

Frosty Troy

Member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame and nationally acclaimed advocate for public education.

Chapter 1

Introduction—1:13

Announcer: Forrest J. “Frosty” Troy was the founding editor of the *Oklahoma Observer*, which is published under the motto: to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. A member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, Frosty has covered state and national politics, government and social issues for a half century. As a nationally acclaimed speaker he spoke on his three favorite topics: The free enterprise system, education and politics. Before launching the *Observer* as an independent journal of commentary, he headed both state capitol and Washington newspaper bureaus. Under his leadership, the *Observer* won more than four dozen journalism awards.

For his vigorous defense of public education across America, Frosty received the Walter Cronkite Faith and Freedom Award, an award he shared with the late Peter Jennings of ABC News.

Among his other honors: The National Champion of Children Award, the National and Oklahoma Friend of Education awards, Scouting’s God & Country Award, the First Amendment Award, the PTA’s Distinguished Service to Children Award and the American Legion’s Patriotism Award.

Listen to Frosty Troy tell his story and make his observations on ***Voices of Oklahoma.com***.

Chapter 2

618 E. Wyandotte—10:40

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today’s date is November 30, 2011. Frosty, state your full name, please.

Frosty Troy: Forrest J. Troy, and my grandfather nicknamed me Frosty.

JE: Why did he choose Frosty?

FT: I have no earthly idea. I asked my mother that and she said, "I don't know why." Her dad, Grandpa Hopkins, started calling me Frosty. So when I was in the second grade I asked my mother, I said, "Why did you name me Forrest? Nobody at school is named Forrest."

And she said, "Oh, honey, that was my high school sweetheart."

And I said, "I don't believe that. Dad's name was Leo."

And said, "Oh, you were number six out of eleven, there was no jealousy left."

JE: Your date of birth and your present age?

FT: Right now I'm seventy-eight and June 13, 1933.

JE: And where are we recording this interview?

FT: This was the headquarters of the *Oklahoma Observer*, but I sold it nearly three years ago and they moved it to Edmond. And so, but I kept the office here because I have to have some place to go.

JE: Eh, where were you born?

FT: Born in McAlester, Oklahoma. Third generation by way of Tipperary, Ireland.

JE: Eh, what was your mother's name, maiden name, where she grew up?

FT: Ruth Hopkins and, ah, believe it or not, she grew up on a farm in western Oklahoma and they moved to McAlester because her dad couldn't make a living at farming during the Dust Bowl, and so he went to work for the prison. State prison, state penitentiary is at McAlester.

JE: What was your mother like? Her personality?

FT: Oh my Lord, she was short of, just under five foot tall, and she was an amazing humorous, she never had a bad day. And she married sons and she'd go to the funeral and then afterwards she'd fix a big meal. And she always talked at the wakes and she was hilarious.

And by the way, within a month of having a baby she would get her figure back. Just the most amazing thing.

My dad ended up owning a dry cleaners in McAlester, 90 Choctaw. One time Mother was there and I happened to be in the dry cleaners and she said, "Well, walk me home."

At that time there were telephone operators and they were changing shifts and the marines, that was naval ammunition depot then, and lots of marines out there. We took off across the corner just as the break came for the telephone operators. And, of course, four or five marines were sitting there waiting for the girls.

About that time Mother got a wolf whistle and she just, she just perked up and shook her fanny across the street. She was hilarious.

And Dad was a sourpuss, he uh—

JE: Well, what was his name?

FT: Leo James, Leo Troy. Now take that in the best sense of the word. Uh, he had a terrific job supporting the family and he wanted all of us to get an education. And there was no quitting school. And he just, he just worked and worked. I can—we had dinner at six, we called it supper then, boy, he would come in and he would just look so fatigued he'd just—and this was six days a week.

JE: But he came in from what? What was he doing?

FT: The dry cleaners. And by the way, you should have seen what he could do with an automatic sewing machine. He did all the alterations—he did everything. He ran the dry cleaners. He had a black guy in the back doing the tumblers and so on and so forth, but he was the work of art.

And he was, in his way he was kind of witty. He used to go—the Businessmen started at the White House Café, which was across the alley from the dry cleaners. And Augie Henry, who was the head of the First Baptist Church in McAlester at that time, he made some smart remark about Catholics. And Dad being a cradle Catholic said, “You know, stand up. I’ve always wanted to knock the hell out of a Baptist preacher.”

And, boy, Augie Henry hit the door.

JE: You referred to your mother’s height. Was your father a tall man?

FT: No he was about five ten, five eleven, and he one son who was tall. That was my brother Kevin. Most of us were average height.

JE: So ah, did he come from the Muskogee area then, I mean, the McAlester area?

FT: Yeah, ah, yes, by a—now you think this is crazy—by way of Michigan. He was, his grandfather was an Associate Dean of Medicine at the University of Michigan. That, two of his sisters were Benedictine nuns and they had been dispatched to the Twin Territories, in fact, as Atoka, IT, uh, Indian Territory. They telegraphed him that they were having terrible trouble and people were making fun of them. Can you imagine the little nuns running around in cowboy country?

So he told Rose, his wife, he said, “Sell the house. Ship everything you want to by rail and I’m going to Indian Territory to check on my sisters.” And when he got to Atoka, IT, he surveyed the situation. But the railroad crossed what was to become McAlester. So he moved the nuns up to McAlester, and they were in the convent at Krebs.

JE: Did you know any of your grandparents? Did you meet any of them?

FT: Yeah, uh, Grandfather Hopkins I know, and I lived for two years, I was a very sickly child, I lived for two years with Rose Troy, Grandmother Troy. She’s, she was a work of art. She had a library, oh my Lord, all the great books of the western world. And I read them all because I lived with her for two years and there wasn’t anything else to do except I helped her with her strawberry patch and mowed the lawn. And that was a push mower.

JE: Why did you go to live with her?

FT: Uh, my uh, believe it or not, we lived on North Main in a big, old, ramshackle house. And my little brother Jerry. Uh, we had a cow named Bessie. The hay was stacked up against the back porch and my brother Jerry playing with matches set it on fire. And so we scattered out. We went to different places.

Aunt Kate took some of the kids and blah, blah, blah. And we were, we were scattered out, uh, for about six or eight months until Dad found a home at 618 East Wyandotte in McAlester. It was really cramped for that many kids. Of course, my brother David hadn't been born yet, nor my sister Mary Ruth. But wow!

So he set about in his spare time, you know, he didn't have any spare time, building a sleeping porch. And we slept two to a bed. And I slept with my brother Johnny.

JE: So then your brothers and sisters, you had one—how many brothers and sisters did you have?

FT: I had, well, all together Mother had eleven children. But twins died at birth. There were eight boys and one girl.

JE: So then the first house you remember, is that what you're referring to?

FT: Yeah, 618 East Wyandotte. I remember that very well. And fact is, I couldn't wait to be twelve years old, uh, 'cause I could join the Boy Scouts. Because my older brothers were Eagle Scouts. And Camp Tom Hale down at Wilburton, oh, that was the place to be, I made it.

But I'll break your heart, it broke mine. I mobilized with 45th Division in 1950. I had twenty merit badges. You get, you needed twenty-one to be an Eagle. And when I came home I went to see Bill Edwards, Edwards Bookstore, he was the Scout Master and handled all the Scouts. And I said, "I wanna, I wanna work on my, on getting my Eagle."

And he said, "They've changed the rules, Frosty, you can't."

"You're kidding?"

If you were over eighteen you could no longer be an Eagle Scout. And it just crushed me, boy, I was dazed getting over that. But I'm, you know, you don't get over it, you just get past it. So I was the only one of the Troy boys that, the older brothers, that didn't make Eagle.

JE: Hmm. Where were you in the birth order?

FT: I was number six.

JE: So Mr. In Between then, you were?

FT: Yeah no one my name, even the nuns. I went to St. John's School, a little bitty Catholic school in McAlester, and a little bitty church. And most of the students were from Krebs. Of course, you know, the Italians were very Catholic from Sicily. Most, they'd been brought over to work the carbon mines.

The nuns would call me, “Frosty, uh yeah, Bernard, Bernard.”

I got a call once at the *Tulsa Tribune*, the *Republican Tulsa Tribune*, and Margaret said, “Line two, Frosty.”

And I got on the phone and I said, “This is Frosty.”

“Bernard, I wanted to ask you a question.”

And I said, “Mother, this is Frosty.”

And she said, “You know who I meant.”

Chapter 3

Tied to Desk—3:13

John Erling: So your first elementary school, what was the name of that?

Frosty Troy: St. John’s.

JE: And do you have any recollection from there, from uh—

FT: Yes, I was held back in the second grade. I had poison oak, and I mean, my eyes were swollen shut. I’m extremely allergic to poison oak and poison ivy. They, uh, two weeks before school was out they called Mother up to Sister Emily, the principal, and said, “We think Frosty ought to repeat second grade.”

And oh, that was another crusher for me. I was already the runt of the litter, so, and by the way, Sister Mildred, who was my first and second grade, we had multiple classes in the same room, first and second grade, she got permission to tie my ankle to my desk with a scarf. And Mother said, “Well, why in the world would you want to do that?”

They said, “Well, he gets up, he wanders around the room, he’s looking at all the other kids’ work, and he goes to the window and gives us weather reports.” And so she paid me back, by the way, because Virgil Dominic and I got to dust the erasers. That means fifteen minutes before school let out, and boy, she was a terrific nun.

JE: You might say, what was that dust erasers? What did that mean?

FT: Well, we used chalk on blackboards and the erasers would pick up a lot of the chalk in those days. And you had to go out in back and beat them on rocks and clean them for the next day. And that’s what dusting the erasers meant. And now they got these smart boards, amazing, amazing.

JE: So, where you a reader, even in elementary? Did you—

FT: Yes I’ve always been a reader. I read everything at Grandmother Troy’s. Dad took a couple of magazines, including *Knights of Columbus* magazine. And I always read that. I don’t

know why, but I was just a reader, and I was probably—the plain truth is as the years went by I went out for basketball. I was too short. Went out for baseball, and I couldn't hit. My dad managed the Golden Gloves for twenty-two years and he stopped my first fight because I wouldn't hit the boy back. And I just got on a bicycle. So there wasn't anything else to do but read. And so—

By the way, the librarian, aah, aah, that's, that was my home away from home. On the way home from school I would stop at the library. I read all the series of books and so forth. And one day I brought a book up and the librarian said, "Not yet, Frosty, not yet." It was an art book of nudes. And I was really curious about that.

JE: So that was at the McAlester Public Library?

FT: Yeah McAlester Public Library. And I spent two years in the seminary studying for the priesthood.

JE: I didn't know.

FT: Yeah, St. Vincent's DeSales.

JE: You thought you were going to be—

FT: Yeah.

JE: A priest. At what point?

FT: Even when I—a little bitty kid I thought I was going—Jilly Desellio and I served eight fifteen mass for months in Yurhiggins, even during the summer. And one time, Jilly, we were emptying the trash for Mrs. Kimes, housekeeper, elderly. And, "Would you boys come empty the trash for me?"

And he found a bag of communion wafers and we went down in the alley and practiced giving each other communion.

And Jilly, uh, he didn't make it. He ended up at Subiaco as a teacher. I still have contact with him occasionally.

JE: Well, where do we put these two years of seminary in your life, because we didn't talk about that back here.

FT: The ninth and tenth grade.

JE: They had you in a seminary training program in the ninth and tenth grades?

FT: Right, right.

JE: Okay, then what—

FT: St. Vincent's DeSales.

JE: And what made you decide not to do that?

FT: You had an exit interview every year and a, and so, my name was called and I went over to the prefect. He said, "Frosty, the faculty thinks that you're extremely bright and you're going to go places. But we think you ought to take a year off." You never got back in. I'd already heard the rumors, you never—

One guy tried for three consecutive years and they finally took him back. And I went home and just brooded and brooded and brooded. And then, you know, I'm Irish, I just, I got past it. I didn't get over it but I got past it. My dream, when I was this little as an altar server at St. John's is to be a priest.

Chapter 4

December 7, 1941—5:27

John Erling: Along about 1941, December 7th, you would have been about eight years old.

Frosty Troy: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Do you have any recollection of that day and those days?

FT: Oh yeah. I got home, Dad and Mom were on the porch swing. Mother was crying her eyes out and my dad, he just leaning on his fist against it and said, "They bombed Pearl Harbor." I didn't know what that meant.

The following Saturday I went to the movies and saw the news real and wow, oh my Lord, it showed those Japanese Zeros coming in and the men running everywhere. It was a really, a sad time.

