

## Bob Anthony

The story of C.R. Anthony and  
Anthony's department store.

### Chapter 1 - 0:47

#### Introduction

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**John Erling:** Charles Ross Anthony born in 1885 was an orphan of Tennessee farmers. C.R. Anthony learned the retail trade while working for J.C. Penney. In 1918, Mr. Anthony partnered with J.P. Martin Company in Cleveland, Oklahoma, where Anthony became a vice president. Mr. Anthony liquidated his one-third interest in the Martin Company and opened his first family clothing store in Cushing, Oklahoma in 1922. But there's much more to the story. Bob Anthony, grandson of C.R. Anthony, became the third president of Anthony's and in this interview tells the story of his grandfather and the growth of the C.R. Anthony business. So listen now to this story made possible by the underwriters of VoicesofOklahoma.com.

### Chapter 2 - 4:29

#### Sales at 16

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today's date is April 27, 2010. Bob, if you'll state your full name please, your date of birth and your present age.

**Bob Anthony:** This is Bob Anthony. My full name is Robert Holland Anthony. The name Holland is my mother's maiden name. I'll be 62 years old next month—and I was born in Oklahoma City.

JE: The date of your birth was?

BA: May 15, 1948.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

BA: We are currently in the Jim Thorpe Building at the State Capitol Complex. This is the office building for the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

JE: And you were born in what hospital?

BA: I was one of six brothers and we were all born at St. Anthony Hospital here in Oklahoma City.

JE: Your mother's name?

BA: My mother's full name was Christine Holland Anthony.

JE: And where was she born-where did she grow up?

BA: Actually she was born in Oklahoma City, not too far from the St. Anthony Hospital, but she was born in a home. And she grew up in Enid, Oklahoma because her dad worked for Champlin Oil Company, which was in Enid, Oklahoma.

JE: And your father's name and where he grew up?

BA: My father is Guy Mauldin Anthony. We're big on having the middle names-that was his mother's maiden name. He was born in Cleveland, Oklahoma in 1915- April 26 of 1915. And he went through some school in Cleveland, Oklahoma. But then, he and the family and the company headquarters moved Oklahoma City. So he graduated from high school here in Oklahoma City at Classen High.

JE: Tell us just a bit about you and your education. Your elementary school was?

BA: I went to kindergarten, first and second grade in a public school called Nichols Hills Elementary. And then I transferred to Casady School, which was an Episcopalian church affiliated school. And I went from third grade through high school graduation with Casady School here in Oklahoma City.

JE: And then your college work and beyond?

BA: For my college I went to The Wharton School of Finance and Commerce they called it in those days. That's the oldest business school in the United States that's part of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. I graduated in 1970. I was a Second Lieutenant also, and the Vietnam War was going on, but the Army deferred me, and a large number of our class. So I had a year and I spent that at The London School of Economics in London, England and got a Masters degree in monetary economics. I came back and worked for a year and then I did another graduate degree at Yale University, a Master of Arts in administrative science, that was the predecessor of their current school of management. And then I worked for little bit, and then I finally did a third Master's degree at Harvard University. It was called the Master of Public Administration.

JE: With all this education were you planning on coming back to work for the family business? What were your thoughts?

BA: Yes. I think that growing up, I pretty much just wanted to be a businessman. I think going to the Wharton School of Finance reflects that. My father also went to the Wharton School of Finance. People would say, "Well how could you ever go all the way to Philadelphia to school?" And if I say, "Well my father did that." Then it seems to be natural, and so they think that that's just fine. But from the time I was 10 years old I did

various chores. I can tell you about that now if you want to. I guess that about the fourth grade, a lot of kids wanted to stay home and watch cartoons on TV, but I thought it was great to get up early and go to work with my dad. That was at the headquarters building of C.R. Anthony & Company, which was at 6th & Broadway in Oklahoma City. And I'd get to help sort the mail and so forth. And then when we got that done, I could walk just down the alleyway to the YMCA and play ping-pong or go swimming and so forth. And so that's what I kind of started off with. Then, as time went on I got to do other things. I worked in the distribution center, some people call that the warehouse. Then I was 15 years old I needed somebody to drive me to work, but I went to the nearest store and I could do sweeping out and that sort of thing. But then when I got to be 16, I was able to wait on the customers. Now that was a really big thing to be able to do that. That's how it started. Getting store experience, that's a part of the culture of our company. There's nothing better than getting store experience and waiting on the customers and being good with sales.

### Chapter 3 - 4:06

#### Longest Serving

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**John Erling:** However, after your schoolwork you didn't go directly to work for the company—was it in 1972 you were staff economist for the House of Representatives?

**Bob Anthony:** Yes. That was during that period of time that I was Second Lieutenant. I was somewhat on hold, and I did do that. I was deferred another year from my service and I did get armed with a Master's degree from the London School of Economics. I was on a special energy staff that the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee put together to look into this rumor that there might be an energy crisis. And I had authored a committee print that analyzed energy demand studies. And it's interesting now that I'm a Corporation Commissioner that all this energy stuff seems to have been around for a long period of time. So I'll just quickly put in here that about a year and a half later, the Arab oil embargo occurred. I think that was October of 1973, and then everybody was more interested in these sorts of things. And John Dingell, Representative John Dingell of the State and Foreign Commerce Committee wrote the Library of Congress and said that he didn't know where Mr. Anthony was, but that he ordered him to update his study. And I was back in Oklahoma working for my company at the time. But they agreed to mail me all the recent documents to be analyzed. And I did so. And they paid me more money than I thought it was worth, but it was a good experience.

JE: So then you picked up permanently in C.R. Anthony stores in what year?

BA: I think he would say 1974. And during summers between years of school and years of high school and even a little bit of college I worked in the stores. And on holidays when they needed a little extra help. But 1974 would have been the time that I started more on a regular basis.

JE: And you ran for Corporation Commissioner you'd actually served in Oklahoma City hadn't you?

BA: I was elected to be the Ward 2 Councilman. Then I also became the Vice Mayor, that's a rotated position. But in 1979 I was the Ward 2 City Councilman they called it in those days, so that is correct. It's interesting that I did not draw an opponent. I think even to this day I'm the only non-incumbent who's ever announced to seek a spot on the City Council who didn't draw an opponent. So I did do that now you mentioned state office. The only state office that I ever ran for was to go statewide the first time and that was for the Corporation Commission Commissioner. In April of 1987 the shareholders of C.R. Anthony & Co. sold control to Citicorp Venture Capital. I stayed on for a couple of years as Chairman of the Board. But in 1988 I ran, which means you start (campaigning) in early 1988. I ran for the statewide office as the Corporation Commissioner and then I was elected to that, and then started my service and was sworn-in in January 1989.

JE: And here we are in 2010 you won reelection-

BA: I'm in my fourth six-year term, which means I been reelected three times. And I just completed 21 years. And just for trivia's sake because Don Nickles has left the scene and Clifton Scott who's the auditor has left the scene, I'm the longest-serving statewide elected Oklahoma official at this time. Even in the United States of America among all the 50 states for the utility commissioners, I'm the longest serving with 21 years. Which may sound like a long time, but when I started there was Bruce Hagen from North Dakota I believe who had served 36 years. It's interesting that elected commissioners seem to serve for a longer period of time. There's a great debate on whether they ought to be appointed by the governor or elected, but the ones that are elected seem to have greater longevity.

JE: And you are likely to continue this for some time?

BA: Well, I have two and a half years left on my current term. So I'll certainly plan to complete that and as it gets to the end of that then we'll have to decide what to do next.

## **Chapter 4 - 5:25**

### **Charles Ross Anthony**

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about a gentleman by the name of Charles Ross Anthony. Tell us who he was.

**Bob Anthony:** C.R. Anthony or Charles Ross Anthony was my grandfather. I think I have counted accurately and I'm one of 23 grandchildren that he had. And that means I'm among 23 first cousins, I didn't count after that. In those days, that is either 1883 or 1884, I've seen his birthday listed more than one way—it's kind of interesting that sometimes you name people after famous folks. Like I have my one family group on my mother's side and one of the brothers is named Orville and one is named Wilbur. The first kidnap for ransom in the United States was the son of Philadelphia banker. There is a book that is now out-of-print, but I have a copy of it and the little boy's name was Charlie Ross. So his parents picked Charles Ross to be the name they gave to my grandfather. His father's name was Zachariah Cicero, so maybe Charlie Ross was a little bit easier to deal with.

JE: And so your grandfather was born where?

BA: He was born in middle Tennessee. The river cuts the state in three parts, and Nashville is in the middle, and he was in middle Tennessee. His parents were sharecroppers.

JE: In 1885 he was born?

BA: I think it's 1884.

JE: I guess. Is that the correct date?

BA: I think August 10, 1884 is what I've seen. The date that we most recognize is August 10 of 1884.

JE: So how does he come to Oklahoma and at what age?

BA: Well I am fortunate that he lived until almost age 92. In other words, I was more of an adult, I had many years to share with him and so I did get to hear some of his stories first-hand, and they're also written down in a few publications as well. So I do want to throw this in, that given his birth and the number of years after the Civil War in the United States...there's a period of time where things were very much in disarray in the South and he really didn't like it. He also became an orphan I think he said at age 12. The economic times for very difficult and as you mentioned his parents were sharecroppers. So he had some relatives that he went to visit and they let him stay with them for a little bit. But they couldn't afford another mouth to feed. And so he decided that he wanted to get as far away from there, as possible. And the furthest place in the whole earth that he could even imagine was Indian Territory. And he had some kind of relative that was in Holdenville. Anyway, he had a very small sum of money but he spent it on getting train passage to Indian Territory. So that's how he got here, and he describes himself as being an orphan at that time.

