

## Chapter 1 – ?

### Introduction

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**John Erling:** Ron Norick was the Mayor of Oklahoma City from April 1987 to April 1998. During his term in office he oversaw the original Metropolitan Area Projects plan known as MAPS. The plan financed improvements for various Oklahoma City owned facilities, and it is credited with the beginning of a brighter future for Oklahoma City and the surrounding area. April 19th, 1995, the Oklahoma City Bombing date, was also on his watch. And he and others led the City through those trying days by providing immediate leadership and securing federal dollars for rebuilding. For students who are interested in government as a future you will learn from Mayor Norick's role in revitalizing downtown Oklahoma City, and his leadership in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City Bombing. The interview you are about to hear was recorded in his office July 28th, 2009 and heard on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

## Chapter 2 – 1:42

### Norick Family Comes to Oklahoma

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**John Erling:** Today is July 28th, 2009. My name is John Erling.

**Ron Norick:** My name is Ronald J. Norick, everybody calls me Ron. I was born in Oklahoma City August 5th, 1941. I'm 67 years old and I went to public school in Oklahoma City. I went to Cleveland Grade School, Taft Junior High, Northwest Classen High School and graduated from Oklahoma City University with a degree in business management. So I've been educated the whole time here in Oklahoma City.

JE: Your parents' names?

RN: James H. Norick and he was a two-term Mayor of Oklahoma City and a one-term City Councilman. And my Mother was Madeline Norick and her maiden name was Madeline

King, and they both were raised in Oklahoma City. My Granddad who was Henry Norick came to Oklahoma when he was somewhere around 10 years old, and moved to Henryetta, Oklahoma from Indiana. So basically we've been here for...through my generation three, and there's two generations past me, so there's five generations of Norick here right now.

JE: So why did your Grandfather come to Oklahoma?

RN: You know I really don't know. I'd like to know that story someday. But they ended up coming down here and we didn't have any ties with the family, other than just the family that came down. So it was some time prior to statehood, so I'm sure it had something to do with the Land Run, or the availability of land or just wanting a new beginning. But he was with a very young family and they came to Henryetta and then he ended up coming in to Oklahoma City and he and his Brother, his brother is named Lon, they started a printing company here in Oklahoma City in 1910 and Granddad was like 16 years old when he did that, 16.

JE: Wow.

RN: Or 17, a very young man for going into business with his brother.

### **Chapter 3 – 4:43**

#### **Norick Brothers**

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John Erling: So it was Norick Brothers Incorporated back in 1910 and tell us what they did.

Ron Norick: Well, back then they were just a printer like you would think in Oklahoma City there were in the upstairs of a two-story building on California Street which is now I believe called Sheridan. Right in downtown Oklahoma City, in fact it was above a livery stable, where they did horseshoeing and those sort of things. And they started out like probably a lot of printers in that day would be printing handbills or maybe some stationery or business cards. I know I've heard him tell me the stories many times cause I was fortunate to get to work with him for about 20 years before he passed away. They would go out and get the money for a job, let's say they wanted to print up some hand bills advertising horseshoeing services or groceries or whatever it might be. Get the money first, they would go and then buy the paper, go print up whatever the item was and go deliver it back to the customer so it was money first in that case. They ended up going broke twice. Put all of their equipment in the pawn shop, or hocked their equipment twice. Each time they would go to work for Oklahoma Publishing Company as typesetters, back setting type for the newspapers and when they'd gather up enough money again to start, they'd go get their equipment out of hock and start again. And

this was from 1910 to about 1917, and somewhere in that timeframe, my Granddad was in his early 20s, he got involved in the car dealership business with a Ford dealership in Wanoka, Oklahoma. I think he ended up going to the 8th grade, so he wasn't an educated man, other than just street-educated. He developed a double-entry accounting system for the automotive industry. In which he, after being with this dealership for some time, and in conjunction with the printing business, (he) figured out that nobody had a consistent way of doing the books in the automotive market. So he developed a double-entry accounting system. That's general journal, general ledger, and a financial statement and got Ford Motor Company to endorse the concept. Ford Motor Company endorsed the concept of a standardized system. And so he made a mailing to the dealers that were in Oklahoma, I'm not sure how many, but a few little towns had Ford dealerships, that business grew. Well, at that point then they never had to hock their business again. They'd made a mailing out, I think he said somewhere around 135 potential customers, and they started getting these orders in, cause these were standard forms. He could print you know maybe 1,000 of them and each dealer would want 25, so he could supply that and that became a standard system. And I worked in the business for, oh I guess 30 years myself, 35. We ended up developing accounting systems for all of the industries. General Motors, Chrysler, Ford, you name it. We've done all of them and that's what we did. We were a very specialized printing company, headquartered in Oklahoma City with plants in North Carolina and Las Vegas and sales people all over the country and then representatives in Detroit because that's where all the accounting decisions were made. But if you go into a dealer today, you go into a Chevrolet dealer or a Toyota dealer, or Honda, it doesn't make a difference what you go in, they all have the same set or chart of accounts for all of their particular network. And each year as they add a car or reduce a car or whatever, they'll use the same chart of accounts and that's how they compare dealers like peer groups. So they'll know that if you're the same size of a dealer in Oregon and one in Texas and one in Kansas and wherever. How are you doing in your peer group compared to dealers your size and economic basis and that's how they do that. And so that's where Norick Brothers really took off. But a lot of people have thought that me and my Dad we were brothers, but were not obviously, but it was my Granddad and his brother so it goes back a long ways.

JE: And the nation has no idea that that concept started with Henry your Grandfather who at the age of 17 or 18 by that time maybe? Nineteen?

RN: Yeah, he had to be. Oh he was probably early 20s. There's pieces in our family history that we can read about this but I would have just loved anything if somebody could have got to him prior to his death and really gotten all this down on paper. Because it had to be an interesting story, on really how all that concept worked and how we really

developed it. But he obviously was thinking for the future and he built a wonderful business that supported a lot of families. Not only our family, but lots of families who worked for us for generations.

JE: How old was he when he died?

RN: He was 79 when he died.

JE: He was here all that time in Oklahoma City?

RN: Yes, he was here in Oklahoma City. He died May Day 1973.

## Chapter 4 – 2:09

### Norick Brothers Sold

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**John Erling:** But then as you alluded to, you were President of the Company for a number of years.

**Ron Norick:** Let's see we sold it in 1992. Mainly the industry got where it was so automated and computers and all that. In fact we were one of the original pioneer research companies for General Motors for doing electronic transmission of data. And so we developed that with companies like IBM and Reynolds and Reynolds and Univac and a number of those big companies back there and it became pretty apparent, as you know like today, you don't see many forms anymore, like business forms, they spit out of a computer, well that kind of eliminated our business and so we could see that coming in 1992 but I was President for about 9 years, but started working in the plant when I was about 16 in high school. And then I worked all the way through and I've done every job you could do in that business.

JE: So you kind of knew early on that you were going to work in that company.

RN: Oh, I knew. Oh, I knew. I loved it. Loved it.

JE: Your degree was it in business?

RN: My

degree was in business, I ended up writing my senior thesis on the 1004 Univac computer which is an old punch-card system (computer) with wires you plugged in that I did all the programming, set up our first electronic system at our company back in the mid '60s. And then just worked all the way up through the company. And then I didn't really take over until the '80s so I spent 20 years. So I wasn't just the Founders sons, you know I earned it so I had a lot of respect for the people cause I did it all and enjoyed doing every bit of it.

JE: And so then you sold it to Reynolds & Reynolds out of Dayton, Ohio?

RN: Out of Dayton, Ohio and they're a very fine company. They were our major competitor and they're still around today. They've been taken private but they're basically the leader

today in the automotive industry as far as the electronic accounting systems and forms and everything, really a good company.

JE: Today, you have Norick Investment Company?

RN: Right.

JE: And real estate is it and-?

RN: We do some real estate, stock market, do a little oil and gas, just a variety of things, we don't have any operating companies. The closest thing I've come to operating maybe is the River Trust or something like that but I basically manage the assets of the family and enjoy doing that, and they want me to keep doing it so I keep doing it and I enjoy doing it.

JE: Sure. Yeah.

## Chapter 5 – 4:25

### Considering Run for Mayor

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**John Erling:** In 1987 you were elected Mayor, let's talk the lead up to that. Had you involved yourself in a civic way, or had you thoughts of it? Did people recruit you? How was it that you came to running for the Mayor of Oklahoma City?

**Ron Norick:** Well, as mentioned a little earlier, my Dad was Mayor two terms, '59-'63. I was at OCU at the time. He was defeated in that election by Jack Wilks who was the President of OCU so that was an interesting deal. I'm a Senior at the school and he was running against the wishes of the Methodist Bishop and anyway, he defeated my Dad. Well, my Dad was out of office four years and he didn't want to go out defeated so he turned around and ran again in '67 and won reelection again very handily and served one more term. During that time I was working at the company. During the time he was in the, what I call the political arena and I really don't call the Mayor's Office a political arena, it's more of a public service arena in Oklahoma City and then he was also a Councilman in the mid-'50s when I would have been in Junior High. During that time I had no desire to do anything in the political world. I knew how much time it took and I was busy trying to finish my education and work and feed myself and raise a family and kind of do all those sort of things. I was getting involved in civic things. I did enjoy that. I was very active with the Jaycees. I ended up being the President for a couple of years. Then I got involved with the Chamber of Commerce and All Sports Association and some of those. Volunteered and worked and I enjoyed doing that. And my Dad, like I say he got out of office, his last term was '71 so for sixteen years there wasn't any family involvement as far as holding an office. I mean, he and my Mother were very active civically and socially and supported a number of functions and always were very visible in the community.

