

**Oral History Interview of  
Sally Murray**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
September 03, 2013  
Lubbock, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Sally Murray, second wife of Texas Tech University president Grover Murray. Sally discusses growing up in East Texas, attending Texas Tech University to become a teacher and teaching in Central Texas. Sally later divorced and pursued her degree in geology. Sally talks about meeting Grover Murray at a conference for the West Texas Geological Society and discusses their marriage, Grover's presidency, and Grover's final years.

**Length of Interview:** 01:53:22

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### Keywords

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**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

This is Andy Wilkinson, September 3, 2013 with Sally Murray, and we're in the morning at the Southwest Collection, and Sally is going to come in and talk about Sally and about Grover Murray, but she's just brought in two very interesting things, one, a special publication by the *University Daily* on November 1, 1966, welcoming the brand new president Grover Murray, but also, she has a copy—guess I should hold it up on the tape recorder so they can—a copy of his speech accepting the position, I guess, or speech at the installation, or—

**Sally Murray (SM):**

I've never seen that before, and there are copies floating around, I'm just not aware of it.

AW:

Well, we would certainly like to get a copy.

SM:

Oh absolutely. The reason that I think this is so valuable is because it outlines his plan, because Dr. Roy Furr was head of the Board of Directors—they didn't call them regents back then, they called them directors—and Roy Furr basically hired Grover Murray. I think—I think he realized that Dr.—who was before Grover Murray? Not Goodwin. I should know, but I don't.

AW:

I should, too.

SM:

I'm under him, because I graduated in '65, and Grover came in '66. Anyway, when he told directors, "You need to get somebody else because I'm going to be retiring." The directors, and I think Roy Furr must have been chairman, and I think Roy Furr is the one that really did the looking around, and so Grover Murray's name came up, and so they started corresponding. Roy Furr said, "Dr. Murray, why don't you and Nancy, your wife, come out from LSU." Grover was academic dean at LSU, academic vice-president. And so Roy Furr said, "Come out and look at Tech." Nancy and Grover came out and looked at Tech, talked to faculty, talked to students, looked the town over, met some of the townspeople, and then they went back home and talked about it. Now they didn't have little children. The oldest daughter was married at this time, the second daughter was getting ready to go to med school, so there wasn't this issue of, Do we take the kids out of college? See that wasn't an issue. He thought about what Furr—Roy had asked him—he said, "Here's what I what I want in a president. Do you think you can do the following? Take little Texas Tech College out of its little college position and make it a real university? Can we get it away from its small-town image? Could we bring people in from all over? Could we offer more courses?" All of these things Roy Furr kept saying, "See this is what we want." And so by this time, Grover Murray thought about it and he said, "Mr. Furr, I'm going to take your

offer, because number one, I like challenges, number two, I'm going to tell you in advance, it's going to take me ten years to do it." And he stayed ten years and like a few days or weeks. I don't know anybody but Grover Murray who would have done that. And the main reason he did it is when he gave his word, he kept it. And then second, he had such ideas to play off of Roy Furr. And of course, immediately, when he got here, he was put to work, because how do you take a little college out of its little-town image? You make it a university. And I know, Andy, you remember that huge controversy over the name change. Huge. And that's worth ten hours of tape by a lot of people. But the reason that I really liked this thing I found, his address, is he addresses the things that Roy Furr really wanted, like making it into a university. And also, I have been told that a president of Tech then—I don't know how it is now—was told, "You get a focus, and you let us know what it is, and you make it prominent." And his focus was arid lands, and he talks about in here how he has traveled all over the world and he has seen destitute people, people suffering for lack of water and cleanliness and that kind of stuff.

AW:

Yeah, that's interesting coming from LSU, where there's nothing arid about LSU.

SM:

That's right. But keep in mind—and in here, he says, "I am a geologist. And geologists are international. If you see granite in one place, it's like granite in the other." And so I think Grover Murray had traveled the world enough by then that he knew poverty and harsh conditions that came from arid lands, and so we got out here, he said, "Well, you're in semi-arid country, we need to get serious about this."

AW:

And that's really interesting, because those of us who grew up out here and moved off and came back here, we're always mystified when a regime comes in here at the university and wants to make us into something else instead of focusing on the resources we have and the place that we're in. It's very interesting.

SM:

Well, I was living in Lubbock when he came. And what I remember—the newspaper had a picture similar to this—I remember—I think it said, "Geologist to head, Texas Tech." And I thought, isn't that interesting that they picked a geologist because I'd never heard of him, and so—and then I thought, Well, he wears Buddy Holly glasses. I remember that. But then what I remember, Andy, it started raining, and I don't know if it was all of September, all of November, but anyway, you know how Lubbock can have rains and rains and rains, and I don't know what the average—

AW:

Especially in the fall.

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

Our average is seventeen inches, and sometimes we get it all in one month.

SM:

Anyway, I remember—he told me later, he said people said, “Man, we got you out here just in time. You brought the rain with you. Thanks for coming.” It was a rainy time, and yet the arid lands are what his focus was. I don’t think anybody had to wonder, I wonder what that new president’s going to focus on, because he came out with it quickly and they established the International Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, got that started. And he really wanted to get some things going with Africa, and he made several trips to Africa.

AW:

It’s also almost immediately when he came out here, he started the Ranching Heritage Center.

SM:

Because I think he saw that was closely related, because I think he saw that ranchers were kind of pushing the envelope where they could make the semi-arid lands work.

AW:

I just did a television show with Red Steagall, helped write the script for it, and he came out and toured the Ranching Heritage Center, and so I had to go back to see what were the actual dates, and I’d forgotten that Grover had just gotten here because it was the fall of ’66 when he met at the Pioneer Hotel with John Lot and D. Burns and all these ranchers, and they started the—it was called the Ranching Headquarters Association.

SM:

I talked to Emily the other day and the tragedy is we can’t find all that sequence of events, but you’re right.

AW:

Well, we have some papers here that do that, but they’re the papers of the Ranching Headquarters Association. And I don’t know—I didn’t find any reference to any minutes having come from that first meeting.

SM:

Well, it's just tragic that none of that's been kept, or if it's been kept, we can't find it.

AW:

Well, we made sure that in the Red Steagall piece that we mentioned that it was an academic idea that the ranchers jumped in on, you know, with—

SM:

Grover always said, "If you don't get the ranchers on board, this ain't going to make it." He liked the ranchers. He liked to visit them; he liked to have them here. You're right. It probably was best to start academically and then—

AW:

Oh, yeah, it's got to. Anything connected with the university's got to have an academic component. It has to be the reason, the basic reason, and that's a really good thing. Well, let's back up a little further. Let's start with you because we have a lot of information about Grover, not that we can't have more, but I wanted to get started with you. What's your birth date? Let's start with that. I know it's not polite. I'm not in a polite business with this interviewing.

SM:

Let me back up and say, when I talked to those students that live in Murray Hall, their director said they want to know why Murray's name is up there, and that's a two-hour lecture. So, I said, "We're going to start with the building and the artwork and then more of the Murray term, and the last part is the part—all of you have had your pencil and pens out trying to figure out is where do I fit in, because I told them, like, when I came to Tech and then when Dr. Murray died and when he moved, so the little pencils are trying to figure out, How old is she?"

AW:

Yeah. Well, that's not—

SM:

Oh I don't mind.

AW:

But your story is really important, too, so—

SM:

I don't know if it's important, it's just fairy tale. It's kind of a fairy tale.

AW:

Hemingway said any person's life, truly told, is a novel. So what was your date of birth? Plus a hundred years from now, when people are reading this, they'll want to know which Sally we're talking about.

SM:

That's probably right. That's probably right. I did come to Tech for a reason, because I'm from Tyler. I was born in Gilmer, Texas, that's—

AW:

In Gilmer?

SM:

Uh-huh. Gilmer is in Upshur County, and it's about a hundred miles east of Dallas. It's the Piney Woods. The reason I was born there is my father graduated from Texas A&M in 1929, he got a teaching job in vocational agriculture in the little town of Gilmer. My mother graduated from College of Industrial Arts, that's now TWU in 1926, and she went back home to teach in her high school, Gilmer High School.

AW:

Oh, so Gilmer was her town.

SM:

Yeah. My dad's from Madisonville. And so the relatives say, "If it hadn't been for your cousins, you wouldn't even be here, Sally," because they saw this single man, this single lady, and his students and her students got them together.

AW:

Oh, really?

SM:

So that's a family joke is that the cousins all said, "Hey, here's a match." And so they get married in 1931, and he continued to teach vocational agriculture, and then you know what happened, in '39 was the war. He taught in Gilmer, he taught—he was an ag supervisor in College Station. He was somehow associated with Texas A&M, and then Ben Aggie had to go into the war. And so he didn't go overseas, they saw on his records that he was a teacher, so they made him teach tanks—tank maneuvering. Can you imagine a little ag boy teaching tank maneuvering? And they sent him all over to different forts in the United States, which probably kept him alive, had he gone over, Battle of the Bulge and all that, Mother probably would have been a young widow.

AW:

My uncle was going to A&M at the time, the uncle for whom I'm named, and wound up going to the navy and dying in the war. Remind me to tell you an interesting story about that after we get done. So he went in—he went right away then.

SM:

Well, he went in '39, and mother decided to stay in Gilmer. Let me see—it was in summer of '42, he was at Fort Knox, and Mother—and baby Caroline was born, and some of her sisters said, "We're going to get on the train and come up and see you at Fort Knox." If you count when I was born, the last day of February, 1943, you realize that was a pretty significant visit.

AW:

Yeah, it was.

SM:

There was a movie one time called the *Summer of '42*—

AW:

I know. That's a great movie.

SM:

Wasn't that great? And I kept thinking, well that's—

AW:

(laughs) Yeah, that's your story. So were you born—

SM:

February twenty-eighth.

AW:

Twenty-eighth, so at least you didn't get stuck with a—

SM:

That's right, and mother always said, "Well, you were supposed to be a March first baby." So see that really verifies that visit in early June was where I came from.

AW:

That's a great story.

SM:

Yeah. And then mother and the baby—baby Caroline and her sisters got back on the—or maybe they drove, I don't remember. They got back to Gilmer, and Mother decides she's pregnant. She said, "This is not going to be a Kentucky baby." So no more visits up there. When I was born on February 28, 1943, they let my dad come down on the train. So he got to see me. And then the war, see, was over in '45, wasn't it? Okay, so Mother and Sally and Caroline then started kind of following him around—one of them was—what's that one in Brownwood? Bowie. I spent some time in Bowie.