JE: Was it a frightening experience as an eight-year-old? Or could you kind of feel that or—

FT: Well, I didn't want to be around adults when they were talking about it.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: So I guess I felt it.

JE: As the United States was drawn into war, rationing and that type of thing, do you remember items of rationing?

FT: Oh do I. Well, first of all, my brother Leo, the oldest, joined the Marine Corps. My second oldest, my brother Pat, joined the Navy and so they were gone. And rationing during the war, ha-ha, one time Dad came home from work at 618 E. Wyandotte, and he said, "Ruth, come out to the delivery wagon. I've got something to—" he picked up and delivered dry cleaning in those days. He said, "I got something to show you." And it was a case of Pet Milk. Oh my Lord, you couldn't believe how hard things were to come by for a big family.

Mother would make Cream of Wheat for breakfast and then fry it for dinner. It really—in paddies, and we, oh, pinto beans. We were raised on pinto beans. And every now and then her good fortune, she traded at Matt Patterson's Grocery and he would slip her uh, uh, one of those bones for the beans. And oh, oh, that made all the difference in the world, the flavor. And I still love pinto beans, by the way.

JE: But you do remember your older brothers, and perhaps others in the neighborhood who then immediately signed up to join?

FT: Yeah. Just right and left, and some of them left high school, eleventh and twelfth grade, they left high school.

Yeah, oh boy, and Dad would never tolerate that. Whew, wow, and fact is, my brother Leo came back and he went to OCU Law School with Curtsy Nix's partner. Now that name doesn't mean anything these days but in those days he was not only the best trial lawyer next to Moman Pruiett in the history of this state. He won more cases, I mean, really important cases. Then he was Chief Judge on the Court of Criminal Appeals when he died.

JE: As a young person, did you remember hearing presidents on the radio, FDR?

FT: We had to, we had to. Uh, boy, everybody went quiet. You know, Dad loved Jack Benny and some blah, blah, blah, but, boy, the minute FDR was coming on—and my dad only had one ornament on the, I guess, the fireplace, and it was a really crummy rendition of FDR. I remember that very well.

JE: So the family were Democrats?

FT: Yeah, all Democrats, well, there wasn't anything else to be. And fact is, Dad was shocked when his sister Josephine married Henry Lawton Jones. He was a Republican and she changed her registration. And there were only thirteen Republicans in McAlester registered at that time. Whew, how the world has changed, whew.

JE: And Harry Truman, you heard him speak?

FT: Oh, I loved him. He was my, he was my idol. It broke my heart when I got his two-volume autobiography. Names, dates, places—names, dates, places, appointments, and it was just terrible.

And then a guy named Merle Miller decided, he called Harry Truman in Independence, Missouri. He was out of office then. And he said, "I'd like to tape record you."

And he said, "Well, come on, come on back."

And so he spent two weeks in the crummy motel. But then during the day he recorded Harry Truman. *Give 'em Hell, Harry* was the name of the book. And it was a one-man show on Broadway, terrifically important.

There was a women's college at Chickasha. Helen and I drove down to see that one-man show. That was closest, uh, to McAlester, it was.

Chapter 5

A Writer—9:06

John Erling: Uh, junior high, you were there in McAlester and uh, high school.

Frosty Troy: Yeah, yeah you're right. High school, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And memories then? Were you active in journalism in high school? And when did this reading or this writing thing begin to kick in?

FT: Well, the thing really took off when I became a junior high correspondent for the *St. John's Siren*, that's what they called the school paper. And I remember when I got my—I was already filling notebooks, writing, writing, writing, writing, writing, and uh, but, boy, my first byline, and the Fink family, it's on the wall there, I'll show it to you. It's amazing. My first byline, and, boy, from—

By the way, when I lost that first fight Dad was keeping time. And he climbed up in the ring and he said, "Frosty, are you going to hit that boy back?"

And I said, "I'm not mad yet. I'll get him next round, Dad."

And he said, "Do you want to hit him?"

And I said, "No."

And he threw in the towel. And that was the end. I went back, this is the American Legion building in McAlester, and packed, boy, Golden Gloves were big in those days. And I went back behind the curtain and cried.

Dad drove us home in the delivery wagon, Troy Cleaner's delivery wagon, and I was sniveling. And my brother Johnny, whom I slept, shared a bed with, he elbowed me and he said, "Shut up! I'm trying to sleep."

It wasn't two weeks later that I was walking down the hall at St. John's and Sister Mary Andrew was coming toward me. And she said, "Frosty Troy!"

Now, I don't know if you've ever been in a Catholic school, but when they call your name you're either in trouble or gonna run an errand. Oh, they were tough, they were tough nuns. And she said, "I saw your poem in the school paper. That was really good. Have you ever thought about being a writer?"

Wow! It's like somebody took the blinders off a horse. Wow! I was off and running.

And let me tell you a story to follow up. When we obtained the *Courier*, the diocese newspaper, why a, the first issue, I went down to Triangle A&E and got a tabloid envelope and I sent it to Mary—Sister Mary Andrew was in New Mexico on her brother's ranch. She had retired from the convent. And I listed all my awards, all my awards, and I mailed it off to her.

And about two weeks later, Helen was standing in the doorway there and she said, "You've got mail."

And I said—she always picked up the mail—I said, “What?”

And she said, “Well, open it.”

I said, “You’ve already opened it.” And I pulled out that copy of the *St. John’s Siren* and she had graded the paper. “Clarity, clarity, Frosty. Too many compound sentences.” Just little dit-dit-dits. I was killed, I was just killed. Just, geeze, I couldn’t believe. I wanted her to brag on the paper and on my—I had accumulated some journalism awards at the *Tulsa Tribune*. And she graded the damn paper. Well, she’s probably grading papers in heaven now.

JE: Yeah?

FT: Yeah.

JE: When she said to you, “Have you thought about writing?” you hadn’t really yet, or you—

FT: Yeah I’d been filling some notebooks with thoughts.

JE: But the—

FT: And I started reading very young. Dad was just amazed. I never fought over the comics and my brothers fought over the comics. And it was age-superior on the comics, but I wasn’t interested. I’ve read all the paper.

And a guy named Ernie Pyle, and man, I clipped and clipped and clipped everything he ever wrote. And that’s what I wanted to do, on the ground reporting. Not sitting in some ivory tower.

I had a kid at the pressroom, I still have a desk in the *Capital* pressroom, cover the Senate. And he said, “Well, you’re the famous Frosty Troy. How did you win all of those awards?” He was from OU.

I said, “Not sitting on my ass in the *Capital* pressroom. I visited every mental hospital. In three of them I was patient on the ward for a week.

“Let me tell you, you will never, ever do what you want to do if you sit on your butt and wait for press releases in the *Capital* pressroom. Or cover committees, or cover the Legislature. The Legislature just makes the rules, the people out there.” And I cited an example that I’d just come back from Tulsa.

A kid was waving a stop and go sign and I said, “That’s important, that’s important. What’s she’s doing is important.”

And Dad always, he said, “I don’t give a damn if you pump gas in this station, in this, uh, city. You run the best damn gas station in McAlester.”

And I made that speech once and a guy jumped up afterwards and accosted me and he said, “I have a filling station. What have you got against filling—”

I said, “No you misunderstood it, you misunderstood it!”

JE: You said you wrote for the junior high school. But in high school you must have been involved in the high school newspaper?

FT: Not only that, I, uh, we had a page every week in the *McAlester News Capitol*. And I wrote and wrote and wrote, I covered everything, the school plays, feature stories. We had one guy that spoke three languages and I did a story on him. And his name was Virgil Dominic. And believe it or not, he spoke Italian and Greek 'cause he'd been briefly in this seminary. But he ended up general manager, he retired as general manager of the NBC station in Cleveland, Ohio. Wow!

And I did a story on Catherine Russell. She played the accordion. It was big stuff then, accordion playing was really popular. And I did a story on her and I said, "How in the world do you learn all those keys?"

And she said, "Well, it takes time and patience."

And I had no time or no patience. I'm still, I arrive anywhere from twenty to thirty minutes early everywhere I'm going.

My kids, I remember when Marti got her driver's license.

JE: She your daughter?

FT: Yeah, she, well, Marti was always late everywhere. And she still is. I just put her on a plane back to Iraq, but she's always late. So Helen said, "You know, if you're going to buy her that little secondhand car," and it was a little bitty Ford, she said, "let's go to mass without her."

And so we waited and waited and Marti said, "Well, I'm doing my hair, I'm doing my hair, I'm doing, you know, I'm putting on my makeup." She was just late everywhere she went. There are people like that. So we drove to mass at St. Phillip Nary in Midwest City without her. Boy, that was the last time she was late. For mass.

JE: On to college, where did you attend college?

FT: Well, I started at OU and I did two semesters at OU. Frankly, the dean called me in, the Dean of Journalism, and he said, "Frosty, uh, you're pretty bored, aren't you?"

And I said, "Yes."

And he said, "They've got a job, a city hall reporter at the *Tulsa Tribune*." And he said, "That's easily the best newspaper this state has. And I can vouch for that for twenty years," he said.

And so I applied to Gordon Fallace and he said I'd have to see Harmon Phillips, Managing Editor. And he said, "You think you're up to it?"

And I said, "Well, try me." And I was off and running.

Chapter 6

Brother Was Killed—7:15

Frosty Troy: When the Korean War broke out—

John Erling: So we're talking what year now?

FT: Uh, 1950.

JE: And that was the year that you'd gone to OU?

FT: Right. That was the year. And I dropped out of OU that year—

JE: Yeah.

FT: And mobilized with the 45th 'cause I was a member of the National Guard. I had no choice. Me and two of my brothers, Kevin and Johnny, were members of the 45th. So we mobilized and basiced at Camp Polk, Louisiana, now Ft. Polk. Then, boy, through the Panama Canal and across the Sea of Japan and into Korea. And then we got stuck on Okido, the northernmost island. And we waited and we waited, the whole 45th Division.

And come to find out, I overheard Captain Phillip Fults, my commanding officer, say that Bob Kerr didn't want us in Korea. And he had put the muscle on the Defense Department. And I told my brothers that. We both transferred out. Yeah, all of us transferred out.

JE: And where did you go?

FT: Yeah, I went to Korea. That's where I wanted to be. We said three Hail Marys at the foot of the altar after every mass for the conversion of Soviet Russia. And he went to the 6th Cav.—

JE: He?

FT: My brother Kevin. I went to the 1st Cav., and my brother Johnny went to the Engineers, Army Engineers. Johnny blew the Han River Bridge, 180,000 Chinese came across the border and kicked our butts clear back to Busan. Wow! He blew the—he was one of the sappers, sapper team they called them, and they blew the bridge. And that halted them temporarily till they could make repairs.

In the meantime, our commanding general made a smart decision. We, uh, disembarked at Busan and went around to Incheon and landed and kept the Chinese off. And then the Peace Talks started at Panmunjom.

But in the meantime, my brother Kevin was killed on Heartbreak Ridge.

JE: Tell us about that.

FT: He got a Silver Star. Well, first of all, damn it, during the Peace Talks, uh, he came by my outfit one day. And, boy, I was really surprised. And I said, "I thought you had frostbite."

And he said, "Just two toes."

And I said, "That was your ticket home."

He said, "No, I'm going back to my outfit."

JE: Could have left?

FT: He could have left. And, boy, you ought to read the citation of the Silver Star.

JE: And how did his death happen? What was the circumstance of that?

FT: Well, he was leading the squad up Heartbreak Ridge and he was wounded and he kept on leading his squad. And they took the hill, they took Heartbreak Ridge. I don't know if you saw the Clint Eastwood's crummy movie on that, but it was pretty fairly accurate. But, uh, esh, and, boy, my dad was never the same.

JE: How did you learn about your brother's death?

FT: The, uh, field phone, uh, my CO said, "You're wanted on the field phone." We had strung lines so we had telephone communications.

And he said, "I'm Chaplain So and So, are you sitting down?"

And I said, "Yes."

And he said, "Your brother Kevin has been killed. The normal transition is for you to, uh, pick up his body in Tokyo and take it home."

And I did. We arrived at McAlester at the depot and there probably, well, the newspaper said in the *News Capitol*, there were more than two thousand people there to greet him. Wow! He was something else. He wasn't my favorite brother but he was something else.

And my brother Bernard tried to join, he was the third oldest. And he tried to fake the eye chart at Camp Jaffy, 'cause he was blind in one eye. He later had surgery, uh, and they perfected that with surgery. But he tried to fake the eye chart, and he felt until the day he died he thought it was unfair that he didn't go in service with us.

And, uh, my brother Jerry, twenty-two months younger, joined the 82nd Airborne a while. And I've got a picture of all of us in line in uniform. And, uh, it's amazing. Those Troy boys were amazing.