And in '86, actually in the fall of '86 I had some people come to me and ask me if I would consider running for Councilman of Ward 8, that's northwest Oklahoma City where I live. And I said, "Well, I hadn't even thought about it." I mean, it kind of intrigued me a little bit because my business was going good, Norick Brothers. I had the time. I had been President of Jaycees, of our Country Club, you know I'd done a number of things where I'd had somewhat leadership positions and was always comfortable in that position. And a couple of people came to me and asked me about running. And I don't know, I mean, think about it, why so and so we don't think is going to run and so that seat's going to be open and so forth. And so I kind of thought about this, and this is like in the fall and the election is—you've got to file the next February, so we're only talking about 4 or 5 or 6 months. So it wasn't like a big long time. It became pretty apparent that the Mayor was not going to run. That was Andy Coats, his first term, and he just for whatever reason it became apparent that he wasn't going to run. So as I was thinking about that, they were still kind of pressing me a little bit about what are you going to do and I said, "Well I think we ought to run for Mayor if we're going to run, and not for Councilperson." Which I think that probably caught them a little off guard. And I said, "You know if we're going to run, let's, let's run." And you know let's just don't run for Council I remember telling them, "If I'm going to get beat, let's get beat for the top job and not one of the other jobs." I remember calling my Mom and Dad like at 7 in the morning. I said, "Mom and Dad I need to come talk to you." Well, as a parent, anytime your kids call at 6:30 or 7 in the morning and they say they need to come talk to you, it is never good.

JE: Right.

RN: And when that phone rings late at night it is not good.

JE: That's right.

RN: So, I get there and they're both sitting in the living room with their robes on, probably panic stricken about whatever I was going to tell them. And I sat down and told them that I was considering running for Mayor and what did they think about it and it seemed like forever there was just silence. And finally my Dad said, "Why in the world would you ever want to do that?" So then I said, "Well, I think I would like to do it and I saw you do it for your years and you seemed to enjoy it." And he says, "Well if that's what you want to do you know we'll support you." And sure enough of course they did. I need to ask him sometime if he still remembers after I left what did he and my Mom say. (Laughter)

JE: Yes. Right.

RN: You know, what was their reaction.

JE: Right.

RN: He was very helpful.

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**Chapter 6 – 6:14****Visiting E.K. Gaylord**

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**Ron Norick:** My Dad is a very low-key kind of guy. He's not going to interfere, not going to push. And he let me do my job at the company. He never ever interfered with what I did I mean he trusted me 100 percent on everything I did and I look back on it and I don't think I'd have trusted a 25 or 30 year old kid to make some of the decisions that I did. But that's the only way you learn. You've just got to learn making decisions. So we put the campaign committee together and ran a very spirited campaign and-

**John Erling:** And whom did you run against?

RN: Well, there were actually 7 candidates. Pete White was the major candidate, who was a sitting City Councilman at the time. He's back on the City Council again right now as we speak. I ran against Pete and I was fortunate enough to win in the primary. I got, I think 50.4% out of 7 candidates so I didn't have to have a runoff. And I was elated not to have to have a runoff just because of another 3 weeks of campaigning but mainly 3 weeks of raising money again that's basically what a candidate does, he's got to go try to figure out how to raise money. Back then, our campaign was like \$125,000, I mean it's nothing compared to what it is today.

JE: Let me say again that was in 1987.

RN: Right.

JE: Out of the primary you said, it's not a partisan?

RN: No, it's not a partisan, which I think is very fortunate here. It's nonpartisan. I had Republicans, Democrats, I didn't even know what they were. I didn't really care. I ran as a businessman. I didn't run with any social agenda or any political ties. I think I might have had some people ask me what I was, which was a Republican, but I don't think it really made any difference. And that was the nice thing about serving too, the Council didn't have to start out with this stigma that I'm either a Democrat or I'm a Republican. I'm either conservative or I'm liberal. Everybody had their own views but at least you could vote more your conscience versus having to vote the party.

JE: Yeah.

RN: And I think that's important.

JE: And the newspaper, The Oklahoman is very influential as has been to this day in Oklahoma City, did they endorse you at the beginning?

RN: They did endorse me. Kind of an interesting story there. When I decided to run, my secretary for my Dad at the time at the printing company was a lady by the name of Glenda Phillips. Glenda was also his secretary when he was the Mayor, not at the Mayor's Office, but at the business. But she was very involved with what was going on at City Hall

because the two secretaries had to communicate and keep schedules and all of that. And she was very active in his campaigns. Well I immediately got her to help me on my campaign. I recruited her and of course she loved to do it. One of the first things she said after we announced that we were going to run and we did all that she said, "Well you need to see Mr. Gaylord." I said, "Okay, how do I do that." And she says, "Let me make a call." So she got on the phone and that afternoon I'm going to see Mr. Gaylord. And that's not an easy deal to do. Thellis Clark was Mr. Gaylord's secretary and she'd been with him for probably 40 years. And I go down to see him, and she escorts me in to his office. He's very polite, this is down on 4th and Broadway, and we shake hands and sit down. And he says, "Well, you want to be Mayor huh?" I said, "Well, yes sir I think I'd like to do it." He said, "Why?" I'm just green as a gourd on political (stuff) and everything but I'm trying to relate to him and prior to that we had talked about the printing business he knew we were obviously in the printing business cause my Granddad and his brother had worked at OPUBCO and he had typesetters at both places so we knew quite a bit about each other. I was kind of going into my spiel and I couldn't have been in there over three minutes and I kind of took a breath like to see if he had something to say and he stands up and says, "Well, good luck it's nice to see you." And shakes my hand and that's it. (Laughter) I mean I'm out the door. And I'm thinking Wow, maybe I did something wrong. I mean he seemed real nice so I go back and Glenda Phillips she wanted to know how I did and I said, "I don't know. I have no idea because it was so short." It wasn't too long after that, and I can't remember exactly when that meeting was but that meeting would have had to be probably in January, and the election's in March. Not too long after that, within maybe a month or less, I got a call from the editorial board and they wanted me to come down and visit with them so still they don't give you a clue what they're going to do. But usually if you get invited to the editorial board, that's usually good. So I went down and spent time with them and they were about like Mr. Gaylord. Not a lot of smiles and they'd look you right in the eye and when they're through they stand up and it's over. But they did end up endorsing me and they did it every election. The Gaylord family has always been very supportive of the Norick family and I get along with all of them. And they've been supportive on all the major issues that deal with Oklahoma City they really have been good supporters.

JE: Did Mr. Gaylord know your Father while he was Mayor?

RN: Oh yes, absolutely.

JE: He had a connection there and-

RN: And more so probably his Father and my Father because he was still the editor, E.L. Gaylord, he died when I guess he was 103 (years old) I think that was right. My Dad was in office then but he knew E.L., E.K. and E.L. I mean knew them all. But like I say, our two

companies were both in the printing business. We're printing business forms and those sort of things and they were printing newspapers, but we both had typesetters and those types of things. So we can some commonality there, we both used paper and ink, so we were kind of printers and they knew it.

JE: Do you remember if The Oklahoman had supported your Father while he was in office, if that was a bigger issue or not?

RN: I think they probably did one time. I think they did one time. And I'm going to guess that they didn't in the 1963 election because that's when the ARG put up a slate of candidates, called the Association for Responsible Government. They put up a slate of four Council people, the slate won. After one term of the slate, the citizens of Oklahoma City decided they didn't like slates. So the ARG, that's what it's called put up another slate four years later and all of them lost. That ended the ARG one time but I can't remember but I'm going to guess that they supported him initially in '59 and they probably supported him again in '67. But maybe not in '63, but I'm not positive on the '63.

## Chapter 7 – 4:34

### Norick Means Business

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**John Erling:** As you first ran wasn't your campaign slogan Norick means business? Norick means business and that made sense to a lot of people because of your business background.

**Ron Norick:** Right.

JE: And that must have played well for you.

RN: Yeah, my whole campaign spiel was I didn't have any agenda. I didn't have any preconceived notion of what I was going to do. I didn't know a lot about city government, probably no more than any other citizen except what my Dad taught to me but like I say he isn't the type of person that's going to come in and sit down and try to tell me how to do things. I did talk about business, I had built a business involved with my family I had built two plants. I'm the one that took the initiative one that, one in North Carolina, and one in Vegas, and used industrial revenue bonds through the state. The first industrial revenue bonds to ever be issued to a private company in North Carolina was issued to us in Shelby County and it was a new law they had passed and this would have been in 1976, 1976. So, I had experience in economic development not only in our own state, but two other states. We had 450 people working for us. I'd gone all over the country so I was used to dealing with people but I didn't know anything about the city or the budget or anything else. I just kind of got in like you do in campaigns you kind of get into the

campaign and get into the fever and the mode and everything that's going on and pretty soon you're elected and then you go, what do I do now?

JE: Right. (Laughter)

RN: It's kind of like that dog chasing that truck, you caught it, now what happens?

JE: I suppose there were that first term many issues there was a sales tax measure that was defeated.