AW:

That's where my uncle grew up.

SM:

Okay. It was—suddenly out of nowhere it became this huge post. And then they went also back up to Fort Knox—that's how army did, you just shuffle around. Caroline learned the letter Q—she was about four at the time—because I came down with scarlet fever, and they put a Q on the door, which meant quarantine. So that's the first letter Caroline ever learned was Q. She would tell you that. And so—between my birth and the time the war was over, a lot of shuffling around, which is what every military person did.

AW:

In fact, my grandmother worked at Camp Bowie. My grandfather taught math at the high school and my grandmother worked at Camp Bowie.

SM:

Have you been back to Bowie, ever been back?

AW:

I've been back to Brownwood.

SM:

The slabs are there, it's eerie, you can just imagine it was a huge base.

AW:

Yeah, my grandmother sort of pointed out where it was when we went back one time.

SM:

Yeah, it was big. It was big.

AW:

And in fact, it was one of the only employers in town.

SM:

I bet that's right.

AW:

Because of the Depression. And my grandmother, who had—I think she had not worked for most of the time she was a mother, but went to work. Both my father and my uncle, the only two kids, were older, but I think they really absolutely needed people to work.

SM:

I'm sure they did. I mean, it's just a rural little town. So here, this man gets out of the service, and he needs a job. Mother was one of twelve children, and there were three boys and nine girls. When you have that many kids, there's always a kind of favoritism, so Mother's—one of her most favorite sisters was named Z-a-m-a, her grandmother picked unusual names, and Zama went to Denton and got a degree in education, like all young girls did then. She wanted a job, so she found out that across the river in Ryan, Oklahoma, there was a job for a young teacher. So she takes it. And she teaches. And back then, you had to be voted on by the board. So she taught all that year, and then a bunch of girls, her girlfriends were saying, "Did you get your letter of re-election?" And she said, "No." And they said, "Well, you better go talk to the man that's head of the board of education and see what you've done wrong." So she gets the nerve to go speak to Mr. Percy Ralls, and says, "Mr. Ralls, I didn't get my letter of re-election." He said, "No, you're not going to teach next year, you're going to marry me." And so Percy was a widower, and he had two little children, and he'd been watching her. And so Ralls, Texas. Mr. Ralls married my aunt Zama, and she immediately had these two little children. And then in nine months, she had a daughter. And so they stayed up in Ryan, and John R. Ralls came down over here and started the town of Ralls. So he wrote Percy and said, "Brother Percy, get you and your family to come down here, and we're going to make this a town." Very important, because Mother was so fond of her big sister Zama that when she found out that Zama was living out here in Ralls, that's 450 miles from East Texas, here'd we'd come and visit. Here we'd come and visit. And so I remember my first visit, Uncle Percy had a fence around his property, and you could climb up the boards and see the horses running and all this, and I was just enchanted. So different from East Texas. He put us in his Packard and he drove us, and I was so little that as I was sitting, I couldn't see out the windows, but I could see up. So I remember driving, and I could see all these unusual roofs. These beautiful tile roofs. Later I realized that was Texas Tech.

AW:

I'll be darned.

SM:

When we would get home, and you know how you ask a little kid, “Where are you going to go to school, Johnny?” “Where are you going to school, Sally?” “I’m going to Texas Tech.” And I started saying that from then on.

AW:

Really?

SM:

And that’s why I’m out here. That’s the only reason that I’m out here.

AW:

What was your maiden name?

SM:

Sally S-o-w-e-l-l, Sowell. So we made many visits. My cousins—I told you they were traveling with Mother’s family, and guess how many cousins there were—

AW:

Oh gosh. You’d have to have a scorecard.

SM:

Cousins out here in Ralls would say, “Okay, all you East Texas cousins, come out and visit us.” And some of them would come to Post on the train and come up. But we’d always come in the car, and they would just turn up loose and let us drive up down the sectioned roads and go to the swimming pool in Ralls, and so all these years, I kept coming out here. It’s interesting that I’m the only one that came to Tech.

AW:

Yeah, that is interesting.

SM:

Now Caroline later came and got her master’s and then two cousins came and started it, but after one semester they were gone because their boyfriends back in East Texas said, “That’s too far for a date.” But I’m the only one as far as I know that graduated from Tech, because we were all exposed to Ralls.

AW:

How interesting. When did you come out here to stay?

SM:

Well, my parents had a rule: you have to go two years to the local junior college, Tyler. It was fifty dollars a semester and then you could go to where you want to. So Caroline did that and I did that. Mother and Daddy being teachers, you know what I majored in: education. And so at Tyler Junior College, I got all my basic stuff, I came out here, and they had something in education that was really good. It was called broad field science, and it was for people who couldn't get their mind, you took most of their hours in like, I picked biology, second most geology, third physics, chemistry. You distributed it yourself. And that's great because it used to—every ninth grader took physical science. You did, I did, and so it was a perfect teaching job for that—teaching preparation. And so I graduated May of '65. And there's a very prominent man on this campus that has the same date, I'll let you guess who that is, Kent Hance. But I didn't know any of them. So I graduated and then I thought, Well, I'm going to go back home and teach a year," because boyfriend was still working on his master's and needed time, and I thought, as well did mother, he'll do better Sally if you're not out there, so I went home and taught a year at Tyler. It was the only school that had something called outdoor education. It was wonderful. The little students from first grade to sixth grade would come out and spend a day or two or a week, and we would teach nature things.

AW:

Oh that's cool.

SM:

Oh, it was fabulous.

AW:

In 1966, they had that?

SM:

They started it in '51. It was the only one in the nation except for the one that was founded in Michigan. We had visuals all the time watching what we were doing, we taught them woodworking, we taught them dam building, we taught them forestry, and then there was a lot of interaction. Little children who had never been away from home suddenly had—were given a bunk bed and had to make their bed, they had to learn to interact with children, it was fabulous. But Tyler has since sold that because they got a brand-new superintendent who said, "We're not in the business of camping. Sell it." So after all these years, it's gone. Isn't that sad? Typical.

AW:

You work so hard to get a program like that, and—

SM:

So anyway, I'm so glad that I worked there. It was a fabulous year. And then we married on August 6, 1966—the exact day that Nancy and Grover came to Lubbock—we were married in Tyler, packed up a U-haul, came out here, found an apartment on Thirty-Ninth Street, and I had a job at Evans Junior High.

AW:

So you married August 6 of '66.

SM:

Yeah, and Tebo Reed, you ever know that man?

AW:

No.

SM:

He was my principal.

AW:

No, I did not—I went to Hodges, Bayless, Atkins, Monterey. And I don't remember Reed at all.

SM:

Well he was a junior high principal.

AW:

But I would have had some—because I had several teachers my senior year that just graduated from Texas Tech, and so they would have—Audrey Curren was one—trying to think of who else, but they'd all just graduated the same year—same time as you.

SM:

And Floyd Honey went over to your school.

AW:

Yeah, he was our—he was—

SM:

—your principal probably.

AW:

At the start, and then he retired, and it was B. J. Randles. But Floyd Honey was there when John Kennedy was killed, and I remember Floyd bringing us all into the auditorium to tell us, you know, about that it was—

SM:

Well, and then the man that I married really liked Honey. He thought he was a really good principal. But anyway, I taught there at Evans for a year and a half, and then Norman Williams, whom I was married to—

AW:

Norman Williams.

SM:

Yeah—took a job at Central Texas College in Killeen.

AW:

In where?

SM:

Killeen.

AW:

Killeen, yeah.

SM:

But he was an unusual person, because his specialty was herpetology, that's snakes. And it was a golden era for the National Science Foundation, from about '61 through '66, golden era. They had all this money, and so his professors, Dr. Packard, the mammal man, Dr. Tinkle, reptile man, all these professors over there in biology were doing research and doing field work, and I mention this to tell you that we spent our honeymoon under the bridge at Robert Lee catching snakes. (laughter) I don't know anybody else would've done that. But this—Dr. Tinkle had this great idea, because the Colorado River comes through and they put a dam, Spence Reservoir, and so he said, "Any wildlife that's living here has been affected by that dam, and one of them was a water snake, named Harter, Harter's Water Snake." So he told Norman Williams, he said, "I want you to start studying the snakes that live in about a three-mile strip on the Colorado River." And the river there was what they call Riffles, it hit rocks and that's—that snake fed off the minnows it could catch. So when reservoir went in, you can guess that it really changed that.

AW:

Yeah, downstream there would've been none of those.

SM:

I've not followed his research. I would give anything to know if somebody has gone and followed up all these years later.

AW:

Harter's snake.

SM:

H-a-r-t-e-r-s, Harter's water snake, yeah. I'm aware that when they had testimony for and against the reservoir, somebody told me, they said, "You know, your ex was up there speaking about a snake." And I said, "That doesn't surprise me." So I'm aware that he was brought in to testify, but that's all I know. I just—I just—

AW:

That's interesting.

SM:

Yeah, isn't that interesting?

AW:

Yeah.

SM:

So he gets this job teaching biology at Central Texas College, and we arrive January of '68 in Killeen. And so it was a brand-new community college, it was a gold mine, because you know what was going on, Vietnam. And if the CEO said, "Well, young men, young women, you have a lot of time on your hands, go over there and take courses at Central Texas College." Our classes were just full, and then if we got one that said—

AW:

Yeah, because everyone wanted a deferment.

SM:

Yeah. There were students that had been jerked out of Princeton, out of Stanford, out of University of Alabama. Vietnam.

AW:

Yeah. I got drafted in February.

SM:

See, you know what I'm talking about. You know exactly.

AW:

Yeah. Because I told you, you know, I'd not done well that first year inside and I'd just started back, which means I had no deferment left.

SM:

Caught you. Well, Norman never got caught because I think all of the—having the master's and all that—I'd see him write letters all the time about "I'm working on my master's." Probably your draft board—was Lubbock your draft board?

AW:

Mhmm.

SM:

Well, that was his, too, but I guess they thought, well—

AW:

And '68 was I think the year of the greatest number of draft inductions. I was just plain lucky they 4-Fed me because I was allergic to tetanus shots. I was working on the police department at the time, so I figured I was a goner, that they'd take me right away. No, it was an interesting time, so yeah, I bet those were full. Now, did you teach in Killeen?

SM:

Yeah, so when we arrived there, he said, "Are you going to teach, what are you going to do?" And I said, "Oh, let me just take some time off." Well, word gets around, and I had a call from the principal at Copperas Cove Junior High that said, "We're just desperate. Please, please, please come for an interview." And so I thought, Oh well, and so, before I went to his office to interview, he took me down the side of the building, and he said, "Here's the room." And I peeked in, and the students were jumping from desk to desk to desk and scraping and hollering, some of them were on the floor, and he said, "See why I need a teacher?" And I thought, Yeah, you need a teacher.