JE: So after the funeral then of your brother Johnny, and you go back?

FT: Yep, I went to, uh, Ft. Sill, uh, they handed me my duffle bag and said, uh, I was in the Standby Ready Reserves for five years.

JE: Oh, so then, you were—

FT: Yeah, that was it. So I didn't have to do two years in Korea.

JE: Because your brother lost—

FT: Because February 18, 1952, was the day he died. And subsequent to that I brought his body home by ship, and then by rail. And then I, uh, I needed to get busy, uh, and so I took a job at the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*. John Lewis Stone, we were a dry state, right?

JE: Um.

FT: And he sent me over to the police station and I came back with two peck sacks full of whiskey. And I set them on his desk in his office and I said, “What is this?”

And he said, “Larue, my wife, is going to have a little deal. She’s a lady golfer and they have a deal at the country club. And they’re just going to pour it in the sewer anyhow.”

And I said, “I quit, I quit.”

And he said, “I’ll save you the trouble. You’re fired.”

So, boy, there I was, I borrowed three hundred dollars from my mother-in-law ‘cause we had some bills to pay in Muskogee. And I got a, I called, uh, the Oklahoma Press Association and they said, “There’s a job in Lawton.”

I worked for the *Lawton Constitution* very briefly. And then that paper was owned by the Chamber of Commerce. He was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, so I moved to KSWO Radio and TV.

Chapter 7

Brother’s Suicide—4:08

John Erling: There’s a story of you when you were in Korea where you were thrown into jail, or in the brig, as they say in the military.

Frosty Troy: Yes, yes, yes.

JE: For stories back to McAlester?

FT: Yes. I was writing regularly to, uh, Howard Cowan at the *McAlester News Capitol* and he had a column called Sideswipes. And it was the left front page column. And he would put my material there.

Suddenly, two CID agents showed up at, uh, during, this is during Operation Clam-Up during—the talks had started at Panmunjom. They arrested me. And I said, “Why?”

And said, “You’ll find out.”

I don’t know where they drove me, I have no idea. But before I knew it I was in a cell.

JE: You’re in a cell. Tell us that—

FT: In Okido.

JE: Right.

FT: And I had sent all this material back. And I didn’t know the army even paid any attention. But apparently the local FBI agent saw some of that stuff.

I’d done a story about watching paratroopers on Sakhalin Island, which is adjacent to Okido. They, uh, they, uh, apparently that was really the Russians were parachuting. And I thought it was our, uh, our side. And I sent that home.

And anyhow, he called me in and he said, uh, "Everything clears through DeVardi." That's Division Headquarters. "Everything clears, every single word. If one word appears in your hometown newspaper, or anywhere else, that you wrote, I'll court martial you."

God, I was just, I was sissified, little old kid anyhow. But not bad for a little old sissified kid that had lost his first boxing match and came home with a Bronze Star. I got a Bronze Star.

My brother Johnny made it a career, three tours in the helicopters in Vietnam. Boy, when he came home, he said, one morning he was telling me, he said when they took fire from a village women and children and old men and everybody, and he said that he was the crew chief on Puff the Magic Dragon, a Gatling Gun, they just mowed them all down. And he had trouble living with that.

And so, when he was discharged, at first, he was pretty normal. But then finally, he went out to Krebs Lake, wrote his last will and testament. No funeral and what his belongings were to go to his children, and committed suicide.

PTSD is not new, by the way.

JE: And so it was his war experience that drove him to that point?

FT: Yeah, it was, yeah, absolutely. He couldn't, he just, he was telling me, he said, "I can't sleep. I'm taking everything at Wood's Drug #2," that was a local drugstore. "Every kind of sleeping potion." And he said, "And I tried drinking and I'd just get up sicker than a dog."

JE: Because it was your brother Johnny who died.

FT: Yeah, he committed suicide. He was three tours in the helicopters in Vietnam. He made it a career. He served his twenty years and had retirement pay and he moved back to McAlester.

And I was going through McAlester to Wilburton to speak to the, uh, faculty convocation when I had breakfast with him and he told me about the village and the Gatling Gun. Made me sick to my stomach.

JE: And I want to make sure this is clear then. Your brother, who died at Heartbreak Ridge, his name was?

FT: That was Kevin.

JE: Kevin?

FT: Carl Kevin Troy. Carl Kevin Troy.

JE: Right.

FT: Yeah, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So then you lost two brothers?

FT: Yeah.

JE: To conflicts?

FT: Yeah.

Chapter 8**Bronze Star—3:10**

John Erling: You said you had earned the Bronze Star.

Frosty Troy: Yeah—

JE: For, for—

FT: You do some stupid things. They talk about heroes, heroes, heroes, and I imagine there's an occasional hero, but, uh, just like Johnny. You know, the pilot said, you know, "Kill 'em." I took orders and we were coming back and we were in the Wijambu National Forrest. We came under, uh, sniper fire. And this one guy, we jumped out of the truck and went under it, naturally, because it's just canvas.

This one guy was hit and he was in the road. I said, "I want to get him." And I was a little bitty thing.

He said, "Don't you move a muscle."

And I crawled out there on my elbows. Boy, he was heavy, but I dragged him to the back of the truck. And then a squad came up of MPs and started returning fire and that was the end of that. And, but I didn't realize I had earned a Bronze Star.

When I went to Ft. Sill to be discharged and Ready Reserves for five years, uh, my brother Jerry was reading the paperwork. He said, "Oh my God. You never told anybody about this."

And I said, "What?"

And he said, "You earned a Bronze Star."

And I said, "Oh you're kidding. I'm driving."

And he said, "Pull over."

And I pulled over, number 9 Highway. God, I just, I couldn't believe it. Somebody had put me in, well, it has to be your CO, for the Bronze Star. And I don't know whatever happened to that kid.

And I'll tell you another—

JE: But you saved the man's life?

FT: Yeah. Apparently. And I'll tell you another story. Captain Fults, he had to write those letters to the parents. And he found out I was a good writer. And so I was doing the letters: "Your son was blah, blah, blenden, blah, blah. And bravest ..." you know.

And one lady wrote him back and he said, "This is for you." And she was from California and we began corresponding. And that went on for, after I came home from Korea, that went on for two or three years. Finally, you know, these things dissipate and so it was gone. But that was amazing. I was her lifeline, really, that

was her only son. She had two daughters but that was her only son. And he had been killed.

JE: Aw.

Chapter 9

Patriotism—1:23

John Erling: So your experience in the military and loss of brothers and so forth had to help shape your life and your views of life. Obviously your patriotism and defense of America and in articles you wrote.

Frosty Troy: I'll tell you what—I'm serious about this, I'm seventy-eight years old and if the President called me today to serve, I would serve in whatever capacity I could. I love this country with all my heart and soul. I grieve over being so divided today, Republicans and Democrats and Conservatives and Liberals and, and, you know, it was always, for me, it was issues. And I used to catch hell from the Democratic Party. Oh boy, 'cause, "I thought you were a Democrat."

And I said, "That had nothing to do with party affiliation. That legislator introduced that bill to enrich himself. And by the way, he did. And by the way, he got, he got community college presidency for introducing that bill. And he'll, he'll remain nameless 'cause he's still alive. And he did a good job, he did a good job on the—

Chapter 10

Helen and Children—12:00

John Erling: When did you meet your wife, Helen?

Frosty Troy: Well, uh, everybody ganged up at booths in Wood's Drugs #2. That was the stomping grounds for young people. I went in there, I was sitting there with a couple of the guys and, uh, there's two girls behind me. And a woman came in to pick up her prescription, but her dress had caught in her panties and you could see her legs, her butt. And I started laughing, and I said, "Look! Look! Look!"

And then the girls started to (giggle) and one of them was Helen. And so, uh, I don't know, I just took an interest in her and she worked at, uh, she was the lady abstracter. And later on an accountant. But at that time she was a, she worked for the McAlester Abstract Company.

So I started dating her. Obviously, she was Southern Baptist and her mother, oh Molly was outraged when she found out she was dating a Catholic. Uhh. And that was in the days when they swore to God that if Jack Kennedy was elected President, the Pope would be on the next boat to America. And that silly stuff.

Now let me tell you, I wasn't the only one dating her. A young, good-looking marine was dating her. She told me this later. And she said on Sunday night, she night, "Well, why don't we go to the service?"

Augie Henry was preaching. And that was the night that he decided to preach against the Catholics. And the marine, without her knowing it, was a Catholic, and so he excused himself and got up and left.

And she said, "From that day forward I was never a Baptist, never." So she didn't go to church at all except occasionally with Molly. They rode the bus and they lived in North McAlester. They were really poor.

We were poor but we weren't nearly as poor as that family was.

JE: So when were you married?

FT: May the 13th, 1953. And we eloped because my father, I was twenty and she was twenty-one, and my father refused to sign the papers. And my mother refused to sign the papers and so I went back to my mother again and I started crying. And the quickest way to a woman's heart is for a man to shed a few tears. And I said, "I love her with all of my heart and she's not a Baptist, she's—"

And she said, uh, "Okay, I'll sign with one understanding. That if it doesn't work out that you get married by Justice of the Peace and then you can later on have a Catholic wedding." Yeah. Boy, Helen and I laughed about that. And, and I was on graveyard shift. I worked until one a.m., uh, on my wedding night, at the *Muskogee Phoenix*.

That's uh, and we had a, we had one bedroom in a rooming house, which we shared with two other couples the bathroom. It was, boy, you talk about poor. And she borrowed some money from her mother.

Her dad was pretty well off. He had a beer joint in Eufaula and it did a prosperous business. But he was an alcoholic and he came home to die.

JE: And children of your marriage?

FT: I'm at the Capitol one day, this monsignor calls me and he says, uh, "How long you been married now?"

And I said, "Ten years."

And he said, "And no kids?" And they didn't have all that sperm bank stuff then. He said, "What about Catholic charities?"

I said, "What about it?"

He said, "They have a home for unwed mothers just west of Okla—of, uh, Tulsa." He said, "Well, why don't you look, take a look?"

So I told Helen, and oh my Lord, you haven't li—we had tried every way in the world. She came from four, I came from eleven. And we couldn't have children, and not because we didn't try. You haven't lived until you made love to a thermometer.

So, uh, we, to make a long story short, we went out to the home for unwed mothers. Oh this brand new butterball, I mean, she was just the cutest thing. And he said, "Well, you have to have an attorney and you have to agree to tell them when they're old enough to even speak English that they're adopted."

And I said, "Okay." And we said, "Okay."

Well, about twenty months later, Monsignor called again, Isenbart, Monsignor Isenbart, and he said, "How's Marti doing?"

And I said, "Oh we love her to pieces. She's just fabulous."

And he said, "You shouldn't raise only children, they're spoiled brats."

And I said, "What are you getting at?"

And he said, "I got you a boy."

And we drove out there, we got Phillip. He was never interested, we were fishing at Draper Lake one day and he was a teenager and I said, "Were you ever curious about your parents?"

And he said, "No. I only had one mother and one father."

But Marti, always the curious, that's why she became a lawyer, I guess, and she looked it up. And she didn't want to meet him. But he was a doctor and she was an RN at the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. They were both Catholics and they didn't believe in abortion. And thank God, thank God.

And that's the answer to the abortion problem. We've got sixteen hundred kids on a waiting list right now. Foster kids. You know, these Okies, why don't they wake up and smell the roses? They could have a wonderful family. Instead they go through these attorneys who specialize and go-betweens.

And I have a friend that paid thirty thousand dollars for one infant. Thirty thousand dollars. He was a reporter for the *Tulsa World*.

JE: Yeah.

FT: I said, "Shame on you." He had to borrow that money.

JE: You said earlier that you sent Marti back to Iraq. What is she doing there?

FT: Okay. She's been abroad for, uh, going on eight years now. When she came, when she graduated OSU she went to GW. They accepted her at Notre Dame, I flew her up there. And she said, "No, that's a commuter school for Chicago. That's where most of the—"

And I took her word for it. Then I said, "What about Georgetown? That's a good Catholic University."

And she said, "They specialize in international law and I want social law."

And I said, "Where you gonna go?"

And he said, she said, "George Washington." By the way, they taught her well. She came back and took a job as Deputy County Attorney in Maricopa County, which is Phoenix. And she did that for six years.

And we were out there and out there, naturally curious.

And her best friend lived there, Marion, and still does. Lovely home.

So, uh, I was telling Judge Johnson, of the Court of Criminal Appeals, who was one of my coffee buddies, about, uh, about "Oh how I wish Marti were back here."

