Randy [Young], the director of Soil and Water for many years. I really liked working with him. But it wasn't the kind of law—nor was utility law—that I wanted to practice. I tried to learn dirt law, soil and water and utility law when I was trying to deal with health issues. So where are we now?

ED: So you went on the Public Service Commission in 1999. Who were the other commissioners? Jim Von Grep was one.

BD: Sandy [Sandra] Hochstetter. Lavenski Smith, Sandy Hochstetter and I were the commissioners at the time. I think Von Grep may have come after Lavenski. [Lavenski Smith was appointed by President George W. Bush to the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.] We were dealing with deregulation [of utilities] and all the things that that entailed.

My friends would say, "I don't know how much they pay you to work at the Public Service Commission, but it's not enough." If you know, understand and like utility law, it's fascinating. And it's another powerful job, with all the lobbyists who are your new, best friends.

ED: Many years ago when I covered the Public Service Commission for the *Gazette*, at Christmastime there would be an electric toaster or some other small kitchen appliance delivered to my house, from Arkansas Power and Light Company. I told [Robert C.] Bob Downie, who was on the Public

Service Commission, about these gifts from the utilities to reporters and others. Bob and the other commissioners changed the rules to require all those kinds of gifts to be taken out of the utilities' rate bases and charged to the shareholders rather than the ratepayers.

BD: That was a shock to me when I was a prosecutor and the presents would come in to me and there would be a huge bottles of whiskey, and I would send them back. One guy wanted to know where I lived. He was going to have something delivered to my house, and I said no. I said, "Don't tell him where I live. I don't want anything. Give it to somebody else." He later raped a hot-check girl. He ran over and killed a dentist who was out jogging at night, backed over him and drove off. I had to get a special prosecutor, a friend from Washington County, to come down and prosecute him. He went to prison for that. We had to piece together a story, because he took his white truck when he had damaged it in killing the jogger, had a new part put on. The manufacturer had stamped the automobile part, a bumper, with a date so we could prove circumstantially that it was he. He had had the bumper replaced on his new truck. He went to prison. They want to buy favors.

So then the governor [Huckabee] appointed me his Chief Counsel.

ED: So you become the governor's staff attorney?

BD: Yes. In 2003.

ED: You replaced Butch Reaves, who had gone over to the Workers Compensation Commission.

BD: Yes. I served for a year.

ED: As his counsel, you served as liaison . . .

BD: I dealt more with judicial appointments, who to recommend, and working with the lawyers from all the state agencies. Kevin Crass was his personal attorney then. Kevin and I had been in law school together. He grew up in Pine Bluff. He's a friend, much younger. If the governor had a legal question, I suspect he asked him. I didn't lobby the legislature. I didn't feel comfortable doing that. So I served him a year. In 2003, I had gone to Atlanta and Kiawah [South Carolina] to plan a daughter's wedding. It was a destination wedding. I had said, "Rachel, if you want a destination wedding, I don't know a prettier place than Heber Springs, where I'm living now. How about that?" No. By then, or about that time, I had moved mother to Heber Springs, because I expected to retire there. She was in a nursing home there. She was in the early stages of Alzheimer's. Last of September or early October, I had a seminar at Williamsburg [Virginia] for counsels for governors and whatever. Before that, I went over to work on the wedding. My daughter was working in Atlanta. Rachel was working . . . I don't know

that we've gotten around to Rachel. Rachel was born in 1975. She was in microbiology and thinking about pre-med. She wound up working for pharmaceutical firms, then setting up dialysis clinics. Now, she is setting up radiology clinics where they buy doctors' practices and she works with hospitals. She does that out of Nashville, but she was in Atlanta then. We were trying to plan her wedding in Kiawah, where she decided they wanted to go. So I was going to Atlanta, Williamsburg and Kiawah and then Boston, to attend my daughter Laura's daughter Rachel's birth, the second Rachel, on October 13. During that time, the governor calls me. He said, "I want to appoint you Chief Justice of the Supreme Court."

