

## Billy Parker

A country music mainstay with 20+ charted singles, but most influential in his roll as radio disc jockey.

### Chapter 01 - 1:40

#### Introduction

---

**Announcer:** While Billy Parker was a mainstay on country radio, his claim to fame was as an influential disc jockey, not as a performer. Ironically, for all of the Top 40 Country Hits he spun over the course of his decades on the air, not one of them was his own. Born July 19, 1939, in Tuskegee, OK, he began playing guitar as a child and by the age of 14 had made his professional debut on the Tulsa radio program *Big Red Jamboree*. A few years later, he began performing in clubs and in 1959 landed his first DJ work.

By 1963, Billy was the regular daytime disc jockey on KFDI in Wichita, Kansas and also hosted a Tulsa television program. In the same year, he cut his first single, and was named “Mr. DJ U.S.A.” in a nationwide poll, which helped land him at Nashville, Tennessee’s WSM. After his 1966 release “I’m Drinking All the Time”, Parker began playing with Ernest Tubb’s Troubadours in 1968, staying with the group for three years, when he joined Tulsa’s KVOO.

Billy was named Disc Jockey of the Year by the Academy of Country & Western Music in 1975 and he won the award again in 1977, 1978, and 1984. In 1976, he scored his first chart hit with “It’s Bad When You’re Caught (With the Goods),” from the album *Average Man*. Billy achieved his biggest success in 1982 with the title track from the LP (Who’s Gonna Sing) *The Last Country Song*. He was inducted into the Country Music Disc Jockey Hall of Fame in 1992.

Listen to Billy Parker tell his story on the oral history website, [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 02 - 10:55

#### On Stage - On Radio

---

**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today’s date is April 16, 2012. Billy, if you will state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age, please.

**Billy Parker:** Billy Joe Parker. I am 75 years of age, born 7-19-1937.

**JE:** We are recording this interview in the recording studios here of [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com). Billy, where were you born?

**BP:** I was born in Tuskegee, Oklahoma, although my birth certificate reads Okemah, Oklahoma because that's where the courthouse happened to be, but I was born at home in Tuskegee, Oklahoma.

**JE:** Is that house still standing?

**BP:** No.

**JE:** Long gone?

**BP:** I think a tornado got that house many years ago.

**JE:** Really?

**BP:** Uh huh.

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

**BP:** My mother's name was Lucille West Parker.

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

**BP:** She was born in Oklahoma and my dad was born in Tennessee.

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

**BP:** James Thomas Parker.

**JE:** Your mother's personality - what was she like?

**BP:** My mother was very talented, very strict when I was younger, played piano, and I like to feel like that that's where I picked up the musical interests years ago at a young age. We used to sing gospel music along with her. She played the piano.

**JE:** And then your father, did he have musical ability at all?

**BP:** No, none at all. My father was just a great person. My father was in stature about 5 foot 4 (laughs), very short. My mother was about 5 foot 8-1/2, so like Mutt and Jeff type (laughs).

**JE:** What did your father do for a living?

**BP:** He worked for the WPA many years ago.

**JE:** The WPA was a government program that built roads and bridges and all at a wonderful time of our country that gave many people many, many jobs. What did your father do?

**BP:** My father at that time was in construction and would do anything that the WPA would ask of him but in later years, we moved out of Tuskegee, Oklahoma. In fact, I was very young at the time. Of course, as I mentioned, I was born there but at about the age of 2 to 2-1/2, we moved to Bristow, Oklahoma. We lived there and he still worked for the WPA there.

**JE:** Was your father a disciplinarian? What kind of guy was he?

**BP:** He was not strict with me or with my brothers and sister. He was always congenial. Everybody liked him. He had a great personality, sometimes funny.

**JE:** So I can jump to conclusions here - you got your music from your mother and you just described your personality from your dad.

**BP:** I like to say that, yes.

**JE:** Right. You mentioned brothers and sisters. Tell us how many brothers.

**BP:** I had two brothers - Oren Lee Parker and James Thomas Parker. Gosh, I miss them. Of course, they are gone now. I have a sister and her name is Frances Louise Parker. I am the youngest.

**JE:** Were any of them musical?

**BP:** No, they loved music but none were in the musical vein, no.

**JE:** When did you first show any interest in music?

**BP:** Well, after we moved to Tulsa.

**JE:** So you were in Bristow and then moved to Tulsa?

**BP:** Yeah, we were in Bristow and my dad got a job at the Douglas Bomber Plant.

**JE:** Here in Tulsa.

**BP:** Uh huh. After we moved here, we moved over on North Utica Street and we lived there for a couple of years in a rented home. Then we moved from there to 1301 North Cincinnati. I do remember that, and I think that is probably when I can say that I became interested in music because we had the Grand Ole Opry on every Saturday night from WSM in Nashville. I remember singing along with Hank Williams Sr., of course, and with Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, and some of the greats in the business. I'd kind of play along with them but I didn't have a guitar or anything at the time. I played a broomstick, you know. I'll never forget that.

**JE:** About how old would you have been at that point?

**BP:** I would have been probably 6 years old.

**JE:** Alright, so it was a very early age.

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** Did your parents do anything to encourage that at that point, that they could sense something?

**BP:** They loved music, my dad especially loved country music. In fact, I was so sorry that he couldn't be here in the later years, you know, because things went fairly good because of the business and the people that I was surrounded by. But yeah, he loved the music business. I remember him taking me to a Hank Williams show at the Brady Theater many years ago and I remember it so well because we sat there and at the time at the Brady, there were these things that hold the ceiling up. That's where I sat was behind one, so I had to turn to the left and to the right to watch Hank Williams on stage. But I remember specifically him taking me to that concert with Hank Williams and that is the only time I really had the opportunity to see him.

**JE:** So you would have been...?

**BP:** I would have been about 7 years of age at that time the best I remember.

**JE:** Wow, that had to have really impressed you then.

**BP:** It did.

**JE:** Because you knew you liked music at that point.

**BP:** I knew I wanted to be in the music world, but I didn't even know really what the music world consisted of.

**JE:** So at 6 or 7, you already projected yourself as being on stage?

**BP:** I felt it, yes.

**JE:** You went to elementary school here in Tulsa?

**BP:** Yes, I went to Emerson Elementary School right off of north Cincinnati. We lived on north Cincinnati. I went through I think the fifth grade there and then we moved out east and I went to Whittier Elementary School for a while.

**JE:** And then junior high school?

**BP:** Junior high school...I went to Grover Cleveland Junior High School which was located in east Tulsa, or mid Tulsa I should say now.

**JE:** And then high school?

**BP:** High school...I didn't. I left school in the middle of the ninth grade at Grover Cleveland Junior High School. I don't have a reason with the exception of my mother and father separated and divorced and my brother-in-law and sister lived in McAlester, Oklahoma. I quit school and moved to McAlester, Oklahoma - not to the penitentiary. I lived in McAlester, Oklahoma.

**JE:** So you would have been how old about that time?

**BP:** 14.

**JE:** So the thing that drove you not to continue your high school was music?

**BP:** Yeah, in a way. I had a guitar. My mother, when I was 11 years old, bought me a Stella guitar at the pawn shop in Tulsa...I believe on 1st Street in Tulsa. She bought me a guitar and I got a book called the "Mel Bay Chord Book" I believe it was. I learned to play some chords on the guitar on that old Stella guitar. Didn't play good but that's how I learned to play. So I had a guitar; I took my guitar - as a matter of fact, caught a bus to McAlester, Oklahoma. I don't know if it was a Greyhound or Continental or what it was, but I caught a bus to McAlester and lived with my sister and my brother-in-law there because he worked for the ammunition depot as a construction worker and iron worker. So I spent a lot of time in McAlester, Oklahoma.

**JE:** And, again, you moved down there when you were about 14?

**BP:** Yeah, I was 14 years of age.

**JE:** So what was your personality like when you were a child. Were you bashful?

**BP:** I was very bashful, yeah. I don't know how I had the opportunity to do the things that I did. In fact, I can't remember everything that I had the opportunity to do. But I was bashful

and backward too, I guess. I didn't have the personality to come out and say hey, I'm a singer, you know; although I would sing in the back room or play disc jockey. I played disc jockey a whole lot with magazines and two record players. You are making me remember stuff that I haven't remembered in a while. I had a nephew that would get in the room with me and he would interrupt me when I was reading a commercial from a magazine or whatever. I remember getting aggravated at him. "I'm on the air! I'm on the air!" (laughs) That was a long time ago. I was 14.

**JE:** So then you had two callings actually? You wanted to be on the radio and you also wanted to be on stage.

**BP:** Yeah, automatically. I guess I just had it in my bones. I had the feeling for it, not knowing that I would ever be...but that's what I wanted to be.

**JE:** You received your first guitar when you were 11 years old. Was there a point you actually performed before people?

**BP:** I don't remember all the years and the dates, but I remember a boy by the name of Bob Duvall played steel guitar and I played guitar. We were on channel 6 back when channel 6 was the only TV station in Tulsa on Bob Latting's Matinee. You are bringing this out of me! Bob Latting Matinee - we would play a country song, of course. We would usually do one song or maybe two songs on the show. I think the show was long about noontime. That was an experience.

**JE:** So was that again at 14?

**BP:** I would think I was a little older than that then because I came back and lived with my dad in Tulsa later. We lived over on east Haskell Place. I can't remember all of the things; in fact, I think I have done too much. I can't remember all of the things that I have done in sequence.

