

## Ken Greenwood

He was a tireless promoter of the state of Oklahoma as well as a life-long nature conservationist.

### Chapter 1 – 1:29

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Ken Greenwood who grew up in Nebraska and was a World War II veteran, graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1946. He began his radio career later that same year as a staff musician and later as a sportscaster and program director. Involved with stations in the Midwest, he came to Tulsa in 1962 as the general manager of KRMG. Ken was soon promoted to the position of President by the station's owner Swanco Broadcasting. In 1968 he was approved by Governor Dewey Bartlett to lead the state's tourism council. One of Ken's earliest projects in Tulsa was the creation of the Great Raft Race, an Arkansas River Event held annually for 19 years and which sparked the development of the River Parks in Tulsa. Greenwood later led the development of The University of Tulsa's Communications Department and through his efforts KWGS radio was put back on the air as a university station affiliated with NPR, National Public Radio. Ken served as director of development for the Oklahoma Chapter of the Nature Conservancy as it was being organized. He helped raise \$15 million to establish the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. In 2008, he produced *Cowboys in Tall Grass*, a seven-part documentary series, which later aired on OETA. Ken Greenwood died on June 18, 2013. He was 89. Listen to Ken tell his story, made possible by generous donors to our oral history website [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 2 – 8:45

#### Swanson Broadcasting

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling. Today is the 5th day of March of 2009 and you are?

**Ken Greenwood:** I am Ken Greenwood.

**JE:** You were born?

**KG:** July 1923.

**JE:** That makes you how old at this very moment?

**KG:** I'm 85, going on 86. I'm a lucky guy.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**KG:** Brainerd, Minnesota.

**JE:** I am surprised, that's my home area up there.

**KG:** I knew that! (Laughter) Yeah, when I was a little-bitty kid I remember standing at a big front window and I remember I could scratch enough fog off the window to see out. My dad had shoveled off the walks and the snow was piled up so high as they did in those days, and I could see hats go by. I was about four years old and I could identify people by their hats. (Chuckle) That was entertainment in those days. There was no iPod.

**JE:** How long were you there in Brainerd?

**KG:** Well, my folks separated and I went down to Nebraska and grew up with my mother and grandmother in Lincoln, Nebraska. I graduated from high school and then went to the University of Nebraska, which was interrupted by the service, but I came back and graduated in 1948.

**JE:** You went to the service—what did you do?

**KG:** I ended up installing air to ground communication equipment, what was the advent or the beginning of radar or blind landing equipment for airplanes. We made all the installations for the planes to land on that equipment in Hawaii, Guam, Lingayen, and finally ended up in the Philippines and then eventually ended up in Japan. We put the installation in in Japan.

**JE:** Back to Nebraska then after that service, then what?

**KG:** When I was in Nebraska, another fellow Bill Wiseman and I...I wrote the music and he wrote the book for a show and you'll never believe it, but the star of the show for one year was a fellow by the name of Johnny Carson, who was a fraternity brother of mine. When we graduated, he got the scholarship to WOW in Omaha and I got the scholarship to KFOR in Lincoln. Carson's bit up there was they had a big drive up there to get rid of pigeons downtown. He recorded pigeons cooing and he took the part of the pigeons in the morning of why were they being so cruel to these birds that never did anything to them. (Chuckle) And the Mayor got incensed and called the manager of the station and he fired Carson for having run this series of his tape recordings on the air. Johnny went out to Hollywood and the rest of it is history. He was befriended by Jack Benny and that's history now.

**JE:** I worked for WOW as well and worked for the same program director that Johnny Carson worked for, Ray Olson.

**KG:** Yes. It's a small world.

**JE:** Okay, so then you went to KFOR?

**KG:** I went to KFOR in Lincoln. I was the only one that had ever played baseball, so I was elected to do the play-by-play of the baseball games. I did those one summer and then the second summer I did them and then I came up with the idea, we had a lot of little teapots in Nebraska as you remember...I came up with the idea that if we could get them linked together, we could carry Nebraska football, which was just coming into being a really big-time event. We put together all of these little pedal pusher type of stations and put a network together. The University gave us permission to do the Nebraska games at home and we talked our way into being the visiting station at some of the out-of-town places and we didn't have enough money in our budget for a color man. In those days of radio, the color guys on any kind of an event had a very deep voice you know, and we didn't have that. So I came up with the idea of maybe an ex-football player who really knew what the game was all about. We talked to a fellow by the name of Tom Novack who had been an All-American at Nebraska to do our color for us. And he was colorful. He used really down-in-the-trenches type of language. He would say, "He just knocked him flat on his ass now I tell you!" (Laughter) He used that kind of language. (Laughter) The cards and the letters came in and everybody said "you've gotta clean it up!" and I said, "Why? Look at the response we're getting!" That was the first state network ever in the United States that carried university sports was that Nebraska Football Network. We had also agreed to carry the basketball games, so I did those. I was called in one early December and I was advised that I was making too much money and I would be terminated because the station was cutting back. We were in television at that time and we were cutting everything back. I got fired two weeks before Christmas. I ended up down in Kansas City. I went to work for WHB Radio at that time. They had a half a channel. Their half a channel joined KMBC / Arthur B. Church to make a full channel. Eventually WHB bought the other half channel and so we had a full television channel to work with. I went through that stage of television. WHB approached me about going into sales work. It paid a lot more than I was making—\$600/month in those days. So I went to work for WHB and about a year and a half later some local Kansas City people said they would like me to put together a radio station and manage it. That was kind of a thrilling prospect. So I found myself in management and ended up at WPEO in Peoria, Illinois as part owner of a little teapot radio station.

**JE:** How did you jump from WHB?

**KG:** I resigned from WHB. These guys had the money for us and we bought WPEO in Peoria. That came up to a group of four stations. We were very fortunate. We turned them around. We had WPEO turned around in 90 days. We were very fortunate. We had it in Albuquerque, San Diego and Wichita and that was the beginning of Swanson Broadcasting.

**JE:** Wow! I didn't know this. Wait a minute now, there's a jump here because why was it Swanson Broadcasting?

**KG:** It became Swanson. It was known as Swanco in those days. They had bought a station in Des Moines, Iowa that I had looked at one time. They were very uncomfortable—they were going to go into business with Don Birden and they got a little but uncomfortable with that, justifiably so later, he got in trouble with the FCC—

**JE:** He lost his license.

**KG:** Yes, he lost his license and—

**JE:** I was working at that station, KOIL in Omaha when he lost his license and I remember at midnight when the station went dark.

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** But your connection to Swanco, and this is the same Swanson family that created the TV dinners?

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** So where did you jump on board with Swanco?

