

## Mary Jo Guthrie

Guy Logsdon, a Woody Guthrie historian, and Woody's sister Mary Jo remember Woody Guthrie.

### Chapter 1 – 1:07

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Mary Jo Guthrie loved her “Papa”—and her brothers, one being Woody Guthrie.

Woody was ten years older than his sister, yet Mary Jo remembers how he would get down on the ground and play with her. “Papa” taught Woody a variety of songs—western songs, Indian songs and others. Mary Jo says her brother always had an instrument in his hands, whether it be a guitar, mandolin or French harp. He taught his sister some chords. However, she played nothing but the radio! “Papa,” whose actual name was Charles, taught Woody the skills of art and good penmanship “to be refined.”

Guy Logsdon, a Woody Guthrie historian, joins Mary Jo in remembering Woody as a very creative man with a photographic memory. Mary Jo comments that her brother always had paper and pencil in his shirt pocket. She also states that government records found no documentation of Woody ever being a communist, adding, “That never came out in the papers.”

Former University of Tulsa professor Guy Logsdon and Woody Guthrie's sister Mary Jo remember Oklahoma's Woody Guthrie on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com)

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**Chapter 2 – 11:45****Guthrie's Parents**

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**John Erling:** Today's date is May 9, 2013. Mary, if you'll state your full name.

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Mary Josephine Guthrie.

**JE:** Your date of birth?

**MJG:** 12/24/22.

**JE:** So how old are you today?

**MJG:** Ninety-one.

**JE:** Where are we recording this interview?

**MJG:** Shawnee, Oklahoma, at my facility that I call my country club—

**JE:** And—

**MJG:** Rose Manor. It's a beautiful place.

**JE:** And what are you sitting in right now?

**MJG:** My Rolls Royce.

**JE:** Right.

**MJG:** Town Car. I have two.

**JE:** Where do you live here in the complex?

**MJG:** The Green Mile.

**JE:** Okay. We're joined in this interview by Guy Logsdon, your friend and collaborator on Woody's Road.

**MJG:** He's my extended family.

**JE:** Among his many, many tributes he has become an expert on your brother Woody. Guy, you were introduced to Woody's work through your wife, Phyllis, actually?

**Guy Logsdon:** Yes, Phyllis was born in Okemah, grew up in Okemah, married me. I think she probably wished she was back in Okemah, I don't know. But we've been traveling ever since.

**JE:** And then so she introduced you to the work of Woody?

**GL:** Well, Woody was not popular in Okemah at that time.

**MJG:** He discovered Woody not in Okemah just worldwide.

**GL:** I was told about Woody in Okemah but nobody would talk about him. A copy of Bound for Glory couldn't be found in Okemah. In fact, I couldn't find one in the state of Oklahoma. And like I have stated, I was teaching school. We moved out to California and at a branch of the Los Angeles Public Library I found a copy of Bound for Glory and read it. And I still think it's one of the greatest books this nation can call its own. And it was not an autobiography, as most thought, it is an autobiographical novel.

**JE:** But is it—

**GL:** He did a great job with writing.

**JE:** But it followed his life, however.

**GL:** Yes, it followed many things but he also exaggerated and used his imagination and there are a lot of things that aren't mentioned. And people who aren't. He doesn't mention his sister Mary Jo or his brother George in *Bound for Glory*.

**MJG:** In the original copies we were there. The publishers cut out that part because it was going to take a different direction.

**GL:** Ah, okay, I didn't know that.

**MJG:** Margery told me that.

**GL:** Okay.

**MJG:** Somewhere the original manuscript will have our name in it.

**JE:** Mary Jo, where were you born?

**MJG:** Okemah, Oklahoma.

**JE:** And then let's name your brothers and sisters.

**MJG:** My older sister, Clara Edna, seventeen years older; Leroy, my oldest brother, fifteen years older; Woodrow Wilson Guthrie is ten years older than me; and then George Gwen Guthrie. Papa would send us pictures. He and Woody were so much alike I had to write and ask, "Was this George or Woody?" 'Cause they were just exactly alike. George still was a very neat person but he got a little pudgy through the years, not much, but more than Woody. George and Woody were the same size. I remember all together we just had fun and always a lot of love and not much serious talk. Papa and Roy are old enough to remember Clara and Mama, never mentioned their names, because I look back now and know that it was just too tragic.

**JE:** Your mother's name?

**MJG:** Nora Belle Sherman. When her mother married the second time she married Lee Tanner. And then around Okemah Mama was known as Nora Belle Tanner, until she married Papa.

**JE:** What would her personality have been like, your mother's?

**MJG:** I think more like George. George and Roy were reserved, perfect, here comes Mary Jo, changed all that. I was a tomboy if there ever was one. I said if I had been a boy I would have been right under Woody's armpits because I loved to be a free spirit. I loved to go and do. And I married a sweet man that never did get out of the city limits. He didn't like to go anywhere, but that didn't make any difference. I overcame that.

**JE:** So your mother's personality, you say it was quiet?

**MJG:** Yes. My mother and George and Roy had reserved manners. Papa brought me up to act like a lady.

**JE:** Papa, what was his name?

**MJG:** Charley Edward.

**JE:** Where did he come from?

**MJG:** Bosque County, Texas.

**JE:** Can you describe him? What was he like?

**MJG:** Aaaah, no, you don't want to get into that. I never will get through. My daddy was a saint if there ever was one. That man, I shared more tears for Woody and my dad because of the things they had gone through to get where they are. But Papa lost his wife, had a home that burned down. At one time, when I first began to know, he was rumored to be the richest man in Okfuskee County. That lasted 'til the Depression hit and in Woody's book he wrote that Papa lost a farm a day for thirty days. And that cleaned him out. And my mother had died in an asylum, and Clara was burned to death. I don't know how the man did it, but I never heard him complain. He was the world's greatest optimist. I idolized the man. Still do. I won't let him die, he's still with us.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** We don't die in my family, I don't let them go, they're still here.

**JE:** Yep. How did he acquire all that land?

**MJG:** Real estate, cattle, livestock. He raised white-faced cattle and Poland something pigs and hogs. They were a real popular, expensive item to have on the farm at that time. But I've got a picture of Papa, it's a really nice picture. We'll have to find that. He's wearing leather boots, lace-up boots, just really nice, out there in the cow lot tending to the cows. But he was dressed up and looked real nice. And my father just died a pauper. My husband came in one day and my hair hadn't been combed. It blows real easy, I just can't do a whole lot with it. It doesn't bother me, I'm not the fix-it kind, I just look good as I can. My husband came in one day, he said, "You know, as poor as your daddy was I've never seen him without a white shirt and a tie and a hat. He was always dressed up." I've got a picture right now in—it's in the book, it's in the book. You know, that's awful. Anyway, it's in there, you'll recognize it, he just has on a long-sleeve white shirt with his tie and his hat. I thought, "Well, I'm glad my husband noticed that." He was a sexy person, he enjoyed looking good all the time.