JE: And why was he an orphan? What circumstances led to that?

BA: Well, I think that his mother had died. Well he may have had a stepmother after that. But anyway, he was on his own and he headed West.

JE: 12 years old?

BA: That is right.

JE: So he comes to Holdenville, then Indian Territory and what goes on there and did he know anybody? I mean did he just show up?

BA: Well, I can tell you a couple of stories. He had grown up on a farm near horses and he had done all kinds of odd jobs. He had very little in the way of educational opportunities. I think he had been through the sixth of the McGuffey's readers at one time. But there is a story that there was a widow lady in Holdenville named Mrs. Scales I believe. She had two or three daughters I believe. Somebody said that she was looking for a man. And so he (C.R.) went to the house and knocked on the door. And she says, "Well I am looking for a man." He told the story lots of times so I remember it well. And she looked at him and said, "Yes I'm looking for a man, not a boy. She was shaking her head. And he said, "Well, I can do good work." And she said, "Well, can you hitch a team?" And he said to himself he was sure glad that's what she asked, because he could hitch a team. And so he went and hitched the team and she let him stay. Now, whether it was the chicken coop or the tool house, we aren't sure. I've heard the story told both ways. But she was a Southern widow lady and a little bit on the formal side, and he stayed with their family for many years. And they never let him have any meal with the family because he was from a different white working-class background. And that always made an impact on him. And it makes an impact frankly to me, the way I see things too to this day. Mrs. Scales also had a little general store in town. And so eventually he got to work in the store and that's where he gained some store experience and then from an early age he always gave the quote that he always wanted to be a merchant. At one time we had the company monthly magazine called The Trading Post but when I became president we started to call it The Merchant and we quoted his little line in there, that he always wanted to be a merchant. But anyway, it does go back to Holdenville and being able to work in that general store.

JE: Did he just walk up to Mrs. Scales' house and knock on the door?

BA: I think he did. In town he walked around saying he needed work and somebody gave him a tip to go try that lady.

## Chapter 5 - 5:26

### J.C. Penney

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**John Erling:** So what was his first job then, working for that lady?

**Bob Anthony:** I believe so. I think he was getting something like 50 cents a month and he always emphasized this, and this is a very important part of the family culture and the corporate culture of the stores. It's the concept of savings. He always would say, "It

doesn't matter what you make, it matters how much you save from what you make." And so he would save up his money.

JE: Did he then, somewhere along the line in there, go to work for the J.C. Penney Company?

BA: That is correct. The way I understand the story, first of all when he was in the store business in Oklahoma having gone not only from Mrs. Scale's store, but later there was a gentleman named Martin that had a few stores, that he worked for that gentleman. And he would go to the St. Louis market and he met Mr. J.C. Penney at the market on more than one occasion. And Mr. Penney tried to get him to go to work for him and he didn't agree to that for the first few times. But eventually, he became the fourth manager of a store for J.C. Penney. In other words, Store No. 4 and that was in Grace, Idaho. C.R. Anthony was married by that time. His first child whose name was Helen was born in Grace, Idaho that further documents the story. But he did go to work for J.C. Penney. And Penney had a new concept, and that was the chain store approach. Not just to have a little independent store, but to have a chain of stores. When C.R. Anthony started the Anthony's stores in 1922, the first store started on September 1st in Cushing, Oklahoma. But a few months later, they had three or four more stores open to get the chain store concept going.

JE: He must have been a special person that J.C. Penney spotted him and for some reason or another he stood out.

BA: I am sure that that was the case. I know he was a very friendly person. He was a people person. He genuinely cared about people. I think the word gregarious is correct. He had a lot of talent in caring about people and (knowing) their names and so forth. J.C. Penney was in Oklahoma many years later, and somebody apparently asked him at a public forum, "What about C.R. Anthony?" And he said, "Well, I sure lost a good man when he went off on his own." So I think they were friends. And it is interesting that maybe 50 years later the C.R. Anthony Company was more like the J.C. Penney Company that J.C. Penney started than Penney's was. Now maybe that's because we were slow moving. But the J.C. Penney Company became the anchor tenants in these huge regional malls. When Anthony's was moving like from a 25-foot storefront to downtown in a small town to maybe a shopping center. Where Penneys' had gone on to these high-rent areas that you would pay in a regional mall.

JE: So then C.R., he partnered with J.P. Martin Company in Cleveland in 1918?

BA: That is correct.

JE: What kind of a model is that? I mean did he own shares? I mean how did he become part of the Martin Company? What was the J.P. Martin Company?

BA: I don't know as much of the history of that as I would like to. But I think Mr. Martin was

the sole owner and he did have a couple of stores and so the story goes he signed a lease on a store in Cushing, Oklahoma, but then he changed his mind and decided he didn't want a new store. Now that's when C.R. Anthony was in Grace, Idaho. And so the opportunity came for him to take that store as his own. And he always wanted to have his own store and to be his own manager and his own owner. But better to answer your question, Mr. Martin did not allow his managers to be owners. And the model for the C.R. Anthony stores is this: Mr. C.R. Anthony might finance a third of the operation, an existing manager would put up a third and the new person would have a third. Now initially that wasn't the investment, but that was the sharing mechanism of the responsibility for getting a store put together. And every manager was expected to train a new manager so that the company could go on and grow. So later this philosophy of letting the active employees have ownership interest further materialized itself in what we call employee stock. We did have a plan where employees could purchase shares of stock. We've had later, under different, more modern tax laws something called an employee stock ownership plan. We had a profit sharing plan which was heavily invested in company stock and even the defined benefit pension plan was invested somewhat in company stock at every level to include top sales people who would have a chance to buy stock. That was the philosophy. We wanted it to be the employees' stock. And Mr. C.R. Anthony, who didn't have a lot of formal education had a way to explain it. He said, "There's dead money and there's active money that support companies." And he would have described other people's methods as outside owners who are not active in the business. But he wanted the ownership of the growth of his company, the C.R. Anthony Company, to be that of active money and people that were actively involved with growing the company and with making it a success.

## Chapter 6 - 6:35

### Sam Walton

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**John Erling:** So then he worked for the J.P. Martin Company, which is a dry goods store?

**Bob Anthony:** And the term dry goods, I'm sure you know is...it wasn't goods which might include alcoholic beverages or so forth. Dry goods was thought of as piece goods, like materials for sewing as well as clothing, shoes and work boots.

JE: He then obviously wanted to start his own store, and he did. Was that when he named his first store Dixie Store?

BA: The very first stores were called the Dixie Stores, that's correct. And some of the pictures of those are even in the biography book that he has and then there was a model



put together of the very first store and that's with the Oklahoma History Center at this time.

JE: Why did he name it Dixie and not Anthony?

BA: You know, I'm just not sure. I think that's just what he did.

JE: So along about 1923, he had grown then I think he had about four Dixie stores: Cushing, Pawhuska, Hominy, Barnsdall and then he did have two C.R. Anthony stores in 1923?

BA: I don't have the exact dates but I know that was the transition.

JE: So then these customers would come from miles around and in all sorts of forms of transportation?

BA: Well, the automobile was starting to get better developed at that point and things were taking off.

JE: So they probably came in covered wagons and horses and-

BA: Well, the biography book's got some pictures of what you and I would think of are some old jalopies that were there parked by the front door. We served small towns in Oklahoma. So the population was 2,000 or 3,000 or 4,000 people. Which today would seem like an extremely small town for a store. But in those days that was what we did. And the 25-foot front...25 feet isn't a very big dimension by most standards but that was a very common downtown location size and even I think 120 feet back (deep) is small by today's standards. We had these small towns and small stores in downtown locations. And then to jump way forward, as women got into the workplace, as there was more ready-to-wear (clothing) instead of piece goods to sew your own clothes, then women in the workforce in particular became interested in fashion and in nicer clothes. You know, they might be the teller in the bank or so forth. And to have a selection of ready-to-wear items you needed more space, so then those very little stores in downtowns in small towns weren't so economical. And the economics of the store moved to having a larger space, which required a larger population and trade area to support it. And then there was kind of a group of people that had respect for each other: the TG&Y Company, which was headquartered in Oklahoma City, the Humpty Dumpty grocery store chain that was headquartered here and operated by Mr. Syl Goldman. So those three merchants, C.R. Anthony, Syl Goldman, and the TG&Y folk, had a very large number of shopping centers sometimes called "strip centers" outside the downtown location where they would put their stores together and they had a little bit bigger space and they could go on and build from there. As highways and so forth developed then those became even a larger operation. But it was still different than those big regional malls. That's just kind of a historical background.

JE: What is Sam Walton doing about this time? And was C.R. probably laying some groundwork that Sam was noticing? I mean did they cross paths?