**JE:** But was it about 14 or 15 that you were actually really performing?

**BP:** Yeah. I was on radio in McAlester, Oklahoma at KNED radio. We would do a show, Carl Garnand had a show, The Carl Garnand Show. It was his show. I played guitar, terrible guitar. I must add terrible guitar; not like Roy Clark. But he had a theme song, Hank Snow, "Movin' On", and I would play the "da na la na la na la na" and that's about all the guitar I played, and then I played some chords. But we would do a show 15 minutes Monday through Friday and then 30 minutes on Saturday in the Aldridge Hotel in McAlester, Oklahoma when I was 14.

**JE:** So that would be your first professional performance"

**BP:** Yeah that would be my first professional gig, yeah.

**JE:** About in 1951 I believe?

**BP:** Yeah.

---

**Chapter 3 - 7:11**  
**Dropped the Mop**

---

**John Erling:** Then you were in Tulsa?

**Billy Parker:** Came back to Tulsa...

**JE:** About that same age?

**BP:** Yeah, I came back to Tulsa. Actually when I was doing the channel 6 show, it was before I moved to McAlester.

**JE:** As a youngster then. Were you playing in bars?

**BP:** Not at 14. That came a little later after I moved back. That's when I moved back to Tulsa.

**JE:** Alright. Did you perform in the root beer stand in McAlester?

**BP:** The root beer stand was here out by Crystal City.

**JE:** OK. So while you were here in Tulsa then, you performed at this root beer stand?

**BP:** Yep, we would go out on a Sunday. They had a little sort of stage built at the front of the root beer stand.

**JE:** Where was that located?

**BP:** Out by Crystal City, out by Red Fork. I would get up and play guitar along with a band. I don't remember the band at the time. But I would get up and play a few songs and we would play out there for an hour or so while people drank their root beer. It was kind of a drive-in thing. They would just drive up and order their root beer.

**JE:** You talk about playing guitar but there was some point here where you were singing too I guess?

**BP:** Well actually I always sung because I always loved the Hank Williams songs and, in fact, that is practically all I sung back in the early years. I guess I always sung, even since my mother played piano and we'd sing the gospel songs mostly. Then I would sing some country songs and she could play along with it too.

**JE:** So when you were on the radio like at 14, didn't you join the Big Red Jamboree?

**BP:** OK, that is when we came back to Tulsa and I was with the Big Red Jamboree.

**JE:** What was the Big Red Jamboree?

**BP:** Hank Thompson was doing the Big Red Jamboree and I got to appear on the Big Red Jamboree. It wasn't much, though, but I appeared on it.

**JE:** Both singing and guitar?

**BP:** Yep, I played guitar and sung but, of course, the band done the playing and I done the strumming, but yeah I always played guitar when I sung.

**JE:** And again about 14-15 years old?

**BP:** Yeah. Gosh I am trying to remember when I was 14 or 15 years old, there was so much happening in my life with my parents divorcing and me trying to live with one of them and trying to live with the other one and then moving to McAlester. There were a lot of things

that happened in between and a lot of things that I did that I don't remember very well. Some things I don't even want to remember but a lot of things I had the opportunity to do. It didn't happen in any particular sequence it didn't seem like.

**JE:** Well the Big Red Jamboree was on what radio station in Tulsa?

**BP:** It was on a TV station.

**JE:** A TV station?

**BP:** Yeah that was on TV.

**JE:** And how did you get invited to that?

**BP:** I got invited to that through being on channel 6. The best I remember, that was the only station here then, you know. That's how I got invited to be on the Big Red Jamboree.

**JE:** And again who was it that headed that up, the Big Red Jamboree?

**BP:** Hank Thompson.

**JE:** So did you have to try out? I mean this was a big thing.

**BP:** No back in those days, you didn't particularly have to try out if you were picking and grinning and you'd get on there and do one song, you know. So many things happened over the years and I'll be truthful - I can't remember. In fact, when you asked me to do this, I thought, "How can I remember at 75 back to 14 years old and all that?" But so many things happened after I left school, some things good and some things bad.

**JE:** Right. What about Hank Thompson? What kind of personality was he?

**BP:** Hank Thompson was one of the finest people that I've ever met. He and Roy Clark were just two of my favorite people. Although I wasn't like next-door neighbors or top-of-the-notch friends with them, I respected them so much.

**JE:** But they must have respected you. Here you were 14-15 years old.

**BP:** I didn't meet Roy until later years.

**JE:** Right. But Hank had to appreciate what you were doing. This young man is here and...

**BP:** I think he did. I felt like he did. At least he gave us a chance. I didn't have too many conversations or connections with him at the time. It's just like politics - you get in through the back door and you get to work with them. Just like later Red Foley and people that I worked with. It all came through a back door. I didn't force myself in; I just kind of politicked myself in!

**JE:** Well I'm sure you let somebody know or word of mouth said here's a young guy that's pretty talented. Did you do any traveling then at about that age with any group?

**BP:** No, it stayed pretty well, of course, in McAlester. I was in McAlester when we came back home. I had just played around here. You mentioned the bars. I played in the Springdale tavern and I played a number of bars around at a younger age when you could at 17-18 years old, you know.

**JE:** You went to work for a radio station in 1959, I believe.

**BP:** I went to work in 1959 for KFMJ and they owned a station in Oklahoma City and in Wichita, KFDI in Wichita. I went to work at KFMJ in Tulsa. It used to be Fred and Mary Jones' station but at the time, I went through three different ownerships there, I believe.

**JE:** Where were they on the dial.

**BP:** 1050.

**JE:** And obviously a country station.

**BP:** Yes it was gospel in the morning till noon and country in the afternoon.

**JE:** You became a disc jockey on that station?

**BP:** Yes, uh huh.

**JE:** So that was your first radio job?

**BP:** Yes. As a matter of fact, we are skipping around but I was working for QuikTrip for Chester Cadjo. I was working for him when they had three stores.

**JE:** What did you do for him?

**BP:** I was a clerk. I ran the cash register. I was assistant manager. They had a manager and an assistant manager in each store and I was the assistant manager. I worked with Chester Cadjo for QuikTrip through six stores, which the sixth store was on north Main. There was an ad on KFMJ radio. They were looking for a part-time disc jockey just to do Saturday and Sunday. I was mopping. I remember this as if it were today. I was mopping the floor, had finished my shift and was mopping up before I left. The ad on the radio, I believe it was Willie the Hillbilly, Hank Stanford, that was doing the promotion that they were looking for a disc jockey for the weekend. I dropped the mop and asked permission from the manager to drive on out on west Edison because it wasn't that far, and I remember driving there and meeting Ron Blue. Ron Blue hired me for the weekend shift that day and I trained under Willie the Hillbilly and a guy named Johnny Western, not the singer Johnny Western but a guy that used the name Johnny Western. I trained under them and started playing the tapes on the weekend and then doing some country in the afternoon. It wasn't maybe 2-1/2, 3 or 4 weeks until Johnny Western, the disc jockey, either retired or they retired him and they hired me full-time. So that's how I got in the business and I left QuikTrip (laughs).

## Chapter 4 - 10:10

### Thanks a Lot

---

**John Erling:** So you were working for QuikTrip and then singing on the side, I suppose?

**Billy Parker:** Yeah, I was working at QuikTrip a full-time job and then when I was interviewed

by Ron Blue and I took the job at KFMJ, that's when I said good-bye and got in the radio business.

**JE:** Well you and I share something in common because we were both hired by Ron Blue.

**BP:** That's right! We were; that's exactly right.

**JE:** Ron Blue hired me at KRMG. More on KRMG later. But here he took somebody who had never been on the radio before as a disc jockey.

**BP:** Right...

**JE:** And there had to be something about your personality that he noticed then. You have to give him a lot of credit for taking an inexperienced young man and he took a chance.

**BP:** Yes, he did, and evidently I just beat everybody else there because I drove...I mean I threw dust up in the little road that went down to the KFMJ studio getting there because I was wanting the job because I wanted to be in the business. You're bringing things out of me that I forget, but yeah.

**JE:** So when he hired you full-time, what shift were you on?

**BP:** Any shift they wanted me on, ok? When I went on full-time, actually Willy the Hillbilly was there at the time and I believe he was doing drive time and I believe I did 1-3 country music wise.

**JE:** What kind of songs were you playing about that time?

**BP:** I was playing Cowboy Copas and I was playing Hank Williams and I was playing Ernest Tubb and I was playing George Morgan. I could go on and on and on. Of course, the older country acts - they were not that old then - but I was playing the kind of music that I loved, you know.

**JE:** Did Ron know that you were also a musician and a singer?

**BP:** No, I don't think at the time that we discussed that. But I think at a later date that I talked with him about working some gigs and I sold... One thing that really helped me at the radio station, I sold the Broken Arrow Hour at \$10 a spot and I filled up the hour. Ron liked that! (laughs) And also at the same time, if I worked the dates, I could plug the dates and that was kind of our understanding. And I would do remotes and this type of thing for him, you know, and I got paid to do the remotes. Like I remember Ernest Tubb saying one time, "I pay the band weekly, very weakly". Well, we got paid very weakly but it was fun and the experience was worth more than money.

**JE:** KFMJ...did that become another station? Did the call letters change on that?

**BP:** They did in later years and to be truthful with you, I don't know. I know I went through the folks out of Oklahoma City and then I went with Oral Roberts. They bought KFMJ. Willard Mason and Bill Nash ran KFMJ under the auspices of the Oral Roberts organization, so I worked for them at KFMJ and then later George Kravis bought KFMJ and I worked for them. So actually I worked for KFMJ until 1968.