He said, "That can be arranged." And before you know it, she got a call. Did she want to be a public defender in Oklahoma City?

She called her mother, they always made the decisions, I was just present. And she came back, to make a long story short, uh, she transferred out of Public Defender to Juvenile Public Defender. And that's where she got her heart broken. And she said, "Yeah, adult public defender, they're stupid! Most of those people are stupid!"

She had one, believe it or not, he was arrested with a cigarette dipped in PCP, which was illegal then. So she went on bended knee to the Assistant DA here in Oklahoma County, who was a hard-hearted, uh, person, and said, "Okay, not ten years, not twenty years but ten years. He'll do ten years, and he'll probably serve three and a half or four."

She said, "Oh." And she went back and told him at the jail he couldn't make bond.

And he said, "Oh we'll win it on appeal. I want to go to trial."

That's when she transferred to Juvy. And guess what one of her cases was in Juvy? Three girls driving a Lincoln Continental were before the judge and they had no counsel. And she said, "Miss Troy, do you want to represent them?"

She said, "Well, I can." And so they huddled. They'd been shoplifting at Penn Square. Rich kids, shoplifting for the thrill of it! And so they had to do community service, thirty hours each community service so—

And then she was a member of the American Bar Association and she saw an ad. And it said they needed attorneys in the old Soviet Block, 'cause they were just crumbling, you know, because Russia had given up power over them. And before you know it, she was in Moldova, and she was in Moscow, and she's all over the old Soviet Block. She did that for three years.

She came home, kind of weary. She, uh, got a call. Would she be interested in Liberia? That was the country-freed slaves from America.

So she did. And she, their job, her job and two other attorneys was to restart the criminal justice system. Because the man on a white horse who had liberated them young,

he was at the Hague being tried for war crimes. And by the way, I don't know what his sentence was. I hope he never sees daylight again, 'cause he killed and killed and killed.

So she was two years in Liberia. And then two years in Iraq. She was all over the place. She had body armor, helmets, escorts, military escorts everywhere she went, teaching the rule of law. Particularly to Moslem women. They hadn't even read the Koran. Now, they weren't cruel toward their women, they just, "Get thee behind me," you know?

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: Eh, they were lovely women. So gradually she built up quite a following and she didn't try to convert them to democracy. Just needed to know how the Koran treated women and they weren't being treated fairly, in all cases.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Chapter 11

Helen's Death—7:45

Frosty Troy: Let me tell you, let me digress for a moment. Nearly a hundred thousand people were killed by hospital mistakes last year. That's from the American Medical Association. Eighteen thousand were killed by people not washing their hands.

Well, Helen had a little TIA and I was back there working away and she called. And I said, "Well, I'll call—

John Erling: What's TIA?

FT: A little numbness in the cheek. "Oh bring her out here to the hospital." She was doing fine and she was going to be discharged the next day. And the neurologist walked in and he looked up at the monitor and he said, "Oh my God, who gave her that?"

And I was sitting there reading a book, and I said, "What are you talking about?"

Nine hours later, she slipped into a coma and nine hours later she was gone.

Hospital mistake.

JE: Because she had been given what?

FT: A thinner instead of a coagulant. The nurse cried. They had to escort him out of the foot of her bed.

And by the way, if you want to know how they find out that they're dead, I watched that doctor bend her finger all the way back and dig his fingernail into her hand. You know, I thought it was the pulse. That's, uh, but, I'm past it but not over it.

JE: Could you have filed a lawsuit?

FT: Yes. Easily.

JE: Why did you choose not to?

FT: Because, that's funny. The firm even contacted me, they were in Dallas, and I don't know how they get those hospital records, but, boy, someone's feeding them their records. And I just didn't want to put my kids through that, I just didn't. It wouldn't bring her back. Oh God.

And that's when the lights went on. She was an accountant. If I was in Oklahoma, I'd spoken in all fifty states and Hawaii twice, and I was due to go to Iwo Jima and Tokyo, ten thousand dollars a speech. Whoa. And Heritage Trust, uh, Ben Byers called me and he said, "Frosty, you and Marti and Phillip need to get out here. Your wife set everything up in trust."

And I said, "Really?"

And she said, "Yeah, she expected you to go first." 'Cause I was the one that had both shoulders and my gull bladder, blah, blah, blah, arthritis and—and I got there and they took us into the conference room and gave us a little clock and some tea. Oh God. I mean, I don't know if you know Heritage Trust, but it's pretty fancy. And they don't handle normally small accounts like Helen's. They do the big stuff. They agreed to set up the trust for, because of her tax lawyer.

So we're sitting there and he said, "Do you have any idea what you're worth?" And he pushed a piece of paper to me.

I said, "Is this a bad joke? I'm in no mood for jokes." I was worth 3.4 million dollars. If I was in town for the week my two twenties were on the dresser. I used credit cards everywhere else. Oh boy, you t—ah, she was—

Well, let me tell you what they said at the tax accountants on Northwest Highway. She was the most meticulous at filling out the forms. And one of the accountants would fight, but when they went to computers one of the—she refused, and she filled out everything. And one of the accountants, a young accountant, fought for the right to audit her. And when he told me that, he said, "That's just—" Oh boy.

It's been a wonderful life, I can't, I don't have any complaints. But I'm just heartbroken about the—I love Oklahoma. As I said with all the fervor in my soul, but I never saw, I never thought I'd see the day that DHS was 157 child welfare workers short. And Little Daisy, and whatever there, is beaten to death. Boy the big headlines: DHS, DHS. They never funded it, they've never funded it.

And by the way, the chairman of DHS was a rightwing Republican state senator when he was appointed there. He's a really good guy, but our mental health program, we're forty-sixth. We're forty-eighth in teacher pay. We're forty-seventh on what we spend on a child's education in the public schools. And the Mental Health Department has two hundred active treatment beds.

They're privatizing, they're privatizing. They go to these private units and the taxpayers are really—I'm going to keep fighting for what's right and just in Oklahoma.

JE: Helen was seventy-five when she died. So when you discovered you were 3 point whatever million dollars—

FT: Three point four million dollars.

JE: You are continuing to write, you don't need the money.

FT: Yeah, well, Ben Byers asked me, he said, "What do you need?"

And I said, "Can I get back to you on that? I have Social Security, naturally, nineteen hundred dollars a month." I said, "Two thousand, and the big ticket items I'll send to you."

And he said, "Are you sure? Two thousand?"

And I said, "Sure, that's, that gives me thirty-nine hundred dollars a month, a person can—"

And he said, "Okay, but you can change. This is, I want you to know, Frosty, this is your money and you can do with it what you will."

And I said, "I appreciate that."

And, uh, Marti in the car back home, said, "Are you sure?"

And I said, "Well, I can always increase it." I never have.

I still make a few paying speeches but mostly I don't charge. I've never charged a church. I'm doing a Temple in Bennett, Israel. The Unitarians in Tulsa. I don't charge those folks, never have, never will. And I tell them the good news about Oklahoma. These are good people. They were just grossly misled in the last election.

They had a national temper tantrum. I don't blame the Tea Party folks. I really don't. When you look at Congress and their ability to agree on anything, except they ought to be rid of Obama, oh my God, are we down to that? Are we down to that?

Listen, I survived the Nixon administration. I voted for Nixon the first time. You know why?

JE: Why?

FT: He said he'd end the war. And guess what? He widened it to Cambodia.

Chapter 12

Frosty goes to DC—4:00

John Erling: Let me come back. When you dropped out of OU, you never returned?

Frosty Troy: No.

JE: So you did not have a college degree?

FT: No, I went to the University of Tulsa. All the time I was at the *Tulsa Tribune* I was at night school. My wife only saw me on Sundays. And I have my Sociology professor, Emile Adair, went to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He called the newsroom one day and he said, "Did you save your notes?"

And I said, "Oh yeah, I saved all my notes."

And he said, "Well, I've been offered a book deal. And your outline was just letter perfect." And I'm in the acknowledgment but I don't have a degree.

So I regret that. I should have gone ahead and finished. I could have.

JE: So how much work did you do at TU?

FT: Over forty hours, yeah, forty hours. And fact is, I asked them for that a couple of years ago because I was thinking about going back to OU. Because they have that special program for adults who didn't complete.

JE: You referred to your speaking. When did you realize you were a public speaker?

FT: When I went to work for Jenkin Lloyd Jones, the publisher of the *Tulsa Tribune*. Believe it or not, I was a City Hall reporter. And before you know it, boop, I was Assistant City Editor.

And then the *State Capital* came open. I told Harmon Phillips, the Managing Editor, I said, "I'd love to have that job."

And he said, "Well, if it's okay with, uh, Jenkin it's okay with me."

So I went to the *State Capital*. And then I did a dumb thing. While I was at the *State Capital* I took a flyer with the *Henrietta Freelance*.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones heard that I had quit and he drove to Henrietta on a Sunday afternoon. He said, "It didn't work out, Frosty."

And I said, "No."

He came in and had a glass of iced tea and he said, "How would you like to go to Washington for the *Tribune*?"

And I said, "Wow, you'd take me back?"

And he said, "In a flash."

And I covered—

JE: So you'd been with the *Tribune*, then when you went with the *Henrietta Daily*, and then he comes back to ask you that?

FT: Yeah. And believe it or not, I covered two years of Jack Kennedy and the first year of Lyndon Johnson.

And Lyndon Johnson is the most outrageously vulgar person I have ever met in my life. He would come over and sit cross-legged in the capitol press on the Senate side—that's where I officed. Oh God, he's vulgar, just vulgar. There's no other word for it. But he was a hell of a president.

Kennedy laid all the groundwork for the Social Justice, and we got the first Social Justice in the history of this country.

So, Lyndon had a good heart, but Lyndon Banes Johnson was—I've got a couple of biographies on him and both of them agreed that he was obscene.

JE: You said you covered Jack Kennedy.

FT: Yeah.

JE: And tell us about that. Were you up close with him? Did you see him?

FT: Uh, no. And the fact is, I was a little mouse, uh, in the old State Department building where he held his press conferences. And we had a streetcar in Washington then. And four or five of us would get on the streetcar and then walk a block or two.

May Craig, I think she was from Rhode Island, she's the one that wore that flower hat and she was just giving him hell and he had such a good humor, he'd just bounce it off of her.

Chapter 13

Peace Corp—2:26

Frosty Troy: And then one day I'm sitting in the, in Washington, and I get a call. And he said, "Frosty, you don't know me but my name's Bill Moyers." He said, "Would you have some time this afternoon?" They were in the building adjacent to the White House, the White Office building. He was working for the Johnson administration.

John Erling: Okay.

FT: And Bob Kerr had suggested that they hire me for Director of Information for the Peace Corps. And I went home and they told me it'd be six months traveling abroad, visiting all the sites and so on, just getting it started.

Sgt. Shriver, what a nice guy, what a nice guy.

And Helen says, "Go for it."

And I said, "I didn't marry you to travel six months out of the year. No." And I turned it now.

Well, Bill Moyers was here recently, he spoke at OCU. He asked about me.

And he said, "Well, Frosty's still around."

JE: Did you meet Sgt. Shriver?

FT: Yes. I interviewed with him.

JE: And—

FT: Bill Moyers was just his aide.

JE: And tell us a little more about Sgt. Shriver then. When you interviewed with him, his personality and—

FT: Well, he talked about Jack Kennedy wanted to spread democracy throughout the world. They had asked him, the administration, I don't know if it was Jack Kennedy personally, "How will you do this?"

And, boy, this was a thinking man. Oh, the Peace Corps is the best idea this country ever had. And it exists today, by the way. So he tried it out on President Kennedy and President Kennedy said, "Well, we'll see." Then, of course, he was killed.

Lyndon Johnson authorized it.

JE: Uh, did you ever have regrets about not going with the Peace Corps?

FT: Yes. I wondered how, how different would my life have been? They hired a guy from CBS, I forget his name, but as Director of Information for the Peace Corps. Uh, I, you know, what if there's no observer? What if the mental hospitals would have just—

Chapter 14

Mental Hospitals—2:35

Frosty Troy: The Speaker hated my guts, hated the *Republican Tulsa Tribune*. Yellow-dog democrat. And he read my articles on mental health. Dr. Albert Glass had paved the way. He's the Mental Health Commissioner.

The Speaker—Mary, his secretary, came in, tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Speaker wants to see you right now!"

And I said, "Okay." Awoo (sound of disgust). I know he didn't like and didn't like the paper.

And he said, "I don't like you and I don't like your paper." They only met every other year then. He said, "But you can write it in ink Taft is closed."