AW:

A warden, not a teacher.

SM:

I thought, Okay, now these were about eighth or ninth grade back then, and I thought, Okay Sally, you took the job, how are you going to keep from—oh, and he told me, “You’d be the fourth teacher this year. They’ve run off three.” He told me all this stuff and he said, “I’m tired of sugar-coating. I’m just telling you how it is, Ms. Williams.” So I went home and I said, “Norman, I took that job and it’s just going to be hell on earth.” He said, “I know what you can do.” And he had a rat snake. He was a herpetologist—yeah, it was a black—anyway, that thing was—I bet she was eight feet long. And he’d had it and fed it mice so it was a pet. So first thing—I started the next Monday. I went in, I had this sack, and of course they came in like, We’re going to run you off, and I said, “The principal says that you are now in like chapter five, biological systems,” or whatever it was. And I said, “I’m going to require you to learn some specific things about”—some specific—how did I say that? In other words, “Everybody is going to be assigned a creature or an animal and you’re going to have to learn about that.” And I said, “So the first one is mine, and I’m going to tell you all about it, and then by the end of this week, each of you is going to have an animal that you’re going to study about and then tell us. And if you can get that animal to bring to class, like maybe a baby squirrel or rabbit, that will make it even better.” I reach out and pull the snake out, and it was gentle enough that it would just climb around me. Oh! Running for the windows, most of them were blacks. Screaming and hollering, and so I said, “No, just get back on your seat.” I walked up and down the aisles. And I said—

AW:

So they thought if you were tough enough to—

SM:

Yes. And so there was one little black boy just—I said, “I think you should touch it to know what a scale is like.” So one whole hour spent on the snake. I thought, I hope it doesn’t poop all over me because they’re capable of doing that. So man, the word went like fire. By second period, I mean, they came in and sat down. So I showed that old snake off all day long. And so that worked. And it turned out to be a good year because they were totally intimidated, and then they liked the idea of having choices, and they picked out their little animals and made their reports, some of them came up with frogs and lizards, that kind of stuff. The principal was just pleased as pop. Of course, back then you didn’t have to have the TAKS test and all that TAAS whatever. So it was a good year.

AW:

It’s amazing how much somebody will learn from a real squirrel than they will from a squirrel in a book.

SM:

I mean, that principal didn't care. I could have talked about the Great Wall of China and he wouldn't have cared. He was just so tired of kids coming in beat up. So I did that and then—oh, my neighbor taught there and then in Harker Heights, that's a little town, we moved and got us a house there.

AW:

Harker Heights.

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

I don't know where that town is.

SM:

Well, Temple, Harker Heights, Killeen, Copperas Cove. And we bought a house there and word gets around, so here comes the—what was Tom?—he may have been superintendent of Killeen schools. I don't know. Here he comes over and he said, "I hear you're a teacher." That was in the summer. I said yes, he said, "We sure need some good teachers in Killeen." And so he told me some positions that were open. So I took the one—Earth science, because that was really my interest. So I started there at Fairway Junior High. I didn't have to use a snake. I was prepared by then. So by the end of that year, Norman Williams said, "I really need a lab teacher. Are you tired of junior high?" I said yeah, he said, "Well, come on out there and you can be my lab assistant." So left there and started—I don't know what date, about '70. Meanwhile, this principal at Killeen had said, "I can tell you really like teaching Earth science." I said, "Yeah, that was my most preferred classes in my major after biology." And he said, "Did you know the NSF is offering master's degrees in Earth science at Texas A&M?" I said no. He said, "I think you ought to apply." So '69, '70 and '71, all those summers I went to Texas A&M and got a master's.

AW:

You did it in the summers while you were still teaching in the spring and fall?

SM:

And got a master's—I found out later that Grover Murray helped promote that program. He was big in the National Science Foundation. So I got a master's—however it's called, I'd never heard of it—C and I, curriculum instruction, that's what they call education now, C and I with a specialty in Earth science. So I didn't get a degree in geology, but I got almost. That's going to be important later on. If I hadn't done this, I would have never met Grover Murray. Never. So I

get that degree in 1971, three summers, and then Norman said, “My geologist has quit.” It was something connected with Fort Hood, and he said, “I don’t even have somebody to start my first classes. Do you think you can handle it?” I said, “Well, let me try.” So I ended up teaching freshman geology in the fossil—geology one and two. So I taught that from ’71 to ’80. And he had been promoted to chairman of the science department, everybody was under him. So it was a wonderful place to teach, the hill country is about seventy miles. All I had to do was just ride out—Sally Williams wants to take twenty-three students, give me a credit card and have fun. I mean, life was wonderful. So we did a lot of field trips.

AW:

Oh, great.

SM:

Went the Grand Canyon, went to Mexico—

AW:

Really? That’s a lot at a junior college.

SM:

At a junior college. And the reason is because of—write this down—S-A-S-G-S, SASGS.

AW:

S-A-

SM:

—S-G-S. That stands for the Southern Association of Student Geological Societies, Southern Association of Student Geological Societies. It was this wonderful idea that major universities like UT and Baylor and A&M and Canyon, we can say, “All right, let’s all work together, and let’s conduct some field trips and invite little schools who don’t have that ability to come and join us.” So I got in with them quick. And imagine them taking us into the interior of Mexico, where they behead people now. So we spent a week down in Mexico and up in Oklahoma and Big Bend. See how wonderful that was? But—

AW:

Plus, as I recall from my freshman geology here at Texas Tech, that was a pretty interesting time in geology. Gaia, Gondwanaland and all those, plate tectonics, all that was a really happening thing for—

SM:

It was. It was a good time. It'd be like DNA in biology, I think. And so the students were really interested. So it was a wonderful time to teach and take students to places they could have never gone. So that lasted until the summer of '80. And the summer of '80, you know everybody talks about the big C, cancer? There's also a big D, called divorce. So big D happened to me, and I won't go into all the details except that it happened. It was the best thing that could've happened because I didn't want to stay there and work under my soon-to-be ex. And some of my students had been leaving me and going to UT and places, and they said, "Hey, there's a boom going on in the oil business. There's a boom, why don't you just leave this teaching and get a job?" And I thought, Well, that'd be interesting. So I thought, I don't have a B.S. in geology, so how could I work this out. So I knew that University of Texas at Odessa, right in the center of the oil boom, taught, you know, geology. So I write them and I say, "I want to come out for an interview, I want to finish up, get a major in geology, because I eventually would like to work." And they said, "Well, come out here." And so they looked at my classes. I only had to take one whole semester plus a field camp. So I took probably about five more and I was given the B.S. in geology. And then it was a boom like nobody's business. And so there were a bunch of us girls in field camp. Field camp was down in Mason. We had to spend six weeks down there. And I remember looking around one night. And I thought, divorced, divorced, single, divorced, all of us were girls that were just trying to get a career going.

AW:

How interesting.

SM:

Yeah, it was very interesting. And so—and we all talked about, I wonder where we can get a job, where can we get a job. And so I real quickly got in with the West Texas Geological Society, that's a group of geologists that meet every week and so on. So I did get a job real quick. It was with a company called Tipperary. That's a name from Australia, I think. And we laughed and said, they spelled it wrong. It should have been Temporary because we were the first ones to get laid off. So took that job in the spring, and I can't remember when I was laid off. I think it was about six or eight months later. I know we were all entry-level geologists and they'd been talking about health benefits, so there was a sign going out Friday that said, "Come early Monday for early seven-thirty meeting," something like that. Oh, they're going to talk about some more good benefits. So we sat down, and our boss came in and he was always happy-go-lucky, how you doing—he looked like death warmed over. And so he gets up there and says, "As of five o'clock today, none of you have a job. Tipperary is disbanding." Pink slip. So it was interesting—

AW:

And this was what year?

SM:

This was in '81.

AW:

Eighty-one.

SM:

Sometime in '81—yeah, am I right on that? Eighty-one? Eighty-one or '82, I need to look that up. But anyway, it's when the boom went bust in Midland. And so we were the first. Later on, somebody said, there needs to be a T-shirt that says, "Will the last person in Midland please turn out the lights?"

AW:

Yeah, yeah, and what was the other joke? Because by that time, I was back in Lubbock in the financial services sector and there was another joke that said—

SM:

Prune pickers go home?

AW:

No, there was a joke that said, a Midland man convicted of child abuse gave his kids oil wells.

SM:

It was rough. It was rough. Okay, so what do I do? I don't have a job. I thought, Okay, there's a lot of independent people in this town.

AW:

Were you living in Midland?

SM:

I was living in Odessa.

AW:

I mean, Odessa, yeah.

SM:

When I went out there, I knew I was going to go to school and work, and so I started asking around, what's the best place to live, and they said, "Midland is a place for geologists and white-collar workers. Families. Odessa is oilfield workers. So if you want to raise a family you move to Midland, if you want to raise hell, you go to Odessa." So I picked Odessa.

AW:

Well and then, the other thing was they give the orders in Midland, but they carry them out in Odessa.

SM:

I'm glad I did that because I got an apartment just a stone's throw from the University of Texas at Permian Basin. So that worked out real well. And so—okay, I don't have a job, and I started walking around and knocking on doors and saying—I promoted myself as a tech. I said, "Could you use a tech?" Because I knew they were going to hire geologists. Back then for computers, everything was hand-done. And you had to be so careful with India ink. And so I would just say, "Do you need somebody to do some technical work for you?" Most of them didn't but one did, and so I went to work for him, and then worked for some of his buddies for some time, and then I went to work for a guy named Pat Bolden, who really needed me more than just a few hours here and there, so I thought, Well, I'll make a living like this for a little while. And so in October of—I remember this date—of 1985, he said, he came in and handed me this piece of paper and he said, "Look here, Sally. West Texas Geological Society is promoting a field trip in Van Horn and that's some good geology, I want you to go because—you just need to learn some of that geology." I said, "I'll go." And he said, "I'm going to give you Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. I'm going to give you those three days off." He may have paid some of my way, I don't remember. And so I knew the lady who was head of West Texas Geological Society, I knew her real well and she said, "Sally, let's just get a room at the Holiday Inn and let's go on that." I said okay, so it took two buses to get everybody down there. That's how many people were interested.

AW:

That's a lot of people.

