

Ed Taylor

A pioneer in the satellite communication business
& philanthropist for many good causes.

Chapter 01 - 1:42

Introduction

Announcer: Ed Taylor grew up in Camden, N.J., the son of an RCA executive who made the Taylor Family the first on the block to have television.

After Taylor graduated from high school, he enrolled in Lehigh University where he majored in civil engineering. When he finished his degree, AT&T Corp. offered him a job in its management training program.

Ed spent the next 16 years of his life working for AT&T. It would be in his work for the telephone company where his desire to chart new territory would begin. While at AT&T, he helped build a satellite uplink station, the first to transmit calls between London and the United States. The company spent over \$100 million on the technology that allowed 90 people to talk all at once.

It was Dec. 27, 1976, that Taylor began distributing Ted Turner's WTBS in Atlanta to cable systems via satellite. That created the first superstation. Ed helped Turner get the station's signal on satellite, then paid \$1 for the right to sell that signal to cable systems around the country. Ed made millions from those sales, and Turner made millions from the advertising dollars generated by the larger audience. Turner called it "one of the greatest \$1 investments in American business history."

Ed also started a channel with news photographs and announcers reading stories about those pictures. Ted Turner first said "nobody was interested in 24-hour news" but after seeing the results started Cable News Network, CNN.

Ed Taylor is a true pioneer, and you will hear him talk about another pioneer Ted Turner, CNN, United Video and his satellite consulting...in an oral history heard only on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 8:40**FCC Chose NBC**

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today' date is November 19th, 2018. Ed, would you give us your full name, please?

Ed Taylor: Edward Leon Taylor III.

JE: That name goes back to your grandfather?

ET: Yes, and I was given it because I was born in the same month that he died.

JE: Oh, and that birthdate is?

ET: December 21st, 1932.

JE: And that makes your present age?

ET: Eighty-six.

JE: Obviously, eighty-seven coming up next month.

ET: Mhm.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

ET: In my apartment in Montereau in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

JE: Where were you born?

ET: Camden, New Jersey.

JE: Your mother's name?

ET: Ethel Larnard.

JE: Where was she from?

ET: Schenectady, New York.

JE: And she grew up there then?

ET: She grew up there, met my father while he was working with General Electric, after he graduated college.

JE: Let's talk about your mother, her personality. What was she like?

ET: Erm, quiet and peaceful type of person. Well liked by everybody. Unfortunately, when I was ten or twelve, she started to have mental issues and was hospitalized and given electric shock treatments. After that, she was very passive, stayed in her room almost all the time; didn't want to be part of much of the world.

JE: But she lived at home?

ET: She lived at home, yes.

JE: You have a sister?

ET: My sister is ten years younger, born in '42.

JE: You said you were ten or twelve, so she was two or three years old?

ET: Yes.

JE: As a twelve year old, you had to take on early responsibilities.

ET: Take on her as sort of the parent, especially since the war years were going on and Dad had to work long hours.

JE: So, you were home alone a lot then, weren't you?

ET: Yes, we had a paid woman that came in during the day, but she was only there eight to five, so I could go to school.

JE: You probably looked back on that time and realize: taking on responsibilities at such an early age actually worked well for you later on.

ET: I think it worked well, yes, because I became organized, I wasn't afraid of hard work and I knew what responsibility was at an age when most others were able to just have fun and play.

JE: Did you resent that?

ET: No, I felt like it was just something I needed to do.

JE: Your father's name?

ET: John Pratt Taylor.

JE: Where did he grow up?

ET: Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

JE: What did he do for a living?

ET: He graduated from Harvard with an engineering degree and went to work for General Electric in radio technology at the time of his starting out.

JE: What was his personality like?

ET: Quite strict, quite organized in what he was doing. Around the house he almost read constantly when he wasn't working in his yard. He had the best azaleas probably in the state of New Jersey, because he was a bit of a perfectionist.

JE: Didn't you say you had asthma?

ET: Yes, I had asthma I guess all my life, or, at least, that I can remember. I was sick quite a bit of the time that I wasn't well enough to go to school. He brought me lots of books to read. Especially about World War I, and also, somehow or another, I became a fan of the Civil War and he brought me biographies and books of all the generals on both sides of the Civil War.

JE: Well, in that area, you were way ahead of your peers early on.

ET: Yes.

JE: Your father was working for GE.

ET: Yes.

JE: General Electric.

ET: Then what does he do?

JE: Well, he stayed with the company, but RCA was formed as a broadcasting separate company.

JE: From GE.

- ET:** And spun off from GE.
- JE:** His boss at RCA would have been?
- ET:** General Sarnoff after the war.
- JE:** General Sarnoff at NBC, they're the first ones to bring color to television, weren't they?
- ET:** Yes. They had a system that they designed and had quite a battle in front of the government with CBS. CBS had another system that was inferior by decision of the FCC. So, RCA won the battle of what technology would be.
- JE:** It'd be interesting to know what that was all about. We don't have time to get into all of that, but RCA was leading the way. Now, your father was an engineer.
- ET:** He was an engineer, but he turned into a marketer, more of a long term planning. After the radar experience that he went through during the second world war.
- JE:** What was that?
- ET:** They needed a technical way to track the German airplanes, and radar was basically invented by RCA at that period of time.
- JE:** And your father was in on that invention?
- ET:** He, oh yes, probably the leader of the group. I'm not sure about that.
- JE:** Well, I'm sure if he wasn't, he was right there in the midst of it.
- ET:** Yeah, yeah.
- JE:** That's certainly a nice thought and exciting for your background.
- ET:** Yep. Yep.
- JE:** Were you around any of these executives that your dad took you...?
- ET:** Yep. He would take my mother and myself to most of the conventions and these sales meetings that they would have around the country and I would wind up serving of bartending at their suite a good part of time. I got to meet almost everybody in the industry.
- JE:** Including General Sarnoff.
- ET:** Oh yeah. He was there quite often. He was always busy talking to our clients, so you didn't have much interaction with him.
- JE:** How old would you have been then when you were doing that?
- ET:** Would have been high school years.
- JE:** That would have been the forties?
- ET:** Yeah, '46 to '50.
- JE:** Were they in court many years against CBS?
- ET:** Well, in front of the FCC, not really in court. The Federal Communications Commission regulates heavily the television industry, like they do the telephone industry.
- JE:** Right, so the two plans: CBS had a plan, NBC had a plan, and the FCC chose NBC?
- ET:** Yes.
- JE:** What would have happened if they chose CBS?

- ET:** If I understand it, their system was more mechanical. I don't really remember all the details. Where RCA's was more reliant on a tube approach.
- JE:** A tube?
- ET:** Yeah.
- JE:** Here he was in the television business, is that what drove you?
- ET:** No, that came about later.
- JE:** Okay, where did you go to elementary school and junior high school?
- ET:** The area was specifically cherry - what is now Cherry Hill, New Jersey. It was a county type of thing in Camden County, not Camden the city. And I went to Collingswood High School, which was a high school with very poor students in a tough part of town, probably equivalent to going to one of the high schools here in North Tulsa. In fact, I was a first graduate of Collingswood to ever get into Lehigh for over thirty years. Lehigh University Engineering School.
- JE:** What year did you graduate from high school?
- ET:** 1950.
- JE:** Do you remember in the fifties the fear of communism and all that talk?
- ET:** Oh yeah, mhm.
- JE:** What do you remember?
- ET:** Oh, when I went over to Lehigh, I immediately went into ROTC: Reserve Officers Training. Soon after that, the Korean War broke out and many of my high school friends were badly injured and a few died in that war. By the time I got out in '54, I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant and the armistice had been signed so there was no fighting. I served for two years Fort Campbell, Kentucky with the Corps of Engineers engineering battalion connected to the 82nd Airborne Division.
- JE:** But you stayed stateside?
- ET:** We stayed stateside.
- JE:** You went to Lehigh University?
- ET:** Yes.
- JE:** Where is that?
- ET:** Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
- JE:** You entered what field of study?
- ET:** Civil Engineering.
- JE:** And that's what you graduated with?
- ET:** Yes.
- JE:** Was that easy for you to handle?
- ET:** Yeah, once I got through the freshman courses, you had to take a lot of economics and accounting and things that bored me, I was pretty much a straight A student for the engineering portion of it.