We even segregated the black mentally ill at Taft. And that was filthy beyond belief. They had an RN and no doctor. Some local village housewives were hall monitors. They slept bed to bed to bed to bed to bed and what they did was they gave them enough drugs to keep them quiet. There was no treatment at all.

John Erling: So Taft was a mental—

FT: Oh mental hospital for African Americans, yeah. And he said, "And if Western State air-conditioning is good enough for the faculty it's good enough for the patients."

And I realized he had read all of my stuff, because I got to Fort Supply. And, believe it or not, I had free range—boy, they hated that, but Dr. Albert Glass cleared the way. And I went into the men's john and there were two guys. It was July, probably 110 in the shade at Fort Supply, and they were in the toilet splashing water on their heads.

Eastern State, they shocked everybody that walked in the front door. They had a young psychiatrist that, "Oh, electroshock therapy is the way to go." Shocked everybody. And that's contraindicated, in most cases. So they stopped that and moved him out.

JE: We haven't named the Speaker, what was his name?

FT: J. D. McCarty. Oh, boy, he didn't like Republicans. He wouldn't even hear their amendments with their bills.

Chapter 15

November 22, 1963—2:19

John Erling: The day Jack Kennedy, President Kennedy died, where were you?

Frosty Troy: In San Francisco at a hotel. I was ready to go speak to the International Brotherhood of Electricians. They were there from four or five countries. And I sat there on the bed, I'd ordered room service, and I looked at that when I heard that. I said, "That can't be right, that can't be right." I went over and I said, "You don't want to—they don't want to hear me."

They said, "Oh yes they do. Now more than ever. Look." There were grown men weeping. Changed the country, it changed the country.

JE: What did you say that night to them? What did you talk about?

FT: Well, it's still you can Google it, it's, believe it or not, it's still up there. But I told them, I said, "Don't give up on America. This is the greatest country in the world. This is a terrible tragedy but we'll get past it. We won't get over it, we'll get past it." And I said, "Hey, and listen, when you go home to your family you talk about the greatness of Jack Kennedy. The fact that he tried to bring Social Justice."

And shortly thereafter Bobby was killed and Martin Luther King was killed and oh, God, this country is corporate America. We're just, we're taken over by the corporations and I have no problem with that.

Have you ever watched *America, a Corporate Love Story*?

JE: Yes.

FT: By Michael Moore. Eh, he exaggerates pretty good but, you know, by and large, he's got it right.

Look at our delegation today. Isn't that pitiful? Except for Tom Coburn occasionally a blind squirrel in the forest will find an acorn, but—

Chapter 16

George Wallace—6:50

John Erling: Let me bring you here to Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Um, that was a good experience for you. But there was a time, I understand, you cost the *Tribune* hundreds of subscriptions because of an editorial—

Frosty Troy: Yes.

JE: You wrote about Alabama Governor George Wallace.

FT: Yeah, I'll tell you. Just back up a minute. Jenkin Lloyd Jones was an elected president of the US Chamber. I was in Washington, and he wanted me to meet him at National Airport, now named Reagan Airport. So I met him, I met his flight. He said, "Come over and sit down."

The family met, this was on a Monday, Sunday, and, uh, "Vic Barnett is going to retire and you're the number two man."

I didn't want it.

JE: What position? What position is that?

FT: Associate Editor, number two. Vic Barnett ran the paper. Jenkin was a, Jenkin Lloyd Jones was an international famous public speaker, speaking all over the world. Canada, oh, he had needles, you talk about ego, behind in a conference room he had little pins on everywhere he had spoken. That's ego, but he deserved it.

JE: Did you like him? Was he a nice person?

FT: Yeah, yeah, I really, I was, I liked him really and truly.

JE: All right. But you were at the airport and Jenkin Lloyd Jones asked you to sit down.

FT: Offered me the number two.

JE: And you said?

FT: I had no decision to make. He said, "You're it." He said, and fact is, David Lloyd Jones, the kid, he said that, "He wants Washington, so you'll show him the ropes here and we can make do until you take over."

So I went back, private office, Janey Isum was my private secretary. Oh my God, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Tripled my salary, whoa, wow.

There was a news story at the Civic Center, the old Civic Center, "George Wallace was coming to town, he's running for president." And I remember the headline I put on the editorial: Armies of the Night. And I ripped him.

And Jenkin came back from Washington, called me in. I knew I was going to be fired because we'd lost several hundred subscribers. And I said, "Oh, I'm so sorry."

And he said, “Frosty, you remember what I told you writing editorials? A stiletto, never a meat axe.” That’s what he said. “If you don’t want to make personal enemies you’ll do a stiletto.” In other words, issues, issues.

But I called George Wallace everything but, and guess what? As God is my witness. Several years later I was speaking to the Alabama Education Association in Birmingham and I was behind the stage, I mean, on the stage behind the curtain. And I looked out and they had a ramp built back to the podium. And I said, “What’s that for? That’s going to get in the way.”

And he said, “No, no, we have a special guest.” And they wheeled George Wallace up, and he apologized. He apologized.

JE: To the audience, he was talking?

FT: Yeah. He said, “I’m so sorry. You know, I used the N word and I did all these things because I thought, you know, I could carry the southern states and maybe pick up a northern state or two. But I never felt that in my heart.” That’s what he said, “I never felt that in my heart.”

And let me tell you, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. And it was 80 percent black because you know where the whites have gone? Private schools. Wow.

JE: Yeah, he—

FT: That’s one of my great memories.

JE: And the fact that you had written that editorial and you were there the day that he first publicly said, “I was wrong.”

FT: Yeah.

JE: Did you speak to him?

FT: No. I shook his hand when he came in, but I wouldn’t dare. You know, I’m not that brave, I wouldn’t tell him I wrote the *Tulsa* ’cause he was traveling all through the country and they brought him to—

And by the way, they passed paper bags through the audience. And the reporter who was covering it told me later, and they were putting money in it for him.

JE: Okay then. Did you have an opportunity to write an editorial about his new stance?

FT: No, never did.

JE: While working for the *Tribune*—

FT: If he and I are in heaven together I want to apologize because it was a meat axe. I attacked him personally. And that’s the wrong way to go. Personal journalism—you have no idea, I could have quadrupled the circulation of the *Observer* anytime I wanted to, if I’d written the kind of stuff that I found out.

JE: After that editorial, though, for the, on George Wallace, Jenkin Lloyd Jones did not fire you.

FT: He didn't fire me and I really behaved after that.

And then I was miserable as Associate Editor. *State Capital* here came open again and I went in to see him and he said, "Do you have idea what a pay cut you're going to take? Have you discussed this, that with Helen?"

I said, "Yeah. She said I'm miserable to live with these days."

And he said, "Okay, you got it."

And John Drummond was promoted to Associate Editor. He was the third guy. And, boy, Jenkin Lloyd Jones was a great American, a great publisher.

And by the way, in fourteen years on the *Tulsa Tribune* I never was ordered to slant a story. And I never slanted a story. And that's a miracle, let me tell you. Whew. Even today in journals in the *Capital* pressroom slant stories.

Chapter 17

Flying with Kerr—5:00

John Erling: Let me take you back here. While working with the *Tribune* in Washington and you would travel back to Oklahoma, and you did that with Senator Robert Kerr, you'd fly on his plane.

Frosty Troy: That was amazing. Kurt McGee had an aircraft, so I got a call from Senator Kerr's PR guy and he said, "You want to spend the weekend in Oklahoma City?"

And I said, "Sure, I've got a brother there and he's a doctor and I'll be glad to see him."

And he said, "Well, just be at National Airport, the private part," you know, and there's two separate areas, or there was then.

And oh my God, Lyndon Johnson was on the plane and we flew to Austin where he had not—listen to this, this is incredible. Lyndon Johnson had such power that he had all three networks and one station and would pick and choose. *Sesame Street*, this, that, the top rated show. Do you believe that? And, boy, during that flight, vulgar! I can't even repeat some of the words. I didn't know that such words in tandem existed.

We went back out to the airpark, not the airport, airpark in Oklahoma City and we flew to Austin, picked up Lyndon, and flew back to Washington. And it was quite an experience.

And I'm trying to remember the name of the kid that sat next to me that never bathed, wore shoes without socks, and became a nationally syndicated columnist to this good day. Wow! I went to here him speak at the Civic Center, top drawer speech. And he said, "Is Frosty Troy out there?"

I said, "All present and accounted for, sir," and they gave me a round of applause, but—

Chapter 18

Sen. Robert Kerr—5:00

John Erling: Describe Senator Robert Kerr's personality and about him.

Frosty Troy: Marvelous, marvelous, wow. He was something extraordinary, and I'll tell you why.

Majority leader was ill and fact is, he later died. And Kerr not only handled the Senate Finance Committee but the Space Committee. And guess why the Aeronautics is here, it's no accident.

JE: Right.

FT: They pass that stuff out and he was marvelous.

JE: But was his personality very effusive and very—

FT: Ooh, but he—

JE: Very likeable?

FT: Let me tell you, he was, he was the kind of guy that would thank the elevator operator for opening—we had elevator operators in those days and he would thank him. He was, he was, and Tom Steed was a nice guy and Page Belcher. But look at the giants we had.

JE: Yeah. I understand Senator Kerr made an astounding prediction in one of your plane rides back to Oklahoma. And this prediction was that Oklahoma would one day be solidly Republican.

FT: Believe it or not, at the Air Base there he gave me a going away party. It shocked the hell out of Helen and I. And it was, they then had what they call the Oklahoma Society and that was all the Okies there and the lawyers and blah, blah, administrators and so on. And he called me inside and he said, "Frosty, I won't live to see it but you're young enough, you'll live to see it. Oklahoma's gonna go Republican."

JE: And how did he—why, why did he think that?

FT: And I said, "Are you kidding? Page Belcher, the only Republican in the delegation, what? Thirteen, fourteen senators, a handful in the House?"

And he said, "I'll tell you, I'll give you two good reasons: the Baptist church and the *Daily Oklahoman*." Wow!

JE: And that would have been in about year when?

FT: Oh gee, I don't—

JE: Some time in the '60s?

FT: Yeah.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: Late '60s, yeah.

JE: And—

FT: He, he, and you know, he was right on both counts because it got to the point the IRS was intervening in several cases where the Baptist preacher would just come out and say it. In Tulsa at the Skelly Drive Baptist Church, they had a life-sized mockup of George W. Bush.

JE: Yeah.

FT: In a sanctuary. Didn't say "Vote for him," didn't leave any room and several people quit the church over that. But most of them did.

And the *Daily Oklahoman*, oh my God, they are so slanted on that editorial page.

Their attack on Senator Jim Wilson for appealing that redistricting bill is just unbelievable.

JE: And then, for the sake of history, that we want to say that Bob Kerr, Robert Kerr, was the twelfth governor of Oklahoma. He was elected three times to the United States Senate, and a giant in natural resources, and the Arkansas River via the Gulf of Mexico—

FT: Oh wow.

JE: And that navigational channel known as the—

FT: Kerr-McClellan.

JE: Kerr, yeah.

FT: Um-hmm (affirmative). Senator McClellan—

JE: From Arkansas.

FT: Yeah, from Arkansas.

Uh, let me tell you, I haven't done this many times in my life for strangers or nonfamily members. Janey Isum called me at home and she said, "Frosty, I wanted you to hear it first. Bob Kerr just died."

And I cried, real, honest to God tears. Oh, what a man! We'll never see his stature—well, I shouldn't say never, never, never, but his stature, oh. Do you know the only reason we built a space port, the only reason we orbited the moon is Bob Kerr. Now I'm not saying it wouldn't have happened sooner or later, but he had a vision. He had a vision.

Boy, he worked on that vision. So sure, he steered some of that vision to Oklahoma. What politician in his right mind wouldn't?

JE: He died January 1, 1963.

FT: Yeah. I know it.

Chapter 19

President Kennedy—1:46

John Erling: And he and Jack Kennedy were close?

Frosty Troy: Yep.

JE: Didn't he bring Jack Kennedy to—is there a famous story?

FT: Yeah. To his—Bob Kerr optioned up all the coal in eastern Oklahoma. And little did he know that it was high sulfur content and they wouldn't be useable. But anyhow, he had a ranch, real getaway. He brought Kennedy down and, boy, the media were just, you wouldn't believe it. And there they were, standing on a fence looking at those cattle. And that was a picture, that was something else.

Jack Kennedy, you know, he wasn't the strong Kennedy. Bob—

JE: Bob—

FT: ...was the strong, Bobby. He's the one that wanted Martin Luther King out of the jail. Now Bob—Jack Kennedy was very cautious. Now I'm not saying he wasn't good but, uh, and, boy, he had an eye for the ladies. Um.

