

## William Vandever

From integration to the Philharmonic,  
Bill shares a fascinating glimpse into Tulsa's past.

### Chapter 1 – 0:59

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** In the 1950's, all things big and small could be found at the store with everything. Vandever's was the go-to department store located at 16 E. Fifth Street in Tulsa. One could purchase everything from Paris fashion knock-offs to Levi's jeans, from a full-length mink coat to a youngster's Hopalong Cassidy outfit, and from expensive imported jewelry to Mickey Mouse watches. Five brothers owned and managed this multi-level retail space in the heart of downtown Tulsa, plus a store in Bartlesville. In addition, very little of major importance happened without the avid support of the Vandever's. Bill Vandever, the son of Gary Vandever, managed the business for many years. Bill served on the boards of 17 organizations, including his favorite, the Tulsa Philharmonic. Listen to Bill Vandever tell the story of a very fashionable department store from Tulsa's past: Vandever's Department store on Voices of Oklahoma.com.

### Chapter 2

#### Early Retailing - 10:00

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**John Erling:** Today's date is March 9, 2009.

**William Vandever:** My name is William Vandever. I'm eighty-three years old. I was born on June 17, 1925.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**WV:** I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at St. Johns Hospital.

**JE:** So then you went to school from elementary in here?

**WV:** I went to elementary schools, Elliot, then Horace Mann, then Central, and by that time I began to develop some of my own ideas, which were not too popular with my parents. So they sent me to St. Johns Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin, for the last years of high school. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me, because the year I graduated from St. Johns I went into the army, and I'd already had two years training, which meant I was ahead of most all the guys.

**JE:** Did you go in at a special rank then because of that?

**WV:** No, no special rank. I went into the Air Force, I went into the Aviation Training Program.

**JE:** So that would have been in the '40s because of—

**WV:** It'd be '43, '42, '43. I went in to their college detachment and I was trained to be an aviator. Though I had to go through basic like any other GI and then they sent me to college in Murphysboro, Tennessee.

**JE:** What school was that?

**WV:** Tennessee State College. And they put all the cadets through a crash course, including calculus, by the way, and the weather and engines. And we had to run seven miles every day. One third of the corps dropped out because they could not make the seven miles a day.

**JE:** And you weren't one of the dropouts?

**WV:** I wasn't one of the dropouts. I made it.

**JE:** So you completed that?

**WV:** Yes, from there I went to primary training in Dothan, Alabama. And we flew the Stearman 17, which had two wings, and in that school we learned aerobatics. And in fact, remember, eighteen years old, we had no sense, we had no judgment, we did things that when I think back about it absolutely frighten me.

**JE:** So you were a pilot?

**WV:** I was a pilot. In Dothan I was in training on a PT 17, and that's the two-wing plane with the open cockpits. We learned that training so well that they required us when you land at an airport there's a pattern. You've got to down one leg and then across one leg and then you've got an approach. So we had to come into the downwind leg upside down, turn, go to the crosswind leg, and then turn and go on the approach. And then about 100 feet before you hit the ground you flipped it back over and landed.

**JE:** Oh my, oh. First time you tried that you were pretty nervous though?

**WV:** Really not, I didn't have any judgment, I didn't have any sense. I was eighteen years old, the world was mine. I don't feel that way now.

**JE:** No.

**WV:** When you start a PT 17 a mechanic has to grab the propeller and pull it. And they have

to take the prime pump and prime it. I went up one day and my mechanic left the prime pump open and my engine flooded. It was in Georgia, nothing but pine trees. I saw a little pea patch, a tiny pea patch. Well, the first thing I did is I climbed out on the wing, going to jump, lost my nerve and climbed back in. So I went into my pattern and got into my approach on that little pea patch. And in order to get into the pea patch when I got the plane over the pea patch I had to stall it. And when you stall a plane it starts dropping. So I stalled the plane and dropped into that pea patch. They had to take that plane apart to get it out. Then, of course, I went into the next stage.

**JE:** Well, wait a minute here now. What was your condition when you came down in that plane?

**WV:** My pants were wet. That's it.

**JE:** Wow, you were fortunate.

**WV:** Yeah, then I went into the next stage of training, another field. And then there was a third stage of training, which advanced, and we flew in AT-6s there, a great airplane. And then we went through Gunnery at Eglin Field and learned how to shoot planes down. And one of my buddies shot me in the leg.

**JE:** How did that happen?

**WV:** He just missed, that's all, 'cause the planes would pull a tow cart, it was a cloth, a big piece of cloth about forty feet long. That cloth would assimilate a plane so we took turns pulling that cloth and the planes had two .30 caliber machine guns in each wing and they would dive onto that cloth. Well, one of my buddies missed and the bullet went through the cockpit of the tow plane.

**JE:** Wow, so you had presence of mind to land that plane even though you were wounded?

**WV:** Just a little piece of shrapnel in my leg, we just kept on going. Remember, we didn't have any sense.

**JE:** That's right.

**WV:** And so then after Gunnery training I was put in the invasion force of Japan. I was checked out in P40 and P51, primary P40. And Harry Truman saved my life.

**JE:** How's that?

**WV:** He dropped the bomb and the invasion force of Japan was brought back to America.

**JE:** Hmm, you would have been in the thick of it.

**WV:** Right. And, of course, I asked for a discharge because I wanted to go into business. I did not want to become a commercial pilot, although I had a commercial pilot's license and an instrument rating.

**JE:** So then were you discharged?

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** They granted that?

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative), granted an honorable discharge.

**JE:** And then what did you do?

**WV:** Then I went for a year at Tulsa University. Of course, being in a retail family I had already worked in the store. I had already worked in the Men's Department, I had already worked in the Cosmetic Department. And so, after church on Sunday, the whole family went to the store and I went with them.

**JE:** The store wasn't open on Sunday?

**WV:** No, the store wasn't open on Sunday. And I had spent some time being an Assistant Buyer. So I went to TU and took a course in merchandising and started flunking it. I went to the dean and explained to him that the textbook was not right, that it was ten years old, and that I had been trained otherwise. I dropped out of the class and they didn't show it on my record. Then I went to New York University and took their four-year course on Retailing in one year, and I worked in B Altman on the flying squad. The Altman Department Store, one of the great stores of our times, it's no longer open. It was just a block from the Empire State Building.

