

**Oral History Interview of
Bette Ramsey**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
May 15, 2018
Amarillo, Texas**

**Part of the:
*General Southwest Collection Interviews***

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Bette Ramsey on April 2, 2018. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

Preferred Citation for this Document:

Ramsey, Bette Oral History Interview, May 15, 2018. Interview by Andy Wilkinson, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.

Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 96kHz/24bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews:

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Elizabeth Groening

Editor(s): Kayci Rush

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Bette Ramsey as she discusses her trip to China and Tibet. In this interview, Bette describes all of the things she did on her trip to China with her daughter Amanda.

Length of Interview: 04:47:44

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Things she learned when she was up in Utah	05	00:00:00
How Bette's trip to China came about	08	00:10:17
Traveling through Beijing	16	00:29:53
Air quality of Beijing; farming in China	27	01:04:14
Tunnel fire after a visit to the Great Wall	31	01:14:030
After escaping the tunnel fire	44	01:49:49
Floating down the Yangtze River; other parts of the tour	63	02:26:29
New experiences and cultures; seeing a Yak	78	03:14:33
Travel back to Guilin; her fall and injury	87	03:36:43
Getting x-rayed in Hong Kong	94	03:58:37
Leaving hospital in Hong Kong	103	04:25:55

Keywords

China, travel

Bette Ramsey (BR):

Things that—

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

I'm going to—let me just interrupt one second and say, Andy Wilkinson and Bette Ramsey in Bette's home Amarillo, Texas. The fifteenth of May, 2018. Just after lunch. A very delightful lunch, I might add. So go ahead. We were talking. We were getting ready to talk about China, but Bette's been talking about—because we were looking at the garden—about things she learned when she was up in Utah, from a Jewish woman raising a Kibbutz and a Palestinian woman, I guess from—

BR:

That was affluent that her mother—I mean, her grandmother had property in the Golan Heights.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

And her, you know, her father was an ambassador to Jordan and so you know, she had some political ties and she was a very active, outspoken woman and her name was Holla and Rachel was the one that was raised in the Kibbutz.

AW:

Right.

BR:

And that was back in the eighties and the problems between the Palestinians and the Jewish people were existing back then.

AW:

Certainly.

BR:

And they were very intelligent, remarkable women and they could discuss their point of view—their points of view with each other and they could present them to the rest of our seminar, where you could understand each side and they could even come up with consensus on some solutions. One of the things that I read about several years ago is one of the solutions, back before, you know, everything got so terrible with different administrations in the world, one of the solutions was that they were taking—they were allowing the young Jewish people, young Jewish persons and the young Palestinian persons to go to this camp and camp together and get to know one

another so that they could come up to resolve their problems and I thought that was a great idea because they started them out young, you know, and they, of course, had prejudices from their in-laws.

AW:

Sure. Parents and neighbors.

BR:

Their parents and all the kin and the history, but they were willing to be more open minded about it once they got to know each other as human beings and in my opinion, if—and that's what I always said as a counselor to children that would come to me and would have disagreements and didn't like each other and couldn't get along. I would say, "You need to get to know this person better. There's redeemable qualities in most everyone and if you know a person well enough, there's going to be some qualities that you like and there may be some that you dislike, but everyone deserves to have respect and regard." And I would make them play games together and I would have them talk to each other in my office and I still believe that. I believe that if people can get together and enjoy one another's company in a nonthreatening way, that there can be things that they can resolve.

AW:

In a way without any expectations from—

BR:

Without and yes. And so, you know, and there's give and take in every relationship. That's—I don't care who you are. You know, whatever relationship you have, there's give and take.

AW:

Oh, yeah.

BR:

And anybody that's ever been married find that out pretty quickly. And so that's what I thought and I was always amazed with these women and loved to study with them because they were brilliant.

AW:

Do you still keep in touch with either of them?

BR:

I don't and I wouldn't be surprised if Holla is still alive because she was really such an adamant, outspoken person and her study was on—she went back to Israel and went into the camps of the

Palestinians that had to be in those camps and when she came back and told about her study to the rest of the group, she said there were children in those camps that had never seen a flower and that really was heart rending to me. And I know that happens and having a Vietnamese friend that came over after the war, before the other group came in to take over, you know, the North Vietnamese. In her area, and hearing her story, she was on a fishing boat for a week.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

Where she could not—it was so crowded that she had to sit with her knees up and did not—was not able to go to the bathroom on that boat.

AW:

For a week?

BR:

And she had lost her—the backpack that she had. They had to leave in the middle of the night and walk through the jungle and she fell in a hole and dropped her, the bag that was packed for her that had some food and a few articles of clothing and she had to—they had to pay the captain of the ship in gold and her sister had gotten married and I guess, in Vietnam, people give brides gold for their wedding gift. The bride and the groom, gold for their wedding gift. And her sister gave her a part of her gold and then the family, she came from a big farming family, and her brother's and sister's all contributed so that she could leave because she was just a young girl. You know, like in—I don't even know if she was twenty yet. And she was afraid to stay and her family sent her off by herself and when she fell in that hole, she dropped the bag and she was afraid to look for it. It was dark. Because she was afraid she would lose the rest of the group and get lost in the jungle and she had to be in a camp across the border for over a year before she could get a sponsor here in the states to move her, but it was a real—you know, that's a—who? Who of us would know that kind of terror and that kind of discomfort and everything? Those immigrants that come over here, if you hear their stories, they've already suffered more than most of us will ever know and I don't know how anyone could possibly get angry that we could allow people like that could come to this country. What would we have done without the Einstein's and the Chinese that built the railroads?

AW:

Well and even more to the point, if there were no immigrants, we wouldn't be here.

BR:

Exactly. I'm a Heinz 57, you know?

AW:
Yeah.

BR:
I'm part—a little of everything, including Native American. But you know, it's just like I don't understand why we think that we are so much—that we're so much better than anybody because we're just a bunch of rag tag people and the people that came over here were running away from the government so that they could practice their belief systems, whatever they were.

AW:
Yeah.

BR:
A lot of them were probably prisoners and the outcasts of their different countries.

AW:
Well yeah and it's—we say that you know, the Statue of Liberty idea. The earning masses.

BR:
Yeah. "Give me your tired, your poor."

AW:
Yeah. Anyway, that's—I shouldn't opine on an interview, but this is a nice Segway, though. Talking about Vietnam and the immigrants to start with one of the things that we were going to talk about today, which is your trip to China and all of the fortunes and misfortunes.

BR:
Oh my goodness. Yeah, my trip.

AW:
What year was that? I should remember.

BR:
That was in 2003. It was a year before—well I said 2003. It may have been before that because I retired in 2003. So it may have been the year before, but it was when they were building the dam.

AW:
Was it after 9/11?

BR:

No. It was before 9/11.

AW:

So it would've been—

BR:

It was when it was a little easier to travel.

AW:

Right. Because I was thinking maybe it was in the 1990's. Late.

BR:

I said—well when was 9/11?

AW:

2000.

BR:

I'm trying to think. Was it 2000?

AW:

Two thousand one.

BR:

Two thousand one. It may have been 2000. I wish I could remember now. But it was—

AW:

I was just thinking, I remember—

BR:

It was before 9/11 because we didn't have to do all the things that you have to do.

AW:

Yeah. I was thinking it was before 9/11.

BR:

It may have been 2000.

AW:

So what? Did you just want to go to China? Or I mean, was it a?

BR:

Well let me tell you about China. When I was growing up, we had a Chinese family that lived right around the corner from us and they were called the Wa's then. It was Joe Wa and Joe Wa happened to be one of Buck's best friends all through his life, through junior high and high school.

AW:

So they'd been here in the states for some time.

BR:

Yeah. His—the story of Joe Wa is that his father came over as a young man and worked in New York in the food industry and somehow ended up getting here in Amarillo and opening a Chinese restaurant that stayed open all night. It was right—it was downtown right next to the bus station. It was an all-nighter and when I was in high school, all the boys would go there after their dates and eat Chinese food because all their dates had to be home before twelve.

AW:

Right. Ten o'clock or whatever.

BR:

You know, before twelve. Yeah. Ten or eleven or whatever. After the movie and so we never got to go.

AW:

The girls didn't.

BR:

The girls didn't get to go eat the Chinese food until we got in college and then we could go eat Chinese food at Joe Wa's dad's house, but when I was in junior high, I knew Joe Wa from—he was a friend of other friends of mine. You know, they—I guess they played through sports together different teams.

AW:

Do you know how to spell Joe Wa?

BR:

Yeah. Wa is just W-a. But his name—they changed the last name to Joe and then it became Wa,

Joe. James Joe. You know.

AW:

J-o or J-o-e?

BR:

J-o-e. It was—they changed it.

AW:

So Wa used to be W-e-i?

BR:

I think it was just—I don't remember. I think it was just W-a-y was the way they spelled it. They Americanized it, of course. But what happened—I didn't realize this, but many, many years later after Joe Wa's mother died. I mean, we're still friends. We've been friends ever since junior high.

AW:

Does he still live here?

BR:

No. He lives in California. He's become very wealthy. All of Buck's friends became very wealthy, except him.

AW:

Except for Buck.

BR:

Except for Buck, yeah. But anyway, Joe Wa and his wife—and he married a Japanese and that's a whole other story that I didn't even realize all the problems with that.

AW:

The tension? Yeah.

BR:

Until I learned some more history about both. But Joe Wa and his wife came. Gracie came to clear out the house after his mother died. His dad had already died and they found this big steam ship luggage out in the garage with all of his mother's trousseau and everything in it intact. But before that, when Joe Wa's mother became sick and he would come back and visit, he found out that she had been like one of the mail order brides, and she had come as a young woman to

marry an older man, who had come here and made his way to Amarillo and had gotten established where he could afford a wife, and had done this mail order bride. And she had not a clue about him and she sat up in a chair on her wedding night in the bedroom and cried all night long. Joe Wa told me that story, which is probably what a lot of mail order brides did, you know? But anyway—

AW:

But so this—the one who ordered her was not his father?

BR:

Yeah. It was Wa's father.

AW:

Oh, okay.

BR:

But he was an older—you know, he was older and she was this young woman, but she ended up—when you would call over at Joe Wa's house, she would answer the phone not very often, but if nobody else was there, she would answer the phone and she could understand English, but she never spoke it and Wa grew up bilingual because they always spoke Chinese at home and the kids all were pretty much Anglo-sized. They were raised in the United States, but every evening meal was Chinese his whole life and she was a wonderful cook because when we were in junior high, we took turns having—you know, I always just had lots of friends. Girl and boys that were friends and we would get together and do stuff together. Not dating or anything, just having fun together and we would take turns on the weekends going to different people's houses and their parents would have a meal, you know? Like Johnny's parents made great pizza. We'd have pizza at Johnny's house and I usually cooked at my house instead of my mom and dad and I don't—I'd do a variety of whatever, but Wa, when it was his turn, we never went to his house, but he would bring his mama's cooking and she made great Chinese food and I always loved—I mean, I was one, when we went to Wa's, when we were studying China in school, it was a mystery because it was closed. We didn't know that much about it, but in our books, and we would study it. You know, we'd learn about Pearl Buck and we'd do all these different things and I was just intrigued with China and particularly because we had these neighbors and Eddy Scott lived right next door to Joe Wa and Eddy was in my class and Eddy and I went around when we were studying China. We went around to the Way's house and asked them if they had any Chinese things that we could take to show and tell since we were studying China, and they gave us all these different Chinese things that they had that we got to take to school and show at show and tell. And the teacher was so impressed with all the stuff that we brought that she let Eddy and I go around to every class in grade school to show all these things from China because it was such a mystery. And I grew up with that mystery in my mind with this ancient civilization that I thought, man,

you know, something that's lasted that long, they must be doing something right. And so when I was teaching in the sixties, I was teaching children marketable skills, which I didn't really totally agree with because I had children in there who were barely educable, all the way up to very, very intelligent children that just were hell raisers, if you'll pardon my expression, in school and couldn't make it in regular classes. So they stuck them in my class, and I was supposed to teach them so that they could make it out of high school and go and contribute to the tax dollars and all of that by having some job skills where they could go and earn enough money to live on. So I was teaching all the hospitality skills and I had this little restaurant that I could seat about thirty people in, and we would prepare meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays and then we would learn all these other things and do the cleanup and stuff like that on other days. Well I felt like that I needed to teach those kids everything that I could possibly teach them because I felt kind of guilty about just teaching them plain old job skills. And so when we would study China, I would get Chinese people to come in, talk about China, talk about the culture, teach them a little bit about some of the celebrations and the different ceremonial things that they would do. Taught them how to cook the Chinese food, how to serve the Chinese food, how to eat with chopsticks. I brought all that in and we did—and I would—and because I'm a creative person and I like to do things, we would make all these different bulletin boards with all the stuff and so that's what I would do and I had—one of my students was part Chinese. Her mom was Chinese. And so, you know, I just had this—and then, Nixon opened up China. That's a good thing he did. And then I was just always wanted to go. I thought, hey, I would love to go to China and just because I love the culture, I love the clothing they wear or they used to wear. Some of them wear it every now and then. And I loved the things they made because they're beautiful and made well, you know, and I just loved the idea of going and so when I got ready to where I thought I might be able to retire someday, I called Amanda up and I said, "Now, Amanda. I have saved money and when I'm gone, I can either leave you this money that I have saved or we can take a nice mother-daughter trip and I'm going to let you decide. What would you rather do?" Well, she chose the mother-daughter trip and I said, "Okay. Where do you want to go?" And she wanted to go to Indonesia and I wanted to go to China and Tibet. So I went down to the travel agency and I made arrangements for us to float down the Yancey before the dam covered up all the treasures, you know, all the things that were along those cliff sides and everything, where they had to move hundreds—thousands of people out, but hundreds of villages along the edges and that dam was very controversial and still is.

AW:

Still is, yeah.

BR:

Because that is the wildest river.

AW:

Was.

BR:

It was the wildest river before they damned it up and so anyway, it was just—that was going to be my dream trip, you know, to go to China and go to Tibet because I really loved—what I knew about Tibet was hardly anything, but I loved the Dalai Lama, what he was doing. I had read about him walking over the mountains and all that stuff and I'd seen the movies and you know, that was intriguing to me too because I just didn't know anything about it and I just wanted to go learn. And so that was my choice and then Amanda wanted to go because she loved all the—what was that? I cannot think of the name of that place where the movie—there was a movie about it and it was something like *Eat, Pray* or something. That movie that came out. But Amanda had—the place that was bombed that all the Australian people go to. What is the name of that place?

AW:

Yeah. I should know it.

BR:

It's not coming to me right this minute.

AW:

Me either.

BR:

But anyway—

AW:

I'll recognize it when you say it though.

BR:

Yeah. It'll probably come to me when I'm not trying to think of it, but anyway, she wanted to go there because I guess she had friends that had been there and it is a very beautiful place and they do all the tie-dying and all the amazing things and I know people that have been there and she wanted to go there and we were going to end up a week on the beach to end our trip. We were going to have a couple of weeks in China and a week on the beach in Indonesia to end our wonderful mother-daughter trip.

AW:

Yeah, so do them both.

BR:

Yes, we were going to do both. We were going to meet my goals and her goals and needless to say, we didn't get to go to Indonesia because that's when I fell.

AW:

Yeah. How far into the trip was it before you had that accident?

BR:

Well it was basically the last night that we were going to be—

AW:

In China.

BR:

In China. Before we were going to fly over into—

AW:

Jakarta?

BR:

No. Not Jakarta. The English part. I'm trying to—

AW:

Oh. To Hong Kong?

BR:

Hong Kong. Yes. I'm sorry. I kept wanting to say another place. Yeah. We flew into Hong Kong.

AW:

Coming from the United States?

BR:

From the United States, yeah. Well actually, from—yeah. It was from the United States. That's right. From San Francisco. We stopped in Japan just to fill up the plane. I wish I had made arrangements to spend a little bit of time in Japan, but I wasn't very smart.

AW:

Well it would've cost you more. They don't treat it like a train.

BR:

It would've cost more and it was a very cost—I mean, it was a very—it was like a five-star trip, actually, and it was very nice.

AW:

So was it with a group or was it planned out?

BR:

Uh-huh. It was with—it was—we had a tour group once we got into Hong Kong. We met up. There were thirteen of us that were on this particular one, but I booked it through the travel agency and I don't know that she—she may have known that it was a tour, but it may have been several people book the same trip through their means and so we had people from the west and east coast and I think there may have been one mother-son person from the Austin area that were travelling together and there were some school teachers.

AW:

What time of year was this?

BR:

It was in the summer. It was in August, which is not the best time to go to China because it's so hot, but it was the only time, I guess, that we could go.

AW:

Well you were still working, right?

BR:

I was still working and Amanda was.

AW:

Yeah, so you'd had to go out in the summer.

BR:

And I wanted to go.

AW:

Right.

BR:

Where I could go and get back and have time to regroup before I started back to work, but anyway, we landed in Hong Kong and pretty much went to Beijing almost immediately from

there. We started out in Beijing and went through all the—every—you know, all the stuff that you do in Beijing. Tiannanmen Square and the whole part of—and it was a really good tour because they had a tour guide in every place, except—well they had one tour guide that went with us on the whole trip, but they had a local tour guide that knew all the local stuff that took us around.

AW:

Was the tour guide that went with you for the whole trip, was that one of those people that's also like a government minder? Or was this just a part of the recreational part of the vacation part of the tour? In other words, you—I've had people tell me in China, in particular, that someone will be with you that, in effect, is also making sure that you are not spies and you're not doing things you're not supposed to. That kind of thing.

BR:

Well now, I didn't know that, at the time. It could've been, but he was—he was—he could speak English very well and he knew all of the area and the tour stuff very well in Beijing. He didn't know when we got to Tibet and different places—he didn't know. And after, you know, I emailed him a few times when I got home. He was very limited on the written language of English. He was very fluent with the spoken language of English and I don't think he was a very educated person. I think he was just someone that was smart that learned English by working and being around and doing things in China and he was good and when—if you can be a good tour guide in China, you can make more money, probably, than you can at a lot of things because your tour people will give you a good tip if you're really good at the end of it and we did give him a really good tip. And at the time we were in China, the exchange was eight yen to one dollar. So if you gave someone a five dollar tip, that was really like forty bucks, and when you learn that—at the time, we learned that a well-paid Chinese average person could make could make three hundred American dollars a year. That's what they—that was well-paid. Very well-paid. And those were the farmers. And when we would be riding on that tour bus through the land, which was my favorite—one of my favorite parts of the whole tour was just getting to see the open land.

AW:

Did you go by bus most of the time?

BR:

We went by plane. We went by bus.

AW:

Train?