RN: Let's see, there was one defeated in '88 just after I came in that had to do with a dedicated police and fire tax that we wanted to put through. Was it '88 is that the election you're talking about?

JE: I do not have the date on that but it was the fourth one that failed since 1983.

RN: We didn't have any elections pass as far as bond issues from '76 to '89 except for one minor bond issue. Everything else was defeated. So we had a period of about 13 years that we weren't getting anything passed as far as geo-bonds or anything like that. Of course like all other city budgets, struggling. Especially struggling here coming out of the oil bust and then the banking bust, Penn Square and all that in the early '80s. So one of the proposals we'd put forward was that we would do a dedicated police-fire tax. It was a three-quarter-cent tax to be dedicated to police and fire. And just prior to the vote, I mean within two or three days, the City Manager came out and said that if the citizens don't pass the tax, that he'll be laying off policemen and firemen, which was not true. Well, the tax got defeated. It wasn't too long after that that the City Manager got defeated. He was moved out. He presented his budget to the City and we rewrote it one night about 11 o'clock at night and he went his way and I was happy and he was happy. But that really was kind of the start of an end for him when he came out and made a statement that was totally untrue. We weren't going to lay off police and fire. We were basically going to use this money to hire new police and fire and new equipment and so forth.

JE: The newspaper, they were supportive of the bond issues or not?

RN: They've always been supportive of all of them.

JE: Okay.

RN: I don't recall 'cause I wasn't in office in the '70s and early '80s why they were defeated but I think obviously any time an election is defeated like a bond issue, or sales tax in our case, it's because the people don't understand what you're trying to ask them to do. I've found that the voters in Oklahoma City, if you put forth a realistic proposal, whatever it is, and explain it to them. And it needs to be simple, the ol' KISS, Keep It Simple Stupid, and that's for me and everybody else. People want to do good things. But if people don't understand a proposition, whatever it is they're going to vote no. And I don't blame them. If I don't understand what they're asking me to vote for on a ballot unless I've heard somebody talk about it, my tendency is to vote no myself, because I don't understand

it. So I think some of those propositions, they weren't promoted right, they weren't explained to the public right. So as a consequence they had about 12 or 13 years that no bond issues of any kind were being passed in Oklahoma City. Part of it was the economic time, and the oil bust and the banking bust you know people weren't in any moods to tax themselves. That's just something that you weren't going to do back then.

## Chapter 8 – 6:57

### Campaign for MAPS

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**John Erling:** Then in '91 you announced a bid for reelection and you obviously won by an overwhelming amount of votes, that had to make you feel good.

**Ron Norick:** Oh yeah. Once I got by the first election the rest of the elections were pretty easy. In fact, when we raised more than we needed we ended up refunding about 35% of the money back to people. I have people today that told me that they took their checks and framed them rather than cashed them they couldn't believe that anybody would ever give them back money but we did it in the two following elections. You never know who you're going to run against and you want to be prepared and we'd raised a little bit of money. I didn't go out and solicit I just was getting more people volunteering money. I wouldn't take over \$1,000. I think the law changed where I could take \$5,000. But I never took any more than \$1,000 from anybody, so.

**JE:** I'm sure there were many issues along the way but we come to 1993 and that's when MAPS, Metropolitan Area Projects was introduced. I guess you had several entities supporting their favorite project perhaps? Would that be true?

**RN:** Yeah that would be true. It really started about 2 or 3 years prior to that. I came into office in the spring, April of '87. Well the first thing you do is the budget has to be approved by the second week of June to submit to the State. So, six weeks to understand the budget. Well there wasn't any way I could understand the budget. As the Mayor, basically what I could do was just try to somehow follow in the Council meetings and make sure I didn't get too lost. But try to understand the budget itself. It's not meaning to be complicated but it's just complicated. I mean there are so many different entities and so forth with the City and they've all got their trusts and this sort of thing. And so as we're going through that process over a couple of years, not just that first one but a couple of years, I started asking the City Manger, I said, "Mr. City Manager, where is the money to take care of the public facilities that the City is responsible for, i.e., the convention facilities, the Music Hall, the baseball, the parks, all of these sort of things. Where's the money? If the roof collapses on the Sports Arena, or the Convention

Hall, or the Civic Center or the Music Hall, who fixes it? Where does the money come from? He said, "Well it's got to come from somewhere." I said, "Where?" I said, "We've got a general budget. How much does the general budget have extra?" He said, "Well, it doesn't have any." I said, "That's kind of what I thought. So we really don't anything right?" He said, "No. We don't have any reserve we don't have anything." And this is where my business background in the printing industry really came in. How helpful. It was really simple for me to compare it back to my printing business. I was dealing with having to buy printing equipment and having to build plants and having to equip those plants and printing equipment, you don't go down to the local print shop and buy a printing press. They're all custom made and usually take one to two years to produce. So I was used to having to plan out. I'm building a new plant, I've got to plan the land I've got to build all the things in the building. I've got to equip it. And that takes time, you don't do it in six months. It's usually a two or three year process by the time you get through with it. It's pretty easy for me to understand the City budget I said, "We've got to plan for this." Based on those original conversations, I said we have got to come up with a funding source. The only funding source that we really have is bond issues, sales tax and what money we get from the County off of the ad valorem tax. That's where our geobonds are paid for and so forth. We don't get money from the state, we don't get money from the Feds, and we've got to have a balanced budget every year. So based upon that we started thinking how are we going to do this? The first thing we've got to do, has really been since '76, where we hadn't passed any bond issues, are streets are deteriorating, our bridges are deteriorating, our parks are getting run down cause there's nothing good. I said, "We've got to have a long-term plan." So we developed a long-term plan and in '89 put together a bond issue for streets, bridges, the public stuff. And it was the first one that had even been proposed in a number of years, and it passed. It was \$127 million dollars. The largest bond issue that had ever been proposed in the City, and it passed. But I went out on selling it and the purpose. It really wasn't hard to sell once you can get in front of people, civic clubs or church groups. I talked to anybody, anybody that wanted to listen to me. And I'd say, "Folks, if you don't replace your roof once in awhile, or if you don't paint your house or fix your plumbing for 15 years, what do you think is going to happen to it? It's going to deteriorate isn't it? It's probably going to crumble around your ears. That's what's happening to our City. And the streets you drive on, you gripe about pot holes and fixing the streets, it's going to take money." So they passed that bond issue, pretty overwhelmingly. From that point on until this day, we have never turned down a bond issue. But again, we make it very specific what it's for and make sure we deliver on that and explain to them the need. I knew once we had started that bond issue process that we could take care of the infrastructure and now we had to go take care of these

buildings that we were responsible for. We being the City, that we provide services to the citizens of the City. And they expect to have those services and to be able to use those buildings and (have them be) be operational. So, I put together a study group and assigned out different pieces of it and asked people to put together some budgets on what it would cost to do certain things to come up with a plan. And then came up with the idea of a sales tax as a funding vehicle cause I did not want to use and still believe that the City shouldn't use its geo-bond capacity for anything other than infrastructure. I think that's what it ought to be used for. All the other things like the buildings and some of the fluff like you might want to call it but the quality of life issues, let's do that with a sales tax. One of the reasons that I like the idea of a sales tax is, we did a study, and it's probably still correct, or may even be higher now, but 32% of the sales tax was paid by people who didn't live here. So that meant, you come to Oklahoma City today and maybe you'll buy something before you leave and tourists coming back and forth. And then all the areas around the metropolitan area that are not in Oklahoma City, but come into Oklahoma City to work, they're depositing money. If we were just collecting property taxes we wouldn't get any of the benefit of their property taxes but sales taxes we do. So we just had to convince our legal counsel that I could use sales tax for that kind of endeavor and not just for the general fund. A specific sales tax targeted for specific projects. They finally agreed with me and allowed me to do that all on one ballot proposition. It was Yes or No.

## Chapter 9 – 6:00

### MAPS Project List

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**John Erling:** Maybe I can just say that for the record here and as people listen to this that in 1993 the one-cent sales tax went to build a new ballpark, indoor new sports arena and canal. develop the Canadian River and renovate the Myriad Convention Center, the Civic Center Music Hall and buildings at the state fairgrounds, does that say it?

**Ron Norick:** That says it.

JE: That had to pass Council approval so-

RN: Yes.

JE: How did that go?