**KG:** Well, the phone rang one evening and I was at home wondering what I was going to do. We still had the stations and one of our stockholders went out to raise his garage door and dropped dead of a heart attack. I didn't know what was going to happen to our little group. So the phone rang and it was a broker. He said, "I think you need to talk to a fellow by the name of George Bowles" who handled their account for them. He was with Tatham-Laird in Chicago. He had bought them—how times change—one spot, one time a week, on television. And that helped that company go from small time to very big time. Before the war, and during the war, they had packaged chicken for the armed services. Gilbert, or Clarke, one or the other came up with the idea of frozen dinners. They had that product ready to go and George arranged the advertising and everything for them and everything turned to gold for them.

**JE:** These were the Swansons?

**KG:** Yes, Gilbert Swanson and Clarke Swanson. Clarke was the older brother and Gilbert was the younger brother. He invited me up to Omaha to meet them and get acquainted and see if they liked me and I liked them—which we did. We formed an alliance that became a company—their station that they had already purchased—KOIA. We put out with the rest of the Wichita, Albuquerque, San Diego stations that we had. We had sold Peoria in the meantime. And that was the beginning of what was originally Swanco broadcasting, which when the two younger brothers came into the picture, Gary and Clarke Jr., they changed it to Swanson Broadcasting.

**JE:** About what year was this happening?

**KG:** About 1961 or thereabout—about the time we bought KRMG.

**JE:** Which was 1961?

**KG:** Yes.

**Chapter 3 – 7:55****KRMG**

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**John Erling:** Let's jump then 'till then. About the time you bought KRMG, how did that come about?

**Ken Greenwood:** I had been in Tulsa to look at KAKC, which had been for sale and owned by the same fellow that they had bought the Des Moines station from. I sent back a report and said that I didn't think that KAKC was the station they should be interested in, but if anybody could get a hold of KRMG I thought it was a bird's nest on the ground. One day early in the morning the telephone rang and the voice said, "this is Gilbert" and I said, "well How are you? You are up early!" He laughed and said, "I had to get a hold of you early this morning because I did something last night that I don't know whether you're in agreement with or not. I was playing gin rummy with Fred Boland at the Des Moines Club and telling him how well we were doing with our stations and he said, well if you guys are so hot why don't you just take that dog down in Tulsa off our hands?" Gilbert said, "I asked him how much he wanted and he said a half a million dollars." And I said, "well we'll just buy it now." He said, "Ken, I don't know whether that's good, bad, or what." I said, "It's just wonderful. It's just absolutely wonderful. You did good work!" (Chuckle)

**JE:** So who owned KRMG at that time?

**KG:** Meredith Publishing Company in Des Moines, Iowa, and they weren't doing very well with it, so Fred was glad to get rid of his dog in Tulsa and we were delighted to take it off a leash and turn it loose.

**JE:** In 1961 it was a floundering radio station?

**KG:** Yes sir.

**JE:** So then what happened?

**KG:** We put a fellow in to kind of cover it because I was finishing up at Des Moines getting it all tidy and nice. I didn't get down until the spring of 1962. We had some adjustments to make. They were carrying commercial religion from 7 in the evening until midnight. They had a fellow on the air in the morning we called Marvelous Marvin McCullough who played country music. They had some CBS network they were carrying. It was just a hodgepodge and we set about cleaning it all up. I had heard a fellow down in Lexington, Kentucky on the air in the afternoon and I thought boy wouldn't he make a great nighttime DJ if we could ever get him interested. So we talked to him and he said, "if you'll buy me a car I'll come to Tulsa." That was Johnny Martin. Later we added Chuck Adams as the morning man. We were very fortunate that through the years we had some good morning personalities on the station. Watson Jelks, Chuck Adams, John Erling to name a few. We

did a promotion in spring of the year through May of the year we ran spots for about two weeks that said KRMG was going to be a thing of the past. That got everybody's curiosity going. What we did was play music from the late '40s and '50s, lots of Tommy Dorsey and Glen Miller et cetera. Well, nothing like that was on the air anywhere and it was an absolute smash. You could just feel people turning the station on.

**JE:** This town was not playing big band music?

**KG:** No. There was nothing like that anywhere.

**JE:** What station was the number one station?

**KG:** KAKC still was.

**JE:** So they were rocking and rolling?

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** So then the Sinatras and all that?

**KG:** Middle of the road. Andy Williams, Rosemary Clooney, anything that was pleasant listening. We had a formula that not many people knew about. The deejays, coming out of the news always opened with an instrumental. The instrumental was a signature type that clearly labeled the station as what it was, and it just took off. I have to say that those years of KRMG were the Camelot years. It just seems like we couldn't do anything wrong. Everything we touched, just literally turned out neat.

**JE:** We are talking about 1963 and 1964?

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** How about salespeople that you might remember?

**KG:** Well, we got Danny Bell. He walked in one day and want to work. He had been with KVOO and didn't like it real well, so we put him to work. I moved Vic Bastion out of the news department and into the sales department—and Charlie Thompson the same. Ron Blue was our sales manager at that time and we built a sales staff.

**JE:** That was in 1963 or 1964 when those people came on board?

**KG:** Right.

**JE:** How long did it take before the ratings showed that KRMG had come alive?

**KG:** In those days it was a Hooper, the telephone coincidental survey and it came out in June. KRMG was number 1 in the morning and KAKC was still number 1 in the afternoon. But shortly thereafter, they begin to fall in the afternoon. In a short time KRMG, at one time, had more audience than all the rest of the stations in town put together.

**JE:** Then, it was a music station?

**KG:** Yes, but with good news. We built a fine news operation.

**JE:** Some of the newsmen that you might have had then?

**KG:** Bob Losure, who went on to big-time stuff was our remote guy. We would do things with that like getting Sid Patterson who was the Street Commissioner in our mobile unit.

They would drive around and check potholes. That was our pothole patrol. That kind of caught on and was kind of funny. We had Malvina Stephenson in our Washington bureau. She was just part-time—a contract lady—but we were the only station in town that had a Washington correspondent. She broke a lot of news for us long before it was national news. We had good voices on. I found a young man in Stillwater, at OSU, who was just graduating. I said, “How would you like to work for us?” And he said, “I really would.” The first night that he was on the air, he got so clutched up doing the 8 o’clock news that Johnny Martin had to turn him off and go to music because Ed couldn’t say a word, he was just frozen. (Laughter)

**JE:** And that was Ed?

**KG:** Ed Brocksmith, who later went to head up the state network. He ended up at Northeastern State University as their PR person I guess would be a good way to say it. He has been very active in the Save the Illinois River Project and has become a very devoted conservationist.

**JE:** Glen Condon?

**KG:** Glen was there briefly. Glen was doing nothing but editorials for us at that time. Glen’s health failed and he couldn’t do editorials anymore. We looked around to see if we could find somebody in the community that could do editorials and nobody could. In the interim, I had been doing some of them just to keep it alive so it wouldn’t die completely—and I ended up doing the editorials.

