

Chapter 1

Introduction

John Erling: You are about to hear from the son of oilman Waite Phillips, born in Okmulgee, Oklahoma as Elliot Waite Phillips. Also known as Chope. He will explain why he became known as Chope. Chope was 91 and his wife Virginia was 86 on the day of this interview May 5, 2009. The night before we enjoyed a get acquainted dinner in downtown Amarillo, Texas and I found them to be a very down to earth and gracious couple. Chope could have been an oilman, but he chose to be a cowboy, a cattleman. Virginia speaks highly of her Father and Mother-in-law Waite and Genevieve Phillips. As you learn more about Waite Phillips and his identical twin Wiate you will also get to know Chope and Virginia. Be sure to check out our “For Further Reading Section” about the Phillips family. But for now we’ve captured the voices of Chope and Virginia as they share their memories on voicesofoklahoma.com

Chapter 2 – 2:38

Elliot “Chope” Phillips / Why Chope?

Elliot Phillips: My name is Elliot Phillips and I have a nickname, “Chope” that most people call me by. I’m 91 years old. I’ve been around awhile.

John Erling: Your birthdate?

EP: My birthdate is January 11, 1918.

JE: And if you’ll figure that out, you can see that I’m 91 years old.

Virginia Phillips: I’m Virginia Phillips and I’ve been married to Chope Phillips for 62 years.

JE: If you don’t mind stating your birthdate and age, I think that would be interesting to this whole story. Eighty-six. I was born October 24th, 1922.

JE: And the name Chope, how did that come about?

EP: Well (laughter) quite a little story on that. My Dad had that ranch and I had some cousins that were considerably older than I that worked there as college kids. They're all dead now, but they were a little older than I am. And they were working on the ranch, and they had cowboy-ed there for several years, and I was a kid considerably younger than they. When they'd come down, and I'd kid with them, why they started calling me "Chopo" which is a Spanish word. It's kind of a slang word for "Shorty" in Spanish. There were a lot of Mexicans in that country. That's really what it came from. We just shortened it to Chope. As far as I'm concerned, I am the only one in the world that has that name, but it doesn't mean much.

JE: And let me say that the date is May 5th, 2009. Where are we recording this today?

EP: At our office in Amarillo, Texas on the sixth floor of a building here where we have a little office. This is the office in Amarillo, Texas.

JE: Just start by telling us how the Phillips family actually came to Oklahoma, and Virginia, you just step right in and help.

VP: Uncle Frank was the first one to come and he came down because his Father-in-law, who was an investment banker, wanted him to come down and take a look at this oil business.

EP: Yeah the oil business was pretty new in those days?

VP: And this was out of Iowa. And Frank went down, and as far as I know never went back. He just was so enamored with it, and it fitted his style, as it did Waite's. And they were good oilmen.

JE: Okay, then in your family, you had siblings, your –

EP: I have one sister who was seven years older than I. She has been deceased for a number of years.

JE: And her name?

EP: Helen Jane.

Chapter 3 – 3:30

Twins Waite and Wiate Phillips Leave Home at 16

John Erling: Talk about the fact that your father is a twin and –

Elliot Phillips: Identical twin.

JE: Identical twin.

EP: They were from a big family, there were about 12 kids in their family, and they lived on a small farm in Iowa, out in Creston, Iowa. Whenever the boys got (to be) 15 or 16, they left home. There was plenty (of people) left on the farm to do the chores there. And my Uncle Frank who was the oldest of the family, My Dad told me that he left home when

he was 14. He's the one that founded the Phillips Petroleum Company. Most everybody's heard of Phillips 66 and he's the one that started that company, the oldest brother. My Dad left home, he and his identical twin left home when they were 16, and they went all over the West and they rode the railroad, you know freight trains and they'd just hop on a freight and ride until where they'd get off and maybe spend a few days here and then go there and anyway, but they saw a lot of country. And the twin brother –this is when all those boys had quite a time They were in Seattle and then they were in –they went clear up –well they didn't go clear to Alaska but they went up into Canada a little bit and all over the West Coast and you know saw a lot of the West. And they'd get off and work for a couple weeks, two or three weeks at some kind of a job maybe as busboys in a restaurant or working on a tractor building a railroad you know with a pick and shovel, whatever they could find, for two or three weeks and then they'd get on a train again and go somewhere else. They were just seeing the country. And in their travels, they got out and happened to be out in the Spokane area, and the twin brother, they were identical twins, just the two of them, got sick and in other words he had an attack of appendicitis and by the time they got him to a doctor and all he'd had a burst appendix and this was in 1901 or something, '01 or '02 and a burst appendix in 1901 or '02 obviously he did lay up, he died, suffered for several days and then died. Of course that was pretty devastating to my Dad. Because there were just the two boys and they were a hell of a long ways from home and the one brother, Frank who was the older one, he was a barber at the time and he was the only one that had any money and he sent to money to get that brother's body brought home for burial. And of course, dad accompanied it. That's the story.

JE: That had to be a tough journey for your Father.

EP: Yes, that was a tough –terrible loss for my Dad because those twin brothers, it that was just like –identical twins they were just like almost the same person they thought alike and they were just inseparable and it was a terrible loss to him of course.

JE: They were so identical that people had a hard time –

EP: Couldn't tell –lots of people couldn't tell them apart. And I've seen pictures of them, where it just looks like a double photograph of the same person.

JE: Interesting about your Uncle Frank who was a barber and then he made this concoction to grow hair? Virginia can you –

EP: (Laughing) He was bald, like all the rest of the Phillips, he got pretty bald.

VP: How could he have sold it Chope?

EP: Well...

VP: Do you think he really sold some of that –?

EP: Oh I think he did, of course he wasn't probably bald but he was beginning to lose hair by that time.

Chapter 4 – 3:42**Frank Phillips –Salesman / Waite Phillips –Oilman**

Virginia Phillips: Uncle Frank had a very interesting life.

Elliot Phillips: Yes.

VP: He traveled over the West working as a barber. He was in Aspen for the Silver Boom there. I don't know the year but it was –

EP: You know, way back.

VP: Before the turn of the century.

EP: Oh yeah.

VP: I guess he had a great sense of humor because he sold that ointment to grow hair when he was so bald.

EP: Right. (Laughter) Well he wasn't awful bald, but he was beginning to lose a lot of hair.

VP: He was losing it.

EP: Yeah.

JE: What got him interested in thinking there would be oil and coming to Oklahoma? Frank I'm talking about. That he would come to Oklahoma to explore for oil. As a Barber in Colorado, how does that transport to oil in Oklahoma?

VP: Well, by then he had moved back to Iowa and he owned all the barbershops in town, when he married the banker's daughter. And he wanted to be a barber because he was so impressed as a child with the barber's dress. They had striped pants and a very nice jacket. And it was probably the most formal dress that he saw unless it was the preacher. But his Father-in-law was a very forward-thinking man. And when he and Jane were first married, Frank and Jane, he sent Frank back east to sell bonds for the construction of the Coliseum in Chicago. And he sold them all. And this was, I would say totally out of his element, other than his experiences selling hair growth –

EP: Hair tonic.

VP: Hair tonic, that would grow hair. That was his only job as a salesman. But he did sell all of these bonds for the Coliseum in Chicago. Mr. Gibson was his father-in-law. And as I say, he was a very –

EP: His Father-in-Law was somewhat of an entrepreneur.

VP: Forward-thinking man. And sent Frank down to evaluate the oil discoveries. And it interested Frank greatly. He got right into it. He and Mr. Gibson invested in it. And then he brought L.E. down, the brother just younger than he. And then in a year or two, Waite came and he worked for the brothers for I think 11 years as a field superintendent.

EP: By that time they had gotten into some oil properties and they had learned the oil business kind of from the ground up a little bit.

- VP: He knew the oil business better than the older brothers, because they never really went out and worked on them as Dad did.
- JE: Okay, as Waite, yeah, knew it better –
- VP: It was Waite, yes, excuse me.
- JE: Yeah, because he went and worked as a roughneck perhaps then, is that true?
- VP: He started at the bottom.
- EP: Yeah, as a roustabout.
- JE: Roustabout, right.
- VP: And then they gave him a little team to drive from well to well, to keep them informed and why he was still in Iowa Waite had met Genevieve Elliot and he started working toward buying a house so he could marry her.
- EP: She was a banker's daughter.
- VP: In Knoxville, Iowa. So this steadied Dad, that he had a goal. Before that he was wandering around the country. He had worked for a little while and then he'd get real restless I guess thinking of Waite. And he would take off.
- JE: When were they married?
- EP: 1909.