BR:

We didn't do the train at all. We went by boat, by plane, by bus.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

And it was a really good tour because we did go down the Yancey. We got to see all those things and we would stop at different little places that they had arranged to send these little places along the river and see some of the local people and the flora and the fauna and the animals and the different things and it was pretty amazing. And when you would go to some of the things that they had set up for you to see, like we went to this really nice—it was kind of like this big place where you could see a show and have some food and some drinks and see their artisans and they had—you know, they had the tumblers and I am telling you, you have not ever seen any kind of acrobats until you see these Chinese people. They can turn their bodies into pretzels. I'm not kidding. The way they would—it's amazing. You know, you couldn't believe that bodies could be pretzels. Really, that's what they were. Just in and out and over and up and down and around and jugglers and the whirly—what do they call the—I can't think of the—

AW:

Like the acrobats?

BR:

No, the ones that whirl. The whirly.

AW:

Like the dervishes in the [crosstalk]—

BR:

Yes. The dervishes. The whirling dervishes and the beautiful, amazing women in their wonderful—I'm going to say their wonderful, beautiful costumes, where they weren't exposing every part of their body, you know? But they were just gorgeous women dancing on rugs with ribbons and kind of like the—if you saw the Olympic—did you see the intermission of the Olympics?

AW:

No.

BR:

Oh my gosh. That is worth seeing if you ever can see it. Where they do all the tai chi and the

drumming. They had like two thousand people out there doing all this stuff. Actually, I went before 2000 because they were getting ready for the Olympics. You're right. It was before 2000 because you know, I didn't actually retire completely until 2003, but I retired ahead of 2000 and went back and worked part time. That's why it's confusing. But yeah, it was before 2000 because they were redoing Beijing. They were tearing down old buildings and putting up new and they were doing it with pickaxes and wheelbarrows. That is how they were doing it.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

And the reason it was so interesting to me is I was working—I was working at the time and Highland Park was one of those—is one of those schools in Texas that was—that didn't get any kind of government funds because they were called the—I think they were like a budget base school or something like that. I don't remember the exact name, but they had—they got enough income from the taxes, their tax base, that they didn't have to get any money, except for the ADA. You know, they got federal funds from the ADA and that's it and we had to send money. Well, we first could choose a school to send money to when they first came out with that law and then later, you had to send money down state if you had excess money. But Highland Park.

AW:

Right. The Robin Hood.

BR:

Yeah. That Robin Hood thing and Highland Park had—you know, they had enough money that they had to send several million dollars downstate, but we were able to give several million dollars to some local panhandle schools before we had to send money downstate. Before they changed it and made you send it all downstate and let the state allocate who got the money. But anyway, we had a superintendent that had figured out that if we encumbered the money—

AW:

That didn't count.

BR:

Then we didn't have to send the money, as much money, and so they started building and they were adding this and adding that and doing this. Well there were all the—you know, all this construction was going on and I would walk down the halls and I'd just be fascinated because they would have all these big machinery things that I'd never seen before. Doing digging and doing this and doing that and I was—

AW:

Nobody with pickaxes?

BR:

Nobody with pickaxes and wheelbarrows. It was all this modern, big engine stuff that I'd never seen and I would be watching it and just be fascinated with all those big things around that I'd never seen. And so I'd been—they'd been doing that for about a couple of years before I went to China, so I'd been around all that construction seeing it going on. Then I went to China and I would see people with pickaxes and wheelbarrows and they were doing that on the dam. That was what was mindboggling. When we went to the dam site, they had pickaxes and wheelbarrows doing a lot of stuff and the other thing that I was watching—because we could look out our hotel and riding around in Beijing in a bus, we could see scaffolds out of bamboo going up to buildings that were—they didn't have huge skyscrapers like they do in New York and Chicago and other parts of China, you know, like Shanghai, you know, which is supposed to be the pearl of China. They didn't have buildings like that at the time in Beijing, but they had buildings that were like maybe twenty stories high with bamboo scaffolding with no thing—you know, just scaffolding. Nothing to keep anyone from falling off. Or little pipes. Rusty little pipes about an inch wide. Maybe an inch and a half wide going up those buildings and I'm thinking OSHA [**Occupational Safety and Health Administration**] would absolutely have a heart attack if they could see, you know, the way people were, you know, workers and people were being treated. I thought, I guess they have so many people in China, they don't mind losing a few bodies.

AW:

Well it depends on how rich you are. You know, the WPA [**Works Progress Administration**] building the Grand Coulee Dam and other dams in the west.

BR:

Oh, exactly.

AW:

Is the same thing.

BR:

Same thing.

AW:

You know, pickaxe. Wheelbarrows.

BR:

I mean, well yes.

AW:

People dying every day.

BR:

Exactly. And the Chinese building the railroads and having to do all of the dynamite. They don't even know how many people died and they never took their names. You know, people in China have not a clue what happened to the people that they send over here because they didn't even bother taking their names and that's how fortune cookies got started. Did you know that?

AW:

No. But I knew they were invented in San Francisco because I learned that writing my novel.

BR:

Well they may have been invented in San Francisco, but they started on the railroad. When they were building the railroads, they started putting messages in the cookies so that people would know, you know, they were like—nobody could read Chinese, but they would put these Chinese messages in the—

AW:

Like a note in a bottle or something.

BR:

Yeah. But it was in the cookies or in that thing and that's how fortune cookies got—I mean, that was the original fortune cookies. They used to make some kind of thing, you know, like they weren't exactly—but that's how they got started and I thought that was very interesting.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

But anyway, it's the same with the Irish workers that worked in the east and they found those mass graves of people that came. We weren't really kind to immigrants. Don't ever think that we were. Still aren't now. But anyway, that—now, I'm lost at where I was.

AW:

Well we were talking about going down the river.

BR:

Oh, going down the river.

AW:

And stopping at the smaller places.

BR:

Yeah. But just seeing all these amazing things and of course, I know—this was a high dollar trip—and I know that we were seeing the best of what they had to offer.

AW:

Yeah. They were trodding out the best stuff.

BR:

They were trodding out the best stuff, but unfortunately, because there were some other things that went on, we got to see both sides.

AW:

Now, what do you mean “other things that went on?”

BR:

Well I’m going to tell you.

AW:

Oh, okay.

BR:

Okay. So now, I want Amanda, because she’s a really good writer, to finish writing this story of our trip.

AW:

Has she started it?

BR:

She started it and she needs to finish it because she started it out saying something like, “My mom and I started out on our dream trip. Our dream mother and daughter trip. Little did we know that we were going to fly into the mouth of the dragon.” Isn’t that great?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

I loved the way she started it out. And she needs to write—I hope you will encourage her to do that because I don't know that she feels like she's that good of writer, but she really is a good writer. Anyway, so encourage her to write. She'll take it from you better than me because—

AW:

Our children always do take it better from someone else.

BR:

Yes. They do. They always do. But anyway, she's got some stories to tell. But that trip, we started out in Beijing and we went to all of the neat stuff. We went to the old part, the old city, you know, where all the amazing things are that used to be—you used to not be able to even get in the gates of that years ago, but now they've had it all opened up and the interesting thing, to me, about that was there wasn't one tree, there wasn't one bush, there wasn't one plant, that hadn't been strategically placed in pots around the diff—you know, the palaces and the buildings. Do you know why?

AW:

No.

BR:

Because the emperor wanted to be able to see everything all around him so that he could not be assassinated and he wanted—you know, everything was built so the emperor could see all of the—everything was cobbled around every building. He could stand up on the palace steps and see everywhere. None of the buildings were so high that you couldn't see everything from where he stood and that was because of that, I thought that was very interesting and the other thing that was—I loved the way they landscaped in China. It was totally different than any landscaping I've ever seen. I made Amanda—every time we stopped at one of these hotels, and we stayed in some really nice hotels—I made Amanda take pictures of the flower arrangements because they were so beautiful and so simplistic and wonderful, but totally different. But the streets, you would be on these buses. None of the trees were allowed to grow very high. They were all cut, you know? They weren't like the bonsai, but it was kind of that same thing. They were only allowed to be a certain height. They were cut, you know, cropped. But they—everybody, people in Beijing either had a very nice like BMW or you know, really nice expensive cars because the only people in China that can even own a car are wealthy and so they buy the really nice cars. But other people might have a lawnmower that has a motor or they might have a motorcycle or they might have a motorbike or they might just have a bicycle or a tricycle. I mean, anything that has something to run, they will run on the highways or the main roads through Beijing. But then they have this green space and that's what I—I loved the green spaces. And then on the other side of the green spaces will be the bicycles and they have thousands. Thousands of bicycles.

And they will carry anything on those bicycles. They have huge baskets on the front and the back. And they—it's amazing. You will see these women dressed for work in their high heels with their socks on. Nobody wore shoes without socks and I understand why because the streets were nasty. People would cough and spit and you know, it was like—and you were like wall to wall people. They did not have a sense of space. Living in the panhandle, it was so amazing to me.

AW:

Yeah. There's—we have big system space.

BR:

We don't have—we don't understand until somebody from someplace else that doesn't have that sense of space, we don't know what we have here to appreciate that we can drive and we can go through country that has nothing for several miles before there'll be anything and other people don't understand that because they don't have that. Now, ours is beginning to close in a whole lot more because all these people are moving in and taking over our space, which I hate to say is happening, because we don't have the resources for all these people, but it's still amazing that we have wide open spaces and that we can see as far as we want from different directions when we get out driving in the open space and that's when I finally understood what it meant to be a cowboy because they have that sense of the open space and they—I think that gives you a sense of self to know that you can be out in the open spaces just with nature and yourself and be good with all that. I finally understood that. But anyway, so in China, if you're walking down the street, you know, somebody's right there. Somebody's right there. On either side of you. You're just walking like sardines, you know, down the street. If you're in a bus or whatever, you could reach out and shake hands with people next to the bus this close to you.

AW:

In the other bus next to you?

BR:

Right next to you. You could just reach out and shake hands and say, "How do you do?" So it's—that's amazing to me. That was amazing to me. The sense of space. But the thing that I loved was the green space because they plant little bushes that are different colors. They might plant a yellow-green one and a red one and a dark green one and when you're driving down the road, you look out and it looks like a ribbon because they keep them trimmed and it looks like a ribbon winding around in Beijing and then in between those ribbons, they will have little trees that are about no higher than six feet tall with little bitty trunks. Thin little trees with little trunks.

AW:

So are these mature trees and they're smaller? Or are they just new trees?

BR:

I think they're mature. I think they're trees that have been growing that they just keep pruned back and then they will have different kinds of flowers in between the trees and the ribbons of the little bushes that are running through in the green space and then when you go other places where they have people live in apartments. Apartment buildings. Very few people. There are places where there are private homes that we actually did go and visit.

AW:

In Beijing?

BR:

In Beijing. A private home. And the private homes are all—they're all enclosed in walls with gates and every gate has a significance. You know, they're in Chinese letters or numbers and it will tell you a little—I mean, it's significant on what's on the gate. You know, of the people. We went to a fellow that was a geologist, I think, to his home. And when we went into his home, the bathroom is a separate building and they had the old—you know, depending on how new, I guess, the residence is, his was older. I'm sure that he got a kickback on allowing people to come into his home and be able to visit him. He and his family. They, when we went in, the bathroom was a separate building.

AW:

Was it like a bath house?

BR:

It was like—yes, it was like a building and they had the old-fashion toilet that you squat. That has the water that runs through, you know, to whatever. He had a living room that was about—it may've been—if you look at my doorway right—no, it might've been a little bit—no, about as big from my doorway to the windows. That was about the size of his living room. He had maybe one or two chairs and there may have been a small thing like this, you know. Not really a big couch, but a—

AW:

Like a settee?

BR:

Little settee kind of thing. Maybe, if I remember. And I think he had a piano. That's it. I mean, very sparsely furniture. And not very many appointments. They had one or two things on the wall. Very limited and he was affluent, you know, because he was a geologist.

AW:

So was it a lack of resources or a style that was driving that? Do you know?

BR:

No, I don't. I don't know that. He—there was a bedroom. There was a kitchen off from one way in the living room and the kitchen was probably—maybe about the size of my dining room and there was a bedroom off the other way down the hall to the living—you know, you went through the door of the living room down the hall and there was a bedroom and his son and daughter-in-law and their child lived with them and they stayed in that bedroom and there was another bedroom down the hall where he and his wife slept and that was the house and that was of an affluent person and the bathhouse was out that way. And it was really interesting just to go in and visit with him and he told us about his family and whomever, but I think he was the only one there at the time we visited. I don't remember meeting wife or daughter or in-law or son or anything. They do have the one child rule there and in Beijing, it's probably enforced more than it is in other parts of the country. But the wonderful thing about seeing families in China is in between these apartment places, you know, the apartment buildings probably go up—I don't know, maybe six stories. They're not real tall. Some of them, four stories. A lot of apartments are over businesses, you know, where people live over maybe their business or where they work or whatever. There's apartments. And but there's green space. They allow green space around some of these places and when you walk through and are walking around, you will see families out playing with their child. In the parks, you will see kite flying. They have kites. They love kites. There's all kinds of wonderful kites that you see in China and they will just be out. Outside with their children. I didn't ever see a dog or a cat or a bird.

AW:

Really?

BR:

No.

AW:

You'd think without the cats, there'd be plenty of birds.

BR:

I didn't see those. Now, they may've had some, but I never saw them out on the streets or just didn't see them. Now, we saw animals along the river. You know, we saw monkeys and we saw the farming animals that they would use to pull the plow. I did see a cormorant on the river when we went sailing on the Lee River. Close to Guilin, there was a fisherman with his cormorant that he would allow to go down and catch the fish and then bring it back up and then he'd take it away from him. You know, because they were catching the fish. But the Lee River, it was a

beautiful river, but I was horrified because the day that we went down the Lee River, actually that's the day that I fell in the bathtub. The day we went down the Lee River, there were probably ten or fifteen boats and we were on a boat and we were up in the top part of the boat where the air conditioning was. Our little thirteen people and they would bring food and things that they thought we might want to buy. You know, they would be trying to sell stuff. They would bring things like three-penis wine, which was—it was monkey and I can't remember all the different penises, but it was three-penis wine. And of course, we did have somebody in our group who was a college professor in California that bought the three-penis wine.

AW:

Sure.

BR:

You know, he had to go take that back. I'd never heard of three-penis wine, but I thought that was pretty—

AW:

It would be all the talk of your cocktail party.

BR:

Yes. And to me, it just sounded pretty gross. But anyway, that was one of the things I remember about the sale stuff. Other than that, they would bring, you know, usually just a bunch of stuff that you didn't really want. Some people bought a few things, I guess. But they brought wonderful food, you know, that they had prepared on the boat. Well, you know, we ate the food and drank the—I learned not to—you don't drink water in China unless it's bottled.

AW:

Like Mexico.

BR:

Yes, exactly. And most people drink beer. Most of the group drank beer. I didn't drink beer so I always drank wine. Not the three-penis wine, but some kind of wine because that was really cheaper than buying the bottled water and so anyway, that's just—and that's true in Europe too.

AW:

Was the air quality bad in Beijing when you were there?

BR:

Yes. Lots of smog and lots of—so anyway, I needed to go to the bathroom and so I went down

on the boat, went down the stairs, went on my way around and of course, it was a squat bathroom.

AW:

Over the river?

BR:

Over the river. And of course, the thing that was good about me going back then is I could use those squat things. I don't think I would be able to now.

AW:

No. I couldn't get back up.

BR:

But I was young enough that I could squat and get back up. And everybody, I will tell you, it doesn't matter what age anybody is in China or Tibet, they can squat and they sit on their haunches. They sit around in circles along the streets and their homes.

AW:

How do their knees survive it?

BR:

On their haunches. I don't care what age they are.

AW:

How do their knees survive it?

BR:

I think it's just that they—because they do it.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

It's amazing. Anyway, so I went down and when I got out of the bathroom, I looked out on the back of the boat and there they were and they had these huge discs that they were cooking and doing all the food and everything in. Just out in the open on the back of the boat and they were throwing everything. I'm taking all the leftover food. I'm talking the bones.

AW:

Scraps, yeah.

BR:

The napkins, the chopsticks.

AW:

Everything went in the river.

BR:

Everything went in the river off of the back of those boats. Do you think that I would ever want to eat anything that came out of that river? Or even to put my hand in the water of that river? I was just—I was appalled because it was this beautiful river and you could see the farmers and the people that were growing. What they do, it's amazing how they farm in China. That's the other thing I noticed and I was talking about the farmers and you would see these big brick homes out in the middle of nowhere and I would think, wow. You know, those people must have some money. I didn't know they were like collective farms where many families lived in those big brick places and so that's the farming, but they use every drop of land and the land—they terraced everything and they plant the plants that need the most water closer to the river and the plants that need less water, up higher. And on tops of all—I don't know if they call them mountains or hills or cliffs or whatever. On the tops are the trees. The mandarin oranges. The citrusy trees. Not all. China's like we are. Every province. I think they're called provinces. Is different. We saw the tropical parts and we saw the winter parts. When you're in the wintery part of China, you get the pickled things and the things that they put up, you know, because they grow the wintery things. They grow the tuberous things.

AW:

Fruits and vegetables and such.

BR:

Yeah. All those kinds of things. And you get some of the other, but the watermelons and the mangos and the citrus trees and the cherry trees and the—you know, all the different fruity things are in the tropical part and the body of—the body structures of the Chinese people are different in the tropical part and in the wintery part. When you're in the wintery part, there are small people. You don't see a lot of tall, really tall, Chinese people. It's pretty amazing. When you do see them, they're very elegant. Usually, very elegant looking people because there aren't that—there doesn't seem to be that body. But you see these beautiful bodies that are perfectly shaped with no fat anywhere. You don't see fat people in China that much. You see stocky people in the more tropical parts. They're built like—Joe Wa was kind of that kind of body build. And so, you

know, you notice the different body structures in different provinces and different foods. You know, the foods are different.

AW:

Do they ship much? Like do the tropical producers ship their tropical fruits and all to the other parts of China?

BR:

Oh yeah. They do that.

AW:

So you can—in any place in China, you can get?

BR:

You can get.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And we were there in the summer and of course, watermelon was a lot of the dessert. You know, the in thing that we ate a lot of watermelon. But they tell you not to eat the fruits and the vegetables unless they have skins on them.

AW:

Because they were washed in the river.

BR:

You could eat—you know, you could peel the oranges and you know, they—I loved the dried fruit because they didn't put a bunch of gobble dee gook on them. They just dried them and they were natural and when I was in the hospital, I pretty much lived on dried fruit and little like Ritz cracker peanut butter crackers because instead of putting—if they had put me on a Chinese diet, I would've probably faired better, but they put me on a western diet and they would bring me this meat and it was just floating in greasy stuff no matter—I don't remember seeing any beef. It was mostly pork or chicken and sometimes, fish. But it was always in all this—and I was—you know, I'd broken all my ribs and I was in a lot of pain and I wasn't hungry that much. I didn't really feel like eating much and didn't want greasy stuff. I loved their vegetables because they were cooked—they were just steamed just right and I loved the—now, I'm not going to be able to think of that. It's kind of like a gruel thing. Every morning in the hospital, they served—it's like broken rice in a broth. A chicken broth or maybe a pork broth. Seasoned. And it's got a

name and I'm not going to be able to think of it right now and then when I'm not thinking about trying to think of the name, it will come. Congee.