RN: Let's see the vote was in December of '93 so sometime in mid-'92, so a year and a half ahead I put together a Committee consisting of myself, the City Manager, the County Treasurer, the Chairman of the County Board of Commissioners of Oklahoma County, the Oklahoma City Chamber President and the Oklahoma Chamber Paid Exec. Well,

it would actually be the Chairman who is non-paid and the President, who's paid, and then two at-large members. We started a study group and the Chamber of Commerce through their budget and not the City budget because I wanted this to be not open meetings. There was not a big enough group with any constituency, there was just me from the Council, so that didn't violate any of the open meetings laws. Oklahoma City Chamber funded the money to bring in basically a consultant and that was Rick Carl out of Florida, to help us kind of decide how we want to put this together and also be a little bit of a spokesman as we got toward the end of the project. My thinking was this would be a County-wide tax, because that's a lot bigger base and we could raise a lot more money in a shorter period of time. It didn't take me too long to figure out that having joint ownership of facilities between two government entities was not going to work. I'm not a good sharer or power you might say, so. (Laughter) And they understood and I politely said, "You guys aren't needed anymore." And so we pared it down and County didn't participate any more. We continued to meet and work through these projects and kept it pretty quiet. In fact, we kept it really quiet. I didn't want to read or hear about any of our brainstorming any or our crazy ideas until I was ready. And so that was the reason I didn't want to get it into a public venue. After about a year or so, probably in the spring of '93 about six or eight months prior to the election I then asked for a Council Committee. I put together the Committee, selected the members off the Council. I selected the Chairman as one that I knew was not in favor of it. I thought that this would be the best way to get her in favor of it, is to make her Chairman. That way, it's harder to really be against something that you're the Chairman of as opposed of you're not the Chairman and you can sit and throw little barbs all you want but being the Chairman you have to be a little more focused is what I've found. Anyway we did that and by that time we had kind of put together the list of potential projects, and they numbered more than what we ended up with because we didn't have enough money. During that initial time behind closed doors, Frankfurt-Short-Bruza which was an engineering firm here in town had volunteered their services to help us guesstimate and that's really what is was, guesstimate how much money we'd need for these various pieces. So we kind of had an idea of how much a new ballpark would cost and how much renovation/ We'd done some studies. The City had done some study on the Convention facility. And that was because we wanted to know why can't we get any downtown hotels going? The answer was, because you don't have a convention facility to support them. So it was kind of the chicken and the egg so we knew we had to go do something with the Convention facility. The City did commission a study by Coopers & Lybrand out of Dallas and they determined that we needed to do one of three things. So we had those in the pieces. Then I had talked to the Commissioner of the Triple A Baseball League, which was the

'89ers at the time. And (found out that) not just our stadium, but stadiums all over the country had five years to upgrade their facilities. And if they didn't upgrade them they would lose their franchise. Well, our facility had been built in '58 or '59 and it didn't even meet our own code, much less the code of the baseball (league) so we knew that we had to build a new facility. We didn't have any choice, or we were going to lose our team. I took all of those pieces and gave it to the Council Committee with some options on how they could maybe fund it. I said, "It could be a sales tax. It could be a bond issue." In other words I gave them some options. Let's have some public discussion. They'd had a number of meetings where the public could come and voice their opinion, and it still wasn't widely understood by the public but I knew that the only way that it would ever get passed by the public is that we would have to be unified on the Council. So we worked until I made sure that council vote would be 9-0. I couldn't have one negative vote. Even though we didn't have any planned opposition, you can probably figure that about 40% of the voting public is a "No" vote. So you are really fighting for that other 10% of the vote. You don't want to give them any more ammunition. And so, we did come out with a program and said on the ballot and so forth that it was a 9-0 vote-

JE: So was that a struggle or how long a period of time?

RN: Oh, it was probably three month, or four months, five months, something like that. 'Cause we had to put it on the ballot I think in October and then the ballot was December. Once we knew that we were going to do this in the summer, then the Chamber headed up the fundraising because that's something the City can't do. I went out and helped on the fundraising. I could do that, but City employees can't do it. But since I'm an elected official, sure I can help go out and help do that, and I did that. I had speaker bureau and you know all the things that you do. I had campaign material. It wouldn't have passed without the support of the Chamber and the newspaper and all that. It was a tough vote as it was. But I tried to really work with the Council as we were working through this process, and I made sure they understood what we were trying to do, and made sure they had their input on projects that they liked. They knew we had to do something with the City too. They knew the City was in trouble.

## **Chapter 10 – 2:38**

### **City Passes Tax for United Airlines**

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**John Erling:** Wasn't it along about that time that the United Airlines Maintenance facility was looking at Oklahoma City, and through whatever, they went to Indianapolis.

**Ron Norick:** Yes.

JE: So there were lessons learned from that. Did you use that as-

RN: Oh yeah, because that's really where I guess you could say we tested the concept of the one-cent sales tax. I think it was in '91 maybe when a lot of cities were you know going after this United deal. I know Tulsa was and Oklahoma City and there must have been 100 cities and we got down to the final three cities, which was Louisville, Indianapolis and Oklahoma City. Almost like a bidding frenzy, it was just almost ridiculous. But we had land and all the great things that you've got here in Oklahoma (City). We've got a great airport. We would give them the land we had Trusts that could build the buildings and then they'd lease the buildings and all this. We thought, well the plumb would be if we did a sales tax, which they never heard of. And I told them what we were going to do, and they said, "Yeah that would be great." And I don't think they had any clue that we'd pass it. Well, we'd put a sales tax, three-year, one-cent, to help pay for the facilities. We wouldn't give it to United. It would go in bricks and mortar and facilities that would be owned by the Airport Trust. Well it passed, in about the mid-50s with 53, 54, or 55% of the vote, it passed. I remember getting a hold of United that night. And Rick Street was the Head of United Operations for the Airlines and told him it passed and he was shocked. I mean here's a city that's willing to tax themselves for somebody else. As it turned out, they ended up going to Indianapolis. A few years later now, those buildings are empty except for a few people up there. The city of Indianapolis and the state of Indiana has got some major debt problems and it was a billion dollars and going to furnish 5,000 jobs and all this really turned out to be a disaster. People wouldn't be liking me right now had we gotten that United deal, you know at the time it looked great, but it would have been a real disaster.

JE: But you probably picked up the phone as they made the announcement in Indianapolis to say, "What happened here?"

RN: Well, they actually called me, I didn't have to pick up the phone.

JE: Okay.

RN: They actually called me. In fact I remember it was on a Wednesday afternoon and I was playing golf and I got a call from the CEO and he said, "Mayor I just want to call you and tell you how good your proposal was." And when he said that, I knew we had lost. He didn't say, "Mayor, we're coming to Oklahoma City." I knew right then that we had lost, and we were just devastated. The City and the Chamber of Commerce, we had spent a lot of time on that and it took us a while to really kind of regroup.

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**Chapter 11 – 5:56****Mr. Gaylord Questions Projects**

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**Ron Norick:** Right after that process, another thing that helped me develop MAPS is that I went to Indianapolis by myself. My son was a race-car driver, and we ran up to Indianapolis. And I had a rental car and I went to downtown Indianapolis about Noon one day I had a break. I drove around downtown and I said shoot I know why they got that United plan. It was obvious to me. I know exactly why United out it here rather than Oklahoma City. I mean this is a live city, I mean there's people on the streets, and there were restaurants and hotels and a Convention facility and all this stuff. It got to be a quality of life issue if you were the CEO of United Airlines and you wanted to have your people work in Oklahoma City or Indianapolis, it was a hands- down decision.

**John Erling:** Major League sports too at the time.

RN: Oh, it had everything. It had Major League Sports and they'd have some big NCAA big sporting events and the area was live. I mean it was really neat. That's really what woke me up, was when I went up there. It didn't take but about 30 minutes driving downtown and I said, "Wow, now I've got it, now I've got it."

JE: Yeah. So, to help sell MAPS, you undoubtedly told that story-

RN: Oh yeah.

JE: And it added energy to your message. And it obviously got through to your citizens.

RN: Yeah, the thing, probably the two things that got through to them. One was, I made it as simple as I could and I said that how we're going to pay for this is going to be a limited sales tax. It's just like you buy a car. You buy a car and you go do a 3-year note on it and you pay it off and you've got your car. We're going to do the same thing here, except it's going to be 5 years. It's like paying off your house. We're going to do it and it's going to have a sunset. This tax is going off by law. And it said in the ballot that it sun sets period. When I first started giving speeches and talking about it, people wanted to talk about projects. They wanted to talk. They'd say for instance, "Well, Mr. Gaylord owns the baseball team, he's got more money let him build the ballpark." Or "I don't care about ballet and I don't want to go to the ballet." And I don't like the symphony and the river, all you've got to do it mow the river." And I said, "Wait a minute, this isn't about each individual deal." And so from then on, I really emphasized this is about the whole. This is not about each piece. I said, "I can't pick and choose out of these 9 projects which ones I want you to pass or not pass." And if one passes and another one doesn't, I don't think it works. The pieces don't work. It's all got to be together. If we want to build a downtown convention business with hotels and we don't want to do the convention facility or we vote it down, we don't get those hotels or the ballpark, we're going to lose the team. I

said, "It's about the whole." I said, "It's not about you and I, it's about our kids." This is about building for the future. People would say, "I don't go downtown, it's not safe. I don't like downtown." I said, "That's fine, but do you think that your kids or grandkids might like to go downtown some day and have a nice place to go?" "Well, yeah, I think maybe they might." And that's what really did it, when I started hitting them on their kids and grandkids. Because I know who the voters are. The voters are the older population of any city, that's where your voters are. It's not the young people. And the seniors get out and vote like crazy as we all know. I am one now. (Laughter) Of course, I've always voted but I really vote now too. But you start talking about kids and grandkids. That and we made it as simple as we can. It was a very simple ballot. It was 5 years, 1-cent, we're going to pay for it and we're going to do it. Whether they really believed that we could do it...I mean they believed me that yeah it would be 5 years, 1-cent, and this is it but I'm not convinced you can build all of these projects. That was kind of the next big battle that we had to go through.