JE: And why did you choose engineering?

ET: Because my dad was an engineer and my grandfather was at a small construction company. He built housing developments and schools, things like that. He and my uncles kind of pushed on me, nobody in the family had a degree and maybe I would get a civil engineering degree and work through them in Schenectady.

Chapter 03 - 6:20

Ed Sullivan

John Erling: That was such a big part of your family life. When do you recall seeing your first television?

ET: It had to be practically when the first station went on the air in Philadelphia.

JE: That would have been?

ET: '47, maybe.

JE: In 1947, yeah, you would have had a television because your father was very involved?

ET: Yes.

JE: Specific remembrance, or what you saw?

ET: We saw a lot of wrestling. (laughter) and a lot of old comedies. Black and white, the color programming came gradually.

JE: Do you remember your dad talking about it then and how he was part of it?

ET: Yeah, some, and while I was in college, he had become pretty good friends, I'm not sure why, with Ed Sullivan. So, we often went to the Ed Sullivan Shows in New York.

JE: Oh, really?

ET: And got to go backstage and meet the performers and that type of thing.

JE: And meeting Ed Sullivan?

ET: Yeah.

JE: How old would you have been then?

ET: Well, it would have been probably '52, so twenty years old.

JE: Twenty-years-old?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Well, that had to be quite a thrill for you?

ET: Yeah, it was, yeah.

JE: What was Ed like when you talked to him?

ET: Not too different than what you saw on the screen.

JE: Yeah?

ET: He was friendly and nice to everybody.

JE: That was way before the Beatles, wasn't it? (laughter)

ET: Oh yeah, way before the Beatles, but I was at the Beetle's first big show with Ed Sullivan and then at Yankee's Stadium when they did that one.

JE: Oh, really?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Were you there when the Beatles appeared on Ed Sullivan?

ET: Yeah.

JE: You were in the audience?

ET: Yes.

JE: Oh.

ET: And my wife and kids became Beatles fans the rest of our lives.

JE: Did you embrace them right away, or you had heard about them I guess?

ET: Yeah, we had heard about them.

JE: Then you were in that audience, a history making television event?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Do you have any pictures from that?

ET: No. Didn't think of it as being history making.

JE: Right. There were some that criticized the Beatles, their long hair and all that, but you just loved the music from the beginning?

ET: Yeah.

JE: As you know, you were there, but there are people in Tulsa today who say, "Yeah, I remember the night."

ET: Yeah.

JE: That was a Sunday. My wife talks about the fact that her minister let them out early in church that evening so they could go home and see the Beatles. Oh, what a thrill for you and your family. Do you remember the first president you saw on television? Would have been Truman, Harry Truman?

ET: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

JE: He would have been President in 1948.

ET: Yeah.

JE: During the war years, World War II, do you remember rationing?

ET: Oh yeah, we had a car but I think we got three gallons of gas a month, so my dad would walk a mile to the railroad station to commute to work. Quite often, I would take my wagon and walk down and meet him at the grocery store, which wasn't like grocery stores today.

JE: Right.

ET: It was a very, very small Jewish operated deli contestant type of thing, and we would buy groceries for the day and walk home with him.

JE: What about the car you would have been driving then?

ET: He had a '39 Dodge.

ET: After college, after you graduate in 1954, what happens to you then?

ET: AT&T came to college and interviewed me for a management training position, so I graduated and immediately got married and commissioned in the army. They knew I had to go but I was deferred till early '55, simply because they knew that they were in an armistice, and they wanted to keep that '54 class of ROTC officers available if the war broke out again and when it broke out.

JE: Okay.

ET: The expectation was that it was only temporary, that it wouldn't last all these years. But AT&T hired quite a few of us that had military commitments but began training us and their training program was about six weeks of brain washing to the AT&T way of doing things and how you treat people. We used to call it "Ma Bell Psychology," because you were more like the mother of your employees in those days.

Then they assigned us for two weeks at a time to go with all their construction crews around the country. So, you wound up learning how to climb a telephone pole in West Virginia, then winding up going out some place in Arizona and taking down the old open wire lines and then climbing towers for microwave, which the towers they built in those days looked like a lighthouse for ship lighting.

Once we finished about five assignments of that, they started us rotating on a three month basis and I had a job in accounting for three months, then sales for three months, twice in engineering: once in sort of the engineering of buildings, and once in the engineering of equipment, which is very different parts of it. Did all that rotation. Then I was called up and spent two years in the military.

JE: So you were?

ET: About a year of AT&T.

JE: AT&T and then you were called up. And then your role at AT&T when you went back?

ET: Well, in sixteen years I had eleven different jobs. It wasn't I couldn't handle the job, it was that I was doing well in them as soon as I did...

JE: You were moving up the ranks?

ET: Well, you moved up. I did an engineering job for a year, and then moved on to accounting for a year, then into the sales department for a year, then promoted back to engineering after rotations in other departments to a broaden US manager and go back to engineering at the next high level up and that went on for most of seven to eight years. It would have taken us probably till about '64 or so.

At that point, somebody decided that I had better talents for getting involved in new things and doing them with staff engineering, which had to be done in downtown New York. So, I commuted to New York City and went through about three levels in the Headquarters department of AT&T.

Chapter 04 - 5:11

Satellite Science

Ed Taylor: The last one was an assistant vice president of satellite science. That's what it was at that point.

John Erling: Satellite Science?

ET: Yeah, understanding how you built them, how you operated them, what kind of earth stations you have.

JE: Okay, so get real basic here, you were then in discussion of sending a satellite up into space.

ET: Yeah.

JE: And using that?

ET: Well, that was the vehicle for using telecommunications from the US to Europe.

That was the first use, because before that all we had were small undersea cables that you had to lay in the Atlantic Ocean that were always breaking and failing just because of the activity of the ocean, because you just throw them in the water (laughter), God help where they landed. This was AT&T.

People talk in London and Paris, so we built a satellite system for that. We didn't understand the concept of a satellite being stationary and being parked out twenty-two thousand miles up to get stationary, even though it was going six thousand miles per hour. We didn't understand that. The brains of the labs never told me or themselves. They'd never heard it discussed till one day Hughes bopped it up.

But the system we built, we had three satellites that circled the earth. They were very small and weak, power wise. So, you built ninety-foot antennas in Hanover, Maine and outside of London. They would both look at the satellite for eight hours and then you'd drop the satellite and both would go back to the next one coming over the horizon. For three minutes we'd cut off a hundred and twenty people, which was a capacity of the system. Didn't know who they were and mostly they just kept yacking, "Are you there, John?" (laughter).

JE: That's because it was switching?

ET: Yeah, and we couldn't give them back their money of anything else because the bills kept running. That's if they were there.

JE: Who first put a satellite up?

ET: We did, AT&T, for communications.

JE: Did another company do it for you?

ET: Yeah, it was launched by - I can't remember the name of the company.

JE: But it was a company who did it for AT&T?

ET: Yeah, yea.

JE: And that was the first satellite for be launched for communications?

ET: Yeah.

JE: And you were part of all that?

ET: Yes.

JE: And how trilling when that satellite went up.

ET: Oh, yeah.

JE: And it's stayed there (laughter).

ET: Yeah.

JE: You said it was stationary, yet you had...

ET: No, these weren't. These were moving.

JE: Then what were you referring to when you said one was stationary?

ET: That came later. Hughes came out with that probably within a year after we built this other system.

JE: Okay.

ET: They had been doing some classified work for our military and had experimented and had came up with the technology for our military. So, there were small military satellites they used.