BA: When I have people ask me about the history of the company the Walmart phenomena comes up very frequently. I can remember when the sales of our company were greater than those of Walmart. I visited that in Bentonville, Arkansas personally and we were fascinated by their success and their growth. I had studied in business school and graduate school things like operations research and mathematical modeling and how to do efficiency operations, particularly transportation or distribution or inventory control and management and replenishment systems and so forth. And I think that Walmart was always very progressive and very advanced in that regard. But then, they were largely a little bit like we were. Sam Walton was from Oklahoma, and we were just people trying to do business. By the mid-1980s when I was president, we had about 20 or 25 stores in what I would call Walmart centers. And people would always ask me, "That must have killed you to have Walmart so close by." And I would say, "No, we liked for them to be right next door." We wanted to be in the same shopping center as Walmart. We didn't want them to be two miles down the road because they would take the traffic there. They liked having us next door because we had branded merchandise. We had a little bit higher quality of merchandise and a little bit different income level of customer perhaps. We attracted a customer that they (Walmart) wouldn't necessarily get on a standalone basis and they would give us some traffic. So all of those stories, and I calculated this to the second decimal point, they had higher return on average inventory investment than our stores in general. The Walmart family operated in real estate locations and shopping centers of their own. There was one time they were trying to get a different chain store, I'll leave the name out, to sign a lease and they had some bureaucracy and delay and they wanted to move ahead. So they called us up and asked us for \$.50 less per square foot, if we would be interested in signing the agreement and getting on with the new store and well, we thought that was all right, and so we went ahead. I think our stores in Springdale, Arkansas and Fayetteville, Arkansas were Walmart centers and I can name others as well. But Sam Walton came to Oklahoma City when they opened a new store in Edmond, Oklahoma. I was president at the time. He came by and we had lunch. There were four of us, three from our company and Mr. Walton. I toured him through our general office building and got to visit with him about retail. And he was always kind of bragging about us because he knows how to make friends. You know he'd say, "You've got a lean operation here. Where is all the rest of the buying staff?" He said anybody that's good with arithmetic could be a good merchant. I think he had a lot of sound wisdom. I personally have a lot of respect for the Walmart success. And I note that today, the Fortune 500 Magazine that just came out reported that they are the largest business enterprise listed in the Fortune 500, bigger than any of the oil companies right now.

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**Chapter 7 - 3:44****Levis**

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**John Erling:** C.R. Anthony was way ahead of Sam Walton by many years?

**Bob Anthony:** Oh yes. That's correct the age difference could be 40 years, a whole generation.

JE: Well, he obviously was then taken with you and your family because he knew you were successful. The C.R. Anthony stores have their concept and Sam had his. So are you saying that you were upper end and he was-

BA: There's a very, very clear difference. Walmart was a discount store. Walmart had a corporate philosophy and they put it on the sign of their stores. It said, "We sell for less." Now ours had come out way before they thought of the words. We had a slogan called "everyday low prices", but if you sell for less than that, you have to be first of all very efficient, but you also have to maybe offer less. They offered self-service. We called self-service, no service. We didn't offer no service. We didn't offer self-service. We offered customer service. We instructed all of our employees in every store, and they could tell you that was the number one goal for every year that I was president and for lots of years prior to that as well. We didn't line people up like cattle to check them out at a cash register. We had a wrap stations throughout the store to give them a little more attention and to treat them a little better I think, with a little more personal courtesy. The person that sold them the merchandise wrapped it up for them and collected their money. Discount stores in those days, and now I'm talking about the 1970s for example, did not have private label merchandise. People like Levi Strauss & Co. wouldn't sell to discounters. And only later did they have a different tag or color of tag or different brand of merchandise to let discounters sell these things. Now things have changed in the meantime, but some one branded merchandise. You know, Hanes knitwear, we were the largest customer for Hanes knitwear. I know that the Haas family, I know it because one time I asked him, it was about 1984 and Mr. Robert Haas VII was in Oklahoma City and I told him that according to our calculations that in the previous 40 years that we (Anthony's) had sold more Levis than anyone else in the world. And he said, "Yes that's what our records would show also." That's branded merchandise. Discount stores did not have Hagger pants. Mr. Hagger and Mr. C.R. Anthony were very close, personal friends. There's a certain story about how my grandfather helped him one time when he was having a problem with his pant company, especially getting collections from people that needed to pay their invoices. And then my grandfather became one of the very, very, very few people that owned Hagger stock after the Hagger family itself. My granddad helped him get through a financial crisis and then when Mr. Hagger wanted to

pay him back he said, "No, I'm not going to let you pay me back, but I want some of the stock in your company." So that he knew that was very precious. Anyway, so I hope I've touched on some of the differences between the discount store and the retail store that is customer-service oriented and that sells branded merchandise.

JE: So Sam Walton comes around with his discount concept did you feel some kind of threat to some of your merchandise?

BA: No. Because largely they had some type of variety store merchandise that they sold. They had plastic buckets and motor oil and things that we didn't sell. Also, we were called a junior department store. We do not sell appliances for example, or even small appliances. We focused on clothing, family clothing, to include shoes. Now some department stores would have a leased shoe department, we always had our own shoe department.

## Chapter 8 - 4:49

### The Depression

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**John Erling:** In the 1920s the stores are growing. Thirty-three stores opened between 1922 in 1926?

**Bob Anthony:** Right.

JE: I think you had sales of \$2.5 million dollars. And the year 1929 comes along which as we know is the beginning of the Great Depression. How did the stores do during that Depression period?

BA: Well that was an extreme period, as everybody would know. And there are a lot of stories that go along with that. There's one period of time that Mrs. C.R. Anthony put up her wedding ring and her jewelry to get some money to meet some financial obligations that the company had. There's a story—Well my dad, as we said was born in Cleveland, Oklahoma. And I guess in those days you could skip a grade in school if you were an above-average student or something. Well, he skipped a grade there and skipped a grade here. So he graduated from high school and went to OU for one semester but he was 2 1/2 years younger than everybody else because he had skipped so many grades going through. So he didn't particularly like it, so he went to work in the stores. He worked in Woodward, Oklahoma for example and Liberal, Kansas, and then we were opening a store in Dalhart, Texas. The Dalhart, Texas was opened I think about the very same day that FDR declared the bank holiday. So I think they said collectively, hey here we are, we are opening a store, the banks are refusing to issue checks or take checks what are we going to do? And Mr. C.R. Anthony got together \$1,000 in cash and took it

to the store. And he said to the store staff, "Look, you take their check and you can give them one dollar over the amount of their purchase for their check if they say that they need that cash to buy food to feed their family." (Pause) I'm getting choked up here a little bit, but these are real-life stories. He said, "You know, if the banks fail it's all going to be over for all of us." And so he had confidence in the free enterprise system, and he wanted to help people. And he said, "Hey people will remember that you helped them." The Anthony's Dalhart store location was I think store number five. Some of those store numbers in the early times were re-used if one closed. Like the Hominy store, I don't think was kept open. But then I have a history book over here and there were some stores opened in the mid-1920s that closed in 1930 or 1931. So they all didn't make it.

JE: Explain what bank holiday was.

BA: I'm not sure I'm that good of a historian, but the banks were going to close while there was an effort to stabilize the financial system. There were panics going on and it was some kind of an effort to stabilize that.

JE: So the Anthony stores met the needs of real people. I believe they earned this slogan as the friendliest store in town?

BA: Yes. We certainly emphasized customer service and that's the same thing as the friendliest store in town. Later, during the merger and acquisition in the hostile takeover period there were guys from Citicorp Venture Capital that were looking to put up an offer to buy the company and they sent all these accountants and due diligence people around. And they would come back and say we never saw so many people wanting to wait on the customers and so many friendly people willing to give customer service. So they observed of course what we think we were trying to teach people for a long period of time. It isn't just being friendly either. What we would do is we would take special orders. You know, not everybody is the average size. Not everybody has a 34-inch waist or so forth. So if you needed extra-long Levis jeans, we would special order them or get them out of our warehouse. I have one of the history sheets here where Mr. C.R. Anthony wrote up the duties of the store manager. And he said, "If a customer calls you at home because he needs something, you go down to the store and you get it." I mean people today don't even know what that kind of service would be. I want to mention another thing that I think is a difference between Anthony's stores and the discount stores. We sold blue jeans. We sold Wranglers and Levis and we were known for that. Well, not everybody has an even length. You know a 30, 32, 34, 36 length. We had odd waist sizes and odd length sizes. So if you had a 33 length, that's what we'd sell you. We wouldn't tell you to just take a 34-length pant and just tough it out or go alter it yourself. So that would require a greater inventory investment. One thing that discount stores would do is they would try to have a more economical in their opinion inventory and they

would skip the odd lengths. That's a difference too. That's part of customer service is doing special orders for your key, basic, fundamental merchandise selection. So you have what people expect and what they want.

## Chapter 9 - 5:37

### Cash 'n' Carry

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**John Erling:** Somebody said the other day, "Oh yes, we used to go to C.R. Anthony's to buy our jeans." Was that a conscious decision to be the jean capital of the area or how did that develop?

**Bob Anthony:** I think it was just playing to our strength. We had many people that their memory of us is specifically about back-to-school. Now for almost all retailers, holiday and Christmas is a big sales period. Back to school for our company was about equal to it. If I can go back just a little bit since I have some of these numbers in front of me. Of course the company started in 1922. In 1925 the total for all the stores exceeded \$1 million. The next year in 1926 it was over \$2 million. The next year 1927 and got \$3 million. By the end of 1929 and was close to \$4 million. But, then things turned around with the Depression so that it slipped almost 25% then by 1930. It was down back into the \$2 millions for 1931 and 1932. The adjustment during the Depression years was phenomenal. There were stores that were closed, but the company survived and it was stronger after that period of time.

JE: During this time then C.R. was a wealthy man, I mean did he live the style of wealth? Could people see his wealth in maybe his home for his cars? Did he try to display it personally?

