

## David Easton

Jimmy Steinmeyer talks about his partner, David—one of the world’s most sought-after interior designers & architects.

### Chapter 1 - 1:38

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** David Easton was one of the world’s most sought-after Interior Designers and Architects. He was noted in the 1980s for his English style houses, catering to a clientele with a taste for grandeur. David Easton was named to the Interior Design Hall of Fame in 1992. David was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1937, and was smitten by design from an early age, visiting Marshall Field’s department store in Chicago with his grandmother, where he was delighted by the fantasy and design of the store’s Trend House. He moved to New York City in 1959 and received an Architecture Degree from Pratt Institute. David won the Fontainebleau Scholarship, that allowed him to study in Europe before returning to New York where he worked with modern furniture designer, Edward Wormley. Then, in 1967, he joined the well-known firm Parish-Hadley, before starting his own practice in 1972. David could design Georgian mansions on the back of a napkin, making his name creating extraordinary architectural designs for media barons of the 1980s.

While living in New York, David met Jimmy Steinmeyer in 1975. Jimmy, a native Tulsan, graduated from Edison High School, moved to New York, and graduated from Pratt Institute. He became a celebrated artist and was known for his highly detailed architectural renderings. After living in New York for more than four decades, David and Jimmy moved to Tulsa four years prior to David’s death due to complications of dementia, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Now you can hear Jimmy Steinmeyer tell you about his life with David Easton, on the oral history website, [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

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**Chapter 02 - 8:48**  
**Second Grade Artistry**

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today's date is May 12th, 2021. Jimmy, would you state your full name please?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** James Steinmeyer.

**JE:** Did you have a middle name?

**JS:** Oh yeah, Melvin. [Laughing].

**JE:** Alright, did you try to avoid that?

**JS:** Exactly. [Laughing]. It was my father's name. He didn't like it, but why would he give it to me?

**JE:** Right. [Laughing].

**JS:** I don't know. [Laughing].

**JE:** Your date of birth?

**JS:** July 10th, 1950.

**JE:** And your present age?

**JS:** 70 years old.

**JE:** And where are we recording this interview?

**JS:** Uh, we're in our study at our house on 35th Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**JE:** I gotta say: this is my first interview after COVID has been relaxed - the COVID restrictions. I've done most of them by phone, so you're my first in-person interview. Uh, how did COVID affect you and your life?

**JS:** Uh, I, I, well it was, well, like with everybody, you were just sort of like: how am I going to do this?

What will I do? How will I manage my life? And I was lucky because I had an office that I could go to everyday, because it's just myself and my assistant, Sean. So, he has his office, I have mine, so we felt very comfortable. He was being very safe because he had had a heart attack a few years ago, so he had to be careful, and I basically was a monk. [Laughing]. So, I didn't do anything. I would see people, but, you know, I didn't go anywhere; I didn't do anything. So, I felt, you know, it was very strange doing it. But everybody managed through.

**JE:** And you were fortunate because you're work - you could continue working.

**JS:** Yeah, we could continue working. Uh, you know, certain things maybe were delayed, but it, you know, everybody was trying to figure out how they were going to work, you know?

**JE:** And so, on this date in 2021, the inoculations are receding, and we still don't have heard immunity as, as of yet. Um, okay, we're here to tell the story of David Easton. Architect. Interior Designer. We could also describe him in many other ways.

**JS:** For, yes, for sure. [Laughing].

**JE:** But, but first, a little more about you.

**JS:** Mhm

**JE:** And, so, where were you born?

**JS:** I was born here, in Tulsa. St. John's Hospital.

**JE:** And your mother's name and where she came from and grew up?

**JS:** Uh, Dorothy Willowbrandt was her maiden name. She was born in, uh, Washington, Kansas, in 1922, I think.

**JE:** What was she like? Describe her personality?

**JS:** Uh, she was, she was very loving, she was very sweet, she was very tough [Laughing] when she needed to be, and, you know, she was a great cook, a great homemaker. Uh, she kept everything running all the time.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** And, yeah, when my, when I was first born, with my brother, my older brother, Jack, my dad did a lot of traveling, so she was by herself for long periods of time, so she sewed and took care of us. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right, you're, uh, and then your father's name?

**JS:** Is Melvin Steinmeyer. Melvin George Steinmeyer.

**JE:** And then where did he come from?

**JS:** He was, he was born outside of St. Louis, in Collinsville, Illinois. I forget the date. I can't even, he died when I was in my thirties - when I was 30 years old.

**JE:** Well, then, you said he was gone, what was his profession?

**JS:** Uh, he was, he had an insulation contract business. So, they insulated old factories and all commercial kind of projects. They didn't do any residential work. But he did that after the war. They, my father and mother met during the war, and, uh, they moved to Tulsa because it was a young kind of thriving city, and they both did not want to be in Kansas or in Illinois, and they thought, "Why don't we do there?" So, they came here.

**JE:** Mhm. We're going to be talking about houses. What was the first house you remember here in Tulsa?

**JS:** Oh, erm, probably when I was in high school. Well, I remember, I remember all the houses that are around here and, uh, oh, uh, Forest Hills, and all those beautiful houses. But, uh, I met a young guy who was in my class, Bill Martin, and his mother was Aline Martine, and she taught cooking, but she loved France, and she loved French interiors. And so, I remember going over to his house one day, and I walked into the entry hall, and there was this beautiful French commode and a, uh, blooming Azalea tree right next to it. And you looked out into the back yard and there were these French curtains that were tied back - all kind of pale blue, silk - and I thought, "Uh, this is how I want to live." [Laughing]. I just, a vivid, vivid memory of that.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** What area of town did you live in?

**JS:** Well, I was, uh, right here in Brookside, is where I was born, yeah, or where we lived when I was growing up.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** And then we moved over to, uh, what would, uh, I guess it would be called Range Acres - 33rd and Delaware, yeah.

**JE:** Well, and then the first school you attended?

**JS:** Uh, I went to Eliot for elementary school. Then I went to Wright for junior high school. Then I went to Edison.

**JE:** Alright. You are an artist.

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** Uh, when did you feel did your first artist ability began, and interest, began to shine, show through?

**JS:** Hm, well, I, I, I guess would, believe it or not, in second grade, for some odd reason, we were taught perspective drawing. I don't know quite why, or anything [laughing], but I loved it. I found it so fascinating. So, that, that sort of started it. And then in junior high school, they, one of the electives you could always take was mechanical drawing, and you kind of did these, kind of, silly drawings. They were mechanical, mechanically based. And then you started doing floor plans, and things like that. So, that's when I really became interested in it. But I always liked to draw. I liked to paint. So, then I just sort of, you know, a little bit of this, a little bit of that.

**JE:** Right, you said "perspective"?

**JS:** Perspective drawing.

**JE:** What's that?

**JS:** Uh, you have two points. Uh, and they're vanishing points. And everything, if you look at things, everything goes back into certain points, and you can draw anything like that, and so, that's what I was taught. And then I found that fascinating, like, "Oh, my God." And then you started noticing, well that's how all that perspective works, and buildings, and you look down, and how everything does back into a diminishing, or, uh, I guess a diminishing point, I guess.

**JE:** That was really something in the second grade, isn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, I guess, I don't know quite why. I guess it just sort of, and it was, I mean, some people obviously, like, a lot of things, you either catch on to it very quickly, or find it fascinating, or you just don't care. But anyway, I thought that was just really interesting. I loved it. [Laughing].

**JE:** You remember that teacher's name?

**JS:** I don't. I wish I did.

**JE:** And that was at, uh?

**JS:** At Eliot.

**JE:** Wow!

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** So many teachers have been so influential in all these stories that I've been telling. What do you think in Tulsa, uh, like in Edison, uh, what did you do for entertainment, were you active in Edison?

**JS:** Oh, oh yeah, I was active in like, I was student council, and all that stuff, and like Glee Club, and you know, all the things you thought you probably needed to do so you could get into college. [Laughing]. I wasn't sports minded at all. I played golf, but that was it, but I really wasn't on the gold team, and I didn't, you know, and that was about it.

**JE:** So, when you graduated from Edison...

**JS:** 1968.

**JE:** And then you knew you had this artist...

**JS:** Yes, uh, yeah.

**JE:** Uh, thing.

**JS:** But I didn't quite know what to do, or how, or how to go about it, and so just, I went to Drury College in Springfield, Missouri, and I was there for a year, and I didn't, I was like: Oh, I don't like this. I really want to go to art school. So, I applied, and, uh, my dad said, "No, you can't go." I had got into Pratt. Not Pratt, I'm sorry, Parsons School of Design in New York, and he said, "No, you can't go," and I said, "Well, then I'll get my business degree, but when I finish, I'm going to go." And he said, "Okay," and I said, "Okay," and we kind of left it at that. And so, I went to Drury College and got a business degree like he wanted me to do.

**JE:** So, how long did that take?

**JS:** Four years.

**JE:** So, he was probably hoping that you would forget about this art thing?

**JS:** Yeah, forget about it. And, yeah, I mean, he didn't, I didn't really know what I was going to do or how I would go do whatever, but I know he had no clue what, how I would make a living, and how are you going to support yourself. So, that was what he was concerned about. But he always thought if you had a business degree, you could do something.

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**Chapter 3 - 5:13**  
**Move to New York**

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**John Erling:** So, a lady by the name of Betty Conheim, she, she gets involved with your life, here?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Mhm, yeah, yeah, so when I was in college, I worked for Betty on the, oh, mostly on spring break, or holidays and things like that, and loved it and found it fascinating, and so, when I graduated from college, I went to work for her for a year, and, which I loved. And, you know, she had great taste - she had something called the Carlin Shop. It was where the Helmerich & Payne building was, where now the a, oh, let's see, it's called the Robert Davis building, there on 21st and Utica.

**JE:** Yes.

**JS:** So, it was in there, and she was on the ground floor next to Sadie's Dress Shop, which was a very fancy ladies dress shop, and I think World Travel was there. Anyway, but she had a beautiful shop, and I worked there, and doing a little bit of everything and loved it.

**JE:** And, like what, what would you...?

**JS:** Uh, I was, I always was very good using my hands, so, uh, I covered frames for her, and, just, I, odds and ends of things that were, uh, that needed to be done with your hands, so to speak. We'd cover wastepaper baskets in beautiful fabrics, and things like that. So, I would do that, and then just kind of there. I mean, she had beautiful present were always wrapped beautifully there, and we had to do that, and it was just, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, but I loved it, because you got to see so many things, because she carried Bertozzi linens. She had Guerin hardware. She had antiques, and it was beautifully, it was set up like someone's home. It was just absolutely beautiful.

**JE:** And, again, that was at the corner of 21st and Utica?

**JS:** Utica.

**JE:** Right, right, and so, you worked there for...?

**JS:** Just for a year, and my father one day said, "We should buy Betty's business," so I would have something to do. And, so, anyways, one Saturday we had a meeting with Betty and my dad and myself, and my dad brings this up, and Betty is very polite and listens, and she finally looked at him and said, "That's what you want; that's not what Jim wants or needs to do." And, so, the meeting ending quickly. [Laughing]. Dad, we went home - I come down to work on Monday and Betty said, "You need to leave town. Apply to school in New York. You'll get in. I know lots of people in New York, I'll make sure you'll have a job. Just leave." [Laughter]. And so, I applied to Parsons, and, I mean, Pratt at that point, and I got in, and in a month, I moved to New York, and she made sure I had a job, which I had a job with Karl Springer, who was a great furniture designer, and I worked for him, while I was going to Pratt.

**JE:** Okay, there's got to be something here when you told your parents...

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** "I'm walking out that door and I'm going to New York."

**JS:** [Laughing]. Well, I, yeah, because I had to remind my dad that I'm going to art school or design school or whatever. You said I could after I got my business degree, and well, I've done it and I'm going to go. And he said, "I know, okay, you can go." [Laughing].

**JE:** So maybe he paid for your plane ticket?

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, no, I mean, they were very generous. I mean, I paid for school.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** And I had a place to live, obviously, and they paid for all of that, so, yeah, so.

**JE:** Do you think your business degree helped you though, in the long run, in life?

**JS:** Oh, maybe to just have practical knowledge about it, but I don't, uh, what I needed to do, or what I have been doing - no, uh-uh, it was not. [Laughing].

**JE:** Alright, so you worked with Karl Springer, a furniture designer, what did you do there?

**JS:** Uh, again I, I worked with this wonderful, crazy Russian lady, uh, Valentina Jodorowsky, and, uh, we covered frames, we covered telephone, little telephone tables that he was kind of famous for, and, uh, we made these beautiful telephone books. Everybody had a telephone book then, you know what, you'd write all your addresses and telephone numbers it was a, and we made those, and they were all covered in exotic skins and leathers and all kinds of stuff. So, three days a week I worked there, and the other days and I was Pratt going to school, and, uh, you know, I would go out on jobs and took, helped deliver things, and just, I loved it because I got to see so much. I got to see so much of New York and apartments in New York. And all of a sudden, you get in to see things that, unless you knew who lived there, you wouldn't see it. But I got, you know when you deliver things, you get to see it. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** So, it was great fun.

**JE:** All of this was laying groundwork for you, wasn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

**JE:** But then you left Springer I suppose, at some time?

**JS:** Well, yeah, in fact, that's where I met David, when I was working at Karl Springer's, and so, uh, anyways, so we got together, and then he said, "You know, you have this ability to draw. Why don't you draw?" And, but at first, I went to work for a decorator, Kevin McNamara, for about a year and a half. And, I was always, David always wanted to do things and go places and so I was always asking, "Can I, do you mind if I take four days off, or do you mind if I do this?" [Laughing]. And Kevin was, was always very nice, and finally it was just kind of the point where, you know, I, this is not fair to Kevin, and so, anyway, then it was, I loved working for Kevin. He was a great decorator, and it was great fun. So, then I started doing renderings.

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**Chapter 4 - 2:14**  
**Then I Met David**

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**John Erling:** So, that was real key, and then I met David.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yes. [Laughing].

**JE:** Because that just changed your whole life, right there?

**JS:** Oh yeah, completely.

**JE:** And, and where was he in his life and career when you met him?

**JE:** Oh, he was established. He had his own business, and he had worked, well he had gone to Pratt also, and had a degree, an Architectural degree. And, so, he had worked with Edward Wormley for a couple of years and then he worked for Valerian Rybar for a few years, and then he worked for Parish-Hadley, and then he went to work on his own, uh, probably about 1972, I think, and I met David in 1975.

**JE:** Okay, but, uh, with Kevin McNamara, he saw the ability for - that you could draw and do architectural renderings, right?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And then you concentrated, I believe, on those renderings for designers, is that true?

**JS:** Yeah, well once I left Kevin, I said, well, David was kind of, like, well, I was, "What am I going to do?"

David said, "Well, you can draw. You can do interior renderings for decorators and there's plenty of people that want to have that done. Just start, and just, you know, you don't have to worry about making a living right now." And we were living together, and he said, "Don't worry about anything. Just do that." And I did. I was very fortunate.

**JE:** And, voila! Your work has been featured in London, in Paris, the Sydney, Australia galleries, the National Academy in New York are all there.

**JS:** [Laughing]. Yeah, so. I was very fortunate. David was very, he was sweet and quite a, a, a good, uh, life partner and a mentor, and just, everything. I was very fortunate.

**JE:** Well, if he were sitting here right now, he'd be saying nice things about you too, so this was a...

**JS:** I think so. [Laughing].

**JE:** This was a great combination because it became, in business, and then he became your life partner too.

**JS:** Yeah, exactly, yeah.

**JE:** You could have been just a business associate, but, no, it was a combo.

**JS:** It, yeah, yeah, yeah, it started out just being, we were together and just partners and not working together, then I was just doing, he had his business, and he had a partner in business, and, uh, anyways, so I, just, I was not part of his business for quite a while.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Yeah.