**JE:** And your husband's name?

**MJG:** Hewlett Edgmon.

**JE:** About your father, while he may have lost a lot and he suffered a lot in life, he was very smart. A writer? Read a lot, didn't he?

**MJG:** Read the dictionary like it was a book. I love to tell this. We never had that kind of time together to try to teach me anything really. But he was a wonderful guide to me. We'd go downtown during the war, young women, their husbands were overseas like mine, the girls looked like they hadn't combed their hair a week or two. He'd say, "I'm sure glad

my little girl's not like that." And then we'd go along and see somebody smoking. "I'm sure glad my little girl's not like that." He never, ever said, "I bet never catch you doing that," he just always said, "I'm so proud that my little girl doesn't look like that or doesn't smoke." I think I was grown and married before I ever used the word "damn it." But Papa didn't allow that and he taught me to always be a lady. You know, we didn't have slacks then. He would always say, "Mary Jo, put your leg down." When I'd sit down he always wanted my dress down, you know, "Be a lady." He tried to teach me to be a lady.

**JE:** Well, it looks like it's paid off here. Didn't he play instruments too?

**MJG:** Yes. We think we never hear anybody talk about it but he played the banjo when he was at home. And then he went back to the guitar. And Papa had a beautiful bass voice, he was a baritone-bass. But we didn't sit around and sing. He was up in years, he was seventy-seven when he died. I look back down and I wish I had realized all of that then.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** Oh he didn't have any doubt that his daughter loved him. He knew that I worshiped the ground that he walked on. One time Mary Ann, my oldest niece, Roy's daughter, graduated from high school. Papa lived right downtown Oklahoma City around these little secondhand stores and flea markets and stuff. And he found a little box with three little scatter pins in it, little bug, you know, three little bugs, and that was real proper for a while. You could get little angels or bugs or dogs, pets, anything. And she came to see me wearing those and she says, "Grandpa got me these for graduation." And I said, "Well, they really are pretty." And so when I Papa, I said, "Papa, Mary Ann came and she was wearing the little bugs you got her for her graduation and she was showing me and she really did like them." And he said, "And I didn't buy you anything for graduation." I said, "Papa, look at me. I want you to know right now, you have given more than all the people in the world combined, all my folks, you've given me more. Two things that you can't wear out or use up, that's love and understanding." And he died knowing that.

**JE:** Yep.

**MJG:** 'Cause I made that clear. Ah I loved my daddy.

**JE:** Yeah.

### Chapter 3

#### Woody's Road - 4:00

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**John Erling:** You referred to the book and why don't we mention here, the two of you

collaborated on the book, Woody's Road. Did you enjoy working with Guy on that book?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** I enjoyed Guy anytime, anywhere.

**Guy Logsdon:** Thank you, thank you.

**MJG:** He's very good. The first time I ever heard him they were doing an interview with me. He was front row in the church, Presbyterian Church, Okemah, Oklahoma.

**GL:** Yeah.

**MJG:** He's sitting there and he always looked real nice. Black was his color. He'd sit there and he had that reel going, his reels going, and it had jumped the track and was going all on the floor. But he didn't dare take the eyes off the tape, usually watching it. But he was trying to control that tape. I thought that was so funny. And he did get to a place to where he could re-roll that tape, I know that he did.

**GL:** And I still have it.

**MJG:** He was taping my part of the program from the stage.

**JE:** How long did it take the two of you to do the book?

**MJG:** He—

**GL:** Mary Jo started on this decades ago, she's been saving since she was thirteen years old, everything. So she—

**MJG:** Well, for years, I did show and tell as far as my car and I could go. I had Madine Lovelady, she's a native of Okemah, she loved going as much as I did and we'd go and do a program at any school. I think the fee was a tank of gasoline and two dinners, because it was always a banquet and that was the total. But in the book, I explain that I was wearing my body and my car and something else I was wearing out. I decided there had to be a better way and I was going to put it all in a book. Nine years ago I started it. Dee Jones lives in Mason, which is right out of Okemah, he and his wife were my friends because they were working in the Woody Guthrie Coalition. He saw I was carrying it around in just a little old folder a few sample pages out of my scrapbook. That scrapbook looks like a bowl of spinach because by the time I got through I had torn all my stuff out of that scrapbook. Dee did all the computer work for it and the enlarging and reducing all my pictures to make them work. And he worked with me the whole time. His wife became ill with some weird something and just kept getting worse and worse and worse, and she died. And then he had a heart attack or two and some heart surgery—

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** Before it was over, my husband became ill and died. I guess we'd still be sitting around until Barry Ollman.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** One day at the Woody Guthrie Festival he had my original, the big scrapbook, and it had these plastic sleeves in them. All Woody's stuff I just kept. By the time I got through

the book was about that big. Barry Ollman, this particular year, was at the table just like this, he had that book open, propped up there real comfortable, you know. I'd never seen him before. He was reading Mary Ann—I have a niece Woody wrote the philosophy of life for her when she was a baby—and Barry was real taken with that. He was a writer. Had y'all met at that time, you and Barry?

**GL:** Oh yes, we had been acquainted for some years.

**MJG:** Okay, that's good. He knew all the right people.

**JE:** I did?

**MJG:** Yeah, it's his name that got us off of the board.

## Chapter 4

### Woody the Carpenter - 4:10

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**John Erling:** You were talking about how much you loved your father. What was Woody's relationship with your father?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Oh, just wonderful. He wouldn't have it any other way. Woody was headstrong, you couldn't tell him no, he didn't try to. I never will forget, we lived at 417 North Hill. At street level was the house where you go in the front porch. And then the back end of it was on a hill part and you had to go about twenty steps to get up there. It was a split-level house, the name for it was up this part and then you went down there and then all down was the basement. And Woody had a frame shop set up down there, all his mats and paint. He was a carpenter, among other things. He built things, framed all of his pictures. And Papa was talented. Papa had one of his brothers an inventor, they were carpenters, they were talented people.

**JE:** Do you remember any time that your father had to discipline Woody when he got into trouble or—

**MJG:** Yeah, if he ever did that. Papa was not a fighter, he wouldn't argue. That's it. And that's the way Roy was. Well, Woody framed all of these pictures down in there and Papa, being a carpenter too, interested, he was down there hanging around. He was joining Woody and Woody wouldn't go for that and he just threw down the thing and walked off and that was it. That was the end of that. I remember that's as far as a fuss every went.