Chapter 5 – 5:08

Waite and Frank / Personality Differences

John Erling: As Waite worked in the oil business it seemed like Waite and his brother Frank did not agree on the business, is that true?

Elliot Phillips: Well...

Virginia Phillips: They agreed on the business, they were just both pretty macho men and they didn't want to have anybody tell them what to do.

JE: Wasn't there a difference in that Frank kind of really wanted to stay in that area and Waite wanted to get out and explore in other areas? And that was a disagreement?

VP: Not that I ever knew of.

EP: Not necessarily.

VP: It was their personalities.

EP: They were just too much alike and if there are two men riding a horse one of them has got to ride in front Dad wasn't one that wanted to ride behind. And of course Frank was the older brother and as long as he was with Frank, why he was going to be under Frank. And he didn't like that very well.

JE: Because Frank was about 10 years older than him?

- EP: Yeah. My Dad admired Frank a lot but they were just too damn much alike. And neither one of them could have worked for the other one.
- VP: Dad loved Frank.
- EP: Oh, he did. He respected him and –
- VP: But it's one of those things you love them more when you're not with them. (Laughter)
Maybe that was the case with Dad and Frank.
- JE: It was said that your Father didn't enjoy the holding of money as much as he enjoyed the hunt for money.
- VP: That's very true.
- EP: Oh I think that's very true. I think that's pretty true of most people that are successful in business. They're not trying to hang on and squeeze the money. They're trying to make more.
- JE: There's a sport in it isn't there?
- EP: Yeah it's –
- VP: Yes.
- JE: So then your Father setss out on his own?
- EP: Yes.
- JE: And doesn't he go to Fayetteville?
- EP: That was one of the places he went down to –
- VP: Yes.
- JE: We can talk about –
- EP: Around Okmulgee Oklahoma was where he –
- VP: But that was after Fayetteville.
- JE: Yeah.
- EP: It was in there somewhere, he went to Fayetteville for a short time, he wasn't there very long. It was marketing business he had some kind of a relative that had a –he wasn't in the production business, but he was in the marketing oil business. You know what I mean by marketing? Filling stations nowadays. He worked in that for a while but that was a little bit dull for him so he got back into exploration side of it.
- VP: He was a distributor in Fayetteville. And he sold crude oil, I'll call it crude oil, what was it?
- EP: Well it was oil –
- VP: Oil?
- EP: And gasoline and –
- VP: Kerosene.
- EP: Kerosene.
- VP: Everything, there was not much of a demand for gasoline at that time.
- EP: demand there wasn't very many automobiles at that time.

JE: Yeah.

VP: But that was too slow for Dad.

EP: Too slow and too –

VP: Boring.

EP: It wasn't exciting enough for him.

JE: Yeah.

VP: From there he wanted to get back into the exploration for oil, and he moved to Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

JE: His initial drilling there was not successful.

VP: True.

EP: Well –

VP: Very true.

EP: Well that's pretty true of anybody that gets in the oil business you know –

JE: Right.

EP: Not every hole that you drill is a good one.

JE: No.

EP: You're going to drill so many dry holes before you get a good one.

JE: It showed that he was not –

EP: That it pays to stay with it.

JE: Exactly.

VP: He was not successful at first in Okmulgee. In fact he was down to the bottom –

EP: Yep.

VP: And he had a well that he just kept trying to make it a well and it wasn't. He got the (inaudible) in to pull the pipe out and the sucker rods and everything in it, casing and sold it to them and took the money and –

EP: Finally hit a good one.

VP: And drilled and hit a pretty good well.

JE: Was that the Graveyard Lease? It was South of Okmulgee?

VP: Yeah.

JE: According to the book, I'm referencing Beyond the Hills The Journey of Waite Phillips with Michael Wallis.

EP: Well, he probably –that's probably right.

JE: Then that gave your Father his first big money?

EP: Enough money to go on from there, he never did stop.

JE: And then meanwhile Frank and L.E. hit it big up in Bartlesville, isn't that true?

EP: They did well.

VP: They were getting ready to leave and move to Kansas City and open a bank there. And

they had one lease left that was one you had to drill on. There was a time limit on when they were to drill. So they went ahead and drilled it and that was that Anderson Well. It was a real blowout.

EP: Yeah, yeah. They hit a good well. Of course that got them started going there.

JE: And then that leads to Phillips Petroleum Company?

EP: Well, that got them started, but they didn't start right out with Phillips Petroleum. They didn't make a company out of it for several years, but they finally did.

VP: In fact they had about 15 companies.

EP: Yeah. Every time they'd drill a well they'd get some new investors and they'd form a different company, they had four or five different companies and they finally consolidated them into Phillips Petroleum Company. They were there in business for a long time before that came about, I don't know what year. It was after they were already pretty successful. It was way before I was born so I don't know too much about it.

Chapter 6 – 3:23

Waite & Genevieve Move to Tulsa / Phillips Oil Company is Sold

John Erling: Then your Father really hits it big in 1918 in the Youngstown Pool?

Virginia Phillips: Yes.

Elliot Phillips: That's the year I was born, I wasn't there. Obviously I don't remember, but I was born about that time. Like most oil people they don't always hit it the first time. They hit enough to keep their interest up and they keep going as long as they can keep getting investors or make enough money to drill another well or their always trying to look for that good well, and then finally find it.

JE: That's what's about these people, they just didn't give up, they just.

EP: They didn't give up, the first dry hole you don't give up. They keep waiting around and when they finally hit it, it goes pretty fast.

JE: So, somewhere in here –

EP: You get one good well and in other words it would bring in enough income that you could go ahead and drill quite a few dry holes before you'd find another one.

JE: Yeah. The family moves to Tulsa.

EP: Yeah, much later. Yeah, he's already got to doing real good in the oil business. Moved to Tulsa about –when I was about a year or two old, in about 1919 we moved to Tulsa.

JE: Your Father kind of seemed to wheel and deal by the seat of his pants, they said that he –

EP: Well that's the way he'd already done –by the time he moved to Tulsa, he was doing real well.

JE: They say that he was producing —he was 38 years old, producing about 40,000 barrels a day. And in 1920, two-thirds of the oil in the World originated in the United States, and much of that came from Oklahoma. About 1925 Waite sold —

EP: Phillips Company. He had built up a nice company pretty fast. It wasn't very many years after that first good strike. Completely integrated company. He even had refineries and filling stations and the whole works.

VP: Tanker cars on the —

EP: Yeah he had a complete oil company, and he sold out in 1925. Not lot of people would have done that cause he could have gone on and been like a Phillips 66 or something, but he had that going real big about the same time, and Frank as doing the same thing.

JE: And I understand sold out for about 25 million dollars?

EP: That's what he got.

JE: In 19 —

EP: Cash.

JE: Cash? In 1925.

EP: Which you know it doesn't sound like much today but 25 million dollars in 1925 was —

JE: Oh, it was. Interesting stories about Waite and Frank sometimes they would bid against each other for oil leases? Is that true?

VP: Yes.

EP: I suppose it was. I wasn't in on it but —

VP: And I think sometimes they would go in together on leases.

EP: Well like most oil people do. This is done a lot in the oil business, I know that much about it.

JE: I think Virginia you'd said that Waite had said that he would not have accomplished all he had if Waite had lived?

VP: Yes, that's what he said. Waite was such a gambler that they would never have accumulated what he did. He would have been one of those that made it, lost it, made it, lost it. And would never have really controlled the wealth that they earned I guess would be the best way to put it. But there were a lot of them there that were doing that.

EP: You know he was an 18 year old kid and kids do a lot of things, they change you know who knows what Waite would have done if he'd have lived to have been 30 years old or something.

VP: Well, that's what Dad thought.

EP: Yeah.

Chapter 7 – 5:12**Prince Albert Can / Picnic for Lawmen & Outlaws**

John Erling: In all your years, did your Father talk to you about Wiate?

Elliot Phillips: A little bit.

JE: What would he say?

EP: Well, not too much. It was such a private thing. It really was with him. He really didn't talk too much about it because it was such a terrible loss in his life. It was just like a part of him that had died. And it really was and I certainly never asked him anything about it. We didn't talk about it much.

JE: Virginia, there were some belongings of Wiate's that Waite kept.

Virginia Phillips: Yes, that Waite kept.

EP: Yeah.

VP: And I found them in his nightstand drawer. And it was a –

EP: Little handful of stuff.