JE: So then when a satellite went up and became stationary that was good for you?

ET: Oh, yeah.

JE: You didn't have to be switching.

ET: Yeah.

JE: Losing three minutes.

ET: You could then go to antennas that were ten feet instead of a hundred feet to receive the signal. And now of course they can do it with ten-inch antennas because satellites are bigger and more powerful.

JE: This was in the seventies?

ET: Yeah.

JE: In your forties when you were involved with all that, exciting, exciting work.

ET: Mhm, yep. But the downside was that I had to somehow or another get to the railroad station, which was two miles from my house, often walked because we only had one car and then take the train, then take two subways, and then walk a mile to get to work. To do all that I left at seven A.M. and sometimes was late getting there at nine. If I left right at five, I could catch the train and get home at seven.

Most days I wound up sticking around till six or seven. When you did that, the trains only ran hourly, and so probably averaged getting home eight or nine o'clock at night, then turning around and going the other, so I really didn't know my kids.

JE: You referred to being married, what was your wife's name?

ET: Nancy Elizabeth. She died 2007.

JE: Okay.

ET: I married Sylvia in 2009.

JE: And she's here. So, you had children?

ET: Yeah.

JE: How many children?

ET: Three.

JE: And their names?

ET: Edward the fourth, Stephen John, then Susanne.

JE: So, while it sounds exciting, downtown New York, you're working for AT&T, and the concept of satellite, it took its toll on a family that you wished you could have been around more.

ET: Mhm.

JE: But you must have been drawing, for that time, quite a salary.

ET: AT&T didn't pay that well.

JE: They didn't?

ET: I don't remember exactly what it was, but it wasn't a big deal. You know, when I started with AT&T, we were getting a hundred bucks a week as college graduates in the fifties.

JE: In the fifties that was considered meager?

ET: Yeah.

JE: That was not a big salary.

ET: No, but that's what the going rate was for engineers coming out of college.

Chapter 05 - 3:16
Satellite Consulting

John Erling: We've got you into the seventies when you left AT&T.

Ed Taylor: I left in '75. I left the satellite job in '74 for a job in Kansas City, erm, running all the engineering west of the Mississippi for AT&T, filling in for a man that was out with a heart ailment but we knew he was coming back and then when he came back he only had a few months till retirement and I had been promised that I would get the job permanently. Even then it was taking one step backwards to get out of New York. It was AT&T's way of keeping me from going to work for somebody else in the satellite world at that time.

When the time came, they reneged on it, and gave the job to somebody else with a better day-to-day detail. He had filled in for five years of growing, what you do in the local, because a lot of my headquarters experience didn't have much to do with digging a ditch across the state of Nebraska. (laughter)

JE: Right. I've got to comment: We hear a plane coming over and I'm sure our listeners can hear that. It seems to be hanging on for a long time for some reason.

ET: The come right down Memorial for landing.

JE: To our airport?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Okay, so you hear that quite a bit?

ET: Yeah. The flight path is right down Memorial to the runway.

JE: So, as you look back then, when you didn't get that job?

ET: I set up my own satellite consulting company.

JE: So, this really was a good thing you didn't get that job?

ET: Absolutely, because about eight years later when they started consolidating bill companies into AT&T and eliminating middle management because of computerization of a lot of functions...

JE: Yeah.

ET: The guy that got the job literally got forced retirement at sixty. So it was good that way.

JE: So, you moved to Kansas City?

ET: Kansas City was were it was.

JE: Okay, and then you didn't get the job. Then you set up your own consulting business and you stayed in Kansas City when you did that?

ET: Mhm. Yep, mhm.

JE: What did that entail? Consulting what?

ET: Anybody that wanted to know how satellites would affect their business. Some of the people I had were companies that wanted to build satellites. Rockwell was one, then

DCI Telecommunications Inc. out of Denver wanted to upgrade their microwave routes to compete with AT&T, so I was consultant. I worked for them for about a year and a half helping them convert them and teaching their people how to do digital voice and how to compete with AT&T on a marketing basis. They were a good client, and also I talked with them about satellites and how someday there would be a satellite system.

One of the consulting clients was Wayne Swearingen and the United Vitdeo Company and on a small scale was doing the same things DCI was doing and he asked me to do a consulting job for him.

JE: It was December 27th, 1976 that you began distributing Ted Turner's WTBS in Atlanta to cable systems via satellite.

ET: Mhm.

Chapter 06 - 8:50

Ted Tuner

John Erling: That begins a story that would create the first superstation. Tell us how you were contacted or how you came to the attention of Ted Turner.

Ed Taylor: Erm, hm, Ted had a habit, and it's one of the things that made him build an empire that's worth millions of dollars, of when he wanted to do something he could look ahead but he'd also say I want to go find the best expert in the country to help me go do it. He looked around for the best expert and was told by other leaders in the satellite industry: "The guy you need is Ed Taylor." So, he basically came to me to do that.

At that time I was the Vice President of Marketing at Western Union. I'd given up my consulting business and went to work at Western Union as the Vice President because they had a satellite up in the air. I was their Vice President of Marketing.

I wrote a proposal for Western Union to provide a business to distribute Ted Turner. The board of directors at Western Union turned me down, said, "No." They wouldn't do it because it involved financing and charging ten cents a subscriber and getting paid in the long run. When you've got half of the eight million cable subscribers that were out there they would be getting four million dollars a year or they got somebody they rented a transponder on a ten year lease at a million dollars a year. They didn't like the idea of taking the risk of Ted Turner at a cable industry that they didn't understand.

JE: And of course, Ted Turner was smaller and leaner.

ET: Oh, yeah.

JE: All right, but you made probably one of the best deals of your life on the dollar.

- ET:** Yes.
- JE:** Tell us what the dollar was about.
- ET:** Ted started out to do it himself and he found out legally he could not do it himself.
- JE:** Tell us what he wanted.
- ET:** To put a signal up in the Hughes Satellite and give it or sell it to cable operators...
- JE:** Why couldn't he do it?
- ET:** Copyright laws.
- JE:** Copyright laws?
- ET:** Yeah, most of his program was like I Love Lucy. He bought the right to play it in Atlanta, Georgia and he could not play it in Albuquerque, New Mexico or Chicago or anyplace else in the country under copyright laws. On the other hand, the microwave systems that I had run at United Video, that and I had done that brought in other distant signals, allowed people who, as long as the customer paid for the distribution, we could substitute our microwave and haul Chicago's WGN all the way to Tulsa and sell it to cable subscribers. While satellite wise, we could set up a company that had no tie. We took Ted Turner's signal off the air and put it up to the satellite ourselves.
- JE:** And that took care of the copyright issue?
- ET:** Yeah.
- JE:** It seems like a no brainer. That was brilliant.
- ET:** Well, before we were done, it cost over two million dollars in legal fees (laughter) to convince the movie companies that what we were doing was legal. (laughter).
- JE:** Right, Ted Turner called it: "One of the greatest one dollar investments in American business history."
- ET:** Yeah. Yep.
- JE:** Because you then made millions from the sales.
- ET:** Yeah, through the subscribers. Once I hit a million subscribers at ten cents a month, I was getting a hundred thousand a month from the subscribers. So, I could pay the million dollars a year for a satellite transponder.
- JE:** And by now, you were on your own?
- ET:** On my own, oh yeah.
- JE:** A million dollars?
- ET:** A year.
- JE:** What were the costs? How...?
- ET:** Just the satellite uplink. We had built a satellite uplink earlier to a transportable truck for about three hundred thousand. It had a driver and a technician. You could run it with two people and we just parked that to do the Turner Job. So, it was not hard to technically do it. The only money we needed was that first year of a million dollars while the

subscribers grew and I sold 1% interest to ten different people and raised two hundred fifty thousand. Between that and not taking a salary myself, we were off and running.