JE: Here we have The Oklahoman and their day-before editorial, "Tuesday voters should support the MAPS plan securing a brighter future for Oklahoma City and the surrounding area." And they made no bones about it that that should be supported and-

RN: Yeah and the first time I went to visit with Ed Gaylord on MAPS before I even took it to the Council Committee, cause I need to kind of see what his temperament was going to be. I went to see him by myself one day and sat down with him. And by this time he'd give me more than two minutes, I could stay a little longer. (Laughter) I explained what I wanted to do. That I wanted to do the ballpark, and the Canal, and all of these things, and I told him how I wanted to fund it, and it was just he and I just like you and I. And he looked at me and he said, "That's the craziest thing I've ever heard of."

JE: And your heart sank.

RN: Yeah, and so I'm just...and so now I'm trying to figure out how to recoup, you know? (Laughter) So I said, "Well, I don't think it is, I think it..." Well, I'm stammering and probably no telling. And he said, "Well, good luck to you." You know, so I get up and leave and see I've got a little work to do. And I really knew it then. I'd know he'd be a supporter cause he always supports what is for the betterment of Oklahoma City. He's always done a great job and so I just kept working on him. And I knew he really wanted the ballpark. Once he warmed up to the idea, I knew he really wanted the ballpark at the state fairgrounds. I really wanted it downtown, because I just felt like we needed to get everything together to get some synergisms going downtown, which worked and that's where we needed it. But he fought me pretty hard and I said, "Mr. Gaylord, it's got to be downtown. I hate to tell you, but that's where it's got to be." And then the Canal he thought was the craziest thing in the world. I mean he thought that canal was just

nuts, and I'm sure a lot of people did. And that canal has turned out to be one of the best things we did I mean by far it was the cheapest thing we did. I think we spent \$12.3 million out of \$350 million on that canal and then we've spent since then about another \$5 million.

## Chapter 12 – 4:52

### Canal to Nowhere / MAPS Passes

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**John Erling:** As he was challenging you on those projects and you had to keep selling him, you still were not sure whether his paper was going to support this?

**Ron Norick:** No, I wasn't sure.

JE: So you knew that, well, maybe I'm antagonizing him here where the ballpark should be, and maybe...I don't know if you thought, if I give in to him...maybe he'll support it, did you-?

RN: Well, I just kept meeting with him and tried to keep him informed. I knew one thing if you keep people in the dark you're going to probably have problems. As much as I could I'd keep him informed and he knew that I didn't have any ulterior motives other than just trying to help the City. I mean I had a business that I was running and it was successful and...You know and I wasn't trying to run for Governor or Senator or anything I was just kind of doing my thing. I just kept after him, you know? After him is not the right word I just kept sharing information and kept talking to him. And then the Chamber was very supportive. So you know, he was very involved with the Chamber. And everybody was kind of starting to nibble away and as it got closer and closer, I knew he'd end up supporting it. I just didn't know if he would be really supportive, or lukewarm supportive and he turned out to be very, very supportive.

JE: But did he ever face-to-face say to you, "I will support this." Or did you begin to sense it through the newspaper?

RN: No, they don't ever tell you that. The paper never tells you that. It's kind of like the editorial board. They're not going to tell you, but, I'd met with the editorial board and then once I'd become Mayor then I'd met with them as they'd want different issues or if I had things that I felt like they needed to be abreast of, I'd request a meeting and of course I could always get it. As we're going through the process it became apparent that they were going to support it, you just don't know at what level they're going to support it. You know are they going to editorialize or are they just going to say "Vote Today" you know across the banner of the paper.

JE: Well, they came out obviously very strong.

RN: Oh they did. And we needed every bit of it.

JE: Because it passed by 54%.

RN: Yeah, yeah.

JE: So it was a squeaker?

RN: It was a squeaker. I remember the pollsters that night, like all pollsters they know what precincts to watch in voting and the vote was over at 7pm, and by 7:30pm they told me we won and well the TV hadn't even started reporting it yet. And it was a big deal for all of the TV stations and they were flashing it as quickly as they had results. They said you're going to win, you're going to win by 53 or 54%. I wasn't convinced until about 10 o'clock at night, cause it started out down, and then the vote... and they said that's okay don't worry. So it was about 3 hours of tension.

JE: Yes. Was part of your sell that maybe you could attract a Major Hockey League franchise?

RN: Not so much then. It was- we want to be a major league city. We didn't know really what that meant other than we just needed to upgrade where we were. If we ever had any chance of being major league, and I thought more likely it would be hockey back then, than the NBA. We're going to have to build a facility, and that was kind of in the times you go back and look at the early 90s and that's when a lot of the city's were building buildings and arenas and we didn't need something but we tried to spec in general so that either type franchise (would work) the floor was big enough to make ice, which it can make ice. Or you can have basketball, whatever you want and then it was later on that I got involved with Clay. Clay was very helpful.

JE: Clay Bennett you're talking about.

RN: Yeah, Clay Bennett was very helpful also with Mr. Gaylord. He was in charge at OPUBCO of all of their outside investments all of their real estate investments and developments, so of course back in the 80s and 90s so between Clay Bennett and myself we worked on Mr. Gaylord pretty good to get the support and over time and of course Clay and I have been really good friends ever since.

JE: So the NHL franchise was used to try to sell it later on?

RN: No.

JE: Not really.

RN: No it really wasn't. Later on, then we went after the NHL but it was not, no we didn't use that.

JE: The vote wasn't predicated on the possibility of that-

RN: No.

JE: So then it passed, but as you were trying to get the Council to approve of this, one of the Council member said that I have a problem with just a waterway in the heart of Bricktown that goes nowhere.

RN: Right.

JE: People look at what you have today and they think oh my that might have been easy. But you had to convince people like Beverly Hodges that there is a reason to have this.

RN: Yeah. They had to faith in what we were saying. And I think that probably some of them said let's just let the Mayor kind of hang himself. Let's let him build that canal that's going to go nowhere and let him build something else and then we'll kind of sit back in the weeds and then we'll tell you I told you so. Well it didn't happen, you know. And they've all become great supporters of it.

## Chapter 13 – 5:53

### Building of Bricktown

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**John Erling:** Was that the project that caused the most talk? They couldn't understand that one because everyone can understand the baseball, and maybe even the river, maybe they questioned and wondered...the North Canadian River

**Ron Norick:** The river, it's surprising. There were only two projects that in our initial polling that even came close to having enough public support and that was the river and the library. The ballpark was like 20%. The convention center was way down, the performing arts center was way down. The key was bundling them together and the sports people would stomach the performing arts people. Their not going to vote down their ballpark. And so it was one of those deals so everybody kind of stomached everybody and as it's turned out, everybody kind of likes everybody now. But it was probably the whole thing in concept that it wasn't any particular project, other than like I said well Gaylord ought to build the ballpark he's got the money and, you know those type of comments, but we could get over those pretty quick. Gaylord, he owns the ball team, but we own the facilities. The City needs to run that, the City owns the facilities and they can put any team in here that baseball leagues will allow.

JE: And, as a matter of fact in November of 1994, you just said basically what you said back then. It says, "Mayor Norick says that City must concentrate on the overall picture and not worry about little details at this stage of planning.

RN: Yeah, the first two or three years I was a little bit out by myself. People ask me, what would you do over? I don't think that I would do anything over, except I would probably not be so aggressive on my timing after the election saying when I thought we could get this started and get things done. We missed that probably by a couple of years, we missed the ballpark by a year. The reason is that when the bid came in it was \$5 million over and I said we can't do that because if we get to the end, and fund 8 projects and

the 9th one doesn't get funded, we'll never get another vote again to approve (a bond issue) because we didn't do what we said we were going to do. So we've got to redesign this ballpark. That meant delaying the ball team moving. They had already announced they were moving it 1997. Now they had to delay it til 1998. No project had opened yet because we were doing the infrastructure, we were doing the environmental issues, we were acquiring land, we were removing utilities. We were doing engineering studies that people can't see. Core samples, we were doing all of that stuff that you've got to do, that nobody could see. Well then we had a meeting at

Frankfurt-Short-Bruza and we made the decision and I said, "Folks, we're delaying it." We've got to re-bid this thing. Well, the Press is outside, they know we're having this big meeting. And I said, "We're going to delay the ballpark opening one year." Here it comes. You know. I knew they couldn't do it. The City can't build this and you know it just went on and on. And that's when I didn't have a lot of friends there for a while, I mean on the Council or anybody. Because they kind of wanted to disassociate with me and I said, "Just hold on, we're going to get it done, but we're going to get it done right." And so i think it was about six months later, or four months, we had a re-bid and redesigned it and made some changes and I remember I went to that bid opening. The first one I didn't go to, this one I went to and I could like feel myself sweating bullets. This bid better come in right, and it came in about \$1.5 million under, so we knew we were off and running then.

JE: Did you change any design to the building?

RN: Yeah we changed-

JE: So you added some things maybe?

RN: Took away some things, added some things but you just had to do some value engineering. We just had to do some stuff. Early on I know I ended up firing one of the architects, cause he kept trying to design a building like one that I told him I didn't want. I said, "I've gone to visit other buildings around the country, I know what I want." And he's say, "Well, I'm an architect and I designed Texas Stadium, and I know what's right." And I'd say, "Well, who's paying the bill?" I said, "We are and I don't need you anymore." So I ended that deal pretty quick. So in the long run, you're probably glad that you prolonged it?

RN: Absolutely.

JE: And it came out better.

RN: Oh, absolutely.

JE: And it came in with the same budget number that you originally had or?

RN: Yes.

JE: The same budget number?