AW:

Congee.

BR:

Congee is the name. I loved the congee. It was wonderful. And I could eat that every day. You know, every morning. That was fine. And I loved the fresh mandarin oranges. And the steamed vegetables that I could get and other—and I had Amanda go get me the dried fruit and the peanut butter crackers and their chrysanthemum tea. I really got—I really got addicted to the chrysanthemum tea. It was really good. And that's pretty—and I just kept those around for when I would get hungry to snack on and they put me in—

AW:

So start with. Talk about the accident and how you wound up in the hospital.

BR:

Okay. Well the accident was we had been floating on the Lee River, which was beautiful, and it had—the Lee River had those pointed tall things that they didn't call mountains. They have a name and I have a book with the picture of them and I'll show you the picture. But they're just like these cones. China, one of my favorite things in China were the rocks. They honor the rocks.

AW:

Really?

BR:

They do. One of the emperors found this huge, amazing rock that looked like a sailing ship. Like one of those sailing ships that you used to see in the movies, you know, about the English and the wars and all that kind of stuff. With all the huge sails on them. Not the little ones, but the big ones. And this rock looked like one of those ships and he—it was huge. It was about as big as—as long as my dining room and as wide as—wider than that dining table. That's how big that rock was. He had someone, all of his servants, people that were under him, get that rock and bring it to the emperor's gardens, which that's another thing that I loved was the emperor's gardens because I love what they do with rocks. He had that mounted like a piece of sculpture and it looked like a piece of sculpture, but it was just this natural windblown rock and the rocks in China and the places are pointed, you know, they're—they've been windblown and whipped so much that they're pointed and people would build—you could look out and you could see these little winding, winding, winding steps up to these structures. Wooden structures.

AW:

At the top of the point?

BR:

Well, built on the sides and all the way up these cones out in the water, you know? Where they had to get in boats to get to. I don't know if they were homes or if they were businesses or what they were exactly because we never went to one, but they look like private homes that people had built on the sides of these cones sticking out of the water.

AW:

Did people live on those? Or were they places for recreation where you went hiking?

BR:

I don't know because we didn't go to them, but you had to walk up, you know, like probably no less than fifty to a hundred steps to get to any of them. You know, they were just wooden just winding around. It was amazing and I loved that. I loved seeing that. But one of my favorite places was going to the rock museum.

AW:

The rock museum?

BR:

They had rocks. This is a chrysanthemum rock. I just brought little rocks home. But look at that. It's lava with crystals that have burst on them.

AW:

Yeah, and not a fossil, but these are crystals within the lava. Right?

BR:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah. That's beautiful.

BR:

And they—it's beautiful.

AW:

Plus, it feels good.

BR:

I know. And that was just a tiny one because you know, I was coming from China. I couldn't bring a whole huge one.

AW:

You couldn't bring the ship.

BR:

But they had huge crystal rocks with all these pattern—you know, huge in this museum of these crystal rocks and then they had things carved. Like, they had teapots and different things carved out of these. And this—look how hard this is. See? Isn't this a beautiful rock?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

Well anyway, so they had—and they had crystals. They had crystals as tall as my ceilings. Big, huge, giant crystals. And jade. They had things carved out of jade, but they had huge, natural pieces of jade. And they had geodes. You know, with the—

AW:

Crystals inside.

BR:

The crystals and the amethyst and stuff inside. Huge. Amazing things. And I love rocks. You know, you see rocks all over my yard and my house. I love rocks and my mom loved rocks. You know, it's just something that we all have in common. My nieces loves rocks. Amanda loves rocks. Anyway, Amanda and I both loved all the rocks and that was one of my favorite places that we went. But, to get back to what happened to me, we were floating on the river. We'd had a great day. At the end of the floating on the river and having a picnic on the river, on the Lee River that day. That was our last day in the mainland. It was a nice, wonderful outing for all of us. We stopped and there was this huge market. This open market and of course, it was hot when we got off of that air conditioned boat. It was August. It was hot. And I really had—on that trip, it was like any other tour. I'm sure they get kickbacks, but we had been—we had been to the silk factory. We had been to the place where they do the lacquer. I will show you some of these things that I was able to get. We—and I bought the silk robes and on the boat going down the river, I bought the beautiful, old-fashion—I have three beautiful Chinese tops that now, I'm wearing, because I've been going to church with Amanda and I can wear them some places, but I didn't wear them for a long time and but now, I am wearing them. And I bought the silk pajamas for my little nieces, you know? Because the silk is beautiful and the embroidery and

everything. I'll show them to you. They're beautiful. And I got the pearls and the nice things from China. The marcasite. They had a marcasite place and I love marcasite jewelry and got those things. So I had bought things that—and basically, I did buy those things because I like those Chinese things. Some jewelry and some clothing, which is not what I normally buy for myself and I normally buy and I did buy these things too, things to cook with, like spices and I loved the markets where they had the spices because it was just all—they had all these beautiful spices in baskets and you know, all the colors and all the different things.

AW:

Did you run into spices that you didn't know what they were?

BR:

Oh, you ran into everything that you don't know what it is. Spices, foods, whatever. You know, it's like—it's all wide open, but I was willing to try the hundred-year eggs.

AW:

So what was it like?

BR:

Well basically, what it is it's eggs that have been soaked in tea and with some herbs and things, you know, so they look a hundred years old, but they're not really. And I loved, like when we would go, we'd stay in these really nice hotels and when we would go and have breakfast, I loved—they would have like European foods and they would have Chinese foods and you could just get this amazing buffet, this variety of whatever you wanted you could get. They would have like—you could get like an Italian kind of salad that was marinated, usually like canned hams and things like that that were all marinated together. You could have that for breakfast. You could have—they would cook eggs with the bean sprouts and a mixture of vegetables and everything. You could have things like that. You could get congee. You could get European pastries. You could get all kinds of fruits, melons, whatever. You could just have an array of pretty much anything you wanted that was always wonderful. The foods are wonderful, you know, eating the Chinese different—we had the—it's not Peking duck anymore. It's Beijing duck. We had the Peking duck. We went to the Peking duck place and I haven't—before I get to telling you about me falling, you need to hear about getting caught in the tunnel fire.

AW:

Tunnel fire?

BR:

Oh yeah.

AW:

That sounds scary. Yes.

BR:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Before the river?

BR:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Okay. So tell us about the tunnel fire.

BR:

The tunnel fire was in Beijing. Amanda and I and the whole tour bus made the drive out to the Wall. The Great Wall of China.

AW:

How far was that? What kind of drive is that from Beijing?

BR:

Oh, it's probably—it's out a ways from Beijing.

AW:

It's not like two days or?

BR:

Oh no. It's maybe a couple of hours drive. Maybe a little more than a couple of hours. But you're going through—and I loved doing that because you're out seeing the wide open spaces.

AW:

Something other than town.

BR:

Which aren't very wide and open, but you get to see the farms and you get to see, you know, the people watering with their big jugs, with their yolks.

AW:

Yeah, carrying water.

BR:

Going down the terraced land that's next to the river. The lotus are growing on the river and by the way, lotus blossoms are good and eating the asparagus with lotus blossoms and mango. I mean, I don't think—I might be able to get lotus blossoms here at one of the Chinese markets because I've eaten lotus blossom salad from Lu [?] [1:26:25]. Lu's nephew made it. But I can do the mango asparagus like they did there. The food, like I said, if you just eat all the Asian stuff, you can get anything in Hong Kong. I don't care what you want. You can get any kind of food. I had some of the best Indian food I've ever had in my life. Some of the best Japanese food I've ever had in my life. You can get pizza. You can get anything from all over the world in China and I have a story to tell you about after when I get to the hospital that I don't tell too many people because they'd think I was crazy. But anyway, the fire. We—you have to go through a tunnel, which is probably two or three miles long. I don't know how long.

AW:

Oh. A long tunnel.

BR:

The tunnel.

AW:

Yeah, it's a long tunnel then.

BR:

It's a long tunnel through the mountains.

AW:

To get to the Great Wall?

BR:

To get to the Great Wall from Beijing.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And it's a narrow tunnel. It will only—it's only a two—

AW:

Two lane?

BR:

Two lane. And most of the cars in China are small cars. They're BMW's and expensive cars and the buses are smaller. They're not as wide. You know, they're smaller in width. They're longer. And we had a bigger bus. We could each have our own seat on the bus if we wanted because there was only thirteen of us. And we had our backpacks because we were given backpacks on the trip and we had our backpacks and we had—Amanda and I have always learned to take a bandana with me traveling because you can always wet a bandana and put it over your head to cool you off or you can put it on your face for the smog or whatever and so we took bandanas and bottled water. We always took bottled water and so we had those things with us in our backpacks and Amanda and I were sitting together on the bus with our backpacks and we had been to the wall and I had walked—that is right after—we went to China and Tibet right after I had had a stint put in my renal artery. This is after I had had breast cancer in March. Buck died in January. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in March. I had to go through thirty treatments of radiation that year and I said when I got through those thirty treatments of radiation, I wanted to get the hell out of Dodge and so I went to Florida and Alabama and Minnesota in June and I think that it was the following summer that we decided to do the trip to China and Tibet.

AW:

So that would've been '99?

BR:

Something, yeah. Anyway, so I was ready to do some bucket list things and I didn't know—you know, because of having had those health issues that I—I never did have that many health issues, except when I was younger, I had every childhood illness you can have and I had them bad, but then I was healthy all the way through Buck, except for having to have a hysterectomy in my forties. That was it. You know, I was healthy and then when Buck died, I just sort of fell apart.

AW:

You'd been saving up all that.

BR:

I guess. I don't know. They say stress will do that.

AW:

It will do that and also, you know, the other thing is that it's like you stay healthy all through the fall and Christmas and right after Christmas, you get sick because you're body says, "Okay. I have time now."

BR:

Yeah, okay. It's time. I guess that's what happened to me this year when I had two episodes with the flu in January. Anyway, so—

AW:

So was it—had you done any strenuous kind of hiking before this? After your stint?

BR:

No, I hadn't. But I talked to my doctor, my heart doctor, and I said, "Okay. I'm going to take this trip. Is it okay for me? You know, I'm going to be in different altitudes. I'm going to be." He said, "You go and do whatever you feel like doing." That was his advice to me and by George, that's what I was going to do. But in the meantime, I bought the travelers insurance because I thought, if I croak in another country, I don't want Amanda to be stuck with my body, having to get it back.

AW:

Try to get you back.

BR:

Trying to get me back, you know. So I did the right thing and bought the insurance and did all the stuff that you need and of course, I had insurance because I was working for the school and I had a good state insurance policy working for the school because they finally put us on their state employee stuff. So anyway, we had been—we were at the wall and I just told Amanda, "I walked as far as I could, that I felt like that was healthy for me to do." But I knew that I couldn't walk as fast and as far as Amanda wanted to go so I stopped at a reasonable point on the walk and just enjoyed looking out at the view. Looking over the wall. Watching the people. Very interesting to watch all the people on the wall and talking to some people and having people take my picture with them. But Chinese people are superstitious about pictures. They don't—they think it takes your image or something. You know, you have to be careful when you go to a foreign country because you don't know what their thoughts are with the picture taking. Some people, like in Egypt, they let you do it but you had to pay them money. You know, that was the way they made money if you got to take their picture. But, you know, the Chinese were kind of more leery about things like that. So anyway, but so Amanda went on and then she came back and we got on the bus and we headed back into Beijing because we were supposed to go have Peking duck at the Peking duck big restaurant, famous for their Peking duck. So we got on the bus and started out and we got to the tunnel and we got pretty far into the tunnel. I don't really know how far, but we were pretty far into the tunnel when we started noticing people walking. People, foreign looking people. People that looked English or British or French or some other nationality. Touristy

people and Chinese people walking fast hurriedly with worried looks on their faces. Walking. Walking, walking. And so—

AW:

None of them stopped to tell you to?

BR:

No. And we started seeing cars trying to go around and then our tour guide got off the bus, went over and talked to some people. He got back on the bus and he stood up in front and he said, “You all just sit. There has been a car crash up in front of us and we are going to back—try to back out as far as we can out of the tunnel.” We started backing the tour bus up and the cars behind us started backing up and we were backing up until we got to a place where a tour bus that was bigger than our bus had tried to turn around in the tunnel and had gotten stuck.

AW:

So it was stuck?

BR:

So nobody could back up anymore.

AW:

Oh my gosh.

BR:

And so—

AW:

I don’t know if I’m claustrophobic, but I would’ve become it, I think, at that.

BR:

Okay. So then, about that time, the tour guide said—we started seeing this huge black smoke rolling, rolling towards us and our tour guide said, “Get off the bus. I will be right behind you. Walk toward the tunnel.” You know, the end of the tunnel. And Amanda jumped up. She said, “Mom.” She grabbed my backpack, her backpack. Gave me a wet bandana. Said, “Mom, put this over your face. You go. I’ll be right behind you.” So I—you know, all of her training, Tai chi training, kicked in at that moment. So I got off the bus. Immediately when I got off the bus. The roads in China aren’t that great. There are chug holes. I stepped in a chug hole and I fell and I was one of the—I wasn’t one of the last people, but I fell, you know, after I had gotten off the bus a little ways and I thought, oh good Lord. I better get up or I’m going to be trampled on. You

know, people are going to start falling over me and I'm going to be at the bottom of the pile. So I got up real quick and I could not see my hand in front of my face.

AW:

The smoke was that bad?

BR:

The smoke was that bad.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

It was that heavy. And I walked—I started feeling my way over to the curb. I knew there was a curb over there somewhere and I knew there was a sidewalk and so I started walking. Found my way to the curb. Found my way to the wall of the tunnel. I stood at the wall of the tunnel. I could not see anything and I started yelling for Amanda because she was not behind me and I was a mother in a state of distress. And I stood there yelling for a little bit and I thought, well this isn't doing any good. I'm going to get choked to death on this smoke so I put that scarf over my mouth and I started feeling my way along the tunnel. I was in a state of distress and I was doing my—you know, you're going through your griefs. I was doing my, "Why me? Why this?" And then I went into the bargaining stage. Like—

AW:

Yeah. "Let me out of here."

BR:

Good Lord. No, no. I went into the—I was saying, "Good Lord, if I have made this trip, this mother-daughter trip, so that I—it is my plan, you know, my destiny to die in China, you can take me. I don't have that many regrets for my life. You know, I haven't done that many bad things, but I have some, but you can take me. But don't take Amanda. She's still got her life to live. She's young and needs to be able to live. Go ahead and take me. Okay. That's fine." I was doing my bargaining and so I was walking along the wall and about, after I had done my bargaining and decided that, hey, it might be my time to go. This little hand reached out, grabbed my hand, and started—came up right beside me, grabbed my hand, said, "Come on, mom. Let's get out of here." Well, it was Amanda. And I said, "How in the world?" Well, I didn't say it at the time. I started walking fast along with Amanda. She had a backpack here, a backpack there. Bandana over her face. Walking, walking, walking. Walking faster. We couldn't see anything. All of a sudden, there was a light and it was like—

AW:

A light at the end of the tunnel.

BR:

No. It was a light at the side of the tunnel. It was like this opening. Like that. Like that doorway you see right there and it was one of those places where workmen come in to work on the tunnel, you know?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

That come in little vehicles and do whatever they have to do in the tunnel at the side of the tunnel. Well here was this pickup truck and here were there Chinese people telling us and they were motioning, you know, get in the truck.

AW:

Universal sign language.

BR:

Yeah, and so Amanda, because she's been doing tai chi and in good shape, you know? All of that. She throws the backpack in the tunnel.

AW:

In the tunnel?

BR:

I mean, not in the tunnel. In the truck. Well they don't have the tailgate down and so here I am. I was thirty pounds heavier.

AW:

And just fallen down.

BR:

Just fallen down and not too healthy from having the breast cancer treatment and the stint and trying to get into the pickup and Amanda was helping me and one or two of those Chinese men hoist me into the pickup.

AW:

Instead of opening the tailgate?

BR:

They didn't open the tailgate. And so here I am, getting over. Well, I get in. I mean, I'm in the pickup because I've been helped and hoisted over and I'm on—I'm laying on my side like this with my hand over my head and this and people start climbing and sitting on top of me. You know, they're climbing in. Because I haven't had a chance to sit up yet and they're sitting on top of me and Amanda hops in, crouches in the corner of the pickup, along with the backpacks, and she pats me on the side. She pats my feet and says, "Mom, are you okay?" And I said, "Well, I'm okay, but if you can get this girl that's fixing to sit on top of my head. If you can get her, then the rest of me is okay to be sat on." You know, and so she reaches up and grabs that girl, who was screaming. A young Chinese girl in there with her boyfriend or her husband. I don't know what. You know, just terrified. Amanda grabs her. Sits her down on top of her in that corner and we go and we drive out of the tunnel and we're in the sunshine and then all those Chinese people start climbing out of the tunnel. I mean, out of the pickup. And they start jabbering. You know, stay. You know, motioning. You know, stay in.

AW:

Stay in the pickup.

BR:

So we didn't get out of the pickup. Thank goodness. And so the truck drove us up to this very nice building and all these little ladies in their traditional Chinese outfits came running out of the doors and down the steps taking us into this big conference room at this big table and there, we see all—

AW:

The rest of your—

BR:

The rest of our tour group. They're all—and they're coming over. "We were so worried about you, because we—you know, you all weren't with us and we didn't know what happened." And they were all bruised and damaged from falling into chug holes. You know, a lot of them had on shorts and sandals and had their—and Amanda was the same way. She had stubbed her toe on some kind of grate or something and her toenail was just chewed up and Amanda had all of her medicine—aroma therapy.

AW:

Her essential oils?

BR:

Essential oil therapy stuff. You know, all the things.

AW:

In the backpack?

BR:

Yeah, with her to treat all of us. You know, treat her wounds, their wounds. I was sitting there and these Chinese women were bringing us this tea and you know, patting us. Making sure that we were comfortable in these big, overstuffed chairs and everything. And Amanda was standing there over me, looking down at me, and I looked up at her and I started laughing and I said, "Amanda. We could be in a minstrel show. We have black faces." Except for just around where we had had the scarf. We both started laughing. And I said, "Amanda, how did you ever see me? I could not see my face. My hand in front of my face." And she said, "Mom, I don't know." She said, "All of a sudden, for just a moment, the smoke cleared. I saw that white hair and that red shirt and I knew it was you." And I said, "Well okay." I said, "I think, maybe we had some divine intervention here." And I said, "But I know that when you save a life, which I really think you probably saved mine, then I owe you one." And I said, "I'm going to make that good." So anyway, we laughed and we cried and we thought, okay. We have had our tragedy. We have been through a tunnel fire. All the rivers were flooding in China at the time. We have seen the floods. I said, "Okay, you know." After we got through Tibet and the mudslides in Tibet, and after we had flown to Tibet, I said, "Well we've made it through the tunnel fire. We've made it through the floods. We've made it through the airplane." Because we were hopping planes, you know, within—to get to Tibet. And I said, "It's not likely we're going to have anymore tragedies."