ED: Dub Arnold [W.H. Arnold] was the chief then, right? And he decided to retire.

BD: Yes.

ED: You were going to be serving as chief justice, to finish his term, for something over a year.

BD: Having never tried a case before the court. I had watched the court, but I had never appealed a case. I was fully aware that that was missing from my experience.

ED: I suspect you had broader experiences in the law than many who served appointments.

BD: I had started later in life. Sandra Cherry, who was my roommate in college, was a U.S. attorney. She had said, "One of the things that I regret is that I—we—started so late in our legal careers." She was excellent. To have started law school at forty-two just to do paralegal work and then to have ended up being fortunate, or unfortunate, enough to be on the Supreme Court . . . I had a smattering of legal experience in several areas.

ED: You had some critical experience for the job.

BD: My daughter Rachel—she was getting an award, one of ten people and there were fifty-thousand people in the DC audience—said something about her mother's vast experience in crime. They started laughing.

ED: So what did you say when he asked you? Hell yes?

BD: I guess I said yes. I may have said let me think about it. I was honored, shocked and surprised. Interestingly enough, Brenda Turner [Huckabee's chief of staff] asked me, "Are you sure you want to do this? Do you think you can do this?"

ED: She asked you if you were sure you could do it?

BD: Yes. I said I can be fair. I can't be accused of not being fair. I can be accused of not having enough depth of legal knowledge.

ED: Did you get the impression she was trying to talk you out of doing it?

BD: That's actually what I inferred, that she thought I shouldn't do it. I don't know. This was October 13.

ED: Had Arnold already retired or was just he planning to?

BD: I think he had already talked to Hannah [Associate Justice Jim Hannah] about it. I asked Bob Brown why he did not run for chief justice, because he was the logical one. I had known him for years. Well, they [Arnold and Hannah] had already strategized, prepared. Hannah had gotten his announcement and paperwork all pulled together. [He planned to run for chief justice in the 2004 election.] If you resign in some period of time you have to wait until the next election. The AG's office, I think, looked at this—what the time period is if you wait too long to resign . . . It's a month-to-month thing. He told the governor that it was his intention to resign the first of October. But he did not actually resign until January 1 or to be effective January 1, 2004. That was the reasoning, so that the election of the new chief justice would be in 2004.

ED: So that Hannah could then announce that he was running in the filing period that followed your taking the seat, that spring. Did Hannah have an opponent? I've forgotten.

BD: Didn't he have an opponent—Wendell Griffen?

ED: Wendell Griffen did run.

BD: And, subsequently, we had all kinds of Wendell Griffen matters to take up on the court.

ED: So you were sworn in on January 1.

BD: Bob Dudley [Justice Robert H. Dudley] swore me in. Bob Dudley's wife has been a friend of mine all my life. Mary Lynn Anthony Dudley. We were friends from college.

ED: The court then would have been you as chief, and Bob Dudley . . .

BD: No, Bob Dudley had gone off the court. It was Bob Brown and Annabelle [Clinton Imber Tuck], [Donald] Corbin, Tom Glaze, Hannah, Jim [James T.] Gunter, and Ray Thornton. Ray Thornton was the one I went to and said "I can't serve, I have to recuse," when a case by David Hodges came to the court. I explained why. That was back in the time when I felt like I had to explain everything. And I recused.

ED: When you go in, you're the chief administrator of the court. You had to learn this system set up by George Rose Smith . . .

BD: Everything. Annabelle and Bob held a tutorial to help me. I had a wonderful assistant who had worked for Dub.

ED: Did you use his law clerks?

BD: I did, at first.

ED: You had to learn George Rose Smith's circular system where there is a main judge and a backup judge assigned to each case as it comes in. It was an effective system. It turned out the decisions.