RCA, who were the owners of satellites and an ex-boss of my Dad's at RCA was running a satellite company, he understood what I was doing and he basically gave me a contract that said I only pay him two hundred and fifty thousand the first year, but I pay him over the ten years in the contract a total of fifteen million, not ten million. He escalates his rates each year so the second year he charges me five hundred thousand, and the third year, seven-fifty, the fourth year I'm up to a million dollars.

JE: Okay.

ET: That was for the transponder, not the right to distribute it. The right to distribute it is copyright, same right that everybody had used in the past.

JE: The transponder, what did that do?

ET: That was a path through the satellite. It was one channel, one TV channel through the satellite. The owner of that satellite was RCA. My real financing was the fact that RCA believed in me. They believed that they would get 50% more over the life of the satellite from Ed Taylor than they got from people that signed a ten million dollar contract and proved they had ten million dollars.

JE: What about CBS and ABC? Where were they in all this?

ET: They stuck their head in the mud. They didn't believe that it would work. They didn't believe in cable. They just didn't. They should have gotten in the business.

JE: Tell us a little more about Ted Turner, his personality and all and how the two of you interacted and were you around each other much.

ET: Erm, Ted was an interesting man. He was bipolar. When he was in his good side of being bipolar, he was brilliant, hardworking. When he went into the other mode, he was dumb, stupid, and a drunk.

JE: And you never knew which one you would end up with?

ET: Erm, you kind of knew. Part of what I did as I headed the company from Tulsa, because we liked to live in Tulsa, my boys wanted their sister to go to Holland Hall because they had both graduated from Holland Hall, but just the Tulsa community, we came back on a love for it because we had lived here a couple years while I headed United Video. There was a time when I was Roy Bliss' boss at United Video.

JE: But it's remarkable then for Ted Turner, to become as successful as he was, to have these two personalities.

ET: Yep, mhm, yep. But what I would do, is I would go in for a meeting and no matter what Ted said in a meeting with a lot of people, I'd just stay quiet when I knew he was wrong, and then I would drive him back to the office after the meeting and tell him like he was a little boy that he was wrong and this is what he needed to do. The next day, he'd tell everybody: "I changed my mind."

JE: Isn't that amazing.

ET: Yeah, and it worked for years. As far as closeness, even though I ran the company either from New Jersey where I'd just left Western Union and then moved to Tulsa, I had an office in the Brave's Stadium so I saw him at baseball games and meetings there whenever he wanted and I probably spent an average of one day a week overnight in Atlanta traveling and meetings, staying the day, then traveling back out to work with Ted and his other subordinate mostly on marketing.

How do we present it to the cable guys? How do we get cable companies to take Ted's signal with his programming: mostly old movies and the Atlanta Braves, instead of WGN Chicago or some of the better independent stations that were nearby and put us on the system?

The easy part was, here in Oklahoma where an awful lot of the people United Video couldn't afford to get to them. At United Video, we'd bring Dallas up one tower at a time through the cable industry but we didn't know how to serve the panhandle type of things.

Chapter 07 - 6:10

United Video

John Erling: You brought up the name: United Video. What was United Video?

Ed Taylor: At that time it was a microwave company that brought in Dallas signals for Tulsa cable and all the other cable operators between here and Dallas. It also had a microwave system up to Chicago bringing WGN all the way down to St. Louis and Roy was heading it up.

JE: Roy Bliss?

ET: Yeah, I did a study for them on converting it to a digital network and going after AT&T's place business and data business and we built additional channels on it from Chicago and Detroit through Tulsa to Dallas then went after the bigger companies to give us 20% of their business between Chicago or Dallas or Tulsa. American Airlines quickly saw that if AT&T went down they could lose everything. They gave 20% of their business. That 20% would keep working and we had built a redundant system so that if they had an outage, we could take 40% of their business, and that's what they paid us for, and they paid us actually a higher rate than they were paying AT&T.

JE: I'm trying to follow. American Airlines, for their communication?

ET: Yeah, for their communications, because remember they had a big maintenance center here and their communications center was here in Tulsa, their whole network. Their most critical route was from here to Chicago and from here to Dallas for communications. That's where the majority of it needed to go.

JE: And then you provided them?

ET: An alternative for them to go on the ground. Not by satellites.

JE: Not by satellites?

ET: No, because the satellites were delayed for many years by the FCC, and in fact by AT&T because AT&T wasn't ready themselves to have their satellite systems up. They delayed it at the regulatory agency by rejecting and also telling the regulatory agent: "Technology's changing, the things that are being built." They basically told them a lie.

JE: Let me come back to how Ted and you sold WTBS to become the superstation. How did you sell the Atlanta station to be first or be the one?

ET: Ted wanted that.

JE: He wanted it, yes.

ET: Yeah, he had created a company, then he found out he legally couldn't do it. So, I gave him a dollar for the company, took over the company, and I gave some promises of what I would do.

JE: Like what?

ET: Get out and sell and distribute the signal to the cable industry. Get him a big audience.

JE: All right, so it was just plain hustle and hard work?

ET: Yeah, it was seven sentences of just things that I would do and things that he would do. And those seven sentences cost me two million dollars over time. And Ted was laughing. It only cost him three million.

JE: What do you mean: it only cost you two million?

ET: Well, I had agreed to do certain things.

JE: Oh yeah, but look what you made.

ET: Oh, yeah.

JE: Is that document around, the seven sentences, somewhere?

ET: Yeah, but we don't show that.

JE: Wouldn't that be wonderful to have that framed? This is what I did.

ET: I've got it deep in the files. I think it's better there.

JE: Well, it should be part of the memorabilia of Ted Turner and you too.

ET: I don't know what they've done with Ted's memorabilia.

JE: You, Ted, and Roy Bliss were the first to actually jump into the business of cable via satellite. Roy Bliss was part of that.

ET: Roy was part of it because he had worked with me and he was one of the first people to say, "Ed Taylor and Ted Turner aren't crazy."

JE: Yes.

ET: And I was going to put up WGN.

JE: You were going to?

ET: Yeah, yeah, in fact, we raced for a while to figure out who would do it. It turned out the transponder I was assigned didn't work when I got up there, the second satellite, and Roy's did. So once he got a signal up and we went through, when they gave me a placement a year later, I used it for a station out of San Francisco, independent station, and left the WGN business, and though we were competitive for a little bit as to who would do it, after that it got to the point where almost every cable system took both services, WGN and WTBS, so there really wasn't competition.

Yeah, sometimes we got in there first because WGN wouldn't help Roy very much. They'd hardly give him permission to duplicate some of their promotional stuff, where Ted was out there twisting the arm of cable operators to sign up with Ed Taylor and take my signal, so he was doing a lot of my marketing.

JE: Ted was?

ET: Yeah.

JE: It's just remarkable because I don't know if you could break it down into a month how many days he was on target and how many days he wasn't. I mean what he did, half a brain, is amazing.

ET: Yep, but he really had a whole brain and a very brilliant brain. It just got turned off at times.

JE: I probably shouldn't have called it half a brain, but you know what I'm trying to say.

ET: Yeah, half the time.

JE: Half the time, right. Did you see him on Sixty Minutes within the last few months?

And now he's struggling with Alzheimer's.

ET: Yes, struggling very badly. His kids have taken over running all the financial enterprises and they're selling most of it off and diversifying it. He owned tremendous amounts of land up in the Osage.

JE: He had all that land up there.

ET: They've sold that. They're selling all the land and that type of things and putting it into a trust fund.

JE: Well, they couldn't manage all that.

ET: No, and they don't even want to.

JE: Right. Remember the last time you saw Ted Turner?

ET: It was a long time ago.

JE: Yeah.

ET: It was, (indiscipherable) probably late nineties because I sold out in '87.

Chapter 08 - 5:25**Came to Tulsa**

John Erling: How did you come to Tulsa the first time?

Ed Taylor: I did a proposal for them of how to upgrade United Video into a AT&T competitor on the ground with a microwave. They had a board meeting.