**JE:** But then you were making performances?

**BP:** During all of that time, I was making performances either at remotes or in clubs and, like I mentioned, the Springdale Tavern and many various places - Ochelata, the Moonglow Hut - anywhere they'd have me, we would work.

**JE:** You were becoming quite a personality then - the fact that you were on the radio, then you could go out and pick and grin and sing and all that.

**BP:** The combination is really the whole picture of what drove me through the life of the music business. If it hadn't been for radio, the other wouldn't have happened - the music - and if it hadn't been for me recording at Oral Roberts' studio down on south Boulder, the Ernest Tubbs thing wouldn't have happened because I recorded a song called "Thanks a Lot".

**JE:** When did that happen - "Thanks a Lot" - was that in '59?

**BP:** Yep, that was in 1959. I recorded "Thanks a Lot" in the basement of the Oral Roberts building.

**JE:** So that was in the same year you went to work for KFMJ?

**BP:** Right, right.

**JE:** So things were poppin' here for you?

**BP:** Yes. I had good friends in the business - David Engles...

**JE:** Who still is today on the radio and he has...

**BP:** The Oasis Radio Network. But I taught him radio.

**JE:** Oh really?

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** At KFMJ?

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** And he today is a singer and then he owns many, many radio stations now.

**BP:** Right.

**JE:** Christian radio stations.

**BP:** I taught him and he will tell anyone the way I taught him. He sat down at the board to run the tapes and play the music. I'm not really proud of this but I walked off and let him have it (laughs) and let him learn on his own you might say, and he did. He still teases me because of that. He says, "You walked off and let me". I said, "Yeah, but you own the radio stations and I'm still working" (laughs).

**JE:** Right. Tell me about the song "Thanks a Lot". How did that come about?

**BP:** Marvin McCullough was on KRMG. Marvin was recording for Capitol Records. They sent him the song "Thanks a Lot" and he just didn't particularly like it so he gave me a copy of the "dub" we call it - the tape - and said here's a song for you, not thinking that it would be a heck of a song. But Eddie Miller wrote the song, Eddie Miller and Don Sessions out in California. Eddie Miller was from Oklahoma originally but I didn't know him at

the time. So I took the song and, of course, at the time I'd have probably took any song (laughs). I was wanting to record and we had the opportunity to record, so I recorded the song called "Thanks a Lot". It came out on Cimarron Records which was owned by Leon McAuliffe. What happened then - and I'm really reaching back in my mind - the song was doing good as a single record and went into the country field and KAKC here started playing it and then it got into the pop field here and other places and was coming up on the charts. In our business, when someone records a song that you recorded, they call it a "cover record/cover song". Ernest Tubb covered me on "Thanks a Lot" in the country field, which was a big hit for Ernest Tubb. Then about three months later, I'm just guessing, Brenda Lee recorded the same song in the pop field and, needless to say, they threw me in the ditch. I mean, my song was over then after Ernest recorded it and Brenda recorded it - the pop and the country was over...although I did get a lot of play and worked some dates on that and later on went to work for Ernest Tubb. Of course, that's down the road a little.

**JE:** So "Thanks a Lot" was a pop song as you recorded it?

**BP:** Yeah, it was a pop song and I'll never forget, John, and you will appreciate this. Marvin was different. I always knew Marvin; I always liked Marvin; Marvin was very talented. Of course, he gave me the song to record because he didn't want to record it. When it came out on KRMG, he played it for the first time, a 45 rpm record, and he played it all the way through 78 rpm.

**JE:** Why did he do that?

**BP:** He was just that type of person. I never could figure out why he did that. And I don't remember whether he ever played it again or not, but he played it 78 speed on KRMG.

**JE:** Because it was a big hit here in Tulsa.

**BP:** And I was still at KFMJ. Yeah it was doing good here, of course. KAKC was playing the fire out of it. Tom York and everybody at KAKC was really strapping it on it. Scooter Seagraves...and it was really going good. But yep, he hit it 78 speed on 45 rpm record. And I was listening.

**JE:** Wow, what did you think?

**BP:** You know, I thought well that's just Marvin. I thought maybe he may play it every day from then on but he didn't. But I don't know, I don't know. I never could figure it out.

**JE:** KRMG was playing country music as well and maybe big band at the same time or not?

**BP:** Well they were playing some country on Marvin's show but that's about it.

**JE:** Was that daily - Marvin McCullough?

**BP:** Uh huh, his show was daily.

**JE:** In the afternoon?

**BP:** He did a morning show and an afternoon show the best I remember. Then when I left to go with Ernest, he came over to KFMJ.

- JE:** Was there any talk about you working for KRMG? I mean, there could have been a spot for you there.
- BP:** No there never was, no. I was never approached from the KRMG standpoint by Ron. He had hired me at KFMJ but I was never...
- JE:** And then he moved over to KRMG. But I suppose with Marvin there, who was a big personality wasn't he on KRMG?
- BP:** Yes, ratings good, very good. Had the band and doing the same thing. And I had the band with Rocky Caple and the Shotguns and we were working out of KFMJ. And maybe that's the reason he didn't play...
- JE:** So there was competition, both in singing and in radio, so he didn't like that apparently.
- BP:** I guess not. But I don't forget it and in later years before he passed on, we had the opportunity. He would call me from Ft. Smith, Arkansas and visit with me on the air but he couldn't talk. He had had a stroke. But his wife at the time would call me and say, "Marvin's here and wants to say hello to you" and that's all he could say. And I would talk to him. And then when they moved to Amarillo before he passed on, I visited with them as they were on their way to Amarillo. I never had any grudge, never held a grudge. He was a very good talent and I loved him as an entertainer and as a person.
- JE:** Did the two of you ever talk about that incident of him playing the record at 78?
- BP:** You know what, I don't...I'm sure someone may have talked about it to him but I was never one to complain. After that, I don't believe I ever said anything else about it that I remember.

## Chapter 5 - 8:00

### A Texas Troubadour

---

**John Erling:** There's a story about "Thanks a Lot" and Harry Truman.

**Billy Parker:** He signed the book for me and I signed the little 45 rpm Cimarron record to President Truman.

**JE:** Where did you see him?

**BP:** I saw him at Independence, Kansas in his library, in the Truman Library. I sat there in his office and visited with him for at least 30 minutes. In fact, I wondered why we talked so long. But he was the nicest person...I've never met a president or former president before, but he was the nicest person that I've ever met. He was just so congenial and so nice and we visited, not about anything in particular, not about politics for sure, just about the business - just as you would talk with anybody. I mean, he's just a splendid person. And he signed those two books for me. I still have them.

**JE:** Did you get a sense that he liked country music, that you shared that?

**BP:** You know what, I remember we talked about his daughter was a pianist, you know.

**JE:** His daughter was Margaret.

**BP:** Yeah, Margaret Truman. He talked about her being an artist, playing piano and this type of thing. But he didn't really talk too much about country music and I didn't either.

**JE:** When he was president and Margaret would play, some members of the media would criticize her playing and that upset him a lot.

**BP:** Yes because he loved her music and she played good music. But the critics always had something to say then and they have something to say now (laughs).

**JE:** Yeah. What a great memory that was for you.

**BP:** Some things you forget and at my age, believe me. You can tell by the interview that I forget a lot of things. But the good things I don't forget. I don't forget people being faithful, and people have been faithful in the radio business to me over the years.

**JE:** You were there then at KFMJ. Somewhere you were in Wichita, Kansas at KFDI.

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** In 1963.

**BP:** I moved to KFDI and lived in the back room at the radio station.

**JE:** You went from KFMJ to Wichita. Why did you do that?

**BP:** Well, as a matter of fact, I had the opportunity to be on that station there and we were doing a TV show here at the time and I would go up through the week and do my show up there...

**JE:** So they must have made you a better offer then up there, is that why you left?

**BP:** It wasn't too much of an offer then. It was the same company at the time that I moved to Wichita. And Ron Blue's folks...you know, his father-in-law owned the station in Oklahoma City, the station in Tulsa, and the station at KFDI in Wichita. So I more or less transferred, I guess you might say, up there.

**JE:** But at the same time, you hosted a TV show here in Tulsa.

**BP:** Yes, I was doing a show here in Tulsa at the time. It was Ray Bradley Chevrolet that sponsored the show on channel 6. I would come in and do the show and the time we would do the show was live. Gosh, John, you're bringing things out of me...I did a show for Horn Brothers Furniture on channel 8, for Ernie Miller Pontiac/GMC on two or three TV stations in later years. On channel 6, Bradley Chevrolet sponsored that. I had the bands and had various people on.

**JE:** You were 26 and you had made a pretty big name for yourself here in Tulsa. People knew who Billy Parker was.

**BP:** Well because of the remotes and because of the radio and because of the TV things, yes. I guess that I did back then. At the same time, I was trying to help make names for other

people too that were in the business because I would have them on the TV shows and radio shows.

**JE:** And some of those names would have been?

**BP:** Well like Johnny Steels in the early years - Johnny Steels, Ted Creekmore. I played Marvin McCullough; I played his songs and still play them once in a while, even though he played mine on 78. Yeah, I just always tried to, and I still do. I just try to be a friend to everybody and sometimes it's kind of tough - I'm sure you know what I mean - in the business. But I don't want anybody to think any bad things about me so I try to help other people at the same time. I always have.