SM:

Yeah. Of course, buses didn't hold that many back then. And so she and I go down there, and geologists are very social people, so after the evening meal, they have what they call ice breaker, where you walk around and you say, "Oh, I haven't seen you Joe in three months. What are you doing?" And "Oh, have you gotten fired?" Just social. So Marie Bell and I were just cruising around and she said, "Do you know that man over there?" And I looked and I said, "Well, I guess I should, I've seen his picture." And she said, "That's Grover Murray. I know him. I've met him. Let's go talk to him." And so we go over there, and the first thing, I look at Grover Murray and I think, number one, he looked ill, he looked tired, he looked sad, and he did look older. I'm not going to say old, I'm going to say older. And so she said, "You probably don't remember me." "Yes, Marie, I remember you," Grover had a wonderful memory. She said, "I want you to meet my friend, Sally Williams." So I stick out my hand and I said, "I went to Texas Tech." Later I found out that's what everybody says when they meet Grover. He said, "Oh

really? When did you graduate?" I said in '65. "Well, who was the president?" I had no idea. Still don't. Goodwin. Is it Goodwin? Anyway. And so he said, "Well, as you know, Tech is a great place." I said, "Well, I left Tech, but I know you had some good years there." From reading alumni stuff. He said, "We had a good ten years." He never said I. And later, I said, "What do you mean by 'we had a good ten years'?" He said, "Because I knew you hire somebody, tell them what to do and turn them loose. You don't micromanage. And after I left, the legislature started building prisons and that was the end of those good years." And see, that's when a guy from where I'm from, William Wayne Justice, he was a federal judge, he took a handwritten lawsuit by a prisoner who claimed in nineteen pages, "I was abused, I didn't get medical treatment, I didn't get my clothes washed, I couldn't brush my teeth," all this stuff, and Justice said, "You know what? You and 300 other people that testified are right. Texas prison systems are wrong." And he got rid of all the old prison systems and all these prisons took the place of higher education money. That was the start right there. That was the start. Prisons. And he said, "It's never been the same. I had a good ten years because the legislature wanted to promote higher education, and it did." So no wonder he was successful. He had legislative money, he had good people, all this building went on, the medical school, the law school and all this stuff went on, Ranching Heritage. So Grover Murray did have a good ten years. Okay, so we visited, and the next day they said, "At noon, we'll honk the horn and you come get your box lunches." We were all in line and I saw him talking and he kind of stepped out. I had bought an old camera, and when you pushed the shutter it went clunk. I got it at a pawn shop. And he heard it. And he turned around and he said, "Well, if you're going to take my picture, I'm going to take your picture." Joke. So he took my picture and then we just moseyed along, about ten of us sat down with box lunches. So he was sitting beside me and he was asking me about my major and all this. To make a long story short, by the third day, we'd just had a lot of chats. And we get back to K-Mart in Midland and he walks me to my car and he said, "Sometimes I come to Midland on business, so I want to take you out to dinner next time I come." I said, well fine, I thought I'd never see him again. A month later, I get this call, "This is Grover Murray and I'm coming to Midland, I'd like to take you to dinner." So as I told the students the other day, this is when I knew Grover Murray was different. We went to the Hilton, which was probably the best—their restaurant was the best. And he ordered steak tartare. Steak tartare is raw meat that's been marinated in lemon juice. That's when I knew he was different. And then I kept thinking, why is he so different? Well, it turns out he's been all over the world. He's traveled all over the world. And he told me about one time when they were on that trip to Africa, he was seated across a little tiny table from the host, and the host said Dr. Murray—of course, I don't know where he went. They had brought in a sheet that had been baked. And so the host took couscous and the eyeball and does this, and then he says Dr. Murray. So he learned to eat sheep eyeballs with couscous. I mean, that's just one example, so he'd eaten stuff all over the world.

AW:

So I guess raw steak would be no problem.

SM:

Nothing, nothing. So that's when I knew Grover Murray was different. So we got friendly with each other and he'd call and talked and his—he'd come down to Midland and his secretary said, "Dr. Murray, quit acting like a teenager, you've gotten five tickets in the last six weeks speeding." So at Christmastime, he said, "One of us is going to have to move and it's not going to be me." So that's when we decided we would get married, and so he flew to Tyler, rented a car, I was there with my sister, my parents. He had I think written my parents a letter, he wanted to meet them. He got a speeding ticket coming to my parents' house. So I could tell my parents were not thrilled nor was a my sister.

AW:

Really?

SM:

No. They just thought, "Sally has lost her mind. She's lost her mind." He—you know, it was a different life. He had left Tech in '76 and then he taught geology and then he was just back getting ready to retire. They put him in the museum, he had an office at the museum. People would say, "Murray, what did Tech do with you when you resigned?" He said, "Well, they put me in the museum, but they didn't pickle me or stuff me." That was his joke. So we decided to get married—

AW:

So what was the date again?

SM:

We married on his seventieth birthday, which was October 26, 1986. Yeah. But now, what won him over? This shows how smart Grover Murray is with people. He detected how cool my family was toward him and so he said, "I need to come back and we need to visit with your folks some more." And I said, "Well, that's probably a good idea." And my dad had a farm, and back then, coal companies were going to lease all your farm and strip it and get some of that lignin, and so they said, "Mr. Sowell, you'll be a millionaire overnight." Well, my dad didn't believe one bit of it, but Grover, see, was the one to talk to him. So we went back to visit, and Grover and I sat in the front seat, and my parents in the back seat, and he said, "Yeah, you do have some lignin," told him about the geology and all this kind of stuff, and so when we got back to the house that night, Mother said, "This marriage is going to work." And I said, "Well, thank you Mother," and she said, "You know why?" And I said, "Well, what's your theory." And she said, "You speak the same language." Because we were talking about sediments and all this kind of stuff, and so that really—I think they saw that here this older man and I'll go ahead and tell you so you don't have to subtract, he was twenty-six years older than I. I think they thought, "You know, I think this is probably going to be a good match." And then after four years of marriage,

we'd always send them presents and Grover said, "You know, your parents don't need anything, let's set up scholarships for them." There was one set up at Texas Women's in Mother's name in home economics and one in A&M in ag education and you can imagine what they did to my parents. And then when he'd visit with Caroline, she was always so standoffish, so he learned real quick to shake her hand and say, "Hello Caroline, how are you doing?" He just—he could read people and know how to approach them. And I don't think my family would have ever accepted him if he hadn't just taken the time to figure out things. And then I know on my birthday, one year he called and he said, "I just want to thank you for giving me Sally." Well, who would do that? So he just knew how to handle situations. So they adored him. And Caroline is probably his biggest fan.

AW:

Really? Oh, that's—

SM:

Yeah, but oh she couldn't—I think I remember that when I told her, I think she just cried and just stormed out of the room, "You're making a mistake! You ought to know better!" Oh, she was just furious. My cousins remember that. And now she would be his greatest fan. She really would. I moved up here. When we talked about having a wedding he wanted to have it at Van Horn where we met on this fieldtrip. So we took two couples, Paulina Jacobo, she's a lawyer, and Robin Greene, and then a guy from education that was his best friend, and his wife. They were a second marriage, just like ours. So we all go down there and we had to take them out and show them where we met out in the field, then we went into town. That night had what we called a rehearsal dinner and the next day, the Justice of the Peace, Bill Lobos, he had a beautiful handlebar white mustache, big head of white hair, and he was so nervous reading the—and then his son took pictures. We had our little ceremony right there out by the pool of Holiday Inn where we met. He had called a florist and the florist said, "I just—I don't think I can get a lot of flowers." "I don't want a lot of flowers. What could you get?" And so whoever we talked to said, "Well, we could get some roses." So the bus came through right before the wedding and they delivered a box of a dozen long-stemmed red roses. All my pictures I'm standing here like Ms. Del Rio or something holding these roses. And then we left and went to our honeymoon to Philmont Boy Scout Ranch because he was a big supporter of the Boy Scouts.

AW:

Really?

SM:

Big supporter. And so they loaned us the—

AW:

I've got some really good friends over there at Philmont.

SM:

Oh, it's beautiful.

AW:

Yeah, it is.

SM:

So they loaned us the van—you know how it's plains and then Sangre de Cristo, went up and looked at the geology, it was beautiful. See this was in October, and then we went out and looked at the volcanoes.

AW:

Oh yeah, what a great time of the year. Oh yeah, and the volcanoes. You know, one of my favorite trips in the world is to take that little tiny road that comes out of Fulsom and goes over the top of Johnson Mesa. You know, it's like a textbook.

SM:

It is. It's beautiful.

AW:

See all the different—every kind of volcanic structure is out there. It's just beautiful, yeah.

SM:

So we get home a week later and we're putting our clothes up and he said, "Oh, the suit I was going to wear tomorrow is at the cleaner's. Would you go get it?" It was about five till five, and I didn't know Lubbock. I hadn't been here since Tech. And so he told me where to go, he said, "Just go and tell them you want Grover Murray's suit, and she runs a tab." So I go in and I said, "I need to pick up Grover Murray's suit." And she puts her hands on her hips and says, "Now, which daughter are you? I know all his daughters. Which daughter are you?" That's when I knew life was fixing to be different. I wish I'd written all these things down, they were hilarious. I was in braces and one of them said, "Murray, can you get someone old enough to not be in braces?" And then in Midland, a good friend told me that somebody said, an older geologist said, "If I'd known she liked old men, I'd have asked her out to date." And some of them I cannot repeat, some are real crude. But I wish I'd kept all those, they were hilarious. It taught me that anytime you do something out of the ordinary, be prepared because people are going to be judgmental. I mean—I mean—not that they think, Oh my God, you're just—that's so—it's just they're going to have an opinion, and they're going to tell you.

AW:

And plus, people are going to always take the easy joke, you know. I think it's pretty characteristic. What was—was Grover still at the museum?

SM:

Yes. Yes. In '86. In fact, he was still teaching geology, economic geology or something. And so—in fact, he had to take off to go to that wedding. He had to take off. So that was in '86. He was seventy on that day. I think he must have taught about three more years. And then Gary Edson said, "Okay, I'm going to let you keep the room, and you're going to identify to me some of your research that you're doing." And so he did research on lineations across Texas and gave some papers and wrote some papers, so he—okay. We married in October of '86 and he died May twenty-second of '03, so see that's a lot of years in there. And yeah, he stayed at the museum that time. And I mean, as regular as a clock, he'd go to his office and do some work. And of course, he was a contributor, I think that helped. I'm not sure now you could get by with that. I just—it was a different world back then. And senior universities typically put their past emeritus presidents in some place. And there's a lot of professors I know are around campus still working that are retired.