AW:

Yeah. You used up your bad luck.

BR:

We've used, you know. We've been—we've done all these things. Little did I know that we were going to have the breaking of all the ribs on the left side in Guilin after our wonderful trip down the river.

AW:

Yeah. This is a good place to take a break.

BR:

Okay.

AW:

No pun intended.

BR:

Okay. Okay. Let's do that.

AW:

I just need to pause here. All right. We will resume here in a moment. [Pause in recording] Okay. We're back from having some chocolate almond candy. Refresh on our water. So.

BR:

Okay.

AW:

The tunnel fire. You've used up your bad luck.

BR:

I've used up my bad luck and we—well and we go to the Peking—well this is where we get to see the un-touristy part of China.

AW:

In the—and we're talking about after the river cruise?

BR:

After the tunnel fire.

AW:

Oh. After the tunnel fire? Because you go back a different way?

BR:

We have to go back a different way because we can't go through the tunnel.

AW:

And your tunnel—and your bus is still in the tunnel right?

BR:

And what we found out—the bus is still in the tunnel and we have to figure out, you know, getting another bus and going through.

AW:

Where was your tour guide now?

BR:

Our tour guide is making arrangements for us to get—

AW:

But he was back at this conference room?

BR:

Yeah. We're all in the conference room now and he's making arrangements with the people that own the travel agency and everything to get us—

AW:

Must be an interesting call. "Hi. Our bus is stuck in the tunnel."

BR:

Yeah. And what we find out is—well we don't find it out yet, but we're still in that conference room and we're all talking and we're comparing notes on who fell and who got this wound and that wound and how we got out and what went on and all being glad that we're out alive. That we made it out alive and people comparing stories and talking about walking out and seeing people with little babies, you know, holding them and worried about the babies and the smoke inhalation and all of that. And we're wondering if everybody got out and we never find out because it's never on the news. We watch the news. It's never on the news. We don't know what's happened to anybody in that tunnel fire. We never did know. We never knew if anybody got trampled. If anybody went down because of smoke inhalation. Anything. We don't know anything about the tunnel fire because it's never on the news and so we get to the Peking duck place and the owners of the travel agency come and they bring us rewards. They bring us masks in little boxes of their heroes and they talk about what heroes we are and how heroic we were and how they appreciate us responding and do all, you know, being the great group that we are. But they are willing to refund our travel if we choose to leave the tour and they're willing to allow us to—

AW:

That's interesting because I don't think you can get sued in China the same way you could here.

BR:

I have not a clue.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

They were offering to allow us to leave and refund the money if we chose to. We have that option, which was very nice and so they came and talked and really built us up like we had done something amazing to withstand that tunnel fire. Well here we are. It has taken us probably four or five, maybe six hours to get back into Beijing and it probably took two to get to the wall. I don't know. Maybe a little over an hour. I can't remember. But it took a very long time in a very winding way to get back into Beijing because the traffic had been stopped from all over.

AW:

Yeah. For the tunnel fire.

BR:

Because of the tunnel fire.

AW:

So it must've been bad.

BR:

Well we found out that what had happened is a tour bus had crashed into an oil truck and they caught on fire and they were afraid that the oil truck was going to explode, or one of the vehicles was going to explode from the fire and send a blaze of fire all through that tunnel. We never knew if that happened or not. I still don't know. Amanda said that she knows someone that was in the Scandinavian islands. Not islands. Well maybe islands. But Scandinavian countries that heard on the world news about the tunnel fire. But I have no idea if that ever came, even to this part, because we never saw any of it on any of the news while we were in China.

AW:

Just look it up and see.

BR:

I have no idea.

AW:

What do you think? About 1999?

BR:

Oh. I say '99, because it was before the Olympics and I think it—I don't think it was the summer that Buck died. I think it was the year later.

AW:

No, I think he was gone. I find them in Mont Blanc and New York, but Mont Blanc tunnel they keep talking about in 1999, 2000. But it's operated by Hong Kong Tunnels and Highway Management Company. That's—

BR:

It could be the Mont Blanc tunnel. I don't know.

AW:

No. That was in Mont Blanc in Europe.

BR:

Oh, okay.

AW:

It just happened to be—the reason it came up in the search here was because I typed in China and so the Chinese.

BR:

Oh, the China. Hong Kong thing came up.

AW:

Yeah. Well there just—there have been a lot of tunnel fires since then because were a bunch in 2017, so it will take more searching to find out.

BR:

Oh my gosh. Well the one place you don't want to be in a fire is in a tunnel. I can tell you that. It's pretty darn scary.

AW:

Yeah, no. I wouldn't want to at all. My goodness. So you hadn't even—you go to the Peking Beijing duck place and you haven't had a chance to go to back to your hotel?

BR:

Oh, no. Here I am. I'm in my red shirt.

AW:

And you still have black face?

BR:

And I've tried to wash the black off my face, but my hair is black from all the stuff. The smoke and soot and everything. I'm still—you know, I don't have all the black off of my face. My shirt is still covered in soot and my pants are still covered in soot and guess what? Those clothes are not here. I did not even bring them back home.

AW:

Oh, really?

BR:

Because, number one, I had read. Before we went to China, I did my research. I did some reading and I discovered that it's cheaper just to pack your clothes, pack what you want to get rid of. Just pack cheap clothes that you've had a long time.

AW:

And leave them there.

BR:

And leave them there and that's exactly what I did because you're going to want to buy things and use your luggage space for that, but I even had to buy a piece of luggage to bring the things I bought because you can buy anything in Hong Kong. You can buy anything, pretty much, anywhere in China. But particularly, Hong Kong.

AW:

So let's go back to the tour people coming to the Beijing duck restaurant. So one of the things they gave you as an award was a mask?

BR:

It was a little mask of, you know, they have masks of the different heroes.

AW:

Oh, I got. I was thinking of a mask to put over your face in the next tunnel fire.

BR:

No, no, no. It was a little mask.

AW:

Yeah, I know what you're talking about now.

BR:

I love the way the Chinese market things because they're in silk boxes. I have some out in my Buck stop, Buck house. Now, you didn't see them because I didn't have them then.

AW:

But I have some of those little balls that ring.

BR:

Yeah, I have some of those too out there. The little worry balls that you, yeah.

AW:

And they're in the box.

BR:

The silk box.

AW:

With an embroidered cover. Yeah. They are beautiful.

BR:

Yeah. So yeah. And I love the way they package things, you know, because they come in those silk boxes and this was a little mask in the silk box and I don't know—I probably gave those away to somebody, but anyway, it was a mask of you know, heroes.

AW:

Yeah. Tunnel fire escaping heroes.

BR:

We could pick the heros. Yes, we could pick the hero that we wanted the mask from. We don't know what hero they were because they didn't explain each one of them, but they were different hero's masks and we could pick the one that we wanted so they brought little gifts and nobody opted to leave the tour.

AW:

Was the Beijing duck good?

BR:

The Beijing duck was good, but I felt really grody because I was so covered in soot and like I said, the soot never came out. The clothes were washed because you could send your clothes. When you'd stay at the hotel, they would take them and wash them and we did that because I

didn't take a lot of clothes. You know, I just took—you could only take one suitcase and it could only weight forty pounds or you were going to be paying overweight charges every time you flew within China, which would've been expensive. So hey, I had a little suitcase with not a lot of clothes and you could get them washed at the hotel and I did that, but the soot never came out of it. That was in—I didn't want them anyway. So I left all that stuff and told the tour guide to give whatever, you know, the shirts and things and the pants to other people and came home with pretty much all of the summery stuff that I had gotten from Walmart anyway, to go there. So that was—and we got back to the hotel and then we went on to meet in the city. We got on a bus and drove across the land again, which I loved, to get to the town and I'm trying to think of the name of the town, but it was the town where they had the big earthquake that killed a lot of people in China not that long ago, within the last ten years anyway.

AW:

But after you had been there?

BR:

Oh, yeah. The earthquake was after. It was when we were back. It's been within maybe the last five years. There was a big earthquake there. It destroyed a lot. It was a huge, huge place. But we went there to be able to get on the bus. I mean, on the boat that was going to take us down the Yancey.

AW:

For the river.

BR:

Although, I'm trying to think and I may have my—I don't have my itinerary. It's been a while since we went there. I'm not sure if we went. I'm not sure when we went to the panda bear reserve because the panda bear reserve was a part of that earthquake too and a lot of those panda bears, I say "a lot." Several of the panda bears escaped during that earthquake thing and I guess they recovered them, but they had that whole reserve with the red pandas that looked like—they looked like raccoons. They had tails like raccoons and climbing trees like raccoons. Anyway, they had those there and then they had the real pandas and we—if we paid money, we got to hold a baby panda.

AW:

So did you?

BR:

I think we had to pay twenty-five dollars apiece or something. Yeah, we did.

AW:

Sure.

BR:

Of course, we wanted to hold a baby panda.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

Well my idea and what I knew about baby pandas were they are marsupial animals and they're little tiny things that live in the mama's pouch for quite a while until they're able to come out. I was thinking baby panda. You know, maybe this big.

AW:

Size of a cat.

BR:

Yeah. Baby panda was like two-hundred pounds. Big baby panda.

AW:

So how did you hold it?

BR:

Long claws. Well, I got to hold the baby boy panda, who was about a two-hundred pound animal with long claws that everybody else had held before I got to hold it, who was a little—

AW:

Tired of being held.

BR:

Tired of being held and a little feisty and I am not that much—I like animals, but I'm not that much of one that likes to hold them and pet them.

AW:

You're not like my wife.

BR:

No because I'm allergic to a lot of them and I can't do that and so—I didn't used to be. I used to hold our dogs and cats and pet them and stuff, but I can't do that anymore and I couldn't do it

then because it was after we moved back from Utah that I had all these allergies coming up on me. Utah and Idaho. And so I was a little, you know, nervous and of course, the people were ready to take him because they could tell he was getting kind of agitated. Anyway, so that was fine with me. But Amanda. Amanda is very much of animal person and she and that little girl panda, who was smaller, but still probably over a hundred pounds. I'm not sure. But they just—you know, you could tell that they just connected and she was holding that panda and there's a real—I have a really cute picture of Amanda holding that panda like hey, hey. And Amanda's still—she kept up with all those triplet pandas and watched all their everything, you know, about them and was showing me pictures of—and their really cute and I enjoyed seeing all of them and I love pandas. I think they're wonderful animals. They don't survive very well in zoos here and I hate to see them even having to live in zoos. But on that panda reserve, they have—they take care of them. They feed them right. They have wide open space that they can be in and have all the—they can eat all the—

AW:

Bamboo.

BR:

Bamboo that they want to consume and I didn't realize it, but a mama panda will stay with the baby until the baby is able to climb up and get back down out of the tree by themselves and it usually takes over a year, I think, for that to happen. But I didn't realize that and so they're interesting animals and they're endangered, you know, because there's so few of them in the world that there aren't that many places that they can survive, just like a lot of animals that are endangered because we're stupid and don't take care of our creatures, our critters. Anyway, so that was the tunnel fire, pretty much, and we left and went and did the—like I said, we may have done the panda reserve first and then gone to get on the boat. I guess we probably did. That makes more sense and we—when we got to the place that we were going to meet the boat is the place that we went that had the—not noodle—the what do you call it? It wasn't a noodle factory. It was—there were little—

AW:

You mean, like a food?

BR:

Uh-huh.

AW:

Oh, like egg rolls?

BR:

They weren't egg rolls. They were—

AW:

Like the pot stickers if they're in Thailand?

BR:

Well it was like a little—I'm just going to call it a noodle because I don't know what else to call it. But because it was like a noodle, noodle thing, I mean, it was—the dough was like a noodle dough. It wasn't like an egg roll.

AW:

Was there like little pies in there folded over and they're boiled?

BR:

They're like little pie. So that might be called a noodle. I'm not sure. But it was like a little steamed thing that had different insides to it.

AW:

Um-hm. Yeah, you can get the meat and—

BR:

It may have been a noodle. But they had different kinds. They had like nuts and chicken and pork and all kinds of vegetable. I don't know how many different ones they had, but in—

AW:

They're just called dumplings.

BR:

Dumplings. That's what it was. It was a dumpling place. Okay. It was the Chinese dumpling place and it was about—it looked like a great, big, huge hotel that looked like it covered about a city block and was about four or five stories high. And you walk in the bottom floor and it's this great big dumpling buffet that you can go through the line and pick whatever kind of dumpling you want and take them home. You just go get them, go buy them, and take them home or you can take them outside and eat them or whatever. I didn't see any really places to sit down in that part of it. That's where they made all of them. But they were amazing because if you got a chicken dumpling, it was made like—it was yellow and it was made like a chicken.

AW:

The dumpling looked like a chicken?

BR:

Yes.

AW:

Oh.

BR:

If you got a walnut dumpling, it looked like a walnut. If you got a pork dumpling, it looked like a pig. It was—

AW:

Yeah. I've never seen a dumpling like that.

BR:

They were amazing.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

They were wonderful and we went up to one of the top floors. I don't think we were on the very top. That's probably for the really big mucky mucks. We were either on the third or fourth floor because we had to go up an elevator. It was very elegant.

AW:

You went up with your dumplings?

BR:

No, we didn't take our dumplings. We went up and we had a carpet about—it was more red than that one, but this red carpeted room with red drapes and big, round tables with a lazy Susan in the middle. That's very popular in China to have a lazy Susan in the middle of the table. That would sit all thirteen of us. Really, all fourteen of us.

AW:

So you put the different dishes on the lazy?

BR:

Yes, and twirl them around.

AW:

Oh, nice. I like that.

BR:

Yeah, it was very—

AW:

A lot easier than “Pass the peas.”

BR:

Exactly, yeah. And they had a string quartet playing wonderful music over in the corner of the room. They had real tablecloths on the tables. They had real China plates and real nice utensils and things and real napkins. It was a very elegant room that probably served three or four hundred people in the room.

AW:

Was it all tourists?

BR:

I have no idea. I think it was a mixture of people.

AW:

Yeah. So you could see what looked like Chinese people and tourists?

BR:

Yeah, you could see. Yeah, there were different ones. People that had enough money to go out to eat and have a nice dumpling dinner. Well anyway, they started bringing dumplings and twirling the table around and you know, people had their drinks and their beer and their wine and you didn't—you know, you didn't order. You just got dumplings and they kept bringing them out, different kinds, and they would bring them out and whirl that thing around and you'd get a dumpling. You'd put it on your plate and then they'd bring out another one before you could even start that one. Whirl it around, bring it on your plate. Well you kind of—you knew what kind of dumplings because of the shapes of them.

AW:

Because—right.

BR:

But you felt like you were having to eat everything fast and furiously.

AW:

Like on an assembly line.

BR:

Yes. Like whirling around, whirling around. It's like they wanted to whirl it all around and you eat just as fast as you possibly could and if you ever watched Chinese people eat with those chopsticks and eat that rice, they are going like this. It's like they don't slow. It's like people live in China and they move fast. They eat fast. They talk fast. They walk fast. Everything is fast. I am like a turtle. I am a slow person. I talk slow. I walk slow.

AW:

So is Amanda. The two of you must have had real difficulty.

BR:

It was. You know, I like to sit around a table. Have a nice meal. Talk. Enjoy the meal. Enjoy the food. The comradery. That is the way I have—that's the way we lived when I was growing up. We ate around the family table. We didn't eat around TV. We didn't. Mother cooked a meal. We ate around a table. We sat around and talked about—I told jokes. Stupid, you know? I was younger. I was the young one. I'd tell these stupid elementary jokes that everybody's already heard, you know? That people would laugh. And but, you know, that would be our family time. And we always had one meal, usually the evening meal, unless it was a weekend or something and we'd have a big dinner, you know? That was it and it was called dinner in the evening.

AW:

Well when I was growing up, it was dinner at noon.

BR:

Well it was dinner at noon. Yeah.

AW:

That was your big.

BR:

Supper. And it was supper at night.

AW:

Supper in the evening, yeah.

BR:

Yeah. We had supper. We had dinner at noon. The big meal, but daddy worked, except on the

weekends and we'd have dinner at noon, but in our house, we had supper, but it was really dinner. You know, as the big meal when daddy worked?

AW:

Yeah. Well when we were on the farm, it was dinner at noon. But when we were in town, it was dinner in the evening.

BR:

Well we called it supper, but it was really dinner.

AW:

And no one seemed to have trouble switching gears because when you were not in town, supper was what you had in the evening, but in town, you had dinner in the evening and you had lunch instead of dinner.

BR:

Yeah, well we—

AW:

Luckily, breakfast was always the same.

BR:

We had lunch at school and we had supper at home when I was growing up until I got older and then it became dinner or we'd have a big Sunday dinner, you know? Or a weekend dinner.

AW:

I wonder if that's a southern thing and not just a rural thing.

BR:

Yeah, yeah. So anyway, yeah.

AW:

So you were force fed the dumplings.

BR:

Yeah. So we were. You know, I had those dumplings stacked up on my plate, trying to eat them as fast as they were serving them and gave up on that and there was hardly time to have any conversation and they would, you know, keep, keep, keep them going. Keep them, keep them. And finally, then they would bring watermelon and it was like they wanted you to hurry up.

AW:

And leave so they could put another table?

BR:

Exactly.

AW:

That's like eating dinner out in New York in the evening, you know? They're standing there over your chair.

BR:

Yeah. And I figure—and that's what they would do. They'd stand over. And I figured out that they probably got paid by the number of tables—

AW:

Well sure.

BR:

--That they served.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And that's why they wanted us to hurry up and eat. But they had all the accoutrements to having a nice, slow, entertaining dinner where you could listen to the music, have your wine, talk to your friends, eat, and enjoy, but that's not what that was.

AW:

Did your fellow tour companions react the same way as you? Thinking this was so—

BR:

I don't know if they were as—they may not have been as—I can't. I don't know how. I didn't say anything. It was just—I was just—I just felt hurried and I know Amanda felt that way because she's probably slower than I am.

AW:

Oh, yeah.

BR:

And so we never talked about that. I should ask her about that dumpling dinner, but it was like that could've been one of the most enjoyable things because I loved—you know, we were looking at the dumplings and laughing and comparing because they were so cute and well-made and I don't see how they could've done them by machine or, you know, I don't know how they did them.