**JE:** I believe in '63, you cut the song "The Line Between Love and Hate".

**BP:** I did in Nashville.

**JE:** What happened to that song?

**BP:** It got some play. It went into the charts. We always got chart action in the early years, not #1 but we'd get some chart action. And I probably recorded at least 50-60 songs and maybe 5 of them out of those 60 have got pretty good national recognition, one of them being "Lord If I Make It To Heaven Can I Bring My Own Angel". That was in later years. And "Who's Going to Sing the Last Country Song". I have had about 3-4 albums out and had a gospel album out. All of it happened around the circumference of life. You know, I mean I don't even remember. I could tell a lot of stories if I could remember all of them (laughs). Like one time I was working at KVOO and Jack Cresse sent us out to Las Vegas for the Roy Clark Show. I remember being there with Tom Carter with the Tulsa World as a guest of Roy Clark. Roy had us stand up - "We are glad to have Billy Parker from KVOO in Tulsa with us and Tom Carter of the Tulsa World - you all stand up". We stood up and waved at everybody and he said, "I just want you all to know they didn't pay a dime to get in here or to fly out here". (laughs)

**JE:** Well along about this time then when you went to Nashville and you cut the song "The Line Between Love and Hate", you were named Mr. DJ USA in a national poll.

**BP:** Yeah, the WSM Radio poll.

**JE:** How did they know about you - at KFDI?

**BP:** Yeah, KFDI. As a matter of fact, that is where I received that award from and went to Nashville and visited with Grant Turner at WSM.

**JE:** It's interesting how they picked up on you in Wichita, Kansas and it was a poll on WSM.

**BP:** Well, I'll tell you what. It was a national poll and you had promoters who promote music and they did the voting, as they do now. You know people who belong to the Country Music Association or the Academy of Country Music, the people who belong do the voting. Well these promoters who belonged to the association at that time, whatever it was at the time, they did the voting on the things that you had done for them I think more than anything else in promotion. It gets back to politics.

**JE:** Uh huh. You release the song “I’m Drinking All The Time”.

**BP:** Yeah, I recorded the song on Decca. Now that was right before I moved to Nashville. I was working at KFMJ.

**JE:** That was in 1966.

**BP:** ‘66 yeah. Ernest had already covered me and Ernest had gotten me a recording contract with Decca - Decca Records. Ernest had gotten me a recording contract with Owen Bradley. As a matter of fact, when I left Nashville, I was still owing Bradley (laughs).

**JE:** Did you live in Nashville for a while?

**BP:** Yeah that was ‘68 when I moved to Nashville.

**JE:** Alright, so you’re still here. When did you go to KVOO?

**BP:** I went to KVOO after the Opry and after Ernest Tubb. That was 1971.

**JE:** Alright, ok. “I’m Drinking All The Time” in 1966. Did that chart very high?

**BP:** Yeah it got on the charts. It wasn’t a #1 or #10. It made it on the charts. They didn’t promote it a lot. I mean I was just a newcomer to the label and they didn’t promote a lot. But nevertheless, it got on the charts and it made the charts in the country field.

**JE:** Were you writing any songs about this time?

**BP:** No I didn’t. People thought that I wrote “Thanks a Lot” and, of course, I never was a writer, although I had written a few songs that didn’t amount to much.

## Chapter 6 - 9:25

### Bar Fights

---

**John Erling:** What about payola back in those days? How close were you to it or did you observe it? What was your experience with payola?

**Billy Parker:** I never really had an experience with payola, especially in my recording. I didn’t have nothing to pay them (laughs) in the first place, and Decca wasn’t into that realm from the country side that I know of. The only thing I remember about payola happened at KVOO radio in, I believe, ‘71 or ‘72, maybe early ‘72. A gentleman came through from somewhere in Colorado - Fountain, Colorado, I think. He had a new artist with him, a good singer and a good record - a 45 rpm record back in those days. He came in and before we went on the air, he handed me an envelope and the envelope was full of...I don’t know, I couldn’t tell you if it was \$1 bills, \$10 bills, \$100 bills or whatever. But he handed me this envelope and said, “I appreciate you helping us out”. This was at KVOO and I told Jack Cresse about it too. He handed it to me and I immediately handed it back to him and said, “I can’t do this”. That is one of my proud moments in radio. I handed

it back to him and said, "You don't need to do this here at all", and I played the record, interviewed the guy on the all night show, and they went on about their business. But that's the only time I can remember that I was involved with anything that had anything to do with even the handling of payola.

**JE:** That was a perfect example for those who are listening and don't know what that term meant, that was exactly it. A new artist would come through town and then they would pay you to play them. It wasn't because they were the most popular or they had the most popular song. They were trying to get exposure.

**BP:** That's exactly right.

**JE:** And, of course, then eventually that just blew up and became a scandal in the business and obviously did away with it.

**BP:** In certain parts of the country, it was really a scandal, you know, in New York and Detroit especially. But no, I never had to pay anything to get a record played at all. Like I said, I didn't have anything to pay (laughs).

**JE:** Would you make calls on radio stations and say, "I'm a singer and I have song I would like for you to play"?

**BP:** Oh yes, yes I used to do...in fact, Decca Records' promotion people would give me a list of people to call and say, "I thank you for playing the record" or "I appreciate it if you would get it on the charts". That was back when they would play 100 records back in those days, you know, so I could squeeze in there. Nowadays, in the year of 2013, it's a little different.

**JE:** Those were good years. Did you open all the time those three years you were with Ernest Tubb? You were the opening act?

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** So you did the personality and sang and the whole bit, and you enjoyed it?

**BP:** Yeah, some of the shows I would do 45 minutes with the band and, depending on some of the shows, the big package shows like we would work with Johnny Cash or with the Stoneman Family or with some of the artists, Stonewall Jackson or whatever - some of the artists we would work with - I would just go out and open. I would do a couple of songs and then the band would do one and we would bring on ET. If we were working a club, I would work about 45 minutes and then we would bring ET on, then we would take a break, then I would come back and work another 45 minutes with the band.

**JE:** Johnny Cash you mentioned, at that time he was a young Johnny Cash obviously.

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** Was he just becoming known?

**BP:** He was already known. He had already been through the Memphis thing, you know, and already been an artist in the business and getting lots of play everywhere. So Johnny was actually a star act. But one thing about Johnny, we would work a show with Johnny Cash and because of ET's length of time in the business and his popularity and everything,

Johnny is one that maybe he was supposed to close the show – and I know of a couple of times – Johnny would tell the promoter, “ET closes the show, I’m not closing the show”. And when he was really in the stature in the business to be the one to close the show, the biggest act, he would respect Ernest and would not close the show. He would let ET close the show. That is back when there was a lot of respect in the business by a lot of people.

**JE:** Do you remember what song Johnny would have had...he had a hit then by that time?

**BP:** Well yeah, he had had a number of hits by that time. Of course, he and June Carter were married at the time. The Statler Brothers were working shows with him. So he was heavy in the business then. I’m trying to think of particular songs, but he was big...big in the business.

**JE:** “I Walk the Line”?

**BP:** “I Walk the Line” had already been a hit even in previous years, yeah.

**JE:** So then he appeared with Ernest Tubb?

**BP:** Yeah on package shows.

**JE:** OK.

**BP:** Say they would book a package show in Canada or Oklahoma or wherever, you know, and he would just happen to be on the shows with him.

**JE:** Nice person to be around?

**BP:** I never did know Johnny that well even being there, and I never did really get acquainted with him. Of course, he and Ernest were very good friends. You know some people you really connect with and some people you don’t. It isn’t that I didn’t connect with him or he didn’t connect with me, I just didn’t infringe on the territory, you know.

**JE:** Uh huh. While you were performing with Ernest Tubb, some of these bars would put up chicken wire. Tell us why that started?

**BP:** There was one particular bar, let’s say club, in Texas – a dance club. On a Saturday night, they would get pretty tough. There is one particular place. There was a stage on the floor and then there was a second stage like upstairs. The stages had not barbed wire but heavy wire around them because of the fact the people get loaded and if you didn’t play the song they liked or whatever, they would throw beer bottles up to the stage. Now that didn’t happen to us per se but that is why the wire was up there. They never threw any at Ernest that I know of when I was with him, but it was there because of the fact that if they weren’t happy with the way things were going and they’d get to fighting or something, so the band was protected with that wire up there.

**JE:** Was it with Ernest Tubb that you played those Louisiana clubs?

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** Tell us about them because I think they were pretty rough.

**BP:** Well, I worked Cut Off, Louisiana and I worked the Stage Coach Inn in Houma, Louisiana. I can remember...I could use a lot of examples in Louisiana but this particular one...ET told

us before we went on – this is the first time I had played there in Houma, Louisiana – he said, “Now guys, I want to tell you something”. In other words, he knew, he had been there. He had been a lot of places. He said, “If they start fighting, start arguing, just keep on playing. Don’t quit singing and don’t quick picking. Just keep on playing” – which is logical, you know. You sure don’t want to join the fight. And in Houma, sure enough, they did. There was an upstairs and a downstairs and there was tables everywhere, and they started a good fight – upstairs throwing chairs and downstairs and everybody gets involved. I’ll never forget. I was singing. Man, I kept on. I might have missed a few bars and I might have got bent out of tune but we kept playing right on through the fight. And if I’m not mistaken, on that particular night, we quit early. That was Houma, Louisiana, the Stage Coach – I’ll never forget it. And Cut Off, Louisiana, I’ll never forget, it was a nice place; I mean, good place/club. The young, they bring their kids. And I’m talking about young kids. You’d look out there and there would be a kid out there maybe 5-6 years/7 years old drinking beer. I mean getting that beer down. I learned a lot from ET and being on the road with him. But that is a true, true story. I was there and saw it.