JE: You knew that when you were in Washington?

FT: Yeah it was an open secret. That they'd come through the back gate.

JE: Of the White House?

FT: Um-hmm (affirmative), the White House.

JE: But Jack Kennedy had the charm that Bobby didn't have.

FT: Exactly. Bobby was brusque. I've heard him speak several, several times, and, uh, boy, I thought he'd make a great president because he's president in effect, anyhow, on the major issues, which I cared for. But it wasn't to be.

Chapter 20

Henry Bellmon—5:55

Frosty Troy: Mike Monroney had an address in Oklahoma City, an apartment of a friend of his. That's it. He had no affinity for this state at all.

John Erling: You're talking about Senator Mike Monroney?

FT: Senator Mike Monroney. Um-hmm (affirmative). But he coauthored the thing that brought the Federal Aviation Administration here. And we're still training all the folk, all the tower folks.

JE: But who defeated Senator Mike Monroney? Wasn't that Henry Bellmon?

FT: You bet. First Republican senator and the finest man of—I’ve covered twelve governors and he’s outstanding, he’s just head and shoulders above.

And then comes Howard Edmondson right below him.

And then, believe it or not, David Hall. He raised taxes for education. He was a slicker. He—money was his downfall.

JE: So then where would you place Senator Kerr? You placed Bellmon pretty high. Kerr above him?

FT: Oh yeah.

JE: And then Sen—and then Governor, Senator Bellmon?

FT: Yeah, Governor—well, the funny—I’ve got to tell you a funny story. I was in Tulsa for a speech at that fancy hotel. And the two meetings broke up at once and I was talking to the realtors and I had a tap on the shoulder. And I turned around and I said, “Senator Bellmon, Governor Bellmon,” he’d finished two terms.

And he said, “Did you hear I was going to run for Governor again?”

And I said, “Why? You were terrible the first time.”

And he said, and this is a quote and I’ve never forgotten it, he said, “That’s the problem with you reporters, you’re always putting black hats and white hats on people and you never know when they’re going to change hats.”

He went on to House Bill 1017, he pulled public education up out of the mud in this state, raised taxes over five hundred million dollars, higher ed was—well, OU was a joke factory. It was a football factory, really, and, boy, he worked hard. And he, he’s just my hero, really. Of all the public officials I’ve ever covered.

And Henry Bellmon was so, uh, I’ll never forget, I guess it was Frank Keating giving the State of the State Address. Henry Bellmon was up there and he crossed his legs and if a photographer shot it—you know, we were in the back then. They remodeled. And he had on his farm boots and a suit. He was a hoot.

I went—Jenkin Lloyd Jones sent me up to Billings to just ramble around, see the farm, see the little, old, bitty town. I understand they have coffee there of a morning. Now you said, “Of a morning,” their grammar’s great. And Bellmon introduced me to some of the local merchants, there weren’t very many, and several farmers and he took me out to the farm. And he said, “Climb up on that tractor.”

I did and it was a John Deere because that’s the tractor—he was on the Billings School Board but that was the tractor he climbed off of the day he decided to run for governor. And everybody laughed.

You know the old saying? They laughed when he sat down to play. Oh my God, they took it for granted that he would lose and lose big. You know, when people, if the media gets the message out that is the candidate speaking to the issues from his heart, they’ll vote right every time.

And the reason we had this debacle last November is simply because the media doesn't do the job anymore.

When's the last time you read a mental health story? A prison story? Except when they riot. Frank Keating brought private prisons to Oklahoma. California had one in western Oklahoma, what? Connors Correctional Institute, whatever—anyhow, at one time we had four prisons leased to outside states. And you know the idea was? Crime and punishment, break the rules, spend an extra thirty days. Break the rules, spend an extra thirty. Before you know it they were piling up.

And we did the same thing to juveniles at Granite Reformatory. We leased it out and a kid would break the rules, whoo, ninety days more. Money. Cause they were paid by the day and not rehabilitation.

And did I ever tell you my favorite Henry Bellmon story? I was in the tunnel leaving the capitol and it's a quarter mile, roughly. I saw a guy coming toward me and he was kind of scrooging his feet, you know, walking. And then I got close to him and I said, "Governor Bellmon! What are you doing using the tunnel? You could park right in, right against he curb upstairs."

And he said, "No, Frosty, I'm just a citizen, a plain citizen today." What a man.

JE: Yeah.

FT: What a man.

Chapter 21

Gene Stipe—6:33

John Erling: The Civil Rights Movement, let me throw out some names here and any recollections that you have. John White and Archibald Hill of Oklahoma City, Curtis Lawson of Tulsa, were elected to the state's House of Representatives. Did you know them?

Frosty Troy: Oh Curtis Lawson was one of 'em. He was just absolutely fabulous. And all three were gutsy on the floor, but Curtis Lawson was an OPO to array, oh boy, man, that little man. He wore that turban and he's a little bitty guy about 5'5. But, boy listen, when he spoke—they listened.

JE: E. Melvin Porter of Oklahoma City became the Senate's first black member.

FT: E. Melvin Porter looked up in the press box and saw me and he begin, began to launch a tirade. He said, "And there's Frosty Troy, a lying sc—" that's what he called me.

And then Gene Stipe walked up to him and put his hand on his shoulder and sat him down. You know why?

JE: Why?

FT: I found E. Melvin Porter on the take and I printed it.

JE: That's why he was calling you names?

FT: Exactly. He was humiliated. He didn't run for reelection, he ran for Court Clerk, County Court Clerk.

JE: You brought up the name of Gene Stipe. What does that mean to you?

FT: Many things.

JE: What's that mean—

FT: The most interesting character I've covered, and that spans over fifty years. Brilliant, articulate, a champion of education, and a reverse Robin Hood. He never, ever stole from the poor. He stole from the rich.

I would—I tried to put him in prison twice, really. Muskogee and Tulsa Federal Court.

JE: Why did you try to put him in prison?

FT: Well, the first time was because the Colmar Hotel in McAlester a bootblack had overheard, you know, a shine boy and we called them bootblacks then, overheard him talking to a guy in the chair next too him. Whew, it was really tough stuff. It was the mob owned all the waste disposal, period. And he had leased a bunch of land on Lake Eufaula, just off Lake Eufaula, and they were going to dump the waste there, the big trucks. And he overheard this. And he called me and told me about it.

JE: The bootblack?

FT: The bootblack, yeah, who was a really nice guy and a yellow-dog Democrat, and he even liked Gene. But he said, "Lake Eufaula? That's insanity, Frosty, that's insanity. That's a jewel in our crown." That's what he called it. And so I broke the story, and of course, he got stuck with the land and no dump.

JE: Gene got stuck with the land?

FT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JE: Did he have words with you over those things? That? Did he call you or talk to you?

FT: The funny thing is, we in the Senate lounge every morning there was a round vase and we put a dollar in it. Everybody had to put a dollar in it. And there were some times, maybe ten or eleven people there, legislators and so on and so forth, and he would go off on me. But fun, just a funny way.

I learned more. I learned that the women—Bernie Shedrack from Stillwater had been elected to the Senate and they didn't want to use the women's restroom, they wanted their own. And you know what Stipe did? He and his cronies led a contract under the Senate, no bid, naturally, and built a restroom just off the lounge. It took a fourth of the lounge. They covered it with Saran Wrap and they told Bernice, said, "You need to christen your restroom."

And she went, and she storming out, soaking wet, her dress. Uh. He was, he was, he was something else.

You know, the Feds didn't get him, they tried to get him. He got himself. He loaned that money illegally to—

JE: To a campaign.

FT: To a campaign and they nailed him. And by the way, they said that, "If they put him in the hospital at Springfield it'll cost a hundred thousand dollars a year for the taxpayers, so just put an ankle bracelet on him." He only violated the ankle bracelet one time and they added a year on to his sentence.

When I was speaking last winter in McAlester his older brother, you know, Francis died? But his older brother was there. And I said, "How's Gene?"

And he said, "Frosty, he comes and goes. He's on a walker, he comes and goes."

He called me at home one night and said, "You know who this is?"

And I said, "I'd recognize your voice anywhere, Senator."

He said, "I want you to be a PR guy for us. I'm having all the ex-legislators down there. We're putting too many people in prison."

And I called his, I think her name was Louise, the next morning and I said, "That would get me instantly barred from the pressroom. Can you talk to him?"

And she said, "I'll take care of it."

But they did have the meeting.

JE: And the meeting was?

FT: Seven or eight ex-legislators, one from Ada was top gun, and I was surprised he was there. But they, you know what they did? It was out of homage to Gene.

JE: Yeah.

FT: They didn't do anything.

Chapter 22

First Black Female Rep.—1:32

John Erling: In '69, 1969, Hannah Diggs Atkins became the first black woman elected to the House.

Frosty Troy: What a woman. She'd been the, she'd worked in the library downstairs and I knew her well. Well. And one of the worst cursing I ever took I took from her. Boy, she put her finger in my face and she just—

And I said, "Why are you mad at me?"

And she said, “You gave him all the credit. The bookmobile was my idea. The bookmobile was my idea.”

JE: And you gave—

FT: You know, the little small communities couldn’t afford libraries, so they put them on trucks in order, and town to town to town.

JE: And that was her idea she said?

FT: Yeah she said that *her* idea.

JE: But you gave credit to?

FT: To the state librarian.

JE: She later served as Secretary of State after Governor Bellmon.

FT: Yeah. And did a good job, too.

JE: Did you ever know or meet Clara Luper?

FT: Yes. I, do you know how many times I talked to her class? Ogh, she wore me out. Clara Luper wore me out. She said, “Oh, Frosty, just come one last time, just come one last time.” And I’d go out and talk to her class. Clara was princess.

JE: She organized the sit-ins in Oklahoma City?

FT: You bet, you bet.

JE: At the lunch counter that became so famous?

FT: Yep, yep.

Chapter 23

Oklahoma Observer—6:57

John Erling: Tell us the story of the *Oklahoma Observer*, its beginning.

Frosty Troy: Well, one day I got a call, I’m always getting calls, and Father Johnny Joyce wanted to meet me in the *Capital* cafeteria. That’s before Frank Keating closed it. And I went in the cafeteria and he was already there and he said, “Well, get yourself some coffee, I’m buying.”

So I went over and got a cup of coffee and came back and sat with him. We sat kind of over to one side. And he said, “You want the *Courier*?”

I said, “I’m sorry? What are you saying, Father?”

“Do you want the *Courier*?”

And I had gotten permission, nonpayment, to do stories, well, social nature like divorce, abortion, and so on and so forth. I was in the *Courier* all the time and never paid a penny for it.

Harmon Phillips says, “No, you can’t serve two masters. If you want to donate your time, fine.”

I said, “Well, what about Bishop Reed? He owns the paper.”

And he said, “He thinks he does but everything’s in my name.”

And I said, “You’re kidding?” They were on 606 Southwest 3rd Street then, the *Courier*. “If it’s all in your name and you’re offering it to me, how much?”

And he said, “A dollar.” And he said, “Can you line up a lawyer to draw up the papers?”

So we met at Naify’s office about three or four days later and we shook hands. And he said, and I quote, “Give me my damn dollar!”

Well, Bishop Reed hired an attorney, and I mean, whoo, a big-time law practice in Oklahoma City and they went through the whole thing. Their word was “Gotcha!” So he had to start from scratch. The *Sooner Catholic* is what it is today, and I picked up the *Courier*. And I started, I started as a monthly, and, boy, it wasn’t going anywhere because the Catholics were fleeing in droves.

You see, they sent bundles by bus and so I hired an ad gal in a little apartment building across from the OEA present thing. And Helen said, “This is not going to work. First of all, you help your secretary find another job and I’m going to take over as publisher.” In two years she put it into the black.

JE: Hmm.

FT: Two—now I don’t mean very far in the black. I was working two part-time jobs for a company in Norman, and are you ready for this? I pasted up the *Black Dispatch* for money. The black guy, I was the guy. Now I didn’t do any of the copy but everything was printed. You see the waxer there?

JE: Yeah.

FT: It’s an old, ancient piece of garbage. And that and an insurance company in Norman. And I held those two jobs for a couple of years. Then, boy, the money started coming in and we started taking money out, so—

JE: Well, how did you call it the *Observer*?

FT: Well, I loved the publication at that time, the *National Observer*. Oh my God, it was first rate. I subscribed to that and seventeen other magazines and journals. And Helen used to say, “Can’t you do without a few of them?”

Well, some of them are monthly, some of them are quarterly, but the *National Observer*, that’s right. And I had a partner. Most people don’t know this. When I started the *Observer* there was a student at OU who started selling ads for me. And he wanted a piece of the paper. And I said, “Fifty-fifty?”