**JE:** I want to get back to more of that, but then Tulsa did not have a news station per se plus music and you were breaking all new ground for people who had never heard anything like this before.

**KG:** Yes, that’s right. The thing we did Sunday evening. We put Johnny Martin on from 7pm until midnight, no commercials, just music and Johnny Martin.

**JE:** That would be unheard of in most places.

**KG:** Yes. It was our gift to the community.

**JE:** And probably one of the highest rated Sunday evening programs?

**KG:** I had so many people say I am driving back from Grand Lake and I listen to Johnny Martin every Sunday night.

**JE:** He’s another topic we could talk about because til this day in Tulsa people will talk about the phrases he used and the things he said—case night in the city. There were families that were born and raised to Johnny Martin.

**KG:** His sons went into radio and became quite successful in major markets.

**JE:** Yes.

**KG:** David Martin was one of those in Chicago—big time.

**JE:** So he comes to town all because you heard him on a radio station in Kentucky?

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** So the station is establishing itself as the place to turn to for news.

**KG:** Yes, and weather.

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## Chapter 4 – 7:25

### KRMG Weather

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**John Erling:** What event do you think really solidified KRMG in the minds of the town?

**Ken Greenwood:** I got active in the Oklahoma Broadcasters Association and at the time they had one weather service for western Oklahoma and one for eastern Oklahoma. There was an imaginary line somewhere between Oklahoma City and Tulsa and we kept losing tornadoes. They would cover them in Oklahoma City, but wouldn't pick them up in Tulsa. So we made a big effort really to get all the stations in the state in a common weather network that had Class A service. We got the Highway Patrol on it and we got several features in there. We were successful with that. Shortly after we had done that, we were on the air covering a tornado. We had people actually out in the streets actually covering the tornado. That was different. The Chief of Police wouldn't talk to us or be interviewed that evening and said that we were making a whole lot out of nothing. The next morning's paper came out and it told about these millions of dollars worth of damage. It blew panes of windows out of downtown buildings. And our position that we had taken we that coverage was very, very validated. That was the big news weather breakthrough.

**JE:** There is no question you laid the groundwork there for the weather coverage for the station, but then, we should point out that after you left the station, June 8th, 1974 became an important date because a storm containing many tornadoes hit the area. It hit Drumright and the Brookside area. Some of the worst damage was around 36th & Peoria. And at the same time tornadoes were also hitting ORU and Broken Arrow. In fact, 25 to 30 tornadoes touched down in 19 counties. I mean this was huge—from the same weather system. Three deaths were reported in Tulsa County. The important thing about the radio station, KRMG was the only station left on the air because all of the other stations lost power. So the June 8th storm of '74 continued to enforce the weather image for the station that you started.

**KG:** Yes, very much so.

**JE:** Editorials, which you did, can you remember some of the topics that you covered? Let's talk about some of those and then some of the reactions that you got.

**KG:** Well, the day of the assassination of Martin Luther King, that happened in late afternoon I think or early evening in Memphis. I wrote the editorial that evening and delivered it. I remember one of the lines in that editorial was “just Martin Luther King didn’t die last night, we all died a little bit last night.” All of us lost some of our personal freedom. That seemed to have been a line that kind of impressed some people. The National Conference of Christians and Jews picked that up. They invited me to work with them and later I did. They awarded us for our community development type—the racial situation with the integration of schools—we took positions on all of those things. They invited me to join first the Tulsa board, which I did, and then later I went on the national board from Oklahoma with NCCJ. That I think was one of the significant editorials that we did. But we would do a lot of little ones—little people. George with the Tulsa Garden Center—they did a retirement party for him and I did an editorial on him. Many people didn’t know who he was, but they ought to know what he had done. That touched a lot of hearts too.

**JE:** Yes. Betsy Horowitz was a name in this community too. Did you deal with her at all?

**KG:** Oh sure, she was a good friend. She called me every week. (Laughter).

**JE:** She was an activist.

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** Were you editorializing about some of the issues that she was talking about?

**KG:** Sometimes we would be in favor and on the same side of the table and sometimes we wouldn’t be, but we were always friends. We had the policy at KRMG, after every editorial we would say that if you have a different opinion or if you would like to express your opinion on this issue, you’re welcome to come to the studio, you know. We had a few people take us up on that. She would be one that would do that. That was fine because our job we felt was to get as much information out as we possibly could and let the community just decide what course of action they wanted to take. So having guest editorial people was wonderful.

**JE:** The station taking on more and more of a news image—it could have remained just a music station and played the network news, but that was on purpose from your direction?

**KG:** Well the music could always be copied or emulated, but the news coverage could not be—that gave you an individual unique position in the community. I was told on several occasions that the *Tulsa World* faithfully listened to KRMG to find out what was going on, and they did. I know that to be the case. We had a deal early on with Chuck Wheat who did a column for the *Tulsa World*. We did a take off of Batman, which was on in those days and very popular and he wrote it for us. He came up with some wonderfully funny lines. Chuck Adams played the part of the guy, and I forgot who played the part of Batman, but some pompous individual—he sounded that way, he really wasn’t of course. That was a

pretty good stint with the Tulsa World and later I think they kind of adopted the station and that was kind of nice too. It was good publicity.

**JE:** Mayors or governors at that time that you might have had some stories about or dealings with?

**KG:** Well, in our editorials we would endorse political candidates. We endorsed Dewey Bartlett and he won as governor. One day the phone rang and it was the governor and he wondered if I would be interested in being the head of the Advisory Committee on Tourism. I said, "Anything I can do to help you I will be happy to do. So I became the head of the governor's Advisory Committee on Tourism. Out of that came what you would call the nucleus for Oklahoma's position as a good place to go to, or a good place to travel or a good place to see some unusual things.

**JE:** I want to come back to that. Before I get into the Great Raft Race, is there anything that stands out as a story about the station that it either did some good or created controversy or anything like that?

**KG:** Because of the positions we took and because of the quality of the material we were presenting, we were the station that the influential people of the community listened to. In many instances I could be in face-to-face contact with somebody within hours after something had happened on our station. That put me in a very unique position, not that I sought it out, I didn't, but I was on-board so I was face-to-face with people and considered one of the movers and the shakers in the community for whatever that's worth.