BD: There are things I probably should not tell you about court indoctrination. The first day of conferencing I'm trying to learn what they've told me about, but I haven't yet experienced. As chief, I handle the paper work and then throw it all in the trash. My assistant has to dig it all out of the trash because these are the original records.

ED: In our oral history, Jack Holt told me that on his first conference as chief justice he started laying out a plan for how cases were going to be handled. George Rose Smith cuts him off. He says, wait a minute, it's going to be done the same way it's been done since 1949. "You don't have anything to do with it. This is the way it's going to be done."

BD: I had more of a traditional woman's attitude. But they were all wonderful, especially Bob, Annabelle, and Tom. Corbin I had known since his rascal days in college. I'd say, "Corbin, you wouldn't talk to Annabelle like you're talking to me. I have a sexual-harassment claim I could file against you every day, except I can't stop laughing at you." He had the old men's attitude. You say something just a little in the gray area, a little off color. He thought it was a compliment.

ED: Donnie was learning all his life. He'd wake up every day and Eureka!

BD: He was like that, and yet he would say to me, "I see that deer-in-the-headlights look." But he was hardworking, and he was smart. He was good, but he had that country boy, bubba attitude. Anyway, being on the court was a shocking experience. I was like Alice in Wonderland, this little girl sitting in a huge chair. I realized they were paragons in the legal community. I had to make some hard decisions.

ED: You're on the court this time for a year. The *Lake View* case comes back. [*Lake View School District No. 25 v. Huckabee*] It's gone back and forth from Pulaski County to the Supreme Court since the early 1990s. It was first before Annabelle when, as a chancery judge, she ruled that the state's system of school funding was unconstitutional, and it's been before the Supreme Court two or three times. I was going to go back and refresh my memory about what stage it was when it went back to the court with you as the chief.

BD: When we appointed Brad Jesson and David Newbern as special masters.

[Briefly, the Supreme Court had agreed with the lower court that the state was in violation of the state Constitution's requirements that it provide a suitable education for every child in the state and that it be available to every

child on an equal basis. In 2002, the Supreme Court held a compliance hearing and concluded that the legislature and governor had still failed to comply with the Constitution and set a deadline of January 1, 2004, to comply. The court, under Chief Justice Dickey, appointed former Supreme Court Justice Bradley D. Jesson and former Justice David Newbern as special masters to evaluate the work of the legislature and governor to determine whether the steps met the Constitution's mandates. They would report that the legislature and governor had made substantial improvements in quality and equity of school funding, and the court ended its jurisdiction. In 2005, small school districts insisted that the legislature was falling short of its obligations. The case was reopened and the special masters took another look and concluded that the state was in violation because the reforms had not been implemented. The legislature raised more taxes and school funding and the Supreme Court in 2007, following another study and report by the special masters, finally concluded that the state was in compliance and that it had set up a system to assure future compliance.]

ED: It was a long and complicated case. School funding was a big issue in nearly every legislative session since World War II. I remember Donnie Corbin talking about it. He was in the legislature when they had those battles over how to distribute state aid to the schools. But he said he had never realized, until he was on the Supreme Court, that the Constitution said the state **MUST** provide a suitable education for every kid. But there it was and he was confronted by that on the Supreme Court. So, he said, all right, by God, you're going to have to do it, legislature.

BD: Yes. And they reviewed what the legislature had done and came back. I remember reviewing certain things. I think Bob wrote the decision, because I don't think Annabelle did. [She recused in the *Lake View* appeals because she had rendered the first decision as a chancery judge.] My issue with Bob—and I wasn't going to write a separate concurrence—was that if we didn't protect in some way the five thousand dollars [per child] or whatever we set that was to be used for education, it would be used to Astro turf the football fields, or build more buildings, and make old coaches superintendents. How could we protect children from that, because they needed computers and more teachers. I remember being troubled by the fact that we didn't have any restrictions on how the money would be used.

ED: You didn't get that into the ruling, that restriction?

BD: No, we said it had to be used for education. We didn't adequately protect kids. But this was the year that we had to deal with that issue.