VP: A can of Prince Albert tobacco that had been emptied out, or used and he had a sack of Bull Durham tobacco and papers to roll your own cigarettes. Pictures of a few girls, there were twin girls that they dated for a while. And then a Union card membership for when they worked in the mines, they joined the Union. I know those were Wiate's. There was no reason Dad would have had that. He smoked but he wouldn't have rolled his own and

–

EP: Well at that time he probably did.

VP: Yeah, but I think it was Wiate.

EP: Well...

VP: I think it was what was in his pockets.

EP: That was back in those days when they both were rolling their own probably.

VP: I remember too after Waite died, I was cleaning out his desk there at home and in the bottom drawer at the very back there was a picture of one of the twins and it was taken off of the old picture that they had made with uniforms. Western Union

EP: (Inaudible)

VP: There's a picture of the twins together.

EP: In uniform –

EP: And really the only time they ever wore a uniform was when they were delivery boys and in those days they had these uniforms and there was a picture of the two of them –and it looked like a double photograph of the same person 'cause they were so identical.

VP: Dad said that those were the best clothes that they'd had up to that time, so they had a picture made for their Mother. But someone had taken one of the boys, one of the twins

and made it a separate picture in a frame, and it was down in the bottom drawer of Dad's desk. And I feel sure that that was Wiate because Dad wouldn't have had a picture of himself. But Dad was so private that when you looked at the picture of the two of them, "Which one is Wiate and which one is you?" And he would say, "I don't know." But he knew and he took that one picture of Wiate and kept it very close to him.

JE: Was your Father, was he a shy man?

EP: No.

VP: In a way –

EP: In a way he may be but you know that was one of the last things that you'd expect of him. He was a pretty bold kind of person.

VP: But he had so much respect for successful men, that had worked for it that you could see him at times that he was a little shy around them.

JE: Yet he was enormously successful. In 1926, at 43 years old he was worth 40 million dollars. And yet for his success he's kind of back off from other successful people.

VP: Until he got to know them pretty well. I remember he met Mr. Harriman in New York once, I don't remember the connection that put them together. But Dad said to Mr. Harriman you know we were partners at one time. You were furnishing the money and I was helping build your railroad out in Utah and Mr. Harriman didn't seem to find anything funny about it. He said he was a very stern man.

JE: And he was Governor of New York, Mr. Harriman and Waite was saying as teenagers they were working on this railroad –

VP: Yes.

JE: Frank had these picnics for these lawmen and the outlaws, did you hear talk about that or –

VP: Well, quite a bit.

JE: Tell us what the story was with that?

VP: I think that really came from the banking days. His bank was never robbed. And he attributed that to the outlaws picnic. And he said at time when they had those picnics, that he knew that some of the people that robbed the banks were there. But they never did hit (rob) him.

JE: They could mix? The lawmen and the outlaws could mix? And then either at sundown or whatever, they went back to their roll again as being what they were.

VP: The lawmen were to not arrest any of the people that were there. It was kind of a unique concept.

EP: This is what Dad told my wife.

VP: And very successful, and as I say they're still having it. We were invited last year but we didn't go. Maybe we'll make it someday.

Chapter 8 – 4:18**Elliot's Education in Tulsa**

John Erling: Let me take you back Chope to your education. Where did you first go to elementary school?

Elliot Phillips: Well, I went to elementary school, it was a little private school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at that time it was called Holland Hall and it was a boys and girls school. They wouldn't let us just attend a girls' school. My sister had gone there and she was still there. And so I went there for two or three years. And then I transferred to a Catholic School in Tulsa, called Cascia Hall which I think is probably still there. I went through the first year of high school there. And then I went from there to Culver, Indiana to military school. I graduated from Culver and then I went from there to California. I was not ever a very good student. I had some friends at Culver that were better students than I and a couple of them were California boys that went to Stanford. Well, I didn't even try to get into Stanford, cause I knew I didn't have good-enough grades to get in there. So I heard about, there was a little junior college called Menlo that was near Stanford, and I went there for two years, took certain courses and made a certain grade point average and transferred into Stanford, I ended up at Stanford.

JE: Along about here come the war years. And so in 1941 you're about 23 years old, the War breaks out, can you tell me what you did during the War?

EP: Well, I was married and had a child the first part of the War was the only reason I wasn't drafted right away. Although I went to military school, I didn't, if I'd have gone one more year I could have gotten commission out of the school and I probably would have gone into the Army right away. But I got no commission for my military school. And I was married at the time and had a child, so I was not drafted. But later on, I had a little disagreement with my first wife, and I had an opportunity to work at the ranch, which I always wanted to do. And she didn't like living out in the country, and I thought well, if I can't do what I want to do I'll go into the service, which is what I did. And I went in as a Buck Private. I was a Private and for about a year, I was doing the same kind of work that Sergeants do cause they were so desperate for drill instructors and stuff. And having gone to a Military school I became a drill instructor. At the time I got in the ratings were all frozen or I would have made a Sergeant or something but I wasn't even a Corporal. I was just a Buck Private but I was doing the same work as Sergeants were doing. I was in a training program in the service. I put in for everything in the world to get out of there. One of the things I put in for is what they call OCS Officer Training Camp. That was one of the things I put in for. That came up and I went to Officer Training and was there for three or four months and came out as a Second (2nd) Lieutenant.

Woman's Voice: So you went from a Private to a –

EP: To a 2nd Lieutenant (Laughter)

JE: And by the way, let's name your children here. I didn't do that at the beginning. The children you have, name them.

EP: My daughter Julie and a son named John who is two years younger than she. Julie is 50 I think or she's 51.

Virginia Phillips: Yes.

EP: They are adopted children, we had been married for quite a few years and we were not able to have children of our own and we found that out after several years and so we had an opportunity to adopt these children and through our doctor friend, who was a very close friend of ours, we adopted our daughter, and then we had another doctor friend down in Las Cruces, New Mexico and we adopted our son down there.

JE: And then you have another daughter.

EP: Well, I have a daughter from my first wife.

JE: And her name?

EP: Wendy, and she's got three boys of her own. And I got a whole bunch of great-grandkids. She's turned out to be a good woman. I had nothing to do with raising her but she turned out to be a good person. She lives in California. She's 67 years old.

Virginia Phillips: She's a wonderful Mother and Grandmother. Like Genevieve, she's never been one to participate in the civic organizations where she lived, but she did somewhat when she could, but she sure raised three good boys. And has seven grandchildren.

Chapter 9 – 5:21

Elliot Lives a Life That Waite Doesn't Understand

John Erling: Then you come out of the War years, out of the Military.

Elliot Phillips: Yes.

JE: And then what do you do?

EP: Well, I always wanted to get in the ranching business. And my Father who had given the ranch away that I grew up on, maybe you've heard of it. He gave it to the Boy Scouts of America.

JE: Right.

EP: Over a hundred thousand acres, and he gave it to them. And it's still in operation that land their on. I always wanted to get into the ranching business and my Father really kind of wanted me to get into the oil business. I had worked in the oil patch in Kansas for about two or three years. He and a partner had some properties up there and around

Winfield, Kansas. And I worked up there for them for about two or three years as a roustabout. And it was all right. I didn't mind it. It was kind of interesting and I made some good friends up there. But I was still thinking of owning a ranch all the time in my life, 'cause I grew up working on my Dad's ranch and my heroes were cowboys and I had been a cowboy since I was 8 or 9 years old, making a pretty good hand by that time. My Father had given the ranch away and didn't have any. But he finally realized that that's what I really wanted to do and he said, "Well, I'll help get you a ranch." So he bought me a ranch at that time and I'd found one out there in Las Vegas, New Mexico and it was about 18,000 acres. I think we paid six and half an acre for it. That's what my Dad paid for it.

JE: Six and a half dollars?

EP: Six and a half dollars an acre.

JE: Yeah.

EP: It was a good little ranch and when I married Virginia it was on that — I'd been there about a year or two and we got seven or eight years didn't we?

Virginia Phillips: I think it was twelve.

EP: And I had an opportunity to buy another ranch that joined me. I didn't add the two together, but I made a three-way trade and sold the present ranch that was 18,000 and got this other ranch that was 35,000 acres, and that's where we stayed and ranched for about 60 years. On New Mexico, it was in New Mexico but the headquarters of it was 25 miles or so from where we had lived on the first ranch.

JE: Did you put a name on that ranch? Did you call it a name?

EP: No, it was just our name, we didn't put any fancy name on it.

JE: Right.

EP: Made a good living on it though.

JE: Tell me, the two of you —

EP: We had about 1,500 yearlings on it and the cows are year-round a bunch of young ones in the summertime. We made a good living. We didn't get rich but we made a good living on it.