AW:

Yeah, and it's such a contrast to like—I've never had this in the Nordic countries, but fondue is a big craze when Mary Anne and I got married. You know, when you got married in the late sixties, as we did, you got three or four fondue pots for gifts, but we had those fondue evenings and it took all evening to eat. You know, it's just such a complete difference.

BR:

I had my first fondue thing with the Ramsey's. Mr. Ramsey and the family and I am telling you, it was a disaster because they didn't get it. You know, Mr. Ramsey didn't get putting a little bitty piece of meat and waiting for it to cook.

AW:

And cooking it. [Laughter]

BR:

And I finally had to put stuff on the stove, you know, to cook it faster, you know? Because those fondue pots with those little candles and those things.

AW:

Sterno.

BR:

Yeah. Put—they weren't cooking. They don't cook very fast.

AW:

And if four people put their little piece of meat in there, it won't cook forever.

BR:

I know, and so it was like, oh my gosh. Why did I even do this? And so from then—

AW:

Plus, the other thing was, you had to wear a turtleneck.

BR:

Yeah. I know. And the—I remember that too, Andy. So from then, I learned, hey. If you're going to do a fondue thing, you need to have easy things. You know, like cheese already kind of melted. Chocolate to dip the—

AW:

For the fruit.

BR:

Fruit in. And then have something already made, you know? Things I did learn. I didn't try to do complete fondue meals because they're complicated, you know?

AW:

Yeah, but it was—

BR:

Up in a ski lodge or something, where, you know.

AW:

We did it with people our own age. One of the most enjoyable times I ever had, we were in California and we were with the—we were there visiting some people who were connected to the couple we were travelling with and they were all our same age. We didn't know one of them, but by the time you finished eating—

BR:

Have it, you know them.

AWL

You knew everybody because you stood around and you were also very drunk because you've been drinking the whole time you're cooking your chicken.

BR:

Yeah, and that's the way it's supposed to be. Exactly. And if you're at a ski lodge and it's snowing outside and you're by a fire and you have all this—of course. You know, it makes a whole lot of sense.

AW:

Not anything like the dumpling dinner.

BR:

[Laughter] I know. But I love—but the thing I liked about Europe, you know, is like you go to a meal at a restaurant in Paris or someplace like that where people do take time and do enjoy drinking their wine and having their meal and eating, where it's not some fast food thing and Andy, I like that here. I like being able—there aren't very many places in Amarillo, Texas that you can go and sit down and have a nice meal and take as long as you want that's not trying to hurry you out the door and that little Asian place that we go, they never have tried to rush me out. Sometimes, I feel like I need to rush because they get so many people waiting in line and I don't want to keep—

AW:

Yeah. I always—if people are waiting in line, I feel obligated to—yeah.

BR:

I feel obligated to get up. But that one place, which is really nice, and sometime, I want us to go there before it closes because I don't know how long it's going to stay open. But it's that copper—I don't know what it's called. It's like the Copper Fire Grill or something like that. It's not that far away and they serve really good food and they have an amazing bar. It has blue lights that make it look turquoise underneath and the copper top tables and you can go in. There aren't that many people. I've only been there at lunch. I don't know that I'd want to go at dinner because it's probably a lot more expensive, but you can go and eat lunch for—it's a little pricey and that's why I don't think it's going to last in Amarillo because no place lasts in Amarillo very long if it's pricey or it doesn't seem to. But so far, it's still there and I've only been there like three times, but every time, it's been good and so we'll have to go there because you can sit and relax, have a drink, have your food, have dessert if you want it. And it's—it's—the menu is different from any other menu I've ever been to. They had—they had crab cake. The breakfast—dadgummit. Why is my mind not working? The thing that you make where you have the poached egg and the ham.

AW:

Oh, like benedict. Eggs benedict.

BR:

Yeah. They had crab cake benedict. Eggs benedict. Now, that's an unusual kind of thing to have, you know?

AW:

Yeah, that sounds pretty good.

BR:

And they were good.

AW:

Yeah. We used to have a place in Lubbock that was—there were. There's one in Lubbock and one in Midland. Harrigan's. And they had a Sunday brunch and they had crab. It wasn't a crab cake. It was crab meat eggs benedict.

BR:

But they had crab meat eggs benedict. That would be good.

AW:

It was terrific and it was better than the ham.

BR:

Oh yeah, it would be. We used to have Harrigan's here and they probably had it.

AW:

Yeah, they were—

BR:

It was a good steak place and then they closed.

AW:

Oh yeah. We had it in Lubbock too. Poor Mary Anne. She hasn't gotten over it yet. It was her favorite place to eat.

BR:

Yeah. I know. Well I loved to go to Harrigan's. Yeah, it was good.

AW:

Well let's get back to China though. You're making me hungry.

BR:

Okay. I know. Okay. We'll get back to China.

AW:

And I just had a big salad.

BR:

I know.

AW:

So the float down the Yangtze, was it before? Was it a separate float trip than the Lee River?

BR:

Oh, yeah. The Yangtze was you go through different provinces. You know? You can go up the Yangtze or down the Yangtze and it's a very muddy, wild river and you can—I think—and the cliffs are very high in some places. Not all the places. And you get to see different kinds of terrain along the river and you get to see—you got to see a lot of the old ancient treasures and different—like, even the bridges, you know, the rope bridges that people walked across to get from place. You got to see a lot of things like that. Plus, stopping in different places along the river.

AW:

On that trip, were you overnight on the boat? Or was it a day trip?

BR:

No. We were overnight in the villages along the river.

AW:

Oh. So how many days were you on the river?

BR:

I can't remember. It wasn't very many. It wasn't a full week. It was just—

AW:

Yeah. But two or three days?

BR:

Two or three. Maybe four. I don't remember.

AW:

Oh, that sounds—

BR:

It was really nice.

AW:
Yeah.

BR:
I love those boat trips. I did the Nile too and I love—I didn't do all the Nile, but I did some of the Nile. I loved being on those boats and just being able to go and see and do and watch the people and it's just easy and you don't have to unpack and repack and do all that stuff. I'm trying to think. I don't remember. We floated down the Nile or up the Nile from—we didn't go all the way down, you know? Because it goes all the way into Africa and stuff, but we did do, you know, quite a bit to see different things and it's just a neat way to travel. If I had my choice, I would do those river boats where you go through the canals in Europe.

AW:
Yeah, in Europe.

BR:
I would love to do that. I think that'd be great. Anyway, and I'd love to go in Russia. I would love to do the St. Petersburg to Moscow. You know, that trip. Anyway, so we were floating down the river and we got to see all the critters. We got to see the orchards on the tops of the cliffs. We got to see, you know, some of the farmers and people watering their crops and doing things and also, on the bus rides too, you know, going through seeing the land and the people and how they lived. To me, that's the most interesting part. I'm not—I enjoyed, you know, Tiananmen Square. I didn't want to go see Mao Tse-Tung's—you know, he's been embalmed and there were lines. Long, long lines. You know, he is everywhere. I did buy some copper Mao Tse-Tung watches that I gave away. I should've kept one. But you know, he's still considered a hero of the people and but all of that was really interesting and Beijing is a beautiful city and they were dressing it all up, like I said. Amanda and I loved the ride, you know, over the streets. The bicycle. They do bicycles now. They don't pull them, you know? They—

AW:
Oh, the petty cabs?

BR:
Uh-huh.

AW:
Yeah. Rickshaw's.

BR:
Rickshaw's. But Amanda and I had a really good time laughing and cutting up with the

Rickshaw ride because he was taking us all these different places and through—they take you through neighborhoods. You know, but with the different individual houses, but only in the nice neighborhood. You know, they take—they only take you to what they want you to see.

AW:

Sure.

BR:

Yeah. And one of the things I really—

AW:

Well if someone came to visit you, you wouldn't take them out to northeast Amarillo.

BR:

No, you don't go to the slum area. You just don't go to the slum area. And the other thing that I really liked and planned for was we went to a Chinese kindergarten.

AW:

Oh. Was that part of your tour or did you have to ask for it?

BR:

Yes. That was part of the tour and I am going to tell you that after being a—I was a counselor in an elementary school in Amarillo and I got to see the artwork because it was a small school district. I got to see the artwork.

AW:

In China?

BR:

No. Of the kindergarten through the sixth—through the fifth grade—in the elementary school because they would hang it out and the teachers would put it in their rooms. I got to see it in the middle school of the middle school kids and I got to see it of the high school, of the high school students, because we had all three levels.

AW:

At?

BR:

At Highland Park. And the kindergarten artwork in China looked like the high school artwork in Highland Park.

AW:

Oh, really?

BR:

Now, Highland Park is a different school. It had a different population than most of—than a lot of the schools in Amarillo. There aren't that many children at Highland Park that are considered even middle class and I doubt that any of them are in the higher levels of, you know, of where parents have—are affluent. Which—so I don't—it's not an honest comparison because I didn't see affluent schools like the private school, you know, where the kids go and do art and stuff. I didn't get to compare that, but I know that the kindergarten that we went to was from the higher classed Chinese people because they boarded.

AW:

Kindergarteners?

BR:

Kindergarteners.

AW:

Oh, gosh.

BR:

They boarded kindergarteners for working parents that worked during the week and would pick them up on the weekends. Some of them, they boarded longer than that. Some of them, they, you know, the parents may have worked overseas. Anyway, it was like a kindergarten boarding school so you knew that the parents had to be affluent to afford to have their child there. But those little children would come out. They would bow. They would say their name and they would say what they were going to do. They would go over to the piano and play a Mozart sonata the way it's supposed to be played. The right tempo, you know, everything. I was amazed. They would sing in a group. Songs in English, in French, in Chinese, in Spanish. They would do folk dances, and I'm not talking about, [sings] put your right foot in. Take your right—none of that. They would do complicated folk dance steps together and I know that they, you know, did this for tourists because when you go to—they let you know when you book these trips, these tours, that you're going. You know, where you're going to go. They send you your itinerary and they give you a backpack with a dragon on it ahead of time and they let you know you're going to visit these kindergarten schools and it would be nice of you if you would take gifts that kindergarteners could enjoy. You know, books, crayons, you know, whatever. Because, you know, that was a courtesy thing to do. So those kindergartens got a lot of nice things from the tourists because we took books and crayons and you know, things for the kids. So yeah. So you know that it's all, you know, they're doing their best. But it didn't surprise me one bit because I

had been to the top ten banquets of all the top ten students in the AISD [Amarillo Independent School District] and in all the surrounding school districts. The top then. And guess what? The majority of the top tens were the Asian students. That didn't surprise me one bit after going to that kindergarten because people from those countries—for one thing, they have different brain—you know, they use their left brain skills much better. And their right brain skills. They use both their skills much better than our culture. I went—you know, I did those right brain, left brain workshops and things like that to learn about different cultures when I was a counselor and it's real different, you know?

AW:

There's so much culture involved though, because I'll tell you, in my college classes, a second generation or third generation Asian heritage, they're just like—

BR:

They're not. It's not. Yeah. It's not.

AW:

Yeah. The culture is—they don't have that “You better succeed” intuition.

BR:

Yeah. But I will tell you that if—it depends on the parents too, but like my Vietnamese friend, her daughter was in—you know, graduated from Tech and she graduated, you know, at the top of her class in Amarillo College. She graduated one of the top at Tech and she was applying to pharmacy school. There were seven hundred applicants the year she applied to pharmacy school and I think they only take like eighty. Seventy or eighty. Her mother took her cellphone away. Her mother said, “You do not have to do chores. You are not allowed to talk on your phone. You are not allowed to go places with your friends. You can go across the street to the gym and do exercise. You are here to study for your exams.” For one month, that child had to do that. She got into pharmacy school, but that's because the mom made sure that she didn't have to do anything except study and exercise and that's it. That makes a difference.

AW:

Yeah, it does.

BR:

Expectations make a difference and you know, I had that little experience with Amanda. When she got to middle school, she didn't want to be—you know, she didn't want to be a smart, nerdy person. Amanda made A's. She never had to work really hard. She made A's all during elementary school and it wasn't a big deal. She got to middle school and oh, she didn't want to be—I said, “Now, wait a minute. I'm going to tell you something, little girl. I expect you to do

the very best you can do. If you work as hard as you can and you only make a C, that might be acceptable to me in some subject like calculus or whatever. You know, some higher level science class. But I know what your potential is and it's not acceptable for you to not do your best." I said, "This is where it counts." I said, "When you go to school and you do your best, that opens up doors for you for the rest of your life and you need to do that for yourself. Not for anybody else. Just for you." So I didn't let her just not be a—you know, I didn't let her get by with that little deal and you know, she did well and she got some garbage bags full of offers for scholarships all over that country that we lived in, but of course, we moved back to Amarillo.

AW:

So it didn't do you any good. So did you have? What did you do between the Yangtze and the Lee River?

BR:

Okay. Well we went down the Yangtze and that was—that took probably—I think it was maybe four or five days. It wasn't a whole week, but it was four or five days and then we ended up going to Guilin. We had done—well, wait a minute. You know, we—I'm trying to think when we did Tibet because we did Tibet before we did Guilin. We must—I think we did the Yangtze stuff and then did the Tibet and when we went to Tibet, we had to—we had to store our luggage at the hotel we were staying in and we had to only take a backpack to Tibet because when we flew to Tibet—

AW:

Small airplanes?

BR:

The airplane was going to be smaller and the luggage, you needed to take carryon luggage because it was easy for the luggage to get lost or something. So when we went to Tibet, it was an amazing trip because I had been to Egypt. No, I hadn't been to Egypt. No, I hadn't been anywhere yet. I had—we went to Tibet and I noticed the mountains and the snow and the architecture of the city and we didn't go—the thing when you go to China, Tibet, places. Unless you get in the back countries, where they don't let the tourists really go, the cities are huge. Like, they're millions of people. Like, the dumpling factory—place. Those people. The McDonald's that Amanda went to and the movie that Amanda went to. The McDonald's in China is like a city block two or three stories high. You know? It's like, they're huge. The places are huge because they serve so many people. You know, you don't go to a tiny little wall restaurant anywhere. They're huge places with huge crowds of people. Amanda went to the movie and it was like thousands. It wasn't—it was huge. She went when I was in the hospital in China. So it's like—the hospital was huge. The—everything. It's just, there's nothing small in the cities. Maybe in the villages, which is where I would've liked to have gotten to go. But that's the back country

that you don't get to go to because you only get to go to the places that they allow you to go in China and I told Amanda, I said, "Amanda, do not open your mouth politically in this country. You just keep your mouth shut about things. This is not a place that you do things like that, and in Tibet, as well." And so we did that. We didn't say anything. The only thing I said in Tibet is I asked the tour guide in Tibet, I said, "How do you feel about foreigners coming over and adopting your children? How do you feel about that?" And I was surprised at his answer.

AW:

Which was?

BR:

Because he said, "Frankly, I'm happy to see the children adopted because I think they will have a better life than they would have here." I thought that was kind of a different answer because I thought they would want their children to have their tradition and everything and some parents are good about that, you know, about making sure that they have—like my niece, her children are half-Korean, she makes sure that they know their Korean side.

AW:

My sister. Ever since they've had their daughter, they have made sure that—

BR:

They have the cultural.

AW:

Yeah, and that's—

BR:

And that's important.

AW:

Sure it is.

BR:

Because children need to have that. They don't need to be Americanized. In China, unfortunately, I could see where it was being more Americanized and even Tibet, you know.

AW:

Well, McDonald's, for one thing.

BR:

Well McDonald's, or when you go to a Hard Rock Café in the hotel you're staying in in Tibet and see all these—

AW:

In Tibet? A Hard Rock Café?

BR:

Yes, in the hotel you're staying in with all these movie star's pictures. American movie stars. I'm thinking, okay. And you go to the Potala Palace and they're talking on a cellphone. You know, you're thinking, Okay. There's something wrong with this picture. But—

AW:

When I was in the air, in the pub that the patron—Buck's idea, the patron saint of cowboy poetry, Robert Burns. This was the pub that he favored and so I wanted to go there while I was in Scotland and I went in and you know what the overriding choice of beers was among the locals?

BR:

Budweiser or Coors?

AW:

Coors. It was infuriating. What's wrong with you people?

BR:

Yeah, see? Yeah, and that—when I would see these beautiful Chinese women wearing the western clothes and trying to make their faces whiter with the makeup and getting their eyes operated on so they weren't slanted and I'm thinking, to me, there is nothing any more beautiful than an Asian woman with that coal black hair. That beautiful colored skin that they have. Just that really wonderful skin and their perfect bodies and I'm thinking, why? And those beautiful silk costumes with the frogs and you know, coats and embroidery and I think, why would you want to even begin to wear some stupid, you know, suit that some designer created? Of course, you can get anything made in China. A lot of those very wealthy men go over and get their suits made cheap in China and they can turn them out in no time at all. It's amazing. With every kind of fabric in the world, but it's like, oh anyway.

AW:

How long were you in Tibet?

BR:

I think we were only in Tibet—we only got to see—well we were only in Lhasa. Lhasa? I think

that—we were only in the city. We did get to go out to the country and see a yak because we couldn't find one in the city and so that was an adventure and that was really fun because we got to get out away from the city.

AW:

Yeah. Did you drink any yak milk?

BR:

I drank Yak tea. Yak tea.

AW:

What is yak tea?

BR:

Yak. It was Yak—Yak milk tea. That's what I drank and it was good.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And I ate pickled Yak tongue and it was good. I love tongue.

AW:

Yeah, I do too.

BR:

And it was good. And I—well Tibet, I've got to explain about Tibet. You know, we flew in, but we had to drive over the mountains to get to Lhasa and there were mudslides. They had had a lot of rain and weather and luckily, we didn't caught in a mudslide, but there had been. You could see where, you know, all around. And there were flags. You know, they had flags everywhere. All those flags. All those different colored flags with the symbols and everything. They're everywhere. All over the mountains. In the high, highest peaks of the mountains and the white scarves that they give you when you go to the Potala Palace. The summer palace, the winter palace. The Dalai Lama scarf. White scarf. They're everywhere. And of course, you have to buy the beads and supposedly, they're blessed by the Dalai Lama. The wooden beads and I bought the books that show the different stupas and all of that. But Tibet is so much like New Mexico, except the mountains are higher and there was more snow on the mountains.

AW:

So when you say "Like New Mexico," are you talking about the arid, desert-like—

BR:

I'm talking about the terrain of the land and the feel of the land and the skies. You know, the blue skies in the clouds and the architecture of the buildings. Everything is made out of yak-dung and straw. It's their adobe. The Potala Palace is out of yak-dung and straw.

AW:

How do you spell Potala? Do you?

BR:

Oh, Lord. P-o-a—I think it's P-o—P-o-t-a-l-a. I think. I've got a book on it. I'll show it to you. Anyway, it's amazing to go through both of the palaces because they're so old. There's this pool. This manmade pool stretching out where you can see the palace in the water, you know, and it's pretty amazing. Pretty stunning. And there are over three hundred, I think, rooms in it. We didn't get to see everything. We went through part of it, but we went through—you know, you're climbing a lot of stairs and you're going through the rooms they have to show you and you get to see the Dalai Lama's study and some of the places that he lived in or visited in. No longer there, but you know, they showed you all the different things and they have—what?