ED: You had a lot of egos to deal with on the court.

BD: But I admired, almost without exception, every one of them. They were bright, they were helpful, and they were genuinely concerned. And they were all proud of their own opinions.

ED: Tom Glaze had started off, sort of on the other side of the issue, when it reached the Supreme Court the first time in about 1996. He couldn't see how the court could tell the legislature that you are going to have to do these things, like raise taxes. Eventually, by 2004, he had come around all the way to the other side to the point that I think he was ready, if the legislature did not do it, for the court to take some steps on its own.

BD: That's when I knew him.

ED: Here's the other thing I wanted to bring up, which is just a theory on my part. Mike Huckabee, early on, is on the other side. I think he was resentful of the court saying the state was going to have to take steps, either raise taxes or take money from other programs, to make the schools compliant. And he had been earlier a vocal opponent of school consolidation. But ultimately, during the course of the *Lake View* fight, he becomes THE champion of school reform. We're going to raise the money to do these things. We're going to make the schools efficient by abolishing all these tiny inefficient school districts that can't offer a full curriculum. I've always thought that his epiphany may have been Betty Dickey saying, as chief justice, that all this was an obligation that the state had to fulfill.

BD: You've followed this many more years than I have. I was busy raising a bunch of kids and doing other stuff. But I was thinking that he gave an inaugural address [in January 2003] when he was giving his lofty ideas about consolidating if they were smaller than fifteen hundred, I think.

ED: Yes, that was his number. Fifteen hundred. But when he ran for office the first time, maybe for lieutenant governor, he was an opponent of school consolidation.

BD: I didn't realize that. He was my minister down at Pine Bluff. We changed churches. I got to know him personally. And then he went to Texarkana.

ED: Consolidation was very unpopular out in the countryside back then. But during the *Lake View* fight, he became a big champion of consolidation. No governor in modern times took on the consolidation fight. Except for Sid McMath, who supported a school consolidation initiative in 1948. Bill Clinton, the school reformer, never did. He danced around it. Jim Guy Tucker, when he was governor, tried to subtly influence consolidation through a consolidation amendment, although he had talked some about having one district in each county but didn't propose it.

BD: But I think Mike made that consolidation talk in 2003, before I went on the court. I think that's correct.

ED: It was not based on any research, but my hunch was that Mike Huckabee may have been influenced by your stand at the court not only on consolidation but on finding money, including new taxes, to meet the state's obligation to provide a good education to all kids. He pushed through some taxes—a conservative Republican governor making the largely Democratic legislature go along. Of course, the legislature couldn't swallow as much school consolidation as Huckabee insisted. They did do some.

BD: I didn't see it the same way. From whenever he made that speech, in 2003 I think, he had that very optimistic view of how we could all consolidate and have more like 75 counties instead of more than 300 districts.

ED: His plan was to consolidate districts with enrollments smaller than fifteen hundred.

BD: The *Lake View* case came back up before the court in 2004, but I didn't see a connection between the two. He had an ambitious executive program.

ED: It did. It included taxes and other steps that satisfied the two masters and the court. It was a pretty courageous thing for a governor to do.

BD: And then, in 2006, when we looked at it again—I don't remember how that developed—we had to call David Newbern and Brad Jesson to look at it again, because there was the allegation [by school districts] that there had not been compliance. I remember Jay Dickey asking me did I want to know what the governor thought about that, what had come up. I said no. Other than the other justices in conferences, I don't ask anybody before I vote on anything. I don't think the governor understood. I don't think he ever looked at what his own attorney, the attorney general's office, how they answered the allegations that there was not compliance. So, we had to call back the appointed masters. It was a couple of years later when the governor was running for president that I saw him. I knew he was angry with me, because we voted to have the masters look at it again, because the attorney general's reply to the allegation was “Yeah, we did comply and you can read about it in the newspapers.” I said, “You know, governor, it was a seven-to-zero decision for us to look at it again. Not that you didn't comply with everything that you were asked to do, but in the pleadings we had nothing to look at other than go to the newspaper, which we were not going to do. They were upset. We were all upset. You remember that at that point your AG [Mike Beebe] was running for governor. “Read it in the newspaper” was basically what the person who filed the response said.