## Chapter 5 – 6:50

### Great Raft Race

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**Ken Greenwood:** One of those experiences, again you think probably all I ever did was answer the telephone, but the phone rang and it was Katie Westby, a beautiful lady who had done so much for Tulsa. She says, "I've got \$10,000 to build a statue and I can't build it for that." She was building statues and people made a lot of fun of that, but at any rate she said, "I have the chance to bring Lawrence Halprin into Tulsa. He is an environmental architect. He did Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco and Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis. Not many people know about him here in Tulsa, but I think it's time we brought somebody like him into the community. I am going to get all the people that have any stroke in town all down to Trinity Episcopal Church for a two-day workshop." It turned out he was a very intelligent guy. He had a great knack for presenting material. We went through first the sensitivity work. We had to go out on the street and ask anybody at 6:30 the evening and ask them, "where can

I get a cup of coffee?" People would look at us and say, "what in the the hell are you doing downtown at this hour in the evening?" (Chuckle) we got responses like that. But at any rate, out of that came two things. One was that the Performing Arts Center would stay downtown. A couple of the fellows that had been in that group went and talked to Mrs. Chapman and talked to the Williams people. One of them was in fact from The Williams Company- that's where the Performing Arts Center originated in its new form in downtown Tulsa. The other thing that Halprin made a big point of was what a jewel the Arkansas River was if anybody ever did anything about it. I went back to the station and called a staff meeting and said, "folks, here's the challenge. What can we do about the Arkansas River to help people look more favorably upon it?" Because at that time it wasn't safe to swim in it and people didn't even want to eat the fish that came out of it. So we had this big session. Somebody in that group had been reading Washington Irving and had been talking about going up the river in rafts and all he was seeing and doing. Somebody else said, "well hell if he can go up the river in a raft why can't we go down the river in a raft?" A-ha! What would we call it? What's wrong with The Great Raft Race? (Laughter) It's too simple, right? And thus was born the idea.

**JE:** In a matter of minutes?

**KG:** In 30 minutes or less. We had to get permission from the Corps of Engineers. We got the Coast Guard people to provide protection for us. We laid out the plans and we decided to have it sometime around Labor Day.

**JE:** That would have been in the year 1973?

**KG:** Yes I think that's correct. We had people showing up like you wouldn't believe.

**JE:** You had how long to promote it?

**KG:** About three months.

**JE:** So in three months you started promoting this?

**KG:** Yes. Encouraging people to build their rafts and enter. The lieutenant governor George Nigh, he had a raft. A lot of the companies had rafts. We were going to launch them in Sand Springs, so we had to get permission from Sand Springs and they were very open to that. Early that first morning, people just kept showing up and showing up. Vic Bastion who was our appointed emcee for that event to get people started and tell them what to do and get the rafts all in the water and so forth. He came over to me and said, "Greenwood, what the hell are we gonna do with all of these people? We are going to have to have waves or classes or something." I said, "Well, start them in waves. We'll have Wave 1 and Wave 2 and so forth. Let's give it a shot." We had arrangements With the Corps of Engineers to release the water at Keystone Dam at such a time that we would have had a good flow of water in Sand Springs and on down the river so they could get to the dam, which is now the Zink Dam at 31st and Riverside. Somehow things got botched up and they didn't release the water in time, so we had to wait for the water and we finally got that going. The guys that won it that year were two

guys in a kayak and they were the only ones who ended up pulling their kayak across the finish line! (Laughter) So we went to Plan 7 about how to pick the winners after that one. (Chuckle)

**JE:** But you knew, despite the water flow that you had a success going here.

**KG:** Again, the *Tulsa World* covered quite thoroughly and they estimated we had 100,000 people standing along the banks watching that event. We never figured out how many rafts we finally had in it. We figured if we could get 50 out it would be great, but we had closer to 200 rafts, maybe 250. It was a phenomenal success. We hit a nerve. Like I said, it was a Camelot time.

**JE:** So then you go back the next year and the rest is history. It was a family function?

**KG:** Absolutely, the whole company would show up. The manager would be steering the raft and all of the people would be on the raft partying and having a good time.

**JE:** You judged the rafts in categories?

**KG:** Yes. Best decorated raft, best decorated middle-sized raft, etc. The amazing thing about that event to me is that in all the years it was held or staged, to the best of my knowledge, there was never a problem. Nobody ever got hurt. Nobody ever fell in-nothing.

**JE:** Nobody drowned.

**KG:** Nobody drowned. It was absolutely amazing. Everybody behaved beautifully. Finally it was dropped because of the liability-the cost of insurance got so high.

**JE:** The Great Raft Race led to?

**KG:** Well, The Great Raft Race got people thinking about the potential for the river. Shortly thereafter the River Parks Authority was formed. They put people on that board and those people began to talk about the recreational (aspects)-initially it was all recreation. Then somebody got the idea that hey there is a potential here for economic development as well. There was never a clear-cut plan for the river. Never a consensus of opinion of what ought to be done with the river. I think that's a safe statement today that there still isn't a clear-cut direction for that river. But it is a tough, tough thing to cope with the Arkansas River because it doesn't want to be tamed. It's happiest when it comes out of its banks and deposits that silt all over the watersheds you know.

## Chapter 6 – 3:25

### Green Beer Party

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**John Erling:** By the way, were you the creator of that great green beer party?

**Ken Greenwood:** Yes.

**JE:** The great green beer party, this was an event in Tulsa, Oklahoma that was just bigger than the coronation of the Queen. How did that come about?

**KG:** When I was working in radio in Kansas City there was a little bar out on the south edge of town and every Saint Patrick's Day, which in those days wasn't a very big event, had an open house type party and they served green beer. We thought that was a pretty neat place to go and schmooze around for a while on Saint Patrick's evening. I had remembered that. It was January and we didn't have very much money at KRMG to do much of anything, but we needed a promotion. I don't know why I thought of that party in Kansas City that served green beer.

**JE:** This was in the 1960s we are talking about?

**KG:** Right, 1963 or something like that. I went to the Bryant brothers with Budweiser and I said, "Can you guys fix up beer so that it's green?" They said, "Yeah, what in the hell do you want green beer for?" And they thought it was a wonderful idea. So we rented the Cheyenne Club, which was probably the shabbiest bar of all of them that was open, still it was dry in that time here in Tulsa. We started to pass out the tickets and we invited anybody that was anybody to that green beer party. You talk about having the movers and shakers there—and we did—and we served them their draft green beer. And I don't know why, Camelot again, it just went over to the place where the second year, the most requested ticket in town was one to the great green beer party.

**JE:** That continued and as you say, it attracted anybody that was anybody. Even some politicians could get too much in them and there could have been at least some verbal fights?

**KG:** (Chuckle) Yes, yes—at least some strong words exchanged at times. But we kept it all under control as best we could.

**JE:** That lasted well into the '80s I believe and then liability issues then became an issue again I believe to end it.