BA: I think that some in the family including me fancied that we were paper rich and cash poor. I worked all of one summer when I was 16 years old and because I was living at home I didn't have to pay rent or anything. And I took my entire earnings and went to see my grandfather and told him I wanted to buy stock. Well our stock was, as we discussed earlier closely held and it was not publicly traded. Now eventually, we got so many shareholders that we had to have registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission. So we got the worst of that world where you had to do all of that paperwork. I think that C.R. Anthony, first of all, he was a lifelong Democrat. He was on the side of the people and he was on the side of the working people. I think a lot of the respect and dedication he received from so many of the employees was because of that. I don't think that he had a lavish lifestyle given the success that they were experiencing. Some of the resources that were developed were put back into the business. This is

extremely important. C.R. Anthony had a philosophy against debt. Most people don't know that he failed in business twice before he started the C.R. Anthony stores. Now if he was born in 1884, that's 16 years left in that century, the first store started in 1922. So he is about age 38 when he started the C.R. Anthony stores. With life expectancies in those days, I mean he was getting on. He had a little general store of his own. He sold on credit and the rains didn't come and the crops didn't come in and he got out of that just barely breaking even. It was an experience that impacted him for the rest of his life. He had a furniture store on I think Okmulgee Avenue in Muskogee, Oklahoma and that did not succeed either. But he learned from that. And he learned from Mr. Martin, and he learned from J.C. Penney. And so then when he was about age 38 he went forward, but for darn sure, he was not going to sell on credit. Zero credit. It was called cash 'n' carry. Now another part of that philosophy is he didn't like banks. He didn't like borrowing money. He liked to loan money to the banks. That's called savings. When you asked did he have a lavish lifestyle...to have the growth of the company financed, the financial resources or the wealth that he might have accrued went into building the company. My dad used to use the expression: "We're playing with our own chips." We would open five or 10 or 20 or 25 stores in a year. In the 1970s and early 1980s when I became president we would do remodels and expansions and relocations and new stores. We were playing with our own chips. We didn't borrow any money to do that-that was retained earnings. I do know that he drove a Cadillac car at one time because that impressed me when I was probably six years old. But I think that he identified with Depression-era people. And frankly my heritage and my immediate family didn't want to be showy about it. I guess we could have been more so. Even my four daughters that my wife and I have, I had an old car that I had all of them drive through high school. They weren't going to have a new car to drive around because that just wasn't the way we're going to do it. I know some of the girls in their class called us the Flintstones because we were one of the last ones to get cable TV and some other things. Although it's probably a mixed story, I know that Mr. Brown of the Coca-Cola Company family here in Oklahoma talked him into getting a joint ownership in some kind of yacht that was in the Gulf of Mexico. But the storms sank it and he refused to go back and get another I think. I know they had a place in Colorado in those days. When there was no air conditioning in the heat of the summer, it was a good place to go. So certainly they were able to enjoy life but I don't think the family was very showy in the way they went about it.

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**Chapter 10 - 6:54**  
**\$1,000 Day Club**

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**John Erling:** After World War II the Corporation operated 66 stores and people started to hear about the \$1,000 Club. What was that about?

**Bob Anthony:** Well I might even tell you my personal experience. The \$1,000 Day Club means that you as a salesperson had \$1,000 or more in total sales for a day. Now in 1964, I was 16 years old. I was working in Reading Shopping Center, which is at Southwest 44th and Western, which is on the south part of Oklahoma City, which is the blue-collar area and the working area, which was a great experience for me for many, many reasons for me to work there. I was writing paper, hand-written tickets as we all did at that time. And the most common piece of merchandise was Levi 501 jeans, it has a button-fly front, blue denim for \$4.15 apiece. Okay, if you're selling blue jeans that \$4.15 apiece to get \$1,000 worth of sales is a lot of business in one day. And I got my \$1,000 day the Saturday before Father's Day because that was a big shopping day. People would buy steel-toed boots, they might even be \$20. That was in an enormous sale. Now there's ways that you could try to help yourself out. An employee could put his own purchases behind until payday and then could pay them later. So I probably got an extra \$40 worth of stuff out of my own-

JE: If someone came in and wanted one pair you probably try to hustle two?

BA: Hey, you did everything you could to act fast. I still meet people in Oklahoma, I obviously am a statewide elected official and I travel all over the state. And I have people that still come up to me and say, "Hey I want you to know, I still have my \$1,000 dollar day pin." Okay, that was per day. And then there was something called Corn in the Crib and now is if you had \$10,000 in sales in one month. We recognized sales achievements. We had lists every month. We recognized the top stores and the top salespeople. That was very much a part of the culture of the business, growth and sales. But also incentives were absolutely foundational to the company. And I want to stick with salespeople right now. We had a quota. You, based on whatever your earnings were, had a quota. Then if you met that, then everything over that you got a percent of sales bonus on it. So, we had some salespeople that could be making more than twice what their hourly wage was. And that's called an incentive system. Along with that store managers were known to receive rather modest monthly compensation or salary. But when the year was over, without them having to invest their own hard dollars in the merchandise and so forth, they could get what averaged out to be 20% of the net profit from their store. And I want to emphasize one little story that my dad said. In his years of being president, which was 1972 to 1980, there was a period of time where the number one store in the chain was



McAllen, Texas. The store manager there had sales of in excess of \$10 million. And his net earnings in one of his fantastic years, was \$1 million, and he was getting 20% of that. So, I don't know if I have my numbers exact or not, but his bonus was between \$150,000 and \$200,000. A lot of our store managers were very hardworking, honest, dedicated and intelligent people but they may not have had the benefit of formal education. So to have somebody who didn't necessarily have a college education receiving that kind of money was phenomenal. And so businesspeople in the downtown business community or the Liberty Bank board would say, "Hey you're the president of the company Guy Anthony, and you've got a guy that you're paying a higher salary than you?" And he'd say, "Yes and he's making me rich and that's the best system that we have." So we had a phenomenal store manager bonus system. People that came to work with us from other chains knew about it and that's why they came. And that's good because we attracted people that wanted to work. They wanted to work hard. One of our things is hey you want to spend your time in the store. The manager ought to stay in the store because he had to keep his eyes on the business and make things happen. So we gave them an incentive at the store sales level and at the assistant manager level and at the store bonus level. That was foundational to the company.

JE: And there were other innovations like layaway?

BA: Layaway is an important part. Now that's maybe a little bit close to that credit that I was telling you about because it helps people to finance the purchase. But notice that that's patterned after the needs of working people that get paid maybe every other week or once a month. And these people wanted to—especially for back-to-school, get the shopping done when they could get the sizes and get the whole family outfitted and then they would leave it in the layaway area and could pay on it each pay period until they got it paid out. I just want to tell you they're sometimes more to these things than the average person knows. Many families would use layaway. Maybe they did have enough cash resources to get it out all at once, but they use layaway because they knew if they took those clothes home the kids would start wearing their new clothes during the summer and the first day of school they might've had holes in those blue jeans or that T-shirt or something. It was a way to work with families so that they could get their purchases and do their planning and help them with their finances. I worked the layaway counter when I was 16 years old and I would have sometimes people that lost their jobs or couldn't make their payment. And they had to come back in and see if they could take some things out of layaway so that they could get their deposit or their initial payments back. It was a good lesson to me about how a lot of people in Oklahoma have to manage their family affairs and their finances. And I am going to throw this in if I may. One of the highest compliments I think I've ever received in my whole life—I told you that \$4.15 with

the price of Levis at the time. There was a black gentleman that had four children and he was coming to back-to-school, and he didn't know the store and all the specials and this and that as much as I did. But he had \$100. And he gave me the 100 dollars and he said, "I need all the clothing for these kids to get back to school." And I worked hard to find them the best things. You know sometimes you buy a package of socks and can be a little better deal. Anyway, I mention that because I think there were people that counted on us to help them and to assist them and to show them service. And depending on their needs and their desires, we rose to the occasion. We would have people carry their packages to their car. If their car wouldn't start we could get some jumper cables. Whatever people needed, we were there to help them.

## Chapter 11 - 7:16

### Did Santa Goof?

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**John Erling:** Blacks were discriminated against in some stores in the 1930s, '40s and '50s but that doesn't seem to be part of the C.R. Anthony culture.

**Bob Anthony:** Well I'm really proud of what I understand to be the history there. I do know that we had some stores that were in predominantly black parts of town or black communities. I might also mention Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, because we had a large number of stores on the Mexican border. And I'll name a few. I have already mentioned McAllen, but Harlingen, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, Nogales, El Paso is a border town and we had five stores there at one time. We had a lot of stores, some of which the principal language spoken was Spanish. Now there are a lot of people at that time that would not give a management position to a person with a Spanish surname, or a Mexican person. And we had lots and lots of store managers that have those responsibilities and it's for only one reason, it was good business. They had worked their way up from being a salesperson to being an assistant manager or department head and so forth and they could handle their responsibilities. Some of the finest people I know and the most family-oriented people I know who were very successful in waiting on the customers and taking care of the stores were Mexican-Americans. I do know several black individuals who were very close friends of mine, and close friends of my family. But it was particularly a large number of those and it was well before the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

JE: Another innovation of C.R. Anthony was profit sharing?

BA: Profit sharing was just a part of the philosophy of active money versus dead money. Outside investors were not what my grandfather wanted. And then when the tax laws helped to support and to favor this concept, we were very generous. Once again, this

may sound folksy, but there were many people that worked for our company that were women. And maybe they were the second provider for their family. And every penny that they earned went to the family budget. For a lot of the women in our workforce that profit-sharing account and that profit-sharing statement was the only asset that they had that was listed in their name. It was a way for them to save for their retirement. And so it was a source of pride and a very justified one that some of those people could have savings vehicle. The same thing for a lot of the men they didn't necessarily have a savings account. But we were proud of it and then generously supported it.

JE: Seasonal sales was that a new concept of C.R. Anthony?

BA: I think so. Hey, I think you've got to have some excitement. You have to have some sidewalk sales. You have got to be creative. There was one promotion that we had that gained national publicity. And we called it Did Santa Goof? We ran a full-page ad for the day after Christmas and it said we don't even care if you bought something at some other store, if you bought something and you're not happy with it, you can come trade it in at our store and will give you merchandise. We weren't going to give them a cash refund on somebody else's merchandise, but we'll let you trade for the right size. Now some people would bring in something that we don't even sell like a toaster or an electrical appliance. And our store managers gave us a lot of gripes at the home office on that. But we said, "Look, one day out of the year we're working to treat people with a little extra help and courtesy when they expect to be treated badly. Because who wants to go work on exchanges in refunds on the day after Christmas?"