ED: A newspaper story is not evidence.

BD: That's right. And he said, "Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Governor, we don't even look at the pleadings until they're finished and the package is presented to us." He said, "I could have got my own attorney to answer that." Well, that's not my job. I think he understood then for the first time what had transpired. So they looked at it again [in 2007] and decided that the state had complied. The governor was just not happy that we made them look at it again.

ED: It was the biggest case in the last fifty years probably to go before the Supreme Court. Do you remember any other big cases that year?

BD: Yes, but not by name. I can describe it generally. It was one of the first cases that I had in addition to the other cases before the court. It was one that I had to write. It involved a contract. One of the provisions was that if you have an issue you have to go to Louisiana to resolve it. It was a contractor who built post offices. He had built one in western Arkansas near Fort Smith—Greenwood?—and he hadn't paid his subcontractors. They were going to have to go to Louisiana to sue to get their money, negotiate the contract, or whatever. It was so egregious to put that provision above subcontractors' liens—the liens that the subcontractors have against the builder, the U.S. government that he is working for. The first vote in conference to have them go back to Louisiana was four to three. Bob Brown [Justice Robert L. Brown] said "I agree with you basically and you can persuade me if you write it right." That is a daunting challenge. He said, "I understand what you're saying, that it's wrong that he basically takes the money and goes back to Louisiana and deprives the subcontractors of the money to which they are entitled." There is more than one suit against this contractor, I later found out. One of them they had settled or had chosen not to appeal. This one lawyer in western Arkansas appealed it. We rewrote it so that Bob could vote for it.

ED: So it was three to four and, after you rewrote it, it was four to three.

BD: That's right, as I recall. I was really pleased. When you see an injustice and the existing law is not in your favor . . . That was an interesting case. But other than *Lake View* and that case . . .

ED: None of the big capital cases came before the court then?

BD: Not that year.

ED: Now, the sodomy case would have been a year or so earlier, before you went on the court?

BD: There was a homosexual-relationship case. It had to do with the way rules and regulations were written. That was a seven-to-zero opinion. But that was in 2006.

ED: I remember that case. Robert L. Brown or Annabelle Tuck wrote the opinion. No, Donnie Corbin might have written that opinion.

BD: Ray Thornton went off the court and I can't remember who came on the court when Ray went off. Gunter came on.

ED: Jim Gunter.

BD: I served the first year with Ray, and then Gunter came on.

ED: Anything else about that first term on the court. Any threats or anything of that nature?

BD: No.

ED: Was there more fallout from the *Lake View* case?

BD: Just the follow-up concerns about serving the children. My brother, more than I, saw that you can't get a good education even with distance learning, if you don't consolidate so that everyone has access to good math and science teachers. It made it so very hard for him to get in to M.I.T. and get up to speed, even though he took correspondence courses in trigonometry and calculus. It's difficult. Until we consolidate we can't give kids what they need.

ED: That is still an issue. The legislature should have passed the governor's 1,500 threshold. It seemed pretty radical to some people. School consolidation was the key to my life. I may not have finished high school if they had not forced the consolidation of my little country school.

BD: Two of the highlights of my term as Chief: One was when Scalia came [Justice Antonin Scalia of the US Supreme Court]. He was coming to speak for his friend Richard Arnold, and Richard died I think the week or two before. Scalia still came. He had lunch with us in the conference room, so we got to have a nice visit. He even allowed pictures to be taken, a very congenial visit. I didn't get to go hear him speak that night, because Glaze was holding an opinion that I was trying to get. It may have had something to do with *Lake View*. I can't remember, but I remember sitting on a stool outside his office while he was getting it done so that I could get to hear Scalia. But Tom took too long. Then I got to have lunch with Justice [Ruth Bader] Ginsburg at a conference in eastern Tennessee. Where is the Biltmore?