**JE:** B. Altman?

**WV:** B. Altman, and it was on Madison Avenue and Retailing moved uptown in New York. And I believe that was one of their problems, but it was a great merchandising institution. I was on the flying squad.

**JE:** Flying squad?

**WV:** Yes, if they had a crowd in a certain department then they would send me there. Well, one day they had a crowd at the Handbag Department. There was a sale going on, only old ladies were in the Handbag Department. You can picture that, handbag, an old lady. So I outsold every lady in the department and so they complained to management and asked them not to send me there anymore.

**JE:** Ladies would rather buy handbags from a male, from you, than from these ladies?

**WV:** Whatever it was. Well, I was young, I was what? Twenty years old, nineteen, twenty years old.

**JE:** Right.

**WV:** Well, anyway, I went there for a year and then I came back to Tulsa and I became the buyer of basement dresses, daytime dresses, coats, and suits, and sportswear. It was a natural to me. And then I was promoted to buyer of Missys. Missys coats, suits, sportswear, and lingerie.

**JE:** You were buying lingerie?

**WV:** Sure.

**JE:** How many years did you do that?

**WV:** Well, I worked there about a year and a half and I did very, very well. I installed unit

control of which the early merchants didn't know too much about.

**JE:** What was unit control?

**WV:** Unit control was where you set up a big graph and you kept track of every sale by classification. And if you saw a dress starting to sell then you reordered that dress. If you saw a dress that was not going to sell then you put it on the markdown list for sale. It was called unit control.

**JE:** Was that a relatively new?

**WV:** Relatively new for Tulsa.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** But not for the big stores in New York. I was very successful in that operation, made money for the company. And then I was promoted to General Merchandise Manager of Soft Goods and Ready-to-wear. And I was made Merchandise Manager of half of the store. My father was still living and he was a stubborn Dutchman.

**JE:** And your father's name was?

**WV:** Gary.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** He was still living, and I got him to sign a contract with me so I could make a commission if I made the store a lot of money. You've got to understand the old-timers. I made a huge profit for them, took the numbers up to him at the end of the year, and said, "Tell the comptroller to write me my check." And he looked at that, "Well, I'm not going to pay you that?"

**JE:** Had he agreed to?

**WV:** Well, yeah, I had a contract. He said, "I'm not going to pay you that." That was the end of that.

**JE:** You continued to work, obviously.

**WV:** Well, of course, I did.

**JE:** Right.

**WV:** And then I had a cousin who had the remainder of the store, had the Hard Goods and the Men's and the Piece Goods and he was unsuccessful. And so we bought him out.

**JE:** And his name was?

**WV:** Vince Vandever. He's no longer living. We bought him out and he went to Phoenix, Arizona, and opened a store on his own. Which failed. Then he came back to Tulsa and demanded that he be put on salary in the store. I refused. So he sued me for mismanagement.

**JE:** Wow. And he was a cousin?

**WV:** Cousin, uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** He would have been the son of?

**WV:** Boris Vandever. So he sued me for mismanagement.

**JE:** How did that turn out?

**WV:** He lost it. There was no mismanagement.

**JE:** But it actually went to court in Tulsa?

**WV:** Yes it did. It went to court, it hit the front page of the newspaper.

**JE:** So that would have been in the '50s?

**WV:** That would have been right around 1960.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative), right in the '60s.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

### Chapter 3

#### Vandevs Arrive in Tulsa - 5:42

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**John Erling:** Let's go back now to the start of how it was that the Vandevs came to Oklahoma.

**William Vandever:** Okay, the Vandevs were born in Irving, Illinois. My grandfather was a coopersmith.

**JE:** Cooper?

**WV:** Coopersmith—a barrel maker, and in a little tiny town with a train running right through the middle of it a couple of times a day, like many of the small towns were. My uncle, the eldest brother, W. A., went to work for Rice Sticks in St. Louis, and he learned the retail business at Rice Sticks. Piece goods was a huge seller in those days 'cause everybody sold it. And Rice Sticks was one of the biggest piece goods houses in this part of the country. He got his training there, he teamed up with a guy by the name of Bean, went to Tahlequah, and opened a little store there. But he heard that Sapulpa was going to be the big future city of Oklahoma. So he came down to Tulsa, then called Tulsey Town, and he couldn't get across the Arkansas River to go to Sapulpa because it was flooding and there were no bridges.

**JE:** And this would have been in 190-?

**WV:** Three (1903).

**JE:** No bridges to get to Sapulpa?

**WV:** No bridges on the Arkansas River. None. And, of course, there were no cars. The Model T might have just come out, but they relied on horses and wagons. He walked up the mud

street when he got here, and there was a guy sitting in a chair with his feet up on the boardwalk. And my uncle walked up and introduced himself to him and it was Cass Mayo.

**JE:** And who was he?

**WV:** Cass Mayo, ultimately built the Mayo Hotel in Tulsa. And my uncle, there was no place for him to go or sleep and so he roomed with Cass Mayo.

**JE:** How did Cass Mayo make his wealth?

**WV:** He was originally in the furniture business and for years there was a furniture store, a Mayo Furniture Store at 4th or 5th and Main. And so his brother was John, so he and John, they raised the money and built the Mayo Hotel.

**JE:** So your uncle, W. A. Vandever—

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** Then stayed there and—

**WV:** He stayed there. He opened a little tiny store there and then between 2nd and 3rd on Main there was a building that had been built and was available. And they leased that building in 1905.

**JE:** Was that known as the Eagan Building?

**WV:** I believe it was and they put a second story on the building. It became the tallest building in Tulsa.

**JE:** It opened under what name?

**WV:** Vandever Bean Dry Goods.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** Then my uncle bought out Bean and started bringing his brothers into Tulsa and added a story to the store. And finally the whole family, except the girls, the sisters, all came to Tulsa.

**JE:** So that would have been Charles who came first?

**WV:** Charles came first and Charles opened the barbershop. Then Boris came and Boris opened the baths. Remember, Tulsa was booming, they were discovering oil every place. They were driving cattle up through here to Coffeetown to the railhead. So then Gary was brought in and Gary opened the tobacco shop. And my uncle bought him a wagon and a horse and he went out on the weekends and traded junk. Well, by this time, the store was very successful and they were talking about moving up to 5th Street and building another building. Then they brought in Vern and Vern was just public relations. By this time, they were all in the store and in 1920, they built the store downtown.