JE: And so what did you do with those toasters?

BA: We told them to put it in the back room. And then eventually we told them to donate it to charity or to mark it way down and get something for it.

JE: Now, you had something that was pretty fascinating for kids who would come in to the store, and that was these pneumatic tube systems. Explain to our young audience what that was all about.

BA: There is a business purpose behind a lot of things. And the business philosophy is: the fewer hands in the till, the better you are going to be at making sure there isn't a shortage in the cash at the end of the day. We had the sales people out there with the selling and they would take your money and they would write up the ticket and they would send it in a cup to the cashier whose office was raised and had a big open window. So the cashier who was usually a lady could look out over the whole store and kind of keep an eye on things, shoppers and shoplifting and people that needed help with customer service and that was a good approach. Before the one most people know about, there was a wire cable from each wrap station up to this raised level and you pulled the handle and it would shoot a little wooden money cup up to the cashier and then she would take it and

empty the coins and get their paper ticket or the folded money. Later, with electricity we had these pneumatic tubes, which had air suction. Banks are the ones that use these today. You could close up the little cup and you could have the air shoot the cup up there to the cashier. To this day a lot of people, their biggest memory is one of that cup that came shooting back. I can remember the former labor Commissioner Brenda Renaud saying that when she was a little girl her mother took her to the store and it (the tubes) scared her so bad that she even wet her pants. She could tell stories that the rest of us wouldn't tell. She got her first dress in an Anthony store and she did remember those money cups. And the Oklahoma History Center now has a display of those, because we found a little piece of equipment and some of the cups for them to do that.

JE: There was a radio program in 1947 that was known as Anthony's Avenue and it was started right here in Oklahoma City.

BA: There was a man named Al Good. Later he had Al Good's Band and he played for weddings and parties and so forth. But there was a radio show and there was a song called Anthony's Avenue. That was a big part of the tradition and Mr. Good was associated with the company in some form or another for decades after that.

JE: Could that also be attributed to C.R. Anthony's philosophy—he believed in very aggressive advertising?

BA: Well we always tried to control expenses. And my grandfather by the time the company grew to have 200 or 300 stores, his two sons, Guy Anthony and Ray Anthony were there and then he had to son-in-laws and sometimes when together they could outnumber him. So I would say that Mr. C.R. Anthony himself had a certain reluctance to spend money on anything that looked like it might be questionable. But they did talk him into advertising. I think that one of the biggest factors in a very short number of years was when the company went from \$300 or \$400 million in sales, and those were my years. When I started in 1980 the total company sales were \$256 million. Then 7 years later it was \$411 million. One of the biggest factors to explain that growth in sales was insert advertising. You know you used to have a run of press newspaper ad. But then we started having these colored, multiple promotional items on one sheet and it just caught people's attention. Advertising was very important, both TV advertising and radio advertising. Radio as you know, you can instantly respond to something. If you had a fire next door, if there was a smoke sale, if you had extra merchandise and had a sidewalk sale, you could tell people about it and they could be there right away and that's helping your customers too to get a good deal.

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**Chapter 12 - 5:07****Co-ops**

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**John Erling:** Is it true that in 1947 C.R. Anthony changed the name of his 75 stores to just Anthony's?

**Bob Anthony:** I think that is actually just about the exact time frame, because my wife and I got married in 1975, and I can remember that the Economy Square store that was pictured on one of our little brochures was opened about that time because my wife and I both got blue hands by folding all of the blue jeans. At one time in America we were a little more formal. They would say J.C. Penney and then later that would just become known as Penneys. And so yes this same thing happened with our company. And we even went a little more fancier where we had square canisters with red and white letters that spelled out Anthony's.

JE: This store was on the move. You opened a store in Van Nuys, California. In 1950 you purchased W.G. Woodward Company in St. Louis bringing the total to 240 stores. I mean it's really growing and then you purchased a warehouse space at Northeast 6th and Broadway here in downtown Oklahoma City.

BA: The area on Broadway is now called the Automobile Alley. It got that name because they used to use some of those buildings to assemble automobiles. They sent them out and just assembled them later. Today we're used to the manufacturers just getting the whole thing put together. We bought a three-story warehouse building and it was used to assemble automobiles. It had a heck of a freight elevator and it was built so that no tornado would ever blow it away either. And we added two stories to it, so it was a five-story building. And yes, the first three stories were used as the warehouse during that time. Of course the company continued to grow and our philosophy became a little bit more toward warehousing goods, not because we wanted to tie up our inventory either, but as a massive distribution center. We even in the mid-1970s started our own trucking company. Actually I was the president of the trucking company that did over 1,000,000 miles a year and shipped over \$100 million dollars worth of merchandise out of our distribution center. But when we got to that kind of an operation, we did have to move to a bigger distribution center that eventually had one third of 1,000,000 square feet and it was on Reno out by I-40 and Meridian in Oklahoma City.

JE: In 1972 the company celebrated their anniversary, 325 stores in 21 states west of the Mississippi.

BA: I was in school at that time but that was a heck of a celebration. I can remember some people still have some license plates that were made up that said Anthony's 75th anniversary.

JE: Now I think that C.R. Anthony also believed in, if he did not start the concept of co-ops, cooperative stores.

BA: A major aspect of our company was quite different and it's a different business philosophy—it's de-centralization and manager autonomy and incentive systems that we probably talked about. Our store managers would have the authority, and the license, and the liberty, and freedom to go down to the local newspaper and maybe negotiate that or pick something that they wanted to put on sale. Today, most chain stores would say hey, you aren't going to discount anything and our computer will catch you if you do it. They take all the discretion away from the local guy. We would have some store managers that would go to some markets. We tried to police that a little bit but some of them would get together to try and pool their resources. But when you're doing business in 21 states in you are as far north as a Minnesota or the Dakotas, and then you're down on the border in Texas, and you've got Iowa farm women the size scales are different. We had stores in the Phoenix area. There's really not a winter in Phoenix. They have different seasons. So, we had different sizes and different seasons, different climates. Some of them are college towns. Some of them are resort towns. All kinds of things you know, you would expect across America. Well, we didn't have the fancy computer to sort all of that out and to make those variations. We did have autonomy and judgment at the local level, which we honored. Other stores had thought that having strict controls was the way to go. You know, maybe in a management sense that has some advantage. But we depended on our store managers and our department heads, I don't want to leave them out. Each store had people that were the head of the women's department, the head of the men's department, the shoe department and so forth. They could work together and they knew some of their local needs.

JE: \$100 million dollars in sales in 1973 and \$200 million in sales in 1978. I seemed this store continues to grow, this chain. Is there no competition at all?

BA: Well, I think there's fierce competition. It's interesting now that I'm in the business of public utility regulation. You know, you get a big monopoly public utility whether it's the electric company or the telephone company, if they have one competitor they say they're being eaten up by the competition. I've studied business and economics and there's this term called monopoly, and if you have two that's called duopoly and that's not called perfect competition. You know, when you can buy Hanes underwear in the Texaco store or by work gloves in the filling station, that's called competition.

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**Chapter 13 - 5:03**  
**Product Knowledge**

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**Bob Anthony:** The retail business is very competitive and the only way that you can make money is if you keep your costs under control and give people a fair and honest value every day. And I want to emphasize that. I do think in business probably the people that are running the stores and know their own merchandise, they could take advantage of a whole lot of customers. However, in the long run, our company believed that people are smart. Customers are smart. And you may try and give them some shoddy merchandise at full price someday but they will figure that out. So the philosophy that C.R. Anthony had from the first was, that you ought to control your costs and sell things for as little as possible. So that you still made a profit and then you could turn that merchandise, and get back with a new inventory, and turn it several times during the year. I think a lot of people in retail or in shop keeping think what they need to do is try to gouge as many people as they can. Others have shown that to treat people right is the best way. And I want to give you a little bit of what I think is important about business in general, but especially retail stores as our company would see it. The average person doesn't have the time, the ability or the background to have expert product knowledge. We were happy to fill that role for them. For example if I asked you John, how many buttons are there on your shirt? I'm not sure you could tell me. But if it's a six-button-front shirt, you probably bought it at a discount store. If it's a seven-button-front shirt you probably bought it at an Anthony's store. Now how much is an extra button and buttonhole cost? The average guy isn't going to maybe know all of that. We had our own private label merchandise too. What is reverse blend? Well if you've got 60% polyester and 40% cotton that's something. What if you reverse it? So I could have 40/60 to give them more cotton and that's a better shirt. We did that for our private label merchandise. If it's going to have our name in it, we wanted it to last a little longer and for it to be a little better deal. And we would price it accordingly. That's part of the philosophy of doing business. I do want to emphasize that we did have control over our stores though. There was something called Keystone, so much markup. If you wanted to have an exorbitant markup, C.R. Anthony would find out about it and he would tell you you're doing it the wrong way. And by the way, I'm just floored today looking at advertisements in newspapers and circulars were they say 20% off storewide, 50% off storewide. We never had anything like that, because we never overpriced our merchandise that we could afford to. We wanted people to know the concept of everyday low prices. So that's a difference of philosophy.

JE: Some of the promotions you ran, is there any one or two that may jump out in your mind?

BA: Well Levi was historically 10% of our total business--so Anthony's was a big Levi outlet.