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**Chapter 5 - 4:02****Charles Faudree**

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**John Erling:** Those who have followed Charles Faudree, or remember the beautiful renderings featured in his first book on French country design, and you were a part of that book. Uh, you and Charles became lifelong friends.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** You know, I forget when I actually met Charles. It was when he moved here from Muskogee with Francie. It was right after Francie had got a divorce. And, uh, anyway, Charles said, "Let's get out of Muskogee. Let's go to Tulsa and we'll open up a shop." And so, they did. And it was probably about 1978, maybe, I think. And he was living in a house, a very nice duplex on 21st between, oh, where was that? Between Peoria and Boston, I think, and kind of in that old area of Tulsa where beautiful old homes, they were for the oil rich at one point, and anyway. I met Charles through a friend, Diana Coorilay, and, uh, we just became instant friends. And so, I, my mother was still living at that point, and so, uh, I would come out to see her and I would see Charles and then I would, you know, just kind of went on from there. We became great friends.

**JE:** And then you remain close to Francie, Charles's sister, of course?

**JS:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** And her husband, Dale Gillman, uh, and in fact, you've used Dale's talent to design several custom tables, haven't you?

**JS:** Oh yeah, yeah, Dale's a great source for, uh, well he loves making things and just anything. He likes a project, and he likes a challenge, and so it's fun to, you know, try to talk with him and say, "Can you do this?" And we talk it over and he can more than likely do it. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right, it's so interesting that all these people in your life that come together as friends, uh, they become a part of your professional life too.

**JS:** Oh yeah, definitely, yeah, always, yeah. [Laughing].

**JE:** Uh, and, of course, you have your studios, Easton Steinmeyer Studios, just off Peoria and Brookside.

**JS:** Right.

**JE:** And I think Dale created some things there for you.

**JS:** Right.

**JE:** Uh, in fact, you've helped in the refurbishing of the Southern Hills Country Club.

**JS:** Mhm.

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

**JS:** Well, Charles did the original. Uh, when they really did a big renovation of the place and added onto it, uh, Charles did that, probably in the early 2000s, I think. And, after Charles died, and, uh, I guess it must have been about 2014, maybe, they were going to redo the dining room and the grill. And, anyway, they were using a country club design firm from

Atlanta, and Susan Arnold called and said, "This is awful. We can't do this. Would you help?" And, you know, so I came out and met with Nick and, uh, anyway, and I said, "This doesn't look like Southern Hills. It doesn't...It has nothing to do with what Charles did. Which it doesn't have to stay that way, but it, you have this all done and then all of a sudden this just doesn't look like anything. It doesn't look like the Club." And so, anyway, they, they had me do it, which was great fun.

**JE:** And the dining room, and, and...

**JS:** And the grill room. The, the Mixed Grill, I guess they call it, yeah.

**JE:** Yeah, and you, and you designed all that?

**JS:** Yeah, we figured out what to do, and, you know, the decorating, and the, you know, let's do this and that and whatever, so, anyway. [Laughing]. So.

**JE:** Man, and the experience you have accumulated along the way here...

**JS:** Yeah, exactly.

**JE:** Set you up for that special time, wasn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, well, yeah, exactly, like all things in life, it's this building blocks that you do for yourself, and you get there.

**JE:** And we're, and we're unaware that's happening to us.

**JS:** Oh yeah, yeah, I think you, yeah, you just don't realize you're doing it as you, along the way, which you are.

**JE:** There was a plan, wasn't there, and we don't realize it.

**JS:** [Laughing]. Realize it, yes, that's right, exactly. Yeah, because I never really had, like, this is what I'm going to do, going to get from A to B to C to D.

**JE:** No, no, but somewhere there was a plan up there.

**JS:** [Laughing]. I guess so. I don't know [Laughing].

## Chapter 6 - 5:58

### David Easton

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**John Erling:** Like I said at the outset, we're here to tell the story of David Easton, and your, part of your story, of course, is told along this way. Uh, legendary New York Architect and Interior Designer, and where was he born?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** David was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1937.

**JE:** And from an early age too, did he talk about that he had any interests...?

**JS:** Oh yeah, yeah, he had a, his, uh, grandmother and his aunts all lived in, uh, in Chicago, and so his mother would, they used to go up there for the summer because David was

basically the only child till his younger was born about eight, when he was about eight. So, they'd go up every summer to Chicago and be with his grandmother and aunts and they'd go to Marshall Field's, which was "the Store," and, uh, they're on the, I don't know if it was the top floor, but one of the floors, they had, uh, they always had a house that was completely set up on this floor and you'd walk in, you had to have a, they'd create a garden and you'd walk into the entry hall and you'd walk through all the rooms, and it was all decorated and it was, you know, this unbelievable kind of showcase. And David was just fascinated with that as a child and just, like, oh, this is what I like. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right, and for a small child to walk into that, it had to be really impactful... And, his parents, his parent's names?

**JS:** Yeah, his mother's name was, uh, let's see, I have to think about this. Dad's name was, uh, David also, and his mother's name was Marie.

**JE:** Alright.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And his father was what?

**JS:** He was with the FDIC, and so when David was little, they kind of moved around quite a bit, and then finally, his mother just put down her foot and said, "We're not going to move anymore. Let's figure this one out." So, they ended up outside Philadelphia in York, Pennsylvania.

**JE:** And she was then a homemaker.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** But, neither one of them were particularly artistic, as we know they weren't.

**JS:** No, no, no I don't think so at all.

**JE:** So, this then just came out of the clear blue sky, didn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, I think.

**JE:** And I understand he drew houses in the back of public-school primary readers and sketchpads and all that kind of thing.

**JS:** Always, yeah, he was always kind of sketching. He liked, yeah. [Laughing].

**JE:** He was doing, probably, in the second or third grade himself.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** So, then his dream was then, obviously, to go to New York, I would imagine.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Uh, how did that happen?

**JS:** Uh, I think he, the first year he went to, I forget what college he went to, he went to it, which he didn't like and he wanted to go to New York and go to Pratt, and so his parents agreed, and so he kind of tells the story of them driving him over the Brooklyn Bridge and driving to Pratt. And then Pratt was probably not in the worst neighborhood, but it was

not a very good neighborhood. At one point, during the early 1900s, it was a beautiful section. It was called, uh, it was, not called Bedford-Stuyvesant, maybe it was still called that, I can't remember. But there was wonderful big townhouses there that belonged to the Pratts and all kinds of different families of New York, and anyway, Pratt ended up there, and his parents were just horrified with it and just, sort of, kind of, said, "Okay, fine, this is what you're going to do. I guess you're going to do it." So, he, he, but he loved it. [Laughing].

**JE:** That inner drive...

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Pushed him on.

**JS:** Yeah, that's what he wanted to do.

**JE:** So about, he went to Pratt's - didn't he go to the University of Illinois and studied Architecture?

**JS:** Uh, he might have gone there, that might have gone, that might have been the first place he went.

**JE:** For, for a year?

**JS:** But he really wanted to, I don't know quite why he decided he wanted to go to Pratt, but it might have been just New York, you know, he kind of knew Chicago, but he wanted to go to New York.

**JE:** Well, I'm going to give a teacher credit: supposedly it came from an art teacher, Herb Lee...

**JS:** Oh!

**JE:** That taught Saturday classes at the York Art Center, which David attended regularly for several years.

**JS:** Right, yeah, yeah, they were, I think they were, he was a neighbor of theirs, and David loved him and was very fascinated by he and his wife. And they told David stories of New York and going, oh, of the Village, and different areas or the Village that they thought David would be interested in. And so, it just sparked his imagination: "I've got to go." [Laughing]. So, that's what, that's how that happened. [Laughing].

**JE:** Yeah, so there's another teacher that was influential.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Uh, so when he graduates from Pratt, he applied for a scholarship?

**JS:** Uh, I, I guess so, I don't know, uh, uh, at the end you always have to do, kind of, a thesis, and you have to do a project and it's your thesis, and so then they have a, uh, group that comes in and looks at it, and one of the people that was looking at it and judging it was Edward Wormley, and, anyway, David won the prize, which was to go to the Fontainebleau School for, uh, three months during the summer, and when, he said, you know, "You won," and he said, "David, and when you come back, give me a call, because you can come to my

office and work.” And so, David was over the moon, because he knew Edward Wormley was very famous. Uh, he was, at that point he was at Dunbar Furniture and was their major designer, and any of Edward Wormley’s furniture that comes on the market is very expensive now and, and quite beautiful. It’s midcentury, but it’s just absolutely beautiful. Beautifully made and beautifully designed.

**JE:** So, was, what was David actually doing? Was he designing furniture?

**JS:** Well, you kind of do a little bit when you’re in school, because it was just part of things you kind of learn a little bit, but it, architecture, basically. But, so, his project was an architectural project, but Edward being in the furniture business was also, uh, your sort of, it’s just all co-mingled, so to speak, you, you know, furniture designers like architecture, and architecture, you know, they like furniture, and, you know, it kind of goes. It’s just symbiotic, I guess.

## **Chapter 7 - 6:44**

### **Albert Hadley**

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**John Erling:** So, he was able to both: Architects and Design.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** But then he was also became an Interior Designer.

**JS:** Yeah, that’s, right, he wasn’t really terribly interested in Interior Design. He liked the Architecture point of it, but, I guess, when he went to work for Parish-Hadley was when he realized, this is really, this is what makes a house special, is how you put all these elements together. You need, uh, Albert Hadley, and sister Parish, were the owners of Parish-Hadley, and Albert was very much architecturally inclined – still did beautiful interiors – but he was, you had to get the architecture right first, and then you can make it all pretty, so to speak.

**JE:** And then, this is interesting, Edward Wormley was part of a circle of people that included Philip Johnson and Edgar Kaufmann Jr.

**JS:** Right.

**JE:** But with his father, commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to build Fallingwater in Mill Run, Pennsylvania in the 1930s.

**JS:** Right.

**JE:** So, what did, uh, of course, we feel Frank Lloyd Wright architecture here in Tulsa.

**JS:** Mhm, right.

**JE:** What did David think of Mr. Wright’s work, and then in particular, Fallingwater?

**JS:** Well, I think he, well he was fascinated by Fallingwater, because it was such a, a, an iconic piece of architecture, and it really works as far as how he made the, uh, airflow and things

work in that building, and it looks beautiful on the outside. It's probably maybe a little strange and cold on the inside, but it certainly is an incredibly beautiful building, or house, and, uh, I mean, I think he liked that. I don't think he liked all of Wright's work. But he's pretty much a genius with certain things, that's for sure.

**JE:** But not to be influenced by him, right?

**JS:** No, no, no, no.

**JE:** Uh, there was a book that influenced David: Mario Praz's *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration*.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah. It's sort of the bible of decorators, a beginning bible of decorators because it goes through the history of decorators, so to speak.

**JE:** And then it made him think of how the pattern of a carpet, furniture, pictures, fabrics, wall covering, and the hang of curtains, along with the fall of light, they admit, all translates into making a room dance.

**JS:** Yes, exactly.

**JE:** And, and you know exactly what I'm talking about.

**JS:** It all has to, yeah, it all has to work, the light has to work the room. It just, everything. Uh, it's just, it's a, such a combination of many things to make a room special and come to life and make it sing, so to speak, it really does.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Yeah, it's funny, that was, uh, well, when I first met David, that was one of the first things he ever gave me, was a copy of that book, yeah, because it, for him it was a bible, so therefore, I needed it.

**JE:** And so, when we walk in, and we should be talking about your place here too, because David had influence on this, but when we walk in, most of us can't - we like it, but we don't know why we like it, I guess.

**JS:** Yeah, I guess, yeah.

**JE:** But I guess it's all those things put together that make it, even with it, the sun coming in through your window here, and, and in your house here, we're in what, which room?

**JS:** This is the study.

**JE:** Okay, right, and so everything was purposely done in exactly the proper space.

**JS:** Yeah, I mean, I mean mostly, I mean David was of, you know, if you would either, well you found pieces of furniture that would work in the room, so to speak, and then you'd, you had to have something made that it would work in the room, you would do that as well, and then, you know, I don't know, there's so many things that go into a room work and make it special. How, where are you going to sit, you know? Where do you want to sit, you know? You have to have a table next to it so you can put a drink on it, you know? You got to have a light there.

- JE:** Well, you kind of touched on Parish-Hadley, but then he met Albert Hadley at a lunch, I understand, is that true?
- JS:** Right, uh, I forget whose house it was. Uh, yeah, uh, one weekend, and, uh, Albert is, is, well, he died a few years ago, was very charismatic and just an incredible talent, and he was always looking for young talent that could come to work at Parish-Hadley, and, you know, he was impressed with David, and just liked his manner, I'm sure, because David's very, uh, David was very, uh, personable, and very, uh, he's funny, and, you know, he just, he knows how to be a social, he's a social creature, or was a social creature.
- JE:** And that personality of his put him into circles, and yes, we know he was terribly talented.
- JS:** Yeah, you can be very talented, but if you don't have the ability to sit at a table and talk to people and - at dinner or lunch or whatever - you're probably never going to get in the door. You have to be sociable, and you have to know how to, sort of "play the game," so to speak.
- JE:** What you just said, young people will listen to them: that was a key point for them to listen to.
- JS:** Oh, you have to. You can't, well you can't be so arrogant, you maybe have all the talent in the world, but you can't be so arrogant to think that someone's just going to hire you because you're so talented. There's other things that go into it. Really, life, which is just life, you should learn that. [Laughing].
- JE:** And he had it all in one person, didn't he? All that personality.
- JS:** He did, yeah, all is spades.
- JE:** So then, when, uh, with, with Albert, with Parish-Hadley, he was thrown into what we call traditional design.
- JS:** Yeah, yeah.
- JE:** What was David's favorite, uh, design, or did it, did it morph into...?
- JS:** Well, he loved the Regency Period, he loved the Georgian Period. Uh, I would think when David first started, he really liked the Regency Period, because it's much more, kind of, uh, it's not so, uh, uh, it's maybe more disciplined, I guess, as you could say. But he didn't, uh, I mean, all the decorating part, which, you know, fancy curtains and all that is probably more Georgian, I would assume. I mean, Regency certainly had fancy curtains, et cetera, but, yeah, I mean, he, and he also loved modern architecture.
- JE:** Right, he didn't stick in one place, didn't he, and so on?
- JS:** No, he wasn't just, you could never pinpoint David. Well, you could probably for a period in the eighties because he did so many big, kind of, Georgian houses, uh, but he was capable of doing anything and everything and, uh, and hated to be, "Oh, that's what you'd go to David Easton for: that, that look," you know? Because he was, he was much more adaptable, so to speak [laughing]. He was much more interested in a lot of things, rather than just one thing.
- JE:** Right.

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**Chapter 8 - 5:15**  
**First Georgian House**

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**John Erling:** So, he leave Parish-Hadley in 1969, and what does he do?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Oh, goes on his own.

**JE:** It says here: "He left Parish-Hadley in '69, after working for another firm, he established his own firm in '72 with a partner.

**JS:** He did, yeah, Michael La Rocca.

**JE:** Alright, and then on his own in the early eighties.

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, they split finally. When I met David, he and Michael were living together and, anyway, [Laughing], due to me, that caused a split, but they stayed in business for the next, oh, ten years or eight years or whatever, and, uh, much to David's credit and Michael's credit, and somehow, they made it work. I just didn't go into the office, so to speak, but anyway.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Michael was always nice to me. He never was horrible, but anyway, just, it happened. Life happens. [Laughing].

**JE:** Well, there was a lot of emotion there, wasn't there?

**JS:** Yes, yes.

**JE:** Right. Uh, then didn't he want this firm to include both architecture and interior design, and at that time that was kind of out of sync with the modern system?