**JE:** So they—

**WV:** They borrowed the money from Mass Mutual Life Insurance Company.

**JE:** I wonder how much money that was?

**WV:** Well, it was a six-story building.

**JE:** That Vandevs built?

**WV:** Yes, yeah.

**JE:** And that was located?

**WV:** That was located on what is it? 5th and Boston, between Main and Boston. Can you imagine? Mass Mutual coming down here to a little old country town and loaning somebody enough money to build a five-story department store?

**JE:** Which really was—

**WV:** They did.

**JE:** —the tallest building in Tulsa then. Was that true? In 1920, did you say?

**WV:** 1920, um-hmm (affirmative). I don't believe it was the tallest building in Tulsa then. It was in about '05 or '06.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative), National Bank of Tulsa built perhaps taller.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Then maybe were they a full-fledged department store?

**WV:** It was a full-fledged department store. It was not a full-line department store. A full-line department store is where you carry everything. But they then bought the May Building over on Main Street and put a ramp across the alley and put in hard goods, appliances, toasters, fans, and a record department. The record department is what got me interested in music and got me on the board of the Philharmonic. But another story.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**WV:** Then they became a full-line department store. And I became president of the store.

**JE:** In what year?

**WV:** In 1958, I was thirty-two years old.

**JE:** At that time, though, you carried how many different products and brands? I mean, this was kind of like the stores today who try to carry everything. Talk to me about some of those.

**WV:** Okay, okay. Well, we were a full-line department store, not yet. They bought the May Building, then I bought Boswell's Jewelers, which was next to us. The old-line jewelry store in Tulsa.

**JE:** You said you—you bought that?

**WV:** Ah, well, when I was president of the company I had the company buy Boswell's. We then became a full-line department store because we had all of the china and glass and silver lines plus jewelry. But I didn't like jewelry and I didn't understand it and I was a little afraid of it. So I made a deal with Zales to take over the jewelry. Then that jewelry operation became Boswell's of Vandevs, which was the original name of the store. But it was operated by Zales, the jewelry. Zales took the idea and went all over the nation and put in these in the department stores.

**JE:** A trend you started. You remember brands of clothes and that types of things that you might—

**WV:** Well, yes, in our Men's Department, Art, Shaffner, and Marks.

## Chapter 4

### J. Paul Getty - 5:40

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**William Vandever:** You probably have heard of a guy by the name of Paul Getty.

**John Erling:** Yes.

**WV:** Paul Getty lived in Tulsa during those years, J. Paul Getty. He owned Spartan Aircraft. In World War II he got frightened and he built a bomb shelter out there, which he lived in.

**JE:** Out where? Built out where?

**WV:** Out where Spartan is, out next to the airport.

**JE:** And he lived there?

**WV:** Yeah, beautiful house he built underground. He felt that the Germans were going to bomb Tulsa. And it's still there. Paul wouldn't pay over \$75 for a suit. Now Paul was one of the richest men in America, and so, when Paul came in it was my job to go over and pull the tags off the suits that he was looking at. And then, no matter what the price was, we would charge him \$75. Paul Getty was doing a lot for Tulsa. He was supporting a lot of our community programs.

**JE:** So Getty would have been shopping there in—

**WV:** Getty would have been shopping there in the—

**JE:** In the '40s.

**WV:** In the '40s and '50s.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** '40s and '50s.

**JE:** And so talk to me about his personality when he—

**WV:** Although Paul was fairly young he looked and acted like an old man. He didn't have any personality, he was just straightforward, "Here's what I want. Thank you." And he paid for it.

**JE:** Wasn't he a rather short man?

**WV:** Yeah, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But the fact that he bought clothes from Vandever's in Tulsa, when he could have gone to

New York, I guess—

**WV:** Um-hmm, um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

**JE:** Does that mean that he was a believer in supporting the local economy or did he just—

**WV:** Yes, he was a believer in the local economy. And, of course, he was friends of the elders in my family. They served on boards together. I believe Paul served on the water board with my family, built the waterline from Spavinaw to Tulsa. Tulsa was running out of water and I believe he served on that board and put some money into it.

**JE:** He basically bought his clothes then at Vandevvers?

**WV:** Yeah, and he would buy five suits at a time. Not one, not three, five.

**JE:** Would he come in once a year or—

**WV:** Well, I lost track of him but it seems like about once every year and a half or so. Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** He'd come in during your regular store hours—

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And I guess he was just Paul Getty at that time. People didn't make a big thing about him or anything.

**WV:** Uh-uh (negative).

**JE:** He could just come in and shop with you.

**WV:** Right. Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But he was a clothes man. As I recall seeing pictures of him he wore his clothes very well.

**WV:** Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

**JE:** I mean, he was a clothes guy, wasn't he?

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** He liked clothes.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** He made his money over in the field in Oklahoma, an oil field.

**JE:** In Glenpool?

**WV:** Not Glenpool. Cushing. If you'll look at a map almost every oil line in America converges on Cushing.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** And the old Cushing field is five miles wide and twenty miles long. I know a lot about that field because I found a lease over there that they missed and I bought it and drilled a well on it. And all of the old-timers made their money over there. Getty, McDonald, of course, you don't know McDonald as an oil man. McDonald made his money over

there and then he didn't like the oil business and he formed an airplane manufacturing company, now known as the McDonnell Douglas.

**JE:** Did he live in Tulsa?

**WV:** He lived in the area, I don't know whether he lived in Tulsa or not. But he got his start in the Cushing Field. And that was 1918, 1916, 1915.

**JE:** Other famous names that might have shopped at Vandever's that you might remember?

**WV:** Oh, Bill Skelly.

**JE:** Would you have sold clothes to Bill Skelly?

**WV:** No, I didn't sell any clothes to Bill Skelly. Mr. Sinclair of Sinclair Oil, Warren of Warren Petroleum.

**JE:** But they all paid full price?

**WV:** Oh yeah, they paid full price, they did. We only had to discount for one of them. And that was J. Paul.

**JE:** What were the, you would consider the competing stores with Vandever's?

**WV:** There were two competing stores, one was Brown Duncan. That was for just dry goods. The other was Leslie Sidenback, and he had the fashion lines. And he had the Gill lines of china and silver. They were the competing. But we finally got the jump on John Duncan.