**KG:** I tell people that I was the luckiest guy in the world to have been in Tulsa at the time I was with a station like KRMG with 50,000 Watts, with the people that came to be associated with it. I joke when I say those were the Camelot years, but it was a wonderful, wonderful experience to be involved with it. I think there was a sense of family about it. I think you felt like you belonged to something pretty special when you worked there. Your opinion counted for something. Somebody could make a suggestion or come up with an idea and boy, we had the pot boiling all the time. It was wonderful.

**JE:** Do you remember any more names? I came in 1976. I think of Don Cummins?

**KG:** Yes he was a newsman there and Ed Brocksmith, John Egan, Dick Jones was the program director. He later went to Houston as a program director down there. I mentioned Danny Bell and Charlie Thompson and Rita Tibbs was there. It was a great crew.

**JE:** We're missing a man here that was around the start of the Great Raft Race, program director Jerry Vaughn?

**KG:** Yes, he had health problems, not abuse or anything, just bad health problems later.

**Chapter 7 – 4:03****KRMG – Kerr-McGee**

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**John Erling:** I have told the story and I want you to tell the story of how KRMG actually came to be. Who put it on the air?

**Ken Greenwood:** It came on the air late.

**JE:** What does late mean?

**KG:** Well, most AM stations went on the air in that period of time from 1930 to 1941 prior to WWII. There wasn't a lot of radio built...as a matter of fact, FM came out during that period of time and failed. The first shot at FM failed, so it went dormant for a period of time. Then you had the renaissance. That renaissance was led primarily by Top 40 stations. They became very popular and could make money and did make money. It was something to be in again and it had some economic potential. But directly related to KRMG in that period of time right after the war you had people making noise about television and putting television stations on the air. They had to file for a permit. In some markets more than one party would file for a television permit, so you had to have a hearing and all of the bureaucracy that goes with that. And only one person would get the permit. In Tulsa, KVOO and KRMG were both vying for the one channel that was left in Tulsa. Senator Kerr and Dean McGee and those people all decided that they would join forces and file for that channel. To do that, Senator Kerr had to sell the station he had put on the air, KRMG, he sold that to the Meredith people. For a while he didn't have a radio station of any kind, but he emerged as one of the owners of KVOO—a little known fact of the business.

**JE:** We've got to go back over this again because I didn't realize this. Senator Kerr emerged as an owner of KVOO?

**KG:** Yes, part owner.

**JE:** With Harold Stuart?

**KG:** Yes. After the war, KRMG and KVOO were the two 50,000-Watt stations in Tulsa.

**JE:** Let's go back to when Senator Kerr actually put the radio station on the air.

**KG:** He put KRMG on the air after WWII in 1947 on New Year's Day. His interest was covering both Tulsa and Oklahoma City. He had lots of strength in the rural areas as a United States Senator, but he was weak in the two metropolitan areas. I read some of his instructions to people, "the only thing I'm asking you to do is build a radio station that covers both Oklahoma City and Tulsa". That's why KRMG has kind of a funny, hourglass type of coverage pattern.

**JE:** Aimed at Oklahoma City.

**KG:** Aimed at Oklahoma City.

**JE:** But it was a 50,000-Watt station, which reduced its power at night to 25,000 Watts.

**KG:** That's correct. That's the only way he could get that radio permit at the time he got it. It's a six-tower array, very unusual for a 50-Kilowatt radio station.

**JE:** And KVOO was sitting there already?

**KG:** Single tower, lots of strength and lots of coverage in both markets.

**JE:** And was clear channel 24 hours a day with 50,000 Watts?

**KG:** Yes. So then he sold KRMG because you couldn't have two stations in the same market, and if he joined with KVOO, he had two stations in one market. So he sold his radio station, joined forces with the people at KVOO and ended up owning part of the television station. The reason for KRMG is Kerr KR and McGee MG. They were partners in KRMG radio.

**JE:** Which television station would that be then?

**KG:** KVOO TV, Channel 2.

**JE:** KJRH?

**KG:** Yes. KJRH today.

## Chapter 8 – 5:15

### Tourism/Sailing

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about Green Country. We all know this part of Eastern Oklahoma is known as Green Country, but there had to be a beginning of that, and you Ken were part of the beginning of that. Tell us about that.

**Ken Greenwood:** Initially it was backed by Phillips Petroleum. The first year was almost entirely a planning stage and jawing about it and trying to get an interest in it. By that time, Dewey Bartlett was in the picture and asked if I would head up the Advisory Council on Tourism. But we needed funding for it obviously and we came up with the idea of if we raised \$5,000 would the Legislature have a fund that they could draw on to match that money. That started the idea of matching money for the concept of promoting tourism within Green Country. Very quickly there were other countries. The first year the area immediately south of Tulsa join in and then shortly thereafter you had others join until finally there were six different countries and that's the way it's formatted today, with six countries. They each have their individual budget. While the Department of Tourism promotes them all, they also do their own promoting on things of interest in their area to see.

**JE:** Back then tourism was not funded at all in the state of Oklahoma.

**KG:** There was no money appropriated for the promotion of tourism or the money to build better museums or do anything like that.

**JE:** We're talking about in the '60s?

**KG:** That's correct, until the late 1960s. Tourism really took off from 1970 to about 1978 or in there is where it really blossomed.

**JE:** You talked about former Governor George Nigh. He called you the Father of Tourism in Oklahoma.

**KG:** That and a dollar will get you a cup of coffee. (Laughter)

**JE:** But you were very instrumental and of course as George Nigh was the Lieutenant Governor, tourism became his pet project. He became known as the tourism man.

**KG:** Absolutely, yes. He took it up. He was trying to get motion picture companies to come to Oklahoma to shoot movies because that would be quite a shot of money in different localities in the state where they were shooting movies. That was his thing—his thrust was on that. Before I ever got interested in the Arkansas River, I was also interested in sailing. Our Sailing Club was on the City water supply out here. But it was fine until your centerboard hit one of the abutments that runs underneath that lake. There are big concrete division things in that lake and it could tear you up pretty good.

**JE:** Are you talking about Keystone Lake?

**KG:** No, I am talking about Yahola. So we came up with the idea of well, Keystone Dam will be opening and why couldn't we build a sailing club out at Keystone Dam? The Corps of Engineers had never authorized any kind of project like we talked about, but we went ahead with our plans to the extent that we got things on paper and got it organized and got a president and all of that kind of stuff. Things were dragging along and Mike Monroney a Senator in those days had a 15-minute program every week on KRMG. It's nice to have friends in the right places.

**JE:** Right. Senator Monroney was a very powerful senator.

**KG:** I called him and said, "Can you jar that thing loose from The Corps of Engineers?" Three or four days later, my phone rang and it was the local Colonel who wanted to know why in the hell I had to go to the Senator to get anything done because he was getting ready to approve it anyhow. (Laughter) We got approval for the construction of Windycrest Sailing Club on Keystone Lake. I built that physically with my son and the kids from the Edison Swimming Team. I financed it with the agreement that anytime the club was solvent they could buy it from me. At the end of the second year it was solvent and they bought it from me and that was the origination of Windycrest Sailing Club.