ED: North Carolina.

BD: It was in North Carolina. That's where we were, at a conference of women justices. I had breakfast with her. She had on her lace gloves. She was charming. She talked about her dear friend, Richard Arnold. The last two books I've read were *Scalia Speaks* [*Scalia Speaks: Reflections on Law, Faith, and Life Well Lived*] and before that her book [*In My Own Words*]. They were both fascinating studies. You have seen them a different way, the

backgrounds of both justices, who were almost polar opposites but who had a great love and affection, and respect for each other. Anyway, those were highlights of that first year as chief, with Scalia. Justice Ginsburg was later.

ED: So that term ends January 1, 2005.

BD: I was on the court '04, '05, and '06. I was on the court one year as chief and he [Governor Huckabee] reappointed me as associate justice when Hannah moved up to chief.

ED: Memorable cases during the second term?

BD: I don't remember any.

ED: There was the one case you mentioned involving homosexual relationships. That was the case involving . . .

BD: Rules and regulations that a state agency had written.

ED: Was it about gay parents adopting kids or serving as foster parents? I think it was.

BD: Yes, DHS [state Department of Human Services] had adopted regulations prohibiting it.

ED: So the Supreme Court told them, no, you can't do that.

BD: Seven to zero. I get on a plane and go to Boston. My daughter Laura's cousin-in-law was gay, and she hugged me as if our vote had been an affirmation of their lifestyle. It was as if it had national ramifications. It was not about homosexuality directly, I guess you could say, but about whether they could adopt.

ED: It was remarkable because it was a largely elected court, or a court subject to political whims, in a very socially conservative state. A vast majority of people thought homosexuality was an evil.

BD: And biblically.

ED: Yes, you had all the stuff in Leviticus about killing homosexuals.

BD: If you killed all the homosexuals and the adulterers . . .

ED: There wouldn't be many people left. And if you have a disobedient child you have to take them to the town fathers to be stoned to death.

BD: What's your biblical background?

ED: I grew up in the Baptist Church.

BD: That's about as conservative as the Church of Christ. Except you did have music.

ED: We did have music. But you couldn't drink, dance and play cards. I think Donnie Corbin wrote that opinion, if I'm not mistaken. [The case was *Howard v. State*, decided June 29, 2006. Corbin's opinion concluded that banning gays from adoptions or foster parenting was unconstitutional because it violated privacy protections. The court said that there was no rational ground upon which to deny couples adoption and foster-parent

privileges given to others. “There is no correlation between the health, welfare and safety of foster children and the blanket exclusion of any individual who is a homosexual or who resides in a household with a homosexual.” The decision upheld a ruling by Pulaski Circuit Judge Timothy Fox.]

BD: Donnie’s wonderful law clerk may have written it, but Donnie got emotionally involved in all the cases.

ED: He did, and in the end and in the oral history I did with him he got into the difficulties he got into with . . .

BD: The women.

ED: And when that gets posted on the website . . .

BD: I have a theory about that, too, and I wasn’t on the court then. I also know, watching enough sporting events, that the foul is not always called on the first offender but the one who reacts to it.

ED: The hostility got out of hand, and a lot of it apparently is still there. It seemed to become an unpleasant place to work for a while.

BD: Once Hannah was taken out of the equation it got a lot better. I think you can set the pace, the tone, as the chief.

ED: Jim was a sweet guy, but I guess he was sort of authoritarian, or he was perceived that way. Did you and Hannah have some difficulties?