**JE:** How's that?

**WV:** We decided to build a store in Utica Square. There was not a branch store anyplace in Oklahoma. This was in 1957. And John Duncan came over. My father was still living, he's one of the founders who was still living and he was kind of retired and I was running the store. He came over and met with my father, and he says, "I've checked with my New York office and we've checked with our analysts," and he said, "I have studied this area." And he says, "You're making a horrible mistake." So my father reduced the size of the store into a little shop. I got my father and my mother to take a trip to Europe; they had never been there. And the store was under construction. And the minute they got on the airplane I called Bill Flint of Flint Steel and I said, "Bill, let's get these plans out. We're going to make some changes." We tripled the size of the store.

**JE:** In Utica Square?

**WV:** Yes. My father got back from Europe, saw what was going on out there and fired me.

**JE:** Okay. Now what happens?

**WV:** I didn't go anyplace, I just stayed there.

**JE:** Kept coming to work?

**WV:** Well, yeah, I didn't pay any attention to him.

**JE:** You remember how old he would have been and you would have been at that time?

**WV:** Oh well, he was seventy-something. Anyway, we opened the store, and of course, we all belong to offices, the New York office, the Chicago office, the Los Angeles office,

because that's how we got information. What new lines were coming up to buy. And Utica's Drugstore had the largest square foot sales the first year it was open of any store in America.

**JE:** Wow.

**WV:** John Duncan and his experts were wrong.

**JE:** So how long did Brown Duncan last downtown Tulsa?

**WV:** Through about '69 or '70, and that's when we started closing the store.

**JE:** But in the meantime, you and other stores, Clarks Good Clothes, they went to Utica Square.

**WV:** Renberrys went to Utica Square.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** But Clarks didn't. Clarks disappeared, Wolfs disappeared, Streets disappeared, Proves disappeared, Brown Duncan disappeared, all of the downtown stores were gone by '70.

## Chapter 5

### Miss Jacksons - 7:00

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**John Erling:** Talk to me about Miss Jacksons. How did that come about?

**William Vandever:** Miss Jacksons was formed in Tulsa in 1907, by Nell Jackson. It had a little shop here and when Wakefields built the Field Tower Building she put her shop on the second floor. She had the expensive dresses, expensive clothes, expensive neckties, silver, because Tulsa was booming. People were making millions of dollars.

**JE:** It was the oil capital of the world.

**WV:** Yes, and they had to have someplace to go besides Dallas to Neiman Marcus and some of the stores in St. Louis and so on. So Nell formed that store in 1907. She died, nobody left to run the store and the oil boom was over. So I got a call from the First National Bank of Tulsa. You have to understand banking in these days, it wasn't like it is now. I could call Russell Hunt, who was the vice chairman of the First National Bank and say, "Russ, we need a hundred thousand dollars." He'd say, "It's in your account. Come over and sign the note whenever it's convenient to you." That does not happen anymore. In those days we all had our bank. We didn't have two banks, we had one bank. One of my aunts on the Building Company board asked me one day, she said, "You know, I'm just great friends with the Bank of Tulsa's chairman. And it would really be a nice favor to me if you would buy a CD from them." I bought a ten thousand dollar CD from National Bank

of Tulsa. And I'll take care of the ladies, you know? About a week later, Mack McClintic, president of the First National Bank of Tulsa called me. He said, "Vandever, what are you doing?" He said, "I just learned that you bought a CD from the National Bank of Tulsa and I want you to cancel it right now." See, banking was different. There were loyalties. I canceled the CD. That was my source of money. So you got to remember, a bank and their depositors and their businessmen. The bank called me one day and said, "We're putting you on the board of the Chamber of Commerce." I served eleven years.

**JE:** Very good.

**WV:** That's the way the banks were. The downtown store was right across from First National Bank. Russell Hunt was the vice chairman. So one morning Russell Hunt calls me. And he said, "Bill," he said, "we just bought you a store." I said, "Well, Russell, would it be all right for me to know what store you bought for me?" He said, "Yes. We just bought Miss Jacksons for you." I said, "Well, Russ, would it be okay for me to get my merchandise manager and a couple of my buyers and go over and look at?" He said, "Sure, come on over and I'll give you the key."

**JE:** Reminding again that was on the second floor of the Field Tower, wasn't it?

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** Yeah, right. So you came in and did an inventory then, obviously.

**WV:** Did not. I took my merchandise manager and we went over there. The merchandise was old, wasn't worth anything, but there was a closet that we had to break open that was full of Angley silver, real silver plate, beautiful stuff. Merchandise in that store wasn't worth anything, the silver was, there was also a closet full of men's ties, the store wasn't worth anything. I went back to Russ and I said, "Look, the store has no value except the name. Now, we just built South Roads Mall, we're poor. Where are we going to get the money?" "I've arranged it for you." I said, "Look, you're going to loan me 80 percent, maybe 75 percent, we've got all of our money tied up in inventory at South Roads Mall." "I've arranged for 100 percent loan for you." I said, "Fine, Russ." Called Winters, John Winters, Connor and Winters, that law firm represented the bank, represented us, yet all tied in when you are with a bank in those days. You use their law firm, not yours. It worked though, it worked. So I called Dale Cotter out at Utica Square and Cotter Lumber and Don Nix, his partner. I said, "You got a space for about a 75,000 foot store." We got together and they said, "Yeah we got a space." So they built the store in Utica Square and we leased the building from the square.

**JE:** So then, Utica Square owned the building?

**WV:** Utica Square owned the building and we leased the building from Utica Square.

**JE:** Well, then, when you opened Miss Jacksons in Utica Square—

**WV:** It was something else. It became very, very successful.

**JE:** Did the public know that Vandevs were operating it? I mean, your name wasn't on the building.

**WV:** No, our name wasn't on there.

**JE:** It wasn't a secret but you—

**WV:** It was a secret but it wasn't well-known.

**JE:** So you—

**WV:** It was well-known in the business community.

**JE:** And all—

**WV:** It was well-known in the banking community.

**JE:** Always operated as a stand-alone store?

**WV:** Yeah, yeah, it was well-known in the market.

**JE:** So then, how was Miss Jacksons different than Vandevs?

**WV:** Well, Miss Jacksons was a specialty shop. When you walked into Miss Jacksons you didn't have to go through the Glove Department and the Notions Department, you walked into a store with high-priced merchandise facing you from the minute you walked into that door. An entirely different animal. Remember, the specialty shops, many of them survived. We were a high-priced specialty shop. We had customers that spent as much as \$50,000 a year with us on just dresses. Joanne Stewart, a great friend of mine, that was the Skelly Oil Company there, she wouldn't buy a dress unless I came from downtown to Utica Square and looked at it and approved it.