We had a circular and would have Levi week. We would try and do that maybe even in the advance part of the back-to-school season or the summer season. There were some brands that hey, were weren't 100% wool, because we had a lot of polyester because that's what middle America needs. There was a group called Pykettes out of Utah. There was a group called the Hagger Pant Company and the Hagger family, which was largely headquartered out of Texas in the later years. So there were vendors that we dealt with that we would have strong promotions for. I do want to mention one thing, I got acquainted with the world of Wall Street and banks and high finance and all of that and people think that cash flow is the way to make your money. That was not our philosophy. I know a finance teacher that would say, "Well my gosh you're making a big mistake." We paid our invoices. We paid people early and they appreciated that. And the Levi Strauss Co. knew that the C.R. Anthony family paid their invoices and they didn't try to hold out until the last minute, because there's other people that have to buy their material and get back in their business. Now there's good times and there's bad times in the economy and as the years go by. So sometimes there might be a time when goods are hard to come by. The vendors that you were loyal to through all those years, if they can only ship to part of the people that they serve, then they're going to ship to the people that were loyal to them, and paid their invoices on time, and were decent to get along with. So it's not just the customers, it's the relationships with the vendors. And I was trying to say that I think the management and the store personnel were trying to have the product knowledge to help, and we were really serving as the agent for customers. You know we were their buying agent. They didn't have time to go to the New York market or the St. Louis market or the California market. We were supposed to do that. We were supposed to look around. We were supposed to give them a little help on what the best color was and what the new style might be. So it was a good relationship with people and communities.

## Chapter 14 - 4:45

### President Bob Anthony

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**John Erling:** C.R. Anthony's philosophy, I have it written here: "When we come to making a decision on the selling price of an article it should not be how much, but how little we sell it for and still make a profit." I think you've already made a comment on that.

**Bob Anthony:** Yes that's exactly right and I'll bet more people than just me could tell you that's exactly what the philosophy was.

JE: Now he retired in 1972 and then your father Guy served as president from 1972 until 1980?



BA: That is correct.

JE: And then Ray Anthony, the eldest son, that would be your uncle, served as chairman of the board and treasurer for 12 years is that true?

BA: I believe so. And hey, I'm a public official I'll talk about anything you want to talk about. By 1972 Mr. C.R. Anthony was I think about 86 years old. Anyway, he was well into his 80s. He had had several heart attacks and his health was failing and so forth. Now he held that title for a number of years when his two sons and his two son-in-laws were more managing the business and so forth. But those are the dates of actually having those designations. My uncle Ray was more of a numbers person, and he was the treasurer just as you indicated. My father was more on the personnel and the management side of the business. And they worked together and that's kind of how they divided up the responsibilities. Some of the uncles were big on the advertising and merchandising and sales promotions side, and one of them was more on the legal and the leasing side as well. So we divided things up.

JE: So in 1980 the grandson of Charles Ross Anthony, Bob Anthony, you, become the company's third president and you are only 32 years old.

BA: That is correct. C.R. Anthony started the first store in 1922 and for 50 years was the first president. Guy Anthony, my dad, was president for the next eight years it took us from 1972 to 1980 and then from 1980 to 1987 I was president and I was 32 years old when I started. It was the largest privately owned firm headquartered in Oklahoma both in terms of numbers of employees and in terms of dollar sales.

JE: Was it known for some time that you were going to be the president? You probably had other family. I mean it could be one of your cousins or whatever how did you come to be the president at 32?

BA: I'm one of six brothers and I think I counted and said a minute ago that we had 23 first cousins, lots of whom were working in the company. No, I don't think any of us were ordained to hold any particular position. I did have the title for about two years as assistant to the president. My dad was president. I was the one that was selected. I was also the Chairman of the executive committee and president. My uncle was the chairman of the board and he was treasurer too at the starting time.

JE: Your education probably served you well through all of that and perhaps probably put you ahead in the ballgame?

BA: There were other members of the family that had the advantage of top-flight education. I think they appreciated that. I think there was a respect for the Wharton School of Finance. I think we all worked hard. Probably picking me as president showed a little bit of a lack of imagination. Now if people think the family owned 99% of the company that wasn't sure, it was just about half. Because so many store managers had been so

successful and had put a lot of their earnings back into owning stock. It's a little bit like the Walmart companies, some of those early store managers became very successful and very wealthy. So the ownership of the company was somewhat diverse. Actually, most of our members of our Board of Directors were active executives of the company. We didn't have so much in the way of outside directors.

JE: Was this a novel idea, in about 1985 you introduced your own credit card? Were you kind of the first in the country to be doing that?

BA: Yes, we call that a private label credit card. But it was non-recourse debt. Okay, Citibank or one of their subsidiaries that did Citibank credit, the card had our name on it, just like J.C. Penney's card has their name on it, but they took the credit risk. If you wanted to apply for a card you gave your credit information to this credit processing company Citibank. So they administered that and they had the credit risk. It was getting especially in the malls where especially the young shoppers wanted to have credit cards and so forth and it went beyond the Visa or MasterCard. By the way Sears had private-label credit but that was where they carried the risk themselves. That's a big difference. I think they introduced credit to the masses of American shoppers.

## Chapter 15 - 5:02

### Anthony's Sold

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**John Erling:** And so you remained president until 1987?

**Bob Anthony:** April of 1987, that is correct.

JE: Then what happened?

BA: Control of the company was sold to Citicorp Venture Capital. And I want to put that in a little bit of historical perspective. People from Oklahoma know that we have the boom-bust cycle, and then we had The Penn Square Bank problem. It's better to be lucky than smart. That's one of my philosophies anyway. I became president in 1980 as we've said repeatedly. And I had two years before The Penn Square Bank failure. And one of those years we had the best return on investment and the highest return on equity and some of the best growth and I just thought the business plan that I put together using some of my little paperwork from business school was really something. In hindsight, I know that the oil boom that was going on with all of those oilfield workers laying down \$100 checks in small stores in Oklahoma must have helped a whole lot more than my business plan did. But anyway, then the Penn Square Bank failure occurred. We suffered as the economy did. That impacted a lot of our shareholders. Our shareholders didn't know what diversity was. They had about 80% of their wealth in one thing, C.R. Anthony's

stock. Some of them were in their 60s or 70s, their 80s and their 90s and then things started happening like First National Bank in Oklahoma City failed. And then there was the Citizens Bank, the gold dome bank in Oklahoma City that my grandfather was the first chairman of the board of and so forth, that bank failed. You know, there were bank failures and business failures. And there were many, many people that had already retired that were scared to death. And then we had another down year in the stock market and we valued our stock at another dollar or two less than what it was. And people were really concerned. And so there was a group from Texas that made an unsolicited hostile takeover attempt. You know like the takeover people were doing during the junk-bond era and so forth. That occurred and our Board of Directors, and I was chairman of the board, had to respond to that and we did. Because I still had some relationships from the Wharton School of Finance, I knew a guy with Shearson Lehman Brothers who also taught the merger acquisition course at the Wharton school and at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. I think he was probably the foremost retail person in the United States on this. As a matter of fact, the people that were trying to put this takeover together called him and he said to them, "I know Bob Anthony personally. And if I'm going to be on anybody's side it's going to be Mr. Anthony's side and his Board of Directors' side. So no, I'm not going to help you guys." So that was kind of an interesting deal. But the sentiment was that the company was in play. I went to a much more financially reputable group, which was Citicorp Venture Capital. The company's stock I think before all this happened was at about \$28 a share. This group from Texas offered \$32 a share. And a lot of the shareholders signed papers and said all right we'll sell you ours at \$32 a share. We eventually got \$40 a share. If this sounds like bragging it's not meant to be personal, it's meant to be the success and the strength of the company that was built over a 65-year period of time. Our company sold to Citicorp Venture Capital for one and a half times book value. Now TG&Y had sold twice in that period of time and theirs sold for 75% of book value. So we think we had a strong company and they did ask me to continue on as chairman of the board, which I did do for two or three years there. So Citicorp Venture Capital put together the winning bid. The company was put in play but I wanted to tell some of the history there. The shareholders, I don't think it's that they disliked the company, but they were panicked about the economy and that their life savings, and their retirement security was at stake, and they wanted to get cash. By the way, the deal we negotiated, people in Oklahoma got cash. Sometimes in these takeovers people get paper. They didn't get stock in somebody else's company, or notes, they got cash. \$100 million dollars came to Oklahomans out of that deal. And there were investors from out of state. But hey, that's the American way too.

JE: Was that disappointing to you that that was always happening? Shareholders would get

nervous and say yes we want to sell—was that disappointing to you?

BA: It's understandable to me. I know that I put together a proposal that the rest of the board wasn't necessarily familiar enough with these things or didn't go with. Now we were publicly traded, we were SEC reporting. I had a proposal that said why don't we just go ahead and we'll make an offer to buy up 20% of the stock. So anybody that really wanted to get out—they didn't have a market. Okay, let's give them a market. But then, I will you know people start seeing dollar signs and say why should we sell out at a minority interest price to the board, maybe we should sell the whole company. And that was true. Instead of \$32 they got \$40 per share. I helped get the \$40 for them because I could see which way the wind was blowing.

## Chapter 16 - 7:05

April 1987

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**Bob Anthony:** I want to say, if I had a little bit of concern and I know you are very familiar with Tulsa and you've heard of some stores called Mervyn's. Mervyn's was a part of Dayton Hudson, one of the huge conglomerate retail stores. They're a California operation and they were coming gangbusters, coming from the west toward the east. They put a big operation and a big warehouse in Texas. They didn't really know what they were doing very well. They did not succeed eventually. C.R. Anthony used to say, "It's the people that will go out of business that will hurt you the most in business." They did acquire several large locations in Tulsa that you probably are more familiar with than I am. They put a bid in Oklahoma City for the John A. Brown locations, which were very large retail locations. That did not happen for real estate reasons or for whatever reason, it did not happen. So all of that was going on at the time. I think that increased the concern that people had. There were other people that were concerned about the growth of Walmart. I wasn't necessarily one of those (people) because of the stories that I have already shared with you, that we did very well being close to Walmart stores and we could work with those people. So there were a lot of business factors going on. But we did owe it to our people to do what was best for the shareholders and it's majority rule. And we got a good proposal and it was adopted by I think a 98% vote of the shareholders to sell control to Citicorp Venture Capital.