**JS:** Oh, uh, yeah, a little bit, I mean, a lot of architectural firms, probably, they may have done interior design, but it wasn't what we consider, uh, comfortable and pretty, it was much more, let's say, uh, commercial maybe, I mean, you know, uh, really strict architects are very particular about what goes into the building as far as how bad, uh, the furnishings are going to look. It's kind of like when Philip Johnson did a house for the, uh, in Houston, for the, uh, oh, uh, oh, I'll think of the name of the oil company, Schlumberger, and, uh, it's, it's a wonderful house, it's beautiful. Uh, but, she had, uh, Charles James, who was really a fashion designer in New York, do the, the interiors. Well, I'm sure it probably horrified Philip Johnson, at, at because he just, like, this, his is very clean, modern house, and here comes, he puts in these things, it all works. It, just, it's a very magical house.

**JE:** Well, his concept then, wasn't it put to the test when he was commissioned to design and decorate his first Georgian house. He said this was a defining moment when he went from bow house architecture to a classical architect. Can you explain that?

**JS:** Well, that house was very, that was in the thirties and the, uh, I guess, maybe late twenties, and it was very clean architecture, very much like the buildings that, the first big glass skyscrapers that went up - just all glass and steel. Uh, very bow house. That's what you'd



kind of consider maybe bow house, its very clean lines, and, uh, I once had a teacher who said, uh, "When a wall and," uh, "meets the ceiling for decorators, it's a celebration," and the bow house is just very simple. It just meet, well, you get a decorator involved, it's going to be, you're going to have crown molding, you're going to have something happening to make this statement. But, yeah, David, the first project that David did was for, uh, a man by the name of Ralph Falk in Chicago, and he told, asked David if he'd design a Georgian house for him, which was a wonderful opportunity because David had never done that to just, and it was pretty good, I mean, it was a good-sized house, that's for sure. And, just beautifully detailed, and David loved, loved it, loved it.

**JE:** And he could start from scratch.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, he could start from scratch and that's what he loved.

**JE:** Right, and Mr. Falk, is that his name?

**JS:** Yeah, he was, uh, Ralph Falk was, uh, his company was Baxter, and it became Baxter Travenol, and, uh, this huge pharmaceutical company, and if you go into a hospital, all the bags, that are sitting there dripping usually say 'Travenol' or 'Baxter' or something, and that's, that's the company. Well, anyway, his father started it, and they lived in Lake Forest, Illinois, and, uh, anyway, he bought land on, uh, Green Bay Road, a beautiful part of Lake Forest, and David got to design this wonderful English house.

**JE:** Isn't it something to take a chance with somebody who had never done this before?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, David had met him when he was at Parish-Hadley, as he was, he was married to his first wife, Suzanne, and, uh, David, Mrs. Parish was doing Suzanne and Ralph's house then. Uh, can't what street they lived on, but anyways, beautiful, kind of a very nice, very, very pretty house. And, anyway, they did all of the decorating on the inside. And Suzanne liked David. And then Suzanne and Ralph got a divorce, and when he remarried, uh, Ralph called David, and said, "Would you design this house for me?" And, so, anyway, and David did, so anyway.

**JE:** Were you involved with renderings in anyway, in that point?

**JS:** Yeah, when he did, when he did that, I did renderings and then we did renderings of curtain details and all that sort of stuff for him, which was great fun.

**JE:** So that was your biggest job too, probably.

**JS:** Well, it was, yeah, one of the first, kind of, big, kind of, things. Doing all kinds of different things. Which was great fun, so.

**JE:** Right.

**Chapter 9 - 9:00****John Kluge House**

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**John Erling:** Uh, I think he said that “‘Home Sweet Home’ no longer has the same meaning that it had in past centuries”? Uh, he said, “Changes in technology, population, demographics, and the economy have altered the way we live in our homes.” Would you agree with that?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Oh yeah, I mean, we, yeah, it’s just, uh, well, especially technology has changed the way we live in a house. Uh, you know, we have the ability to have anything and everything at your fingertips is kind of amazing. Uh, good and bad, I guess. It’s kind of, like, ‘Home Sweet Home’ was probably pretty nice and sweet and wonderful and kind of things, we all kind of aspire to, but we kind of all, we still want the new things that we can have now, you know? And also, your house is, uh, well, I mean, you know, it’s run better, uh, you know, it’s, the systems are better in a house, uh, the HVACs - all those sort of things, sound system, you know? It’s all just - gets better and better with years, you know?

**JE:** I would still think that within that you could still feel a ‘Home Sweet Home’.

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, I think, I would think most of David’s homes were ‘Home Sweet Home’. They were comfortable to live in, you know. He, yeah, he made sure that they were comfortable. You know, you came in and you felt like you were welcomed into a house.

**JE:** Fair to say that “David created English-style palaces for an American aristocracy.”

**JS:** [Laughing]. Yes. Yeah, it’s kind of, uh, yeah, I mean, you...living in New York and working in New York and you get exposed to people, and that’s where a lot of money is, and then... You know, people come to New York from all over the world, also, and they search out people to do work for them, so you’re, if you get established and you’re well-known, and, uh, you know, one thing leads to another, you’re very fortunate, you know?

**JE:** Did he do much work, eh, in foreign countries?

**JS:** Uh, in England and Mexico. Uh, where else did he do? Never, uh, yeah, I think that’s really about it: England and Mexico, yeah...Canada.

**JE:** Didn’t he work for the Kluge, John Kluge?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Uh, and you talk about wealthy people and getting to meet them.

**JS:** Yes.

**JE:** John Kluge was a television industry mogul, here in the United States, and at one time he was the richest person in the United States. How did David meet John Kluge and his wife?

**JS:** Uh, I think, well, Patricia, I think, was his, maybe third or fourth wife, I can’t remember now, but anyway. They...they were in New York, and they were looking at furniture at Stair & Company, and Alastair Stair was the owner of Stair & Company, and they, they, Stair sold beautiful English furniture they were, you know, known, you know, they were just a very

good dealer, and anyway...John and Patricia said, "Who should we talk to if we want to build a house in Charlottesville?" And they said, Alastair said, "Well, you'll have to talk to David Easton." So, they called David, and Patricia and David met at the Carlyle Hotel and sat there over a drink and David sketched out what the house ought to look like.

[Laughing].

**JE:** On a napkin?

**JS:** On a napkin. [Laughing].

**JE:** Wasn't he famous for doing that?

**JS:** Yeah, we could, he, David was very adaptive. I mean, he could be talking to people and kind of, "What do you want?" And he could, he'd start to sketch something out very quickly, and the floor plan and everything. I mean, you know, I want to say, "Not all the time," but a lot of the times it pretty much fell exactly what he started out thinking about, you know.

**JE:** Those could be framed. They probably were. Your renderings have been framed, obviously.

**JS:** [Laughing]. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, so.

**JE:** Right. But I just want to push you a little more about John Kluge. In 1986 he sold the Metromedia television stations to Twentieth Century Fox for 4 billion dollars. Those stations would later form the core of what would become the Fox Television Network.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And the following year, Forbes placed Kluge on the top of his list as the richest man in America.

**JS:** And he, he was, uh, John was a very, I mean, he and David got along very well, and I think, uh, John respected David and David certainly respected him, and erm, John was very much, yeah, he didn't, I mean, he cared what things cost but he was, you know, all you had to do was explain to him why this was good or blah blah blah, and John was, "Okay, fine, let's do that." You know, he didn't, you know...The only thing that he did probably in the house that David really didn't want to do - there was an existing house and he wanted to keep the main part of the house on the, uh, that foundation, and David would have torn that whole thing down. Well, it all came down anyway, but he would've just got rid of the foundation and started over and made it, oh, a bit different. And, uh, John was, well he was kind of like, "Well, we'll save money. We'll do this," and your kind of like, "Well, okay, well, fine." So, there's certain things you're, like, "Well, okay fine. We'll work within that print then."

**JE:** So, what was the worth of that house when it was built?

**JS:** Oh, I don't know. It's so hard to tell because there's so, so much that goes into it, and you add up all the prices, it's just gets to be sort of silly, ridiculous. [Laughing].

**JE:** But it was sold at some point.

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah. She had some financial reverses and sold it. But, for nothing.

**JE:** Really?

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Most houses like that end up being sold for practically nothing.

**JE:** How big was this house?

**JS:** I think it was, probably, 30,000 square feet, probably.

**JE:** And so, you would describe it overall as what kind of a house?

**JS:** It was a Georgian house, and it was, uh, it was, eh, it was, was, very elegant but it very livable to live in. I mean, we were down there a lot for holidays, and, uh, anyway, it was just, it, you know, the bedrooms were beautiful. The living-room was beautiful. The library was beautiful. The gardens were beautiful. It was just a beautiful house to be in. You know, there were so many different facets to it, you know, that were, uh, made it a fun house.

**JE:** I've often thought about houses that are that big. We have some pretty big houses in Tulsa too.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And just two people live there.

**JS:** Oh Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Are we building houses that big anymore?

**JS:** I think they still are. You kind of wonder why? Uh, because you can't live in all the rooms, so to speak. And if you have a house like that, I mean, Patricia wanted to entertain, so if you have a house like that, you need to entertain. Uh, and that's what she wanted to do, and they did, you know. Uh, so, you know, then, then you use the house, if you have that big of a house, you know?

**JE:** Yeah, they gave a name to that house, didn't they? What was it?

**JS:** Yeah, she just, just Albemarle House.

**JE:** And how did, where did the, uh, Albemarle name come from?

**JS:** Oh, it's the county that, that the house is in: Albemarle.

**JE:** Oh, right.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And, so, I was reading about the house and it's as you just said, by Patricia and her husband John, and then, you just read about this? It was in the...Donald Trump became the new owner of the entire estate.

**JS:** Yes.

**JE:** And that was in 2012, when Trump paid \$6.5 million for the house. Sounds like a chunk of change, doesn't it?

**JS:** Yes. [Laughing].

**JE:** Then we go down here and read about this, oh, there's David Easton's name in it. "Home designed, demanded top-flight treatment, despite its compromised position," it says. And, uh, so it became a Donald Trump house then for a while.

**JS:** Well, yeah, I think, the, uh, Patricia, well, when John and Patricia got a divorce, uh, she was giving money and then she was giving kind of X amount of dollars every year also, and Patricia did some good things with the money and made money, and things, but then she decided she wanted to have a vineyard. And vineyards are very expensive. It's kind of one of the, it's like horse and vineyards, you probably shouldn't get involved with them unless you've got a lot of money. And, anyway, because of that she ran into some financial difficulties and then the banks cause, you know, you got to, anyway, they basically were told they had to, she had to sell all their contents to meet the bank's demands, and anyway, so. So somehow, he bought it. Which he always buys things like on, on the cheap.

**JE:** Trump does?

**JS:** Yeah. You would never be able to buy that house for six and a half million dollars, or you shouldn't be able to, yeah.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Right now, I think it's, it's a hotel. I mean, it's, yeah. I don't know what he calls it, but anyway.

**JE:** And Trump owns it?

**JS:** Yes, as far as I know.

**JE:** He turned it into a hotel?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, so. It's very small. I mean, it only has five bedrooms, plus a master bedroom, so you know, it's not, you know, very, well, you know, it's a, a, what would you call it? A luxury hotel. A petit hotel.

## Chapter 10 - 7:34

### Books

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**John Erling:** I'm just going to go through some of the personality of David.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Okay.

**JE:** He says, "I built all these Georgian houses - we're talking about 15-25,000 square foot houses. Young people are not going to be able to build that way. They still are up in Greenwich, but that's the last blast. We can't afford to. We're not going to be able to afford to."

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** And so, most people can't do that anymore can they?

**JS:** Well, you know, there's still plenty of money out there to build big houses if that's what you want but I think David's looking at it, or did look at it as, uh, uh, hm, almost a moral thing: should we be building houses like this because they cost, I mean, it puts a lot of people to work and, uh...

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** ...and does a lot of good in a lot of ways. Uh, you know, in the end, in the industry, as far as... as far as professional people who do beautiful things, but these houses, you know, they take lots of people to, to run them. They take, uh, it takes an endless amount of everything to make all this work all the time and is that how somebody wants to live? And it's most of our clients' kids don't want to live like that I would say.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** They don't want to live like, they don't want the silver you have. They don't want the furniture you have. You know? So [Laughing], it's just funny.

**JE:** So, it gets sold in the garage sale somewhere. [Laughing].

**JS:** Yeah [Laughing].

**JS:** Or it goes to auction [Laughing]. It used to be like English furniture, always so funny, uh, well, anyways. How the furniture market is - English furniture has gone through such a slump. I mean if it goes to auction it just doesn't bring prices like it did let's say in the 70s, 80s, and the 90s and the early 2000s. I mean now it just kind of, it's just kind of like no one wants brown furniture. And it's kind of like it's beautiful and even fine French furniture. People don't necessarily want to buy that. There are obviously people that still do, but you don't.... there wasn't... there was quite a market for it. Now not so much.

**JE:** We are always giving credit the English, the French, and others I suppose about their design. Did American architecture influence foreign countries?

**JS:** Oh, that's an interesting question. Probably, uh, oh, yeah, I would think so because I mean, it probably melds together I would say, it wouldn't you know. We picked up things from the English and French and made it sort of American in a lot of ways. It was a great, sort of, there was a great architect in Chicago by the name of David Adler who could, who was very adept at taking different vocabularies of architecture and make absolutely beautiful houses and they're still beautiful. Uh, and they could be French they could be English and, but maybe, with a little, uh, toned down a bit, but making them somewhat American, I guess. But, uh, yeah, so, somehow people still - they pick up things from everywhere.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** It's just mixed ballgame I think, you know? I wouldn't say that people will, well people come to America to see what we do, that's for sure.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Uh, David said that “Books are such an important part of my life. They fill in the bookshelves in my room.” Let’s talk about books.

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** Because that was part of, he says “I have more than 4,000 books. That’s a plea for help,” he says.

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** “It’s like having 4,000 friends entertain, educate and give you comfort.”

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** So, talk about books in his life and how much reading he did.

**JS:** Yeah, David was a voracious reader. I mean it could be anything. It could be about things that he was interested in as far as his profession, which would interest him, but it was also just any subject. If he got interested in it he’d start to read about it and he’d, he’d, he’d never read uh novels so to speak but he read history and umm that’s what he was interested in and then he did, you know, so many lectures over the years that, you know, he’d have to, he’d do a lecture let’s say on the Grand Tour so then he’d buy every book that he could find on the Grand Tour and he’d start to read about it and then he’d underline things and he’d start to...figure out what to do and then he’d get the slides together. We had slides and all that had to be [Laughing] coordinated, and he would give a lecture, but he didn’t. He also taught school for, oh, a couple of years when he was, when he first got out of Pratt, I think.

**JE:** Oh.

**JS:** Yeah, he taught at Parsons. He taught the History of Design.

**JE:** Okay, so we have books for reading.

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** But you also have books as an interior design decorator.

**JS:** Oh yeah, well, they’ve become decorating. I mean we have books on decorating, on gardening, on furniture, on painting, on just you name it.

**JE:** Right, but, I, uh, in your other room there you have a table with books on it.

**JS:** Yeah, uh...

**JE:** And in your design studio you have books here books there.

**JS:** Yeah, it’s part of how we like to decorate, so to speak.

**JE:** Okay, that’s what I mean.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, it makes, uh, I mean, David would be horrified if he walked into somebody’s house and they had no books. He’d be like, well, he just wouldn’t understand that, uh, books were a part of his life and for him it was somebody who was maybe bereft of curiosity I guess because he was always curious about anything and everything. It just didn’t matter, and he would just buy books on things. He just loved to learn, loved to learn.