**JE:** So you must have had an eye for fashion, then obviously. You did—

**WV:** I did, I did. I had an eye for fashion, I bought the Preda Coterie in Paris. Preda Coterie are the copies of the Coterie, French Coterie. In fact, Pat McClintic who is the wife of Mack McClintic, First National Bank, said, "Bill, uh, next time you go to Paris pick me up a copy." That's what I did. So I bought her a dress in Paris.

**JE:** Her, meaning?

**WV:** Pat McClintic. Pat was going to go to a party at Sherry's. Sherry's is the restaurant in the Opera House in New York. People at that party would be the top 100 of New York, the Vanderbilts, the Whitneys. Mrs. Whitney was hosting the party. You probably heard of the Whitney Museum and all that. So I bought her the dress. She put it on and she liked it. Now, it was three thousand dollars. The dress I copied was twenty-eight thousand dollars.

**JE:** Wow.

**WV:** It was a Givenchy. She went to her party and she came back. She had a great story to tell. She walked into Sherry's, down the stairs, and Mrs. Whitney was the hostess and she came to greet Pat. But Mrs. Whitney had on the same dress that Pat had. She had on the original and she walked up to Pat and she says, "Oh my dear, you have the original."

When really Mrs. Whitney paid the thirty thousand dollars for the original.

**JE:** That's a great story.

**WV:** Pat McClintic.

**JE:** And she was?

**WV:** Mack McClintic's wife.

**JE:** And he was?

**WV:** He was the president of the First National Bank.

**JE:** Okay. So we have him to thank for the resurrection of Miss Jacksons?

**WV:** No, we have Russell Hunt to thank. Russell Hunt was vice chairman of the bank.

**JE:** Okay. That store would have gone away.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** We would have never known the name. Isn't that true?

**WV:** Right. Disappeared. Russ handled Vandever's account. Mack was an oil man, Mack didn't like fashion and clothes and diapers and piece goods. Russell loved it. He was the number two man.

## Chapter 6

### No More Vandever's - 4:30

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**John Erling:** Let's bring the final days here of the Vandever's. How did it end?

**William Vandever:** Okay, here's how it ended. I lost control of the store. Couldn't renew the voting trust. I had the voting trust for seventeen years and that's when I built all this. I lost control of the voting trust, so I had to have a shareholders meeting and had to figure out how to get reelected so Aunt May wouldn't take over the store. She was a great person, I loved her. She was great.

**JE:** Yet she was a thorn in your flesh in the business?

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

**JE:** Could you have family gatherings and Christmas and all that—

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** And the family could—

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** All the Vandever's—

**WV:** Yes. Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** All came together—

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** And just kind of forgot about all that business?

**WV:** Right. I would have an annual meeting to try to get reelected. The last annual meeting I had lasted six months. The in-laws, the two in-laws of some of my cousins, Vandever girls, didn't like me. That's common. And they were always my enemy and they were always trying to get me out of the store. And, of course, they were unable to do it. But I figured out something else, I figured out that the independent store was not going to make it. Now, I owned 2 percent of the store. I was making money for a lot of people, and I was putting up with the family that's out of control. And I knew that the independent store was not going to make it. My love was finance anyway. So I said to myself, "What am I doing here? Let them have it." So I proposed in the meeting that we sell the store. They all agreed. Wonderful, wonderful. I brought now Federated Department Stores, the big one. Federated Department Stores came in, looked over the store, they said, "We're going to try and make a deal." Did a little money and trade stock. In the meantime, at their representative's hotel, several of the stockholders called the representative of this group and said, "I'll vote for this if you will pay me X dollars." Five members of the family called that man. And he called me the next morning, reported to me what happened, he says, "Don't want anything to do with it." So I got a hold of Retha Martin, somebody that I had known from Muskogee, Dunlaps. Retha had built some stores in Texas and had been very successful. Retha, of course, had tremendous respect for Vandever because he had never built a store as popular. And with the reputation that Vandever had. I called him. He said, "You know, I'd like to have it." He said, "I can afford it." I said, "Okay. But we cannot propose it in a stockholders meeting because you'll have people calling you for payoffs." So I met Retha out at a Holiday Inn. I said, "Here's what let's do. I've talked to the federal judge here, who's a good friend of mine and he understands the problem. And I think the only way that we can sell this store is to file bankruptcy and then you buy it out of the bankruptcy court." My team and my lawyers, we all agreed, so I made a deal with the federal judge. "This is what we're going to do and this is why we're going to do it." And we filed bankruptcy. In order to make things look real good they fired me, which was part of the plan. And the sale went right through.

**JE:** And that was the end of Vandever's?

**WV:** No. Utica Square would not take Retha Martin because their merchandise was not of the quality of Vandever's. So—

**JE:** Mr. Martin operated—

**WV:** Mr. Martin—

**JE:** What kind of store did he operate? And where was he?

**WV:** He was in Lubbock, Texas. And his first store was in Muskogee.

**JE:** What type of store was it that he would operate?

**WV:** Just a general department store.

**JE:** But it wasn't—

**WV:** Didn't have the high fashion. And Walt Hemrick [time 3:21] wanted the high fashion. And he should have it. I agreed with Walt Hemrick. Said, "No, you don't want Retha." So Retha had South Roads Mall, he had Eastman Shopping Center, and he had the downtown store. And he called us down to the downtown store, which I would have done also. If I hadn't of had this problem I would have closed it. And then, in about five or six years, Retha got killed coming back from Colorado Springs. A teenager ran a stop sign and hit him broadsided. His son was here in Tulsa, running the two stores. And his son never liked retailing and he wanted to be a preacher. So when the leases were up at South Roads and at Eastman Shopping Center, he walked out. And Vandever's never existed again.