**JE:** Well, he was ten years old than you.

**MJG:** Woody was.

**JE:** Yeah, Woody was. Do you remember him writing about the family early on? Do you

remember reading—

**MJG:** He wasn't writing back then. No.

**JE:** Even when you were ten. When did he leave? When was the last time you saw Woody? I know he came back again but didn't he leave at one time and you didn't see him for about twelve years?

**MJG:** Twelve years. It would have been Tampa, Tampa, Texas, because at some time my stepmother—my dad left to get a job in Oklahoma. We were in Texas, Borger, Texas. She planned to be a magnetic healer and she had her shingle out. And that's the way we lived. Papa, his burns had left him crippled and his hands were all gnarled. You know, that's what bothered me because what he trained himself for and really loved he was not ever able to do it.

**JE:** And what did he really love?

**MJG:** He loved government and politics, and not a radical. He kept up with it. I got all the stuff he wrote in my stuff. I've got people clamoring to try to get to see that and one of these days I'm going to get it out. We'll look at it.

**JE:** Well, let's go back to your mother. She had a mental illness, your mother did.

**MJG:** They thought it was but it turned out to be Huntington's Disease, just like Woody inherited. You stand a 50 percent chance of inheriting it.

**JE:** And there must have been a time when you were concerned whether or not you had inherited it?

**MJG:** I was past thirty-five. They said, "You're going to show signs by the time you're thirty-five." And I went to see Woody in the hospital in New York, and the doctor called me in, you know. And they were trying to discourage, like me, to not have any children. They were trying to stamp it out. "You don't have any children, you know, that's it." Well, I already had a little boy about like this. And I said, "Woody did more in his thirty-five years than the rest of us will do in a hundred." I don't believe in being tested to see if you're going to have something.

**JE:** And then there's the story of your sister Clara and her death. And she died in a fire.

**MJG:** Well, I didn't know her either. She would have been fifteen years older—

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** Than me. Did you notice, Guy, in all the pictures of my family look sad. Clara is sitting there just no expression, but now, the other kids either, so that might just be the way that they were raised—don't ever smile. 'Cause they didn't know how to smile.

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**Chapter 5****Fire - 3:45**

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**John Erling:** Don't you think that Woody and his writing was affected by his mother's illness and the death of Clara? That affected his writing—

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Oh yeah.

**Guy Logsdon:** Yes. Very much. He was six years old. And I still think, in *Bound for Glory*, where the teacher came in and they discussed her grades and attendance and he said Clara said, "Do you think I'll pass?" And the teacher took her fingers, put them to her eyelids, and said, "Yes," and closed her eyes because Clara died right in that spot. Now that, in my opinion, is one of the most beautiful descriptions of—

**MJG:** Dying.

**GL:** A young person's death. You can't ask for anything nicer than that. With Clara's death and Woody was six to seven—

**MJG:** I wasn't even born.

**GL:** Yeah.

**MJG:** 'Cause Clara died before I was born.

**GL:** Yeah.

**JE:** It was a fire—

**MJG:** I never had a straight answer, but Woody indicates that Mama set Papa on fire. Papa told me his story and he said he was in the hospital and a man was smoking and he threw his cigarette at the trash thing in his bed next to Papa and it caught the sheet on fire. If that had been true that would have burned Papa from the trunk up. But Papa's burns, and I helped him heal, I used to sit on the bed with Papa after they let him out of the hospital. And he came home to Aunt Maude's, my auntie that told me from five years. And I'd sit up in the middle of the bed and rub Papa's scars, and they're really deep. The red is actually real deep. Back then they didn't know what, you just burned. Nowadays, every day they dress it and take off all of that burned skin, but then they didn't. So that burned skin just laid there and became part of your body. Papa had scars that deep from here to his groin and down on his side. And that would indicate that something was poured here and ran down the sides. I didn't ever question Papa, he just didn't want to talk about it.

**GL:** Well, if she had anything burning in her hand with kerosene, maybe a kerosene lamp, who knows, and suddenly, the Huntington's hit. She'd throw it across the room and anyone would have a cup of coffee and that goes flying.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** Anything in the hands or legs, those are motions and movements—

**MJG:** Jerky.

**GL:** That are uncontrollable. And so she may have—

**MJG:** But the main—

**GL:** Accidentally, but then Clara, they also said she burned Clara.

**MJG:** Well, they always thought Clara committed suicide.

**GL:** Yeah.

**JE:** At what age?

**MJG:** Fourteen, fifteen.

**GL:** Yeah. But Woody says that she was ironing—

**MJG:** Yes.

**GL:** And the kerosene iron—

**MJG:** She was filling it up—

**GL:** Yeah.

**MJG:** And the fresh kerosene, it splashed on her clothes and caught her on fire. She ran outside, that's when the neighbor boy caught her, threw her down on the grass and tried to roll her to get the fire out.

**GL:** Yeah. But suicide, Woody, and no one else in the family ever mentioned her committing suicide. That was not a family belief.

**MJG:** Well, it came to me from family and Roy, he won't even talk or think about it. So he was there, he was a grown boy during all that time.

## Chapter 6

### Music - 2:09

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**John Erling:** Do you remember Woody playing instruments like—

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Oh my gosh, yeah.

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**MJG:** I never saw him without an instrument of some kind in his hand.

**JE:** What would he play?

**MJG:** Everything, anything, French horn—

**JE:** And guitar, I suppose?

**MJG:** Yes.

**JE:** And banjo?

**MJG:** Yes. Oh mandolin. The mandolin was the first little instrument and I thought, "That's kind of cute." You know, he taught me all the chords and I said, "I could have been a famous guitarist or something now, taught by the world's greatest leader," but I didn't.

**JE:** What kind of songs was he singing then when he was young?

**MJG:** Lively songs.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** Nothing melancholy, nothing sad, no. Well, you know the top songs.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** Little bouncy rhythm. And George and I didn't play nothing but the radio.

**JE:** What did you listen to on the radio?

**MJG:** Bob Wheels and like Chris Devuls [time :54].

**Guy Logsdon:** When you were very young, did you listen to Jimmy Wilson and the Catfish String Band?

**MJG:** You're older than I am.

**GL:** Well, that was early broadcasting out of Bristol. About 1982, somewhere in there, I was in Illinois at the University doing a Woody program. And afterwards a woman said, "Whatever happened to Jimmy Wilson and his Catfish String Band?" So people that far away.