**JE:** And then he, uh, I thought you were going to say if he walked into a room, and he saw just a plain table with nothing on it.

**JE:** That would probably bother him.

**JS:** Well, yeah, in some ways and in some ways with some interiors, if that's just what you've got it can look absolutely beautiful. But I think for David he couldn't imagine that necessarily. I mean it would look the room didn't have a soul to him - that books are life.

**JE:** Right, and you want a lived-in feeling, don't you?

**JS:** Yeah. Yeah, you want to look like you live there - somebody lives there.

**JE:** Right. They asked him his attitude towards money, and he says, "Well I realized as I've gotten older it's important to have accumulated in terms of what people have generally, not a lot, but enough that I know I could survive. He says, "I know this apartment, which I know it's vulgar to say it, but it only cost \$834 in maintenance."

**JS:** [Laughing]. Mhm.

**JE:** "And so I know I can pay that and this project we are working on the modular house down in Charlottesville, Virginia, and I'm going to go teach and live there." So, then that's his attitude about money. Talk about Charlottesville, Virginia.

**JS:** Well, that's where, the, the house David, the house for the Kluges, outside of Charlottesville, and at one point we thought we would go down there and build a house and David thought. David never really wanted to retire but he thought well maybe I would teach. I would go to University of Virginia, and I would teach in the architecture school or the design school or whatever and, you know, teach a couple of courses and uh you know, I would still be working but that would be fun to do, I would like to do, which he probably could have done, we just never did it. We never - once they got a divorce and then it got, I don't know, it got sort of complicated, and we thought, "No let's not go do this." So, we didn't.

**JE:** Alright so we're talking a lot of houses.

## Chapter 11 - 4:56

### Country House

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about where you lived in New York and the places you lived there.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Okay, we just, we had, David and I first had a townhouse on 79th Street uh right off of Park Avenue and, uh, it was just a one-bedroom apartment. It was very nice. It was very classical, and it was easy to live in and it cost absolutely nothing. When we moved in there, I think we paid \$375 a month and we were there for 25 years and by the time we left because of rent stabilization, we only paid I think maybe it was \$1200 so,



so... [Laughing]. During that time, we then built a house in the country. So, we had this wonderful house in the country, and we thought, "Well, this is fine. We just need..." when we are in New York we just, this is, this works out fine, but we have a beautiful house in the country, and then finally David moved his, he wanted to move his office. So, we moved his office down to Spring Street in SoHo and the commute from 79th Street to SoHo would take forty-five minutes during the day and David was like, "I hate this. Let's look for an apartment downtown." So, we started to look, and we found something on 20th Street right off 5th Avenue. So, we moved there, and we were there for 16 years. So, we were very much, kind of, find a place and we would settle. We didn't move around a lot.

**JE:** No.

**JS:** The house we had in the country was, uh, very American. It was a shingle house, uh...

**JE:** You have it in your book.

**JS:** Yeah, it's in the book, and, uh, it, we found it through some friends. We were looking for something to buy, uh, I guess in the early 80s must have been, and, uh, so anyway. We looked up in Connecticut and we were, uh, we were at some friends' houses in Millbrook one weekend, and they said, "Well there's this piece of property and it has, it's kind of neat, and it's close to New York so why don't you go look at it." It's in Herfordshire, New York and so we drive down from Millbrook and we stop there and get out and we get on the Palisades Parkway, and it was, it was like 45 minutes to get into New York because we didn't want to go out to the Hamptons. Going to the Hamptons was like a four-hour drive if you're lucky in the weekend on the Summer. So, we thought well this will be perfect so I don't know that was like a Sunday and then on a Monday we bought the, and we didn't know anything about the, uh, about the area except it had, we had 7.5 acres and, uh, it was a walled garden. It had this wonderful little stone cottage and it was originally owned by a lady named Louise Bebe-Wilder, who was a famous, uh, landscape designer in oh turn of the century, and she lived next door in this very kind of nice farm - American farmhouse - and they had just, they had been dead for a while, but, so, anyway, but it was, this was, this walled garden was her garden that she experimented on and anyway she wrote a book called *Color in my Garden*, which we've got. And, uh, anyway if you're interested in landscape architecture or designers, she's very well-known and we just didn't know anything about it when we bought this thing and David said, "Well, this is how we're going to build this house." So, we tore down one end of the walled garden of the house with porches, and it was, it was a very beautiful house. It still is there. It's a beautiful house.

**JE:** And you named it...?

**JS:** It was called Balderbrae because that's what they called it and so we never really, we just sort of left the name, but we never realized we'll come to Balderbrae.

**JE:** Well, it's holding up in the book, that is just a gorgeous place.

- JS:** [Laughing] Oh no, oh yeah, it was. No, it was, it was very, very pretty. That was for sure. Yeah.
- JE:** I should say the book I'm talking about is *Timeless Elegance: The Houses of David Easton* with Annette 'Tapperish'?
- JS:** Annette Tapper- yep.
- JE:** And the forward by Albert Hadley, but you ever wish you still lived there?
- JS:** Yeah, no, it was so funny when we sold it. I remember when everything had been packed up and I was, there was just something I picked up at the very end, you know, the house was empty, and I drove up the drive and I was like, "Okay, that's done," and I had, I didn't miss it. I mean, I loved it for 20 years, we loved it, but it was a lot of work, and it was, you know: roses that had to be taken care of and 7.5 acres is kind of a lot, uh...
- JE:** Right, so is this a rendering of yours?
- JS:** Yea that's, that was at the porch; one of the porches. We had two porches that came out from the house. One was for sitting and lounging and the other side, the other porch was for dining. We had two round tables set up. So, we would, you know, when the weather was nice, we would have breakfast, lunch, and dinner out there all the time.
- JE:** And by the way, this isn't, uh, this is in page 216 of the book if you want to see exactly what we are talking about.

## Chapter 12 - 4:45

### Timeless Elegancy Book

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**John Erling:** As long as, as long as we're talking about the book though, is there another house in here that jumps out at you that's in this book that, that's...?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Erm, that David loved?

**JE:** Uh, yeah, here is Island Living, Nassau, Bahamas.

**JS:** That was a house for Michael and Betsy Dingman down in Lyford Cay, and building in the Islands is difficult at best, because everything has to be brought in, and you're, uh, you're lucky if you can find very good people, work people, to do anything and everything. But it just, it takes a little bit longer to do everything and you just have to have patience to do everything. But, uh, I mean, David loved it. Uh, he loved building it. He likes the idea of island kind of house. That was very, kind of, fancy house, but it was very, uh, you know, they had a huge, big center screen porch that a lot of rooms fed off of and, uh, it had, you know, nice gardens and everything going on and it was, uh, it was fun. And that was their main residence. They lived there all the time. That was the main, that was the big screen

porch that was kind of in the middle of the house that, uh, oh, the main living room came off of and the dining room came off of and the entry hall, you'd walk into there. I think that Betsy liked, did not like air conditioning, so this was sort of where she loved to be, but the house was always air conditioned; it had to be.

**JE:** Didn't David like one big room, but then you'd have a sitting here and a sitting here and sitting over there?

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Was that kind of his...?

**JS:** And his, yeah, which was our house in the country - was one big room, and we had seating at one end and dining at the other. And then we had an, obviously a separate, uh, kitchen, and then we had a study for us and our bedroom, you know. Then we also had a guest house, but, uh, yeah, but he loved the idea of just one big room where you kind of did everything, you know?

**JE:** Did you throw a lot of parties? These would be great party houses; I would imagine so.

**JS:** Yeah, oh, yeah, yeah. No, we had a lot of people up, always for, oh, kind of, lunch on Saturday, or lunch on Sun-or, you know, Sunday. Or, you know, they'd come up Saturday night for dinner, or, you know, things like that. We liked - it was great fun. I like to cook so it was fun to do that.

**JE:** Did you ever pinch yourself and say, "Wait a minute, I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma"?

**JS:** [Laughing] Exactly.

**JE:** And while we have wealthier - not the kind that you are, uh, galloping around with.

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** You, but you had to do that, didn't you?

**JS:** Oh yeah, yeah, no, I mean, we're, I, you know, every once in a while, you thought, "Oh my, I can't believe we're, you know, know this, or know these people" - or we're doing this today and you're, kind of, like, "this is really something. I've never," you know, "I'm just a little boy from Tulsa, Oklahoma. And David felt the same way too. He was never, felt that was his due. That was the way it was supposed to be. He was just, he was equally as thrilled with the things that happened in his life as I was. So we were, we were fortunate.

**JE:** Yeah, here is that Aspen retreat we talked about earlier.

**JS:** Yes, yeah.

**JE:** And who did, who's house was this?

**JS:** This was Tom and Franny Ditmer, and, uh, it was basically a builder's house, and David, kind of, went in and blew it up a bit and made it much more attractive. And, uh, Franny loved, uh, modern art. And David, the first house that David did for them was in Lake Forest. They bought a beautiful Atelier house that was English Tutor and, uh, David went in and redid it. And it's in the book also, and that was when she really started collecting

modern art. She had Twomblys and she had, oh, I don't know, Rothkos, and, I mean, she had beautiful, I mean, wonderful things and over the years she collected other things. She put together an incredible photograph - photography collection - for Tom in his office. And he always thought it was sort of silly, but it sold for a lot of money when he went to sell it.

**JE:** I'm not here to sell books, but, if you're interested in design, *Timeless Elegance: The Houses of David Easton*. And then David's own thoughts and reflections are, uh, are throughout the book and he gives credit to Annette...

**JS:** Tapert.

**JE:** Tapert.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** For helping him write it.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And he gives - you helped.

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** In the very end an acknowledgement as well.

**JS:** Yes, yeah. Annette's, uh, was always, well, is a writer. And David met her years ago. And she wrote a lot of articles for *Architectural Digest*, and that's how David met her. And then at one point, she married a client of David's, Joe Allen, and, uh, anyway. David had done a townhouse for Joe and all of a sudden, he married Annette, and he did an apartment for them on 70th Street and 5th Avenue, and, uh, anyway. She's a, she's a wonderful lady and great fun.

## Chapter 13 - 6:45

### David's Personality

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**John Erling:** When David died, we'll talk about that, there are those who reflected, on their friendship with him.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** [Laughing].

**JE:** Here is one who said that, uh, "I cannot tell you how many times I would fly back on the plane with him after meeting a potential client and he would scribble the house on a napkin on the plane and he would hand that napkin to the staff, and he would draw it up. And clients took the napkin and framed it and said this is how our house started."

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** We kind of alluded to that earlier but...

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** That's what would happen.

**JS:** Yeah, I mean he was always drawing. I mean, uh, somebody did send a picture We were on a boat with a client on a down in the Bahamas or some place and there's David sitting at a table drawing away on a pad of paper, a sketchpad, and, you know, figuring out something for a client that needed to be organized and done and he was always drawing. We always took paper with him, and he was always drawing.

**JE:** Which means there were always ideas spinning in his brain, constantly.

**JS:** Yeah. Yeah, a lot of times it could be a new project, or it was a project that needed to be, something resolved. How am I going to fix this? I've got, you know, we've got to work this out or, you know, there's always something.

**JE:** Would he have a sketch pad by his bed and wake up in the middle of the night?

**JS:** He'd get up. He would just get up and go to the desk and he'd work. Yeah, yeah...

**JE:** Oh.

**JS:** Yeah. Yeah, he would always get up, not necessarily right next to the bed but yeah, he'd always...

**JE:** But in the middle of the night, he could easily...

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, I would find all of a sudden, he would be awake, and he would be in there working and it'd be 2 o'clock in the morning and I'd like, "Okay?"

**JE:** What was his schedule like? His normal wake up time and...?

**JS:** His normal wake up time? He would usually get up like at six or five and then he would, and then we would go to breakfast and then the day would begin and then he would, and then I would, depending on what we were doing in the evening I'd have to usually tell him to leave - he's gotta go. I'd call up his secretary. "You gotta go now. You gotta go." Or I'd go down and get him and say, "We've gotta go now," [Laughing] because, or you know, we'd be going to dinner or we were doing something, but he would work.

**JE:** And he would work into the night, wouldn't he?

**JS:** Yeah, he would eventually stop, but he would, yeah, yeah, and then he worked all weekend. He never... He would go to the office all weekend and then he'd work all weekend too. That was what he loved. That was his hobby. [Laughing].

**JE:** Yeah, I get some of his charm. He had a habit of getting his car, drop him off a block away from a meeting with his client so as to arrive less grandly on foot.

**JS:** [Laughing] Yes. He would do that. Yes, I don't know, he didn't want people to think he was being something special or whatever you know so, and we always had, well, no, we had nice cars. We either had a Volvo or, we basically always had Volvos, but he wasn't going to have a... no we won't have that, so.

**JE:** Really?

**JS:** Yeah, no, yeah, no, he didn't want to appear to clients, you know... He wanted them to know he was successful but he didn't want them to think that he was rolling in it so to speak. And a lot of clients thought he was just, I mean, architectural expenses are, to build a house, and the architectural fees are expensive but that didn't all come to David. I mean it paid a lot of salaries, but I think they thought, "Oh, you're just rolling in it because look at the, you know, you got this percentage on this house" Well yes, but you've got overhead, you know, you've got to pay everyone their salaries. You've got to give everyone their 401k, whatever that is and you've got to pay their health insurance and you have to do this and that and David was always generous with, uh, his employees.

**JE:** So, he didn't want them to be staring at that Ferrari out front.

**JS:** Yeah, he would have never ever...

**JE:** Well, he would have never had one.

**JS:** [Laughing] Right.

**JE:** When he would walk into a restaurant and see the maître de, and he would get on his knees and say, "Will you marry me?"

**JS:** Yes, that's right, yeah.

**JE:** He always did quirky things like that?

**JS:** He always did. Yeah, he would always ask somebody to marry him.

**JE:** Oh really.

**JS:** Yeah, I don't know [Laughing]. Clients and also just anybody and everybody. You know, and they were always just so, you know, taken aback but completely, uh, enamored of him all of a sudden. He charmed them immediately.

**JE:** Yeah. Right. And so sometimes it could have been embarrassing for you?

**JS:** Oh yeah, I got so used to that. It was like oh, okay, that's what he's going to do. I usually said, "Well, you're not the first."

**JE:** Right, right. He gave birthday parties for clients' dogs.

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean he would just think up things to do. I mean we gave, I can't remember any one specifically. I mean I do remember we had a, our first dog, a Chow, a dog named Lilly and when she died we had a memorial service for her and it was at Johnny Nicholson's Café in New York and we were in the townhouse that his restaurant was in and David arrived in Chinamen's outfit with a wig and a little hat and, uh, we had White Gladiolas, I think is what you're supposed to have at a Chinese funeral, anyway. We invited all these people and David arrived and was going to read her will, Lilly's will, and so Lilly gave I don't know what to everybody, but everybody got something and then we all got, we had these little framed pictures of her as well.

**JE:** He loved dogs, didn't he?

**JS:** He loved dogs and he just, he loved having fun. He was a great practical joker, probably some of the things that he would do now you probably can't do. Or shouldn't do to, uh,

employees or you know, it might be, not that it was politically incorrect, but it crosses the line now that you would get in trouble.

**JE:** Can you remember any?

**JS:** Oh, uh, well most of the things we just absolutely, oh, uh, he loved to go to - it was a store called Come Again and they had sexual toys so he would love to go and buy that. Any kind of sexual toy and leave it for some new girl employee and if they laughed, he knew we are going to get along just fine and most of the time - always they did, but he did that to secretaries and all the secretaries he had over the years got into the game too. They loved it. David would say "Could you go and do this? I need this." And they would go find it. And they thought it was so funny and he thought it was so funny. You know, but I don't think now...