**John Erling:** And then as time moved on, in 1991 Anthony's filed for Chapter 1 bankruptcy.

BA: The Company filed for reorganization and I think they were in that for a period of several months and in some regards that's different than a Chapter 7 liquidation. So the ownership structure changed but most of the stores continued to operate and the

people kept their jobs as they normally had.

JE: And it came out of bankruptcy in 1992 as I understand, where were you in all of that?

BA: I was a full-time Commissioner at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission. I got sworn in, in 1989. I did go to board meetings. There was the operating company and there was the holding company. I had given up my position as president of the company when we sold it in April of 1987. I was chairman of the board of the operating company and chairman of the board of the holding company. After a year or so, I gave the CEO, the president and the chairman and the operating company up. But I was chairman of the board of the holding company during this period of time, but that was just attending monthly or quarterly board meetings. Largely, I was 100% full-time employed as a Commissioner. Actually I became chairman of the corporation commission after I'd been here seven months. So that was my principal responsibility at that time. I was not involved in the management of the company.

JE: And so, was there the feeling that you got out at the right time? I mean then this bankruptcy comes along?

BA: Well, there's a little time period that you left out. We sold the company in April of 1987. Do you remember what happened to the stock market and all across the United States of America in the latter part of 1987? I think it fell like 25 percent. It had one of the biggest nosedives until this recent financial crisis. So, the timing was phenomenal. That's back to it's better to be lucky than smart. You could not have had that transaction occur eight months later. Hey, there's another thing I'll mention. Some people don't like to talk about these things. We in the United States hadn't changed the minimum wage in many, many years and then they changed the minimum wage. That had a very detrimental effect on the company. I wasn't in charge of the management of the company and the operations at that time so I'm not making an excuse for myself. I'm just telling you that for retail, that is people intensive...you know discount stores have self-service. If your approach to business is to give customer service and have free gift-wrapping and all kinds of services, and then the wage rates change, that was one factor.

JE: And then in 1997 Stage Doors Incorporated acquired C.R. Anthony's stores?

BA: Stage Door is a large operation and chain. It's headquartered out of Houston, Texas. It operated Stage. Oklahomans and people in this part of the country would also have known about Bell Brothers, that was a part of it, and Palais Royal. There was a least a couple of hundred Anthony's stores at that time that they operated under the name of Anthony's for awhile and then they changed all of those stores to the name Stage. Some of those stores are still open today.

JE: Did you miss the business?

BA: Well, I've thought a lot about that, or people have said, "How is it different being

a Corporation Commissioner with a duty and responsibility to all the citizens of Oklahoma?” You know your public utilities, your electric, your gas and telephones are just as fundamental to your life and your health and your existence as clothing is. But it’s a little different. I more carried the burden of sincerely caring about all of our employees and the retirement trust. By the way when we sold the company the value of the retirement trust over about an 18-month period of time, almost doubled. And I already told you how for some of the sales people, that was their only source of retirement savings. We had so much paternalism and so much concern for our employees that frankly it was a 24/7 obligation. I told that to the people at Citibank. I said, “You know probably the years prior to the sale I worked 50 Saturdays out of the year.” And they just couldn’t believe that. I mean when the company first started they worked 7 days a week. You got Sunday afternoon off. So people in the modern era don’t know much about work. I don’t know that I’ve answered your question, but the burden of responsibility of the company—there were so many people that had their life savings, they had their jobs, they had their communities. I felt a stronger burden of responsibility as president and chairman of the board of the Anthony’s Company than I probably would otherwise. Not that my public service doesn’t have an enormous responsibility, but it’s mainly not as intense. It’s as important, but it’s not so intense every day. But see, I can say that differently too. I have families call me, and their gas or electric is cut off because they can’t pay their bills. Or somebody’s on life support or this or that. So I get calls in this office where people depend on somebody to go to bat for them. And sometimes they call me out of desperation and by gosh sometimes I can help them, and sometimes I do it. I enjoy helping people and I know you didn’t ask me this question, but I’ll just tell you. I think that my experience with the Anthony Company and the stores is fundamentally important to how I approach my duties. I approach my duties as a public servant based on the retail model. You might say retail? What are you talking about? I mean one person at a time. Caring about people. You know you can get out a big book of data and figures and talk about the economy of Oklahoma and this and that. The grand totals are important but it’s all a matter of individual people and families and communities being added up together.

## **Chapter 17 - 6:18**

### **Future of Retail**

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**John Erling:** Here we are in April 2010, because of technology we’re working on a website.

Let’s say you’re listening to this in 2025, 2035 and 2045—the future of business as you may

see it. Talk about department stores and also box stores, or stand-alone business. How do you see that kind of business developing over time?

Bob Anthony: Well, I am maybe going to be accused of being old-fashioned. I think there are some fundamental principles. I don't think you're going to succeed in the long run unless you feel in your heart that people are smart. Customers are smart. They know what their needs are. And if you are dedicated to meeting their needs, and making them happy and serving them with honor and honesty, then I think people can succeed in business. Now I have studied and used some modern techniques, modern accounting and inventory replenishment and computerized electronic systems. And sure, efficiency is important. But you can be as efficient as you want. But if what you're selling people isn't what they need, and you aren't treating them right or servicing the product, then I don't think you're going to succeed.

JE: Internet business? What impact do you think that will have in the years to come? Does it have any impact on local business because we are buying items on the Internet?

BA: I think the Internet has a great benefit to consumers, even those who don't buy over the Internet. If you are shopping for a car, and most people don't get a new car, but let's say you were looking for a new car. I think to be an intelligent shopper you need to go and see the different kinds and see what the ratings are, and see what the features are, and see what options are offered, and the local availability and get a better feel for the pricing. The same thing with all gadgets and equipment and even things you would have in your kitchen. There's so much information. Consumers and shoppers are better off when they are informed. And I think the Internet is an information system. So, the Internet I think can be helpful to people. Of course it's not the only game in town, people can utilize it to the extent they want to.

JE: So technology becomes a negotiating tool?

BA: I think it does, it makes them better informed and better shoppers.

JE: So a student who's thinking he sees retail in his life—he really wants to be in retail, would you talk to that student now. It's got to be a very tough business. You work many hours as you've indicated. You have to like it.

BA: I think you do. And one thing that I would mention to be more specific about how my background has helped me in public service is this thing about e-mail and sending somebody text message or all these things—I think just some basic human communication skills are being lost. In retail, this is how I say it to people out of state, sometimes on the East Coast. I learned how to walk up to a stranger and say, "Howdy, can I help you?" If you've got to ask somebody, "Would you vote for me in the next election?" You've got to be comfortable at sticking out your hand and handing them a brochure and in a succinct manner tell them what you stand for, or why you think he would be the best one for the

office. It's really sad to me that I think some people just never developed the ability to come up to someone and have a brief conversation. Modern methods have their pros and cons.

JE: My life was not in retail, but it was, and I am not far from your age going to high school in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. It was Norby's department store and George Norby lived in Fergus Falls and I worked for him. And I can remember we would sit outside a competitor's store and we would count the customers coming in and out. And that was in the 1950s.

BA: Right.

JE: He was one of those that would say to me, and you probably said things to other people that worked for you and they can quote you to this day. He said, "John, if you don't have anything to do, you can always do the dusting." (Laughter)

BA: That's right. We had slogans like never walk to the back of the store empty-handed. There's always a box to be carried out. And I think it's a fun business. I would go to the state fair and see things that most other people are doing. Like just looking around and seeing how many people are carrying a straw handbag purses and other kind of handbag. Or what kind of shoes are they wearing? We had lots of private label programs and that helped us go from \$200 million to \$400 million in sales. There was something that I have people still ask me about today called Fastback shoes. Now, we had that as a private label program. And yes a lot of the production of those was done in the Far East. At one time we had just an enormous market share in some of those programs. I still have fun with the fact that we had a western shirt. You know in Oklahoma and Texas and places where we did business, people liked western shirts. Well, if you would buy it even from the big-name brands, they would have small, medium, large or extra large. Well I'm sorry, that just doesn't fit really well. What if you get the neck size and the sleeve size to give a person a good fit? See that's more of an inventory commitment. We did that. We had 180-threadcount fabric and made those shirts, and it had C.R. Anthony stitched in the collar. That was the best western shirt I think that's ever been around. I still have a couple of them. Anyway it's fun to be creative. I think you have to look for new ways to do things and to give people a better value. And hey, it's part of the American way to try and be more efficient and to try and serve the customer. A lot of people grow up and they think that the word "sales" is bad. Well most people are going to have to be in business of some sort, and sales are going to drive a part of it, and that's a part of participating in the modern economy.

JE: I don't think we've taken the retail business out of you. I think it's still there. It's hard for me to believe that maybe you wouldn't return to it someday. But you've probably sworn off of it.



BA: Well I actually, I hope this isn't a plug, but my youngest brother Tom Anthony currently is the chairman and president of Golf USA which is headquartered here in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. When he wanted to buy that company, I went with him. I was the largest shareholder and I was on the board for a period of time. I've stepped back from that now and I'm not on the board right now, but I still have a big interest in the company though. It's got more than 100 stores. As a matter of fact, I think it has about 120 or so and about 25 of them are international in places like Spain and Portugal and Sweden and South Korea. I mean it's just phenomenal. So I still have a little dabble with the retail business.