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

**GL:** But it was in the '20s. You would have been very young.

**MJG:** I was born 1922.

**GL:** Yeah, and you left in '25, wasn't that about it?

**MJG:** Well, I was three years old.

**GL:** Yeah, '25. That's when Woody and Roy were alone at Okemah.

**JE:** Woody started high school in Okemah.

**MJG:** Oh yeah, he went to—

**JE:** And then when he went to Pampa he was a junior? He didn't graduate from—

**MJG:** No, no, he just went to Pampa and enrolled as a junior and then before that year was over he quit and did something else.

**JE:** You went to high school in Okemah?

**MJG:** No. Pampa, Borger, Panhandle, St. Allow.

**GL:** Many different schools.

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**Chapter 7****Kidnapped - 3:25**

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**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Roy, my oldest brother, kidnapped me from my stepmother. I mean, literally kidnapping.

**John Erling:** Okay, we were talking about Betty Jean. Do you remember that kidnapping? How that happened?

**MJG:** Oh, do I? I guess I do. I was right in the big middle of it.

**JE:** Tell us about it.

**MJG:** Oh, well, I sung all the way to Konawa, Oklahoma, I was so happy.

**JE:** How did he kidnap you?

**MJG:** He—it was on Sunday right about lunch and he had borrowed Frank Streetman’s car. Roy might a had a car but it wouldn’t drive that far, I guess. Anyway, he borrowed his boss’s car. Our house was on the corner. I’m standing there and I had my dog in my hand to show my neighbor my little Pekinese pup. And then there’s a car. And I looked down and Roy had parked going that way, but he’d leaned out from behind the steering wheel and looked at me. I recognized him. “Ah, there’s my big brother.” I’ll never forget that. And then I went bouncy bounce bouncy down those eight or ten steps from that hill to street level and Roy had pushed open the door. I just turned myself around like I’m just backing in and just gonna sit there for a minute or two ‘cause I figured he was gonna park. Well, he didn’t. We’re sitting there and he said, “Well, Jo, get in and close the door. I’ll go down here and turn around and we’ll come back.” So I got myself straightened up and got the door closed and Roy was out there and oh, I’m happy. You know, I always knew that they would come.

**Guy Logsdon:** What age were you at that time?

**MJG:** About sixteen. Roy was circling the block hoping that he’d catch me out. And he did. So he got down to the corner, there was a police station on the other side of that block. He was on his way around there to get a policeman to go with me, ‘cause he had the letter with Papa’s permission. Anyway, he got there to this corner and he didn’t do a U-turn and come back. He turned a right. I said, “Roy, Mama saw me get in this car,” and fear of God being put in me if I ever got in a car with a strange man. And I broke down and started crying. I said, “I’m already in big trouble (whimpering).” He handed me Papa’s note: “Go with your brother like a good little girl. Your mama will understand.” And that’s the last I ever saw of her.

**JE:** Then where did you go?

**MJG:** Well, Roy, my brother, lived in Cornwall, and he had a beautiful wife and she was about six years older than me. She was about George’s age. And we had a good life, you know,

we got along real good. And Roy said, "Now, Jo, you want to try and help a hand all you can. Don't be a burden to her in any way. I don't want you being a burden to anybody." I grew up that way. I felt like the fifth wheel on the wagon. I didn't really belong anywhere. When I got married, all I wanted was my own home. I wanted a house so if I wanted to change the furniture I could.

## Chapter 8

### Dust Bowl -1:45

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**John Erling:** Woody was famous for, of course, being the Dust Bowl troubadour. What do you remember about the Dust Bowl days?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** I was thinking what he did. I was right there in that big storm and watched it roll right over me and—

**JE:** The dust, tell us about that, how it felt.

**MJG:** Well, it's funny. It wasn't just like dirt blowing in, it was just as calm as we are right now, right here. And about the time then it got to us that rolling dust just engulfed us. Went and engulfed us. Then we had to put towels and handkerchiefs and wet things so that we could breathe. Oh it was exciting but I thought he's fun.

**JE:** How long did it last?

**MJG:** Well, that happened about two or three o'clock in the afternoon one day and it was all night and all the next day. We just were really up with the water, dust on the sheets, on the tables, on the furniture, I mean, it was just everywhere.

**JE:** Did you have to wear something over your mouth, your nose, when you went outside?

**MJG:** No we didn't. Once the cloud went over and the next day that dust settled. It was just while it was going over us.

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

**MJG:** I can remember the light bulb, just a little tiny bit of glow was all that you could see. George was visiting a friend that lived seven, eight blocks away, on the other side of town. And Papa, when he saw the magnitude of this cloud, he grabbed his hat and started out walking to find George and help him get home. So it was bad enough that you could get lost in it. I remember that.

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**Chapter 9****Castor Oil - 4:50**

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**John Erling:** Woody was a sign painter, wasn't he?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Oh, he painted anything, everything. That's the way he traveled.

**JE:** Tell us about the time he took you shopping in the Montgomery Ward store.

**MJG:** Ah, that pet, I got that drawn on his life in Pampa, Texas.

**JE:** What's the story when he went shopping with you?

**MJG:** Well, he's been cross town to visit us and he got ready to go home. He just grabbed my hand and took me walking home with him. We got to the Montgomery Ward, about halfway between our house and his house. Montgomery Ward was a big, new, modern store.

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

**MJG:** And we're walking and I've got a big store and a big sign, I'd drawn that on my art and I show Woody and I on the sidewalk, looking at all the clothes in the windows. And Woody said, "Tinken, let's go in here and see if you and I can find something you'd like."

**JE:** That was his nickname for you, Tinken?

**MJG:** Uh-huh (affirmative). Very much so, in fact, I was Tinken to everybody in Texas. Anyway, we get inside the store and I find this sweater. I see that, I never forget anything, it was an olive green with a lime green, two tones of green set in it. The clerk was helping me and there was a little tam, just a little kind of a beret tam, and it was exactly the same two tones of green. And she says, "Here, you need these to match your sweater." And Woody said, "Well, put that—" you know.

**JE:** Woody really looked after you as his little sister?

**MJG:** No. He—

**JE:** No?

**MJG:** Didn't have to. I was a big girl. But he loved to be with me and he'd entertain me, but not like any watching me or nothing, no.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** I was too wild.

**JE:** But he cared for you a lot?

**MJG:** Oh my goodness, yes, yes. He did.

**Guy Logsdon:** And you wrote a book about him, not a hardcover, but a paperback book before—

**MJG:** Who did?

**GL:** Woody's Road came out.

**MJG:** You know what that was? It was really a program for the Smithsonian that was coming.

And the Historical Society on the Phillips—I'm still upset about that, they took that program and printed it up and sell them for eight dollars. It had three or four of my special stories when they were trying to give me castor oil—that's one of my best stories, it's in that.