JE: United Video?

ET: Well, LVO, because LVO was who put the money in.

JE: LVO?

ET: Yeah, LVO was the oil company headed by Wayne Swearingen.

JE: Okay.

ET: They were the money behind United Cable of which one subsidiary was United Video. LVO had a meeting on whether or not they would finance this upgrade.

They came out and John Brock told me, "Come on in. Wayne wants to talk to you and the board at one time." He just looked at me and said, "Ed, we'll implement your proposal if you move to Tulsa and be the president of the company." I told them, "Well, give me twenty-four hours. I got to go home and talk to the wife." We decided, that yeah, we'd move down here and do that. The satellites were stalled. AT&T had done a good job of stalling it to their dime schedule, so there was about a four or five year gap there where things could have been a lot sooner if they hadn't stopped it at the FCC.

JE: Didn't you and a gentleman, by the name Julius Livingston, plays a part, rebuilt Swearingen's oil company? They began to gather cable franchises in Tulsa and other cities?

ET: Wayne Swearingen did that himself.

JE: Okay.

ET: Jul Livingston was Livingston Oil and they changed it to LVO.

JE: Okay.

ET: The bank foreclosed on Livingston Oil. The head of the bank was Wayne's brother. I think it was Gene.

JE: Yes.

ET: And Gene got Wayne to come in, take over the bankrupt company, and make it viable. Wayne basically did that with John Brock being the day-to-day head of the oil company and Murray Collette was the financier type of guy. Then LVO looked around for other investments and bought a controlling percentage of United Video from the Snyder brothers and pretty much gave the brothers their say so and with the funds from Livingston Oil, had some land and assets under the ground and some good oils, so it threw off a lot of cash, and Wayne put it the United Cable and the United Video and did a good job.

JE: So, we remember the name of Tulsa Cable.

ET: Yeah.

JE: What was Tulsa Cable?

ET: It was a part of United Cable headed by the Snyder brothers. Actually, they were out of Casper, Wyoming, but Gene moved here when Wayne invested in it. And Tulsa Cable, the reason it had another name, there was a group, Swanson, Bill Swanson, he and Oral Roberts put in a competitive bid to the city of Tulsa to build a cable system here. It would have taken a long time to beat them in front of a city council with lawsuits and that type of thing, so Wayne and Gene set up a merger for Tulsa Cable. So the Roberts family owned a piece of it. Bill Swanson became the general manager. Mark Savage was really the guy running the show. Swanson was kind of like chairman of the board. Savage was president.

JE: What timeframe are we talking about?

ET: Early seventies.

JE: And Oral Roberts was in on the forefront of Tulsa Cable?

ET: Yep.

JE: Was he investing money?

ET: No. All they did was basically merge his application in and I don't remember whether he got 10% and Swanson got the job of leading it and some percentage, and eventually lost the job because he was a good public relations and talking guy, but he really wasn't a good manager. If Mark Savage hadn't have been there, it probably would have gone under.

JE: So, Tulsa Cable bought this microwave company, United Video?

ET: No, United Video was just a microwave company owned by United Cable. United Cable was the big stockholder in Tulsa Cable.

JE: Okay.

ET: And they also had gone out on so many franchises that they were franchise rich and even Wayne Swearingen's cash wasn't enough for them to build all the franchises they had and then interest rates went to 15% in the early seventies and they were in a lot of trouble, but they sold Seattle to somebody. They sold Omaha to another company, and they sold Des Moines and used the money from selling the franchises to finance Tulsa Cable as far as the equity part of it, and had a tough road to get it done and financially viable.

JE: Ted Turner helped you create a company: Southern Satellite Systems.

ET: Mhm.

JE: What did that do?

ET: That's the one that builded our station, rented a transponder, and distributed Ted's program to cable companies. Ted didn't pay me and I didn't pay him. I didn't see any advertising revenue. He didn't see any subscriber revenue.

JE: That became very profitable.

ET: Yes.

Chapter 09 - 6:55**Tempo Television**

John Erling: You went on to form Tempo Television.

Ed Taylor: Yes.

JE: What did that do?

ET: We had a satellite transponder. We had a studio here in Tulsa. We used the Atlanta uplink to play programming. But when we approached programmers, we said, "Look, if your program's so good, you pay me an hourly rate and you sell the advertisers." We basically went after international programming so our primetime was a movie from GOMO, which is the French equivalent of one of our movie studios, in French with English subtitles at the bottom. They brought primetime every night.

Sunday morning we sold to the ministers who wanted satellite distribution and couldn't get onto CBN, Cable Network, or on the other one that was up there. So Sunday morning was actually the highest rates that we had per hour.

JE: Really?

ET: That's why we had so many religious clients that wanted it, they just kept bidding it up.

JE: Did Oral, was he in on that?

ET: He didn't buy time with us, no. I think he was getting on one of those other networks.

We had a morning show, This is Japan. It looked like Today's Show NBC. It was Today in Japan hosted by the wife of one of our GIs in English interviewing Japanese people and you learned all about Japan.

JE: And that was of interest to an American audience?

ET: To some people it helped the cable industry a lot because, well, it was GOMO. There were four million people in American who knew French and could watch a French movie in French. That wasn't enough in any one theatre. Well, they did have French theatres that played French movies in both LA and New York in French language. But we basically looked for good shows from different countries and put them on. That way we didn't buy any programming but we worked with individual American producers.

There was a guy in town, by the name of Terry Pips, he did fishing shows and we actually bought his production company and made the fishing shows ourselves and we had a lot of other fishing shows that would buy time on the network. It wasn't just his. So we were pretty well doing that type of thing. Doing a lot of outdoor stuff because we could use his crews to go shoot travel and on the beaches of the Florida Gulf Coast type of things.

JE: You also did home and garden shows?

ET: Yep.

JE: Cooking shows?

ET: Yep.

JE: Were you in on the ground floor of creating a program?

ET: No, if it's a good idea, they could buy the time and they knew the people to sell advertising to and if they couldn't then they didn't get on the air.

JE: Right.

ET: Our judgment was strictly: Yes, we wanted to look at the show and be satisfied that it could be on the network, but then they had to bid for their time. If they wanted to take it in the middle of the night, they could come to bid almost free.

JE: Who was the committee? You and others who decided this program...?

ET: I had a young couple who had been heart and guts of my marketing for Turner. Kip Farmer and his wife, Lynne, took over that network and really did the work for it. And they had a young person in LA and a young person in New York making the contracts for the programmers.

JE: And they would decide what they felt was good?

ET: Yeah.

JE: You said you took these programs from overseas. Americans then were looking at this and saying, "Oh, we want to get in on that?"

ET: Well, a lot of people were closed out from distribution.

JE: Okay.

ET: Cause Turner wasn't going to do a fishing show. How could they get on satellite?

JE: Right, but then Tempo answered that question?

ET: Yeah.

JE: That problem.

ET: It also launched a lot of things. We had some morning shows from a guy who was actually the public relations manager of our National Cable Television Association, Bob Johnson, black man. He created the Black Entertainment Television Network. For the first two years they occupied one hour, then four hours on our network, and then he got his own transponder and left.

We did the same thing with a religious gal by the name of Mother Angelica. She ran a little catholic school where the women are. Today she is on a hundred and sixty-five different satellite systems in the world and is available to something like a billion people worldwide. The Catholic Church themselves has a network and they're only in about five hundred and sixty million homes. She's twice as big and a little nun. Still, we're on the network.

JE: You gave her a start?

ET: Yeah, because she went to my attorney to see how she could get on satellites. He convinced her to do an hour or two on our network and then eventually buy her own

channel when she had enough people paying her to really afford it. She didn't have to knock on doors for contributions to try to stay on satellite.

JE: There was a proposal to start a new channel called Discovery. Did you jump on that opportunity?