**JE:** Even his charm wouldn't work today, would it?

**JS:** Uh, probably not. There was one episode he did where the lawyer had to come in and talk to him and said, "You really have to maybe stop."

## Chapter 14 - 4:44

### Colors

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**John Erling:** About colors, he said, "Red is my favorite color but I use it as an accent. I prefer a quieter background: stone, cream, grey; it's calming."

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Mhm. Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** So, he wouldn't see red?

**JS:** Yeah, I mean David did like red libraries and he would do, and he liked color. I mean you know we did very kind of pretty rooms for houses, for people, but I mean for himself he liked that. He liked that calmness and for himself he would add pops of color.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** Yep.

**JE:** He's..

**JS:** Because then you could put almost anything with it and change it. If all of a sudden you have a red room that's all red, you're married to that for, unless you change it.

**JE:** So, what do you do to it? To a red room?

**JS:** You gotta, if you want a change, you probably have to repaint and just do a whole new thing you know. So, you know, it's fine for some rooms, obviously. David loved that for probably very intimate rooms for libraries and things like that. Yeah.

**JE:** Yeah. He said, 'I don't believe in curtains anymore. I like an edited simplicity. The simpler things are, the less I feel the need to change them.'

**JS:** Yeah...

**JE:** That, that, take him a while to come to?

**JS:** Probably, uh, oh, like our house in the country had curtains and they probably were probably elaborate and then once we added on another bedroom in our house. We kind of took we originally had a studio that was, kind of a study but also our bedroom and then we added on a dressing room in our Master bedroom and then the curtains in there were just on, uh, bronze poles and rings - very simple - but in the rest of the house we had helmets and tassels, well not tassels but we had fringe and jabots and, you know, it was, uh, dumb, and so by the time we moved downtown to 20th Street, in the living room we just had blinds like we have here. These kinds of solar shaped lines.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** And I think when we had curtains in our bedroom, just kind of to shut them at night but that was it.

**JE:** When uh you were designing apartments or houses you probably had your own idea about something and it was different than his. Is that true? And you would say, "Hey I have another idea?"

**JS:** No.

**JE:** You're shaking your head 'no.' What does that mean?

**JS:** Well, it's just 'No'. David was a leader so to speak.

**JE:** You never challenged it?

**JS:** No, I would say what I thought of something and then we would talk about it, but I didn't, no, he was a leader.

**JE:** Well maybe he listened to you though?

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, he would listen if I thought something: "Why don't you do that? What do you think about that?" But no, David, I think. Rarely did I ever question something I'd think that he was going to do, I would kind of be like, "Oh, I don't know about that."

**JE:** Maybe you influenced him? He said that's a good idea, I'll use it.

**JS:** Uh yea, probably. I mean yeah, it was a back-and-forth thing. But yeah, I mean it was definitely David

and I was there to help. Which I was fine with. [Laughing].

**JE:** We're sitting at this desk here in your nice home and umm in Tulsa and I'm looking at this green parrot.

**JS:** [Laughing] Yes.

**JE:** Right here and he's stuffed. I don't know I don't dare touch it, what is, is there a meaning? Did he love birds, or?

**JS:** He did. He loved birds and I don't know we bought that in Paris at a wonderful shop that's been there since the eithteen-whatevers and, uh, anyway. Yeah, he just needed it so to speak so we bought it.



**JE:** And he would travel the world wouldn't he and bring stuff home?

**JS:** Yeah, he loved, we loved, he loved to shop. He didn't like to shop for clothes, but he loved to shop for, uh, decorative things, architectural things, and just things that were a part of the home, so to speak, you know? It could be a, uh, Hurricane Ladder that he would put outside on a table, uh, just anything and everything. He'd go and shop. He'd love to do that. That was great fun.

**JE:** I'd suppose he'd buy things and he wasn't sure how he was always going to use them?

**JS:** Yeah, and we ended up, we had a warehouse full of stuff and things that we thought, "Well, these are great and clients never wanted them," or anyway, so somehow, so eventually when we sold our house in the country, all that stuff we had in the house in the country went to our warehouse and it sat there for two years and eventually had a big sale at Doyle Gallery and sold all that stuff. We kept some things, but there was a lot of stuff. A lot of stuff. Most decorators have that because they're always constantly buying and they're buying for themselves, or they buy for clients and the idea is that well that might work. And sometimes it does and so then you have it and sometimes it just sits there and then you eventually should think enough is enough you know.

**JE:** That's hard to stop though, isn't it?

**JS:** Very hard. Yep.

## Chapter 15 - 10:54

### Architectural Digest

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**John Erling:** This house was featured in *Architectural Digest*.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yes, yeah.

**JE:** And I don't know how many years ago that was...

**JS:** Erm, I think it was in...let's see, we bought the house in 2008. I think it was 2011 or 12 maybe, I think.

**JE:** Okay.

**JS:** Yep.

**JE:** I wonder how many homes have been featured in *Architectural Digest*, if any.

**JS:** Uh, I'm thinking about it. I don't know, probably not very many.

**JE:** No, no.

**JS:** No, no, no, no. I mean, how it happens is you have a connection and, you know, if you're a decorator and you, Paige Rense was the, uh, editor at that moment, and, you know, you would get this relationship with editors of all the magazines, and they're always looking for,

uh, shoots. They need, they need to fill the magazine. And so, anyway, somehow it all, kind of, all happens. And sometimes you have projects, and you present it to them also and say, "Well, I've got this project. It's in North Carolina," "It's in Aspen," or whatever. And, you know, they look at it and go, "Oh, yep, we'd love to do that."

**JE:** And, of course, with David Easton, as a name, you're name as well...

**JS:** More so David than me. [Laughing].

**JE:** Okay. But they found this unusual that you'd be moving to Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**JS:** Oh, yeah, yep.

**JE:** And then when they came here, they said, "Wow!" more than likely.

**JS:** Yeah, uh huh.

**JE:** Uh, here they, I was just looking, they've been writing about this house, "It's central core resembles a silo tower. Inside a design treasure blends their love for antiquities with contemporary sensibilities."

**JS:** Yeah, that's right, exactly. [Laughing].

**JE:** "And," uh, "as David believes, 'Architecture should give rhythm to a home. It should be a symphony of design.'"

**JS:** [Laughing]. Sounds very poetic.

**JE:** And, and those, and they've quoted him as saying that. I think that's interesting: "A symphony of design."

**JS:** "Of design," yeah.

**JE:** And then they said that you pointed to the doorways, "Their tops accented with antique mirrors, architectural fragments." Maybe you can comment on that.

**JS:** Yeah, well all the door heights were nice, but it just, kind of, to extend them up higher, we just added antique mirror above them, and panels and it sort of helps raise the ceiling even more so - I mean visually - it doesn't do it exactly, but visually it makes it, uh, the room appear a lot taller it is, I suppose, so.

**JE:** Right, uh, I'm looking at that right now.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Right above that doorway.

**JS:** Yeah, it gives it a little bit more, uh, architectural interest, I guess.

**JE:** Right, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And the marble flooring, Architectural Digest said, "In the absence of traditional draperies, there are other stylistic examples distinguishing their home." So, a little bit about that, and the flooring and the draperies.

**JS:** Mhm. Well, when we bought the, the marble floors were in, and David's first inclination was, "Let's rip it out. We'll put in old wood flooring." And I was, "Oh, I can't do that." I just

thought, "I can't, uh, I don't want to go through the mess." I know what that's like. And I thought, "Oh no, let's just, let's just leave it." And so, uh, anyway, now that we left it, I love it. I think it's nice. One thing we did change, was all the air vents were just metal air vents, and so we had those ripped up and had them done, uh, in marble so they were flush with the floor. And it just, it's just a cleaner look. It looked much more, uh, finished. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right. And then the absence of traditional draperies?

**JS:** Yeah, we have curtains upstairs in the bedrooms. But, uh, down here, it just, it makes it all look, just, uh, feels cleaner, and just a little more bit more modern and sleek, yeah. The, the whole house I, had kind of, uh, clean background. It's very kind of clean modern. But it's again filled with upholstery and antiques and things like that, so it sort of calms all that down, so it isn't so hard-edged.

**JE:** Right. You were talking just about the vents. Uh, and you and David did so much remodel and building and all... Did you enjoy the process at all?

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, I did.

**JE:** That's part of the journey. You have to enjoy that don't you?

**JS:** Oh yeah, I mean, you kind of look at it and there's always something that you think, "How am I gonna, that needs to be fixed. And let's see, how will we fix that, so it looks better?" You know, so, anyway, just. [Laughing]. Just funny things, like the, the windows in the living room that are on the other side of the fireplace, when you first looked at them, they appeared to, uh, run up right into the fireplace. And there was nothing on, it wasn't a balanced space on either side of the windows and then you had the fireplace, uh, breast. And, uh, anyway, we're looking at it and David came out one weekend to look at this and he said, "Well, we'll, we'll just have to, we'll do this on this side, and it'll all be balanced." And, it was, yeah, it's the simplest solution and it was... At first, I was looking at it and I, "I don't know how to fix this," and he was just like, "No, we'll do that." And I was like, "Okay, that works." [Laughing].

**JE:** But you've said earlier in our interview that David, you wondered how many, I asked if David listened to you and you kind of questioned. He did listen to you on the marble flooring.

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah. It's funny, I think when we bought it and David was definitely had buyer's remorse - he wondered, "Why did we do this?" [Laughing]. And I thought, "Well, it is done, and, uh, we're going forward."

**JE:** Right, and then Architectural Digest talks about your dining room. It says, "The dining room is a welcoming half-moon shaped," uh, it says, "Steinmeyer finds perfect for entertaining guests."

And then, also, I want you to comment on that. There's a round nineteenth-century mahogany table.

**JS:** Mhm.

**JE:** And, then you have the English creamware plates placed on brackets. So, let's kind of talk about all that?

**JS:** Oh, okay, uh, well, it's kind of, it's, it's, I don't know, very, uh, not everyone has a sort of half round dining room, and it's just sort of inviting. You know, a round table is inviting to eat at, uh, much more so than if it's just a long, oblong, uh, thing, and I don't know, it's just much more 'gemutlich', as they say. Uh, the creamware set David has bought in London from Colefax and Fowler, and we had it for years and years and years, and it just...never had any place for it. And since all the background here was sort of this kind of cream-colored walls, it, we, it looks wonderful on the, it sort of does a decorating, but it isn't, doesn't jump out at you so much, other than it does a lot of decorating, so to speak. [Laughing]. So, it was fun to have them out finally.

**JE:** Right. And they say, "The most noticeable change they made was covering the brick walls with a two-story librarian." That's...

**JS:** Yeah, yeah. All that, there was a lot of brick in here. The whole staircase, the silo, was all brick. I mean, it was the same color as the outside of the house and to me it was just all dark. So then if we had brick on the inside, then we just covered it and plastered it over, and, uh, sheetrocked it up and then painted it, so to speak. Cause, to me it was just so dark. I just didn't like the brick.

**JE:** And then the digest says, "This library is the heart of their home and office, and that's where we are right now."

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** "Both contain treasured books, especially *Timeless Elegance: The Houses of David Easton*." Uh, and then the digest says, "For Steinmeyer and Easton, their home is a perfect setting that encompasses their love for exceptional design and gracious entertaining. Most importantly, it reflects their global perspective as world travelers who now love coming home from those travels to Tulsa." And I think you'd comment on all the things you brought home from all your...

**JS:** Yeah. Here, there, and everywhere. [Laughing].

**JE:** You think there's a country you two had never been to?

**JS:** Erm, we never really did much of South America. David went a couple of times to Columbia, I remember. Uh, but never, uh, very much sad that we didn't go, like, to Brazil or Argentina or Columbia, just, I've never seen. Just to experience it, I'd love to see Rio, to see what that looks like. You know, there's a lot of places like that. But, and, uh, obviously we were in Mexico a lot, but just never got to South America, which was, I think was, sad.

**JE:** Were you traveling, let's see, eh, David could have been, I think it was '83 and then four years, he could have been seven...When he was 75, 76, did he still have the, uh, adventurous spirit?

**JS:** Oh yeah. Yeah, he was still wanting to go, yeah, yeah.

**JE:** So if it had not been for his health issues...

**JS:** Oh, oh, definitely. We would have traveled till he keeled over. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Cause he loved to travel and loved to, just, see. Uh, yeah, when he first started, when it first started, we went to London a couple of times, and, uh, he just, I mean, he enjoyed it, but it wasn't the...he didn't have the same curiosity that he did, you know, before all that. Uh, cause usually, uh, he did the directing. "We're going to go do that; we're going to go..." And I just followed along, cause he knew what [Laughing] he was going to be okay. [Laughing]. It'll be great fun. We'll see something wonderful, you know, so...

**JE:** Right. And then it says, "Steinmeyer says," quote, "Coming home to Tulsa really is full circle." And then *Architectural Digest* says, "The strategic move was New York City's loss and Tulsa's immense gain."

**JS:** [Laughing].

**JE:** And I would have to say, "Amen to that," that's for sure.

**JS:** That's nice. I'm so glad that we did make the move. It was easy to deal with David out here, and, uh, it's home. And all my friends in New York, hm, whenever they say, "Aren't you going to move back to New York?" I say, "No, this is it." [Laughing]. "I, just, no, I'm fine." I can always go back.

**JE:** Did you ever have some friends in New York who were skeptical and maybe you invited them out and then they said, "Oh..."

**JS:** Oh yeah, well, well, anybody who has come out here from New York, or, you know, people who have - know us, have always been: "Oh my gosh, it's such a pretty city." "It's a nice place." "What a wonderful place to be." [Laughing]. So, yeah, I think everybody's surprised. It's, you know, when they do see it, which is wonderful. So, it's funny, one of the ladies by the name of Norma Dana, and she's on the Central Park Conservancy, and one of the founders of that whole project, and she's 93 at this point, and she grew up in Pawhuska, Oklahoma and married a guy by the name of Charley Dana, who has made a lot of money, anyway...And, we immediately bonded when we went to a friend's house in Greenwich cause she was from Oklahoma and I was from Oklahoma and she's, I think, almost, a little bit of Indian too, I forget which tribe, but, I mean, you know. She's an absolutely gorgeous lady, and, uh, a lady, and, uh, anyway it's so funny, you know, she ended up her life in New York but, you know, she wouldn't even be back, but anyways, we bonded because we were from Oklahoma. So...

**JE:** Yeah, yeah, it's a great place to bond. We're both lucky to live here, aren't we?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

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**Chapter 16 – 2:05****Martha Stewart**

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**John Erling:** There's a fascinating story about Martha Stewart.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Mhm.

**JE:** And maybe you can tell the story because there was a dinner and Martha Stewart sat next to this charming man. Can you tell it?

**JS:** There was a house next to, there was another house in the country in Easton, Connecticut, Rosemary and Bill Weaver, and anyway, that was when Martha was still, was just starting out her business and she was, uh, I can't think of the town she was in in Connecticut on the water, anyway. But she was starting out to be, you know, really, lots of things. Anyways, so she was at the dinner party and David had never met her. He was sitting next to her, and she was, you know, David used the, people would ask him what he did and he usually said he was a sex therapist because he didn't want to talk about what he did, but anyways they somehow got to talking and he said, "Well," you know, he said what he did, and she said, "Well, what houses do you like?" And she named some houses, and they were all houses that David had done and [Laughing] he goes, "Okay, I did those houses, so..." [Laughing].

**JE:** Amazing.

**JS:** Yeah, so, you know, that's part of being in New York. You start to meet people who are at the top of their professions and I don't know it's just networking situation in life.