**JE:** The world’s largest dance, was that down there?

**BP:** That was in Houston. We played that two years in a row. I don’t remember the exact years, but we played it two years in a row. One year we played it – ok, Ernest Tubb and the Troubadours and Hank Thompson and the Brazos Valley Boys. The stage was kind of high where you could see out over the thing and there was 20,000-plus people in the Astrodome. There is the Astrodome and then there is the Astrodome, and it was the Astrodome. We would play that thing and we would do the same thing – I would go and do 45 minutes, then Ernest would come up. And you could look out over the crowd and see the fist fights. Usually it was an hour into the gig and you could see the fists slinging, and you could see the women. I mean, I don’t know what they were fighting about, we just kept playing. The two times that I played there, which was a couple of years in a row – I think one year we worked it with Conway Twitty – the same hall, Astrodome. And the same thing...you get that many people together and they get to drinking, somebody’s going to be slinging a bottle or a fist or something. So I remember some good times. I didn’t get involved. I was kind of a coward. I stayed right on the stage.

**JE:** So how many people, how many thousands of people would have been there?

**BP:** Oh, I’d say 20,000-plus, the huge Astrodome. I don’t know an exact figure but it was big. It was the biggest dance that I ever played. Of course, I never drew that many but they did. And Texas is dance country. They would dance and they still dance in Texas. But, I mean, it was country music country and they would come out whether you were working in an auditorium or whether you were working a dance hall or the Astrodome. They would come out in abundance.

**Chapter 7 - 8:12****KVOO**

---

**John Erling:** Was there a point in time you said “I’ve had enough of this traveling”?

**Billy Parker:** I’m glad you brought that up. There was. As a matter of fact, I’ve worked with Ernest all that time and also for a little while there I had done some booking for him and the Troubadours. I booked some dates for them with Atlas Artists Bureau. I talked to Jack Cresse at KVOO. I think he called the house in Hendersonville and he said, “I think we may be going country”. He said, “I talked to Harold Stuart and Harold is going to go over and visit with the folks at WBAP”. Then on the newspaper there and on WBAP radio. I can’t remember their names and I should, in Ft. Worth, Texas. Bill Mack was there on the air at the time. The station was doing good; they were playing country music 24 hours a day, that’s all they were playing. Jack said he was trying to get Harold Stuart together with the gentleman over in Ft. Worth and they did. I think Harold went to Ft. Worth and visited with him. They got to talking money and how the station was doing and this type of thing, and it was very successful. So Harold decided that they were going to go country. I moved back on the strength of Jack Cresse and went to work at KTOW in Sand Springs, Oklahoma. I worked for Buddy Powell over there.

**JE:** So is that where Jack Cresse was, at KTOW?

**BP:** Yeah, he was over there at one time. But was already at KVOO at this time.

**JE:** Ok, so he calls from KVOO and says we are going go to country.

**BP:** He said we are thinking about changing and going to country.

**JE:** But then you go to KTOW?

**BP:** Yeah because there was going to be a period of time in there, six months or something, before that decision was definite, before I could say anything about it. And then when they made that decision, of course, I left KTOW and joined KVOO.

**JE:** Was KTOW country?

**BP:** Yeah, it was a country station.

**JE:** So did he arrange to come on up here and work for KTOW?

**BP:** He talked to Buddy Powell, who was a manager at KTOW.

**JE:** Did he know that KVOO was going to go...

**BP:** No, he didn’t know that.

**JE:** So Jack was just probably calling him, would you do my friend a favor.

**BP:** Yeah, he says he is coming back to Tulsa. That’s exactly what happened.

**JE:** Then you were coming back to an area that people knew Billy Parker. I mean, you had made quite a splash around here.

**BP:** Yeah because we had been here playing with Ernest and the Troubadours three or four times.

**JE:** Right.

**BP:** So I guess momentum wise, I maybe had been known here fairly well but not, you know...

**JE:** Sure, you were on television...

**BP:** Yeah, we had already done the TV thing too and everything.

**JE:** So we've already talked about the town knew who Billy Parker was. And then you came back again, so it was all comfortable territory for you.

**BP:** Yeah it was good. As a matter of fact, I mentioned earlier, we left Tulsa in United Van Lines and I left Nashville in a U-Haul and I drove the U-Haul and Jerry drove the car home. We packed our own furniture and Billy Joe was just a couple years old. I didn't want to be away from them that long. We would be on the road with Ernest 30 days. The longest I remember was I think we were gone 26 days away from home and I just got tired of it.

**JE:** Talk about that a little bit. That just has to be wearing on a people.

**BP:** John, used to we would go by ET/Ernest Tubb's house and we would pack albums. And I'm talking about LPs on the bus for a tour, never under 12 days, never over 26 or 30. And we would be gone, I mean we would be gone. It gets lonesome. You call home, but in those days, you had to travel to make the bucks and you had to travel to pay for the bus, although it was an old bus. You had to travel to pay for the hotels. You had to travel to pay for everything that you did and the family back home. ET had a pretty big family too, you know. So we actually just stayed on the road too much, where the artists nowadays will go out for two or three days and boy they've got it made. But you don't find anybody out there for 30 days or 25 days.

**JE:** The fans see you on stage and it looks like such a glorious life and you're a big star and all that. They go home to their lives and you're just doing some...sounds like drudgery.

**BP:** You have to really love the business back in those days to stay on the road that long. I loved the business but I loved the family too.

**JE:** Yeah. So it was time, wasn't it? It was time to move.

**BP:** Yep.

**JE:** And Jack Cresse did you a big favor by calling you.

**BP:** Yeah he did, he really did. He said we're going country and I want you to do morning drive. Bill Mack was on WBAP doing the all-night show. And I said Jack, you know what I would like to do? I said I would like to do midnight to 5. He said you're crazy. I remember him trying to talk me out of it and I said that's what I'd like to do. And he hired me to do midnight to 5.

**JE:** How long did you do that, midnight to 5?

**BP:** 8-1/2 years.

**JE:** KVOO. And you were talking to truckers?

**BP:** Yeah I had the big rigger club, talking to truckers everywhere.

**JE:** And were you singing then too? I suppose you were.

**BP:** Yep. I was doing picking and grinning, that's part of the deal.

**JE:** Because you did dates around here...

**BP:** I did dates here and in Louisiana and Texas and Kansas and around the area. I would go out and still do my dates and record. And he made that possible. I gotta give Ron Blue and Jack Cresse credit for really believing in me and hanging in there with me.

**JE:** Yeah. Jack Cresse was manager at KVOO for many, many, many years.

**BP:** Yes he was.

**JE:** I came here in '76. He was manager then and Ron Blue was my manager at KRMG. Times were different in radio then, weren't they?

**BP:** You can't believe now what we had the opportunity to do back then. And I couldn't even believe it then. But Jack Cresse and Ron Blue had gotten together and you and I, we were 100,000 watts one morning on KVOO and KRMG.

**JE:** Because we were both 50,000 watts each at that time.

**BP:** That's right, and talking with each other and visiting. That's another thing that I will never ever forget because that's just not even thinkable nowadays.

**JE:** No. KRMG was not playing country so we weren't competing with you there, but it was the news station in town and then playing some pop music and maybe some big band stuff.

**BP:** But in a way we were competing.

**JE:** There's no question we were competing. But still, the two of them had known each other for all those years and were friends and carried on that very good relationship, even to the point where I would have you on the radio. I don't know what I would talk to you about but we did.

**BP:** We did. We talked about a lot of things. As a matter of fact, our ratings - the station ratings, KRMG and KVOO - were both very good. It seemed like one time around, you would be #1. The next time around, we would be #1. I mean, that was the good old days.

**JE:** In fact, I remember you at KVOO's numbers were really strong and I think we started lacing in some country because we thought we could capture some of that audience.

**BP:** I remember! I remember that! (laughs) That worried Jack a bit (laughs). I remember that.

**JE:** He probably thought we were going to go all country.

**BP:** Wasn't that during the urban cowboy stuff.

**JE:** In that period of time, right. That's something that would never occur today, of course. The competition is so stiff and so tight, as it was then too.

**BP:** Oh, yes it was.

**JE:** Ron Blue would come out with the numbers...well, KVOO is beating us. Oh, we were down to the dumps because KVOO was...well, today now, then coming back again, oh KRMG is beating KVOO.

**BP:** I know, Jack Cresse would say oh my gosh, they're getting us on this one. I know, I know. I lived through that stuff.

**JE:** They were good days.

**BP:** From doing the all-night show to program director to operations director to now, I guess.

## Chapter 8 - 5:45

### Harold Stuart

---

**John Erling:** We should talk a bit about the owner of KVOO, who is Harold Stuart.

**Billy Parker:** Yes.

**JE:** Now Harold Stuart was a real dude. He was a lawyer in town. He was involved in international relations. He married Joan Skelly, who was the daughter of the oilman here in Tulsa, W.G. Skelly.

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** She preceded him in death but then he married Frances Langford Evinrude in '94 and she preceded him in death as well. I could go on and on about him because he was an outstanding person. He enlisted in the Army Corps in '42. He served as advance officer, director of intelligence in charge of operational intelligence for the Corps as it went from England to France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany. After the war ended, he served as an intelligence officer in Norway and he left active duty in '46 as a colonel but remained in the Air Force Reserve until 1972. Then, of course, of all these things he did, he owned KVOO. So tell us about him. You must have had interaction with him and would he come through the station and talk to you?