And he said, “You bet.”

Later on, just a couple of years later when he graduated law school, he said, “Buy or sell?”

I said, "I'm not selling. What are you buying for?" I said, "I'll talk to Helen."

And she said, "At least five thousand dollars."

His name is Bill Bleakly, he does the big paper, the free paper in Oklahoma City. He got *Eastward* in Midwest City now. He's gone to glory.

JE: Hmm.

FT: He's made millions.

JE: Yeah.

FT: And he still has a terrific law practice. And fact is, Lana Tyree, who was our attorney, along with Bob Naify, told me that Bleakly represented over two hundred school districts.

JE: Hmm. You've bitten the hand of those who have advertised—

FT: Yes.

JE: Utility company.

FT: Yeah, the first vice president of ONG called and he said, "We buy a half a page ad in every other issue." And that's what he said, he said, "And you go after us for our filing for the increase for the corporation commission?"

And I said, this was on the phone and I said, "What do you think that ad buys you? It doesn't buy you the news column or the commentary in the *Observer*."

And so the ad agency called me and he said, "What have you done now, Frosty?"

They went through an ad agency. Oh Fidelity, oh they were big advertisers.

JE: American Fidelity?

FT: Yeah and they were a big advertiser. And then we had a couple of banks. We had in Tulsa, gradually we just reduced it to the back page ads, ten dollars. I didn't want to do that but Helen said, "It helps pay the bills."

JE: But you offered subscriptions every, nearly every legislator, state legislator would subscribe to your newspaper?

FT: I passed it out free at first. You know, they print a document where you can get all their addresses. And only one refused it, he sent it back in the mail with a letter and I won't quote what he said. Whoo, he was a true believer. But most of them ended up subscribing. All the courts, Supreme Court Justices subscribed.

Chapter 24

County Commissioner Scandal—3:14

John Erling: You've exposed corruption in our state, such as the Oklahoma County Commissioner scandal?

Frosty Troy: That was mine. It started in McAlester. I was coming out of drug—Wood’s Drug #2 one day. County Commissioner walked up to me and he said, “You think you can get away with that?” And he hit me, knocked me flat on my ass. And, boy, I was sore for a couple of weeks. But he didn’t break anything.

I had exposed them routinely, no bid contracts, no bid contracts, and they were paving church parking lots and entryways. And I took pictures of them. I couldn’t believe it. There’s a separation of church and state. I don’t give a damn if it’s a Baptist, Catholic, or whatever, the taxpayers and some of the county roads were pitiful but they were taking real good care.

So they were indicted in, uh, the first indictments came in Muskogee Federal District Court. I was at that trial.

JE: What—

FT: And then above, boy, from then on it, the FBI took it over and it is today the number one single investigation that resulted in the most convictions in the history of the FBI.

JE: This was in the early ’80s. And there was a scheme involving the owner of a rural lumber company?

FT: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: He was giving out false invoices to buyers in return for kickbacks?

FT: Sure. This was, this was just standard operating procedure. Let me tell you about the Republican takeover of Oklahoma. The Democrats had their chance, and frankly, it was getting more and more corrupt when the temper tantrum happened last November.

JE: So is that the only time you were hit over the County Commissioner scandal? Were there any other issues? And did you ever feel threatened for—

FT: Yeah I was, I had all the windows broken out of a car in the driveway one night. And then Carl Twidwell rang the doorbell and he said, “Step out here, I’m going to whip your —”

And Helen heard him. And we were up, it was after dark. And she said, “You get off of my porch or I’m going to call the police.”

And he said, “I’ll get you, I’ll get you.” He never did get me.

And then we had our front porch, the windows on the front egged, and that’s, you’d think that would wash off easily. It doesn’t, it doesn’t.

JE: A fellow editor once threatened to slap your teeth out?

FT: Yep, yeah, that’s a—

JE: You were called a lying SOB by a newspaper publisher?

FT: Yeah, Ed Gaylord.

Chapter 25**The Gaylords—2:45**

John Erling: Talk about the Gaylords a little bit.

Frosty Troy: Okay. Uh, E. K. was conservative but fair. He attended all the conventions, Republican or Democrat. He loved being with the reporters. Then at 101 he died and he lived 101 years.

So Ed took over. Now you need a little background. They were—had several minority stockholders in the *Oklahoman*. And one of them was, he rep—the gal Louise was living in New Mexico and she hired this local guy to represent her on the board meetings. And E. K., he didn't think he worked hard enough, you know. "I'd go out there and you're never at your desk. Where are you?"

And so by the time Ed took over, whoosh, it was get even time. He even fired the sports editor. He moved the managing editor to Colorado Springs, and they owned that paper then. Oh, boy. And nasty. And he went to the Church of Christ school in Edmond and called Henry Bellmon "the senator from Moscow."

Boy, I went after him in a rage. Issue after issue, everything. And the funny thing is, Jim Standard and all the reporters in the *Capital* pressroom were egging me on.

JE: Did any of them help you or they knew things they couldn't write about?

FT: Yeah one of them helped me considerably.

Eddie Jr. came along and he was going to take over. His father was a busybody so, and he built that roping arena north of Oklahoma City. You know where it is.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: And paved, the state paved that entryway, it had damn good paving. And so, and he got disgusted with the paper and he did, uh, he went to Hollywood and *Over the Hill Gang* and several B movies and living off the, you know, the fat of the land, as they say. He was a nice guy.

And by the way, Clem McSpadden was a personal friend of his. And Clem was majority leader of the state senate. And he said, "Frosty, if that guy had his way, that'd be a really decent newspaper. But as long as his dad's alive, it won't be."

So the kid quit. Quit.

Chapter 26**Bill Atkinson Journal—7:10**

John Erling: But isn't there the story of another newspaper that came along? One that would compete with the *Daily Oklahoman*? And this is Bill Atkinson's newspaper. And he bought property north of what is Tinker Air Force Base, became Midwest City, and what do you know? Did you go to work for that newspaper?

Frosty Troy: Well, I covered Bill, his run for governor. He invited Helen and I out to dinner one night. And he said, "Frosty, I'm going to start a five-day daily south of the river."

I said—southwest Oklahoma City, in other words. I said, "Well, that's fine."

And he said, "I want you to be the editor. I'm prepared to give you fifteen thousand dollars worth of stock. At no cost to you."

And I said, "Well, we'll think about it."

And Helen had said, "Ah, this is a wonderful opportunity," and so we took it.

JE: They lured you away from the *Tulsa Tribune* at that time?

FT: Yes, the *Tulsa Tribune*, briefly. Just briefly. I'd been there about two months, we had the new building. They were installing the Goss Enterprise Press and it was state of the art, oh, boy, he was going first class. And Russell Vought, his aide, walked into my office in the new building. And he said, "I've got some bad news, Frosty."

And I said, "Well, what, what's the matter?" And I'd been hired staff and I thought maybe some of them.

And he said, "Bill thinks you ought to, all of you ought to, including me pay the insider price for the stock."

And I opened my top drawer and I had a valise, not as big as that, but, and I emptied all my belongings in there and I said, "You tell Bill Atkinson to kiss my —."

And I went home, and I called Harmon Phillips at the *Tulsa Tribune*, and I said, "I want to come back."

And he said, "I'll think about it. You keep leaving."

Anyway, I didn't keep leaving, I just took a flyer in Henrietta. And so when Jones got in, he said, "Yeah. Put him back at the *State Capital*. He does good work."

JE: So what kind of money would that have been to buy the *Insider*?

FT: Well, uh, fifteen thousand dollars and the stock would have cost me three thousand dollars and I wasn't about to pay it. Can you imagine that? And, of course, he immediately opened news racks all over the city. And you know what the *Daily Oklahoman* did? Cut their price to ten cents. Guess what else the *Daily Oklahoman* did. The biggest advertiser was Sears in the *Oklahoma Journal*. The *Oklahoman* display advertising department approached Sears and said, "Oh, we can let you have that for 50 percent if you quit advertising with Bill Atkinson."

And since Bill didn't have any circulation to speak of, and he'd hired some—I had hired some pretty damn good kids, really and truly, and one of them went to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The other one went to Will Rogers Memorial Museum as curator. And you know, a lot of them really amounted to something because I was careful.

Do you know what Bill Atkinson told me? After I was on board. He said, "I just spoke with the journalism class at Northwest Classen. That's where you can get some good reporters."

And I said, "Yeah, yeah," I didn't disagree, I just, aagh, I left there, aaaagggghh.

JE: But the *Journal* caused the *Oklahoman* some problems, I believe, because Atkinson had a very good, state of the art press. He was able to print some very nice ads and supplements. And—

FT: He was doing the supplements that were appearing in the *Oklahoman*.

JE: And so the Gaylords would not accept these supplements?

FT: You know what the, yeah, and that was costing them big time. And you know what the Gaylords did? They went out West and bought a company that bought the *Journal*, and closed it. They bought a company, that bought the *Journal*, that closed it. You know the terrible part about it? Bill Atkinson was in on it.

JE: In on the company that bought the *Journal*? That closed it?

FT: Yeah, yeah, he knew he wasn't going to go anywhere with that paper against the *Oklahoman*. Let me tell you, that, uh—and then two or three years before his death he calls me at home, and he said, "Uh, Frosty, I'm thinking about doing my biography. And do you want to write it?"

And I said, "Bill, are you kidding? God, I'm making a ton of money as a public speaker. I've got a successful newspaper. Why in the hell would I want to write your biography?"

He said, "Because you're the best writer in the state."

And I said—uh, he said, "Think about it, think about it. Get back to me."

I never called him back.

JE: Was Senator Kerr behind the *Journal* at all? Because he would have been—

FT: No.

JE: ...with the Gaylords.

FT: Yeah. The Gaylords, I remember one editorial Eddie wrote on page one. They put editorials on page one. He, McClellan Kerr had been become law and the headline said—and I've got it in there somewhere—"Water on the brain, Kerr. Water on the brain, Kerr." The most visionary man I ever met in my life. Oh, I don't know, that's, Ed Gaylord was just the undoing of that paper.

And now Phil Anschutz has bought it and they say he's even more conservative than them. And he hasn't shown up at the property yet. According to the—

JE: The current owner of the *Oklahoman*. In 2011.

FT: You know why?

JE: Why?

FT: All he wanted was the hotel in Colorado Springs. That was his dream. He had made three offers, bigger, bigger, bigger, and then finally, the gal told him, “Look, we’re not interested in selling unless we sell all of it.”

So they bought hotel chain. That included, oh, oh my God, that hotel across from—in Maryland is six hundred rooms. Nashville Grand Ole Opry Hotel, the hotel in front of, oh, the great amusement park, Disneyland.

Chapter 27

Speeches—10:29

Frosty Troy: They, uh, I’ve spent the night at that Disneyland hotel because administrators were meeting there. I got to the point where I was only accepting speeches from educators. I didn’t want to get out of my field. I’ve had a chance to speak on a myriad of subjects and I never—I believe with all of my conviction, if it’s dishonest, really, to write a speech about an industry you don’t believe in. So I turned down a lot of them, I have in the past. But why? Why would you—

John Erling: So you were asked to come out, speak to their group, puff them up, talk about how great they are—

FT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JE: And when you take issue with them and don’t believe in them you turned some pretty good money away.

FT: Well, I told that gal at the downtown Rotary Club, you know, they had an executive secretary because they were big. They were the largest Rotary Club in America at one time. I said, “Are you sure they want me to speak?”

And she said, “I’ve cleared it with the board, and you give them hell, Frosty.”

Boy, the *Tulsa World* covered it, oh, I, man, I spanked their butts. Tsh. I said, “We’ve got to get past this ‘What’s in it for me?’ We ought to be thinking, What’s in it for Oklahoma? What’s in it for our children?” I said, “Look how we pay teachers. No wonder there’s a terrific turnover.” Oh I, I got two standing ovations, honest to God.

I drove back down the turnpike and I got to the office and I had a phone call and it was from her. And she said, “They loved you, Frosty. They loved you.”

And then the—she represented the Tulsa County Bar also, and they asked me to come over. And that’s that book they gave me over there. I said, “Some of you give

lawyers a bad name. Let me tell you what a good lawyer is. A public defender. Because those people are penniless. Taking a case that you know you can't win but the guy deserves an honest and fair trial." And I went down the list and I was thinking, oh, in the back of my head, My daughter had taught me that, that all lawyers aren't greedy, aren't pigs, and they loved it. A couple of them got up and walked out on me.

JE: Were you ever intimidated or you must have or was there anything you would, "I'd better not speak this. I'd better not write this because of what could happen," did you ever come to those moments?