**JE:** Did he ever do any work for Martha Stewart?

**JS:** Uh, he tried to. She bought an apartment at 72nd and, uh, Park. No, erm, 5th and, anyways. It was some building will let you put under the windows air conditioning systems, and some don't. This was one of the ones that wouldn't, and she wanted them under the windows and so she thought she could cajole the board to let her do this. So, she went for probably about a year to cajole the board to do this and they were, "No, No." [Laughing] So finally she just sold the apartment and she ended up going downtown and living in a very modern building that way downtown on the river.

**JS:** Mhm.

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**Chapter 17 – 9:26****9/11**

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**John Erling:** So, Jimmy, then we come to September 11th, 2001, and, of course, you were living in New York.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yes, yeah.

**JE:** And let me just recap: That's when 19 militants associated with the Islamic Extremist group, Al-Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside of Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which triggered major US initiatives to combat terrorism. So, I, where were you living right at when that happened?

**JS:** Uh, well David and I had an apartment then on 20th Street off of 5th Avenue, and then we had our offices off of Spring Street, which was, uh, let's see, we were between Broadway, and, uh, can't remember what the other street now but, uh, right down there. We were, that seems very close to the World Trade Center, but it wasn't exactly, but it was close enough, so to speak.

**JE:** Right. What was your first indication that something had happened?

**JS:** Uh, it's funny, I was talking to my younger brother who lives in Texas and we - and I heard a plane and it sounded very low. And it always...every once in a while, you would hear planes flying low, but usually it was just kind of a small plane, so you didn't think, I never, you never thought of it as a jet. And it just, I was, I was talking to him, and I said, "That plane just sounds like it was so low. It's so strange." And this was whatever, I don't know, right before it happened. And it was, all of a sudden, you know, people started, in the office, started saying, "Oh my God, something's happened." And you were just like, "Oh okay," and we had, I think, one of the - David's partner had a television in his office and we watched that for a while, and, you knew, everybody was sort of, just, didn't know quite what to do; you were just sort of stunned. You were just watching it. And then at some point, my office faced south, and I had a window that looked out over, looked towards, uh, the Twin Towers and there was a young lady in the office, and she was standing there just kind of watching it and just dumbfounded, as I was, and all of a sudden when the - they collapsed. And you were just like, "I don't know what I saw." And it, that can't be what I saw. And you were just, uh, I don't know if you were horrified, just, numb. You thought, "I don't know what that was." And then later obviously you just kind of go, "Oh, that's what that was." And you just - very, very shocked about the whole thing.

**JE:** Right. Did you have a direct eye view of the towers?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And so, you saw the collapse?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah just standing there, you know, just watching it just kind of, because before they were just, you know, on fire and there were a lot of smoke and all that happening, and then all of a sudden when they did collapse, you were just, you didn't know what you'd seen. You were just so surprised and stunned and, uh, it was, anyway, it was...you, you just

kind of walked away and thought, "I don't know what that was. I don't know."

**JE:** Did it take you a while to think you could even go outside, or you, kind of...?

**JS:** No, we're, uh, Spring Street's far enough north of the World Trade Center that we didn't have, we weren't caught up in the, all the smoke and the collapse of the buildings and all that debris and all that whatever it was in the air. We were, oh, I don't know how many blocks it is, but it was quite a distance, really. Uh, but, anyways, so we didn't, we never got that. If you were closer downtown to the World Trade Center then you really, everything was covered in that ash and dust and mess, and that was awful.

**JE:** You, you, you probably went in that direction at some time and...

**JS:** You know, I never did. I never went down there. And also, also they had quarantined it off, you couldn't get down there, unless you were helping, or, you know, working somehow. Uh, you know, if you lived down there, then, you know, you could get to your apartment and do things like that, but you, no, there were certain areas you couldn't... And people couldn't come for the first couple, first week of so, you couldn't even get below, I think it was 23rd Street, unless you could show that you had some sort of identification and why you would have something. Like, we had our office, so we had identification with us, so we could go, and, uh, anyway. We went back to the office. It was on a Tuesday morning, I think, and, uh, so we went into our office Wednesday and Thursday and everybody kind of that, the day that it happened, everybody left, and they had to walk home cause they shut down the subway systems, and, uh... I would assume the buses were running, but I don't, I can't remember that in Manhattan, but you had to walk home if you lived in Brooklyn or the Bronx or New Jersey, uh, and they did it. Everybody did it. It was like this great flood of people walking. It was just, kind of amazing.

**JE:** Right. So, some in your staff had to walk home?

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, not everybody could, could afford to live in Manhattan, so, you know, a lot of the young people lived probably in Brooklyn or wherever. I don't... I don't know if we had anybody that lived, was living in New Jersey then, but anyway. They had to walk home. And, so, you know, obviously we said, you know, "Don't worry about coming in. That's not going to be anything." So, anybody who was in Manhattan tried to get in if they could, you know? So I remember one of the funniest - well it wasn't funny - but it was so stupid, we had a client that was supposed to have, oh, let's see, she lived, she lived on, uh, 5th Avenue, and anyway, there was, she was supposed to have, uh, some carpet installed in the service area on Friday. So, she calls up and Kathy, who was David's secretary, answered the phone and she said, "Now, they're coming today to install." And Kathy was like, "I don't, no, I don't think so because they're not letting any trucks or anything across the bridges. And, no, you know, that's not going to happen." She said, "Well, it has to happen. It's, it's on the calendar." And she was just like, "Well, I hate to tell you, but it's not



going to happen.” And then you realize, you know when you’re...When you’re dealing with very, very rich people, they just assume that it’s going to happen. So, anyway...[Laughing]. And you’d kind of, like, uh, “Were you here yesterday? Have you been watching the news?” Anyway... [Laughing].

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** It was kind of like, we had another friend who, uh, ran Gloria’s Food, who was a, it’s a big catering company in New York, a very, very fancy one. And I think it, I can’t remember, he was the producer or somebody from Los Angeles, and he was supposed to have a party on that Friday, and he called up irate that he couldn’t have the party, and they were just like, “Not much we can do about this, and it isn’t that big of a deal.” [Laughing]. “It’s just a party.” [Laughing].

**JE:** The word ‘entitled’ comes to mind.

**JS:** ‘Entitled.’ Oh, yes, very much so, yeah. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right. And here we thought everyone was so glued to the TV and all...

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, and these other people think that their lives are just going to go on exactly as the way it was. [Laughing].

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** It’s funny, that day when David and I left the office about noon, because everybody, we said, you know, “Go home, everybody.” And we went down to a restaurant called Il Cantinori and had lunch and then for some odd reason, we had a car service, and I don’t know why we went uptown and went to the antique dealer’s and looked at antiques all afternoon and then we went home, and we were kind of thinking, “Well what are we going to do for dinner?” Because I, for that point, we just kind of went out every night. So, David said, “Well, let me go see what’s open,” you know. And so, he kind of walked around and there were a few places open, and they said, “Sure, we have food and, but its cash only,” for some odd all the terminals were down and all those things, so he said, “Well okay, that’s fine.” So, you know, you’re just sort of like, “Okay, we’ll just see what we can do or can’t do,” you know. That’s when you realize you need money at home and all kinds of things, you know, so, but anyway, it’s very... It was a strange time, that’s for sure.

**JE:** Even though you lived where you did you were affected because you couldn’t use plastic.

**JS:** Yeah, right. [Laughing]. All strange. It was a very strange day. That was for sure.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**JS:** And after a while you just, you didn’t watch TV. I mean, it was, like, too much.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** It was just too much. I remember my brother called me from Texas again and he, my nephew was so upset. He was probably 10, I guess. And he though surely that something had happened to me because I was in New York. And so, Jeff said, “You know, you, you

got to talk to him.” “Oh sure,” you know. I said, “I’m fine, don’t worry. Everything’s okay.” But his perception of what... if you didn’t live in New York, it was kind of a strange... what is that like? You know? So, anyway, it was a weird day, that was for sure.

**JE:** You know, we’ve been talking about the 1921 Massacre, and lots of people didn’t know it till not much later on, but, uh, on 9/11, I, uh, did a presentation in two, I think they were 10th grade History class, or Social class, and I brought up 9/11, because I was going to play something back from Voices of Oklahoma. And some of those had never heard of it. They did not know about 9/11.

**JS:** Oh my gosh.

**JE:** I know. And so, where were they tracking in school or their parents?

**JS:** School, yeah, or their parents, yeah?

**JE:** And so that wasn’t heard about, is it any wonder that this massacre...?

**JS:** Yeah, wasn’t heard about. I know, exactly.

**JE:** Right, right, right. Anyway...Well thanks for sharing that since you were so close to that in New York.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, mhm.

## Chapter 18 - 10:55

### Dementia

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**John Erling:** Alright, so you’re living this great life in New York. Something came into somebody’s mind to move to Tulsa, Oklahoma. How did that come about?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Well, it would have been because, uh, we had the house, and then, probably about 2013, probably, David realized that he was having memory problems. So, he, cause David would always say, “What are we doing?” And I would tell him, and he would come back to me ten minutes later and say, “Now, what are we doing?” Because he was concentrating on whatever he was doing, he was not concentrating on what might be happening in an hour from now, particularly. Which was normal because that’s just, kind of, what he did. I was used to it all my life because I’d always say, “That’s what we’re doing and I’d have to tell him again and I’d have to remind him again, because he was much more interested in what he was working on. Uh, but then he realized that he was having trouble, so he went to a neurologist, and, uh, probably 2014, I noticed on his schedule - he had a typed schedule everyday - so, which, we’d get them for the week, and it listed everything: where he had to be and where he’s supposed to be, and there was a doctor on it that I didn’t know. So, I asked his secretary, “Who’s this?” She said, “Well, it’s a neurologist,”

and I said, "Oh, okay." And, anyway, uh, I'd go with him finally to one of the, one of, this neurologist and he's beginning then to really have problems. Uh, you know, they, they, they ask you all of these..." When were you born?" "What's your...?" "Where do you live?" All that. Which he could answer, but, uh, certain questions they'd ask him, like, "Who's the...?" wouldn't be the president of the United States, but I don't know. It could be something that probably he'd know. You know? I don't know. So, which was somewhat like David, but not, you know? You probably should know that. And, then the next time we would go, which we'll say was three months later, then it was a little bit worse. So, eh, at one point he just said to me, which was probably 2015, he said, "Why don't we move to Tulsa?" And I was like, "Okay?" [Laughing]. Cause I think he, in his own mind, would, he never verbalized he didn't want to be in New York, and be around people that knew him and see him that way.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah, I understand. That's tough. Right. But you had purchased this house a number of years earlier.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, we bought it in 2008.

**JE:** So, did you anticipate something was going to be a move here, no?

**JS:** No, we came out here one weekend and, I don't know why, might have been Easter weekend or something. We came out and we were with Charles, and he said, "Remember that house that I leased for one year and Francy always called it 'The Women's Prison?'" [Laughing]. I don't know why. And I knew exactly, and I said, and I loved these, they were built by an architect from Chicago by the name of Colburn and, uh, George Kravis and Tim Smith built them in the late seventies. And Colburn is a very famous architect and did very simple architecture. And, uh, I remember when they were built, Betty Conheim took me over here to look at them, and I thought, "oh, these are, for Tulsa, these are really, really nice," and I, in fact, this is the one that I saw then, and I remember it and thought, "these are just really exceptional, so we knew." Anyway, so I knew what the place looked like, and David was with me, and he said, "Why don't we buy this?" I said, "Okay." So, we did. Then I think he had buyer's remorse, because he was, like, "Why did we do that?" I said, "Well, I don't know, but we done it, so." [Laughing]. So, we had it and got it done and fixed and the way we wanted to have it done.

**JE:** And you refurbished it, did a lot of work in this house?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, did a lot of just, kind of, cosmetic, obviously cosmetic things. We changed the master bedroom a little bit and the master bath, we redid completely, and, uh, the kitchen was kind of basically what it was, we just made some changes. Uh, but, and we kind of, narrowed some doorways and widened one, and put antique mirrors above them and, you know, did a, just cosmetic architectural things to make it more pleasing to us.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** And, uh, anyway, so, it was all done, and we had it seemed like, and I think David was like, and he, David had been out here enough that he liked being out here and liked all my

friends and they were his friends and so it was familiar to him. So, he thought, "Well, why don't we do that?" And I thought, "Well, okay, we'll do that."

**JE:** And it was a simpler way of life from New York.

**JS:** Oh yeah, yeah, David was getting at that point before we left, he was, uh, getting lost. He could get in a cab and get home. He had an address. He knew where to go if he had the address, but he couldn't walk there. He couldn't, he couldn't navigate. Uh, I mean, we lived on 20th Street. Gramercy Tavern was literally down the street from us, and I could say, "Well, I'll meet you at Gramercy Tavern," and he couldn't get there. And, you know, other places that we would go to all the time, like Union Square Café, he knew exactly where it was - it was two blocks from our office - I'd say, "Why don't you meet me at Union Square?" And he couldn't get there. So, it was just, uh, just difficult, you know? He never got lost that he couldn't get home, cause in New York you get in a cab, you got money, you'd get there, you know.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** But if he was driving, you know, had to drive someplace... no, no, no, no.

**JE:** This had to be horrifying for you to realize that this was coming on, and unsettling to you? Scary?

**JS:** Yeah. [Laughing]. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it wasn't scary to move out here. Uh...

**JE:** Oh, I meant the fact that you saw this happening. This is dementia we're talking about.

**JS:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, and he just, I, probably the, oh, two years before we moved out here you could tell that he just...David...if you had a new client come into the office and they had a townhouse that needed to be renovated, well he could do the drawings immediately. He would redo all the floors and make it all make much more sense for somebody, and it was just something he could do instinctively. He could do that in a minute. You know, he'd work on it in the weekend, and he would call the client and say, "Let's have a meeting and show it." And we'd always had to say, "Don't do that. We have to, we have to have them sign a contract. You can't give it away." [Laughing]. So, but he was, that was just instinctive, and he couldn't do that. We had a client coming in and they were putting two townhouses together and he sat there for probably three weeks, and I'd say, normally he had, he had the plan, and I said, we said, "Here's the program that we're working within," and he would come back to me every hour or so and say, "Now, where's the stair going to go?" And I'd show him, and then I, and then we'd do it again, and we'd do it again, and finally we just, we did the, we didn't, we didn't get the job, but we did a presentation for them. And then there was an episode where he...altitude is really bad dementia patients, which I didn't realize, and David, we had work in Aspen, and he was out in Aspen, and he got completely confused. He got up in the middle of the night and he had his suitcase, and he was wondering around the streets of Aspen. And he was, luckily,

he was there with, uh, two girls from the office and he was, I think, that weekend, he was supposed to meet me in, uh, uh, my nephew was getting married, and he was getting married - where was he getting married? - oh, in Austin, Texas, and David was supposed to come for the wedding from Aspen and he got to the airport but couldn't get on the plane. He couldn't figure it out. And, so, our client said, I told the girls, "You've got to take him to the airport, and you've got to make sure he gets on the plane. I know how to do this." And he missed it again. And so, finally I just said, "Just get him on a plane to New York. Just get him home." Because I don't know what else to do.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** So, anyway, so that was the last time he really traveled by himself or with somebody, unless he, you know, we traveled a little bit when we moved our here, but I was with him. But he couldn't go on his own.