**BP:** Yes, as a matter of fact he had talked to me. As operations director and program director, I had the responsibility of listening to him quite often. Little stories I can tell and this kind of goes back to the Air Force and his career. At the radio station, we tried to keep a clean ship, OK? You keep the floors clean, of course make sure the wastepaper baskets are emptied. Now I was on the air as a disc jockey and also in operations with him. He would say "come and go with me a minute" and I would walk outside with him. He would say "see along the road out there, there is all that paper and all that stuff out there" and said "that don't look very good for the people driving by the station". He said "let's get out there and get that done". He said "you don't have to get out there but get somebody to get out there and get it done". Well, needless to say, I got somebody to get out there and get it done but I went with them and I would get out there. I mean, he was a good boss. He was a good teacher. Lord, he taught me more about the world just visiting with him. Like with

ET, I learned more about the country music business with ET. I learned more about not particularly radio but learned more about the world talking to Harold Stuart. I remember a couple of times he would go along like on the door facings, right above the door facings, you know. He would lick his finger and put it across the top of the door there and say "see that dust". Lord, I had never looked up there at home probably or anywhere else for it, but he did. Oh, he was strict and yet he was so good. I will never forget one time I was doing a program out at the Sheraton out south of Tulsa. I was actually emceeing an event. The podium was kind of low where I was reading from and some of the people I had to introduce, I was kind of bent over a little bit and reading. He came up to me and hit me on the back of the shoulder there and he said "stand up straight when you're talking". I try to stand up straight anywhere I go now. It is hard to do at my age, but I'll never forget. And I'll never forget serving on the board at Southwestern Sales, which was a part of KVOO and the oil business and the whole thing. John Stuart, his son, who is a very good friend of mine and such a wonderful person, and I was an old country boy from Tuskegee, Oklahoma. I didn't know nothing but I served on the Southwestern Sales board. Harold Stuart and then the people on the board would be there and John Stuart would always sit next to me and he would nudge me whether it was yay or nay. He would nudge me this way or if it was nay, he would do his head this way, you know, so I would know how to live on the board. I guess the finest people that I could have ever met and on top of that, when he, of course, sold the radio station to the Great Empire people, the great Great Empire people which are wonderful folks - Mike Lynch and them - when he sold to them, there was a lot of questions about savings that we had made through the station and keeping our program going and mustering out with our money. He held back and he would not sell and sign the papers until the agreement that they would honor all of our financing and everything. If it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't have this Polo shirt on today (laughs). If it hadn't been for him, life would have been a heck of a lot tougher. He was so fair. The Stuart family was so fair to us.

**JE:** Retirement money...

**BP:** Retirement money, yes that's what it was.

**JE:** That's what he was protecting, to make sure Great Empire honored that and kept it in place.

**BP:** And I think they would have anyway but I'm not sure and he wasn't sure and he made sure on paper. Like I said, if it wasn't for Harold Stuart and the Stuart Corporation, it would not be as pleasant for my family today as it is and I appreciate them very much, and I appreciate all the folks that I've worked with in radio because it all built up to that.

**JE:** Was his personality gruff?

**BP:** Well, he spoke gruff to a certain extent. But he was military. What can I say, I mean, he

was military in everyday life. But he was kind, a kind person. It is good to be able to talk to someone who is gone and say how kind they were. The Stuart family were very, very kind people. I never did know W.G. Skelly or that end of it but...

**JE:** Did you ever meet Joan Skelly, Harold's wife?

**BP:** Oh yes, yes she was always kind and nice to me, very much so.

**JE:** Jack Cresse then was the manager at that time.

**BP:** Yes, I worked with Jack for many years. Even at KFMJ, Jack sold advertising and then at KTOW, he sold and stepped in to KVOO.

## Chapter 9 - 5:18

### Garth Brooks

---

**John Erling:** You worked for Safeway stores?

**Billy Parker:** Yeah, I was very young then. I told you I worked for QuikTrip. I worked at Safeway stores at 11th and Yale. As a matter of fact, a guy by the name of Charlie Corbin who actually later became a deputy sheriff in Tulsa County. I needed a job. I forget the year. I don't know when it was, but I will never forget the situation. He asked me have you had experience in produce? I said yeah, I had experience in produce. I needed a job; I needed to go to work. So he hired me in the produce department and I think I went maybe a couple or three days, not very long. A shipment of bananas came in and the bananas were in wooden crates at that time, were in the wooden crate things with the wire on them and everything, you know. I was supposed to display the bananas up on the produce shelf there. So I opened the boxes. Bananas come on stalks and I split all the bananas and had them in ones - one banana, two banana, three - I had them all put up there real neat. But I had cut them apart. Needless to say, I got fired (laughs).

**JE:** Was that before the QuikTrip days?

**BP:** Yes, that was before the QuikTrip days. And I needed a job then too.

**JE:** You told me that Garth Brooks' mother, Colleen Carroll, was a singer.

**BP:** Oh yes, a very good singer.

**JE:** She sang country, obviously.

**BP:** Yes she did. As a matter of fact, I had the opportunity to work with her in Fairfax, Oklahoma at Jumps Roller Rink many years ago. A wonderful singer. I got acquainted with her and with her children. They were wonderful people.

**JE:** Did you know Garth then as a child?

**BP:** No I didn't know Garth back then. As a matter of fact, I didn't meet Garth till later years. Of course, Garth married Sandy, who lived in Owasso, Oklahoma. So I got acquainted with them from the standpoint of a friendship. I never was real close with them or anything but they are great people and were great people. Of course, I followed Garth's career throughout the years. But his mother had three children. Jim Smittle and Colleen lived here in Tulsa. I worked with Floyd Cherry and the Tulsa Ramblers and with them at Fairfax, Oklahoma many years ago. I have an interview that I have and had her on my show before she passed on.

**JE:** He gets his ability for music from his mother then apparently.

**BP:** Oh I'm sure, yes I'm very sure.

**JE:** And you talked about Urban Country.

**BP:** Yeah I remember when he was in Stillwater. As a matter of fact, I remember working a date with him at Binks Club. You're bringing it out of me again. But Binks Club in Stillwater, Oklahoma, I opened the show and Reba McEntire's brother, I brought him on. And then I think Garth opened for us. Yeah, Garth Brooks and the band Santa Fe opened for us over there. They were wonderful then and I know he was writing then but I wasn't that acquainted with him then at all.

**JE:** Yeah. He was quite a self promoter, wasn't he? He knew how to promote himself.

**BP:** Yes and he still does. Garth went to Nashville. Of course, the story has been told and he has told the story that he had some disappointing times in Nashville. Yeah, if it hadn't been for his sense of promotion in his mind and his sense of loving the business, he would have never made it. He would have never made it in the business because there were so many artists and still are, but there were so many artists in the business at the time and everybody was looking for a songwriter, singer, entertainer, all together in one package thing - which that proved to be the truth later in the business too. And he fit all that. I feel like he stayed in there and made them like him because he had the talent to pursue. I don't know all the story about his career, which he would have to tell you that, but I know he was a go-getter in college at OSU, had the experience and had the want to go it. And he loved his mother and dad, Raymond Brooks. He loved them very much and learned from momma; just like you said, he learned from his mother. I never was real acquainted with Garth except I knew his stepbrothers and stepsister very well in the early years, but I never did really...you know, some people you get to know. And I've never been one to sort of force myself on anybody. I mean, in other words, you know me, I'm Billy Parker. You know, I never did that. I play his records, still play his records, his songs, but I have never been that close to him.

**JE:** Did you ever think to yourself, "I wonder if I had been a real self promoter myself", because you probably weren't.

**BP:** No, I wasn't.

**JE:** You were kind of laid back and you let the music work for you and if it became popular, fine. If not, you weren't going to force yourself on anybody.

**BP:** Yeah, and I'm still that way. I won't do that. I don't know that I could have ever been any different than I am from the standpoint of the business. But I don't think that I could ever call somebody up and tell them how great I am. I couldn't do that. Now some people could maybe. Maybe that's the ones that make it. But I feel like I made it in life just being me, you know.

## Chapter 10 - 6:55

### Roger Miller

---

**John Erling:** OK, I'm going to throw out some names here - Sheb Wooley, Roger Miller.

**Billy Parker:** I knew Roger (laughs), I knew Roger Miller. As a matter of fact, Roger Miller and Marvin McCullough went to the Tulsa Motel on east 11th Street. Roger was appearing here in Tulsa on a weekend on a show, I think at the auditorium at the civic center. They charged the room to me for the weekend. I think it was Bill Wimberly, Roger Miller and Marvin McCullough. They skipped and didn't pay the bill and the folks at the Tulsa Motel called me to collect. Of course, I didn't pay.

**JE:** Did they leave the name behind, charge this to Billy Parker?

**BP:** Oh yeah, yeah. Everything was charged to me to the Tulsa Motel. I don't know if they served drinks. I don't think there was that much, but yes, definitely they did. I'll never forget that. And I haven't talked about that either but that's the truth.

**JE:** Jean Shepard?

**BP:** Yes, I met Jean, knew Jean, even knew when she was married to Hawkshaw Hawkins before he was killed in the plane crash with Patsy Cline, as a matter of fact, and Cowboy Copas. They were all killed in a plane crash going back from Kansas City. When I saw I know someone, I don't want to make it sound like that I was topnotch friends with them but have worked shows with her when I was with Ernest Tubb.

**JE:** Did you fly much in touring or mostly in buses I suppose?

**BP:** We were in buses most of the time. The only time we would fly, we would go into Seattle and we would fly to Alaska to do the shows in Alaska. I have flown to Alaska with Ernest.

**JE:** The music business has lost tragically too many people to plane crashes. At any rate, you weren't necessarily part of that traveling mode.