JE: So you can still talk retail with your family?

BA: That's right.

## Chapter 18 - 4:32

### How Much Will It Cost?

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**John Erling:** So finally then as a Corporation Commissioner again today in April 2010, what are a few major issues that you are facing as a Corporation Commissioner?

**Bob Anthony:** I think that first of all it is so rapidly changing. There are going to be some issues that impact consumers and their pocketbook enormously. I've been here 21 years. You could go back 10 and 15 years ago and I was fighting, and fighting hard, for some things called refunds and rate reductions. And we achieved some that were even measured in tens and hundreds of million dollars. And people couldn't believe it. I think my business background helped me in that regard. And if I can say this not so modestly, I'll bet I'm the first Commissioner in the history of the state of Oklahoma that was the CEO and president of a company that had hundreds of millions of dollars of revenues. And so to come and regulate companies that receive hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues gave me an ability to see things that other people wouldn't necessarily have seen. And it gave me a comfort level so that people couldn't blow smoke when I think others could be easily deceived. Now, to try and answer your question-today there is probably more desire to have government policymaking at a national level shoved down people's throats because people think that's the thing to do. Something called a climate policy. The commitment that carbon and carbon dioxide's responsible for global warming and we're going to spend huge sums of money-all these debates in these programs I go to-I'm the one that holds up my hand and says, "How much is that going to cost?" You know let's say that you wanted to achieve the carbon reduction that people are seeing by government mandate and what if it's going to cost 2% of the gross national product of the United States of America? Or 3% or 4%? How many of the worst diseases in the world could you

cure for that kind of money? You start having people's electric bills go up 20 or 30 or \$40 a month to do some of the things that they are talking about. Somebody needs to ask some serious questions. Now, not quite as dramatic as that, there's things called energy efficiency and energy conservation. And all of these government programs with rebates and incentives to buy a lot more expensive air-conditioners. And the government rebate program that all of us are going to pay for is going to give you an extra thousand dollars John, so that instead of the \$6,000 air conditioner, you can get a \$7,000 air conditioner and have more efficiency. Well, those are programs with a big price tag. And it's amazing that the first few years anyway you're going to pay more so that you can save electricity. What? If you're going to tell people that they're going to have a new program that's going to have them consume less, they're going to think their bill should go down, not go up. And so I am watching some of these things. To pay for and new ultra super critical coal-fired plant that was a \$2 billion proposal in Oklahoma is a major commitment. But coal is a lot cheaper of a few old than some of the alternative fuels. I would admit that my orientation and my starting point is what's cheapest for the consumers' bill? Whereas, a lot of people don't start with that, they say I have an environmental objective, I have a national priority, and were not going to use this fuel. There is getting to be a war among fuels and it's being conducted just like a negative political campaign. In the last six months before the presidential election there were people making up horror stories about things like hydraulic fracturing which is essential to horizontal drilling and drilling for shale gas in Oklahoma. Some of these things have no basis in fact and so forth. So I'm not so sure that my challenge isn't to ask tough questions before we commit enormous sums of other people's money. And by other people I'm talking about consumers. Those are the things that strike me right now. I'll make it very simple. We just need to ask how much is it going to cost? We've got wind power resources all over western Oklahoma near the Panhandle and so forth. How much are the transmission lines going to cost to get all of that over to Tennessee or Alabama where the wind doesn't blow? Because you adopt a national portfolio or standard, a renewable standard, that's what they're going to have to do. I'll consider anything. I just want somebody to tell us how much it's going to cost before we commit ourselves.

## **Chapter 19 - 7:25**

### **Elected or Appointed?**

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**John Erling:** And we won't continue this conversation very long because my mission was to come here and talk about C.R. Anthony. But, you talk about wind and fuel. We have wind-

energy. We are rich in coal and natural gas and oil. A lot of states wish they had that, so can this all work together? It seems like there is that campaign that one is better than the other. How do you see that working out?

**Bob Anthony:** I think that you are a very intelligent person. And actually yes, Oklahoma has a diverse resource base. Respectfully I will suggest that you left one of them out. We do have some coal resources. We do have oil and we have wind and we have solar. There is one resource that I think is going to go to the top of the list as the next couple of decades ago by and that's water. Now, you look west of the Mississippi River and you'll see some enormous successful cities like Denver, Phoenix and Las Vegas. Now go examine what their water availability is. We don't always think of Oklahoma as the most plentiful place in the world for water, but eastern Oklahoma is not doing so badly. We do have some water resources and I think that that combined with the energy resources that we have just mentioned is going to put Oklahoma in a very favorable position. I was president of MARC the Mid America Regulatory Conference that includes the states from the Dakotas all the way over to Ohio down through Texas and Oklahoma. It's comprised of 15 states. We had a conference in Oklahoma City in 2008. One of the featured topics we covered was the energy-water nexus. You know, why don't they sell water towers at three o'clock in the morning when the electricity can be cheaper? It's called energy efficiency. We need to do that. And then there is one step even to go further than that. And I know that Bama Pies and others have these concerns as lots of people in Oklahoma do. You need to talk about the energy-water-food nexus. We can't afford to use corn to make ethanol and drive the price of basic food supplies up. Especially when ethanol in my opinion is almost a breakeven proposition on how many BTUs you put in, to get one BTU of ethanol out. Now switchgrass is a much more efficient way, so I'm not opposed to every form of ethanol. But we need to think of the energy-water-food nexus. And if you do it, I think you could invest in Oklahoma for a solid future because we're going to be very favorably positioned.

JE: Okay, just one other thing comes to mind. You talked about the position of Corporation Commissioner, we vote on them as opposed to being appointed by the governor. It's obvious that with your background you are eminently qualified for this job, and the voters got it right.

BA: Well you're very kind and you have been on the radio through the years a few times too and I appreciate it.

JE: Do you think that this position should be left to the voters? Or should this position be one that's appointed by the governor?

BA: I've thought about this question a great, great deal. And the answer is yes. I think it ought to be left in Oklahoma the way it is, as an election of the people. It's for a little bit of a

peculiar reason. Try this on for size. Electing commissioners by a statewide vote is less political than the governor appointing the person. Because the governor gets to go to a smoke-filled room behind closed doors surrounded by the people with the strongest special interest, the people who are regulated to influence him. And you don't have to assess this only by theory. All you have to do is open up the annual report that comes out every year on the Corporation Commission and look at the list of all the names of the people who have ever served as commissioner. Because about one third of them, 25% to one third started by appointment by the governor. Because somebody died in office, or they resigned. And what characterizes those appointments? There are people that ran for Congress and lost in the governor of the same party had to lift them up and put them on both feet to do them a political favor, whether they were qualified or committed to the public interest, I think was not the first consideration. You look at some of the appointments that have been made, and I would like to argue with you as to whether the other theory is all it's been made up to be. Now the election system isn't the greatest either, and we've let the voters make some big mistakes in the past. And then again, maybe that's too bad. Voters need to rise to the occasion and be well informed and ask tough questions during campaigns. But at least in a campaign there's a chance that you might get someone who's committed to honest public service.

JE: Well, I want to thank you for sharing this time and the couple of hours that we visited primarily about C.R. Anthony. So many people have such great memories and it's got to make you feel good that you can walk the streets with pride and knowing that the Anthony name still stands strong today started by Charles Ross Anthony.

BA: Well, I am proud of it. You know when I ran for this office the first time, I was the first Republican elected since the Hoover landslide of 1928. There had not been a Republican elected to the Corporation commission since 1928. That's 60 years. And if you did what is called the generic ballot test. Like whom would you vote for? Whatever the office is—a Democrat or the Republican the generic ballot test in November of 1988 favored Democrats by 15 percentage points. So why did people vote for Republican Bob Anthony on the ballot when the odds went the other way? And I think the reason is and this is a little unscientific. One out of 10 registered voters, either that person personally had worked for Anthony's as a teenager or an immediate member of their family had. And so, being a Democrat or being a Republican I guess that's important to a lot of people. But, having somebody who has direct knowledge of your family, because they didn't have so much of a direct knowledge of me, personally. I'm not taking this as a personal thing. I think that helped them enormously. As decades have gone by, the Democrat Republican shift in Oklahoma has occurred somewhat. But I attribute that to the store managers, the store employees and the reputation for serving customers with honesty as virtually the

entirety of how I got a start in this business. I was able to have a good life and to earn a lot of money and to have a success, and so I could enter public service without a strong obligation to anyone. And they might say well, "Who is your biggest contributor Bob Anthony?" And I will say, "Me, personally." Now my wife doesn't necessarily think that that's the best way to finance the campaign. Anyway, I attribute a lot of what I am able to do in public service to the reputation that our store managers in all of the communities we were located in were able to achieve through the years. I've been accused of a lot of things. I really have been. But nobody's accused me of carrying the water for any of the big special interests or big companies that get regulated. Because my job is to look out after the public interest and I think I ought to resign just as soon as I'm not able to do that with honesty.

JE: Well very good. Thanks so much Bob.

BA: You're welcome and thank you.

## Chapter 20 - 0:29

### Conclusion

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**John Erling:** You have just heard Bob Anthony tell the story of his grandfather Charles Ross Anthony and the growth of Oklahoma's C.R. Anthony's stores. In 1997 Stage Doors Incorporated acquired C.R. Anthony's. For more information, please visit our "For Further Reading" section. The generous support of our underwriters, which are listed under our "Sponsors" section make these oral history stories possible on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).