AW:

So did they talk about the Dalai Lama on your tour?

BR:

Not that much. No.

AW:

P-o-t-a-l-a. You're right. I just looked it up.

BR:

Yeah. And you know, they had the things for sale. They don't talk about him. Of course, they have a different one there that the real Tibetans don't honor as the real Dalai Lama. But, you know, they have their substitute one there. And the people—the thing, they have the prayer wheels all over the city and the prayer wheels are beautiful. You know, those round wheels that people go by and hit, you know, as they're walking by and they have the little—I have a little miniature one that I brought back. They're big copper, the ones in the city in different strategic places are big copper wheels and you hit them and go by and they have the prayers and everything in them and mine has, you know—you whirl it around and it's just a nice little thing to have laying around your living room to show if somebody wants to see it and I like it. And anyway, you see the people making their pilgrimage. Their pilgrimages. And a lot of them are dressed western style. Particularly, the men. Some of the women are wearing the traditional outfits and they wear these dark woolen clothes that have these big sleeves where the air can go

through, all the way through, with these brightly woven aprons in all different colors, you know, that wrap around the darker—I guess it would be kind of like a big loose jumper because they keep you warm in the winter, but cool in the summer. You know, when you wear clothes that don't touch you anywhere, that's a way to stay—and that was the same in Egypt. That, I found out later. A lot of people wear what they wear. But the people in Tibet reminded me of the Native Americans in New Mexico. They were tall and slender and stately. They wore coral and turquoise and silver. They had—in their hair, and ribbons. And they had that beautiful, dark, black hair twisted in different ways with the ribbons and the coral and the turquoise, and everywhere—the buildings are like the adobe buildings that are square with the flat rooftops and the wooden windows. The only difference. The difference in the adobe color is it's more of a grey color with dark blue trim. Wooden trim. Scalloped in different ways, sometimes, around the windows. But painted with pretty designs, you know? Like, that's what reminded me so much of New Mexico. You know, just the style of the different homes and things that you would see with the wooden windows that were painted with floral designs and different pretty designs and the woven blankets and pillows. Now, in New Mexico, they didn't have the silk things.

AW:

Right.

BR:

With the beautiful embroidered silk things. Like, when you would go to the monasteries, they would have these beautiful, embroidered silk things with tassels hanging from the different columns of wood that were holding up the monastery. But the thing that you could see is where the Chinese had come in and sanded the paintings off of where the parts that hold the columns together, you know? You'd have those cross bars that would be hand painted and you would have—you would see hand painted—the history of the people. You know, they would paint. In the monasteries, they would paint all these things that meant stuff to the people.

AW:

What did your Chinese tour guide, the one that knew Beijing, but not the smaller places? What did he say about Tibet? Did he go with you on this part?

BR:

I don't—he didn't. The Tibetan guy took us through Tibet.

AW:

Do the Tibetans call themselves Chinese? Or do they call themselves Tibetans?

BR:

They call themselves Tibetans, but you could see Chinese soldiers everywhere and with guns,

which was kind of disconcerting to me and we met a girl—where did we meet her? I think we met her in Hong Kong later, who was Tibetan, and we had—we saw these different things that we had seen in Tibet that she was selling at the market and bought some things from her. They make beautiful woven—I have some. I'll show you. With beads and different and rocks and different things and I didn't even get to tell you about the rocks in China. What they do with rocks is they create art with rocks.

AW:

Yeah. We talked. You talked about that.

BR:

Did I talk about that?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

Okay. Well and that's what is just so fascinating. I love natural things. You know, wood rocks, metal, whatever. I love natural products and it's so hard to find them anymore in this country. But you know, they make use of so many—even the papers. The parchments and everything are so much prettier in places that you go where they use things like that and in places where they use real napkins and have real cotton sheets and things like that. It's still nice to see those things. Anyway, and it was that way in Tibet. We stayed at this really nice place. It was an older hotel that had the Hard Rock Café in the basement, but when you walked in, they had this whole—it was only a two-story building, but it had—all the way around, there was this—what do you call those things? Mezzanine, I guess. Where you walk all the way around and you could walk all the way around that mezzanine and look down and see, you know, what people were doing on the first floor. But they had these beautiful hand woven rugs and tapestries and things hanging over the—it was like a—it was like my deck. That fence, sort of.

AW:

Rail?

BR:

Rails, you know, around. Wooden rails. Real wooden rails all the way around with—and they had—they have a turquoise, but it's a lighter turquoise there and they had a lot of turquoise and coral jewelry, but it's a lighter blue turquoise. It's not as dark of blue as the New Mexico and I didn't see any green turquoise at all. But just beautiful things. So well-made and a lot of silver. So I guess that's from all the mountains having those different things that they mine, which you don't ever hear about, but anyway, it's there and I just thought the people were regal and we

actually got to go and visit a real home in Tibet, which was very interesting. They had the old ovens, like they have in Mexico, where they bake.

AW:

[inaudible] [3:07:17]?

BR:

Uh-huh. The breads and they bake the things and the Yak butter tea is what we had. The Yak butter tea. And we had the Yak butter tea there and it was good. I liked it. And they use everything from the Yak. You know, they use the wool. They use the meat. The bone. Everything. And they have candle in the—you can light candles and you can give money. They have all these—when you go through these, the palaces, and you go through places, they have all these—they call them stupas, where different remains of different people are buried and people are giving money. You know, these people go in and they lay on the ground all the way up to the palaces. They're lying on the ground and kind of just crawling.

AW:

Crawling, yeah.

BR:

And it's amazing to see all that, you know?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And to see that kind of faith being practiced. They, too, have markets everywhere, where they have things that they want to sell that people want to buy and I guess they're really proud of their boy children because when Amanda and I were walking out of the Potala Palace, down the stairs, there was this old couple and we were walking down and they had this little child. Looked to be maybe a couple of years old and when we got to where they were sitting on these steps, they opened up the flap of his clothes and showed us his penis.

AW:

To let you know he was a little boy.

BR:

And started laughing, you know? Like, it's a little boy. Like, that was really something to be proud of, you know? Because he had a penis.

AW:

Yeah, can't you dress him in blue and we'll know?

BR:

Yeah. Yeah. And but we had an Indian couple on that trip.

AW:

From India?

BR:

Huh? From India. And she was a lawyer and he was a stock broker and they lived in New York and they travelled everywhere. They were going to go to Africa after they left the China trip and you could tell they were affluent, definitely. And so this girl was talking about how she was reading this book about this doctor and we did notice this. I didn't get to tell you about the ugly part of China, but the ugly part of China is you got to see these little children walking around totally naked. Nothing on. Through weeds and grass and stuff and seeing the outdoor toilets, which they smelled like outdoor toilets. Like, you know, just awful smell because we were on this bus that wasn't air conditioned. Second bus.

AW:

Wasn't your nice bus, yeah.

BR:

You just got to see—and you got to see the poverty side of China, which we got to see accidentally.

AW:

Because of the fire?

BR:

Yeah. They didn't want us to see that, but we saw it because we went in such a roundabout way and saw the pitiful neighborhoods and the pitiful stores and all of that. Not the nice things that you see in Beijing and the hotels. It was all the pitiful people, which gave you a whole different picture. But what this girl said is that there was this doctor that she was reading about that had learned to replace the penises of little children that had had their penises bitten off by animals.

AW:

Oh, because they're running around in the—oh my gosh.

BR:

Because they are running around without any clothes on, you know? And it's like pigs and whatever animals are around that.

AW:

Geez.

BR:

That sounded terrible to me.

AW:

Yeah. Who would've thought that was a risk?

BR:

Yeah. She was talking about it, you know, that he was able to remake them or something. I don't know. I just thought that was pretty interesting.

AW:

Oh, gosh.

BR:

But I hadn't even—it's something I'd never thought about, to tell you the truth.

AW:

Me either, but now, I won't be able to forget it.

BR:

Yeah. I know. And so, but, like I said, the one child thing, they do try to enforce that and they do try to enforce—the other thing they try to enforce in China, because of Madame Mao, basically, is not doing the foot thing anymore.

AW:

Yeah, the binding.

BR:

Yeah, the bindings, because she didn't allow her feet to be bound. They tried and she took the bindings off and wouldn't do it and so they outlawed the bindings. But then we saw this documentary when we were there on foot binding and it's still practiced in the rural parts of China, where they don't enforce it. They interviewed these men that were married to these and these were in the farms, you know, in the rural parts where these women are having to go around

with their [feet] bound to feed the pigs and the, you know, do the chores. Now, if you are of royalty or of wealth and you don't have to walk very far, you know, it's very painful. You can imagine. You know how much it hurts your feet to just be wearing shoes.

AW:

It's the perfect parallel to the corset in America.

BR:

Exactly.

AW:

You know, the corset. The poor people wanted it because it made them more like people who were rich and didn't have to bend over.

BR:

Yes, yes.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

It just—but it's—you know, it's so crazy what people have done culturally, mainly with the women, you know? Like people that wear the neck rings and the just awful things and do the clitoris cuttings and you know, all these different things. It's horrifying, to me. But the foot bindings. We went to a museum in China and saw—you know, the men call them their little lotus blossoms. That's what they call those little bound feet and I have to tell you, Amanda has little feet. The women in my family—I used to have little feet. I don't anymore, but I used to. But they have little feet and little hands and they're little people, basically, from my dad's side. My mom wasn't that tall either. She was five-two. But all of my dad's sisters were like four foot or maybe even shorter and my sister, Drew, was—she was barely—she never was five foot. And she claims she was, but she never made it to five foot and shrunk, you know, as she got older to about four foot ten, I think, when she died, but she always claims she was five foot, but she wasn't. But she was taller than our aunts, my dad's sisters. So they were tiny little women and the feet, you know, of the women that had their feet bound, they were like tiny little feet and they had all these handmade shoes that were beautiful. I mean, they were embroidery. They were made out of leather and silks and wools and laces and just beautiful—those whole beautiful array of these lotus blossom shoes, but I'm thinking how painful that would be, but when they interviewed the men that were married to these women, they said, "Oh. We wouldn't marry any woman that didn't have their feet bound." Like, you know, macho men who were not considering how painful it would be for the women and the women, you know, they could talk

about the pain. They never get rid of the pain walking on those pitiful shoes with their feet bound like that. You know, just having to feed the hogs and the pigs, trying to do that and the chores that they would have to do on a farm, I couldn't even imagine. So I'm grateful to Madame Mao, even though—I wish I would've read her book before I went to China because she really did do a lot of mean—more mean things. I don't know if she did more mean things than Mao, but you know, Mao, when you read about Mao, he may have, to the Chinese people, you know, he had to swim across the river every day to show how virile he was. But they don't know that he had to have a virgin every day to keep his virileness going and that he died of syphilis and there's no telling how many young beautiful women that he infected because of his lust for—I don't know. It's just—I was pretty turned off by—I didn't read it before I went, but I did read it when I came back and I'm sure it was never available ever in China.

AW:
Right. Probably not.

BR:
And probably isn't too available here in America. I don't know.

AW:
Let's take a little short break and we do need to get to the hospital before we get done today so.

BR:
Okay.

AW:
All right.

BR:
All right.

AW:
Just a short break.

BR:
A short break, okay. [Pause in Recording]

AW:
Okay. We're back after two bites of cantaloupe and—

BR:

A little more tea.

AW:

One more sip of water.

BR:

We're in Tibet still and Tibet, the people were—they—when we went out away from Lhasa, out over the hills and dales, we got off the—we even got off of the country roads. We got—we were going across the prairies.

AW:

Really?

BR:

Yeah, in our bus.

AW:

Really?

BR:

And I'm sure those people had never seen a bus, a tour bus, of people because they were walking over the hills to come and see what was going on.

AW:

Surely, that couldn't have been the first tour bus to come around.

BR:

I don't think they had seen one before.

AW:

Really?

BR:

Because I don't know if people really ventured out away from the city to find a Yak before because we had—

AW:

So you had to make your guys, your tour people take you out to a Yak hunting?

BR:

To see a Yak, uh-huh. Yak hunting. He actually had to go do some calling to try to find somebody that had a Yak for us to see. And so—and these people started coming—I'm telling you, they were walking over the hills with their little kids in their traditional outfits, by the way. And the little kids were holding onto the legs of their grandparents. It was more like grandparents than parents. These little kids. And peeking behind the legs to see us because they—I don't think they'd ever seen. Anyway, so—

AW:

They'd really thought it funny if they'd found out you'd came all that way just to see a Yak.

BR:

Yeah. Well we went in and they gave us Yak butter tea and there was this little baby. Perfectly naked. Laying on one of these beds, which was like a handmade bench that you could tell was not really that soft—you know, it wasn't that soft. They probably had a little bit of a mattress sort of thing made out of straw or something. I don't know. But over were these beautiful hand woven blankets and pillows and quilts and the little baby was laying there. I don't think it could've been more than a couple of months old. Perfectly naked, but she had a silk scarf laying over her that you could see through. It was a red silk scarf that you could see through to keep the flies off of her because they didn't have any windows.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

It was like they were all open. I don't know what they do in the wintertime.

AW:

Probably hang skins or something.

BR:

I have no idea, but they were.

AW:

At one time, people would've done that.

BR:

It was all open and the flies were coming in and flying out all around.

AW:

And so the silk cloth was like a little tiny mosquito net.

BR:

Just a little thing to keep—yeah, like a little mosquito net to keep it off the baby and it was like the people that were in the house at the time were like the grandparents. Like the younger couple were off working somewhere and they were tending the baby. And but anyway, and they didn't speak English. None of them spoke English. The tour guide spoke whatever language, you know, to tell them and get them and the man went out. We kind of—you know, they brought some chairs out and we kind of sat outside some and the people came around. There were several different people coming around. Kind of making a little circle around us, with us and none of them sang—you know, they were being pretty shy. Just observant, mainly. And we were just kind of sitting around kind of waiting and then this man came with this Yak that had the saddle with the tassels with all the bridal and the woven colorful everything. He was dressed for a parade. I mean, it was like, Hey. Look at me. I am the star of the show, you know? It was. I love the—I just loved all the woven and the paintings on the walls and anyway, so you could get—you could get on the Yak and have your picture taken if you paid money, you know, and of course, Amanda wanted to get on the Yak. I did not. I opted, but we paid the money for Amanda to get on the Yak and I have a picture of her on that Yak and he's a fine looking Yak. So we did get to see our Yak and then we got to go to this wonderful—well first of all, in the hotel that we stayed in, we had a wonderful restaurant that we got to go eat in and the restaurant was like walking into a harem. That's the way I felt because you had these little conversation groups with these little couches with the little tables, with the beautiful rugs and pillows around—all the way around the little table, and you had these paintings all the way around the room of the people, you know. Just hand painted the whole thing, all the way around the wall and you had these beautiful silk streamers hanging down like they had in the monastery and you just felt like you were in this special place. Like you were a harem girl or something, you know? That you'd walked into and the food was really good. I don't even remember what we had, but we—

AW:

Was Tibetan food similar to Chinese food or was it?

BR:

No. They had more meat things. They had the Yak, which tasted a lot like beef. And they had rabbit and they had pork and they had—it was—you know, they had more of a hearty kind of—at least, where we went, than the Chinese people. And the other thing I noticed about the Tibetan people, they had beautiful teeth.

AW:

Really?

BR:

Absolutely beautiful teeth. Yeah, and so I just thought they were regal and I didn't get to talk to hardly anybody because they didn't speak English, but it was, you know, through hand motions and things, you could figure out some things, but we went to this restaurant that wasn't in the hotel. We went to a different place that also had—they have the conversation groups and the lighting was low and they had these tiny, little glasses. These beautiful little like crystal glasses that had been—what do they call it whenever they have a design on them and it's probably done with some kind of chemical?

AW:

Oh. You mean, like an etched?

BR:

Etchings. That's—yeah. With etched glasses. These beautiful little pink crystal glasses, you know, like lacquer glasses and she—the waitress, who spoke English, came around with this bottle of stuff and poured a little glass of each of these things—glass full of these things and said, "You have to drink it in one gulp." And I don't know what it was. It was some sort of alcoholic thing, you know?

AW:

A liquor of something.

BR:

Liquor. And I think it had anise. It was like a licorice thing. And I don't think it was—it may have been similar to the Greek. Whatever that Greek one is.

AW:

Ouzo?

BR:

Ouzo, yeah. But she said you had to gulp it down.

AW:

That was before the meal?

BR:

Um-hm. And I took a sip and there wasn't any—I mean, it was like drinking straight, heavy alcohol.

AW:

So you didn't do yours?

BR:

I didn't do mine. Amanda did hers and she took mine and did mine, as well. And so I thought, Okay. But anyway, it was very strong whatever it was. But I don't like licorice either so that was another thing. The taste wasn't to my taste either. I might've been able to do it if I'd liked the taste of it. Anyway, but we got to order whatever we wanted from the menu and I'm the one that ordered—everybody thought I was crazy because I ordered the pickled Yak tongue. I think Amanda ordered the rabbit and somebody else ordered something else and we all took turns tasting the different things and it was all really good. Everything tasted really good and they had like root vegetables that were cooked and you know, kind of a hearty kind of a meal and I don't know if it was just at that one place that we went that served that kind of thing or not. But it was meant for you to sit around and have a conversation, enjoy the meal, take your time.

AW:

Not like the dumpling house?

BR:

Not like the dumpling house in China. It was to enjoy and when we went to the monastery in Tibet, it was like listening to the drummings and the singings of the monks and you know. The one thing in China that I didn't tell you about that I loved was going to where they make the silk rugs and it's all the women making the silk rugs and it's tiny little weavings and they sit on the floor. The older women sit on the floor and start the rugs and they sing the whole time.

AW:

Oh, really?

BR:

They're singing.

AW:

Even while you're there watching?

BR:

Yes, they sing while they work and they sit on the floor not very comfortably. They're just sitting. I don't know if they even have a pillow on the floor, but they're sitting on the floor doing the warping and the weaving and singing and that's the beginning of the rugs and they cannot work past about forty years old because it's too hard on their eyes. You know, they wear out their eyes doing it and so the younger girls are the ones. By the time they get to where they can't

do it on the floor any more, the younger girls, the rugs are hanging on the wall where they're shuttling back and forth, back and forth, with the designs of the silk rugs and they are walking on a wooden plank over a concrete floor. Women are sitting on the concrete floor. The girls' wooden plank is up about this high.

AW:

About three feet? Two feet?

BR:

Yeah, about two. Maybe a little over, but at least two feet. Plank is about this wide.

AW:

Foot and a half.

BR:

Foot and a half wide. A log here. Cut. Log here. Cut. Log there.

AW:

On either side of the plank?