**JE:** Can you tell us that castor oil story?

**MJG:** Yes. I'm full of them. Well, I had the flu and the only thing they knew to give you was Epsom salts and castor oil. My stepmother brought the castor oil in, you know, and I was fighting it just like a cow being taken to slaughter. I wasn't about to take that, no. So I hit her hand some way or another fighting her and it knocked the spoon. I didn't know that a tablespoon of castor oil would cover the whole inside of the house, but it did. Anyway, Papa comes along, Mama gave up. Papa comes in, "Some ashes, that would be real good. You could take this." I wasn't going to take that either. I didn't knock it out of his hand, but I didn't take it. Woody comes traipsing in. He could get me to do anything. I could lay my head on the block and it'd be fine. Anyway, he had it all and he did ventriloquism. He'd put on an act, "You take that castor oil like you're supposed to." And then he'd talk with a doll. And he put on a performance, him trying to give that doll that castor oil. I want you to know he got me, I swallowed it just quicker than oil. I never have had any more since.

**GL:** Well, let me ask you about the book. Is that the book that the Oklahoma Historical Society published? Okay.

**MJG:** They call that a book.

**GL:** Well, it's—

**MJG:** It's just a pamphlet. I think they're selling it for eight dollars. Ma Blackburn is such a nice person.

**GL:** Oh yeah.

**MJG:** And don't do any good to make a friend if you're gonna turn around and make 'em mad. So I won't say nothing about it, but they were more concerned about being ready for the Smithsonian when it came and thought, "Oh, this'd be wonderful, we can print this up and have a thousand copies made." And I didn't even know for a long time they were calling that a book.

**Chapter 10****Art/Penmanship - 3:00**

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**John Erling:** Woody got married for the first time. Do you remember the details of that when he got married?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**MJG:** I was right in the big middle of that.

**JE:** 1933, I believe, he was married.

**MJG:** Yep. Matt Jennings was in a band, Woody and Matt and Cluster Baker or somebody else. Matt had a sister Mary. That's how he met her. He became smitten with her and they married. She was a Catholic girl. In that pamphlet, I draw the wedding with all that religious stuff that goes with Catholicism. Oh that's what I wanted to tell you about, Catholicism. I called it Catholic-ism one day, I didn't know. Anyway, "Mary Jo, the word is Catholicism." I'll never forget that. That's when I found out that he wanted to learn how, 'cause when I was trained out in the country, I ain't got, I seen, I done, all the mistakes articulate people don't use that kind of language. And Papa was teaching himself, he was ordering, he ordered all the books that got Woody started in his art. He noticed that Woody had a talent for art and he ordered a book on art for Woody. Then he ordered one on penmanship for himself, mastered that, and one on proper English. Because he wanted to come across as refined. And he did. You wouldn't know that my Papa didn't have but a fourth grade education.

**Guy Logsdon:** I forget who it was, one of the talks said that Woody had very good penmanship when he wanted to.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** And I didn't say his father taught penmanship in Indian territory and around. So Charley Guthrie was an excellent man with penmanship.

**MJG:** We all wrote kind of pinched up. That's the way Papa taught us, I guess.

**GL:** Yeah. But he was a penmanship man, wasn't he?

**JE:** Did your father teach you penmanship as well?

**MJG:** No. I don't remember being taught anything really, I just picked it up.

**JE:** All right.

**MJG:** It's a flair, when I don't it depends on my, and I didn't ever know when to quit.

**JE:** Well, you had that artistic flair that Woody had.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**JE:** Woody and Mary had a child, didn't they?

**MJG:** They had two girls and a boy.

**JE:** Woody was drifting around, going to California and coming back, did you stay in touch? Did he write you letters?

**MJG:** Well, he wrote cards home. I've got cards and letters. Yeah, he'd be going somewhere and he'd stop and write on it. He kept in touch. My father was a letter writer. He wrote a letter to me and then I'd send it to George. George'd send it to Woody and Woody'd send it to Roy. But we kept letters in the mail.

## Chapter 11

### Bound for Glory - 2:00

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**Guy Logsdon:** What was your father's reaction to Bound for Glory?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Ohhhh, it was full of vulgarity and obscenity and he just was so ashamed of it. No, Woody, he didn't have to use those words. He didn't accept that. But I said, "Papa, in this day and time, they're just coming around to where writers were using those terms." I didn't use them but if you read the book, Bound for Glory, Woody's not saying those words. He's repeating the vagabonds and the tramps on the train. Woody was not cursing. And I don't think I can ever remember my dad cursing any.

**John Erling:** How about Woody? Did he curse, his normal language?

**MJG:** Papa wouldn't have allowed it. He made the boys respect me because I was a lady, trying to make a lady out of me.

**JE:** During the Dust Bowl days he wrote many songs about the Dust Bowl. The famous one was "So Long, It's Good to Know You."

**MJG:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** Did you ever hear him on the radio?

**MJG:** He had a noonday program. When I had lunch at school I'd take fifty minutes and go to the KPDM, it was Pampa Daily News Radio Station. Allene and Jeff and Woody and one other one had this noonday program and that's all I remember. He didn't hang around. I guess he went to the West Coast first and then migrated back to the East Coast. I hadn't been one that never out of Seminole County 'til I was thirteen or fourteen. I didn't get to travel. My husband did not believe in spending money on gasoline or doctor bills. You didn't have anything to show for either one of them, just vapor.

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**Chapter 12**  
**“My Daddy” - 6:28**

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**John Erling:** Then Woody was on the radio in California?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Yeah.

**JE:** His cousin Jack was out there? All these songs were of the mistreatment of immigrants?

**MJG:** Yep.

**JE:** So he wrote liberal topics and it drew him toward communism.

**MJG:** Yep.

**JE:** And people thought he was a Communist.

**MJG:** Yes. Because he was fair and equal. And my dad was the same way. He couldn't stand to hurt anything. There was a little girl that fell into a well. And the news media covered that. It was on the radio. By the time they got to her, of course, she was dead. And Papa wrote page after page of that little girl. He wrote that story on. He just couldn't get over that little girl falling in that well and dying.

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

**MJG:** Oh, and when we lived on the farm, Papa took me to Okemah when I was three. He went into the show and picked me up, went out to the house and got a peck sack and put two or three little dresses or something in it that were mine. Put them in the car and me and went back to the theater where Mama was and said, “I'm taking Mary Jo to Maude.” That's his sister in Panhandle, Texas. And that's the last time I ever saw my mother. Now Aunt Maude and Uncle Robert took care of me for five years and they were saints, just saints.

**Guy Logsdon:** Were they ranchers?

**MJG:** No, they were just dirt farmers, just raised big crops and sell them.

**JE:** Woody wrote so many songs, “This Land Is Your Land.” Can you talk about that and tell us how that came about for him?