JE: You didn't have electricity there did you?

EP: Well, we had electricity, we had our own power plant, or what we call a light plant, which was pretty common in those days on ranches that were out in the country 25 or 30 miles from town, which is where we were.

JE: So that was enough to generate electricity?

EP: Oh yeah, yeah, plenty of electricity.

VP: You could have lights in the house and you could run a vacuum cleaner, but not all at once. It put out about 1,500 watts.

EP: Watts.

- VP: And you used that up pretty quickly.
- EP: You couldn't have like an electric stove. You couldn't have an electric stove because it took too many watts to run something like that.
- JE: Yeah.
- VP: Or a washing machine and you couldn't run a refrigerator. And we had a gasoline refrigerator.
- EP: It wasn't gasoline, it was kerosene.
- VP: Kerosene and they called them Servels.
- JE: Again this would have been in 19 —, you were married in what year?
- VP: 1947.
- JE: So this is in '47, '48 that you're talking about. So there had to be some nights when you'd used up all the electricity for that day?
- VP: No, the way it operated was that there was so much output when the plant was running. And at night we shut it off. So we had no electricity at all.
- EP: We couldn't let that plant run 24 hours a day.
- JE: And then you burned kerosene for heat at night?
- VP: No we had a wood stove —
- EP: Had a wood stove, and later on we had a kerosene stove.
- JE: So, I'm thinking about your Dad and he liked the finer things in life, probably couldn't understand why the two of you would want to be living on this ranch in northern New Mexico and struggling along with a light plant, an electric plant, is that true?
- VP: Very true. He made the remark once that we lived down in the canyon like a couple of coyotes. (Laughter) Which didn't bother us at all.
- JE: But there was the time when he came to visit you?
- VP: Yes.
- EP: Oh yeah.
- VP: And was very disappointed that we didn't have television. That was still pretty new to us. We would see it occasionally.
- EP: Well, we were kind of down in a canyon in a way and it was hard to get TV without a TV antennae but on our second ranch we —
- VP: Yeah, not on the old ranch.
- EP: We were down below a bluff and we had about 1,500 feet of wire from that antennae, that we had the antennae wired to the top of a pine tree up on top of the ridge, and that's where we got our TV but we couldn't get a signal down there where we lived because the TV (signal) came out of Albuquerque and this bluff was between us and Albuquerque, and we had to get that antennae up on top of the bluff, that was what it amounted to.

Chapter 10 – 1:29**Ice Box at the Ranch**

John Erling: So then Virginia, there are a lot of wives who would listen to this and say, it was his love to live on a ranch, but he brings his bride to this ranch, was this a big shock in your life?

Virginia Phillips: No. I had a cousin that lived on a big ranch out in Vernon, Texas and I would've stayed out there all the time if my Grandmother would have allowed it. Because I loved the life out there, to go with my cousin when they fed cattle or whatever they were doing. And they lived, I guess five miles off of a paved road. And they were about 20 miles to the closest town. So it didn't bother me at all to go out to the ranch. We had an ice box. Literally. It was an old-fashioned one, where you put ice in it. And when we would go to town particularly in the summer we would bring back a big chunk of ice to put in the ice box, and try to keep it cold so we could have the milk and butter and eggs and such in a cool place.

Elliot Phillips: I remember when I was a child in Tulsa, Oklahoma we had an ice box. You wouldn't –

VP: And a man that delivered ice?

EP: Yeah that delivered ice. You know a couple of times a week. And you'd put these big chunks of ice in there. We called it an ice box, we didn't call it a refrigerator.

JE: And then the ranch was about 60 miles away from anything wasn't it?

EP: No, it wasn't that far, it was about –

VP: Thirty.

EP: The ranch was about 30 miles from town.

JE: If you don't mind stating your birthdate and age that would be interesting to this whole story.

VP: Eighty-six. I was born October 24th, 1922.

Chapter 11 – 2:54**Elliot Lives in Philbrook / Roller Skating on the Third Floor**

John Erling: Let's go back now then to when you lived in Tulsa, in 1927, you were 9 years old –

Elliot Phillips: Yeah.

JE: And your remembrances of Philbrook?

EP: We had just moved into Philbrook in that year, yeah.

JE: And at that time it was about 2 miles from downtown?

EP: Yeah.

JE: What had been Creek land?

EP: It had been a little farm that my Dad had before they built the big house there.

JE: I think they said it was a combination of the Schuler and Klein farms that had been in that area.

EP: Yeah.

JE: And then there was a little stream that came through that land?

EP: A brook, yeah.

JE: And it was called Crow Creek –

EP: Crow Creek, yeah.

JE: And so, that's how your Father named the villa, he called it Philbrook.

EP: Yeah.

JE: Nine, ten, eleven years old, while you were living in that house –

EP: Yeah.

JE: Tell us about what you remember about it.

EP: In that big house?

JE: Yeah.

EP: Well, we had a pretty big yard and of course I loved the animals and we had four or five dogs and when I'd come home from school, he'd run them out of course he didn't like dogs running wild, you know? And we had a pretty good-sized dog pen and we kept them penned in there. But when I'd get out of school, I'd let the dogs out and I'd make a big circle around the yard and go down and maybe we'd tree a possum or a coon or something down there and I liked that kind of stuff.

JE: Did you have a favorite room in the house? There was the Music Room –

EP: No, not necessarily. No, I didn't stay in the house anymore than I had to. The house was just a place for me to sleep and I wasn't crazy about it. The house didn't intrigue me very much.

JE: For a 9-year-old this was a huge, huge house.

EP: It was a big house yeah, but I'd have been just as happy living in a log cabin, or happier probably.

Virginia Phillips: Well you used to skate up on the third floor though, didn't you?

EP: Oh I would roller skate on the third floor of the big house, in Tulsa at Philbrook.

JE: You skated on the third floor?

EP: Up there on the third floor there was kind of an attic up there, and it was sort of a paved place. And I roller skated up there some. It was a pretty good-sized area and I'd go up there and skate once in a while but there's nothing –

JE: Do you remember the opening party of the house?

EP: No, God no, I was just a kid. I wouldn't –

JE: Yeah.

EP: Pay attention to that.

JE: Because they said that when your Mother came down the staircase was a stunning moment, for all those attending, do you –

EP: No, I wasn't interested in that.

JE: You didn't –

EP: I was – I was just a kid. That wasn't ever my party.

VP: I don't think that that's really true the way that's told. Genevieve would have been there to greet people when they came in. She was no a grand-stander, she wouldn't let all the guests arrive and then make an entrance. She wouldn't have done that.

Chapter 12 – 3:10

Virginia Talks About Genevieve Phillips

John Erling: As long as we're talking about Genevieve, would you talk about her Virginia and what kind of a person she was?

Virginia Phillips: Well, she was my Mother in law and I couldn't have loved her more if it had been my Mother. And she was wonderful to me. We had many god years together, and good times together. She had a good sense of humor. She liked to dance and would dance at any chance she had. She liked her gin drink in the evening. She and Dad always sat down together in the evening before dinner and back when the children were younger they didn't have a drink at that time but then later on they did and we always had a drink in the evening. Sometimes two, but always one. She loved the horse races. We used to go to Santa Anita together. She loved to shop when she was younger. She was beautifully dressed, always well-groomed, had great taste, great style. She was always a standout wherever she went, in her quiet way. She was not a beautiful woman, but she certainly had an air about her that made you think she was. She was totally devoted to Waite. As I have said before when I talked to her being married to Waite was a full-time job. She didn't knit. She didn't sew. She liked to read, but that would be novels. She loved to work jigsaw puzzles and we worked puzzles together. Which is a nice thing because you can visit while you're working. Almost any topic was open to her as well as me. We just had some really good times together. And after Waite was gone, we spent even more time with her. She would come in the summers and spend a month with us, sometimes a little longer but nearly always a month. Chope or Waite would take her back to Iowa to visit her sister every summer as long as her sister lived. We just saw a lot of

Genevieve after Waite was gone. We went to California more.

Elliot Phillips: 'Cause they had moved to California.

VP: And then the last year, or maybe two that she lived there was one of us out (to California) every month to see how she was doing. She had some health problems, but nothing that kept her down.

EP: She lived to be 93.

VP: She could always get up and walk. Until the very end, and then she walked with some help from a nurse. It was just hard to not be there often because we had nurses around the clock and someone had to manage the help. She had a cook and a gardener and a chauffeur and then a housekeeper.

EP: This was in California.