RN: Yes. It ended up about \$1.5 million under and then we could go back and ad some of the

add-ons, you know that we had cut out. The day the ballpark opened, which I think it was April the 8th, I had been out of office two days. It was 1998. Two days after I left office we opened the ballpark. I threw out the first ball with Kirk Humphreys who was the new Mayor, and he's sitting there with me. And he said, "I don't know what I'm doing." And I said, "I didn't either 11 years ago, you'll figure it out." (Laughter) And once that ballpark opened people all of a sudden realized what this could be and then the canal opened a year later and there was another deal and right after that about every year some major project opened up.

JE: But there was that period of time where people couldn't see what was going on and maybe some even said the whole MAPS plan should be disbanded and unrest was going on.

RN: Oh yes, there was unrest. Taxes were being collected and I knew it was going fine and then I was giving speeches all the time anyway and I'd say, "Folks, trust me, we are getting this done, it's just slower than we want. It's just all of the environmental issues. We're building it. Bricktown is an old, rail yard, industrial oil field with all sorts of environmental issues, with a lot of remediation down in that area. And we had some property to acquire and a number of things like that. So, once we kind of got it all put together, then it was fine you know. But it was delayed a little bit. But we knew it was going to take some time to build buildings.

JE: So then, I think you've already said it, if you were to do anything over again

RN: I would have been not quite as optimistic.

JE: You would have immediately said, folks you're going to have to wait a year or two before you see anything open, or whatever.

RN: Yeah.

JE: But it was, everybody was caught up in the emotion at the time, so.

RN: And that was partly our fault too but you know we're also trying to sell the project.

## Chapter 14 – 4:47

### April 19, 1995

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**John Erling:** And then April 19th, 1995 hit and that obviously has become known as the Oklahoma City Bombing. Talk to us about that morning and where you were when you heard the story or...

**Ron Norick:** That happened on Wednesday morning at 9:02 April 19th. And that was the morning of the Annual Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, which was held inside the Myriad Convention Center at 6:30 in the morning. Every businessperson, political person, lots

of state officials, city officials, county officials, probably about 1,600 people we have at our Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. And we have a wonderful public speaker come in and so we were there and I've thought about it many times that if McVeigh had really wanted to make an impact, if he'd have pulled underneath that garage (Myriad) there's 1,600 people that that building would have been down on us like nothing. Anyway, that's usually over with about 8 o'clock in the morning. We try to get people out of there so they can go to work. I came out and was in this building here in my Dad's office which was just on the other side of this wall. And it was a beautiful day, it was just a gorgeous April day in Oklahoma. There was nothing particular going on, and this building that we're in, it's a five-story building shook. We have underground parking, I thought either somebody had really run into one of the columns of the building, or we'd had maybe a gas explosion. I mean this building shook like an earthquake. And I was in this other building and Hefner Parkway is right out here outside of my windows and I'm sitting here watching the traffic kind of wondering, "What was that?" And my Dad and I were talking and he said, "Did you feel that?" And I said, "Yeah, I felt it, what was that?" And we're kind of looking around and pretty soon we see across the highway coming out of the building, they're kind of standing out in the yard kind of looking toward downtown.

JE: How many miles is this building we're in from downtown?

RN: Well, we're on 5400 and the Murray Building was on 4th Street. So as the crow flies, about five miles, so not very far, so I come into my office here, which I have windows that face the City and I look and I see this big black plume of smoke. And this all takes place within just a couple or three minutes. About that time, I can't remember if Fran Cory who was my secretary at City Hall called me or if I called her, but we made contact very quickly and I said, "Did you feel that?" And she said, "Oh yeah." And I said, "What is it?" And she said, "Well, we don't know but it looks like something that has come from the direction of the federal (building) or up in that direction somewhere." Which my City Office would be about four blocks from that. And I said, "Well is everybody okay down there?" And she said, "Yeah, we're fine down here. We've lost some windows and had some things knocked off the wall but we're fine." I said, "Well, as soon as you know what it is, let me know." And so we got off the phone and it wasn't but just a few minutes later she called back and she said, "Well there's been a big explosion somewhere around the federal courthouse, and we don't know yet what it is." Of course, my first thought was I think everybody's, well the gas line has exploded, an airplane's crashed, a tanker truck's blown up. Something kind of like that is what everybody was thinking. About that time I turned on the TV and Channel 9 happened to have a helicopter in the air going from Point A to Point B and they were there on site within minutes and had live shots and it's on TV. So I'm sitting here in my Dad's office watching Channel 9 and seeing this building

and trying to figure out what in the world? You know you could see the smoke and the fires. The fires were from the cars. There wasn't any fire in the building. The fires were all in the cars across the street, their gas tanks and the cars themselves were burning. Again we're kind of calling back and forth from City Hall. And I said, "Well do I need to come down?" And she said, "I don't think so now. Why don't you stay there until we can figure out what's going on." Okay by that time the Press was starting to call and I said, "Well just have the Press call out here and I'll talk to them." So I started telling them that I'm watching and yes we don't know yet what's going on and so forth. Earnest Istook's office was in this building, and he was in the building. And it's somewhere around 10 o'clock so this would be an hour after. I had decided by then that something pretty major had gone on. I said, "I want to go down and see what's going on." And they said, "Okay, we'll send the police to get you." By then they'd closed off I-40 and they'd closed off all the roads, the Police had. So they ran two detectives out here and got me in a car, and I might have taken Earnest down with me cause he needed a way to get down there so we went down.

## **Chapter 15 – 5:45**

### **Mayor Norick Visits Murrah Building**

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**Ron Norick:** And I met the Police Chief and the Fire Chief about a block away on Broadway, we walked down to the corner right where the YMCA would have been, right across the street. Of course there was still a lot of commotion going on. By this time it was a little after 10 o'clock. He said, "It's a bomb." "What?" He said, "It's a bomb. He said do you see that crater?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "It's a bomb." I mean there was something planted there. I think they knew kind of knew what it was. So right after that at about 11 o'clock they called an organizational meeting of all the emergency people in the command vehicle of the Police Department which at the time was sitting in the parking lot of the Southwestern Bell building which was two blocks north. So I went to that meeting and Chief Marrs, Gary Marrs was the Fire Chief and this being a fire incident was the Commander in Charge. And I remember how organized that meeting was. This was now 2 hours after the incident. He knew exactly what everybody should be doing. The FBI, he introduced the people there, like DEA was there, FBI was there, Police, Fire, I can't remember if anybody from the state was there yet. They may or may not have been. But I mean he just said, "Okay, the Police is in charge of security and we're going to cordone off this area. Obviously it's an issue dealing with a crime. It's on a federal building, so that involves the FBI and the federal agencies. The FBI will be handling the investigation of the incident. That's their responsibility and the DEA will assist them. Mayor, you need to

get a hold of the Governor. And see if we can get the National Guard down here starting tonight to relieve our police so our police can go back to their normal duties.” Right now we had sucked everybody in to cordone off that area and right after that meeting I got a hold of the Governor and they had the Governor in the bunker. They didn’t know that there might not be another bomb. They didn’t know.

**John Erling:** Governor Frank Keating we should say.

RN: Right, Governor Frank Keating was in the bunker and I talked to him and he said, “Of course, whatever you need Mayor.” And we got the National Guard and they came in and set up the barricades. And we barricaded it off from about 6th Street North to 2nd Street, or that’s probably Kerr Avenue on the South to somewhere around Hudson on the East and Broadway on the West. So it was 6 or 8 square blocks at least, 10 square blocks cordoned off for three weeks while they did the investigation and there were a lot of businesses in there and a lot of cars, people working. We had to go through the process of people going in over the next few days and to be able to just retrieve their cars for instance. I remembered from that first meeting just how organized it was. There was no sign of panic or who’s going to do what. And the reason was, the summer before, so 10 months before the City participated in an emergency planning session in Maryland. The federal government put this on for cities and municipalities, emergency preparedness classes and seminars on what do you do in emergency situations? How do you organize your city? Well, our City had done that and all the departments participate, public works, Police and Fire. Everybody participates. We thought we’d be planning for a tornado, may be a plane crash, that type of a disaster, not a bomb. But the mechanism was still the same whatever the disaster is. How do you control all of these sorts of things? We met every day for a few days and then we also determined really quickly that you needed to control the Media. They have a right to know, and if you don’t tell them something their going to make up whatever they want. So we had our first press conference that afternoon. We did two press conferences a day. There was so much press there. You were probably there at the time and there was press from all over the world. We set up an area. We had to control what they did. But we also knew they had jobs to do so we really need to provide them with information. We had 2 press conferences a day for I think a week or 10 days, and then we went to one press conference. Everybody had their responsibilities. The Fire Department was the only group if people that gave out body counts on how many victims they found. The Medical Examiner’s Office was the only one that would release names and only after they’d notified the families. Because there was too much speculation on how many people were there and how many bodies. One of my first jobs, the Governor that night, the night of the 19th, we set up a phone bank at City Hall and we were trying to determine who

was in that building that day. Which employees were at work? Who had maybe family members that were going there to try to identify who the people were. Lots of people from the City volunteered and we had of course all the phones in there and I think at that time Southwestern Bell brought in some other lines. Basically we're trying to work down Bob your brother, was he at work that day or was he not at work? Was he sick or was he off? Then we asked people through the Media services, the Media was very good. We said please broadcast to people if they think they had people in that building, let us know and we gave the numbers which rang to City Hall. Several of the families would call and say, you know I think my Mom and Dad were going down to apply for social security, and we can't get a hold of them, which was not a good sign. Several families were that way. Over time they figured out that's what happened to their families.