**JE:** But then it was in Utica Square?

**WV:** Walt Hemrick would not let Retha Martin, who bought Vandever's—

**JE:** Yep.

**WV:** Including Utica Square.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** He would not let him run the Utica Square store because they were not high fashion.

**JE:** So who operated it then?

**WV:** They went out and I believe they got Dillard's. I believe that's who they got.

**JE:** And then Dillard's renamed it?

**WV:** Dillard's renamed it.

## Chapter 7

### The Way It Was - 3:50

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**John Erling:** So then, what did you do after you had been fired?

**William Vandever:** My brother, my sister, and I had bought the First National Bank of Stigler, Oklahoma. And that was a nice investment. I had drilled some oil wells, had some oil interests, it was a nice investment. Not enough to support me like I was supported. And my love was finance, I enjoyed finance. And so, I rented a little office over in the Fourth National Bank Building, now the Bank of America Building. And my merchandise manager, Tony Rodney, said, "I don't want to continue in retailing. I want to be with you." I said,

“Tony, you don’t know anything about finance.” And he said, “Teach me.” So, we went into the construction lending business. It was fascinating. I did over almost a billion dollars in the first seven years. Made more money than I ever made at Vandevs, like two and three times.

**JE:** Let’s talk just a little bit here about the Vandever family and the community service—

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That the family performed. W. A. helped create the Tulsa Memorial Airport.

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** Do you know some of the story on that?

**WV:** No I don’t know the story on that.

**JE:** Okay. He made donations to bring railroads to the city?

**WV:** He was instrumental with a group of other Tulsa citizens of getting the railroad here.

**JE:** He was credited with founding the Tulsa State Fair?

**WV:** He did. And when he died my father went on that board.

**JE:** I don’t know if you have any stories along with this. And he helped create the First International Oil Exposition.

**WV:** Yes he’s with the group that did that, White Phillips and Bill Skelly and Sinclair and Warren.

**JE:** So all these brothers and their wives, they served on boards and charitable events and all this?

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative), yes.

**JE:** And all those kind of things.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** So they were the ta-ta-ta—

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Of the elite?

**WV:** Yeah, and then when they were all gone I served on seventeen civic boards.

**JE:** Wow. Great memories of Vandevs.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That people that are still alive today have.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** During the Depression Vandevs was able to make it through all that?

**WV:** Yes, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And probably hired a lot of people.

**WV:** Yes.

**JE:** To make them through that depression. And here we have a store full of friendly clerks and—

**WV:** Yeah, it's a lot different.

**JE:** Vern knew the names of people and—

**WV:** Yes. And he even met them at the door.

**JE:** And an elevator operated by a very nice lady.

**WV:** There were no automatic elevators, you had to have an operator.

**JE:** Just sum up your thoughts about that sweet spot, that sweet time probably in the '50s, early '60s. Your thoughts about all that.

**WV:** There were no computers, there were no calculators, early there was no TV. There was no air-conditioning. Everything was done with people. I've learned the computer. My business today is practically run with a computer. Thinking back to those old days, I would much rather have it run with people. We had an accounting department, twenty-seven people. We had a credit department, thirty-two people. On just one of our floors we'd have ten people. Go over to Macy's and see if you can find two people. So looking back, it was people. And that's what I miss about those old days.

**JE:** Was it easy to hire good people or did you have to really work at that?

**WV:** Yeah, it was easy to hire good people and people were more loyal than they are today. People were more a part of your business.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** I don't see that anyplace today.

**JE:** The store kind of became theirs, didn't it?

**WV:** The store became theirs, they would protect that store.

**JE:** Yeah.

**WV:** And anything thing that went wrong any place it would be reported. Including the theft. We had several customers who were kleptomaniacs.

**JE:** Oh I suppose.

**WV:** Oh, oh, we let them steal, and then we sent the bill to them.

**JE:** So how did that work out?

**WV:** Wonderfully, they paid it. What would they rather have, the jail or the bill?

**JE:** Were there any names that the public would have known?

**WV:** Yes. I don't feel like I should use them.

**JE:** No.

**WV:** They were very, very respected families in Tulsa, well-to-do families that did a lot for us civically.

**JE:** And they'd come in and steal from you?

**WV:** Yeah, little kleptomaniacs. There were three of them.

**JE:** But yet they paid their bill?

**WV:** Oh of course. You know.

**JE:** That's great.

## Chapter 8

### Integration - 6:10

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about this telegram—

**William Vandever:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Which is something we don't really deal with today.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But we're holding this telegram, and maybe you can talk about it.

**WV:** Yes. That was in—

**JE:** Why don't I just give that to you and you just talk about.

**WV:** Oh. That was in 1963, and we had just had the Race Riot in Detroit and in Florida and in several cities in the South. We had a young president, Jack Kennedy. And so, one day I got a telegram from Jack Kennedy, it was signed John F. Kennedy. And he said, "I'm meeting with a group of business leaders to discuss some aspects and difficulties experienced by minority groups in many of our cities. I'd be pleased to have you attend the meeting."

**JE:** That came to you?

**WV:** Yes that came to me, addressed to me, it came to William Vandever, president of the store.

**JE:** Why don't you finish reading that?

**WV:** Okay, this telegram was sent on May 29, 1963. It was addressed to William G. Vandever, President, the Vandever Company, Inc., 5th and Boston, Tulsa, Oklahoma. "At five o'clock on Tuesday, June 4th, I'm meeting with a group of business leaders to discuss some aspects of the difficulties experienced by minority groups in many of our cities in securing employment and equal access to facilities and the services generally available to the public. These subjects merit serious and immediate attention and I would be pleased to have you attend the meeting to be held in the East Room of the White House. Please advise whether you will be able to attend." Signed John F. Kennedy. I answered his telegram: "I would be delighted to attend your meeting at five o'clock on Tuesday, June 4th." Signed William G. Vandever.

**JE:** So you went to the meeting?

**WV:** I went to the meeting.

**JE:** Can you tell us a little bit about it?

**WV:** Yes. He had several of these meetings. Jack Kennedy was there, Lyndon Johnson, and Robert, Bobby, right, Bobby. It's only a few people that I've ever met that I felt when they walked into a room. One was Charles de Gaulle, I met him in Paris, and he walks into the room, I felt it. I had the same feeling when Kennedy walks into the room. Only two people.