ET: Yes and no. We gave them some time when there were only twelve channels available. One of those was our Tempo channel. So Discovery went on our network for awhile and then when the second satellite came along and the industry went from twelve channels to twenty-four, they got their own channel and left. But, it did a lot of good. The interesting thing is, when John Malone bought my company, first thing he did was turn around and sell that channel to NBC for thirty million dollars.

JE: Wow.

ET: We had lost two million before we had had it up and running and profitable and we financed it entirely with the cash flow from our WTBS business.

JE: And you started the first advertising supportive cable channel which evolved into CNBC?

ET: Well, that's when we sold NBC. When I sold the company to John Malone...

JE: To John Malone.

ET: For stock. All my stockholders got stock and his stock, including I did.

JE: So that happened?

ET: Yeah, right away. I stuck with him for a year and he had me sell of things.

JE: John Malone?

ET: Yeah, if it hadn't been that he owned it, I probably only would've gotten ten million from somebody, but since it was John Malone...(laughter)

JE: You're having fun, aren't you?

ET: Oh yeah. Well, I think you'll see in that newspaper story my employees got to call, and all these other companies, Taylor's Toys. (laughter)

Chapter 10 - 8:45

Cable News Network

John Erling: You started a channel with news photographs and announcers are reading stories about those pictures.

Ed Taylor: Yes.

JE: Tell us your thinking.

ET: Again, this is in the year when there were only twelve satellite channels available.

JE: In the seventies?

ET: Yep. One of the first things we did, probably '78 or so, we worked with a British company that was making a convertor box that would take a different subcarrier, you know, the TV signal has a subcarrier for your voice to ride along, but there's room for several more subcarriers there or some data there. So we would send the picture out in data form, put the voice out in data form and this little box that the cable operator would pull it off of the transponders that had Turner's signal on it and it would run a channel all by itself.

What it was was the photographs that AP was sending out to the newspapers. We'd send them out that way and that photo would be there and then one of our young ladies, Becky Dixson, one of the young leaders of that group...

JE: Oh.

ET: Would read the AP story as the AP writer had written it and they got credit that it was them that was being put out there but it was actually our people here in Tulsa that did the reading and the fill in to make it a channel. We didn't make a ton of money, but that idea of twenty-four-hour-a-day news was there.

JE: That was the first time that ever happened?

ET: Mhm.

JE: Are you getting into New York and all with your signals at this time?

ET: Yeah.

JE: So, they see this, they have no idea it's coming from Tulsa, Oklahoma, or maybe they do?

ET: Well, some people knew. AP knew it was there.

JE: Right. It's remarkable. It's your move to Tulsa and Swearingen that all came together and it comes out of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

ET: Yeah, mhm.

JE: That's pretty amazing.

ET: Yeah, and then that woke Ted up because he saw how much the cable guys were putting it on as another channel. He went out and hired a guy by the name of Reese Schonfeld who headed the news operations for UPI Television News casting and what's probably the best there was in television news to move to Atlanta and head that CNN up for them. Two years later they put up a live CNN and basically, most instances, our cable operators dwindled away on our channel, but it stayed on for the first two or three years of CNN just because the satellites went to twenty-four channels. The average cable guy had to go out and replace all his electronics from twelve channels going down the streets of Tulsa to twenty-four channels going down there. So, they at least had to replace every darn amplifier on the poles. Now, the amplifiers are less than every mile, so there was a shift of timing, but it still had enough audience, but gradually our cable operators would take it off.

JE: At first he saw what you were doing, putting up the news photographs.

ET: Yep, yep.

JE: And Ted said, quote: “Nobody was interested in twenty-four-hour-news.”

ET: Yep.

JE: But he saw the results you were getting and then he said, “Oh, I need to get in on this,” and that’s when he hired...

ET: Reese.

JE: Reese. And called it Cable News Network.

ET: Yep.

JE: But, you’re the forerunner of CNN.

ET: Yep. Oh yeah.

JE: (laughter) That’s pretty amazing.

ET: Yeah, mhm.

JE: With CNN then you dropped what you were doi?

ET: Eventually we stopped it.

JE: Yeah. United Video also partners with Sony to start the Game Show Channel.

ET: United Video did that.

JE: Yeah, and you weren’t...

ET: No, that was Roy.

JE: How about the preview guide? That was Roy too.

ET: That was Roy.

JE: That was Roy. All right so, then John Malone, who had worked with both you and Roy, also had been involved with Turner in the early days wound up owning United Cable, United Video, and Tempo Television?

ET: Yep.

JE: Although all or part of those ventures he eventually sold to others.

ET: Yeah.

JE: Where’s John Malone today?

ET: The company’s called Liberty Media. He changed its name. He had owned some stock in twenty-six other companies from as big as AT&T and the Discovery Channel to small Hollywood production companies. He had owned more cable subscribers in Europe than Comcast owns in America. He built a whole European network with some of the cash from those things and he still runs his empire.

JE: And he must be around your age?

ET: He’s late seventies.

JE: Okay.

ET: Yeah.

JE: Where is he headquartered?

ET: Still in Denver. He’s got a ranch, I think in Wyoming, maybe it’s Utah.

JE: You shared with me a copy of the Tulsa Tribune, February 18th, 1985. I'm just going to take a quote from it. It has your picture there and it says: "We are building a strong niche in the television industry. We're aiming for 1/50 of the audience that watches network TV."

ET: Mhm, yeah.

JE: (laughter) And you ended up 100%.

ET: Well, I think when we said that we were talking about tune-ins, not coverage.

JE: Yeah.

ET: Our coverage was pretty hefty.

JE: They talk about Taylor's Toys here in Tulsa Tribune in 1985: "Teleconferencing satellite systems recently purchased the minority interest in video star connections, which offers video conferences services. Expanded satellite dish services, direct broadcast satellites will use dishes instead of cable serve consumers." So we hadn't done that yet in '85.

ET: No.

JE: But, that's what your plan was to do?

ET: Yes.

JE: You gave credit to Ted as being a visionary but you were a visionary as well.

ET: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: You could see this coming on. "Overseas transmission satellite systems have a 15% interest in international satellite, which will transmit between North America and Western Europe." That was another vision you had.

ET: Yep.

JE: And hadn't happened yet maybe, right. "Information services for the home: Taylor's looking at ways of distributing cable TV information into personal computers through special decoders." What came of that?

ET: I think we ran into some other competitors and merged, took some stock in the company. We did thirty concepts in the seven years or so of the eighties. Of which, when I sold out, we had full control of eight of those thirty-two. Some of those thirty-two we found, when we got halfway down the road, that there was somebody bigger and better in that field and we would usually try to merge with them, and take some of their stock, get our investment out that way. If not, we often shut several of them down to have the cash and the people to do what was our next plan, the next item. It was a recycling. But when I sold to Malone, the evaluation of the company, half of them were on the side companies; the other half was an evaluation on the TBS distribution.

JE: Here you are quoted in the 1985 newspaper: "We see growth in cable acquisitions. We are buying cable in small towns along Route 66 but not in the big towns."

ET: Yeah.

JE: You were bringing cable to the rural areas that wouldn't get over the air from Tulsa and other bigger cities?

ET: Yeah.

JE: So, you were certainly welcomed as you brought that concept?

ET: Yeah, we bought out small Oklahoma cable systems that were badly being managed. So badly that the first thing we did was put converters on the cable instead of having a thousand subscribers. Five hundred came in and said, "Well, we paid your installer to install this box and he told us that we would never have to pay a cable fee."

JE: Oh.

ET: Probably we took over fifteen small town cable operations. Probably half of them had had installers that was stealing from the guys who were absentee owners.

JE: At that time Satellite Systems owned twenty-two cable systems.

ET: Yep.

JE: It bought several in Oklahoma, including those in Fairview, Cordell, Sayre, Cherokee, Watonga, Okeene, and Hennessey.

ET: Yeah.

JE: That had to be exciting for you.