**JE:** About what year did the dam come in? Do you recall?

**KG:** Well that would have been, well, before the Great Raft Race, so it would have had to have been in the late 1960s.

**JE:** Windycrest is still operating until this day?

**KG:** It has been written up in Sports Illustrated as the finest sailing club in the southwestern United States. It's remarkable, it really is. It still doesn't cost very much to join it. There are no amenities for cocktails every evening. It's just a place to go sail and have a good time—family again.

**JE:** I am trying to think of a name of man who had a sailing store on...

**KG:** Joe Becker.

**JE:** Who is like 90 or 91 years old as we sit here and talk.

**KG:** He's a good friend.

**JE:** He must have had something to do with that as well.

**KG:** He helped pour the concrete. (Chuckle) Joe showed up every weekend and he helped do something. We poured the concrete for the ramps. The Edison Swimming Team wheeled that down the hill in a wheelbarrow. They had a code among themselves that when they lost control of the wheel barrow they would holler "wipeout!" and every now and then you would hear someone yell, "wipeout!" (Laughter) Then you would hear the wheelbarrow rattling around. We had some good times doing that.

**JE:** What a good era. No wonder you call it the Camelot years.

**KG:** Yeah.

## Chapter 9 – 6:04

### Nature Conservancy

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**John Erling:** I see you are wearing Ducks Unlimited shirt here today.

**Ken Greenwood:** (Laughter) I watch them call Ducks in Stuttgart, Arkansas.

**JE:** Yes in duck calling contests, but you helped establish the Tulsa Chapter, this came out of years of hunting yourself?

**KG:** Well, it had gone defunct. Harold Stuart and Will Cox and Grant Hastings and those people had given up on it. Tiny Thompson and Bob Hawkins and I decided that we could have a new chapter, so we pitched in and did it. The first year we did it, we decided it would be a lot easier just to throw \$50 in the pot than to go to all the work to out on a banquet. But it continued and it has done well through the years and really was the lightning rod that got Ducks Unlimited started in Oklahoma as a big part of the conservation picture here.

**JE:** That would have been in the early 1970s?

**KG:** Yes. The other thing I was involved in or had been involved in in conservation was the

nature conservancy and the purchase of the Chapman Barnard land up in Osage County to make the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. I worked as director of development for two and a half years in that period of time when we were raising the \$15 million to buy it. Then we set up a Trust for maintenance purposes and that was a wonderful accomplishment as far as conservation is concerned. I have gotten really interested in conservation and ecology and as a matter of fact I have just had a book come out here in November that's called *Grass Roots Ecology*. It's been pretty well received in scientific quarters and I hope it will begin to take off. I would love to see it get into high school and college classrooms because it could very easily be a textbook.

**JE:** Yes. Back to the Nature Conservancy, you established the lease term preserve?

**KG:** That was one of the things they worked on real early on. I didn't have a part of that. That was Herb Beatty and those people. Oklahoma didn't have a chapter and the fellows came out and convinced Joe Williams that he ought to head that up. He was the first chairman of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He got some wonderful people on that board and from that time on it took off. It's become a very powerful player in the environment here in Oklahoma.

**JE:** The southern bald eagle roosting area too was part of that?

**KG:** Yes, they are a small part of that. That's basically the Sutton Avian Research Center, Steve Sherrod and his people. As a matter of fact, they have accomplished their purpose. They have restored their bald eagle population in this part of the country. It's a great conservation story. We've got a bunch of them around.

**JE:** Yes. Tallgrass Prairie Preserve—were you involved in that at all?

**KG:** Oh yes.

**JE:** Did you start that?

**KG:** No, I didn't start it, but they were buying this and I was more involved in a marketing standpoint. As I told the board of directors one day when I was reporting as development director, I said, "I don't know if you gentlemen have ever tried to do it, but grass is a hell of a tough thing to sell. We need a symbol of some kind for marketing purposes." And about that time up in Bartlesville, Adams came up with we will give you our herd of buffalo. He had about 300 bison. That's where they had the big grand opening of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and released the bison. From the time that people could go up there and see bison, there was no question about support for it—that was kind of a little symbol that turned it around.

**JE:** Out of all this comes the Nature Works Wildlife Art Show and Sale?

**KG:** When I was with the Nature Conservancy, a fellow by the name of Vince Zukowski came to me and he said, "you've talked about it, you were on our original board." And I said, "Yes I was. I tried to help for a couple of years." He said, "I can't keep it going anymore."

Would the Conservancy be interested in sponsoring the show?" So I took that idea into our board and then to the national people. They decided that no, they didn't want to be involved because of the liability that was involved, so we formed Nature Works and had a really good board to begin with. A fellow by the name of Ross Murphy, who has been in the petroleum world here in Tulsa for a number of years, was our president. Our first show was downtown Tulsa and it wasn't all that successful. But as we stayed with it the last couple of years we sold a little better than \$600,000 worth of art. Twenty-five percent of that was our expenses and then the money that's leftover, which is generally a very sizable amount, all of that money goes into conservation projects of various sorts. We've done a lot of them.

**JE:** Then you headed up the effort to produce the Oklahoma Centennial Duck Stamp Print?

**KG:** Oh that was a fun thing, yes. We got guys that I worked with through the years because Nature Works always put up the money for the artist's honorarium for the state duck stamp. They said they wanted to phase it out because of the advance of the Internet and computers because it was all changing. They also wanted to phase out the print program. They would sell print images of the duck stamp every year. We came up with the idea of a centennial, which was the right year fortunately, and we commissioned Scott Storm to do a painting for us, which he did of mallards in Hackberry Flat. Hackberry Flat is one of the finest conservation projects in the country. It is certainly a crown jewel in the crown of the Oklahoma department. That was the centennial print and it sold out in a matter of days and raised a lot of money for Ducks Unlimited, and a lot of money for Oklahoma conservation.

**JE:** We should point out here that in 1997 you were selected to receive the Nature Works Stewardship Award, which is a statue of a pair of otters. It's a monumental statue in Tulsa at 70th & Riverside. I run last that, I would like to say every day, but maybe three or four times a week.

## Chapter 10 – 5:05

### University of Tulsa – KWGS

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**John Erling:** So there was a time in 1972 when you said, "I've had enough of this radio stuff. I want to be a professor at TU. how did that come about?"