VP: If the cook took a vacation, I would go out and be cook. And if the housekeeper took a vacation, I'd go out and be housekeeper. And when I was there, I drove her (around) a lot too.

Chapter 13 – 4:33

Virginia Describes Waite Phillips

John Erling: The relationship between your Mother, and as you can him Dad, it was good wasn't it?

Virginia Phillips: Between Genevieve and Dad?

JE: Yeah.

VP: Wonderful. They loved each other dearly and showed it. I never heard a real quarrel between them. There were times when I know they didn't agree, but you never heard a quarrel.

JE: Can you kind of through your eyes talk about Waite? How would you describe him as?

VP: Oh, I adored him. He was very nice to me always. He and I both liked history, geography and we liked to read, and we had those things in common, that Chope didn't have (in common) with him, and Genevieve didn't have (in common) with him. She wasn't particularly interested in history or the geographic world, so we had some wonderful conversations. About two years after we were married Chope and I took a trip to Alaska with them. And Dad had always wanted to see Skagway, where the Gold Rush kind of started and it was the jumping off place for the people to go look for gold. And when he and his twin brother had come West, they had originally planned to get on a boat and go to Alaska. Well, there was no boat, and then winter was coming up and they didn't do a lot in the winter. So they lost their desire to go when they couldn't hop right on the

boat, which I'm glad he didn't go. We might not have had him otherwise. Dad had a very inquisitive mind, which I do too, and we always wanted to know about things. We read the same books. Dad would pass books on to me about historical figures mainly, which I liked. Before he died, he wanted me to come out and help him write a biography. And I told him whenever he felt like it I would come and do it. But that never happened. Another thing that he wanted that never happened, he wanted to rent a car, or two cars, or whatever was needed, on the railroad, and travel around. Go up and across Alaska — I mean Canada and then come down through Iowa and see that again. Maybe go to New York, he said we could just go wherever we wanted to, hook on to a train. But that never happened. We should have done it sooner, but we didn't.

JE: Yeah.

VP: But it was fun to dream about it and talk about it.

JE: Sounds like he treated you as if you were his daughter?

VP: Oh he did.

JE: Yeah.

VP: He certainly did.

JE: Yeah.

VP: I couldn't have been happier. My Mother had died when I was quite young and my Grandmother raised me. And my Dad was sort of out of the picture. He remarried, and was really never a Dad. So of course I was very glad to put that name on Waite.

JE: Yeah.

VP: And he asked me to call him Dad. We had a good relationship, and I got to know him very well. He would tell me things sometimes that, well I don't — he asked me about religion and I said well I'm not a very religious person. I was raised in a very, very strict Baptist (Church) and when I found I couldn't believe that I thought I was an atheist. And he said, "You know I went through the same thing when I was a boy, when I was out wandering around." He said, "We had been under both Grandfathers." His Mother's Father and his Father's Father were Methodist ministers, and the family had pretty strict beliefs. And the boys were taught to- or they tried to teach them to be good Methodists. And you know Dad said I couldn't believe the things they were saying either. And like me, we didn't know anything else. So we thought, if we can't believe that, well we must be atheist. Well of course we weren't. And we both found as we got older that you don't have to be like those very strict religious people that we were raised with. Even though neither one of us went to a church.

Chapter 14 – 4:33**Money and Waite Phillips**

John Erling: He never talked to you about the business or the oil or the money or anything, did he talk to you about that?

Virginia Phillips: Oh yes, money wasn't terribly important in his life. He used it. Just like with us, when close to the end of his life, he said, "If you wanted this Elliot, you can have it. Can you use it? Do you want to take it and do something with it?" Chope said, "I'm perfectly happy with what I have, and we really don't need it."

JE: And he offered to give you money?

VP: Oh yes.

Elliot Phillips: Well, he was a pretty wealthy man. He didn't leave a lot of money to me and I told him I didn't want him to.

JE: But he –it sounds like he offered to?

EP: Well...

VP: He would've.

EP: He would've yes. But he didn't believe in –he thought that money should be used as a tool to help people, help society, help something. And if you aren't going to put it to good use, then you shouldn't have it. And I agreed with him 100 percent. You only need so much money, as long as you got plenty to eat, just a few things like that. I never was one that was hungry to get any more money or anything, I didn't –

JE: And his gift to you financially was –

EP: What?

JE: His gift to you was the ranch and –

EP: You bet.

JE: And that was –

EP: That was all, that was what I wanted.

JE: And that was it.

EP: That suited me fine. That was it. That was plenty. More than –

VP: Well, he left you a very nice legacy.

EP: Yeah, yeah.

VP: And the rest went to SC, Southern Cal, Southern California University and they built a building there with his name on it and neither one of us are greedy kind of people. We don't need a lot of money. We wouldn't live any different than we do. And then when Genevieve died, she had about the same size fortune that he did. After her bequests that she made to several people, and to Philbrook, we took what was left and set up a Foundation. We also could have had that, but we didn't want the personal wealth. We

made a Foundation out of it and we've been –

EP: A charitable Foundation that we donate things to.

JE: Which exists today?

EP: Yeah.

JE: And is managed I believe by you and Julie?

VP: Yes. Julie is now the President of the Foundation. And Chope backed down first and then I shut down some of mine. Really all I do, I do the investing, and I have from the start. Chope and I had quite a disagreement about the Foundation when we first got it because he wanted to put it in the bank and let the trust department take care of it. Well, he hadn't been –when he was ranching he didn't want anything to distract him from ranching and he didn't realize how poorly some of these trusts were being managed in the banks. And I did. I had been reading about it, and knew about it and I said, "No I wouldn't put it in the bank." And he said, "I don't want to fool with it. It interferes with my ranching." So I said, "Okay I'll set it up." I had never done anything like that before. I did invest. I'd been investing for some time before we received the Foundation. So I took it on and I had a very, very good accountant in New Mexico and with his help we set that up and got it running. And it was such an opportune time. It was during the biggest and longest bull market that the financial world had ever seen. And we made money, we doubled the Foundation and then we were on our way to tripling it and the bull market was gone. But we made several big gifts, we gave Philmont Scout Ranch 3 million dollars out of it in one whack, and then we've given more to them. Primarily we give to Philmont and Philbrook if they need it. If they have a project, a capital project. And if we have money left over, we give it to schools and hospitals.

Chapter 15 – 4:37

Will Rogers Visits Phillips Ranch / Elliot Gets Walt Helmerich's Car / Southern Hills Country Club

John Erling: Let me come back to when you're –in 1935 when Will Rogers dies and you're 17 years old.

Elliot Phillips: I've got a picture on my desk I'll show you of him and Wiley Post, just about four or five days before they got killed. It was taken at the ranch. It's on my desk, I'll show it to you in a few minutes.

JE: Because they had visited Philmont?

EP: Yeah, that was a picture of them, yeah.

JE: And you might have been there but –

EP: I was there I was up in the mountains. Dad had sent me up in the mountains to (with) Bishop or somebody from New Mexico was on the ranch visiting and Dad said, I had a friend with me and he said, "You boys take Bishop up to the Fish Camp and take him up there for a day or two. Well, he didn't know Will Rogers was coming to the ranch. And while we were up in the mountains with the Bishop, Will Rogers and Wiley Post stopped at the ranch and there's a picture of them on my desk and when I got back the day after they had left, I found out that they were there and I'd missed seeing them and everybody at that time, Will Rogers was a well-known person you've heard of him of course and he was well-known and everybody would have been real happy to meet him and I certainly would've. That's one regret I have. But he just was there for the one night. I got down the next day and they said well, Will Rogers, you just missed him, he was here yesterday. And Wiley Post went on to Denver, on that way in that direction and went on up there to Alaska. About two days later, that's when their plane went down and they got killed.

JE: Yeah. Do you remember as a young boy, 18 or 17 whenever, or older, some of the famous people that you might have met that came to the ranch?

EP: Well of course that first year that they built the big house, it was the year they had that Dawes Party out and that was General Dawes the Vice President of the United States at that time. I was 9 years old. Another guy was Ken Roberts who was a well-known author at that time, he was a friend of Dawes. And another one was a cartoonist John McCutcheon, a cartoonist with The Chicago Tribune. And then (inaudible) Williams who was a very prominent author at the time. Those two authors and that cartoonist were in on that party the Dawes Party.

JE: Yeah. I'm bringing you back to when you were a teenager, maybe your first car, do you remember your first car that you ever owned? There was a car in Tulsa that you told me about, it was that Dodge –

EP: Yeah, but that wasn't necessarily my first car, because that's what I had later on. But when I got out of the service, this car had belonged to the son of one of his good friends, a man named Walt Helmerich. You know who Mr. Helmerich was, it was Walt his son. He had gone on to War and I ended up with his car, young Walt's car.