FT: Yeah. Once when we named the top ten, worst ten legislators, five in the House, five in the Senate, I got a threatening phone call. And I went out in the garage. I used to love to—Philip had a first baseman's mitt and catcher's mitt and he played a lot of baseball. And I got a bat and I put it in the backseat of the car. I carried that bat for quite a while but I never heard anything else.

JE: Now there are issues you took a stand on and then later on you saw the other side and you reversed your stand.

FT: Yeah the Ethics Commission.

JE: What is—tell us about that.

FT: Henry Bellmon traveled all seventy-seven counties. I had to follow him in cheap motels. Oh Lord. He was trying to get a constitutional amendment creating an ethics commission. And I said, "Yea! Oh this is wonderful, this is wonderful." I was wrong, they don't even fund it. Marilyn has two clerks, she—

JE: Marilyn?

FT: Marilyn's the director of the Ethics Commission. They meet and it's a joke when they meet. And they've got hundreds of cases of complaints filed. You know, it could be a city attorney somewhere or a councilman. You know, it's statewide, it's constitutional. I really bit on that.

JE: Favorite issues for you have been education—

FT: Education, politics, and social issues. That's the only thing that I'll speak on. Mental health, public health, do you realize that 8 percent of parents are now no longer getting their kids vaccinated in eight states? That's in the *Tulsa World* this morning. Oh, do you know what they—they could cause an epidemic—

JE: Because?

FT: Literally.

JE: Yeah. And tell us why they're not vaccinating.

FT: They, uh, vaccinations doesn't work and might screw them up. They interviewed one mother on the TV this morning. I think it was NBC. And she said, "Well, if I don't have to no one can make me."

Yes you can in Oklahoma. You can't go to a public school unless you have your vaccinations. But eight states don't require that. I hope they get on board really fast.

JE: Unions? You've—

FT: Oh I'm a strong union man. And I'm not talking about the longshoremen and all this violence and terrible stuff. Eunice comes from the Greek word "to stand united." The Republican legislature has done everything in this world.

Do you know that the teachers no longer have trial de novo? They can appeal to District Court. You know what the OEA said? "We've got five lawyers, we'll appeal for you."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: But what does that leave the Oklahoma City teachers, AFT, the American Federation? They don't have five lawyers. Why, why would you do that? And they've changed the pension.

Do you know that I have a sister-in-law that has taught thirty-one years in an inner city school in Oklahoma City and her pension after thirty-one years is \$1,400 a month. Shame on us. Shame on us. And luckily she's married to a doctor. And, of course, she spends several thousand dollars a year. She said, "They come to school, the shoes don't fit, first day of school. Hand-me-down clothes. And the worst thing is," and I'd never heard it expressed this way, "they're ashamed of being poor."

JE: Hmm, um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: Wow. And I said, "When are you going to take the cruises? You know, you and Jerry deserve some—don't do like Helen and I did, put it off, put it off, put it off." And she said, "Not as long as my kids need me."

JE: Hmm.

FT: You know where he spent Thanksgiving Day?

JE: Where?

FT: Elk City ER. A doctor called him and he said, "I just got up." What is that, Tweet? Is that what they call it?

JE: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

FT: "And after thirteen years of marriage she broke up with me on a Tweet." He said, "She's moved all my belongings into a little house in Elk City."

JE: Wow.

FT: "I just, I can't face it, I can't face it, Jerry. Help me."

He knows him, they went to medical school together, OU. He went out there, he gave up his Thanksgiving. That's a Troy for you, that's a Troy. They're an amazing bunch.

And I'm Irish. I go to bed sometimes really depressed and I wake up in a new world every day. Take charge! I really, I can't get down here fast enough. I used to love to go to the *Capital*, but anymore during a session I dread it. 'cause Clark Jolly and those people, they belong to that, what is it, that what's his name club? I hate government so badly that

I want to reduce it to the point where what is left I can drown in a bathtub.

They signed that pledge! To him. Grover Norquist.

JE: Right.

FT: He was here. He got the pledges signed. Why would anybody sign something like that?

They cut taxes in the first two years of control, \$771,000,000. And now tax cut this year of \$120,000,000. How many textbooks would that buy? You know, 1017, Henry Bellmon is rolling over in his grave. Do you know that 1017 is gone? It's gone.

JE: And why is it that when we cut our budget education gets cut?

FT: Always.

JE: In fact it's one of the first.

FT: Always.

JE: And we seem to talk about how important education is but we don't fund it.

FT: Yeah, everybody will tell you, oh boy. And the fact is, they just did an Oklahoma poll in the *Tulsa World*, and it's a, the Oklahoma poll is a good poll. Seventy-four percent strongly support public education, but they won't vote that way.

Do you know that in last November, regardless of the Democrats badly outnumbering the Republicans, the Republicans cast a hundred thousand more votes than the Democrats did?

The fact is, I'll lay another one on you. In the year 2000, 2 percent were registered Independent. Last year it was 11 percent. They're disgusted with both parties. And that's an easy disgust to have. Only one—

Chapter 28

Oral Roberts—3:44

Frosty Troy: You know, a lot of people couldn't understand if Jenk Jones had trouble when I left the *Tribune*. Not a little did we know afternoon papers would go away. But he told me once, and I told Helen, I said, "There'll always be a place for you on the *Tulsa Tribune*." And it made her mad.

And she said, and she's German, "We'll show him." He really liked Helen.

And one of my favorites stories, Jenkin Lloyd Jones is best friends with Oral Roberts. He came down and he talked to the staff, the executive staff at the *Tribune*, and then, of course, I was associate editor and I was invited to the cocktail parties at the Tulsa Club and down in—

And at one time, Jenk was having it at his home and I whispered to Helen, I said,

“Look, Oral’s drinking chocolate milk.” And then he walked away.

And the bartender said, “Chocolate milk is a Brandy Alexander.”

Oh, Oral wasn’t beyond taking—isn’t that tragic what that kid and his wife did to that university? But Green, the billionaire—

John Erling: David Green.

FT: God bless him. I hope you do him.

JE: I have him.

FT: Oh sheesh, he’s one of my heroes. He’s one of my heroes, really and truly, because he saved a great university. Do you know that they were the first university in Oklahoma, and I did a story on this at the time, to have carols? If you missed, if you missed a class you could walk in this carol, sit down, at the computer, call it up, put the earphones on and take your notes. They were the first.

JE: Hmm.

FT: And do you know they wouldn’t hire anybody less than a master’s degree to teach there at ORU? Oh it’s a great—oh that kid and his wife—

JE: His son Richard.

FT: ...read, read.

JE: Um, so were you a fan of Oral all along?

FT: Yes, yes, all along, all along. When he, when I was, see, I had never met him until I became associate editor. And Jenk periodically would have him in and meet, uh, “How’s the university going?”

Let me tell you what he did. Oral Roberts, the real Oral Roberts, when he opened that university the first thing he did was give fifty-two points or better black, African Americans, a scholarship to ORU.

JE: Hmm.

FT: Is that beautiful?

JE: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

FT: Now that’s, that’s what religion is all about. It’s not about, “Oh, hum, look, I’m holy, I’m at church, I’m at mass.” Oh jeez, it’s really all about helping people.

JE: But Oral had his detractors because he had his—

FT: Oh he—

JE: ...style of raising money and all that.

FT: He got crazy. The little friend of mine was a PR guy and he said, he took me to lunch one day at Delores’s and he said, he said, “Really, that prayer tower, taking the letters up in the prayer tower, that’s my idea.” And he said, “Boy, that hospital backfired full time.” And he gave the law school to Jerry Falwell.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Chapter 29

Future of Newspapers—1:35

John Erling: Where do you see newspapers in the future?

Frosty Troy: Well, given the state of the art today even the *New York Times* has cut back their foreign bureaus. Uh, there is the, uh, the *Journal Record* is the only one covering business news in Oklahoma now. And they're just a little tabloid.

I, uh, I fear for the future of print in journalism, really and truly. And the young people are getting—I'll give you a statistic that'll blow your mind. Eighteen percent of young people, that's eighteen to thirty-four years old, get the majority of their news off of the daily show.

JE: Yeah.

FT: John Stewart.

JE: Okay.

FT: Don't, give me a break! God, John Stewart? Oh God, it's just amazing, it's just flat amazing.

JE: So students, journalism students listening to this then, I mean, there are plenty of opportunities for them to write to share their skill.

FT: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So it's not as if, if the print went away, they'll still have places to write.

FT: Oh sure, absolutely. They can blog, they can, uh, and, you know, you've got to be careful with the Internet. I Snopes a lot of items that I get, and Snopes as you well know is the verification of validity.

JE: Right.

Chapter 30

How to Be Remembered—2:52

John Erling: You'll live to be a hundred but how would you like to be remembered?

Frosty Troy: Um, my mother made it to ninety-seven and that's what I'm shooting for. My dad would have made it but two packs of Camels a day and, uh. But I would like to be remembered as the person who addressed the social issues of the day. Really and truly, the social issues of the day.

Now, what are they? Number one is fair taxation. Everybody ought to pay their fair share of taxes. And I'm not knocking, I'm a Catholic Benedict and educated, I'm not knocking.

And secondly, we adequately fund public education.

Third, higher education isn't for everybody. And that means career tech has to be adequately funded. They only have two plumbing programs now in the entire state. They turned away three thousands kids last year who were dropouts, seven hundred of them were dropouts and they wanted to learn a trade 'cause they're tired of minimum-wage jobs flipping hamburgers. Or loading and unloading a truck.

So, uh, oh and, boy, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, have you had any of those lately? I just had a locksmith from Choctaw, I live in Midwest City, oh my God, he would bip, bip, bip, bip, bip, he'd change that lock so fast. It had gotten bad. And I took him into the dining room and I said, "How much do I owe you?"

And he said, "Eighty dollars plus the cost of the lock." He was there fifteen minutes.

No, I'm not criticizing him, I think that's wonderful.

Electrician. I had a little bulb go out in the little bathroom and this guy rings the doorbell, Metro Electric here in Oklahoma City, and, uh, he rang—oh boy, and this was last summer and he had a T-shirt on and he had, you know, and he was really good looking. Metro tech and, uh, he was, and he blub, blub, blub, blub, and he changed that out. And we went in the dining room and I was writing him a check. I said, "You really like being an electrician?" That's a five-year journeyman program, as you know.

And he said, "No, I just, I'm an electrician just to support my real occupation."

And I said, "And what's that?"

And he said, "I dance in *Ballet Oklahoma*." God, God, he was Hollywood handsome, I mean, you wouldn't believe how good looking he was. I thought, He dances in *Ballet Oklahoma*, that's his, see that's his thing.

Chapter 31

The Lone Wolf—2:53

John Erling: So do you feel, uh, you've been the lone wolf? Uh, we don't seem to, our newspapers, our major newspapers in the state don't seem to take on the issues that we report about. But don't seem to take on issues like you have. You feel like in the state of Oklahoma that you probably are the lone wolf?

Frosty Troy: I've never thought about myself, I just show up here, show up at the *Capital* every morning at seven thirty. Have coffee, go out check the committees, that are meeting today, by the way, the water thing and tax credits are due, they're being drafted in legislation. And I came back here and went to work and—

JE: But now nobody else is doing this, what you're doing.

FT: Yeah, yeah. That's sad.

JE: So you're a dying breed?

FT: Yep. I admit it. The *Tulsa World* had a *Capital* correspondent Travis Walch. He was fantastic. See, I was with the *Tribune*, he was with the *World*. Boy, we were, competition breeds life, it really breeds life. And, uh, "Ooh, God, where did he get that story?" You know, you go hunting and you work at it. And believe me, government isn't Washington, DC, and it isn't Oklahoma City, it's the people.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

FT: They're, they're—I was asked the other day, I said, a friend, a pretty good damn friend or he wouldn't have asked it. He, uh, she, Iris Lockner asked me, "How can you be a Catholic?"

I said, "Let me tell you about the hierarchy. They're there but the church is the people in the pews."

And she said, "Good enough answer." She said, "I'm an agnostic."

I said, "For some reason that surprises me."

JE: Anything you'd like to say that I haven't brought up, we haven't talked about it? We could talk much longer about your life and career, but, I mean, if there's anything else that you'd like to comment on?

FT: No, uh, no I think that sums it up.

JE: I want to thank you very much.

FT: Oh yeah I was glad to do it.

JE: We've done this—

FT: I think that what you're doing here is, and, boy, you told me, when you said you'd done Green. Oh God, that's, and, boy, we—let me tell you, the majority of people are good people. They just don't make page one.

Chapter 32

Conclusion—O:33

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