AW:

Oh, yeah. If you retire, you really are likely to meet your end—when you quit working, it's tough.

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

Plus, you know, when you've been worked that longed, you've still got something to offer.

SM:

That's right. That's right.

AW:

So what did you do when you got back to Lubbock?

SM:

Well, he said, "Your phone's fixing to ring off the wall. They're going to want you to join a bridge club." Sure enough, the next morning, "Sally, we're the Friday afternoon fun and games bridge club, want you to join us." I don't play bridge. I know I was asked to the four prominent bridge clubs.

AW:

But you don't play bridge.

SM:

Even in college, you know why I didn't like it? You had one deck—this—

AW:

And smoking with the other.

SM:

See, I was in Horn Hall, and it was a very social dorm. The cowgirls were on the bottom wing, all those cowgirls. And they were very—almost like a sorority. They were very close-knit. I just—I just—I couldn't stand the smoke. And I just don't like games. I don't. But now—when Nancy Murray died, he told his two girls, "Please come and help me distribute this stuff." Well, they didn't really want a lot of stuff, so there was a trunk that was full of linens that are the exact shape of a coffee table, because Grover and Nancy played bridge big time in their social life, big time. And I want to touch on that because I have found out some things about his early life that's interesting, but we'll do that later. So anyway, what did I do? My next-door neighbor was Fran Carter, the founder of ARCS. Do you know what A-R-C-S is? Achievement Rewards for College Scientists. My next-door neighbor, so you know what she did, she got me into ARCS. And then up the street was the wife of the editor of the paper. Now, who would that—see, I can't recall her name. He was so good. He was the best editor, publisher—publisher. He was good. He was good. Anyway, she said, "Sally! I want you to go to the Lubbock Women's Club." So I joined that. And—I can't remember that. It seemed like I joined everything in town just about. Made trips—we both would go back to Midland to—to the West Texas Geological Society field trips and lectures on Wednesday, and then—basically we traveled. And why I didn't do what you're doing, I don't know. It just kills me when I think about it. Because we'd start out and he'd say, "Do you mind driving?" So I'm driving. He has a map, and so we're going up through Utah, and he's talking about the rocks and he's talking about the people that did some research, and then he'd look at me and he'd say, "Did I ever tell you about—" And here comes a story. The museum had a revolving door of directors, and he knew a story on every one of them. The Board of Regents, some of those people had agendas like you wouldn't believe. If I'd only—at night, if I'd just written some notes. Because almost every day he'd fold that map up and he'd say, "Did I ever tell you about—" And some of them went all the way back to—that's why I know about his university, when he was up at freshman at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He'd say, "Dr. Stotter was so good." He'd talk about Dr. Stotter. And I knew which professors cussed him out, I knew which—in Jackson, Mississippi they lived on a cul-de-sac, all these new entry ones, all of them were young brides and grooms. I knew which ones were having affairs, I mean, he knew how one—like this girl over here—he even drew me a picture. And he'd tell his wife, "I'm going away honey all week." And he'd sneak in and he'd go on his belly back here to go to this girl's

house because her husband was unaware. And how they just orchestrated all this, he just thought it was hilarious. I said, "There's a movie right there." So anyway, all that stuff—

AW:

Who knew geology was that exciting?

SM:

That's right. That's right. So—some of them were just hilarious stories. But we had that—really, until he died, we didn't travel as much toward the end. Last two years he kind of slowed down. And then we went to Australia. LSU had a policy that you could arrange your courses so you could have some time off, so he finished geology like in the middle of May and he didn't teach until September first, so he could go to Australia. And he went to Australia and did some oil finding. Bless his heart, it was fabulous, he should've become a multi-millionaire, but the Australian government said, "Listen. If you Americans think you're coming here and finding our oil and make money off it, you've got another thing coming." So they changed some rules so that he had to hire an American geologist, a geologist down there, had a lawsuit—I bet he didn't make fifty thousand off that. And you know, most people, it would have just killed them, but he just said, "Well, better luck next time." I think he always thought that was just going to be the icing on the cake. And I'm glad he didn't tell his girls, "Girls, someday you're going to have all the money in the world." I think all he told them was, "There's a chance that someday I'll be able to make a nice gift to you that will put your kids through college." It never happened. But I admire him for just saying, "You know, it just didn't work out."

AW:

Yeah, that's tough.

SM:

That was very tough.

AW:

The big one that got away is always the biggest one, you know?

SM:

But see, some Americans before him did get the big fish. But then the Australian government started saying, "Huh-uh, you're not going to do this to us." And he got caught right there. But he loved Australia. He went to the outback. I think one of the reasons that he noticed me in those little conversations, he started talking about traveling, he said, "Do you ever travel?" I said, "Well, last year I was in Australia." "Australia?" I said, "Yes, my parents and I and some relatives went to Australia and Fiji and all that." And he said, "Well, where'd you go in Australia?" I said, "Well, I went to Ayers Rock." Well, see that's right up there where he'd been

working. It was just part of a tour and I just left my parents in Sydney and then I told them, "I'm going to do some geology work." Well, he was so impressed that I knew some of those things about that, but my gosh, I mean how could you be a geologist and not going to Ayers Rock and all those gorgeous places. But anyway, we traveled a lot, went to Mexico, went to Canada, never made it to Africa. He wanted to go to Africa but he—Grover just—his body just got tired. And he became—congestive heart failure.

AW:

Oh that really takes your energy, too.

SM:

And I will never forget—the doctor took me to a little examining room and he said, "I want you to watch Dr. Murray's heart." And he had a video—our hearts look like pears, they go—his looked like a pumpkin. It was fat and it just—he said, "This is what we're working against." So congestive heart failure, it's going to get you. But I'll give Brad Snodgrass credit, and then also, see, his daughter's a doctor in Houston, and he put us on with the outstanding person down in Houston, so that's another thing. Every three months we would drive to Houston, 601 miles one way. The first time this cardiologist said, "I'm going to put you on the transplant list right now, I think within six months you'll have a new heart," Grover said, "Let's understand each other right now. No, I don't want that." He was about seventy-four at the time. "Well then, I'm going to put you on a pharmacy." Grover said, "I'll go for that." So when he died, he was on about thirty different meds. But it worked; it kept him alive.

AW:

What was his opposition?

SM:

I think he thought at that age—

AW:

He was using up somebody else's heart?

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

I wondered if that was it.

SM:

Yeah. Yeah. If he'd been younger he'd have jumped at it. But this doctor, James T. Willerson is considered the guru of that. And I'll never forget, they put Grover in this room that's reserved for the sheiks from Saudi in the hospital. I mean—five chairs and I said to the nurse, “How did Grover get in here?” And she said, “Well, you've got a daughter named Grover Murray and a doctor named James T. Willerson, so they just thought, Oh gosh, Dr. Murray's coming.” So I sat and I waited and I waited and so about eleven-thirty, here he comes breezing in. “Dr. Murray, I'm James T. Willerson, I'm going to take care of you.” And Grover put his hand on his arm and he said, “Well, I need to tell you something.” “No, no, no, I've taken care of heart patients all over the world,” He had just flown in from Japan, he had a private practice. “I've taken care of people that's far more in trouble than you. I am the person to take care of you.” And later I said to Grover, “You know, he's the most conceited guy I've ever seen.” Grover said, “I want my doctor to have confidence.” So he and James T. just got on.

AW:

They got along.

SM:

Yeah. And it wasn't his heart that killed him. He never had surgery, and these meds worked perfectly except for Coumadin. The day he died, he was just kind of dragging around and his daughter called, he said, “Well, I'm just a little tired. Need another nap.” So he just pilled around, we had dinner. And he was watching the Arizona Diamondbacks play somebody. I was over at the kitchen sink, he said, “Sally! Come watch the replay!” And it was one of those where you jump up and catch the ball. So I'm trying to show you how alert he was. And so then went to the bathroom, I looked at my watch and thought, He's been there an hour. So I went there, I said, “Grover, you okay?” He said, “Well, maybe I've got diarrhea, I don't know.” And he stood up off the potty and he collapsed. And so I immediately called 911 and I said, “Get out here, my husband's had a heart attack.” And so they get out there and they pull him on the rug, one nurse said, “He has a pulse.” But I'm convinced he went right then, and I thought it was a heart attack. And so I told Brad Snodgrass, I said, “I want an autopsy. I want to know how this man died.” And I said, “His daughter will want to know, too.” The autopsy showed, and I didn't tell you, but—when they took him over here to Covenant, they kept putting blood in him, he had lost like eight pints of blood. And Grover was a big man, and a lot of that went into his chest cavity, and then he—I don't think he passed fresh blood because I think he would have called me and said, “Something's wrong here.” I just don't know that part, but I know they put eight pints of blood in him. But I think he was gone. Okay. The autopsy showed he had a tiny perforation—I think it was in his colon, it could've been his intestine, and he was on Coumadin. He bled out. So his death certificate says, “Bled out.” So see, it wasn't a heart attack that took him, which is what we thought always would happen.

AW:

Yeah, that Coumadin's dangerous stuff.

SM:

I'm on it.

AW:

Yeah, my brother's on it, too. You really have to pay attention.

SM:

But when—on his record it said, “Call Barbara Murray,” so luckily she's in town because she travels as much as she does—as he did. So she got there the next morning and the first thing she said to me, “Don't ever blame yourself, Sally. He could have never stood the surgery. He would have never come out alive.” So he got his wish. He always said, “Don't put tubes in me and extend my life,” and boy, he had a sermon. So he got his wish because there wasn't any screaming pain, he just collapsed. So he got his wish.

AW:

Tell me, did you feel like you had given up geology when you married and came back to Lubbock?

SM:

No, because he would have me read his papers and make comments on them. I helped him a little, not a lot. I could've helped him more. To be perfectly honest, if I hadn't gone on that field trip and met Grover Murray, I was fixing to send out resumes and go back in teaching. And I probably could have taught at the University of Texas at the Permian Basin, because I taught summers for them. So I probably could have done some teaching there. So no, I did not.

AW:

Well, it sounded to me like you really kind of stayed in it, but I just wondered.