BR:

Huh?

AW:

On either side of the plank?

BR:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

I don't think they're nailed down. I didn't see any nails. Laying on the logs. The girls are walking back and forth on this—there's only one girl to a plank going back and forth doing the shuttling in her shoes with a heel this high.

AW:

A high heel shoe?

BR:

It's a—it's like those—

AW:

A wooden clog or something?

BR:

Wooden. It's not a clog. It's those total—it is kind of a clog, I guess. Yeah, but it's like a sandal clog, you know, that she has on. Walking back and forth and I'm thinking, what would OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] think of this?

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

If that poor girl fell on that concrete from miss-stepping off that wooden plank. Back and forth. All day long doing a shuttle making absolutely gorgeous silk rugs. The women in the—and there are men in the lacquering places that we went where they do the lacquering and they do the jade things with all the big, you know, the big things and then the little. You can get little things too, which I brought a couple of little things home. Beautiful stuff with all the different colors of jade and the lacquer. Those lacquered things come from the lacquer trees. I didn't realize that, but they put about ten coats of lacquer on every piece before they even begin to put the designs on them. I had no idea that it was so complicated, but it is. It was amazing. So and of course, we went through the wool—I mean, the silk factories and learned about the silk worms and the whole thing and saw all the silk stuff. Which all of this stuff, I know they take you to all of these things so you will buy things and the people probably give the tour people a kickback for taking them there for people to buy, but it was really interesting. Okay. So now, we get through with Tibet and we end up back in Guilin, which is one of the most beautiful tourist places you can go in China, where they have places to stay.

AW:

Spell Guilin.

BR:

It's G-u-i—I think l-i-n. I have some pictures of that too that I can show you, but I think that's kind of how you spell it.

AW:

Yeah. It was once spelled K-w-e-i.

BR:

And pronounced Gui—probably.

AW:

Well no. Now, it's spelled with a G just as you did it. I was just looking it up to see where it was.

BR:

Okay. Is that the right spelling?

AW:

Yeah. G-u-i-l-i-n?

BR:

Yeah. Okay. And it's really a beautiful country with the Lee River and when you are going down the Lee River, of course, you get to see all the farming and the people washing their horses and critters that are pulling their plows and things like that along the river, as well as floating on the Lee and seeing all the boats dumping all their garbage and stuff in the river. And so it's not going to last that long being very pretty and I guess there are still some fish that can live in it because that cormorants was bringing some up, but I don't know how long that's going to last either because Steve Treg [?], he—

AW:

Just looking out for our—

BR:

--He told me once, one time, how long it took for—you know, when people threw things in the water and the sea, how long it took for it to deteriorate back into anything natural.

AW:

Yeah. Well some of it never deteriorates.

BR:

Huh?

AW:

Some of it, like all the plastic.

BR:

Well, the plastic doesn't ever, but we were just talking about bones and you know, things like that.

AW:

Right. Yeah.

BR:

He was telling me because he seemed to know all that stuff. Anyway, so I—it's sad that we're trashing out the planet all over the world, not just in this country.

AW:

Oh no.

BR:

But anyway, we had that nice day and I ended up buying some—you know, the Philippines make such beautiful hand embroidered things and they're one of the few places that make hardanger. I don't know if you know what hardanger is, but it's—you see that [inaudible 03:38:38] right there?

AW:

No. Spell that. H-a-r-d-a-n-g-e-r?

BR:

Uh-huh. Hardanger is an old, old hand crafted thing that people can make.

AW:

Yeah. It looks like lace, but it's not lace.

BR:

It looks—well no, it doesn't look like lace. It's—see how the cutouts are there? That's just a cover over. Don't pay any attention to that, but when you have a real piece of cloth, you have—you stencil a design on it and you embroidery around that design and there will be places that you cut out holes in a design. I know you've seen those. Those old timey things that women used to do when they were making quilts and doing crochet and knitting. Well they still do crochet and knitting, but they don't do hardanger that much anymore and they don't do tatting that much anymore. But you know, when women used to do those handy work things. Well in the Philippines, they still do all that and they had beautiful, like big tablecloths and napkins and everything to match. And they had all these outdoor markets where they wanted you to buy stuff and I was so hot and ready to get home and wash my hair and get out of those hot, sweaty clothes and just relax a little bit before we went to dinner. I wasn't interested in shopping. That's the last thing I wanted to do. But I was looking at those tablecloths and that lady—I kept—she started out with one price and kept coming down, coming down. I kept saying, "No, no." Finally, I just didn't want to deal with it anymore. Started walking away and she ended up selling me two

amazingly beautiful tablecloths with the napkins for fifteen dollars a set and I couldn't turn that down. Of course, that would've been times eight. So she got a deal out of it, I guess. But it was like, hey. It's worth it for these and I still have them and they are really pretty and I do use them. But anyway, that was my experience there and then we got back to the hotel in Guilin and I told Amanda I was going to take a shower and wash my hair and then lay down for a little while before we got dressed to go out for our final meal before we flew back to Hong Kong and off of the mainland. And so she said, "Okay." [Notices someone is at the front door] I wonder who that is. Some man.

AW:

You want me to pause it while you check the front door? [Pause in recording] Okay. Okay. We're in Guilin. You're going to take a shower and have a nap.

BR:

I'm going to take a shower and take a bath. So I get in the shower, wash my hair, the water's getting kind of hot, you know, because I have the hot water on and it's getting hotter as I wash my hair and I start to step out of the shower so I can turn the water off. You know, turn. Get out of the tub and go turn the hot water off and just get out of the tub. And I step—I have one foot up to step over the tub and the other foot, because it is a porcelain tub with nothing in the bottom and I have washed my hair and used the shampoo and the soap and it's just slick like glass and my foot slips. You know, just starts sliding and my body turns a little and I land on the side of the tub on my rib cage.

AW:

On your left side?

BR:

On my left side. And I know immediately that I have done something very wrong because it really hurts and the hot water is still running.

AW:

Oh my goodness. So you're about to be part boiled too.

BR:

So I suck it up. Hold onto my ribs. You know, hold onto my side. Get out of the tub. Turn the hot water off. Turn the water off. Hobble over to the phone because I have told Amanda I'm going to take a shower and do that.

AW:

And a nap.

BR:

And a nap and she has told me that she was going to go down to the office and check her emails. So I call the office for Amanda and they cannot find her so I tell them that I have fallen and [Leaf blower blows] I—they have a hotel doctor.

AW:

Yeah. You may need to speak up a little louder with the blower.

BR:

Okay. I tell them that I have fallen and I need to see the hotel doctor. So the hotel doctor comes. It's a lady that does not have a clue what I have done. Some woman doctor that doesn't have a clue, but thinks I probably need to go to the hospital and then, by then, Amanda comes up. They never found her, but she comes up with this puzzled look on her face wondering what's happened, and I say, "I think I have to go to the hospital to find out what I have done." And so Amanda helps me get my clothes on because I can't dress myself.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

BR:

Because I don't have a torso anymore and we—you know, they call—they call a cab, I think. The cabs in China are like little bitty cars. They're little hard things to get into, you know? And I'm having to get into the backseat of the cab. It hurts to move. It hurts to breathe.

AW:

Yeah. Do they not have an ambulance?

BR:

They didn't call an ambulance. They called a cab. And so here I am in this cab on these rickety roads and we get to the hospital and they—somebody comes out. I think Amanda goes in. Somebody comes out with a rickety wheelchair and they have—the cab has stopped at the wrong building. So this hospital person—

AW:

The wrong part of the hospital?

BR:

Yeah, the wrong part of the hospital.

AW:

Got it. Okay.

BR:

Okay. So this hospital person, who is pushing this rickety cab. I mean, rickety wheelchair on this rickety parking lot. I get in the wheelchair and she manages to hit every single bump.

AW:

Of course.

BR:

Every single bump, it's like torture because I'm in so much pain and Amanda is so frustrated with the way that woman is pushing that wheelchair because she knows how to push wheelchairs and she is so mad at that woman for hitting every rut because she can see the look on my face. I'm not saying anything, but I—you know, I don't say anything when I'm in pain or when I'm really sick. I just want to be quiet and be left alone and that's the way I wanted to be. We got to the right building. They were doing construction at the hospital and they don't have electricity. Now, by then, it's getting to be kind of sunset. So your light is fading some. The only electricity they have are the emergency stuff that they can run a few things on the emergency electricity.

AW:

How are they being a hospital without electricity?

BR:

Well because somebody has cut under the line or something.

AW:

Oh. This was a mistake.

BR:

Yeah, a mistake.

AW:

Got it. Okay.

BR:

They cut the cable. They did something in the construction and so they're temporarily—but they're on their generator or whatever runs when they don't have electricity. And so we go in and they have—we go into this room and they have this little room. Not as big as my dining room. And they have this thing on the wall. If you turn that vertical, that photograph over there.

It wouldn't be quite as big as that photograph. It would be—take. It was, you know, about like this. And they tell me to stand up against that. Put my chin up over it.

AW:

For the x-ray?

BR:

Uh-huh. For the x-ray. And the two doctors stay in the room without any kind of—

AW:

No lead.

BR:

Nothing.

AW:

Oh.

BR:

They're in the room and they turn the x-ray thing on and I am x—my chest is x-rayed and so they tell me—

AW:

But they're speaking English when they?

BR:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

Because the doctors speak English. An educated person in China will speak English. It's others that don't. And so I do that and they say, "Well, it's hard to tell. We think, you know, because we're not sure." And they hold the x-ray up to the window to read because they don't have—

AW:

They don't have electricity.

BR:

No. And so they say, "It's hard to tell. We think you've broken three or four ribs and so we are going to bind you up and then when you get to Hong Kong, you need to go to the hospital there and they'll have better facilities for you." So they bring out this muslin thing that looks like a hula skirt and they wind it around my chest and they weave it in and out. It's like strips. They weave it in and out to hold my chest firm.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

BR:

And it does make it feel better to hold it firm. Now, you have to realize, I'm thirty pounds heavier than I am now, and so I have a lot of overage of the ribcage and so we get back in the cab and go back to the hotel. Needless to say, I do not go to dinner. Somebody sends me up some—I think the hotel sends me up a fruit basket or something and I'm not really hungry. I don't—I'm hurting. I don't want to—I just want to try to get some sleep because we have to catch a plane the next day. Next morning. So I'm—I get in the bed and I do manage to sleep and I wake up in the morning and I think, I think I feel better until I try to move and then I realize, oh no. I don't feel good. Still hurts like hell. So Amanda helps me get dressed. We get in a wheelchair. We go to the bus. We get on the bus. I do not say anything to anyone. I just sit on the bus. Wait until we get to the airport. Get back on the wheelchair. Get to the airport. Get to the plane. Get unloaded from the plane. Get on the plane. Fly to Hong Kong. Get off the plane. Get in the wheelchair. Get through the airport. Get on the bus to get to the hotel. Get to the hotel. Tell them to call an ambulance.

AW:

Yeah, not a cab.

BR:

Not a cab. We get—they call the ambulance—we get in the room first. They call the ambulance. The ambulance comes and the ambulance says, "Well I can't take you to the western hospital because your insurance won't be effective." Now, I don't know that he's looking at the travel insurance and that he has not a clue that I have good insurance from the states that I could go to the western hospital. I don't know that. And I don't feel like talking about insurance and argue—you know, anything like that. So I—"Just take me wherever you need to take me, you know, that my insurance will be good." We get to the hospital and Amanda finds out that we have—that she has to go and get money. Cash money. From her credit card to pay for my hospital stay. Well they take me in, you know, but she's got to go do that before the insurance will pay, you know. And I'm thinking—well I don't know all this because Amanda didn't tell me all this. She didn't worry me with all this. They take me in and I'm—they take me into this emergency room where

I have a muslin drape on this side. A muslin drape on that side. I can't see past the muslin drape. And their bed is, you know, like right there next to me all the way down. It's the women's part of the hospital. Women are separate from the men in the emergency room. And the doctor comes and he speaks English and I say, "I am in so much pain and I have high blood pressure and I know that my blood pressure is going wacko because of the pain." I said, "I need something for this pain. I need for the pain to stop." So he orders a morphine drip and hooks me up to the morphine drip. I barely have the morphine drip—no. Wait a minute. No. They take me to the—first. No. Wait a minute. Let me back up a minute. That doesn't happen yet. I get to the hospital and I'm in the wheelchair and they take me in to the—they don't even take me a bed or anything. They take me up to several floors up on an elevator and Amanda doesn't get to go. She has to wait from wherever they take me in to the emergency. They take me up to where they're going to x-ray me. These two x-ray technicians take me up to the x-ray room. They tell me to hop up on the table.

AW:

Hop up on the table.

BR:

I can't hop up on anything. I am—you know, I struggle to get up on the table. Finally, make it up on the table. No help from them at all. They tell me to lay down. It is so painful to do that and I—you know, very brusque and rude. I lay down and they say, "Turn over." I say, "I can't turn." They—I'm laying on this x-ray table and they have this metal plate that they put under, you know. Have—they put under me, which is painful. Tell me to turn over. I say, "I can't turn over." And they pull on my arm. Pull me over on that metal plate with my broken ribs. That is the only sound I made and I screamed. It hurt so bad.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

I screamed. That's the only scream I made. And they x-rayed me and then, you know, got back in the wheelchair and I was in all this pain. And that's when I went back and the doctor showed up and he ordered the morphine drip and he had just hooked me up to the morphine drip and I was laying there waiting on it to kick in and these two buffoons came back with their little gurney and they said, "Get up." Said, "You're too fat and we can't tell from the x-ray. We're going to have to redo it." I looked at them and I said, "I'm not moving until this morphine kicks in." And that doctor—thank God that doctor was there. He shook his head and said, "They're wrong." You know. And they walked off. I never went back to that x-ray department again. I never knew how many ribs I had broken. I never knew anything except I wanted to get out of that hospital as quickly as I could because I knew that my germs didn't match their germs and I

knew—and then I was in this room where I couldn't see anything and everything was noisy. Everything was rattily and noisy and loud. And when I would—when I was on this morphine drip, I was like dancing in fields of flowers. It was wonderful. It was just—I was dancing.

AW:

You see why people get addicted.

BR:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And then I would wake up and I would think, oh no. That was the dream. This is the nightmare. I am in a Chinese hospital where I can't see anything. I don't know how damaged I am and I may end up not making. I may not be able to get back to my deck and watch the butterflies and listen to the birds. You know, that's really all I wanted to do and so I was on the morphine drip for three days, but sometimes, you know like—

AW:

What are they doing for you during these three days?

BR:

Nothing.

AW:

Nothing?

BR:

They wouldn't even help me with a bedpan. They—I was American. I was an old lady. They were very leery of me, you know, all the help. Particularly, you know, the nurses and the doctors could speak English. The night help didn't have a clue about anything and couldn't speak anything. You just had to motion. But I was in this emergency room and they would have all these people come in and there was one lady that they brought her in and she was screaming. Screaming her head off.

AW:

This was a patient?

BR:

I guess.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

I never got to see her. She was a screaming lady and she had—she was screaming and I thought—she was right in the bed right next to me and they were doing—I don't know what they were doing, but she was screaming and I thought, Oh my gosh. There's somebody that's going to die right next to me, you know, because that's exactly the way she sounded. You know, because she was screaming her lungs out. Bloody screams for it seemed like a very long time.

AW:

She had probably just gone to the x-ray guys. That's probably—yeah.

BR:

Maybe. But what I found out later was—I don't even know how I found this out. She had hemorrhoids. That's—I thought she was dying. I thought she was going to die any minute by the way she sounded and she had hemorrhoids. I'm sure they hurt, but oh my gosh. She was just making such an issue of it and Amanda would come to see me and I would say, "Amanda, you have got to get me out of this hospital. You have got to get me someplace."

AW:

Like the western hospital.

BR:

Where I can sleep. You know, these people coming in all hours of the night screaming. You know, I said, "You've got to talk to the doctor and get me out." So she goes and talks to the doctor and then they move me to a room with a young girl who has had a hyster—not a hysterectomy. An appendectomy. Who has lost her baby. She lost her baby in the birthing process and then had to have an appendectomy on top of that.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

So it's this young couple that have lost their baby and she's had to have this surgery and he comes in and in the Chinese hospital, the family has the option of bringing the customers—I mean, the clients.

AW:

Patients.

BR:

The patients their meals so they don't have to pay for them. And so the husband was bringing the meals and they're bringing me stuff, but I don't want anything, really, to eat. And anyway, she—this is a sweet couple, but I feel—you know, it's very sad. It's a very sad situation. And so Amanda comes to see me and I say, "You have got to get me out of this hospital." So she talks to the doctor again and they move me upstairs to a post-operative unit with all women who have had surgeries. I don't know what kind. All kinds, I guess. In this room with all these women who are healing from their surgeries and they put me up next to this brick wall that has a window, but the window is so high that I can only see the tops of the buildings and the sky. And the TV side—the TV is there on the wall and I can see the side of the TV. I can hear the TV, but I can only see the side of it. But it is a hospital bed that can be raised and so I ask—well because I've asked the night help to help me with my pillow and the poor lady nearly killed me because she doesn't know, you know. And I can't tell her that she's hurt—you know, trying to hold me up while she does the pillow and I can't tell her she's hurting me more and so I don't ask her anything at night anymore. I wait until the day nurse gets there and I say, "Will you roll me up? Put this bed up as high as it will go so I don't have to move that much since I don't have a chance to get out of bed." I thought, I am not going—

AW:

You were planning an escape?

BR:

I thought, I am not going to use bed pans anymore. I am going to get myself up out of bed and I am going to walk to the bathroom. So I'm up and I only have to move a little bit to sit up. It takes me a while and I'm like the monkey in the zoo because all these women are watching me. I'm the only American. It takes me a while, but I manage to sit up. Turn my body around. Hang my feet off the bed. And the woman across the room, on the other side of the room, shakes her head and says, "Very good." [AW laughs] And so I slide out of bed and I walk to—

AW:

Is any of this funny to you at the time?

BR:

No, but it is hilar—it's funny now. So I walk to the bathroom. I walk down the hall and I see all of these people up and down the hall that I'm walking down with—under these covered oxygen things. All up and down. Men in the men's part. Women in the women's part. I do not know that they have—

AW:

SARS [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome]?

BR:

SARS in China at that time.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

But I know that there's people in that hospital that have all these respiratory things and that I am very subject to something respiratory and I don't need to be in that hospital, you know, with their germs and my germs not matching. So I go down. I get to the bathroom and I walk into the women's portion of the door and they've got two stalls and they're tiny little stalls because Chinese women are little and there's nothing. There's commodes. There's no bars. There's nothing. There's no way I can negotiate sitting on one of those toilets and get back up because I don't have a torso. So I walk out and there's the handicapped stall which has some bars, which has a toilet, but it is a stall. It is outside. It is a stall for either men or women and it is a stall.