**JE:** Wow.

**WV:** They explained to me what was happening around the nation, about the problems we were going to have, about the riots we were going to have. Bobby Kennedy took his card out of his pocket, wrote his private number on the back of the card, handed it to me, and he said, "You are to go back to Oklahoma and you are to desegregate the state. And if you need the United States Army, you call me. If you need anything, you call me." So anyway, I came back and on the way back I figured out how to do it. I came back and I called the heads of each industry. I got Birch Mayo for the hotels. I got Holiday for all oil companies, he was a big Standard Oil guy. I got Nelson of Nelson Electric for the industries. I took the retail stores because I was on the board of the National Retail Association and the board of the Oklahoma Retail Association and I was well-known, because I was one of the youngest presidents in the United States and of a large department store. I called them all to a meeting, called Jim Maxwell, the mayor. Jim was a good friend of mine. We all sat down, he calls the president of the Chamber of Commerce, called Larry Colson, police chief. Even though when I was a teenager he did arrest me once, but anyway, for speeding. I always kidding him about it. And we put a plan together. The Chamber of Commerce was to call every Chamber of Commerce in every major city in Oklahoma. Mayo was to call every hotel. Holiday was to call every oil company. Put his staff on it. I was to call every retail store. The papers grabbed it, people began responding. And in eleven days we desegregated all five of the major cities in Oklahoma. That means the "Colored" sign came off the back of the bus. The "Colored" sign came out of the restrooms. A black could now eat at a restaurant. Now, we had two holdouts in Tulsa. We formed a biracial committee. Amos Hall, who was half white and half black and the son of the governor of Georgia, illegitimate. Great man. He was in charge of the blacks. And so we had a group, and we met once a month. We had two holdouts: Piccadilly Restaurant, which I signed the lease for myself and I met the owners of Piccadilly, but the old man was dead—

**JE:** And again, that was the South Roads Mall.

**WV:** That's right. They wouldn't take the sign down. Borden's would not take the sign down. So we had a meeting. Amos Hall said, "Look, this is not your problem," talking to the whites, talking to the police commissioner, talking to the mayor. "This is not your problem. This

is our problem and let me handle it.” Well, I said, “Amos, don’t you think you ought to tell us what you’re going to do?” He says, “Yes. I’m going to call on both these restaurants and ask them to take the signs down. I’m going to tell them about what’s happening all over Oklahoma. And then if they refuse, I’m going to tell them that their restaurant the following morning, every morning every table, every chair will have a black person sitting at it.” Now Borden’s and Piccadilly took the signs down.

**JE:** Did Oklahoma City respond as well as Tulsa did?

**WV:** Oh yeah, oh yeah.

**JE:** Because you said five cities, so that would have been Bartle—

**WV:** Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Bartlesville—

**JE:** Muskogee?

**WV:** No, it would be Enid, Ardmore—

**JE:** And then that spread then throughout the state?

**WV:** Yeah, it just went.

**JE:** And it started because you had the back of Robert Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy. Did you hear from him again? Did you meet with him again after what you did here in our city?

**WV:** Yes I did hear from him again. Kennedy sent me invitations to their social parties.

**JE:** Did you ever attend?

**WV:** I went to several of them, yes, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And there you would meet?

**WV:** Jacqueline, Bobby, Jack, and, of course, our senators, our representatives, and a lot of social people in Washington. The ambassadors, Mario’s people, Mario de Vallis, ambassador from Spain, wonderful people. I got them to come down as honored guests of the Cinderella Ball.

## Chapter 9

### The Cinderella Ball - 5:50

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**John Erling:** Why don’t we just touch a bit here on that Cinderella Ball? Because that was a big thing in Tulsa.

**William Vandever:** Yes.

**JE:** What was the Cinderella Ball?

**WV:** The Cinderella Ball was an idea that I had to raise money for the Tulsa Philharmonic Orchestra. Burch Mayo asked me to come on the board of the orchestra when I was

about twenty-eight years old. We had an orchestra, they didn't play very well, we had a tin cup in our hand trying to raise money. And the oil men would not give any money to the ball, the oil company. And my father, at first, would not let the store give any money to the Philharmonic Society. He said, "It is sissified. What are you doing down there running a band? Playing music that nobody ever heard of?" Old Man Helmerick, Walter Senior, I went out to see him. He said, "It's sissified." He said, "I would never give them a dime." All the old-timers who had made all this money in the oil business would not support us. Of course, that all changed as the years went by. So, where are we going to get the money to build an orchestra for our city? Dallas has an orchestra. St. Louis has an orchestra. Tulsa needs an orchestra. It also needs a ballet, it also needs an opera, all of that has been accomplish, by the way. And we all worked on that at that time. So I came up with an idea to put on a fashion show as a test. And I did it first for the Junior League and it worked. In that beautiful Mayo ballroom. Then I said, "Hey, this works, let's do a ball for the symphony." Actually, the first ball that we did was in '56, and I got Lily Pons, one of the great sopranos of all times to come down as the honored guest. Vandever, of course, sponsored the ball. Vandever prepared the program, Vandever did everything. We got a prominent lady to be the chairman, you know, to handle the meetings and so on. And we got Green Lease Letterman to give away a Cadillac.

**JE:** That was a car dealer? What was the name of that?

**WV:** Green Lease Letterman was the Cadillac agency here, very different. You bought your Cadillac, delivered to your office or your home. In ten days you got a bill. That doesn't happen anymore.

**JE:** No.

**WV:** So the first ball was very successful and we got a big price for the tickets, we raised a lot of money for the band. We were able to put in a couple of chairs of professional people. The second year we did the ball I got the Ford models to come from New York and do a style show.