SM:

With Grover, you have to stay in geology. Geology was truly the love of his life. And somebody asked him one time, “Okay, you were in that president's office for ten years. What did you miss?” And he said, “I missed being able to keep up with geology. I didn't have time to read journals. I didn't have time to correspond. I didn't have time to go to meetings.” And he said, “It took me years to even get a headstart—a start of reading all those journals that were sitting there stacked up.” So you can't—in fact, somebody said once, “Why did Grover marry you?” And I said, “Well, I'll tell you what mother said, I did speak the language.” I think if I'd been an art major or a history major, it might not have ever happened. But he wanted somebody to read

journals, he wanted somebody to look at maps, he wanted somebody to—we would drive through who knows where, and he'd pull over and say, "Get the rock hammer." And we'd get out there and pick up rocks and then I'd take them and then I'd put this rock and collect it, "on highway so and so and so." Everything had to be documented, and I knew how to do that. So I really think—I think when Nancy died, he knew. "I've got some years left, and I want to spend them busy." Nancy started having strokes probably five years before she died. It was horrible. And he had to have caregivers for her, it was—I think he was worn out. Just—I mean, he wasn't a twenty-four seven housekeeper kind of thing, but he always had to make sure she was taken care of. Nancy didn't have a college degree, but that didn't embarrass him because she had gone to a business school in the town and then she worked—his little towns in South Carolina were textile factories and she worked—

AW:

That's where he grew up?

SM:

That's another story. But I just think he—I'm aware his secretary told me that women all over were saying, "Oh, Grover Murray. Widower." And the casserole cuties came, that's what they called them—that's what they called them, they'd call and say I made a casserole for you. I just think he was vulnerable and if it hadn't been Sally, it could've been somebody else, but I just think our paths crossed at the right time.

AW:

Yeah. Yeah, what you mention about you being able to speak the language, though, that's really important.

SM:

Yeah. Mother was really aware. I think she remembered my first marriage, and I certainly knew biology, and I knew snakes, not as well as he did, but I think she detected that just the sheer love of what you're doing wasn't there, whereas with Grover, you either loved geology or why are you here? It's funny that Mother picked up on that. But now that marriage was sixteen years to the biologist. This friend of mine in Midland one time that I worked with, she said, "Sally, you were married to a biologist and now you're married to a geologist. What is it about these science men? You know there's other men out there." "No," I said, "men of science are interesting."

AW:

Yeah. That's very cool. Let's see, how are we doing on time? We've only been going a little over an hour, an hour and a quarter about. I would really like to get at least a copy of this, and we'll—we can—

SM:

Because that really—that just—I thought if I'd only read this years ago, because it really is kind of his dream as of that time, and something very important in here, and I explained this to the student, very important little fact. where he talks about, it was fifty years ago—anyway, he went to college at sixteen and he says that in here.

AW:

Really?

SM:

Yeah, it's in here somewhere. It says, "Fifty years ago, when I was sixteen, this school started," or something. Anyway. This is wonderful because it kind of tells his expectation of what he expected of Tech. And I just think Roy Fur laid it out on the line and I think he thought, Yeah, I can do that, I can do that, because he was already international when he came here. See, he was going to international geological meetings, he knew university professors all over, but I think what really got him in here, and I didn't know this until toward the end of his life—he had helped somewhere—not at LSU, but somewhere in the LSU system, had helped get a medical school online and that, see, he knew Preston Smith was pushing it—he comes in '66 and it's going to be '69 when that house bill, whatever, 601 or whatever it is, was passed. He was able to get in on the start. He was able to bring some people from LSU to advise him. He went to Costa Rica and looked at a medical school there. He just wanted to go everywhere and say, "What are you doing? How did you get online?" and that kind of thing. So I kind of think that was a huge factor in him getting this job.

AW:

Really interesting. You were talking about the talk you gave the other day to the students, and you mentioned you had several talks that you'd give. Can you kind of give me an idea of what they are?

SM:

Well, the Women's Club likes to call it—I've spoken twice there, the legacy of Grover Murray. And I told the kids, I said, "That's not cool" because it sounds so formal, and I looked at the ladies that just had a nice meal, complete with rich dessert and within fifteen minutes, they were nodding off.

AW:

They have me come sing there from time to time. I know the experience.

SM:

So I said, "This is going to be a bunch of Grover Murray stories. It'd be best if we were sitting around eating pizza, but since we can't, I'll just keep you in here." So I've done the legacy, and then I've done some on the collections of Grover Murray. His collections were—in fact, do you know Denise that works over there at the museum that sets up those displays?

AW:

No, I don't. I don't.

SM:

Grover's memorial service was like no other. And one of the reasons this was like no others because—do you know Idris Traylor?

AW:

Yes.

SM:

Idris planned it, so he knows all the deal. I have a thick book on it. His brother called this his coronation. It is inauguration. And the reason that he wanted that was not to say, "Oh, we're going to put on a circus down here, we're going to rival the governor of Texas." He had thought about how he was going to do all this stuff and make Tech recognized, well what better way than to say, dignitaries, come and meet us." And this was also tied in with the Symposium of Arid Lands, I'm pretty sure. It was tied in, so the inauguration and then the arid lands. So this was his way of saying, "Here we are, Roy Furr, you wanted to bring us out. Here's step one." But Idris can really fill you in on this. It was—they'll never be another one like it. Now, Nellis may have one—did you go to Schmidly's?

AW:

No.

SM:

Smedley's was up there, but nothing like this.

AW:

I know, but when Smedley was here I think they started making the graduations more formal.

SM:

Yeah. You know what made Smedley different? A&M. Schmidly was from Tech, but he was at A&M for about ten years and I mean, you can't—my degree is from A&M, that C and I, you can't help but pick up—there's just something about A&M that we can all learn from, really

could. Schmidly had something one night and Grover planned to go and he said, "Sally, I'm just not up to it. Tell Smedley you're representing me." I got used to that. So Schmidly talks and he said, "I'm so glad to have Sally Murray in the audience, Grover Murray was the president when I was here," and he went on about five minutes about Grover Murray, and so then when it was over, he walked me to my car and he said, "I hope you realize how important Grover Murray was to this institution," and blah blah blah. I said, "David, there's no reason why you can't be another Grover Murray. You're a science major, you've got enthusiasm, you travel and all that," He looked at me and he said, "Sally, I won't last that long." Two years. Grover's was ten, there's been nobody longer than him.

AW:

Right. Right.

SM:

Isn't that interesting?

AW:

It is. And especially at such a time for Texas Tech, the law school, the med school, Ranching Heritage Center, ICASALS, all the things that were going—and the change to a university from a college. That's a lot of big stuff that could waylay you as easy as it could build you up.

SM:

I told the students, I said, "When Dr. Lawless came on board," I said, "first of all, Grover Murray's number eight. Dr. Nellis is number sixteen. When Dr. Lawless came aboard, the *Avalanche-Journal* took it upon themselves to have one whole page on Texas Tech presidents. They started out with Paul Horn, and the years, and his education, and then what he's remembered for. And I said, "I came down to number eight, Grover Murray. And here in the column, I remembered 'Tech's most controversial president.' This was a Sunday morning and I thought, He's going to blow his stack. So when he came in for breakfast, I said, "Grover, you're a wise man, you're know everything in the paper isn't true." "Yes." "It's really somebody's opinion." "Yes." And I said, "So you really have to laugh some things off." And he said, "What'd they say about me?" I said, "Well, they said you're Tech's most controversial president." And he said, "How in the hell do you think you get things done without controversy?" And of course, name change, Indiana, all that. So I think if he had—

AW:

And when you say Indiana, you mean Indiana Avenue?

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

I just wanted to clarify that for the recording. Those of us who are locals remember that, but—

SM:

Yeah, Indiana Avenue, a huge controversy. But I think since he had promised Roy Furr he was going to stay ten years, I think he stuck it out. But he and the *Avalanche-Journal* especially—I can name some names—did not get along, and he said that went back to day one because I think it was one his first day officially in office, somebody said, “We’re going down to the Lubbock Club, we want you to meet some people.” First person sticks his hand out, and it’s Charlie Guy. And what I’m fixing to tell you—I just feel like has not been fabricated because somebody else told me it was true. Charlie Guy says, “Dr. Murray! Glad to have you! We need a good new academic person, you look like the man. I need to tell you, the A-J has final say on sports, but you’ll have final say on academics,” and Grover looked at him and said, “I’m sorry, I’ll have final say on all of it. And he said right then he made an enemy that never went away with Charlie Guy. And then another one on board was Jay Harris that he crossed with. See, I wasn’t here then. I should’ve made a disclaimer at the first that everything I’m going to tell you, I wasn’t here to observe a lot of the stuff because when we moved away in January of ’68, I did not step foot on this campus, I’m pretty sure, until about 1973. The alumni center would send me things periodically and I’d read them. I’d run into somebody they’d say, “Oh, my cousin graduated from Tech, you ought to hear about the blah blah blah.” So that was my only keeping up with Texas Tech. I was not a loyal alum. Anyway, so Grover Murray, he was not an abrasive person, but he certainly could get his dander up when somebody would say, “You’re going to run academics, we’re going to run sports.” And there was some truth in that. There was. To what extent, I don’t know, and the idea of town and gown, which everybody says, “Oh, town and gown.” Grover said it crossed the line, that a lot of the townspeople just crossed the line with too much influence. So—I know he had reasons to say that, but those two men gave Grover fits. And I remember when Chancellor Montford came on board, oh, about six months into his chancellorship he called me and said, “Is there any way I can take Grover out to lunch?” And I said, “Yeah, but why don’t you just come here and I’ll have some lunch ready?” So they had lunch and I disappeared, and when he left, Grover said, “Same thing.” I said, “What’s the problem?” He said, “Really, it’s the A-J.” Isn’t that interesting? And Grover has some ashes in the Texas State Cemetery and a beautiful marker. When I tell people that, they say, “Well, he wasn’t a governor, he wasn’t a senator, how’d he get in there?” And I always tell them that the Texas State Cemetery changed its policies about ten years ago that you don’t have to be one of those people, you can be what’s called “an influential Texan.” And so right after Grover died, I was flying somewhere and I ran into Montford in the airport, and it’s the the first time I’d seen him since Grover died, he’d written me a letter and he’d said, “I want you to know that I shaped my chancellorship after Grover Murray’s presidency.”

AW:

How nice.

SM:

And I said, "That is very nice." He said, "If I can ever help you, let me know." And I thought, You just don't know, because my sister and I had gone to Texas State Cemetery because she's real big in genealogy and we'd walk around and we were leaving, and I said, "Caroline, wouldn't it be nice if Grover had a monument?" She said, "He's not going to get a monument here." And I said, "Well, let's go ask how you get in, how you get a marker in here." So I go up to this lady and I said, "How does a person get a marker at Texas State Cemetery?" And she said, "Well, are you thinking of somebody?" "Well yes, but how did you know?" She said, "Oh, here, I've got something in the files." So she gives me all these papers and she said, "It's quite a selection process." And I said, "Well, thank you." So I take all these home and I look at them, and all this stuff, and I said, "I'm going to try to get a marker for Grover." He wanted to be cremated, which he was. So the—have you been to Texas state cemetery?