**BP:** No.

- JE:** In 1975, you were an AM Disc Jockey of the Year by the Academy of Country and Western Music and in 1977 and 1978 and 1984. What a nice honor. You have other honors, of course, but that was nice for you in the '70s.
- BP:** That was very nice. I must say that at the time, I was with KVOO radio doing the all-night show, had a lot of acquaintances in people who actually belonged to the Academy of Country Music and to the Country Music Association in Nashville. I made friends with a lot of those people, and those are the voting people. I had the opportunity to go to L.A., I think four times. We went out once to get the radio station of the year award and at the same time I had the DJ of the Year award, the Academy thing. I don't know how I won it that many times but just good people I guess you might say.
- JE:** At that time, you scored your first chart hit, I believe, with "It's Bad When You're Caught (With The Goods)".
- BP:** Yeah, I did record that.
- JE:** In '76.
- BP:** Wife didn't like that song, but yeah "It's Bad When You're Caught (With The Goods)". I recorded that and actually the song, I guess, that did more than anything in the charts was "Lord If I Make It to Heaven Can I Bring My Own Angel Along", and she liked that song.
- JE:** (laughs) Then you had a series of singles including a tribute to Ernest Tubbs, "Thanks ET, Thanks a Lot".
- BP:** Yes I did.
- JE:** Did you write that?
- BP:** As a matter of fact, I didn't write it. A boy in Texas wrote the song and sent it to me. I put some words in it, yes, but I didn't take credit for writing it.
- JE:** In '82, you had a big success at "Who's Gonna Sing The Last Country Song". Tell us about that.
- BP:** Darrell McCall was a great singer, worked with Ray Price, worked with George Jones, and worked on his own. He recorded with me. We recorded that song in Nashville, "Who's Gonna Sing The Last Country Song". It was fairly good on the charts but I don't remember the exact numbers. Like I said before, they didn't reach the top notch but we tried.
- JE:** In '83, "Something Old, Something New"?
- BP:** Did that with Jack Greene, the late Jack Greene. Jack Greene passed on in, as a matter of fact, 2013. He recorded that with me and we recorded an album with Ernest Tubb, Webb Pierce, Jack Greene, Cal Smith, Bill Carlisle and other folks that were on the album.
- JE:** The album in '88 was "Always Country". In 1990, you did a gospel record.
- BP:** Yes I did. I recorded "I'll Speak Out for You Jesus". That's the title of the album. Along about that time is when all the school controversy was coming up about Christ in school and I recorded a song called "Let's Bring Jesus Back to School".

**JE:** Was that written by you?

**BP:** No, and also the Dallas Kids' Choir sung that with me in Dallas, Texas.

**JE:** Was church a part of your life? Did you have a faith that was...

**BP:** Yes, yes. Now I call me Bapticostal, OK? But in the early years, we were Pentecostal. My folks were Pentecostal. It's a combination. My dad was a Methodist. My mother was I guess you might say Bapticostal because that's kind of what I am. I always say, what religion are you - Bapticostal. I believe in God.

**JE:** So what does that mean?

**BP:** Kind of halfway between a Baptist and a Pentecost (laughs).

**JE:** Oh it's Bapticostal.

**BP:** That's my explanation, but we go to church at First Baptist Tulsa, Reverend Spoo. That's where we attend church.

**JE:** "Unexpected Heartaches" was a song for you?

**BP:** (laughs) I wrote that song. That made the charts back in those days, but back in those days, it was so easy to make a chart. You didn't need payola, that's for sure. Glad Record. I wrote the song "Out of Your Heart" and a few songs that didn't really make it, but I was on radio at the time and...

**JE:** You could play your own songs.

**BP:** We could play it (laughs). David Engles used to play it. Willy the Hillbilly could play it. You know, yeah.

**JE:** Other songs, you wrote the song "Just a Drink Away"?

**BP:** Yeah, Bobby Lewis and I wrote that song and Ernest recorded that song.

**JE:** Did that do well for him?

**BP:** Ah it was the B side. That's the story of my life, the B side. It was the B side of the record. It was small but it was an honor that he recorded it.

**JE:** "Doggone The Heartache"?

**BP:** Yeah, we wrote that song. How did you know all this, John?

**JE:** I just know all this stuff. Did songs come to you so you wrote them immediately in inspiration or did you have to struggle, or how did that work?

**BP:** You can tell by listening to most of my music, I never struggled to write them. But Bobby Lewis and I wrote "Doggone This Heartache" and I still get small BMI checks, royalty checks, on that - very small. Then Carl Belew and I wrote a song called "Everything That Glitters Isn't Gold" that Ray Piller recorded. Carl Belew, who is from Salina, Oklahoma, of course the late Carl Belew - when Decca dropped me - when I said I went to Nashville recording for Owen Bradley and I left Nashville owing Bradley, this is about the truth. And then Carl Belew got me back on Decca and we did a song called "The Ladder of Success", which was fair. It did pretty good but nothing fantastic.

---

**Chapter 11 - 5:45****Wills Brothers**

---

**John Erling:** How did you meet your wife, Jerri, and how many years have you been married to her now?

**Billy Parker:** Jerri and I have been married since 1966.

**JE:** That's a long time. A lot of performers don't stick with their spouses that long.

**BP:** Well, you know what, she is pretty strong. She is a pretty strong woman. We met at the Johnnie Lee Wills rodeo. I was working there with Roy Ferguson and his band and Johnnie Lee Wills, as a matter of fact. I met her there and I think, if I'm not mistaken, Jerri and I went together about 6-8 weeks and we got married.

**JE:** How old were you?

**BP:** 29, so we have been married...well I have been with KVOO 43 years. I was with KFMJ when we got married in 1966.

**JE:** And you refer to KVOO as you're still with them...you're still working for KVOO?

**BP:** There's five radio stations in the building, okay? KVOO is a big part of our broadcasting facility.

**JE:** KVOO FM now.

**BP:** Right, KVOO FM. The old KVOO AM is now KFAQ.

**JE:** And is a talk station.

**BP:** It's a talk station, right.

**JE:** So you're performing on which station now?

**BP:** Big Country 99.5, which is in the same building with KVOO.

**JE:** Right. So you do a two-hour program?

**BP:** Right. I go in on Wednesday. I do a two-hour program that runs on Saturday morning from 8-10 and on Sunday evening 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. Then I handle about 15-18 accounts.

**JE:** OK, so you're still active here at the age of 75 in some way.

**BP:** I gotta be, I'm afraid to stop.

**JE:** Alright, let me throw out these names to you that you have worked with - Sonny James.

**BP:** Yes I have. Sonny James was a wonderful singer, a wonderful writer, and I still get a Christmas card from Sonny and Doris every year.

**JE:** He had one or two that were signatures of him.

**BP:** Of course "Young Love" was a signature song of his.

**JE:** Right. Red Foley we've talked about.

**BP:** Yes, I had the opportunity to work with Red Foley in 1957, actually previous to going to Springfield, Missouri. I worked for Triangle Blueprint, Tulsa Camera Records, J.D. Young Company, and a lot of good companies in Tulsa. And I met some people that knew a

promoter that was very close to Red Foley. The lady's name was Marijohn Wilkin and her husband, Art Wilkin. They were moving from Tulsa to Springfield, Missouri. So I decided I would move up there with them and I did for a while and I met a gentleman named James P. Coleman who promotes shows all over the country. Well he promoted the Red Foley Show, and Red was doing the Ozark Jubilee. I wasn't a member of the Ozark Jubilee but I would go out on the road a couple of weeks before the show would get to town and I would sell tickets for fire department, police department, Sertoma or whatever it might be. I would sell the tickets and then when the show would come to town, I would get to do two songs with Red Foley and Red would call me out on stage. This is before ET and before all that. Red would call me out on stage to do a couple of songs. I would do the songs and he would pat me on the head and I would walk off (laughs), mind my own business.

**JE:** You mentioned Johnnie Lee Wills. Did you actually perform with him?

**BP:** Oh yes. Johnnie Lee - I performed with him on radio. I took him to Nashville with me to record a couple of songs that he did on the album. We did the "Milk Cow Blues" and "Take Me Back to Tulsa". It was my session and I invited him to be on the session with me and in the studio with all the pickers, the musicians. You wouldn't even have known I was there because Johnnie Lee Wills was everybody's friend. They all knew the Wills family - Bob Wills, Luke Wills and Billy Jack Wills and all them. So we had the opportunity to visit with all the musicians and they loved it because Johnnie Lee was there. That is one of the most memorable times I've had in the studio really.

**JE:** Did you work with Bob Wills, his brother?

**BP:** Yes I did, only when I was with Ernest Tubb on the Happy Peoples Tour. I worked four or five shows, I'm not sure, but I know I worked four or five shows with him. He only had a guitar player with him and himself and we backed him, meaning the musicians, The Texas Troubadours, backed Bob Wills on these shows. I had the opportunity to visit with him. This was after he had had his first stroke, but he was still very alert and very nice and very kind. I remember him as being a very kind person.

**JE:** Was there a difference in personalities between Bob Wills and Johnnie Lee Wills?

**BP:** A lot, yeah. There was a difference in personalities. Like I say, being only on four or five shows with Bob, I didn't learn a lot about his personality because his personality since the first stroke had kind of lessened a little bit, I'm sure. But Johnnie Lee was more personable than anybody that I've ever met in the business, even more so than some of the artists that I worked with on the road. Yeah, Johnnie Lee was just a super guy. He even got me in my first boots sized up right because he said I was wearing my boots too tight (laughs). Yeah I enjoyed Johnnie Lee Wills very much, a great friend.