Virginia Phillips: But that would have been –

EP: Yeah that wasn't the first car I owned, I owned several cars yeah, that was quite a few years later.

JE: Yeah. Staying in Tulsa now, in 1928 your Dad played a role in the opening of the Tulsa Municipal Airport when he joined others like Bill Skelly and others –

EP: Yeah, I knew Mr. Skelly real well.

JE: You remember him?

EP: Oh yeah, he was a good friend of my Dad's and at our house, he and Pat Hurley was

another good friend of my Dad's, they were at our house a lot of times.

JE: And then they signed what they call a stud horse note for the Tulsa Municipal Airport of about \$172,000 and that's why we have an airport today 'cause your family was involved in –

EP: I wasn't living in Tulsa much then –

JE: Yeah, Tulsans don't know that your dad bought 700 acres south of Tulsa and gave about 290 acres to Southern Hills Country Club.

EP: I knew all about that.

JE: You knew about that?

EP: Well it was a farm, I used to go out there and ride horseback on that farm way before they even made a Country Club out of it. You know it was nice just to go out to the farm and you know we had a few cattle out there and just go out there and ride.

JE: And do you remember then when he gave the acres to Southern Hills? And then he gave in 1935, he gave \$25,000 to build the Clubhouse. You were 17 at the time.

EP: No, I was there.

JE: Okay.

EP: I was living there, I was in school or somewhere. I really wasn't too interested in that kind of stuff.

JE: But you do remember riding on the farm and riding horses south of Tulsa?

EP: Oh I remember we had horses all over that farm, yeah. I remember that. I knew the farm all right.

Chapter 16 – 2:47

Bill Skelly & Elliot / Philtower & Philcade Buildings

Virginia Phillips: Didn't you go with Bill Skelly out to his ranch or farm and fish?

Elliot Phillips: One time.

VP: Oh, just one time?

EP: I think he had a boat or something out there and we went out there. He kind of took a liking to me cause he didn't have any boys, and he was very nice to me, he always liked me. He didn't have any boys, but he was a good man. I liked him very much. We were very good friends with him. He was a very good friend and man. A very good man.

John Erling: Did he follow your life very far? Bill Skelly?

EP: On no.

JE: It was while you lived in Tulsa –

EP: No he didn't.

- JE: That you were –
- EP: No, I just knew him, you know –
- JE: Yeah. In 1928 the Philtower building was built, and then your Dad moved his office from the Atlas Life building to the Philtower building.
- EP: I remember that.
- JE: You remember the Philtower?
- EP: Oh I do remember it very well. My Dad's office was on the 21st floor of the Philtower building.
- JE: And you were about 10, 11 years old then?
- EP: Yeah I was 10 in 1928.
- JE: So you remember going up that elevator and –
- EP: Oh yeah. Oh you bet. Many times, well I remember his office was there as long as –until he left.
- JE: It had elevator operators I think –
- EP: They had elevator operators, yeah, they didn't have the punching thing. You had in those days you had that building like all of the rest of them, you went in and you had an elevator operator.
- JE: And then across the street in 1930 he built the Philcade building.
- EP: The Philcade building.
- JE: Can you talk to me about that?
- EP: He built that building when he gave his home away in Tulsa, to the museum. Why then he built an apartment up on top of the Philcade building, and lived up there for about three years.
- JE: And I think he moved into the Mayo Hotel after they gave the house away.
- EP: They lived in the Mayo for a while, and then he built that thing on top of the Philcade and spent two or three years there before they moved out to California.
- JE: And you would have lived there then?
- EP: I lived there some when I was –I wasn't living there, I was somewhere else you know, by that time I wasn't staying at home but when I was there, when I would touch base with my folks and they were living at the Philcade (inaudible)
- JE: He built a tunnel between the two buildings.
- EP: That's right.
- JE: Tell us why he did that.
- EP: Well, I don't know. He just did it. He had the two buildings and it was just a way to –without having to walk across the street. You could go down to the basement and go from one to the other. It was pretty convenient.
- JE: And then I understand it was for security reasons too?

VP: I think it probably was –

EP: I don't know anything about that.

VP: To avoid being out on the street, back then the kidnappings were common for wealthy people.

Chapter 17 – 5:22

Hawkeye Ranch / Philmont – Boy Scout Ranch / Elliot is Not Interested in the Oil Business

John Erling: Now we'll come to the Hawkeye Ranch in northern New Mexico, which was a favorite place for your Father to go. And in 1925 he acquired more land, 30,000 acres that went along with the 42,000 that he had purchased in 1922 and that's when he renamed the ranch Philmont.

Elliot Phillips: Philmont.

JE: And "-mont" meaning mountain?

EP: Yes.

JE: And so this had to be a boy's delight?

EP: That was a place I liked the most and he kept adding to that and he ended up with 300,000 acres on that ranch and he kept buying stuff that adjoined it. We ran quite a few cattle and I went out on that ranch and- when school was out I'd stay at the cow camp with the cowboys for at least a month or two. We'd be moving the cattle from down below up to the high country for summer pasture. I got in on a lot of that.

JE: And you of course loved horses.

EP: Oh I loved horses and the Cowboys. Cowboys were my heroes.

JE: You even had a camel there?

EP: Yes.

JE: How did that come about?

EP: My Father's older brother Frank had this little ranch out in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. He had some exotic animals on it and I was up there one time and he had several camels and I said, "I wish we had one of those." I didn't (really mean it) I was just talking. And dang ig he didn't send one out to the ranch. So we put it in the game pasture. Dad had a game pasture there at the ranch, down there by the headquarters with a big fence around it. There was probably 700 or 800 acres in it. This camel was in there with some elk and some other animals. We never did anything with it, but it was just an oddity.

JE: I think you have already touched on this but the fact that it was the time that your Father wanted you to be the businessman?

EP: Oh, of course. It wasn't just a time. He always wanted that. He had one son and he was pretty proud of what he had done and had a right to be. And obviously he would like to

have his son follow in his footsteps. There's not a thing too unusual about that, that you don't find two people that just think just along the same lines. And I had already been exposed to this Cowboy stuff and that's what I was interested in was ranching. And he was so much different, high echelon than I was interested in (being) and that's what it all amounted to.

JE: But then he got you interested or tried to get you interested in oil business in Kansas?

EP: Well I worked up there for about two years in it. It was all right. I didn't mind it. Roustabouting up there and pulling wells and you know doing the kind of oil field work that a roustabout does. I made some pretty good friends, but you know I just wasn't interested in drilling a lot of wells and making a lot of money that wasn't the thing I wanted to do, I wanted to be ranching. And I knew there wasn't anything like the (same) amount of money in it but it wasn't that that I was interested in.

JE: So then do you remember the time when you told your Dad I'm leaving this? Was there a moment –

EP: I didn't say I was leaving. I never told him I was leaving. I didn't tell him that. But he something (like) "What do you think about the oil business?" And I said, "Well, it's all right, but it doesn't compare with the ranching." If he would have said anything, I would have kept on working up there in the oil patch. He was discouraged when he thought that maybe working up there in the oil patch that I'd get the fever to come down and want to get into the oil business like he did. But our courses were all together different. I wasn't trying to make a lot of money. I just wanted to do what I wanted to do. And in his case it was a little bit different. It might have been different with me if I hadn't had opportunities to do some of the things I was doing, like go out on the ranch and work cattle, which is what I really liked.

JE: So then he understood that and then –

EP: Finally he did, he finally did. It was kind of hard for him to swallow that. But he just –

Virginia Phillips: I think he tolerated it.

EP: Mmmm?

JE: He tolerated it more than anything?

EP: Yeah.

JE: Then he set you up then with the ranch in New Mexico? Is that what had happened next?

EP: He bought one for me. He didn't set it out. I set it out. I did everything. I just had one guy working for me. I hired a man and we did all the work. We had 17 windmills to look after. You know we just weren't looking for something to do. We had plenty of work.

JE: Then as you operated the ranch –

EP: I operated it, he didn't have anything to do with it.

JE: But you were a Cowboy?

EP: I was a Cowboy and a Rancher, a pretty good one. I did a pretty good job of ranching and did a pretty good job of running it. A lot of people have ranches, but they just hire somebody to run it for them. And they really don't know a damn thing about some of the work that goes on on the ranches. But I was a hands-on rancher and I did anything that was to be done, I was in on. And that's the way I wanted to do it.

JE: Which was different from your Father –

EP: Oh, yeah.