ET: Not really. (laughter)

JE: Why not?

ET: Well, it was a good investment because we knew we could buy them and upgrade them and double the subscribers.

JE: All right.

ET: The subscriber counts probably were half of that when we bought the systems and within a year you could double the number of subscribers.

JE: It meant a ton of work I guess is what you're saying. You bought them, but...

ET: Well, it was a good investment.

JE: Sure, it was.

Chapter 11 - 10:17

Future of Cable TV

John Erling: Your company, Satellite Syndicated Systems, became publically a publically held corporation in 1983.

Ed Taylor: Yeah.

JE: And it's rated over the counter under the symbol SSSN. How exciting that day had to be for you. Were you in New York?

ET: Oh yeah, we were in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston all in one day with our own private helicopter taking us from one meeting to another.

JE: You probably saw some of this coming. You're a visionary. Let's talk about cable TV and all today in 2018. According to reports the younger viewers are leaving TV, and thus cable, and they're streaming.

ET: Yep.

JE: They're streaming Netflix and others. Let's talk about it a minute here. The new millennial mindset, their ages in this year, twenty-two to thirty-seven, so that age group, the use of TV has dropped 15% and is down 36% from 2014. The drop off in teens, 18% from last year, 48% since 2014 is even more pronounced. The older population, fifty-five and older, the drop off is only 2%. For three months, ending September 30th, cable and satellite systems reported a loss of another one million customers: the largest quarterly drop yet. About 40% of homes led by Millennials don't subscribe to cable or satellite services.

ET: Yep.

JE: And they project that 47% of the video watched by the age eighteen to thirty-four crowd is streaming, up from 41% last year. Is this something you could have seen coming?

ET: Yeah, as the internet expanded, but you have to be careful of the number. There's still watching CBS, ABC, NBC, and the big programmers. They're just getting it through their Internet connection and putting it back on the digital television, or some of them are watching it on their computer.

JE: Yes, I guess the point to all of this is many of them are avoiding cable.

ET: Yep.

JE: It doesn't mean they're not watching their television programs and all that, although maybe they're not watching as much because we have Netflix, Amazon, or Hulu, and others that are also producing programs like you were kind of in the business doing yourself.

ET: Oh, yes.

JE: They're doing that now today.

ET: Absolutely.

JE: To fill as much time as they can.

ET: Yes, and I don't think it will stop. I think the Internet will eventually have four thousand channels like we once had four thousand magazines and newspapers.

JE: Wow.

ET: If you counted how many different fishing, local publications there are, practically every state has official...

JE: And you said that's four thousand what?

ET: Different channels.

JE: Like we had magazines, right.

ET: Yeah, they'll have to pay some amounts of pennies per channel, but they're not going to

pay for everything. It's interesting that ESPN has given up and has finally put ESPN over there and charges everybody that moves over there to the internet, but the charges for ESPN are more than ESPN used to get from the cable operator.

JE: Oh boy.

ET: So when one moves over here they get a ten dollar bill direct to them, where before that the cable package had ten dollars in it, but the cable operator was keeping four or five of it to run the cable system and they were only getting six or seven.

JE: Okay.

ET: They'd argue for each year so the networks are each one, one by one, giving up and putting their own channels over there with the charge on it. Now, whether people will continue to pay for some programming and not others, how many people send in checks to public broadcasting now and will pay PBS some money? The whole economics is gonna change some because these people will watch what they like to watch. That whole generation, they're not watching news and listening to news.

JE: Right now we have AT&T and they're in conjunction with Direct TV.

ET: They own it.

JE: So you, you can buy a product, your phone and all and Internet use from them and then your connection is with Direct TV, which is satellite, and they avoid using cable that way.

ET: Yeah, mhm.

JE: Do you see there's a time then that all of us may end up receiving our signals on the Internet and not have any need for cable?

ET: Technology moves on. AT&T's long term plans are that they will go directly to every device in your house with no wiring what-so-ever in the house and they'll be going directly from their cellphone towers. What they're waiting on is a technology, which is 5G, and they've just done 4G, which is just the speed at which they can push the microwave. And the government is auctioning off a lot of unused frequencies and they intend to convert everything to wireless, like your cellphone. And then everything will be available on your cellphone as well. Yeah, you can have your big TV set.

JE: Well, even today in 2018, I can watch a sport event on my cellphone, my smartphone as we call them, the Iphone, we can do that today.

ET: Oh yeah, yep.

JE: So again, is there a time when cable will be of no use at all? We won't need cable.

ET: Well, probably yes. That's the dream of both Verizon and AT&T. Verizon is a little more still upgrading their fiber optics cable systems in the big cities where they started. AT&T has stopped and they're putting their plans into five year out, everything goes wireless, and we get rid of all these trucks and installers. If you can get it on your phone and you can't get it on your TV set, damn TV's not working.

JE: Right.

ET: Vice versa. If you get it on the TV and you can't get it on the phone, go after the guy that manufactured or rent you the damn phone or the TV set, get a new one or a better one. Now, the interesting thing, it's not real nice, you look around, how many people are installing phones and services in our houses? It'll be a lot of jobs lost. You have no trucks, no people involved at all. You may have an outside consultant, especially in this building with... with little old ladies who don't understand anything about technology.

JE: Right.

ET: And it's gotten so bad that I have to call a technician to fix this TV set that does everything. (laughter) I never thought that day would come, but it's here. But the idea of doing everything wireless is even better for, well you like take a little town like Cleveland, pretty close to us, Cleveland, Oklahoma I'm talking about now. It's got all those beautiful hills and all that water and they're only less than three thousand people living within the city limits of Cleveland and half of them are so far apart that they've never been wired, because even if you're just stringing the wire for Internet, it was ten thousand a mile seventeen years ago, my guess is that's it's twenty thousand a mile now that you have to get back installing that wire there. And more and more people are moving far out from Tulsa, but also from all these little cities.

Cleveland has a shopping area of who comes into that Walmart of about nine thousand people and it's all the ones that's five to ten miles out of town in rocky hills with lots of trees and the cable operator couldn't afford to build twenty years ago when he was building the system and it's even worse now. But once you put one tower on the hilltop, they've got as many frequencies for Cleveland as we have for all of Tulsa and amazingly, the real bottleneck is New York City.

When you go forty miles from New York in directions, you've got sixteen million people and they've got the same set of frequencies. Philadelphia is only a hundred miles away. It's got it's own circle. So, in the bigger cities, the bigger the city, the more you might have to stay with some cable.

At one time, I guess ten of fifteen years back, some of us saw using wireless on phone poles and reusing the frequencies over and over and over again. You would just switch to whichever frequency was stronger. The cable would just interconnect to the pole line and broadcast from that location. But, that isn't going to happen. They're going to have to use the big microwave towers.

JE: If we wean ourselves off cable, we've got all this cable underground, I wonder if that could be used for something else. What would become of it?

ET: The only thing it could be used for is masses amounts of data from small business wanting to be sent out to other business or to stores or to subscribers and they want to originate

it from, well, your delicatessen, to tell people your order's ready. You may be able to use some of it that way.

You may find that you'll use a lot more with the communications we now have. Most people could work at home. You don't really need to commute into cities anymore. But, we're in the habit of doing that.

JE: No. You know, this has been affecting radio too, since that's been my background.

ET: Yep.

JE: And now we're streaming on the Internet. The other day I was driving from here to Grand Lake and I was listening to an FM station, pretty soon I lost it and it just dawned on me: If I was listening to my phone I would have had the signal all the way in. So, it's gong to affect radio and transmitters won't be needed at all.

ET: Nope.

JE: And it's very simple to put your signal on the Internet.

ET: Yep.

JE: That's where we'll be getting our radio information.

Chapter 12 - 3:45

Stop Smoking

John Erling: It's an exciting time, but it was an exciting time for you.

Ed Taylor: Oh yeah.