**Ken Greenwood:** Well, on our board of directors, we had sons coming into the picture and they had very different opinions about what the direction of the company ought to be. We had Clarke Jr. and Gary Swanson and pretty soon most of the people on the board were most of the Swanson family and that was quite a departure as far as I was concerned. I

was kind of the swing vote between the two brothers. It didn't matter which way I would vote. I would always irritate somebody. All of the traveling around to the other stations and things like that. Pascal Twyman and I were talking one day and he was the president of TU at that time. We were on the board of the Children's Medical Center together. He said, "I've got a problem. My head of the communications department has resigned and left. School starts in about a month and I don't know that I am going to do. We've got to get the radio station back on the air and nobody knows how to buy equipment." I got to thinking about that whole thing. I thought, well, holy Moses wouldn't that be a nice way to resign and go out to the university and take on a whole new challenge. So I called him and said, "Would you be interested?" And he said, "Come out and we will talk." And we did. I don't have an advanced degree and I barely got out of college. I was voted least likely to succeed but that was never really a problem. So I went out to TU and I got interested in training. Training is such a bad word because you think of dogs and you don't train sales people or management or leadership and that sort of thing. Out there I had access to the new television equipment and the youngsters didn't really have anything to do. We began making little short vignettes. Any kind of interaction between people we would videotape it. Then we did three or four where it was like a sales person who was calling on a potential client. They learned their parts and we did those. I would stop the tape and ask questions and then start the tape and then stop the tape and go a little further. It was interactive video. The results I got out of the college were very interesting. I tried it out with some of my brethren who were running radio stations and the reaction there was very good. So within a few years I began to get requests to do seminars and they asked me to bring my tapes with me. Really, in the summertime I was busier doing that kind of work with radio stations around the country than I was at the department, all legitimate because in the summertime you didn't do a lot in June, July and August. Then in 1975 I took a short leave of absence and tried it out in the summertime. It was very successful and very well received and I decided I could package that and make a product out of it, which I did. I hired some folks to help us, who were interested in that kind of thing and thus was born Greenwood performance systems. Again, everything was on our side and the timing was good. We were honored by several national organizations with the best training material brought out in a year. We won that for three years. I traveled all over the United States. I visited Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, anywhere in Europe where they had English involved with their radio stations in any way. It became an international product and was later adopted by the Canadian broadcasters as their official training material of Canadian Broadcasting Systems. That was a lot of fun and very rewarding. I still get cards and letters from people to say thank you and that it was a great experience and you mean a lot to me and those make you feel real good.

**JE:** You bet. When you went to TU, didn't you have something to do with growing KWGS?

**KG:** Oh, it was off the air. They were building the Chapman Theater at the time and they took it off the air and didn't know how to get it back on. Nobody knew how to buy the equipment for it so I was engaged in that role for a period of time. I was successful with getting it back on the air and affiliated with PBS. I made two trips to Washington. That started KWGS. It's changed a little bit since we put it on the air, but you would expect that to happen.

**JE:** Is there anything you didn't touch? (Chuckle)

**KG:** I've been a lucky guy. I wouldn't deny that.

**JE:** Yes, but it took a whole lot of talent. You combine luck and talent and then you have a success.

## Chapter 11 – 4:30

### Conservation

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**John Erling:** Would you possibly have a bumper sticker on your car, which would say, "As for me I'd rather be hunting and fishing?"

**Ken Greenwood:** I've gotten very interested in conservation. When I would be out traveling or something like that I could always find time to go visit with somebody or talk with somebody in conservation work or head of a wildlife department or something like that. It's been kind of a secret passion for these many, many years. The more interested in it I got, the more I became convinced that this country has, whether we want to admit it or not, a real environmental problem. Our culture was based on consumption, not conservation. Until really about 1970 there wasn't much thought given to really caring for the resources. In the book I talk about, we always felt like the land ought to take care of us, we didn't need to take care of the land. That was our credo. That was our ethic. As I began to think about ethics and ethics being, that's the way it is because we say it's going to be that way. It's my land and I can do with it what I want to. There is a strong ethic in the middle-western part of the country. The old Puritan ethic of the land is hostile and must be subdued. You get into the people that say, well, you can manage it for the benefit of the most people. Then you get into the people that say you can't manage it, you have to have national forests and set it to one side. There are 10 different ethics, including what I call the Bambi ethic, which says you shouldn't kill or harvest anything. We have no real conservation ethic in this country and I

don't know what's going to happen to it. We're going through it right now. So, it's a challenge. It's really a challenge. And I wrote this book for the guy that's sitting in the duck blind, not the guy that manufactured the shotgun, but I wrote it for the everyday guy. To this point in time it's gotten pretty good reviews in the scientific community. They have accepted the premises that I make in the book. I don't know how it will do. I have two states, Oklahoma and Wyoming that have inquired about the possibility, what would the price be, etc. if the book were to become kind of the standard textbook for high school students and college students, which if that could happen would be wonderful.

**JE:** The book, *Grassroots Ecology*, the mindset though, I don't know if it's of the masses, but it's out there today to preserve the land is much more than it was back in the 1960s and 70s. Would you agree?

**KG:** In some quarters, that's true. I think the subject of care of our natural resources tends to be attractive to what I call the elite people, or the well-educated people, or the people that can afford to take care of the land. The people who are still trying to grub stake a living off the land, they don't have those feelings. They don't share those feelings and unfortunately, they are the majority of the people.

**JE:** So as we sit here today in 2009, do you think our land is in jeopardy?

**KG:** Yes. And I think what Al Gore said, and they laughed at Al Gore, but I think someday he'll laugh. Because the book *An Inconvenient Truth* that he wrote is well based. It's already happening. You hear more about the scientists that say we are worried about the polar bears right now because their ice is melting and they don't have anything to walk around on anymore. Okay? Now the big brouhaha is about plowing up all the grasslands in South Dakota and North Dakota—not so much Nebraska—but Kansas, South Dakota and North Dakota and to some extent here in Oklahoma.

**JE:** And they are plowing them up for?

**KG:** They are plowing them up to plant crops, because they think they can sell their crops for ethanol.

**JE:** And that probably will not go anywhere?

**KG:** I don't think so.

**JE:** Ethanol is not going to be a source.

**KG:** I think the long-range solution to our energy problem is solar power.

**JE:** What about wind?

**KG:** And wind power. And we go right back to taking care of our natural resources.

**JE:** Yes.

**Chapter 12 — 4:05****Radio in Review**

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**John Erling:** Let's just look back on radio as way it was. Has it lost any influence? Is it going to be watered down in time? We have satellite radios now and local radio stations could lose local influence perhaps? Is this spawning anything with you, as you would reflect on radio as you see it today in 2009 and how it was back in the 1960s?