BD: When I was chief, I said “Next year, you’re going to be chief. You go to these seminars and I need to stay here and work. I offered it to him. I tried to be as congenial as I could be. He was more the Bill Simmons type. This comes out of the blue, too. The next year, when he’s the chief, he never said thank you. He was a misogynist more than you can imagine, and when there were enough women on the court to push back then he calls the *Arkansas Times*, like he did when there were other disagreements. You just don’t do that. You maintain the integrity and the decorum. If you can’t like somebody, you can be civil. You heard one side of it, but if you talk to some of the women there is an entirely different side. Everybody, I’m sure, has a percentage of guilt.

ED: I never talked to him about any of that. I never talked to Hannah.

BD: If you talked to the women, you will get an entirely different version of it. I don’t see any of them socially, but I heard more about it than I wanted to. But I also knew some of the things that Jim did that were not . . . As I said, when I went on the court the justices, if they did not agree with you, were still more like Ginsburg and Scalia as far as showing mutual respect. And you apparently haven’t talked to any of the legislators who almost voted that a justice could run again after he was seventy without forfeiting his retirement. The second and third times the legislature voted on that,

which Jim and [Paul] Danielson were promoting, there were fewer votes every time as more and more legislators knew what was going on. That was my understanding. It's really sad. I really liked and respected the other justices with whom I worked.

ED: So, we're up to . . .

BD: 2007. I'm up at Heber Springs making my own jams and jellies and happy and taking care of my mother, who has Alzheimer's. She was in a nursing home.

ED: You had moved to Heber Springs.

BD: In my last year on the court, I moved to Heber and commuted.

ED: Any particular reason you moved to Heber Springs?

BD: I loved the lake. I had grown up on rivers. I loved fly fishing. I did a lot of that.

ED: Did you live on Eden Isle?

BD: I did. I had mother in a nursing home, because by then she was not ambulatory. I did not do any legal work of any significance. I played tennis and took care of Mom, eventually feeding her every day. One of those years while I was taking care of my mother, Rachel had her first baby and a few days later, had a grand mal seizure. She recovered, and I stayed with her a couple of months because she could not drive. She had another little boy two years later. So those were times when I did more mother and grandmother chores, than caring for my mother. Mom died January 4, 2010, and, in February, I went with a friend and my daughter, Laura, to Australia and New Zealand for six weeks. I loved New Zealand. I never thought I would go. In 2007, when I took a tour of the great Northwest and saw Glacier National Park, it was the most beautiful place, but Milford Sound [New Zealand] was even better. I didn't like flying that long, but I did it, and went skydiving with my daughter to celebrate a birthday.

ED: You say skydiving. What did you do? You jumped out of an airplane?

BD: As high as you can get it to go, which was fifteen thousand feet.

ED: How old were you then?

BD: Seventieth birthday. Kind of like George [H.W.] Bush. [Laughs]

ED: I wouldn't have done that when I was seventeen.

BD: I said, "Laura, do you want to go skydiving with me over Milford Sound?" She said "No!" I said that's fine. I've raised all my children. My mother is gone. I'm not scared. She said, "Well, you're not going without me." We had an amazing time! I came back and joined the Navy.

ED: You joined the Navy?

BD: Well, actually NPACE, that's Naval Professors at Sea, a program that is offered to men and women in different branches of the military to take