**JE:** Of Vandever clothes?

**WV:** No. They're all coterie, all from France, copies. Then on the next one I got Elizabeth Arden to come down. One of my favorite departments was the Cosmetic Department. And I was the assistant buyer in the Cosmetic Department. And we built the second largest cosmetic operation in the Southwest. Neiman's was one. And Miss Arden just adored me. She came to Tulsa as our honored guest. And, of course, everybody gave parties for her. Gave her a party at Southern Hills, five hundred people came. All buying tickets to the ball, making contributions to the Philharmonic. The next year, we got Alfon, the French ambassador, to come. The next year, we got Marcella Borghese, the Borghese family. She lived in the Borghese Palace in Rome on the top floor. The bottom floor

was open to the public. And she owned Wateries and she had a cosmetic line that she opened. Vandevs bought it, I got her to come down here, and she was a true princess, by blood. A Borghese was a pope, I believe. But a strange thing happened. After that ball, I got a call from the head of our receiving room down in the basement of the store. He says, "We've got four boxes down here marked cosmetics. And, Mr. Vandever, I think you'd better come down here." We were a dry state. I went down and the four boxes marked cosmetics were full of Bolo wine from her vineyards. Now in those days, we drank scotch and bourbon, we didn't drink wine. So it took years to drink all that wine. I gave a lot of it away. Now the next year, we got the consulate from England to come and we did an English show. Then the next year, we got the ambassador from Japan to come. Now remember, everyone is vying to have parties with these people. And the last year that I was involved with the Philharmonic, the Mario de Vallis, ambassador of Spain, came. They were marvelous people and the Cinderella Ball helped build the Tulsa Philharmonic.

**JE:** Do you remember what kind of money you might have raised on a yearly basis?

**WV:** First Cinderella Ball was '53, the last one was '65.

**JE:** Okay.

**WV:** I didn't mention the year I got Harry Winston down here. Remember, a lot of money in Tulsa, a lot of oil money. The rest of us were all poor. Okay?

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**WV:** So I got Harry Winston to come down and bring all of his jewels. So Pat McClintic, wife of the president of the First National Bank, had a party for Harry. And Harry brought his jewels out to their home. And there were guards all around the house. Harry came in and came over to me, I had my glass of scotch in hand, and he said, "Let me help you with that scotch. I want to make that scotch taste better." He reaches in his pocket and he pulls out the Hope Diamond and puts it in my scotch glass.

**JE:** Wow.

**WV:** They owned it at that time, they don't anymore. Then he walked across the room and he says, "Bill, ever play baseball?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "Catch." Star of Africa. Anyway, they brought millions and millions of jewels up to the Mayo Hotel, in that foyer just before you get into the ballroom. And they had it all on display. We got a little piece of the action. I stood there and saw bracelets sold for \$60,000 each.

**JE:** In '63 or '64 or '65, in there?

**WV:** Yeah, around '57. Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Wow.

**WV:** Yeah, we got a little piece of that and raised a lot of money. He probably raised \$100,000. That's a lot of money then.

**Chapter 10****Van Cliburn - 3:45**

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**William Vandever:** But my most favorite of all, of the balls, was Van Cliburn. The Philharmonic had Van Cliburn signed up for a concert for seven hundred dollars. Just before coming to Tulsa, he won the Tchaikovsky Contest in Russia, came to New York and they gave him a tickertape parade. He came to Tulsa, and I was the youngest member of the Executive Committee and so I got all the dirty jobs. I was in charge of Van Cliburn, he was just a kid. He brought his mother with him, his mother went with him everywhere. We had a grand dinner for him [time :29]. So I said, "Van," I said, "what do you want to eat?" I said, "Would you like steak, fish, or chicken? What kind of wine would you like?" He said, "No, my mother and I want hamburgers." Big long table, black tie, mother at one end, Van at the other end, we're all eating steak, fish, and chicken, but two hamburgers. Then, of course, it was my job to take him to the concert hall. The old Brady Theater. He was going to do the Tchaikovsky first piano concerto, the one that he won the contest with. We pull up to the stage door in the alley. I was very close to the telephone company. There were a little social in those days, they aren't anymore. They were on committees, they helped us raise money. And I had the first car telephone in Tulsa.

**John Erling:** In '60?

**WV:** In '58. I had the phone before '58, probably '57 I got the phone. And it wasn't like our car telephones today. I had a phone in the front seat and a phone in the back seat. Because from time to time I would use a driver when I had important guests in Tulsa. We got up to the stage door, the house was filled. We were selling standing room, we were selling step seats. It was the largest number of people ever to be in the Brady Theater. Fire chief jumped all over me once over that. Van sees that telephone. He says, "What is this?" I said, "Van, that's a telephone." He says, "You're kidding? Okay if I call my agent in New York?" I said, "Sure, Van, pick it up." He called his agent in New York and told him all about this marvelous invention and he hung up. He said, "Can I call my agent in Los Angeles?" I said, "Sure, Van." So he picked it up and called his agent in Los Angeles. We sat there for fifteen minutes, keeping a full house waiting for him to play.

**JE:** That's great.

**WV:** He played the Tchaikovsky, beautiful. He was going to do a Beethoven concerto in the second session and he turned around to me and he said, "I don't think I can play it." He said, "I don't know it too well." His mother was there and we got him into the dressing room. She was rubbing him all over. Got him up, got him over to the stage, and I pushed him out. He did a beautiful job. He left Tulsa and went to Dallas and his fee in Dallas was ten thousand.

**JE:** Man! What press coverage you got on that? It was huge.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Got lots of it and it's full, the thing is full of it.

**JE:** Yeah, that's a great story. And all those years launched the orchestra?

**WV:** Yes, the ball helped launch it.

**JE:** Yeah, that's great. You've done a great job here today.

**WV:** Okay.

**JE:** Wonderful insight into Tulsa.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Intrigued, I did not know this was going to come out of you. I didn't know what I expected.

**WV:** There's much more but a lot of it I can't tell.

**JE:** Oh yeah.

**WV:** Three people have to die in Tulsa before I can write my book.

**JE:** You plan on writing a book?

**WV:** Yes, I'm going to write a book. Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** 'Cause it will tell all?

**WV:** After these three people die.

**JE:** And I can't ask you who they are?

**WV:** No, no, no I can't go into that right now.

**JE:** Are they older than you? Are they—

**WV:** One of them was my age, the other two are older.

**JE:** Much of what we've done here could easily go into a book.

**WV:** Yes it could.

**JE:** What you've talked about here.

**WV:** Yeah.

**JE:** So this is part of your book.

**WV:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** I sure appreciate it very much. You did a great job. Thank you so much.

**WV:** All right, you're welcome.

**JE:** That was wonderful stuff.

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**Chapter 11****Conclusion - 0:33**

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on [voicesofoklahoma.com](http://voicesofoklahoma.com).