**MJG:** Well, I jumped up and down, everybody in the hometown is hearing this and so, “My brother wrote that! My brother wrote—you know, that thing, my brother wrote it!” I couldn't say enough about him I was so proud. And they began to have articles coming out in papers, you know, and people'd begin to call me about it. I get asked a lot of time, “What is your favorite song?” Well, I think “My Daddy.” My daddy flies a ship in the sky. And if you ever listen to it he was equal. “My daddy flies a ship in the sky, my daddy da-da da-da de-do.” And then the main thing, and a little kid down here is singing about, “My daddy in the sky, but my daddy is digging in the dirt. My daddy keeps that plane in the sky.” Somebody else just, “My daddy—” what all does it say?

**GL:** Well, “My daddy, uh—

**MJG:** It took a lot of people to—

**GL:** “My daddy flies a ship in the sky,” and then, “Mama’s not afraid and neither am I—”

**MJG:** “Why? Because my daddy keeps that plane in the sky.”

**GL:** “. . . plane in the sky. And then another one—”

**MJG:** “Another one—”

**GL:** “Makes it, one makes it, don’t be afraid because my daddy makes that plane that flies in the sky.”

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** “And my daddy works at the place where they land so don’t be afraid. Tell your mother not to be afraid. My daddy’ll bring your daddy back home again.”

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** I think that’s the way it goes.

**MJG:** That man up there in the airplane wasn’t any more important than the one down here on the ground. And that’s the way he was about trash people. You don’t say a trash man or a garbage man, I learned the technical names and they would refer to anything that’ll make them lower. I never could stand putting anybody lower than me. And that’s just born in me and Papa and Woody.

**JE:** He wrote that song?

**MJG:** Yeah. “Ship in the sky.”

**GL:** Yes, out in California. That was one of the first ones he wrote.

**JE:** And the name of it again was?

**MJG:** Well, there’s two different, “The Ship in the Sky” is one and then “My Daddy,” is another title.

**GL:** Yeah, it appeared in the little pamphlet of songs written in 1936, but I think it was in 1937 when it really was published. It was “Woody Guthrie and Lefty Lou: Genuine Country Folk Songs.” Something along that title.

**JE:** Was it old-time hill country songs?

**GL:** Yeah, yeah. That’s where he said, “Lefty Lou will sing ‘The Cow Fell through the Bridge and Strained Her Milk,’” and Woody will sing, ‘When Rose Blows Her Nose on Her Clothes Her Hose Shows.’”

**MJG:** That’s right. Leave it to him to know ‘cause he’d know.

**JE:** You enjoyed watching Woody paint, didn’t you?

**MJG:** Oh yeah. I liked to watch him do anything. I liked my brothers, I loved them. I just was in awe when I was with either one of them. Roy was like a father figure, and Woody, he’d get down in the dirt and play with me, build me cars out of wooden blocks, and use checkers for the wheels. And we’d play cars on the hillside at the side of the house. George, he was a master craftsman with wood. Now he inherited that woodwork that

Jeff and Gid and Claude, they came from the carpenter's son. But my dad did too. Anyway, each one was special. I had people to ask, "You got three brothers and you got one that's getting all?" I said, "No, I idolize each one of my brothers. They're each one very special in different ways." Roy was the father image, Woody was the one that'd get down in the dirt and play with me, and George and I were together all through the hard, lean years. We experienced a stepmother and all that together.

**JE:** Yeah. Woody got along with his brothers too? And they—

**MJG:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** Even though—

**MJG:** There was five years difference between them, they didn't fight.

**JE:** Even though he was traveling and—

**MJG:** Don't forget the letters.

**JE:** So Woody made sure he was in touch with his family, didn't he?

**MJG:** Oh yes.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** And Papa made sure, doubly sure, when he got letters he sent it out to everybody. Papa was sure that we all kept in touch. You'd of loved my daddy.

## Chapter 13

### Woody's First Job -1:26

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**John Erling:** Didn't Woody work in a drugstore, a Harris Drugstore?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Yeah.

**JE:** What did he do there?

**MJG:** Sold whiskey. Well, Shorty Harris was a bootlegger and Woody just got a job. He didn't know what he was selling. But Shorty took him and showed him that, "When people come in here they lay fifty cents on the counter. This is what they want." He took him back to where the whiskey was in a little sack. That's what they wanted and they never had to call it that. And he never heard it. But anyway, that was Woody's first job. He sold the little sack for fifty cents to everybody that came in.

**Guy Logsdon:** Didn't he paint the sign outside that said Harris Drug?

**MJG:** Yeah. And let me tell you, it's ironic, but it became an icon because it changed hands a few times. And the new owner would come in, the first thing they wanted to do, "Sandblast that sign. It's not Harris Drug anymore." And they'd get sandblasters to come

in there and they'd sandblast it and get rid of it. And it wasn't any time they did that through Harris Drug and there's Woody's initials, WG. Just as plain as day. I've got that in my book too.

**GL:** I think they're restoring that sign—

**MJG:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**GL:** In Pampa now.

**MJG:** They're proud of it now. They're proud of everything Woody touched, now.

## Chapter 14

### Non-communist - 5:54

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**John Erling:** But people in Okemah weren't always proud of Woody, were they?

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** No.

**JE:** How did that make you feel?

**MJG:** Well, I never, ever felt lesser than any of them. I was raised to be proud. Didn't have any money but I was proud, not ashamed of anything. I was proud of Woody. One of the publishers of my book, he noticed that I was quoting the governor and different ones of notoriety. He said, "I noticed that they're trying to play up all these famous people." And I didn't get a chance to explain, but all those years people would loved to have made me ashamed. It didn't work because I knew better.

**JE:** It was because they thought he was a Communist—

**MJG:** Yeah.

**JE:** They didn't want to associate with him.

**MJG:** No.

**JE:** And they weren't proud of him at that time.

**MJG:** Well, even now, they write too much. I went to an attorney 'cause I had letters from Woody explaining and proving that no way.

**JE:** That no way he was a Communist?

**MJG:** No.

**JE:** Right.

**MJG:** No. I had an attorney, a well-known attorney in Seminole that was researching all of that and he was calling me regularly from Washington. Said, "Well, Mary Jo, I'm here in so-and-so's office. We're looking for things that would have suggested Woody would have been a Communist." She said, "We can't find anything." Then they were in the FBI file.

“We can’t find a thing, Mary Jo. We didn’t find a thing.” So he was exonerated right then, but that never came out in the papers.

**JE:** Yeah. Well, his message was to encourage those with wealth to share with those who did not have wealth. Communism was sharing with everybody as well, so the message came awfully close to each other.