AW:

No, I haven't.

SM:

It's a mile west of the Capitol. You must go. It's a full block and Bob Bullock—

AW:

Is that the other side of Mopac? Is it that far?

SM:

East.

AW:

Just east.

SM:

Bob Bullock got cancer and he thought, Why would I want to be buried in a cow pasture? The markers were tumped over, there was grass, there were weeds, it was nothing, so he passed legislation that got Highway 1 to go through, and you get a highway through something, and you are on your way. So he had them dig out a pond and all this dirt made a hill. And that's where cenotaphs go. Cenotaphs means ashes and no marker. And so—I don't remember what was the next step. But anyway, I got all the papers, sent them in, and never heard a word, and so I called Montford's secretary and I said, "I need to speak to him. I think Grover deserves a marker at Texas State Cemetery. He spent as much time down here trying to raise money for Tech." And

then Montford jumped in and said, “Plus, look at all of his geological expertise he had.” Montford said, “You send me those papers to me.” A week later, I get a phone call from the head of Texas State Cemetery and he said, “I think I need to tell you that Dr. Murray’s cenotaph has been accepted.” So we had a little ceremony down there, it was real nice. But anyway, it’s beautiful, Texas red granite. Did you ever see his signature? It’s beautiful.

AW:

I have it on my diploma.

SM:

Of course you do. So when you go in the front entrance, across the way, you see this marker you can barely make out because he put black ink and Grover E. Murray. So that’s on the front side. The back side is the true Texas seal, the cotton balls and all that.

AW:

The true Texas Tech seal.

SM:

Yes. Yeah. And then it tells his date of birth and all that. And I—see, I’m a heart patient, and all this had to be done while I was getting over heart surgery. And they would call me and they’d say, “What do you want on the front, what do you want on the back?” And I think the last sentence—I’ll have to go down there and see it, I think it says, “His ashes are now part of the earth he loved to explore, interpret, and understand.”

AW:

Oh, that’s nice. Yeah.

SM:

And I remember Idris said, “Oh Sally, this marker’s marvelous. The wording is beautiful.” And I thought, Coming from you, Idris, that’s—I never told him.

AW:

That’s high praise.

SM:

That’s high praise. But I wanted them to know the ashes were there, and Grover left me instructions for those ashes. I don’t know—seems like a year before he died, he said, “Now you know I don’t want any big church service or funeral. Here’s where I want my ashes.” I’ve done all but one, because the first one was his home—and this is another story—little city in North Carolina had a creek running through it and that’s where as a little boy he’d pick up stones and

put them in his pocket. Later he learned to identify them. So ashes are in those creeks. Number two, at the Mississippi River at LSU, because see when he left Chapel Hill, he had to learn a whole new set of geology, river geology. So that's another story. He had a ten-gun salute on that one. That's two. Number three, he wanted them at Philmont. And I thought, Oh, how sweet, that's where we went on our honeymoon. But I found out later, and I'm so glad I found out that one of the grandchildren told me, Well, that's where grandmother's ashes are. So he wanted them there with Nancy's. He didn't make an issue about it, but anyway, it was so cold we had to cut a hole in the ice to put them in Lake Cimarroncita up there. You know where that is, Cimarroncita? That's three. Number four, El Capitan. I was dreading that because that's a height. Do you know Don Graff, the attorney?

AW:

I know him well, yes.

SM:

Okay, his girlfriend is a good friend of mine, Sheila Hale? And Sheila said, "Sally, I'll deliver those ashes." Because I was supposed to have a flyover and that man never did it. That's four. The one I haven't done is Mexico. He loved Mexico. His first big—

AW:

What part?

SM:

It's kind of where I was on the fieldtrip down there in through the interior. It's—I bet it's at least 200 miles into the interior.

AW:

The only reason I was asking is that I'm going in February—do you know Bonnie McKinney?

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah, I'm going to go do an interview with Bonnie McKinney, and they're taking me across, but they'll only be in that giant part, just on the other side of the Rio Grande.

SM:

I thought about Terlingua, because we spent—there used to be a nice hotel/motel complex and we spent time there.

AW:

We'll cross at Boquillas and go across.

SM:

That'd be good. I'll let you do that. When are you going?

AW:

In February.

SM:

You remind me. That'll be the fifth. There's no way I could get those into the interior anymore.

AW:

Oh, it's too dangerous. And if I wasn't going down there to see Bonnie—but Bonny can take them in that huge park and anyplace you want.

SM:

That'd be perfect.

AW:

I'll call you as we get that set.

SM:

That would be perfect, and then that'll be all of them. The National Science Foundation, I think gave him his first grant to take his master's students into Mexico and map all this virgin territory in Mexico. And he took, oh, ten or twelve master's students, so that's where they did their mapping, and then he got in contact with PEMEX, you know who PEMEX is?

AW:

Yeah, the petroleum company.

SM:

And he said, "Would you happen to have any maps?" And I think they were just really—just primitive. But the good thing is he got to know this high-ranking man in PEMEX, and later, they got to be buddies and there was a time when we met them in Washington, D.C. at an international geological convention, and Grover and this guy, oh they were just like sorority buddies. And then he died right there as he was putting his luggage on the plane. And so his widow was so kind, and one time she called and said, "Would you all come to Mexico City and just spend some time with me?" So, see, there's a case of Grover's friends—he cultivated friendships unlike anybody I've ever known. When we married, his secretary said, "You better

get busy on Christmas cards, his list is 450.” I thought, I’m going to test him. So I just started, I say, Jim Evan, John Angle—every one of them he could tell me about, every one of them. They weren’t just courtesy cards. So anyway, she invited us down, and had a wonderful time in Mexico City. See, this is before all the mess started. I’m telling you this to show you—you see all those five places he picked? Every one of them was significant. The one over there at Capitan, see, as you go to Philmont, you see Capitan, and he went on a lot of fieldtrips there. And he said how wonderful, that that is a perfect example of a reef without the water. And so it’s so—he said, “Geology is so explainable,” and he first came to Big Bend as a student, probably in about ’45 or ’46. I don’t know, in the forties. And he fell in love with it, because everywhere he had lived was high humidity. He said, “My gosh! It’s geology in the nude.” There were no vines and trees and all that stuff. In fact, he took me back right after we married to—Louisiana has parishes, it doesn’t have counties, and so he did his—and this is all in his stuff in here. He did his master’s on I think the geology of a Red River Parish. Oh, he had the maps spread out, he showed me how he was going to do this and this and he was going to show me this. We get out there and the kudzu had covered it. If we’d had a machete, we could’ve have chopped—kudzu, he was so disgusted. So he loved Big Bend, just loved it. I’m not surprised he took this job, just to get away from all that stuff down there. So I will definitely take you up and let—

AW:

I’ll let you—I’m going to talk to Bonnie and her husband a little later in the year to make sure they’re—their schedule gets really busy right around the new year, but I think that’s when I’ll be able to go down.

SM:

I’ll just put them in a little box and just whenever you go. Sheila did something real wonderful, she was with a girlfriend hiking, and the girlfriend took a picture of Sheila putting the ashes there, and then—I think there’s a book you sign in up there. Anyway, I just—

AW:

We’ll get—

SM:

You’ll document it.

AW:

Oh, sure, sure. In fact, Bonnie’s a watercolorist as well as doing her work on the ranch and everything. I’m trying to learn watercolors, so she’s promised she could teach me some things, so we’ll do some painting there, but we might bring you back a painting of the place.

SM:

I think the last—Oh my gosh—I think the last book in the Grover E. Murray series of Southwest Books was hers.

AW:

Yeah, just the most recent one, yeah.

SM:

So she knows me.

AW:

No, no, no, she'd love this. She'd see this as a big treat.

SM:

Well, I'm making a scrapbook, because every place we put those ashes I have pictures. And so I'll eventually give that to the Southwest Collection, because how many people do you know make a list of everywhere—and this one I refer to—this friend in Midland said, “Golly, why didn't he put Hawaii, Paris—” I said, “Well, that wasn't his style.” They're all connected to geology. Isn't that interesting? I don't know anybody but Grover who would've done that. From the time the little rocks that caught his eye in this little stream that ran through town, and his son-in-law is a geologist, and so he had gotten a USGS map and traced that little stream near his house, and like I told the students the other day, the best thing about where he grew up—they didn't have fences. So the children would come home from school and then, goodbye Mom, and run down to this little place and play—that's the way life was back then. It socialized children. He knew everybody in the town, the teachers thought he was great, he did the writing thing when you make circles to make your Ps and your Os, the Palmer Series, and that—what's on your diploma is the way he wrote from about junior high on.

AW:

Really?

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

That's great.

SM:

Isn't that incredible?

AW:

What was the town in South Carolina?

SM:

He grew up in Newton. N-e-w-t-o-n, Newton. And then his English teacher told him one time, “You know grammar so well, you get your ideas on paper so well, you know how to write well.” I held up this book to show the students, here’s his outstanding book called *Geology of the Gulf Coast*, something like 690 pages that he wrote. And of course he was able to do a good job because he had writing skills.

AW:

Well, they used to teach us that at school, you know.

SM:

I know. I know.

AW:

They don’t anymore.

SM:

So Grover benefited from the little town, the little school. Like I told those students, here’s a man who was born into not New York City or LA, just a little rural town, he went to public school, he didn’t go to a private school, he didn’t go to military school, he went to a—really, kind of an ordinary university, he didn’t go to Stanford, he didn’t go to Harvard, he didn’t go to Rice, and he took a job as just an entry-level geologist, you know, he didn’t start out on Wall Street or—you know. So really, all these things kind of shaped him into an ordinary life, but he left behind something very out of the ordinary.

AW:

Yes.

SM:

And so that impresses me that he didn’t have the gifts that kids want: private school, or I want to work on Wall Street, I want to have a boat and a car, and all these things that kids want now. That wasn’t a part of his growing up. Now, I’m not saying that down the road, he didn’t become successful because he did because LSU let him practice geology while he was working, and so he able to do some oil finding which benefited him and benefited Sally—not in huge amounts, but I mean—mailbox money you can’t beat. The other day, I said something about Grover’s wells, and Caroline said, “Well, how are they doing?” I said, “Well, he always believed that if you get an invitation to step out or to do some more drilling to take it. You never question it.”