**JE:** So, then he had the official diagnosis as dementia in New York?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, right, yeah. So, his, our doctor, basically, you know, said, "Well, that's what he's got," and so, just, "What do we do and how do you do it?" Anyway, it was just, uh, it, it, made sense to move out here because everything was just so much easier to deal with. I didn't have to worry about him getting lost. Every once in a while, he could do something here, but he, uh, I don't know, it just, uh, doctors, going to the doctor's was earlier out here. Going to the hospital was easier out here. David had bladder cancer and we had to go to the hospital with that, uh, well, I think six different times. We had to go for, I don't know, they would do some sort of injection or something, and do a biopsy, or whatever, and... [Laughing]. The first time he went, I mean he was being, his, his self, but he wasn't as bad as I thought he was, so anyway, we got, the operation was over and he was in his room and he seemed perfectly fine and he said, "Why don't you go home? You don't need to be here with me." So, I went home, and it was like 8 o'clock at night and the nurse called and said, "Well, he's ripped out his IV and his catheter, and I, he said, "There's blood everywhere and he's locked himself in the bathroom." -I don't think he locked himself in the bathroom.-So, I said, "I'll be right there." So, anyway, I said, "He's not..." [Laughing]. "He's not dangerous, he's just..." Anyway, and so then I talked to the doctor, and he said, "Well, what happens in late afternoon, early evening, when it gets sundown, they really forget everything. They just, everything just becomes very confused." So, anyway, so then all the other trips we had to go to the hospital, and we had to be there at night, I would go, I would, just, stay in the room with him. Luckily, we got a big room. They'd bring in a bed for me and I'd sleep and try to help him. [Laughing].

**JE:** Yeah, well it sure made sense why you were in Tulsa, then, didn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** So that was St. John Hospital, I suppose, that you were in?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Yeah, so, but anyway. It, just, yeah, and I think the saddest thing is watching somebody who was so, uh, loved what he did; couldn't do it anymore; couldn't read anymore. You, I, you could watch him read or think that he was reading because he would turn the pages, but when he could still kind of read a bit, you realize that he was always going back to the beginning again, and he'd always go back. And then you realized after a while that he wasn't really reading. He was just sort of in the motion of reading. And I kind of thought that because he loved to read; he loved books. So, it was sad to watch somebody just deteriorate.

**JE:** Yeah. What was the age difference in the two of you?

**JS:** Thirteen.

**JE:** Thirteen years, right.

**JS:** Yeah.

## **Chapter 19 - 14:57**

### **David Dies**

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**John Erling:** Uh, so then, he lived here, was it four years before his death?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. We lived, uh, David was here, and then, and erm, in 2019 he fell and broke his femur, uh, and he was at St. John's, and so, uh... They did the operation, and any anesthesia really messes with dementia patients. They, if they're at one stage, they're at the worst stage, because it just, it really messes with their cognitive senses. It just, everything gets messed up. So, uh, then he had to go to skilled nursing because he had to learn how to navigate again with a broken something. And, so, he, we put him out at Montereau, out there, and erm, he did that - got to walking and, uh, we had senior helpers with him, and so we had somebody with him twenty-four hours a day - his own help. And, uh, then, I, he couldn't come home, I know. Cause he could, he just, it was going to be so complicated to have him here; just cause of the stairs, and him getting up in the middle of the night - which he was doing when we were...before he got into the accident. We would get up in the middle of the night, I'd find him down here, and he was rearranging things. Or all of a sudden, he'd open the door and the alarm would go off. It just, this, it was just too complicated. Plus, he was, then he became incontinent completely. And, so, luckily, we had senior helpers with him all the time and that's when I moved him to Methodist Manor, and he had his own apartment and nurses that lived with him, and he had his helpers with him. And then, you know, which he was doing, you know,

okay. He wasn't, I mean he knew me, and he knew... I mean he would, he acted...he would start to ask you a question, and you, but it didn't make sense. He just, kind of, a jumble of words. The words did not string together and make a proper sentence and, uh, anyway. He was kind of there and then COVID hit and then I couldn't see him and that was just crazy, but, so, anyway... And I saw him twice, just because he had to go to the hospital for dehydration and one time because he fell, and anyway. That was, yeah, just something.

**JE:** So, when did he die?

**JS:** Uh, he died on, uh, October 30 - 29th. And, uh...

**JE:** Of 2020?

**JS:** 20. 2020. And what happens with dementia patients, they, I mean, I went to a - go to a therapist. I said, "What's the end game? What happens?"

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** And she said, "There's lots of possibilities. But one: they basically forget how to do something, like breathe, like eat, like swallow, uh, and that's what will happen." It'll be something that's, you know, one of those simple things that we're instinctively have because we've always just had it. You're just, you're here, you know how to do that.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** And so, he basically forgot how to swallow and so, I mean, the...one of his helpers called, or I called, and said, "How's David?" And she said, "Well, he's, I don't think he's swallowing, because he keeps the food in his mouth." And I, "Oh, great. Okay." So, anyway, uh, I think it was the next day, the, uh, the Methodist Manor said we have to put him into their, uh, what would they call it? It wasn't assisted living, it was their, uh, long-term care, because he needs more help. Erm, I don't know he got that much more help, anyway, because he still had his helpers with him all the time. But, anyway, basically he was just sort of there, and just didn't swallow. And, you know, you just, all of a sudden you just can't take any fluids and you don't eat. And that...

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** So, so, they basically...three days, four days, I think, and then that was the end.

**JE:** So, they called you and said, "He passed on"?

**JS:** Uh, he, one of his, I would see him in the morning, I had gone up in the afternoon, and I went home to have - get some dinner - and one of his helpers was obviously with him and just, she called and said, just, "He stopped breathing."

**JE:** Yeah, wow, tough, tough, tough.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Yeah. And, how old was he when he died?

**JS:** 83. [Laughing].

**JE:** 83.

**JS:** Not really old, but...

**JE:** No, no, no. And, uh, let's see...Coming up this October, it'll be a year.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And so, it's still fresh with you, isn't it? His lose. Uh, such a great mind and great influence on your life.

**JS:** I was very lucky.

**JE:** Yeah, you were. And, and, and so was he.

**JS:** He would probably say that too.

**JE:** Uh, uh, but they're forms of dementia. Was it Alzheimer's that they finally...?

**JS:** No, uh-uh.

**JE:** No?

**JS:** It's, it's so many, it's, uh, lots of, uh, variations, I guess. But it wasn't...they never said that he had Alzheimer's. The only way that I guess they can actually see that is that they did an MRI, and they can look at the, uh, I guess it's the plaque on the brain, uh, would show there's a great deal of plaque, then you definitely have Alzheimer's.

**JE:** Okay.

**JS:** Yeah. Is, what I, my understanding of how it is...

**JE:** So, it's all, I don't know what's the word to say, it's just awful.

**JS:** Yeah, the whole, uh, it's a horrible thing to kind of watch.

**JE:** Whatever form of dementia...

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, cause you just... You have this person that you know and that you love. You know how they should be and they're not. And it's funny, I always thought...uh, David was never gonna retire. And I always thought well he's going to go to the office one day and he's just going to die, because that's what he does.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** So, I, this never, we'll it would never enter, enter, enter into anybody's mind that this is what you're going to face in life and, uh, I don't know if there was, I don't know if you, it's a hereditary thing. I don't think it is - it might be a little bit, I don't know. But there wasn't anybody in David's family that I could think of that had that, you know, but, uh, it's just weird. I just, uh... horrible thing to have to, to watch, I think. Especially, just, uh, somebody who is just fun and vibrant and, uh, a great talent, just watch them lose all that. Just, it's all gone. I mean, he'd, it's funny, he would sit here, and he'd say, "We'll this is a pretty house, who's is it?" And I'd go, "Well, it's our house." And he'd, and then he'd say sometimes, "Well, this is, I don't... who owns this house?" [Laughing]. You know, he'd just, you didn't know where, I mean, I knew where he was sort of, but he didn't, you know?

**JE:** How did you - because there will be people listening going through what you did - how did you handle all of that? It had to be frustrating at times.



**JS:** Oh, yeah, uh, I was kind of lucky that, uh, we, I was able to have a - during the day I had somebody kind of with David. I got a really nice man, John, to be with him from, like, 9 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon. Which was a big help just because I didn't have to answer all of his questions and John would go for a walk with him and John would just... just kind of there to help. Uh, the nights were hard because David would, they get... well they don't really understand time. He was just sort of impatient. You know, if we were just sitting here and we were going to go to dinner, if it was 5 o'clock and we weren't going to go till 6:30, from 5 till 6:30 he would ask every five minutes, "When are we going to go?" And I'd have to say, "Well, not yet, but we're going to go." And you just, you try to answer the question and you try to keep your voice as calm and as level as it can be, and the best thing that you can do is answer the question and kind of turn and walk away for a little bit. And then you come back, and you do it again. And you just, do it again. And you just, you have to be as, I have, I guess I have a lot of patience, and I was just like, you'd take a deep breath and, you know, he was what he was, and I couldn't, just, kind of have to do it every day. And I, uh, I guess, I, you know. And then you also, I think you find yourself, uh, coming, my therapist was kind of, like... when we think you cannot take care of David... because I never thought I'd have to put him in, like, an assisted living and the only thing that made that work was he had a fall and he had an operation and it made sense to progress him into that. Because if I had just told him, "I'm going to move you to assisted..." That would have never worked. I was fortunate that that all worked that way. But it's very hard to figure out what's your limit of what you can physically do or mentally take care of somebody. And I realized I, when he became incontinent, uh, both ways, I thought, I can't do that.

**JE:** Nope.

**JS:** I just, I just, uh, I don't think I thought if he knew I was doing this, he'd be so embarrassed.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**JS:** How he let ladies help him, I don't know, but he did. Uh, you know, and you just think... I guess there's, everybody has a point where they think "I can't do that." And if you, if you're fortunate enough to have help, please take the help, and then you can be there to be supported as best you can. But, uh, you, you would, you'd just wear yourself down. I remember it was Sean that said, after David was finally, you know, where he was in the assisted living, he said, "You don't look as exhausted as you used to." Because it was just every day. I remember he would get up in the middle of the night, so you never really slept. You slept, but all of a sudden, he was up, and then was, he didn't know where the bathroom was.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** So, you had to, you know, get a flashlight, and turn on the light and show him where it was. Or he'd be in the closet getting dressed and it was 1 o'clock in the morning and you'd go, "No, it's not time to get dressed. We have to go back to bed." So, you know, so you just, I was, you know, you really have to be as calm and as, as you possibly can be. And I just, I, plus I'm not a yeller and David was never a yeller. So, I just, you know, I thought, "Well, that doesn't do anything." You know, you can't, you know. [Laughing]. And you just have to - with anybody like that - you just answer their question, but you don't argue. You can't that's, uh, that's a 'no.' That's not they way it is. You just say, "Oh, no, maybe you're right." Or "Oh, yeah, that makes sense. We'll do it that way." But, you know, you never argue. [Laughing].

**JE:** Uh, not everybody can do what you did. I mean we're all built differently.

**JS:** Well, I was....yeah, yeah. If you can afford to go have, talk to somebody, go talk to somebody. You need somebody. You need a third person that just, that's not involved that can help you and give you advice, and say "No, you're not crazy." [Laughing].

**JE:** And you can, you, you know you're frustrated...

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** But you can be frustrated to that third person.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah. And you can cry in front of the other person and then you can just, all kinds of things. You, cause you, I guess you don't want to burden your friends either, or I know at some point... I first realized David was getting bad in New York. I remember going to dinner with one of my best friends, Claire Potter, and I would start telling her things and just cry. I thought, uh, I felt guilty.

**JE:** And you felt guilty?

**JS:** Well, somebody has to sit there and watch you cry, I guess.

**JE:** Right, right, yeah, yeah.

**JS:** Anyway [Laughing].

**JE:** Yeah, yeah, oh my.

**JS:** Anyway.

**JE:** He was so fortunate to have your temperament, I guess, well, I'm going to say.

**JS:** Yeah, I, yeah, I think if you're...

**JE:** Eh...if you're a hothead yourself, you'd never, that'd never have worked.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think it'd be, I, I feel so sorry for anybody that has to go through this and can't navigate it somehow.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Because it's, it's not anything that's easy to navigate and you don't ever know how, what you're going to, how it's going to go. You just have to... You know, I remember one day I was, I, we were down at the office, and it was early in the morning, like, 7:00 or 6:30, or

something. I said, "I'm gonna...David, I'm just going to go home really quick, I'll be right back." I came back. I couldn't have been gone fifteen minutes and he wasn't in the office, and he, so he was somewhere. And this was 6:30 in the morning and I, I thought, "Oh, my God." So, I got in the car, and I started driving around where our office was, and I thought, "Where would he, where would he go? Where would he go?" And I would just happen to go across Peoria, and he liked to walk over where the church was. That Methodist, I think it's a Methodist church. And there were some flowers that were blooming. He would like to go over there and pick them. So, I thought, "Oh, well maybe he went over there." And I, he wasn't there, and I came back onto Peoria and there he, he was all of a sudden, he was crossing Peoria, and somebody was helping him walk across Peoria. And he was walking to, there's a gym right there - right next to the Brook Theatre and somebody was walking, and so they walked him over there and I parked the car and went in and got him. And he said, "Oh, there you are." And I said, "Yeah, oh, okay, we'll, I, I, are you okay?" He said, "Yeah, I'm fine, I was looking for you." I said, "Oh, okay, well you found me, so let's go back." So, anyway. But, I mean, you know, you have moments like that and even here he would, he wanted to walk Lola, our dog, and, uh, he would, all of a sudden, go out the back here and he wouldn't come back, wouldn't come back. So, I'd get in the car and go look for him, and all of a sudden, he'd show up. And then couple times he'd just, he left Lola someplace. So, we'd have to go look for her. And then, so finally, we put a gate on there so he couldn't get out. [Laughing]. Cause it was just too... I just thought, "If I can't do this, then I can't..." Yeah.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Just can't for some reason.

**JE:** And you had to be tired a lot because you wouldn't get a good night's rest, would you?

**JS:** No, uh-uh, no, so.

**JE:** And so that made you...?

**JS:** Yeah, would kind of get, you just get kind of worn down and you just, you know...

[Laughing].

**JE:** So, the last...what you just described, was that the last six months of his life, or was it the last...?

**JS:** Well, well, it was, let's see, he was in Methodist Manor from, uh, January to October, and it was the period before. Probably that...probably the whole year before that was when he was probably the worst and probably not horrible to live with, you just had to figure out, "How am I going to navigate this?"

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** You know, with him getting up in the middle of the night, you know. And we tried sleeping pills and we tried different sleeping pills and had to go to a psychiatrist for that cause the one's that Dr. Galley could recommend weren't strong enough and then, so, you

know, so then you get those. And those probably didn't work, you know. And, it was just like, "Oh God, I don't know." [Laughing]. You know? And he'd be fine, cause, he'd, oh, if he didn't sleep, he'd, we'd go to the office and then all of a sudden, he'd be sitting in his chair and he'd fall sound asleep. And he never complained. I, I was lucky that he was never frustrated. Never said, "I don't remember," and "I don't understand." He never got angry about it. He just never did, which was, I mean, uh, for me, so thankful.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Because I never had to deal with that too.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Uh, so, you know, and a lot of people have that: when they get angry.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** And he was never angry.

## **Chapter 20 - 6:10**

### **The Cachet of David**

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**John Erling:** I feel fortunate at a party I was, you brought him to, and I got to meet him.

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Mhm.

**JE:** And little did I know who I was meeting.

**JS:** [Laughing]

**JE:** As I now know about him since I've done this research.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And he was saying quirky things then.

**JS:** Oh yeah, he would like to say things that would maybe shock people, especially about religion and Christ.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** Because he was a Catholic and brought up Catholic and went to Catholic school but just could not tolerate it and so he loved to say outlandish things about religion and things like that.

**JE:** Yeah, and Jesus was his favorite.

**JS:** Yeah, and Jesus was his favorite topic. Yeah, yeah, yeah...

**JE:** And I just, I'm glad, but he was just a shell of the man because he was by that time...

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** By that time, he seemed smaller from what pictures I see of him. His face was fuller and..

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And he'd lost a lot of weight, hadn't he?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah. Finally, he was down to oh 110 pounds I think, so yeah...