**JE:** So he obviously liked you. I mean, there had to be a nice relationship there with you.

**BP:** I think there always was and I always respected him very, very much.

---

**Chapter 12 - 7:55****Branson**

---

**John Erling:** Did you do any work in Branson?

**Billy Parker:** Yes I did I think 26 TV shows there actually for the network with Stan Hitchcock, the Americana Network. We went around to the various artists and the various theaters and interviewed. Actually I didn't do the show from the standpoint of singing or performing but I interviewed the various acts. I interviewed a lot of people in Branson in that period of time. I didn't live there but we spent a lot of time there back and forth doing 26 shows, 13 weeks and then another 13 weeks, but I didn't just stay in Branson all that time.

**JE:** The shows were headlined by...

**BP:** Well, Roy Clark, for instance; B.J. Thomas; the Mandrels; the Lennon Sisters. That's just some of them that I can remember.

**JE:** So you were part of their shows?

**BP:** Actually I had the opportunity to interview them and then we showed a part of their show in the production.

**JE:** Did you ever think about wanting to live there and perform?

**BP:** I thought about it. As a matter of fact, I bought a place up on Table Rock Lake up in Hollister which is right out of Branson. We would commute back and forth and I had my RV, my motorhome, up there. I left it up there and we would go back and forth and had the boat dock and everything there. I enjoyed it but I didn't enjoy the back and forth 250 miles every weekend, you know.

**JE:** From?

**BP:** From Broken Arrow to Hollister, Missouri to Branson and the Hollister area.

**JE:** Andy Williams was one of the first there. Did you meet him and were you around him at all?

**BP:** No, never met him but I did attend his show one year, a Christmas show as a matter of fact that I'll never forget. I think he was one of the finest personalities, finest singers, I really enjoyed him.

**JE:** Out of your past, Loretta Lynn?

**BP:** Yes. I met Loretta, in fact with Ernest. See they recorded together. They recorded a hit record called "Sweet Thing" together. I had the opportunity to work shows with her and with ET. Never did get real acquainted with her but I knew her and her husband also who passed on. I knew them just through ET.

**JE:** Conway Twitty?

**BP:** Conway Twitty - nicest guy. He recorded a song. Cal Smith recorded it first I believe it was, and Loretta and Conway recorded "The Games That Daddies Play" and used my name in

it – my friend, Billy Parker’s, dad came by. You know, they honored me but I didn’t know it until after it was released but I appreciated it anyway.

**JE:** Jim Ed Brown?

**BP:** Jim Ed Brown – I worked a lot of shows with Jim Ed on the road with the Abu Hamza Tours out of New York. Worked in Canada, stayed in New York and all over the place. I had the opportunity to play golf once with him. I didn’t play very good but I played. He is such a gentleman, such a nice gentleman. He was here in Tulsa recently at one of the event centers and I had the opportunity to emcee the show that he was on.

**JE:** One thing I was going to point out, KVOO was 50,000 watts 24 hours. KRMG is only 50,000 watts daytime and 25,000 at night. When you were on from midnight to 5 on a 50,000 watt radio station, you blanketed I don’t know if it’s the nation or how far out your signal went. How far did it go?

**BP:** Well actually it didn’t blanket the nation because of the fact that it was westbound. We got back to the southeast pretty good, up to the north fair, out west gigantic. Weather had a lot, as you know, weather had a lot to do with it. I remember one time I was doing an album giveaway on the truckers’ show, on the big riggers’ show, and a guy in Bangor, Maine called in. Now I don’t know if he was listening in his truck or where he was at and told me when he’d be through town to pick up his album and he came right down Peoria and he picked up his album there on south Peoria. I forget who he drove for. I don’t think I even had it written down anywhere, but he came to pick up his album and he was in Bangor, Maine listening to us. I said we don’t go to Bangor, Maine; he said you do tonight. I remember that.

**JE:** A nighttime personality for KRMG was Johnny Martin.

**BP:** Yes.

**JE:** You remember Johnny Martin well and he was a musician and he played big band music. But he wasn’t necessarily competing at the same time slot with you. He was on like from 6 to midnight.

**BP:** Yeah he was on earlier.

**JE:** And then you were on from midnight to 5 o’clock in the morning.

**BP:** I used to listen to him. I listened to Johnny, yes I did. I listened to him and enjoyed the big band music. I enjoy other types of music. I mean, I love country and country is my favorite. But let’s face it, if you listen over the years or follow it, country music has changed a great deal to a great extent. I enjoy some of it. I don’t just live all of it, you know, now. But it’s changed to a great extent. I’ve watched a lot of changes over the years.

**JE:** Was that tough to see because country for you at the time did fade away in the national consciousness of America.

**BP:** Right.

**JE:** It stayed with a certain group of people. Was that tough for you to see that happening?

**BP:** Yes it was. It was tough for me to see it happening because of the fact that when it got to the point to where the story was gone or the story of the song was hidden under instruments and you couldn't understand what they were singing about. Even if they were singing about a broken heart, you'd never know it. Yeah, the feeling was gone. There are great artists, like George Strait is one of my favorite artists; Alan Jackson, one of my favorite artists. They are still hot and heavy, although George Strait is saying he is retiring his business but I've heard that before too. Some music I love outside of country music because I can still understand what they're singing about, whether it be pop or even classical. If it's good classical, I can listen to it. It's not my favorite but I can listen to it. In fact, for a change, it's kind of enjoyable.

**JE:** Here you are 75. You're really not done. Are you performing musically any more?

**BP:** Only if I'm asked and, you know, I'm seldom ever asked (laughs). I do a TV thing. In fact, I went to Joplin and recorded a TV thing here recently for educational TV, which I think will be on Rogers State College or those type of stations. But I don't do a lot of that. I don't thrive on that. I'll emcee some gigs which we call them in the business once in a while, but I don't play anymore with my arthritis. My guitar was bad enough before the arthritis but I don't play it anymore.

**JE:** You just recently emceed Roy Clark's 80th Birthday Bash, as they called it, at the River Spirit Casino owned by the Creek Nation. So you did that and had a good time with Roy.

**BP:** As a matter of fact, Roy is one of the best times you could possibly have and one of the nicest guys you could ever meet. Knowing him over the years has been a pleasure. I have worked with a lot of people at the River Spirit Event Center emceeing when they have the country shows in. I enjoy doing that. If they call, I'm there.

**JE:** Yeah, and you still do TV commercials today.

**BP:** Let's see, I believe if I'm not mistaken, I have been doing the Miller family for 40-some years, 42 years I believe.

**JE:** That's quite a string, and that's Ernie Miller Pontiac/GMC.

**BP:** Ernie Miller Pontiac/GMC, now Marc Miller Buick/GMC. I'm driving a Buick (laughs). Jerri's driving an Acadia (laughs).

## Chapter 13 - 3:40

### Billy Sings

---

**John Erling:** The music world has been really wonderful to you, hasn't it?

**Billy Parker:** You know, John, really and truthfully, I don't know how I could have had it any other way and been halfway sane, you know. I love the business and I guess that's the

reason I still do it. I play classic country on Big Country 99.5, as you know, and it's not the most popular music with today's younger audience. It's just not. And I realize that. But I still have people in the younger audience segment that love some of the older music, so I don't look at demographics, I look at listeners. I never did look at ratings. I never did pay much attention to ratings. That's terrible to say to be in radio. I'd love to be #1, but if I'm #5 and I have listeners and they appreciate what I'm doing, then I like where I'm at.

**JE:** So how would you like to be remembered?

**BP:** I'd like to be remembered as a caring guy, a person who cares for other people and, at the same time, a person that don't expect sympathy because I'm not playing the old country every day like I used to play. And I'd like to be remembered as a person that everybody likes, which that probably would be impossible but still that's what I'd like.

**JE:** Well, I'm saying to you that percentage wise, that's probably 95% have got to like Billy Parker. I mean, what's not to like about you? You know, you were just given that God-given talent. Your personality is as big as your music ability and the two of them you've combined. And radio...there are a lot of singers who could never be on the radio. They could never pull that off. But you have taken both your personality and your music ability and you've combined them in one to be the much loved Billy Parker.

**BP:** I can't follow that, I can't follow that.

**JE:** What would be a favorite song for Billy Parker?

**BP:** That I've recorded?

**JE:** That you like or whatever, yeah that would be part of your life or recording.

**BP:** My favorite song that I've recorded is "Can I Bring My Own Angel Along".

**JE:** And how does that go?

**BP:** Lord if I make it to heaven, can I bring my own angel along.

**JE:** Sing it.

**BP:** Oh Lord, you got me now, you know. (singing) Lord, prepare me no mansion. If a mansion's what you had in mind. Lord, there's just one thing I'm asking when you lift up this spirit of mine. Lord, can I keep this same woman I've loved here on earth for so long. Lord, when I make it to heaven can I bring my own angel along.

**JE:** Very good. Amen, amen.

**BP:** Thank you. I can't even believe I remembered the words.

**JE:** Thank you, Billy. Yeah that was great, that was great. Thank you, Billy.

**BP:** Thank you, John. I'll tell you what. This has brought back me that I didn't even know was there.

**JE:** (laughs) Well it was fine and you were very giving. I appreciate it very much.

**BP:** Well bless your heart, don't think I don't appreciate it. In fact, I was telling Jerri, the wife, the people that you have, I said they are too esteemed, too highfalutin for me, but by God I'm proud to be in there with them.

**JE:** Absolutely, and I have told a number of people that I was going to interview Billy Parker and they said oh yes, we're anxious to hear his story. So there are people who want to hear it.

**BP:** You got more out of me than the wife ever did (laughs).

**JE:** (laughs)

## Chapter 14 - 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](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).