And so I did that, and so now my check has doubled because of step-out oil drilling on one of his properties. So what I'm saying is Grover learned the value of work. How many people—unless you would have said, “Okay, I'm going to get rid of my students in May, and then I'm going to go to Australia, I'm going to drill some wells there, and then I've got an ex-student that wants me to look at some wells up here in Jackson, Mississippi”—he just thought that way because he was not a traditional geologist in the terms of geological theory. He really was towards exploration. That's how he thought. He was a 3D thinker, he would spend hours looking at cross-sections, looking and see, if they drill this here, what about here. He loved salt, doe migration, because in the gulf coast, you know that salt will do this and it drags the beds up and makes a trap? I mean, he wrote papers on that. And yet, he was so shy, he said that “If you can find the podium where I gave my first paper at the Rice Hotel in Houston, it would have my DNA on it.” He said, “I was so terrified, I just remember hanging on, and then turn the page, and hanging on,” and I bet he was. And he had to make himself be friendly and conversational. He just a—really a shy little boy, I think even to adulthood, there was a shyness about him. He wanted to come on strong person. So there's a lot of stories about—again, if I'd just written down the notes. When he went to Chapel Hill, his parents put him on the train, his dad—that's a tragedy, his dad died young—pulls out his wallet, hands him a hundred dollar bill, he said, “Son, this is all I can do.” So he had a hundred dollars to go to school on. And I don't know if that was for four years—I bet it was just for that first year. So he had to go get jobs. He worked in the faculty dining room, perfect, so he had to get to know the faculty and meet them. Didn't have enough money, so in those men's dorms, they had little stores because you couldn't just run over here and buy some pencils and pens, and he had to order all his inventory, keep track of it, work around his hours, I said, “Well, what'd you sell?” he said, “Number one: cigarettes. Number two: razor blades. Number three: candy.” You remember that? And then, the four-story dorm had an attic and he and another boy went up there one time and it wasn't being used, so he talked what would be housing into letting them put some partitions and live up there very cheaply in the attic. It was hot and cold. But three jobs to get by. What kid would do that?

AW:

Well, in today's world, three jobs probably wouldn't be enough.

SM:

I know. Yeah. But that's where—he bombed out his first semester because he really didn't know what he wanted to major in, and he had his brother—who was totally opposite—flamboyant and talking and glamour life. He knew movie stars. I went to his funeral up in Washington, he was a major general in the air force, and his big claim to fame—he helped discover a de-icing process and ejection seats. And if he'd done that as a private citizen, he'd been a millionaire many times. But he did it for the air force. So that brother was just totally different from this brother. So he always talked about engineering and physics and math, and so Grover thought, Well, maybe I ought to go in engineering. And so he majored in engineering his first semester and his English and history was okay but he bombed the math and the physics. So he was in line, and he still

didn't know what to take and somebody said, "Dr. Starr teaches the best course in geology. You'll love it." So he signed up. That's all it took was that course. And from then on, it was smooth sailing. And the professors just adored him, and then when it got time to leave, they said, "Don't you go just to an ordinary college, you go to where there's some young professors that really know geology, they have the drive, they'll get you involved." And it came down to Indiana and LSU. And LSU paid forty-five a month, and Indiana paid forty, so he picked LSU. And that really made him. That really shaped him.

AW:

Especially for petroleum.

SM:

Yes. But see, the professors wanted to mentor him because he was so eager. He read, oh my Lord, until the end of his life. He just devoured books. So he could talk—it wasn't just a student saying, "Well, maybe I can impress him." I mean, he knew his stuff. And that's why people remember him I think as really caring about students, and I think that's where that came from. I think he remembered professors that—so he made himself available from what I've been told, that he didn't just go in his office and stay there. And of course, it was the year of activism, you remember that. And so his secretary would say, "You got these guys out here, demanding to talk to you." And he'd say, "Meet you at the fountain"—that's what they called the circle, at noon, and he'd go down there and they'd fuss about Vietnam. One time, it was a bunch of black boys and he thought, Uh-oh, I'm in trouble, it's racism. And they said, "Dr. Murray, we want some soul food. We tired of this cafeteria stuff. We want some soul food." So Grover called the dorm where they were living, these black boys, they could've been athletes, I don't know. And he said, "I want some turnip greens—" Grover named all these things. And he said, "I will be there at one o'clock to eat with the boys." That's all they wanted, just wanted some soul food in their dorm.

AW:

I guess I grew up on soul food, too, because that's what I eat. That's interesting. Well, let's—for the next time we visit, let's do a couple of things.

SM:

I need to get a pencil and paper so I can prepare.

AW:

Let me give you—I think I can tear off a sheet here. Is that—okay.

SM:

Okay, what are we going to talk about next time?

AW:

Make it just a—and don't write these out in detail, just make you a little list to cue your memory of two things: one is the Grover Murray stories, the ones he told you, you know, you said he would always say, "Did you ever hear the one about"—and just—some of those. We don't have to do all of them in one whack, but make a little list to go by. And then the second thing is—and we might want to figure out a better way to do this, but I would like to get you to do your talks, and we'll record them, and maybe what you want to do is next time you do one of those talks, we'll just go record it. I know how hard it is to do a talk to a tape recorder.

SM:

Oh, it doesn't bother me.

AW:

Oh, good.

SM:

You're the one who's going to have to listen to it.

AW:

It doesn't bother me. I'd have to listen to it either way, so won't matter. But I think if we got those two things down—or those two groups of things down—probably will have to do them in two different sessions, but I think that would be really good. Does that sound like a plan?

SM:

Yeah. I'm trying to think—I've done the one on his collections, that's a good one.

AW:

And you talked about the sort of the legacy one, and then—what, you were talking to the students the other day—

SM:

Yeah, on why his name is on Murray Hall.

AW:

Yeah, I think that'd be a great one.

SM:

Yeah, I thought that was such a good thing because those ninety-two students are living in there, and I told them, I said, "I lived in Horn Hall, and I never knew who Paul Horn was."

AW:

Yeah, and you should. You know, if you're going to live there, it'd be nice to know that, wouldn't it?

SM:

Well, as you know, there is a plaque there, and then outside is the horse. And I wanted—I really wanted to go into the artwork, because a lot of people don't like that horse. The horse to me is so symbolic of Grover Murray because it looks unfinished. It's twigs and limbs that have been bronzed, and I told them, I said, "Even though he was here ten years, he never felt like that everything was accomplished. He still had plans, big plans, for things, especially in the arid lands area. Even the geology department, he wanted that to be expanded." So I said the horse is perfect, because it's kind of unfinished, and then it's not rearing up like the one over at Cowamongus, and it's not the Masked Rider, and it's not the sad one out here, Soap Suds. And its head is turned, almost like, Well, come talk to me, come, let's have a conversation. And then the benches are there that have statements of the students.

AW:

And in some ways, it's like geology. These bits and pieces of different things that all of a sudden you look at them and you go, "Oh, there's a shape here."

SM:

I told them, I said, "It's just paleontology." I said—he was deceased, so there's not—he never knew about that, but I said—people say, "What would he think?" And I always say, "I think he would be very, very pleased." This is just the perfect thing to go—that needs to go here.

AW:

Well, let's do that. I think that would be really good to organize the next session or two in that way.

SM:

I'm trying to think—you know—they just run together. Some of the other times I've spoken about him. In fact, my stepdaughter Barbara, she is so much like her dad. She's head of infectious disease, University of Texas at Houston—smart as a whip. Her research is finding out why antibiotics don't work out anymore. They just don't work because of viruses and things, bacterium are so immune to them. She goes all over the world discussing that. She can give lectures in Portuguese and Spanish.

AW:

That's interesting.

SM:

Oh she's smart. So anyway, one time, she said, "What do you do all the time?" I said, "Well, I actually gives some talks about your dad." "What do you say about Dad?" I say, "Well, it's probably more—" The girls know their dad and the relatives in that little area. I know Grover Murray in another area. Unfortunately, I know what he told me, but then some of the stuff is what I've read. So I should have put a disclaimer that says, "You should know that what I'm fixing to say is not—was not because I was there with him. I was not Nancy Murray."

AW:

No, it's fine. We know that. I just think the way you're putting it together is interesting.

SM:

I tell you, one of the best things that happened is when they added—when they renovated over there at the Ranching Heritage, you walk down that wall, and here is Mrs. Johnson and here is George Mahon and here is Nancy Murray, and I just thought, Thank you, thank you. She's the one who lived through getting that built. She's the one who lived with ten years with him. She's the one that knew how much he adored Mahon. That's another subject.

AW:

That is a very good subject.

SM:

She's the one that deserves to be up there. So I said to—

AW:

Jim Pfluger?

SM:

Mrs.

AW:

Marsha.

SM:

I said, "Marsha, I'm so glad to see that. How did you pick that?" She said, "We just put a bunch of pictures out there and the designer picked that." I thought how perfect, because that was the dedication day when it rained. I just thought, Nancy went through so much. I say that because I don't think she came here thinking, Oh, president of Texas Tech. I'm the first lady. Life's going to be wonderful. She couldn't have been that naïve. I just think when he hurt, she hurt. And when

he would get a newspaper saying derogatory things—in fact, both daughters told me that it was very painful to her to see some of the criticism that came his way. Well, any wife knows that. We all know that. So anyway, I'm just so thrilled—that's a beautiful picture of Nancy Murray up there because she went through a lot.

AW:

Yeah. That's great. Well, let's do that. And then, let me get straight—do you want these back? These two documents, the UD piece and this?

SM:

Yeah, probably ought to keep them, especially that one.

AW:

Well, I'd just like to—can we keep that one, make a copy of it and then give it back to you?

SM:

Oh I know you have some others.

AW:

Of this?

SM:

Yeah.

AW:

Okay, then let me make a copy of this and then I'll get it back to you, because I want to get it scanned. I don't want to just run it through a photocopier. But I'll get this back and return it to you.

SM:

I know you will. But I just thought, if I had only seen this—see, it is going to be released when he delivers it. In others, the press didn't get a pre-deal.

AW:

Yeah. Oh, that's great.

SM:

Isn't that something?

AW:

All right, well, I'm going to stop this until our next time. Thanks, this has been fun.

SM:

I feel sorry you having to listen to that.

AW:

Oh, no, it's fun. This is what's great about my job. I get to sit here and—

SM:

Who else have you interviewed?

AW:

Oh—it's—

SM:

Tons of people?

AW:

Tons of people, yeah, and interesting—I'll tell you about one here in just a second. So it's been a couple of hours and we'll be resuming next time.

*End of interview.*

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