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** Because it just you, kind of, they lose their appetite and the only thing that really interested him.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Were sweets, so, you know. We tried to give him anything and everything was sweet just so he would have something that he liked to eat, you know? So anyway [Laughing]. But he always had liked sweets, always liked sweets.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Yeah, and anyway. He was, that was very lucky...

**JE:** If my world had been in the world of design than I would have, should have known him, probably should have known who he was when I met him, but I didn't.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And I'm not going to apologize for that but not all of us can...

**JS:** (Laughing) No.

**JE:** Our interests follow that world...

**JS:** No, no, because it's just...

**JE:** It's an honor to know him. I can still see him there and I love that coat that he had that you showed me.

**JS:** [Laughing]

**JE:** I love that. I love all that.

**JS:** (Laughing) Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Did he love clothes?

**JS:** Yeah, he was uh, it was funny when I first met David, he was, well he always liked clothes, but I would say he was almost more interested, I mean he went to a tailor, and he had his clothes made and even had his shoes made and, you know, it was the lining of the jacket that had to be a certain way and, you know, and he loved that, and we went to London and had all of our clothes made at Anderson Shepard and, just suits and sports coats. Not all of our clothes, but that and it was he loved that, loved picking out fabrics and then, you know, can we do this to it or, you know, he didn't get outlandish. I mean they were very traditional coats and suits, but he loved that, yeah [Laughing]. And then he got to the point he really - He did not like to go shop so I would just go and order shirts for him and, you know, khakis and I knew, "Okay, well that's his waist size?" And then because if I took him someplace and, "Okay, you have to try this stuff on." He would say, "I don't wanna try this stuff on. I'll just buy that...That fits." And I'd say, "No you've got to try it on." He was just, yeah. But originally, he was really, really particular about all that, but he still... he loved to get dressed up and loved clothes. Yeah, so.

- JE:** He seems like he, I read somewhere, he said something: "Ties will go away," or, no, I don't know.
- JS:** Yeah maybe, I don't know, I mean, it's funny how, I mean, when I was first in New York, you, uh, you wore a coat and tie to work and you know, New York was, you wouldn't have thought of going to anywhere unless you had a coat and tie on. There were certain restaurants you certainly had to have a coat and tie on and then it slowly got to the point where it got less and less.
- JE:** Mhm.
- JS:** There's still restaurants in New York, you have to, you should wear a coat and tie and you probably do wear a coat and tie, but, you know, it's gotten very relaxed so no, no [Laughing].
- JE:** Very, very relaxed, hasn't it?
- JS:** Very relaxed that's for sure. It's like the airlines. [Laughing].
- JE:** Right. I think you gave some advice, but I always ask about advice you would give to young people who want to be an architect and designer and who, and before you get into that... Nobody can try to be a David Easton. You know, the nation knows very, very smart names...
- JS:** Mhm.
- JE:** ...and they may not know a David Easton, but David Easton would belong in those very smart minds that we know about who have created, the Bill Gates of the world.
- JS:** Yeah.
- JE:** David Easton's mind could be in that world.
- JS:** Well, uh, yeah, well for, in David's profession, David was very much a star, I mean he really was.
- JE:** Yes.
- JS:** And, uh, there's a lot of people that because they worked with David Easton's office, have offices. I mean they were thrilled they got to work under David, and you know have him as a, as their boss and their mentor and they learned something, and they were able to go out on their own and have clients and do whatever.
- JE:** And use the name, I learned...
- JS:** I worked for David, yeah.
- JE:** And that so...
- JS:** Even selling a house. There's a lot of houses that say they were designed by David Easton, you know, and has a certain cachet and, you know, in like Palm Beach and Aspen and New York and things like that and Connecticut and Greenwich, you know, it has a sort of cachet. You know and it should. [Laughing].
- JE:** So, you drop a pebble in the lake, and you see it goes out from that pebble - that's going out still today, from David.
- JS:** Yeah, yeah, oh yeah.

**JE:** From David Easton's pebble...

**JS:** I mean eventually it will probably die out. I mean I don't know, you don't know, but still, but it's funny, it's like yeah, it's amazing, yeah, when you think about it. That all these different people... It's just a big thing. [Laughing]. In fact, Parrish-Hadley did a book a couple years ago. It was called *The Tree of Life* and, uh, basically it was about all the different people that worked at Parrish-Hadley and went on their own and, you know, it started out like this and it's like this, you know. It's just sort of amazing you know...

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** And everybody, yeah, I owe my whatever because of that, because that's where I worked when I learned all those things, all that...

**JE:** Yeah, right, and then. We're all human beings no matter how smart we are to hear you describe the end of his life.

**JS:** Mhm, yeah, yep.

**JE:** And from what he was and we all, and it all comes down to just being human beings doesn't it?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

## **Chapter 21 - 9:46**

### **Can't Have Life Both Ways**

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**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** I was, I was very lucky because I met David and uh, he uh, I needed to get a portfolio together for Pratt. I mean not for Pratt. I was at Pratt and needed to get a portfolio so you can go out and get a job and I, so and, had met David through Carl, so I went over to his office one day and showed him my portfolio and I said, uh, this is nothing that I really like, uh, it was things I had to do when I was at Pratt. Pratt was really at that point very Bow House, but it wasn't really anything I really liked. He said, "Well you shouldn't put that in your portfolio if you don't like it." I mean it doesn't make any sense, why would you, should that to anybody. So anyway, and then, it kind of, we went on a, had dinner together after we had gone to a concert together and, uh, he asked me to go to Mexico with him and I said, "Oh sure, I'll go that will be wonderful," and, uh, so anyway that was like a Friday night and he goes home and I go home and I call him on Monday morning and I say, "Well, I've got something I need to talk to you about." So anyway, we go to lunch, and I say, "I'm engaged to be married," and he just kind of looked at me and said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you, but you can't have your life both ways. If you think you can have a life being married and being gay, you can't because you're going to hurt

somebody,” and he said, “If you want to screw up your life, don’t screw somebody else’s life up.” So, he said, “Just make up your mind, what do you want to do.”

**John Erling:** Yeah.

**JS:** So anyway, I called the girl and I said I can’t. I went out and saw her. She was going to University of Michigan, and I said I can’t get married. Didn’t really give her an excuse. Just said I can’t get married. And I went to Mexico. And David and I went together.

**JE:** Hm.

**JS:** So, I mean, David was very much that way where he kind of looked at something and gave you good advice and said, “I don’t know what, you have to make up your mind, but this is what I would do,” or “This is good,” “This is sound advice...”

**JE:** Yep. It was so sound advice

**JS:** So, I was very lucky with like Betty Conheim telling me to get out of Tulsa.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** And I was very lucky to meet him when I did, and I made a right turn when I should have made a right turn, you know?

**JE:** Exactly.

**JS:** You know, two times in my life, and it changed my life.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** I was very lucky.

**JE:** You know, uh, and this could be a whole other story about you being gay, David being gay. And that’s a whole other story, isn’t it?

**JS:** Oh yeah.

**JE:** About life and how either of you were. There was prejudice.

**JS:** Oh yeah. When we were first together, we had a separate line. He had a separate telephone line, and I had a separate telephone line, and I wouldn’t answer his line and he wouldn’t answer mine and, uh, it wasn’t, I mean eventually that died away, but, but, uh, even traveling, uh, our travel agent would put David Easton and party and so I was always... They wouldn’t put my name on it but they knew there was a guest that was going to be in David’s room and I remember coming out to the Beverly Hills Hotel and I arrived and David wasn’t there yet and, but I knew we had a reservation and I said, “It’s under David Easton,” and they said, “Well, it’s David Easton and party,” and I said, “Well I’m the party,” and they said, “Well we can’t give you a room,” and so eventually that changed. But it was stuff like that you just thought I don’t know, you know. And David was, uh, very, even careful with clients. He didn’t tell anybody for a long time and then he finally, I remember he went to dinner one night at the Weaver’s and, uh, he was supposed to come home for dinner and he didn’t come home and he didn’t come home and it was like 10:30 at night and so I got dressed and I was going to head down to the office to see where he was and



what was going on and all of a sudden, he walks through the door and I said, "Where have you been?" and he said, "Well I was at the Weaver's, and they said 'Why don't you stay for dinner?'" and I said, "Well, you couldn't call me?" And he said, "Well, I didn't know how to, uh..." Well, you could have said, "Hello Susie, I'm not going to be able to meet you. I can't meet you. I don't care just call me. Don't do that, you know. Don't ever do that to me again." And so, I think from then on, he all of a sudden, well, okay, this is what we're gonna do. I'm going to... I'm introducing you and you're introducing me and that's the way it's going to be. And we just started doing it, and well, living in New York helped because you're in a much more acceptable society but even out here I would never have told my parents.

**JE:** No.

**JS:** Mhm. I always... my dad died when I was 30. He never knew, I don't think, and I was with David then I think for 5 years and, uh, when mother, my mother got sick with ovarian cancer. So, I was out here with my brothers, and I said, so I said, and I don't think I, I don't think they even knew, but I said, "Well, maybe," I said, "You know, I live with David," and I said, "Should something happen to me, you're not going to come to a hospital and decide what happens, David's going to make the decisions." And I said, "I don't know how you're going to tell mother, but that's what we're going to have to do, you know." I mean if that would happen. And so anyways, I thought well, how will I, I never thought I would tell my mother and so I thought if she got to know that I was with David, that he was my friend, but she never asked, and I thought, ask me and I will tell her, but I didn't think she wanted to explain that to her friends just because of the era that she grew up in and just out here in Oklahoma and I thought, "Okay, that's fine by me but I'm happy, you know, I don't care." And I was perfectly happy in New York. You know, then David and I were just accepted, that's really what it was.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** So, it was never any stigma after certainly by the 80s, early 80s, there wasn't any more stigma.

**JE:** Right. You must feel sorry for young people who are afraid to announce to their family and then when they do, how they're ostracized.

**JS:** Oh yeah and, yeah, yeah. And I guess when you don't know how your parents are going to accept it or not. I don't know with my parents. I think mother probably would have. I don't know about my dad when I think about it. I mean I don't know that's probably not fair, but I don't think, uh, just because of the way he grew up and, uh, I don't know. I don't think so. So, and it's a hard thing to, yeah, because you're just ostracized and you know it ended up, David was my family even though I had two brothers. I was close with them. I love my brothers. We get along - have a good time together. But David was my family, you know?

That was it, and I think mostly a lot of gay people end up that way. They end up let's say with a partner or friends that they become their family because they're accepting, and they love them.

**JE:** Right. It's been a tough way. However, maybe easier for you?

**JS:** Easier for me than it was for, let's say David.

**JE:** Right, yeah.

**JS:** You know, when he was, when I first met him. I mean it was easier for him, let's say going to school and things like that, you know, so I mean he was lucky to be in New York because it was probably more accepting you know but still.

**JE:** Yeah. Did you question your sexuality early in life?

**JS:** Well, I thought, oh gosh, I mean I knew I was attracted to men, but I thought it couldn't be that way. When I was in college things happened to me, but I took a shower and therefore that didn't happen you know. So [Laughing] you know, that's why I got engaged and got married because I thought it was what I was supposed to do.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** I'm supposed to do that. I'm supposed to get married. I probably would have done it had I not met David. When he said, because you know, I had thought this is what I'm supposed to do.

**JE:** Oh. When you were at Edison High School, did you date girls?

**JS:** Uh huh, I did. Yeah.

**JE:** You did. And you did all the things you were supposed to do?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** And you were confused too probably?

**JS:** Yeah, More so in college than I was in high school, and I guess I probably didn't think much about it in high school.

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** Uh, but I think by going to college and just being away and going to college and just doing whatever, so, you know. So, but, you know, it's funny, there's this very funny book called *When I knew*, and it's all these funny stories of gay men and women and when they knew and they're just sweet and some very tender and some just hysterical. One about a girl who comes down and she's telling her mother, her grandmother, that she's a lesbian and the grandma says, "No you're not, you're Lithuanian." I mean it's stuff like that, you've got to laugh about it.

**JE:** Okay, then. I'm going to have advice and to the people who are listening and are going to have a son or daughter who is going to come to them and announce to them that they're gay, what would you say to them?

**JS:** Well, I would say surely you love this person and, uh, enough to respect them and respect them that they have the mind to make up their own decisions about their life and that's okay. It can't be your life. It's their life and you should give them the opportunity and the love to have a life.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Yeah, so.

## Chapter 22 - 4:01

### How to Remember David

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**John Erling:** How about young people in the world of architecture and design and all, I guess they just have to follow their dream if they have to do it than they have to do it?

**Jimmy Steinmeyer:** Yeah, you gotta try. You know you've got to. If that's what you want to do than just go do it and I think if you don't, you'll always think, "Well, I should have done that," or you have that "What if I had done that?" You know, uh...

**JE:** Mhm.

**JS:** Yeah, uh, I would be very sad to think, yeah, you just, yeah, I think in a lot of people do do that and then later on in their life they realize that's what I want to do, and I want to go do it now.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah, and hopefully do. You know, life gets to be very short, I think. I mean I'm 70, I'm not that old. I think, "Good God how many more years do I got?" and then I think, uh, you just think [Laughing] life is just pretty fleeting.

**JE:** Right, and at 70 you see yourself working for 80-90 years old with the kind of work you do.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, as long as I can be, so long as I don't...If I don't decorate, I can always paint. I can do something, you know. And so, I'll, I like the idea that I go someplace and work and do something, you know? And I probably won't do as much but I'll still want to do something.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** You know, I can't really, I don't have hobbies so to speak, I'm kind of like David: I don't have a hobby.

**JE:** Right.

**JS:** I do what I do.

**JE:** Right, and so what are you doing now?

**JS:** Uh, well still doing decorating which is great fun, and I'm also doing renderings for clients. What their houses look like. What their interiors look like, which I like.

**JE:** So probably backed up on your work?

**JS:** That, yeah, they take a while to get done, and, uh, so, but I love that.

**JE:** How would you like for us to remember David?

**JS:** Oh. Oh gosh. Oh, I think that he was a kind, thoughtful person.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** Uh, funny, uh, uh, I think, uh, oh, gosh, a great talent in his field and that, and that he was a good mentor to a lot of people.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JS:** And, uh, gave of himself to people. You know he loved people.

**JE:** Was he willing to take time?

**JS:** Yeah. Always did that. Always took time with anybody who worked in the office and he always, any, [Laughing] he, he was even funny with clients' children. You know they might be having some sort of silly problem or whatever. He would take the time just to sit down and talk to them as an adult you know and, uh, it's so funny, a lot of them have said, I mean, they just respected him because they just, that he talked to them like an adult as a child.

**JE:** Mhm. No baby talk from him, was there?

**JS:** Yeah, No, no. He would try to talk to them and help them in any or whatever so, no. He was, yeah, a sweetheart, so.

**JE:** You know you're so accomplished yourself.

**JS:** Well, I don't know about that. [Laughing].

**JE:** No, you do know and you're very humble about all that and so accomplished and so you didn't just ride on the coattails of David, you created your own coattails.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And you were that kind of person. How would you like to be remembered?

**JS:** Oh, oh, [Laughing] I don't know. Oh, I guess as a good person and I guess, uh, I'm a good friend to people and I'm, uh, generous and, uh, thoughtful. Uh, I think those are, I don't know, yeah. [Laughing] I don't know.

**JE:** And I'm quite certain and I know for a fact that's the way you will be remembered, and I want to thank you for giving us this time. A couple of hours here to reminisce about your life and the life of David Easton for Voices of Oklahoma. I appreciate it very much and I enjoyed it.

**JS:** Thank you. Yeah, it was fun. I enjoyed it. Thank you.

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**Chapter 23 - 0:33****Conclusion**

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience.

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