JE: He enjoyed ranches –

EP: He had a lot of people working for him of course. And he wasn't in there doing the actual labor like I was. I worked on his ranch as a kid, just as a, you know, a common hand and I enjoyed it. I enjoy that kind of work and he didn't have anything to do with that. I was out there working with some of his men.

Chapter 18 – 3:00

Philmont is Donated to Boy Scouts

John Erling: In 1937 then your Father donates Philmont to the Boy Scouts and he had correspondence with Walter Head who was the Leader of the Boy Scouts. How did that make you feel?

Elliot Phillips: That was all right. I thought that was a great thing to do with it.

JE: But, it was the ranch that you loved to be on?

EP: Well, I loved to ranch but I didn't want all of that ranch I wanted part of it. By that time it was a 300,000-acre ranch. He didn't give them the whole 300,000 acres, he gave them 90-some- thousand acres. And the part that he gave them was just right. That was the part where the house was and the fish camp was and you know, a lot of beautiful scenery. I loved that and I loved it. I grew up in it and all that. But the part of the ranch that I would have liked was maybe further on south and in some country that he wasn't particularly interested in, but he ended up selling that to somebody else, many years ago, for really pretty cheap. The way that things are now, he sold it for about \$7 an acre. And you know, you don't go out and buy country like that for \$7 an acre now.

JE: Virginia, are you going to comment?

Virginia Phillips: Well, I just wanted to make the point that Dad enjoyed the ranch but none of the work on it, as Chope was saying. He would never have enjoyed it in the same way that we have. He didn't know it really, that was a part of the ranch that he never knew and never understood.

JE: So then when he gave the land to the Boy Scouts, you still had land –

- EP: There was plenty of land, yeah.
- JE: And so there was enough for you to still be on?
- EP: Oh my God yes.
- VP: And it was very productive land.
- EP: More than enough.
- VP: What he gave away was camping (land).
- EP: I wasn't real happy when he sold that to –which even at that time was a pretty cheap price. You know I always had hoped that I could end up with a little piece of that somewhere, sometime but I think really he thought he was doing me a favor by getting rid of that, I think he really did.
- JE: Because he thought that you might end up in the oil business again?
- EP: No.
- JE: No?
- EP: He felt that I'd probably, if he'd have given me a part of that ranch he figured that I'd probably stay there the rest of my life. And that's all I would ever want to do and that's exactly what I would have done. And he didn't want me to do that.
- JE: Yeah.
- EP: He wanted me to do something else.
- JE: And then when he gave Philmont to the Boy Scouts that was in 1937 and you would have been 19 years old.
- EP: Yeah, that was, I'd already been through that.
- VP: In 1937, he gave them a small part of the ranch that was detached from the main ranch.
- EP: Yeah.
- VP: I can't remember how many acres it was. Do you Chope?
- EP: It was right around 45,000 acres.
- VP: Okay.
- EP: But later, when he gave the big part of the ranch to them, what year was that?
- VP: 1941 or '42.
- EP: Yeah, somewhere in there.
- JE: So you were 23 then?
- EP: Yeah.

Chapter 19 – 3:53

Philbrook is Donated to Tulsa / Waite Takes Dale Carnegie Course

John Erling: In 1938, your Mother and Dad, they donate Philbrook to the City (of Tulsa) and

you were 20 years old. That pretty well stunned most Tulsans at the time they didn't think that was going to happen.

Elliot Phillips: I wasn't living there then.

JE: You weren't around then –

EP: I wasn't living there. That didn't mean a thing to me.

JE: Yeah. It's interesting, your Dad's quoted as saying, "The only things we keep permanently –

EP: "Are what we give away. The only thing you really keep is what you give away." There's pretty good truth in that.

JE: Yeah. This is interesting. Your Father attended a Dale Carnegie course.

EP: Yeah, he did.

JE: Can either one of you talk about –

EP: Well, see he had very little formal education when he was growing up. What was that, for Dale Carnegie?

Virginia Phillips: It was public speaking.

EP: Public speaking and all and Dad was –

VP: He couldn't –

EP: He really didn't like public speaking very well. So there was nothing bashful about him on a one-on-one basis with you and some business people he was working with, but as far as getting up and making a speech –

VP: It almost made him sick.

EP: He didn't like that at all.

JE: You have to give him a lot of credit then he wanted to –

EP: He thought that that would help him, and I think it did help him some.

JE: Did you ever hear him make a public speech?

EP: Did I ever hear him make one?

JE: Yeah.

EP: Well, I can't remember. I don't believe I remember him ever doing that. I've heard him talk a lot to business people in conferences of various kinds, and he was very good at that. But as far as getting up for some kind of a public gathering and giving a speech he wasn't good at that.

JE: But, I'm sure he improved after the Dale Carnegie course.

VP: Not a heck of a lot. (Laughter)

EP: A little bit, he still didn't like it.

VP: I'd love to hear Dad's voice again.

JE: Wouldn't it have been great? We could have had that on a website?

VP: I would love it.

EP: We both would. Yeah. He was a dynamic person, if you had ever met him, I'll say that, if you'd ever met him, you'd never forget him. If you would've said I met that man once 55 years ago, spent about 30 minutes with him and I'll never forget it and that's pretty true isn't it? He made a pretty profound impression on most people.

JE: Tulsans would be interested to know that in 1938 your Father gave money to St. John Hospital.

EP: Oh, well he did that kind of stuff all of the time.

JE: He gave a \$100,000 endowment for an x-ray unit. And that was at a –

EP: He was doing things like that all the time.

JE: And it was a Memorial for his twin brother?

VP: Yes.

JE: To Saint John Hospital.

VP: When his twin brother dies, they had been in Utah. And when he got sick, they realized they were working in a hotel. I think they were bellmen and they ran the front desk, they just did a little bit of everything. And the man that they were working for recognized that Wiate was seriously ill. And he recommended and made arrangements for them to go up to Spokane. And they of course had no money. But they got him on the train. Put a cot on the train, and took him into Spokane. And a Catholic hospital took him in. And that was where Wiate died. And the nuns were very good to Dad. And Dad always favored the Catholic hospitals after that.

JE: Which led to the St. John –

VP: Yes.

JE: And then in 1944 when he was getting ready to leave Tulsa, he donated money to the north Greenwood Avenue area, which was the site of the Race Riots. He got all of these powerful people in the Tulsa Club. He donated \$100,000 for the creation of a black community center.

EP: He did a lot of that kind of stuff.

JE: I mean –here's man that didn't have to be that kind of person of giving.

EP: He wanted to do it. He wanted to do it.

JE: Yeah.

EP: He gave lots of stuff in Tulsa and everywhere he lived.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 20 – 3:44**Waite's Death**

John Erling: And then we can say that we're sitting here in Amarillo, and you were actually stationed here, at one time in the military. It's because of you being here, that's how you met Virginia.

Elliot Phillips: Well, is that right? Is that where we –?

Virginia Phillips: Yes.

EP: I remember when I was here during the service, that's what I remember.

VP: Yes.

JE: So then Virginia, or both of you –

EP: She was working at Pantex and I was out on that Bivouac and living in a tent. The Bivouac area the base the main base was right around here south of town. But they had a Bivouac area, about 20 miles farther out. In that Bivouac area and I was living in a tent out there. Which just suited me fine. I didn't care about staying in the BOQ (Base Officers Quarters) at the base very much. I had to come in there every once in a while and take a shower, that's all I needed it for. But this Bivouac, it happened to be pretty close to this Pantex where Virginia was working. And it had a cafeteria there and I'd go over to that cafeteria and I met a girl over there and went with her a while and she happened to be a roommate of Virginia's, they were both working there and living there in this apartment and of course through this roommate I got to know Virginia and it didn't take long before I dropped the other one and we started going together, is how that happened. (Laughter)

JE: Was it love at first sight Virginia?

VP: Oh, I don't think so. We went together for three and a half years before we married. He was in the service and after about a year he was moved and re-stationed in Colorado Springs. I went up there when I could and he'd come down to Amarillo. He knew when he got out of the service that he was going to get a ranch somewhere in New Mexico, and he said, "We won't marry until I get the ranch, get out of the service and get somewhat control of my own life again." So he bought the ranch and about nine months later we married and I moved to New Mexico.

JE: So in 1964, Waite, your Father, dies.

EP: Yeah.

JE: He was 81.

EP: Yeah.

JE: And you were 46 at the time. Where was the funeral?

EP: In California.

JE: Can both of you remember comments about that? Would you remember?