**Guy Logsdon:** Socialism is better than Communism to describe the sharing of wealth.

**JE:** Right.

**GL:** And there are still people today that want the wealthy to—

**MJG:** Share.

**GL:** Share, and of course, in Tulsa we have George Kaiser who is sharing his success. We won’t say wealth. He is sharing his success in life with others and does it, not for showmanship, he does not like for his name or photo to be anywhere. So there are people who do share, and that’s all Woody was doing. But he fought against greed, and he fought against malicious life.

**MJG:** Oh yeah.

**GL:** He fought against—

**MJG:** Cruelty.

**GL:** Cruelty to others and all, and he did say in his “Jesus Christ” song that—

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** If Jesus lived today they would do the same thing to him as they did, maybe not on the cross—

**MJG:** Take it from—

**GL:** But he would not live—

**MJG:** Take it from the rich and give it to the poor.

**GL:** Yeah. He was a man who believed in sharing.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** And if that’s an evil then Christianity is evil then. Because not many of us really live—I’d better not get started on that. But he believed in living what Christianity teaches.

**MJG:** Well, he believed in the Bible and he quotes it all the way through.

**JE:** Well, his favorite person was Jesus Christ.

**GL:** Yeah, and Will Rogers.

**JE:** And Will Rogers.

**GL:** Jim Longee said, “I didn’t know you were religious, Woody.” He said, “Yeah, I like ‘em all, I just don’t have a favorite.”

**MJG:** And he said, “People choose me being a Red,” he said, “well, I’m in the red a lot but I don’t necessarily am not a Communist.”

**GL:** Let’s see, right wing, left wing, chicken wing, and today it would be buffalo wing to go

with it. But a wing is a wing.

**JE:** But he didn't care if people thought he was a Communist.

**MJG:** Oh no.

**JE:** He didn't try to fight against that.

**MJG:** Oh no, no.

**GL:** No.

**MJG:** He never said a word—

**JE:** But when he was living in New York he was with Pete Seeger and Will Geer. They were known as progressives so then they would kind of put Woody into that roll. That roll and Socialism and Communism, I guess, were kind of all bunched into one, and he got dropped there.

**MJG:** And Woody was just not going to change. I guess he inherited a lot of that from Papa, 'cause Papa was a real staunch Democrat. But we never got into politics a lot.

**GL:** In fact, your father wrote two books against Socialism back in 1912 and '14, I guess it would have—

**MJG:** What were they about, politics?

**GL:** It was against Socialism, sharing everything, making everything equal, I guess you'd say.

**MJG:** Papa was against that.

**GL:** Yeah. At that time. Now, Woody did not tolerate and could not stand Adolph Hitler. And I think with what was brought out about Joseph Stalin that if he had known any of that he would have hated Stalin—

**MJG:** Oh yeah.

**GL:** The same way he did Adolph Hitler.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** Well, I won't say hate, wouldn't tolerate him, was willing to fight against them.

**MJG:** Woody lived the life of a pauper.

**GL:** Yeah.

**MJG:** On the streets alone. Roy tried to take him in and he preferred to walk the streets and sell beer cans and bottles and anything else. He just foraged for himself.

**GL:** That's when he was fourteen years old in Okemah.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** He made his living cleaning spittoons, selling newspapers—

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** And picking up scrap iron.

**Chapter 15****Huntington's Disease - 2:40**

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**John Erling:** There was a time when he made a lot of money in his day. When he was in New York he made money. In California.

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Yeah, if he did he spent it faster than he made it because he had to help somebody. He'd give it away.

**JE:** But when he was told not to say things or preach his philosophy then he would just quit and give up that income.

**Guy Logsdon:** Because he did what he believed.

**JE:** Right.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** Period.

**JE:** He wasn't doing it for the money.

**GL:** No. Woody Guthrie was a man who was for the working people.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**JE:** I wonder what Woody would think today about the foundation George Kaiser, Henry Zarro and all that are doing so much in the community. They are very, very wealthy people—

**GL:** Yeah.

**JE:** And I don't think he could refute that wealth as long as they were—

**MJG:** No, he would know—

**JE:** He was helping.

**GL:** He would be all for it.

**JE:** Right.

**MJG:** If they were not being greedy.

**GL:** It wasn't wealth as much as it was against greed and keeping people down. Woody believed in the middle class, I'll put it that way.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** And too many people today don't. And I'll state that as a genuine fact today.

**JE:** Did you ever see him in his early signs of Huntington's Disease?

**MJG:** Oh sure.

**JE:** Tell us about what you observed.

**MJG:** Well, he had no balance, he had no control over his muscles. It wasn't just little twitching. I've got pictures with him at the hospital. Arlo and me and his mother and Woody, with the four of us at the hospital. And alone. And Woody's just standing there and he's just limber, no motion. They're having to hold him up.

**JE:** It's an awful disease, isn't it? Just awful.

**MJG:** I'm thrilled that he didn't have to live any longer.

**JE:** He was fifty-five when he died?

**MJG:** Yes.

**GL:** October 3, 1967, was his death date.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**JE:** Were you near him when he died?

**MJG:** I was in the hospital. And I didn't know it. They'd been trying to call me at home. I'd had some surgery and was in the hospital in Oklahoma City. I had on the morning news in my hospital room and there it is all about Woody Guthrie. And the doctor came in, I said, "That's my brother! That's my brother! He died." You know, and then that got all over the hospital real fast that Woody Guthrie's sister is in here.

**JE:** Aren't you proud, though, of being famous for that?

**MJG:** I don't think of it as being famous. They tried to tell me, they said, "Mary Jo, you're a star." I said, "Woody is the star, I'm his representative."

## Chapter 16

### Ashes - 3:14

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**John Erling:** Were you at his funeral? The circumstances about that—

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** He was cremated.

**JE:** He was cremated, right. They took his ashes out, can you talk about that?

**Guy Logsdon:** Well, see, their daughter Marjorie and Woody's daughter, who died from burns, Arlo's oldest sister, was four years old when she died from burns in an apartment. They said a war-time radio shorted out and caught her war-time light dress on fire. Marjorie was across the street getting some groceries when it happened. And then Woody was singing and—

**MJG:** She told me herself she had just gone down the stairs to take a little trash thing. I've heard it everything. Now see, you said downtown. And somebody else said across the street. She was right there, just going down the steps to their apartment, and she told me that. I was with Marjorie a lot.

**GL:** You know, I'd always heard—

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** That she had gone across the street and left the door open. Anyway, Kathy died from

burns. Kathy loved Coney Island, and they lived, I guess, next to Coney Island. They cremated her and it's against the law, but they scattered her ashes quietly on Coney Island.