AW:

So it's public.

BR:

It is public. You know, there's no covering around it. I stand there and I look at that stall and I say, "Bette Ramsey, suck it up. You are never going to see any of these people again in your whole lifelong. Get in there and use that bathroom." And so I do and I do that from then on until I can finally get enough chutzpah and I usually wait until Amanda comes so she can help me because she has to help me. I can't. I can't dress myself. I can't wash the parts of my body that I can't get to easy. I have to have her bring me those muumuus that I bring that I have and hold my hands up and let her dry me off and let her pull those muumuus over my head. That's the way I have to do for a while, you know.

AW:

How long?

BR:

Well until about the last week I was in the hospital.

AW:

Well I mean how long were you in that hospital?

BR:

I was in there for two weeks.

AW:

Two weeks.

BR:

About two weeks. And but the latter part of the two weeks, I could—oh, and I could go into the women's restroom. It was difficult, but I could. They didn't have any place to wash your hands, you know, so I would go out. They had a sink outside and that was my one, my one good, nice thing is to wash my hands in warm water. I loved being able to wash my hands in warm water. And then the nurse came and fussed at me for using the sink that was for the staff only, which was just another put down. Another bad, you know. So by then, I had Amanda bringing me the tea. The chrysanthemum tea and the—and when I was in that women's unit, those women were really nice because I didn't have my—I didn't have all the hospital things. I didn't have—you're supposed to furnish your own toilet paper.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

You're supposed to furnish your own cup to get the hot milk or the hot tea that they give all the patients after everybody leaves and they have the hot buns. The steamed buns with butter, if you want that after everybody leaves, and that's for the patients that pay their way. Pay for the meals. And there's this really pretty Chinese girl that comes to see her mom. The mom is the one that told me—

AW:

Good job.

BR:

Very good. Very good. And I liked them, you know, and they just seem to be sweet people watching me try to—

AW:

Do they speak much English?

BR:

Not much. But that woman spoke some because her daughter spoke fluent English.

AW:

The one that came to visit her?

BR:

That came to visit her and she had several children, but the one daughter. And the one daughter came over to me and said, "I notice you hardly ever eat anything. Aren't you hungry?" And I said, "Well nothing seems to taste good to me right now, you know. I'm just not really very hungry." And she said, "Well what kind of flavors do you like?" And I said, "Chocolate." And she said, "I can bring you anything you want." She said—I said, "You could?" And she said, "This is Hong Kong. You can get anything. Anything you want. What would you like to have?" And I said, "Something chocolate." And she said, "I am going to bring you this wonderful chocolate mousse cake." She said, "So you can have it." And so, I thought, Okay. That sounds wonderful. And so—and then—you know, we talked a little bit. I said, "You speak such good English and you speak it with the right meter and everything. Where did you learn that?" She said, "Oh, I lived—I have a brother that lives in Canada and I lived over there for several years." And she said, "And I like to speak English. I like to practice my English with English speaking people." And I said, "Well that—well good, you know, I'll be glad to speak English to you anytime." And so she brought me this little box and it had this poem on it and the poem was, "Come to me and I will make thee a bed of roses." And it was hard to read because it was just in—the light wasn't that good, you know it was kind of late and the lights in the hospital weren't that good. I was trying to read it and I just barely saw on the box, all the printing on the box. The box said, "Love," you know, on the box and then back behind the "Love," it—I guess that was the name of the place and back behind the box, it had this poem written on it and I was trying to read it with this light, real light tan color, you know, in that bad light. And I got to the place that said, "Bed of roses," and I thought, "Bed of roses." That's the name of the song that Buck wrote for me.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And then I got to thinking and it was my birthday.

AW:

When you got that box?

BR:

Yes.

AW:

Wow.

BR:

And I did not know that and I thought, Buck is thinking about me and it's my birthday and I don't know if I'm ever going to make it home or not so I can see the butterflies on the deck. And I started reading that poem and that chocolate mousse cake not only had chocolate, but it had strawberries and different things and it was really good, but I couldn't eat but just a few bites of it and gave the rest to Amanda. But I said, "Amanda. Do not throw that box away. I'm going to keep that box because I want to know who wrote that poem." And I came home and I wanted to be able to tell that story. I thought, I know everything's going to be okay now. I know, when I got that box and that poem was there and I read that poem about the bed of roses, I thought, Okay. It's going to be okay. And then I decided that, you know, I'd been there with that TV going on and with people having their family come, you know, and stay until ten o'clock at night every night with the TV blaring and all that because nobody in China has television hardly. At that time, they didn't anyway. Not the average person. And so.

AW:

So it was a treat to come to the patient's room and see the TV?

BR:

Huh?

AW:

It was a treat?

BR:

Well I couldn't see the TV.

AW:

No. I mean, for the, you know, families.

BR:

Oh yeah. It was a treat for them to watch the TV and so I decided, you know, I guess I'm going to have to use my mind not to go crazy in this hospital. So I'm just going to have to use my mind to think about other things and being other places, and so that's what I did. But that's after I got the box with the poem on it and I kept that box. Amanda saved that box for me. I gave her the

cake, but she saved the box. I brought that box home and I looked it up and it was—I'm trying to think of his name right now, but I have that whole poem and I have the answer to that poem. You know, it was the guy that wrote the—oh, it was something to the maiden, is the name of the poem. I don't know if it was the farmer to the maiden. To the maid or something was the name—the title of the poem and it was written by a Shakespeare contemporary who some people think wrote some of Shakespeare's stuff.

AW:

I'll see if I can look it up.

BR:

But it's, you know, come to me and I will make thee a bed of roses and blah, blah, blah. It's a very romantic poem and then there's a poem. There's an answer to that poem, which is really pretty funny. You know, that the woman writes back and I don't know who. I can't remember who.

AW:

"The Farmer and the Maiden." Perhaps.

BR:

Is it "The Farmer and the Maiden?"

AW:

No, that's—no, I think that's a different one. That's more modern.

BR:

What's the—look up the "Bed of Roses" poetry. The "Come to me and I will make thee a bed of roses." I think is the—I could have that first line wrong, but it's pretty close.

AW:

[Pause as Andy searches] Christopher Marlow.

BR:

Christopher Marlow.

AW:

"The Passionate Shepherd to his Love."

BR:

Yeah, "To his Love." Yeah.

AW:

Yeah, and that was—that is someone that is often thought of too as a possible source for some of the, at least, some of the plays of Shakespeare.

BR:

Of Shakespeare. Yeah. Christopher Marlow. Yeah. That's the one. Well anyway, there's an answer to that poem, which is pretty funny about her telling him, unh-uh. I'm not going to come and lay in a bed of straw. I don't know. Whatever. But anyway, it's pretty funny. And I have both—I have copies of both of them because I looked it up online to find it. You know, after I'd brought the box home and had that experience. But that was—at the time, I didn't know.

AW:

So how did you get out of the hospital?

BR:

Well I finally told Amanda, "You have to get me out of this hospital." And she told me that the insurance people were giving her a very hard time. Somewhere, after I got better, you know.

AW:

That your insurance here in Texas?

BR:

No, no. Not at—this was—

AW:

The travel?

BR:

The travel stuff. And but I didn't know that's who it was and I told her, I said, "Amanda. You go back and tell those insurance people that are giving you a hard time that I don't feel like arguing with them over insurance. That I'm in a lot of pain and I'm not going to argue with them. I have a lawyer in Texas, and I will be glad for them to talk to my lawyer because I will not hesitate to sue them. If they give you any trouble at all, I am not going to go through this." Because I had already been through all that insurance rigmarole with breast cancer. With them giving me a hard time.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

You know, not wanting to pay for this and me having to pay twenty thousand dollars of my own money for my radiation treatments because of the insurance people. All that stuff. I thought, you know, I'm not doing this again. I am not going to do this with insurance again. And so she went back and told them and then, they didn't give her a hard time anymore. They, you know, came through. But when I got home—

AW:

So, but I mean, but did they move you to a different hospital?

BR:

No. They didn't ever move me to a different hospital. I just told Amanda, "I want you to tell that doctor that I need to go and recuperate in a hotel where I'm not around all these germs. He can make me wait to fly until I'm able." But what I didn't know is that they were afraid that if I flew, that my lung would collapse because they didn't know if one of those bones had punctured a lung and they were waiting on it to heal, you know, a lung to heal so it wouldn't collapse on the plane. I didn't know that at the time, but that's what it was.

AW:

You thought they would've told you.

BR:

Because—yeah. They didn't tell me anything, but so when I finally got to the hotel, Amanda was staying in the hotel. She had moved with another—there was another couple that was staying in Hong Kong that Amanda liked really well.

AW:

That was on your tour?

BR:

That was on our tour and that she kind of went some places with while I was in the hospital, you know, and because they were sightseeing in Hong Kong and doing things and Amanda, that's who she went to the movie with and went out to eat with some and went to the market and all that. And so Amanda was doing touristy stuff in Hong Kong while I was in the hospital. Which she got a better deal than I did.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

But anyway, so we got—and so they had moved to a smaller hotel that was in an area that had like a shopping mall all the way around that you could go out of your hotel room and then you were in this shopping mall that had all these stores and restaurants and all of that, and you didn't even have to get out on the street at all. You could come like those ones in Houston and Dallas and places. So anyway, so we finally got me out with the doctor with Amanda saying, you know, that we would stay in the hotel room until he felt like it was safe for me to travel and he would sign the papers for me to travel. But in the meantime, we—I—he had to say that I had to have a travelling companion because I couldn't fly by myself. I couldn't do anything. And so the insurance had to approve of that and they had to upgrade my travel, you know, so that I could have a decent seat and access, you know, like at least to—if not first class, to business. Yeah.

AW:

Business or whatever.

BR:

And so they had to do all that, you know, and Amanda had—bless her heart—she had to negotiate that. She never wanted to travel with me again, by the way, after that trip.

AW:

Yeah. [Laughter]

BR:

Because she had to fly back to Amarillo with me and stay with me for two or three days. Take me to the doctor's office and the plane trip back home, I did fly business class, but that stewardess fussed at me for going to the bathroom that was the closest, which I didn't know was first class bathroom. I just knew that it was close and I went. I wish you could've seen the look on her face when they brought a wheelchair for me to get into when we landed in San Francisco. I didn't have to say anything for her to feel pretty ashamed of herself for fussing at me for going to that only bathroom.

AW:

First class bathroom. Yeah.

BR:

And so anyway, but yeah. The trip was okay because we had nice seats.

AW:

How long were you in the hotel before you were able to leave?

BR:

You know, I say I was in the hospital two weeks. I think I was in the hospital maybe a week and a half, but I was in the hotel another week. We were over—

AW:

Two or three weeks?

BR:

We were two or three weeks over the time, you know, that we were supposed to be and they had to cover it. But then when I got home, they sent me all this bill. You know, I mean, all this paperwork stuff.

AW:

From China?

BR:

From China.

AW:

Well that's easy.

BR:

Yeah, and I was supposed to interpret it, you know? I mean, they told me, you know, I said—I wrote them back a letter and I said, "Wait a minute." [door opens]

AW:

Let me pause this.

BR:

Yeah, turn that off. [Pause in recording] You know, he was in kindergarten. He'd come help his dad and Buck used to give him a dollar, you know, because he was a good kid that was helping his dad carry things and do things. He's just a good Catholic boy.

AW:

Yeah. We just took a little break while Nick and Bette settled up for some yardwork. So I had asked about how long and you said somewhere around two weeks plus, including the hotel?

BR:

Yeah, the hotel. And when I got back to Amarillo, well when I got back to Amarillo, what had happened to my house while I was gone. I had asked my sister Pat to come and stay and kind of

look over things and she was willing to do that and then Janie Fristo [?] [4:34:58] called and wanted a place to stay and—

AW:

Now, is this because Joe had died or because he was—they were separated?

BR:

No, they were separated. She was already separated from Joe, but she wanted a place to stay and Janie had stayed at my house one time when I had been travelling. I don't remember where I went now, but she took really good care of things. You know, and I came back and everything was fine. This time, she came—well she called and I had told her that my sister, Pat, was going to take care of my house, you know, and that my garage apartment wasn't in any—I don't know. It wasn't rented, I don't think, but it wasn't—I had stored everything. It wasn't in shape for anybody to be staying in it. Whatever. I don't remember what the problem was now, but I think it was just full of stuff and wasn't able, you know, I wasn't able to have anybody out there and so you know, she's a pretty good talker and she talked me into—she said, "Well you know." I said, "I'll talk to Pat and see what she thinks." She had been a good person to stay here before. So Pat said that was okay. That she would stay downstairs and Janie could just stay upstairs and that'd be fine. Well when I got home, Janie had managed to—I don't know what she did to Pat. Pat told me that Janie wanted to use my house to entertain her friends and have Pat do the cooking and the cleaning and you know, all the stuff. Dishwashing, entertaining. Pat wasn't willing to do that and so Pat called her son and had him come take her home and so that left Janie here by herself. I didn't know Janie was getting involved in a romance and so her romantic interest smoked cigars. They drank a lot and you know, it was like, I came home. The house smelled like cigar smoke. The dishes still had food on them from the dishwasher up in the cabinet. The—they had taken—they had had the electrician take the yard light off of the—that I have on purpose out there. You know, that motion light, so I can see when I walk down the—just things like that. Oh, and I had the bottle of wine that I got from you when you did the—

AW:

Charlie Goodnight.

BR:

Charlie Goodnight stuff. They had drunk the wine and thrown the bottle away. I couldn't—and I was saving that bottle for something special. And you know, just things like that, without—not offering my car. Someone had spilled like a latte or something on the carpet.

AW:

So she was driving your car too?

BR:

Oh yeah. She was driving my car too.

AW:

Oh gosh.

BR:

And I had to have five hundred dollars worth of work done on it. Plus, I had to—I never did get the carpet clean like it was supposed to be.

AW:

Oh my goodness.

BR:

It was like, hey. You know, and no offer to pay for anything at all.

AW:

Any remorse?

BR:

No utilities. No nothing. She was supposed to pick us up from the airport when we got in and no one showed. We had to get a ride from the airport home. We were exhausted. We couldn't even—we had to open up all the windows, all the doors. To even be able to stay in the house. It was just—it was a nightmare. And so needless to say, whenever she ever called again to want to stay in the garage apartment or anywhere, unh-uh. But she, I think had gotten on pain pills and I know she drank a lot and who knows? I don't know. I—she ended up kind of—she died two or three years ago and I think she was addicted. Somebody told me she had all kinds of mental issues. I think she got addicted to pain pills and whatever.

AW:

Yeah, well that's sad.

BR:

She was really a neat, smart person that I liked a lot.

AW:

Yeah. I knew her when Buck was alive. I didn't. That's the only time I knew—

BR:

Yeah. And she was great and I really liked her. I still like her, but it was like, hey, you know. I don't need that. At that time, I didn't need anything except—

AW:

Recovery.

BR:

To try to recover.

AW:

So—yeah.

BR:

And when I got back, I had an appointment. Luckily, I had made my summer, you know, appointment. My yearly doctor's appointment with my doctor to go in and get checked. Well and we got home one day and my appointment was the very next day because I was late getting back, you know. Several weeks late getting back from my vacation and so Amanda took me to the doctor because I had a message. I had an appointment. So we went and I went in and I said, "Susan, I don't know what I did to my ribs. They told me I might have three or four broken. I have no idea. All I know is it hurt really bad and I was on a morphine drip for three days and then they gave me this and I don't know what it is. I showed her the pill and she didn't have a clue what it was either. You know, for pain. My heart doctor knew immediately what it was and it was Tylenol. That's what I had for my pain was Tylenol and that's it. So luckily, I have a high pain tolerance and I didn't need any more than that.

AW:

Well and they didn't do any surgery because you know, you can bleed out with Tylenol if they don't know it.

BR:

Yeah. Well and so and I was on blood thinner anyway. You know, for my heart stuff. So anyway, Janie. I mean, not Janie. Susan sent me upstairs to the x-ray lab [phone vibrates] and the x-ray technician. X-rayed me.

AW:

I don't think I know anybody in Kingston, Surrey County, Jamaica. Sorry.

BR:

And he came out and he said, "What in the world did you do?" And he said—I said, "Well I fell

on a side of a bathtub.” He said, “That must’ve really hurt.”

AW:

[Laughter] Well, yes.

BR:

And I said, “Well, as a matter of fact, it did.” So he walked the x-rays down to Susan, which I didn’t know. Amanda—you know, he just missed me and Amanda. We left and Susan called me in. You know, we went out and waited for a little bit. She called me in and she said, “Bette, when the x-ray technician walks your x-rays down to you, you know your patient has a problem.” She said, “I want to show you this.” And she had those—that x-ray up, you know, where you could see it.

AW:

She didn’t have to put it on the window.

BR:

No. She had it up where you could see it and she said, “You have managed to break every single rib on your left side.”

AW:

Wow.

BR:

And she said, “And they were broken.” You know, not just cracked. Broken. She said, “I was going to try to put you in a brace, but I’ve got to call a lung man and find out.” She said, “I’m not sure what I can do yet.”

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

And so she did and she came back and said, “Bette, this is just going to take time. You are just going to have to let this heal itself.” She said, “You do have blood in your lung. I don’t know if it’s from a puncture wound.”

AW:

Or all that Tylenol.

BR:

Or if it's from the—you know, the bleeding.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

You know, the internal bleeding from—said, “It’s going to have to self-absorb and it’s going to take time,” and it did take time. It took two years for me to get over that fall. I could not. My niece came that spring or summer and planted my pots for me because I couldn’t do anything. I could go back to work and I did after a couple of weeks of being here. I thought, well I can go sit in my chair at work as easy as I can sit here and so I did. You know, I went back to work and went to work, but it took me two years before I could really do the things that I normally do and that was a very long time.

AW:

Yeah. My goodness. All right. Well your trip to China has worn me out. [Laughter]

BR:

Well it’s time for us to quit anyway.

AW:

Yeah, it is.

BR:

Because you and Amanda need to—

AW:

Yeah. If we can. I don’t know how much time I’ve got for that either, but thanks and we’ll—after I turn this off, we will talk about topics for our next time. I do. Amanda said she’d talk to Selden Hale and so I’d like to come back up when I can and interview him too so.

BR:

Yeah. You need to do that.

AW:

Yeah. Sooner rather than later, probably. All right. Well thanks again and remind me to never go to China. Or at least, not to—be careful about the tub.

BR:

China is a wonderful country and it's—

AW:

Well you know where I want to go now, I don't really want to go to China, but I really want to go to Tibet. I want to—

BR:

Tibet is amazing and I don't know. I don't know about it now. I don't know what the politics are.

AW:

They're still difficult, I think.

BR:

It is.

AW:

Yeah.

BR:

Yeah. You know, things change. I have not a clue. I know it's very sad for the people.

AW:

Yeah. All right. On that sad note, thanks.

[End of Recording]