VP: Well, there's a little cemetery in Westwood Village, or what used to be Westwood Village.

EP: Yeah.

VP: And he had made arrangements to be interred there. And they were to build a crypt. But they didn't get it done before he died, and Genevieve finished it. It's a beautiful crypt, with some –

EP: It was a beautiful little cemetery.

VP: With bronze gates, that they had made in Italy, and shipped over, and some of it is like the gates at Philbrook. And we were there this year (2009). When we went out to California, we visited the crypt. There was a statue in their home, a marble statue that they had gotten back when they were building Philbrook in Tulsa. And they always had it just outside their breakfast room. When they left Philbrook they took it with them, and they had it just outside their dining room in –

EP: California.

VP: California. And Genevieve told me once, "When Waite and I are gone, will you put that little statue in our crypt?" So we did as soon as the crypt was built. And then Dad had been in a temporary vault there, and we moved him into the crypt and put the statue in there.

Chapter 21 – 4:05

Philbrook Design Inspired from Trips to Italy / Genevieve's Funeral

John Erling: We didn't mention this about Philbrook, but that design came about because of their trips to Italy, and I think the Lake Como area?

Virginia Phillips: Yes, well they liked all of Italy. But there were some things at Lake Como that they wanted to duplicate at Philbrook and that was in the formal gardens in the back part of Philbrook. I don't know the directions there.

JE: It would have been East I think.

VP: It would have been East.

JE: Yep, right.

VP: And it is very attractive.

JE: And then Genevieve dies in 1979, and she's 92. And that funeral was out in California?

Elliot Phillips: Right.

VP: Same place.

JE: Any particular remembrances of that?

VP: We had a Unity Minister from Santa Monica. It was a woman and she had a little church there that Genevieve and I would go to, not the Church services, but the meditation

garden. And we would go out there and stay sometimes. But Dad's service was done by a Methodist Minister that had been in the Westwood Village, at a Methodist Church there, that dad had gotten to know and they went to lunch about once every month or two. And he had left and moved to Arizona. But, I called him when Dad died at Genevieve's instructions, and asked him to come and do the service. Well he was sick with Valley Fever and he said, "I just can't. I'm not able." So the second thing that we were going to do was have the Commander of the Salvation Army do the service for him, because Dad had worked with this man in the Salvation Army in the Los Angeles area. We knew he would do it, and he was a really nice man. But then the Minister Ragsalle from Arizona called and he said you know I so want to do this, and I'm going to come and then leave right after. And he did, he came. He and Dad had worked together and if he had a project that needed funding, he knew he could talk to Dad and get help, as the Commander of the Salvation Army did. Christmas mornings, Dad would always call the Salvation Army to make sure they had enough food for all the people that were coming in. Dad said he didn't want to think of any man going hungry on Christmas Day.

JE: Yeah. What do you think you drew from your Father? Characteristics or anything, did you draw something from him?

EP: God, I guess I got a lot from him.

JE: Characteristics or —?

EP: You couldn't help being around him and having him rub off on you.

JE: Can you kind of describe what it was that rubbed off? What do you think about?

EP: So many things that I'd have to think about it a long time to take a long time to say what all it was but my Dad had a very dynamic personality. Of course he was a great philanthropist, that's been demonstrated many times. Not only was he a good businessman but he was certainly generous with his money. He didn't have any respect for people that didn't work and do something. That's true I mean he certainly didn't believe in people just sitting around and spending their money, but he thought everybody ought to work.

JE: Yeah.

EP: And he certainly worked all of his life. He worked up until the day he died.

JE: So there's a work ethic that you drew from him?

EP: Well, that's part of it. I mean you had to do something. That was one of the things that he was pretty adamant on. (Asking Virginia) Can you think of anything?

VP: Honesty.

EP: Well, yeah, he was certainly —I think I got some of that from him. You know everybody makes a bonehead (mistake) sometimes and the best thing you can do is just admit it. I just made a bonehead doing that. And don't try and make excuses for it. Hopefully I

won't do it again.

JE: Yeah.

EP: That's one of the things I learned, which has been a pretty important thing.

Chapter 22 – 5:13

Waite the Landscaper / Advice to Students

John Erling: Your Father paid a lot of attention to detail.

Elliot Phillips: Yes he did.

JE: He was a detail man. And even though he didn't work the ranch he was very on top of everything in details?

EP: He was pretty much on top of what he knew anything about.

JE: There's a story at Philmont about a tree that he had moved several times, can you tell me

—

EP: Oh yeah. I remember that. He was very interested in the landscaping and he had both homes. The home at Philmont had a pretty nice yard in it and the one at Philbrook, you've seen it, you know it had quite a yard and you know he did a lot with that yard. Sometimes he had a tree already there and he wants to move it from there to here, which is quite a project you know in those days we'd have to do it with a team and a wagon and horses and pull it out of the hole and dig a big hole and box it up and jack it up and move it out of there. But anyway he had several trees and he'd think: Well that tree's there, but I'd really rather have it over here. So, he moved them every once in a while. He moved them more than once, even the same tree. Well this one deal, he happened to be moving it and he said, "Tony, I want to move this tree from here to here." And Tony, you know he'd already moved it. He'd moved a lot of trees for Dad. And he kind of grinned and he said, "You know, Mr. Phillips that's where that tree was to start with." (Laughter) Dad told that story on himself. (Laughter)

JE: Well, both of you now, if you had young people listening to you, any words of advice in life or jobs or pursuit of happiness that you would care to offer?

Virginia Phillips: Try to find what you really love doing. Not everybody can do it. But if you can, work at that. Because you will enjoy it and the money will take care of itself.

EP: I think that's good advice for anybody.

JE: It was for both of you I mean.

EP: You know, life is actually reasonably short. Which I think when you take somebody my age you realize how short it is. And it's pretty nice to work at something. Everybody should be working at something. I don't believe in people just sitting around. But it's very

important to be working at something that you're very interested in. You'll do a better job of it for one thing. You'll get a lot more satisfaction out of it. And I just think that's a pretty important thing.

VP: I can't imagine anything worse than to work all of your life at a job that you hated.

JE: Yeah.

EP: Find something that you enjoy doing, just like you're doing, and we're all trying to do.

JE: And you worked the ranch 'til you were 75 years old I believe?

EP: Yeah, oh yeah. I enjoyed every minute of it.

JE: Do you now at 91 like to go out and visit the ranch and all or are you just not interested now? You live here in Amarillo now and —?

EP: Well, I enjoy seeing the ranch, you know, somebody else's ranch, and what they're doing and I still enjoy that. We go to Philmont a couple of times a year, and I always enjoy going out there and seeing some of what they're doing out there. Sometimes I approve of what they're doing, and sometimes I don't, but what I don't, I usually keep my mouth shut. Or, if it's really bad I'll go ahead and express myself.

JE: So if you had to do it all over again Virginia?

VP: I would love to do it all over again.

EP: Yeah.

VP: And live just the way we lived, and count our blessings that we could do it.

EP: Yep.

VP: Not everyone is that fortunate.

EP: I think we feel pretty good about our past life, most of it. Some people say God I wish I hadn't of done this or hadn't have done that. I can't say that too much. Most of my life I've pretty much done what I was interested in, and I can't say that I'd do it much differently. I'm not trying to brag on myself, what a hell of a good job I did, but as far as I'm concerned it suited me pretty well.

JE: Yep. This is a funny question, out of the clear blue —did you have a favorite horse and what was the name of your favorite horse.

EP: Oh Wow. Not necessarily, I had several favorite horses.

JE: You had several of them? (Laughter)

EP: Yeah. Kind of like if you had five children, which one's your favorite child? You know, that's like asking that.

JE: Okay. They were as meaningful to you almost as children weren't they?

EP: Yes.

VP: Well, I think Old Buck was probably my favorite.

EP: Oh, that old horse that I had.

VP: The stallion.

- EP: I had an old stallion that was a really good horse and there's no question about that.
- VP: Now I liked to ride that horse.
- EP: She rode him and got along good with him.
- JE: And so you enjoyed riding horses too?
- VP: Yes, up until the children came I did quite a bit of it.
- JE: Yep.
- VP: But after they came, there was no time.
- JE: Well, I want to thank you both for giving to this and I'm just fortunate to have met you both. And this legacy now will be on a website so that people can hear the history of the Phillips family and of your family forever and ever because of today's technology.

Chapter 23 – :13

Conclusion

John Erling: Now that you have heard Chope and Virginia Phillips share their memories, you may want to consult our For Further Reading section and you'll learn more about the Phillips family and the mark they made on Oklahoma.

– END –