**MJG:** When my husband died, he lived on the golf course in his spare time. I was going to put them on the golf—

**GL:** Yeah.

**MJG:** And they mentioned to me that that was against the law because it's public property. I wrote him a letter the next day after the funeral, described it all to him. I said, "Honey, I'm not going around feeling sorry for myself and boo-hooing because I haven't let you go yet." And that's the way it is, I haven't.

**GL:** When Woody was cremated there was two or three, uh, Marjorie, Arlo, and they threw him out in the ocean. They scattered him along Coney Island along with Kathy's. And—

**MJG:** They couldn't get the lid off. And Arlo said, "Give me that," and he took it and flung it. Just ashes, urn, and everything.

**GL:** When Clara was dying, and this is in Bound for Glory, Woody was six years old at the time, and she said, "Don't cry."

**MJG:** She said, "Woody, don't cry like your own Papa and Roy."

**GL:** Yeah. "Don't ever cry." And Woody said, "I didn't, and I haven't."

**MJG:** He said, "That's when she died, that's one of the things she said."

**GL:** Yeah. And Sisco Houston said the only time he ever saw Woody Guthrie cry, in all the years he was with him, was when they went to Coney Island and Woody knelt down where they had scattered ashes, and cried a little for Kathy. And then got up and dried his eyes and they never saw him cry again.

**JE:** Hmm.

## Chapter 17

### How to remember Woody - 3:46

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**John Erling:** We talked about people in Okemah didn't really embrace him. But the whole state of Oklahoma does now.

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Yeah.

**JE:** A portrait of Woody Guthrie hangs in our state capitol, which was painted by Charles Banks Wilson.

**MJG:** Yeah, he died yesterday or the day before.

**JE:** Just a few, not too long ago. May 2, 2013, he died.

**MJG:** Eighty-four years of age.

**JE:** He donated his twenty-five thousand dollars that he got for doing that to the Huntington's Disease Society. That was a nice gesture on his part.

**Guy Logsdon:** Yeah.

**JE:** So you can be proud of that, Woody Guthrie painting hanging in our state capitol. How would you want future generations that will be listening to this to remember Woody?

**MJG:** Just like he is right now. I think that he has achieved. I think that all the acclaims that's been in his honor, they're true and they're timely, they don't ever age. And good books, you know, and good movies, they're there.

**JE:** Yeah.

**GL:** And just remember him as a very creative man.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** Creativity was a part of his soul. He wrote constantly. I think he had a photographic memory.

**MJG:** Yes.

**GL:** I also think he had this, whatever it's called, I think President Johnson had it where you can work three or four hours, take a thirty-minute nap, and get up.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** 'Cause Woody wrote all night long.

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** And all day long. But he would take naps here and there. Creativity—

**MJG:** Yeah.

**GL:** Was a drive in him that nothing or no one could defeat.

**MJG:** Yeah, but he always had, always had paper and pencil in his shirt pocket. He never was without a pencil. He was writing all of the time.

**JE:** What would Woody think of the Woody Guthrie Center that the George Kaiser Foundation—

**MJG:** What would he have thought?

**JE:** Yes.

**MJG:** I think it's fabulous and I think he would have been proud.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MJG:** My dad would have been. When I started getting interested in all other things I thought about Papa and Mama. The thought the family needed to step up. Every time I saw Woody's name in the paper, where they were going to be having a program doing something, I went as a representative of the family. I represent the Guthrie family for

- Woody. That was my job.
- JE:** Well, I saw you there at the opening of the Center and you had to be proud that evening—
- MJG:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** To see his instruments there and to see his writings on display.
- GL:** It was a great, great celebration. If I had a glass of water in my hand I would give a toast to George Kaiser—
- MJG:** Oh he's wonderful.
- GL:** For being so generous.
- MJG:** Well, I want to write them a personal letter expressing my heart to them.
- GL:** When they inducted Woody into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—
- MJG:** Yeah, that—okay.
- GL:** The Rock and Roll Museum had all of these “Touch this,” “Touch that,” music. And I thought, “It'd be great if some place in Oklahoma could do that.” And indeed, the Woody Guthrie Center has so many, you can spend days in there, and not hear everything.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- GL:** The little kids were having great fun with tap this, tap that, different things show up on the big screen.
- MJG:** Have you seen it?
- GL:** Yeah, he was there.
- JE:** Right.
- MJG:** Then you understand what we're saying.
- JE:** Right, including you can hear the song, “Oklahoma Hills.”
- GL:** Oh yeah.
- JE:** Which he wrote and is our state song.
- GL:** Yes.
- MJG:** I'd liked that.

## Chapter 18

### Been Good to Know You - 2:16

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**John Erling:** So as we say thank you for this time, and you've been very gracious—

**Mary Jo Guthrie:** Thank you.

**JE:** I like the song, "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You." Maybe the two—

**MJG:** I love that.

**JE:** How about the two of you kind of harmonize on that, huh?

**Guy Logsdon:** Well, I've sung this song, I'll sing it again, of a place where I lived in the wild windy plain. The month of April, the county cold gray, here's what all of the people there say. So long, it's been good to know you. So long, it's been good to know you. So long, it's been good to know you, but this dusty old dust is a getting my home and I've got to be drifting along.

**MJG:** [at the same time]

**JE:** That was—

**GL:** My favorite two verses of, Telephone rang, it rang all the off the wall.

**MJG:** Off the wall.

**GL:** That was the preacher, he was a making his call.

**MJG:** His call.

**GL:** He said, "Kind friends, this may be the end, this is your last chance at salvation of sin." Well, the churches were jammed and the churches were packed, the old dusty old dust storm kept blowing so black. The preacher could not read a word of his text, so he folded his specs and took up a collection and said, "So long, it's good to know you, so long." There are a lot of verses.

**JE:** That was wonderful.

**MJG:** I know it. He was known for the length of his songs.

**JE:** Went on so long—

**MJG:** I knew I'd be out there for one of the programs.

**GL:** Oh yeah.

**MJG:** It was Bob Childers, I believe. He laughed and got up there, they were supposed to pick one or two songs and sing 'em and the song that he picked was eighteen verses long. Well, he made a joke about it and everybody laughed. But he sung the first two.

**JE:** Thank you so much.

**GL:** Well, thank you. It's an honor to be here with Mary Jo.

**JE:** It is.

**MJG:** Well, I don't think I did that much—the pleasure is mine.

**GL:** And with John Erling.

**MJG:** The honor.

**JE:** You were great.

**MJG:** It's an honor.

**Chapter 19****Conclusion - 0:33**

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**Announcer:** (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous 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).