college courses while they serve their country. So I served my country. I flew to Dubai, UAE, and boarded a naval destroyer, the USS McFaul, DDG 74, which was armed with nuclear weapons. It was one of the two ships that were later sent to Benghazi when the murder of our US Ambassador occurred. But this was earlier, in 2010. By day, we worked with the coalition to keep the shipping lanes open, capturing Somali pirates who were trying to capture other ships. I taught five classes of criminal justice at night. We had some pirates on board. In fact, the captain took me down to see them one day. We were in a cyclone, the outer edges of a cyclone. They were passing out medicine for seasickness and telling us to strap ourselves in our bunk beds at night. We went from Dubai through the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman out into the Arabian Sea, and through the Gulf of Aden. We had been told that Somalia now had a stable government and would prosecute the pirates, so we took the Somalis to Djibouti, Djibouti and they were flown back to Somalia, which promptly released them. We'd spent a hundred thousand dollars of government money to fly them back, just to have them let go. That was a precarious situation, trying to get from the Djibouti pier to the airport in a bus full of pirates, machineguns, and our navy guards. Traveling through the narrow Strait of Hormuz was also tense, because of the trouble Iran, on the north border, caused by running small craft at our ships in a taunting, threatening manner. So, we went through the Strait of Hormuz at night. We were not allowed in ports with pirates on board, so after putting them on a plane we came back through the Arabian Sea to stop at Salalah, Oman. There were camels running up and down the beaches. I turned down a chance to go see where Job was buried, because it was a journey into the desert in a strange country near Yemen. I learned a little bit about Middle Eastern history. I went to Hafa Souk (bazaar) to shop, in typical dress, no skin exposed except eyes and hands. It was quite a contrast to shopping in Dubai which, although it was during a recession, was a huge, futuristic-looking city, with huge malls, some with a ski area within the shopping center. You could go in, put on your gear and snow ski. One had an aquarium that was three stories high. The malls were just amazing. But the contrast in the way men and women dressed was also amazing, the men dressed in all white, their wives dressed in all black with only their eyes showing.

ED: And walking seven paces behind, probably.

BD: Yes, and then the young women who weren't married had the latest in fashion and hair piled on their heads and lots of makeup.

ED: The most futuristic city in the world.

BD: It was. Like ten lanes wide, or maybe six lanes in each direction.

ED: Too much money.

BD: Yes. It was just an amazing educational experience. So I taught for a couple of months and chased pirates. One ship we were following, our men picked up on the fact that they were suspicious and so we started radioing back and forth. At first it sounded pleasant and then, after questioning them for about two hours we said, “We’re going to board you to verify that what you’re saying is correct.” A different, harsh voice then said, “No, you’re not. We have two dozen men with machine guns.” So we followed them until they go into the cyclone because they apparently were not maintaining contact about the weather. And we go in the other direction.

My criminal justice classes are finished and another professor is coming on board. I am transferred onto a British oil tanker to get a ride back to Bahrain to fly home. For a little girl from Black Rock and Walnut Ridge it was quite an experience.

ED: How long were you over there?

BD: Two months. I had gone to New Zealand and Australia after Mom died and was on the ship for two months. I had rescued a yellow Lab. I had a chocolate, and then a black Lab who went on homicide calls with me when I was a prosecutor. But this one was from the animal shelter. One day I was walking him on a leash, and with a friend when he took off after a rabbit and flipped me. I had a concussion and brain bleed, and they helicoptered me down to Little Rock. That was just before Halloween, 2010.

ED: An eventful year.

BD: That was a very eventful year. 2011 and 2012 more trips with the kids. In 2013, I met—not met, I’d known him for thirty or forty years. I went to see Dr. Charles Davis at UAMS. He was a dermatologist, recently widowed, who had practiced in Pine Bluff for many years and had taken care of my kids. His daughter and my four children were friends. We married in 2013 and moved to Little Rock in 2014. Then, in 2016, in November, he was shot.

ED: It was a hunting accident and he got shot in the leg. There were complications.

BD: Actually, he was doing great until the day they took the machine off his leg . . .

ED: A compression device that kept the blood circulating?

BD: Yes, to accelerate the healing. Skin grafts with people our age don’t take as well. He was doing well. They removed the wound vac machine and about two hours later the event happened. We were working on income tax files. He was in a wheelchair. The doctor that he shared a clinic with—they had a two-man office—had moved up here a couple of years before. He came, as did the Fire Department, within five minutes. They got his heart

beating again but he never recovered. Two months later, Jay died, my children's father. Charlie died in January, my closest friend, Mary Lynn Dudley, in March and Jay in April. The life changes that we all face if we live this long. Losing our friends. Every week.

ED: That's right. I think we've about covered it. It's funny and a few sad stories. When you get the transcript, it may jog some more memories. You can add some stories.