## Chapter 16 – 6:04

### Telegram From Israel

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**Ron Norick:** And then immediately we started getting money in. I mean we started getting donations in, I mean immediately.

**John Erling:** From where?

RN: From all over the world. The first telegram I got was from Israel. I had the year before set up a sister-city agreement in Jahod, Israel, a little town outside of Tel Aviv, sister city agreement, first telegram was from them that afternoon with condolences and all of that but telegrams started pouring in from all over the world. And then money started pouring in just immediately. And so we had to organize that, I got the Community Foundation to set up an account and we started putting all of the money in there. We had school kid sending in pennies and people sending in checks and just lots of stuff so we had to kind of organize all of that and try to keep the city going and keep the public informed. I remember asking that first night through the Police, don't come downtown, there's too much going on. You can't get their anyway. We need flashlights. And the next day it started raining, it got cold. It just got cold. It started raining and we needed rubber gloves and we needed this and that. I mean people started to bring some of that stuff. We told them where to bring it. You can come anywhere on the North perimeter and there will be policeman there. We had cookies and pies and pizza. I mean people are just unbelievable. They just opened up their hearts. We didn't ask for all this stuff. I mean it was just great you'd be sitting there somewhere around the command center and somebody would bring a big deal of homemade cookies that somebody had just furnished us or 30 pizzas that they'd had delivered from so and so. And this went on day

after day after day.

JE I believe somebody said at that point, everybody became Oklahomans.

RN: Oh they did. One of the things that supposedly McVeigh was trying to do was he bombed the Murrah Building so that he thought that that would start the uprising to overthrow the government. Well it did just the opposite. I mean the same thing that happened on 9/11, people band together. It's kind of like having a family squabble. The family can squabble all at once, but you better not get in the middle of a family squabble or their going to turn on you. I think it's the same thing with the U.S. We may have our political differences and we may squabble and we may sound like we're about to fall apart. But if you want to attack us or do something like that, you're going to find out that all of a sudden we're going to turn the other way. And that's what happened then, the nation just became very, very supportive.

JE: Let me just insert this, as we do this for the sake of history, that this bombing was the most significant act of terrorism on American soil until the 9/11 attack in 2001. This bombing claimed the lives of 168 victims, injuring more than 680. The blast destroyed or damaged 324 buildings within a 16-block radius, destroyed or burned 86 cars, shattered glass in 258 nearby buildings. And the bomb was estimated to have caused at least \$652 million dollars worth of damage. Now, we're 14 years removed from it. It took a while for everybody to realize the numbers. It took you a while in the Command Center to understand the enormity of this.

RN: From the first minute we had to figure out if there was anybody alive and that wasn't me that had to figure that out. The best thing I did back then was I stayed out of the way. I told Chief Marrs, I said, "You tell me what you need, this is your deal, this is what you're expertise is in. I'm here 24-hours, I'll do whatever you want. You just tell me what you need from the City of whatever." That's how they used me. They needed something from Public Works, we needed to get more restrooms, you know portable potties down there for the people that were working. Or we need more barricades or we need to do this, or we need to do that. So that was really my function, and handling a lot of the duties of dealing with the Press. And I did that so they could their duties of dealing with the disaster itself. And that worked out very well for me, I'm comfortable in that type of position. I don't (mind) having to be the one out in front of the TV cameras. Chief Marrs is more comfortable doing his deal and Sam Gonzales was the Police Chief. Everybody had their jobs, so it wasn't a power struggle or a who's getting the most TV time or anything like that just didn't come in to play.

JE: But weren't you as the Mayor a focal point, maybe a spirit leader?

RN: Oh yeah, I tried to make sure that the public was informed. Not only the national public, but our public was informed what the situation was and what we were doing and that we

were okay. Physically we were okay. Yeah there area lot of people hurting, a lot of people lost a lot of family members and all of that. We organized the clergy. I got that organized real quick to support all of those families. Lots of people, we used the Church out on 36th & Walker. That's were all the families were to get them away from the site. They just didn't need to be down at the site itself.

JE: That must have been moving for you because you no doubt went to visit families and see them there and they wanted to talk to you.

RN: Yeah and you know it took several days to finally retrieve their bodies even though we knew after about 48 hours that we weren't going to find anybody alive. Then it's trying to recover their remains. Because of where they worked in the building and how the building collapsed, you pretty well knew where they were. And it may take several days to get there. And in the mean time those families are agonizing that maybe by some glimmer of hope we'll find one of them alive or something, and you're just not going to do it. They would remove some bodies. They would take them right across the street to the Methodist Church where the medical examiner was set up and they would try to identify as quickly as possible, and then notify the family. Then at that point that family would disperse to home and deal with their funeral arrangements and all of those sort of things dealing with family leaving the other family. So it started out as a big family group and just over time got to be smaller and smaller. But obviously those people, a lot of them became very, very close to each other, as you would. As you would think you would.

## Chapter 17 – 5:52

### Billy Graham & President Bill Clinton

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**John Erling:** Shortly after the bombing President Clinton weighed in on this?

**Ron Norick:** Yes. He came in. Billy Graham and President Clinton. It was the first time I'd met either one of them. I had the privilege of introducing for the Memorial Service Billy Graham. And I had developed a severe cold or something and basically lost my voice.

JE: You didn't have much rest I'm sure you people didn't sleep.

RN: I remember I went home the first night, let's see the bombing was at 9 in the morning, and I was down there by 10 or 10:30 am something like that. I had on a suit cause we had been in a big banquet that morning. I called my son who was working out at the printing company and I said I've got to have some clothes. Go home and get me some jeans and shirt and jacket in case it gets cool tonight. And he brought it down and I told him where to come and the Police let him in so he could come and I was just running ragged then. And Southwestern Bell had given a few of us that needed them, cell phones and

you know that cell phones weren't very prominent back then. They were big ol' things with open access on lines, I think we were knocking people off. I never got a busy signal. I think it was one of those lines that if this phone needs to make a call, it works. I was getting so many requests for Press interviews and all that. The phone was just constantly ringing between me and City Hall. And I'm trying to do other stuff or talk to people and the phone keeps ringing and he became my scheduling partner for a couple of days and he got a big kick out of that.

JE: And his name is?

RN: Lance Norick.

JE: Lance.

RN: And he would have been 26 years old at the time so he was a young man. So it was a great experience for him. He got a real kick out of that of just kind of being my scheduling guy for a couple of days.

JE: Around the world probably, they were calling you-

RN: Oh yeah.

JE: And you did interviews most every-

RN: Oh I did interviews all of the time. Every news segment, usually the early morning shows like Good Morning America and NBC and all that. We did all those at least every other morning I was on one or all of them. And then the 5 o'clock news, we had probably 100 or 200 TV studios represented from around the country. So, I couldn't do every one of them.

JE: Yep.

RN: So I'd do maybe a half a dozen or more every news segment, tried to kind of spread it out on who needed it. But I remember that first night we got home about 11:30 or 12 and got up a little after 3 o'clock. I mean I lay there for about two hours and I don't think I slept. I just thought this is ridiculous. What am I doing here? So I just got up and put my clothes back on and went down. I did that for several days. But my voice, anyway I lost my voice to kind of get back to the story we started.

JE: Of Billy Graham and President-

RN: Billy Graham and I couldn't- I mean I was having a tough time even talking. I mean I could get anything to work and I remember I had a glass of water sitting beside me and I finally introduced him but...He was really a phenomenal guy, really very warm, very caring.

JE: Did you have words with him before or anything like that?

RN: Yeah, we had a little reception before where we kind of introduced I mean it wasn't long but just very quick. But he was just very down to earth and very polite and his wife was there I think her name's Ruth. Just a very humble nice man and that's the first time I'd met Bill Clinton or Hillary. He hadn't been in the Office I guess too long, maybe a year or two,

something like that. He was a brand new President. Interesting story with him, that was on a Sunday, and sometime the following week, I'm at home one night and it's somewhere around 10 or 11 o'clock at night and the phone rings. And I'm just kind of sitting there kind of regrouping. And it says, "This is the White House Operator, can you talk to the President?" I've often wondered, look can you just take a message, I'm a little busy, but I- just to see what she would have said. I said, "Well sure." A second later, "Mayor Norick?" I said, "Yes sir." I think he said, "This is Bill Clinton." I said, "How are you Mr. President?" He said, "I'm very good, I'm very good." I said, "Well where are you?" And he said, "I'm in Des Moines, Iowa, I just got through campaigning and I'm sitting in my limo outside the hotel and I just wanted to call and see how you were doing." And I said, "That's very kind of you." I said, "We're doing fine." He said, "Now is there anything that I can do to help you?" I said, "No sir." I think James Lee Witt had come in that day. He was here by Noon. He was head of FEMA and I said, "No, James Lee has been great. He's here and everything we've asked for we've gotten." He said, "Well I just wanted to call and see how you were doing. And just wanted to let you know that we're thinking about you and if you ever need anything, don't you hesitate, you just call, and let me know." And I said, "Well I sure do appreciate that Mr. President. It's really nice of you to call." And he said, "Well I just wanted to let you that and you have a good evening." And he hung up. And I was sitting at home at 10:30 or 10 at night and I get a call from the President.

JE: Yeah.