**Ken Greenwood:** My thinking on that subject is that today we live in a world of condensed communication and temporary appreciation. If you can't say something in 30 seconds, and I have to be careful now, if you can't say something and 30 seconds you're not going to hold anybody's attention for much more than that. We are bombarded with communication today. Where it has any kind of audience at all, radio was and still is every personal medium. And it can be some crackpot talking to other crackpots, but there's still a relationship there. That's not the case anymore. It's all syndicated. We've turned it into a commodity. We've allowed it to proliferate to the place where there is such a great abundance of it. What have we got in Tulsa, Oklahoma today, 36 radio stations?

**JE:** And now you can listen to radio stations on the Internet and you can probably get by quite nicely without listening to local radio.

**KG:** From a selling standpoint, selling the medium, I hear more and more conversation about use of the websites and how they are coming in. Radio sales people will sell the announcements on their air, but they also strongly advocate the use of the website.

**JE:** And that's something that you talked about in advertising at Tulsa University?

**KG:** Yes.

**JE:** Tell me what you would tell those people back in the late 1980s.

**KG:** Well, it just seemed to me like I was part of the all-music stations fading away. They were being replaced by news-talk stations, and the proliferation had begun. And when you go back and you read your history, every advance in the world of communication, has been followed very shortly by a revolution, and that word I use advisedly, but it really was. When Gutenberg figured out he could put words on paper and publish them, it created a little era—the Elizabethan Era, and we had Industrial Revolution. We had changes in culture and we had changes in society. We had changes in the political world—tremendous, massive changes. Think what happened when the radio came into the picture and how radio affected peoples' lives. Now, think again when television came into the picture. There were other smaller things like back after the Civil War the presence of Western Union. We don't think about that much in the field of communication, but it changed the time that it took to get a message from the frontier, two weeks or three weeks or four weeks, to a matter of minutes.

Again our society went through that great upheaval right after the Civil War. It had massive impacts because of the new speed. Now, what kind of the world of the living in today? And it's hard to grasp, until somebody shows you a little tiny square box and they say, "I can record 8 hours of you talking on this little bitty box." Yesterday, a former student of mine and I were having lunch together and he held up a little black box and she turned around and turned it on and she videotaped me sitting there looking at her and she played it back for me. It's an amazing world in which we live.

## Chapter 13 – 4:45

### 101 Ranch

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**John Erling:** We didn't talk about your series on the 101 Ranch. Tell us just a little bit about that.

**Ken Greenwood:** When we were in the process, I say "we" because by that time I was affiliated with the Nature Conservancy and the Chapman Barnard Ranch. There are very strong feelings in Osage County about any kind of federal intrusion. There was a lot of opposition to the idea of the Nature Conservancy buying 30,000 acres initially because they felt the Conservancy was a stalking horse for the federal government that was making noise about that time about a park that would start in Oklahoma go up through Kansas—Tallgrass Park that would go on up into Nebraska. We were trying to come up with ways that would lessen the pressure against that whole thing. I came up with the idea of having a reunion and inviting all of the old Cowboys that had ever worked at the Chapman Barnard Ranch and who were still living to come back for this reunion. That's what we did. A lady by the name of Helen Christiansen helped put the names together. We invited them and lo and behold, 90 of them showed up for this reunion. I thought, well they are there, and if we could get them talking, they could tell some great, great stories. So I got some folks out at TU to videotape them. Those tapes just sat around for a period of time and here we were with a bunch of wonderful stories. Finally, Harvey Payne who is the director of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve now, said to me, "you are just sitting around on your fanny not doing anything. Why don't you do something with those tapes?" So I went back and looked at them. You could use those tapes because they had the time code bar across the bottom of them and sometimes clear up to the chin of the person that was speaking. But I got to thinking a lot of those people are still around. If we could find them, we could get them to tell those stories and that's what we did. When we started out, we can only work on Saturdays because the man who was doing the videotaping could only get off on Saturdays and I didn't want to work on Sundays. So, we started out interviewing

people. Invariably, when we would finish interviewing these people, they would say to me, “Ken, I don’t know as much about this as I sound like I do you really ought to go talk to so-and-so because they really know what happened.” So I would go over and talk to so-and-so and we would get permission to do their interview. When we would finish guess what they said? “So-and-so knows more about that than I do. Why don’t you go talk to so-and-so?” I ended up with about 125 interviews on videotape. They all fell into various patterns. Well, as I got into this, I uncovered the most amazing history up there in Tallgrass Country like the 101 Ranch. The 101 Ranch is the only place in the world that there have ever been five different kinds of cowboys. There were the drovers, and that’s what Mr. Miller started out when he was driving Longhorns up from San Antonio. They would drive them up and unhook them in Kansas someplace and go back to Texas and get another load. So he had the drovers there. A lot of those fellows stuck around and became his ranch hands—so you had the ranch hand type of cowboy. Then, from these, you had those that went to Hollywood. They actually made motion pictures on the 101 Ranch that were circulated in the United States. And you had the rodeo cowboy, said you had five different kinds of cowboys—amazing stuff. I uncovered so much of that, like Ben Johnson Sr., you could always tell when he was on the horse in the rodeo, because he always wore a white handkerchief in his back pocket and it would flag while he was riding around so they knew that was Ben. Helen Christiansen gave us some wonderful interviews and told all about Ben Johnson Jr., who of course was famous as a Hollywood cowboy—all of those stories. Tom Mix. The Dewey Roundup—The Dewey Roundup was as big or bigger than Calgary or Cheyenne or Pendleton and those rodeos and its time. The grandstand collapsed one day and they didn’t have enough money to rebuild it, so they lost their rodeo. Stories like that—just Oklahoma history. We put these six episodes—there are now seven because we added Will Rogers—who was actually at cowboy before he became an entertainer. They are doing well as a DVD series. It’s called *Cowboys in Tall Grass*.

## Chapter 14 – 1:35

### Ken in Review

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**John Erling:** So as you look back on your life, your professional life, what was the real creed? We have hit on so many areas. What was the thing that turned you on the most?

**Ken Greenwood:** Opportunity. First it was opportunity to use the medium for the betterment of the community. I believe very devoutly in that. That it was a gift that had been given to somebody and they ought to use it wisely. He had so many opportunities to do so many

good things with the radio station or with the television station. Education—helping young people find the excitement in learning and growth and doing better. Last but not least, taking care of the Earth. God, we all live there we ought to be taking care of it.

**JE:** Yes. While you are to be admired, you ought to be thanked for what you've done in the community. It's nice to be able to have you comment on this. And now we are going to put this on a website so that students and grandchildren and all will be able to click on and listen to what we've just talked about 40 or 50 years from now.

**KG:** And maybe appreciate what they have or what others have had and figure out new and better ways to use it.

**JE:** Thank you Ken for your time here and thank you for what you've done in our community.

**KG:** You are very, very welcome. I've been a lucky guy John—just so lucky really. Just the changes I have seen and the people I have met and the experiences I have had.

## Chapter 15 – 0:29

### Conclusion

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