JE: In those days, in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. As we've talked about all this, what do you take the most satisfaction from in your business career?

ET: Maybe at the peak, we had three hundred people working in Tulsa, and when I sold out, nine of them became millionaires, not counting me, by our stock option plan. All three hundred of them were non-smokers when they were at the office. We didn't allow it.

JE: Really, really?

ET: Yep.

JE: You could not be a smoker and be hired? You wouldn't hire a smoker?

ET: Nope.

JE: Where did that come from?

ET: Me. If we had a smoker on the payroll we told them, "Your next pay raise will be the day after you give up cigarettes. If not, somebody else will hire you. We'll be glad to see you go if you don't stop smoking." My own secretary, she held out and held out being a smoker. Her kid hit college age, she had to pay tuition, she quit smoking.

JE: Isn't that something, the addiction to smoking was that great?

ET: Yeah, yeah.

JE: But you weaned a lot of people off. How do you know that some of them didn't smoke at home?

ET: We didn't know.

JE: You didn't know?

ET: Well, we could smell occasionally, but we weren't going to enforce that.

JE: Right, because there were smoke breaks?

ET: Nope.

JE: There's no smoking pit outside?

ET: Yep.

JE: Can you do that today?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Hire only non-smokers?

ET: Sure.

JE: We're so sensitive about some of those things.

ET: Yeah, yep, but the interesting thing is the quality of the number of experienced employees that quit their jobs and came to work for me was greater by a long shot than those that we lost.

JE: They came to you because of the non-smoking policy?

ET: Yep.

JE: Why did that become the big issue for you?

ET: I think because I was stuck in an era of so many meetings that was smoke filled rooms and I've always had the asthma in lungs that it bothered me. I think that got me interested in it. Someday somebody will decide to start the campaign to stop sugar like we campaigned to stop smoking, and we still got 30% of the people smoking.

JE: (laughter) What would be your advice to future young entrepreneurs that want to either start something new or be in business, what do you say?

ET: I think they've got to get away from the culture of young people today that they want to judge by what I'm given just because I'm me and I'm there, and they've got to get on the saying: "You've got to work hard to create something new." If you don't want to do that, you probably ought to go to work for the government or some big corporation and you'll get a pension and health insurance and a living wage, but you can't have all the freedom that our society is seeming to want in the younger generation lot.

JE: Yeah.

ET: It's impossible. Without people to create things and work hard to do it, this society is going to have all the failures that socialism has had. Sylvia and I together now have thirteen great grandkids.

JE: Wow.

ET: And I'm wondering what their life is going to be like. Really afraid.

JE: Why are you worried about what their life is going to be like?

ET: That they're going to grow up in a culture that seems to tell them that's what it is.

JE: What are you going to do for me attitude?

ET: Yeah, yeah.

JE: Yeah. Well, won't they figure that out, that that's not going to work?

ET: I don't know.

JE: But then you hate to see how far they have to go to discover that?

ET: Yep.

Chapter 13 - 4:18

Pioneer and Philanthropist

John Erling: Well, their grandfather was a pioneer.

Ed Taylor: Mhm.

JE: And that was you. And you take that title on and understand that.

ET: Yeah.

JE: There's no question you were a pioneer.

ET: Mhm. The, like, last twenty years, and it's really thirty now, since I sold out, I've spent giving away the money that I made. I think it's harder to give it away to good causes than it is to make it. (laughter) Sylvia is a Baptist and got me involved as a Baptist and I really enjoy doing it because they still have an awful lot of, well, like the food truck that Sapulpa runs, amazing, serving eight to twenty thousand meals a day. Now, it's in Florida, last year it was in Houston, and the crews we have that are out fighting the fires in California.

JE: You said the Baptists. Is this through the Baptist Church?

ET: Yeah. They have all kinds of things.

JE: But you've given generously to their causes?

ET: A lot of that, yeah, the most recent one that I've been involved in is the Crossover Community Church at 36th and Peoria. They started out afterschool trying to make life better for boys and girls with a athletic program that included reading. Most of the reading was in the bible. They would also tutor them and hire the brighter juniors and

seniors in high school at ten bucks an hour to lead a team of six or seven of them in sporting activities and tutoring and move the kids back and forth depending on the abilities of the tutors and the disabilities that kids...

A year and a half ago we opened Crossover Pride, which is a prep school for fifth and sixth grade boys that are tops in grades. They get a free scholarship and a private high school. We get corporations to sponsor their tuition. This year we brought in the second class of thirty kids, so we have a seventh grade and an eighth grade class. We have six and a half million pledged to build a church and a school up there now.

JE: Hm.

ET: It's really taken off from where we started.

JE: And that's in North Tulsa?

ET: Yeah, 36th and Peoria. It's all the work of two young people, both of which were basketball players. Well, one was a receiver for Tulsa at college.

JE: The names of those two, do you remember?

ET: Paul Abode. He was a tight end for Tulsa University about ten years back. Quite a good player, and a basketball player, he's the minister and the head up there. He went on and got himself a minister degree after TU degree. The other young man is white, played for the University of Missouri basketball team, got an MBA from Harvard or Yale, one of the Ivy League schools and went up there to help out and that. The two of them had built this whole setup, amazingly really.

Nobody would do emergent care in that part of town because they didn't think they could make money and cover their cost, but they started one along with one doctor who just retired. He thought he retired. He's worked pretty hard for the last five years, but he now has four full time nurses, five doctors that donate half a day or more to come in and treat patients, they've treated twenty-four hundred patients last year.

Most of the people up there, it's kids and young people on the Medicaid, not old enough for Medicare, they take that payment. If you don't have the money, they ask you to pay it back by working at whatever skills you have; either tutoring kids if that's what you can do, if you can only clean the bathrooms and the floors at night, whatever it is to pay back their cost of services.

JE: This has got to make you feel awfully good that your legacy lives on through these people.

ET: Yep, yep.

JE: Just because people have money, they don't get involved, I know that. There are lots of people in Tulsa with lots of money, but you've gotten involved involving those lives.

ET: Yeah, yeah.

Chapter 14 - 2:18**How to Be Remembered**

John Erling: How would you like to be remembered?

Ed Taylor: For helping people. That's what I've done for the last twenty years, still do.

JE: For all you've done and created and pioneered, it comes down to helping people?

ET: Yeah.

JE: Your career also helped a lot of people in terms of jobs.

ET: It was a different way, yeah.

JE: It was a different way, but this is even more direct.

ET: Yeah.

JE: And you're saying, "I want to be remember for...?"

ET: Supporting good causes.

JE: Yeah.

ET: When we had the company, we did things like bringing Ann Carol to sing and we did a lot with the Philharmonic and the Tulsa Ballet and things that were good for Tulsa, but they weren't really good for the needy.

At the same time we were doing that, we basically had financed and served on the board of Town and Country that has taken them from forty kids to a hundred and sixty-five kids that have autism of certain levels and many of them are graduating high school and a small percentage are getting through college. I stumbled on that one because my granddaughter had it and we just started out to pay back. It's been a great project. It hasn't needed me for four or five years other than writing a check each year.

But, we do more and more things now like the Crossover operation, especially with kids that have a disability. And being born to an eighteen-year-old mom that doesn't know how to raise you is maybe a worse disability than being without an arm or a leg unless somebody really pitches in and helps. And we've concentrated on that. I'm happy doing that. I keep busy.

JE: Yes, it's got to bring you tremendous satisfaction.

ET: Yeah, it does.

JE: Well, I just want to thank you for this time.

ET: Okay.

JE: I've heard about you in our community for a long time, and to be able to sit across the table and hear your remarkable story is my pleasure and those who will listen now and the generations who aren't even born will hear: "Wow, did they really have to do that?" To show them how it all began.

ET: Yes.

JE: As far as the work that you did, so, thank you, Ed, I appreciate it very much.

ET: Yeah, thank you.

Chapter 15 - 0:33

Conclusion

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