RN: You could tell he was touched by it. It wasn't a call for political (reasons) you could tell in his voice he sincerely- I may not believe in all of his politics, but as a man I had a lot of respect for Bill Clinton. He was very good to us here in the City, very good with me always very receptive. Anything I needed, in fact when he was in here for the 10th anniversary. He spoke at the Church. He had come in at a different time than I had, we didn't get to see each other. I was sitting on the stage behind him, and there were 40 people up there so it was a big group. I wasn't one of the speakers. I was just there. After it's over with he's shaking hands and he's looking around. And he spots me and immediately he waves at me and comes down and gives me a big ol' hug and shakes hands and we talked for 5 minutes. And you know this is several years after he had been out of office. He picked me right out of the crowd very personable and knew my name and he said, "Well I was sure hoping you would be here. I looked forward to it I was really hoping you'd be here." It was really nice to have him do that.

**Chapter 18 – 4:46****Rebuilding**

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**John Erling:** Well when this is a crime against a federal building, then it's like a crime against all of the United States. Don't you think?

**Ron Norick:** Oh yeah.

JE: And so that's why the whole nation was so riveted with this-

RN: And they were so riveted, cause they were going, in the Heartland? Oklahoma City? Why would they do it in Oklahoma City. You know there are just people down there. There's no big...that's what really, I think, got the nation. As opposed to being in New York City or somewhere where it kind of seems like there's always something going on. I think that really caught them off guard here.

JE: So the City while you were going through this MAPS process, was interrupted by this? Then do you think there were some differences? There was some healing as a result of the bombing that smoothed out the MAPS planning at all?

RN: It probably did. It did delay some of the MAPS there's no doubt about that. Because our City Public Works was working on the environmental issues, the land acquisition, the planning, working with architects. We were trying to select architects for various projects. All of a sudden all of that had to be put on the back burner. We had, as you mentioned earlier 300-some buildings destroyed and damaged 16 square blocks. We had other issues a lot more important than a baseball park or a canal, or anything like that. So we really had to redirect our focus for several months, while we determined what we needed to do to that area. I mean I didn't let it stay (that way) any time at all. Because what that was, was an area of town, outside of a few buildings that was an older area of town. A lot of little Mom and Pop businesses, like a battery shop or a radio shop that was probably built in the '40s and '50s. The buildings were destroyed to the point that they were inhabitable and they were going to have to tear them down. I didn't want 16 square blocks of parking lot. That's about the last thing we needed in the City was more parking lots. So we really had to concentrate and then start working with the federal government and worked with Henry Cisneros and of course the President, making sure that we got rebuild and that the federal campus did not leave downtown cause there was a lot of conversation about dispersing it. They all had to relocate somewhere anyway and they all relocated out in the suburbs in various locations. We ended up having them all come back down town except for what they call the gun-toters, the FBI and DEA. They've got their own campus out northwest and it's secure and all of that. But HUD and Social Security and things like that are back downtown.

JE: But you went to Washington and asked for federal financial help to rebuild, was it \$34

million, or something like that?

RN: Yes, I think our first tranche was \$22 million and it had to go through Congress and I worked with the congressional delegation and our delegation and The House and Senate and got all of that done pretty quickly.

JE: So there was no fight to make that happen?

RN: No. And you look back on some of the hurricanes and other things and were talking about billions and we took \$34 million. It was really nothing. And that was really to take care of anybody...so they had no losses. You know a lot of them had insurance on their car. For instance, people that just happened to be in the area. We made sure that they weren't out anything. We made sure that none of the families were out any medical expenses or anything like that. Property owners were compensated to rebuild their buildings or relocate or you know those types of things, and that's what the money was used for.

JE: For those listening to this, they would look at a leader, and you're the leader of the City when this happens, I guess you've expressed already that you didn't have to go in and direct traffic.

RN: Right.

JE: It was being directed for you. And then you decided, I know I'm the Mayor but I need to find my nice and where can I serve the best?

RN: And I knew my best service was to support in the initial phase, the first three weeks while we were recovering bodies, just to leave that up to the professionals. And that's the Police and Fire and crime investigators, and let me deal with, you might say the Press and running the City otherwise. Because the City had to continue to function and then I was the spear-leader working with the Feds to make sure that whatever we needed to do to make sure that the people were taken care of. And that the federal employees, and wherever they needed to go. The businesses and so forth, that they were taken care of, that they weren't left destitute. And we had to set-up procedures on how they would apply for all of that, and decide what's fair. And I think we did a pretty good job of that. You hear very little, in fact you don't hear anything anymore, and at the time very little, somebody might argue that they needed X and we gave them Y but we couldn't justify it and so we tried to be fair with everybody. And the main thing is to be even across the board, so one group or one individual didn't get more than they should. But the government was very good. Bill Clinton and all of his staff were very good to the City.

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**Chapter 19 – 3:09****Funds for Victims**

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**John Erling:** I was just thinking that there are children you know children, say 6 years old, we probably remember for sure at 6 and so now add that to 15, there are people here who are 20 or 21 years old who distinctly remember that. Here and now they're coming into young adults, there are some scars and some remembrances of that.

**Ron Norick:** The funds that I started getting immediately that people just volunteered to the Mayor's Office, and the same thing happened at the Governor's Office, and between the two of us, we put all of those funds jointly in an account at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation for their administration. Those funds took care of all the medical bills, all of the education for all of the families. For any of the children, to this day in 2009 we are still, any of those children that want to go to school, college or anything, we pay for. And we've still got several million dollars left, that we're using for the benefit of those families. One of the discussions we've had, there is going to be an end to it. What are we going to do with the money? And you know the thought is that we probably will save it and God forbid there ever will be something like that in Oklahoma but that gives us a start to help those families. Or maybe, there may be other situations around the country. The donors were giving it to us, so we have to be careful on what we do there. But they were giving it to us for disaster relief to help families and that's what we used it for. We still have people that are under psychiatric care that are still having issues. People deal with it different ways and we pay for all of that. We pay for all those and those are all paid for on a very private, discreet basis. I couldn't tell you who they are, and I don't need to know. But I know we're still paying medical bills on some of those, for some of the Police and Fire, and other people, just trauma.

JE: And all that money was donated from people...

RN: Yes all that money was donated.

JE: Do you remember the amount, about what came in?

RN: My fund was a couple million dollars, \$2 or \$3 million and the Governor's I think was maybe \$4 or \$5 million.

JE: So did you invest that then? I mean you said you still money today and?

RN: Oh yeah. We gave it to the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and they invested it. And as we've needed it over the years, but we have, I don't remember the last numbers, but it's amazing how many of those kids that we've sent to college. Like you say, it's 14 years (ago), so if they were 6 or 7 years old, they're probably about out of college by now. Or if they wanted to go to trade school, or whatever it was, we took care of all of those families and continue to take care of all of them. Some of the little bitty kids would just

now be in high school. So their education for their family is taken care of.

JE: Did you and Rudy Giuliani ever speak?

RN: Yeah.

JE: He has his experience and you had yours.

RN: Yeah, Rudy and I did a program here, at the Memorial...two year ago...for public television, an hour on the two (disasters). And it was really interesting, and it was a forum, Burns Hargis moderated, and he'd give each of us questions about our particular deal. I enjoyed doing it. And then I'd met Giuliani after our bombing when we were up there thanking all the rescue teams, I'd met Giuliani at the time.

## Chapter 20 – 7:04

### Norick Library / River / Olympics

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**John Erling:** I'm jumping ahead now. Then I know you did a task force to set up a Memorial and that is attracting people even to this day, from around the world, they come to Oklahoma City. But then I have the story here, two hotels to be built downtown, that was in October of '95?

**Ron Norick:** One of the things I said early on, what really prompted the Convention Center was that we had one downtown hotel when I came into Office and that was the Sheraton with 399 rooms, and it was about to close. I thought, here is Oklahoma City, the 28th largest city in the nation and if it didn't have a downtown hotel, would that ever be a black eye. So we started this study to come up with whatever we need to do. We had to have a Convention Center to support the hotels. And we got that done. And they told us back then that we needed to have a minimum of 1,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of your Convention Center to have a chance to have not national conventions even though we were having some national ones, but to be a very good regional center. You're not going to be New York or Chicago, or LA and we don't want to be, but to be a nice Center. Today we have 1,600 rooms within walking distance because of that Convention facility. We spent \$350 million dollars on MAPS 1. Today, the dollars counting that \$350 that have gone in to downtown Oklahoma City, The OU Health Science Center, those two and their both basically downtown, it's a little north, is \$4 billion dollars. At the time people were asking me, how much private money do you think you'll get on top of the public? I said, "Well, if we could get 1:1 or 2:1, I think we'd be doing good." I missed that 10:1. I mean I didn't even come close. I had no idea. But that's what's made this work is that the private dollar came in and believed us. We have 1,600 hotel rooms now and some more planned. We were just about ready to lose the last hotel we had downtown.

JE: The revitalization of downtown everybody is enjoying to this day and then for another time you had a MAPS II and that was under Kirk Humpreys-

RN: That's right. Maps for Kids.

JE: And he had been a school board member as a matter of fact and it was MAPS for Kids. And now Mayor Cornett here in 2009 is talking about MAPS III. So you really started something back then.

RN: It's a good brand. As they say in the promotional world, you've got to have a brand. And I think MAPS is a good brand, and I just hope that we keep it going and don't mess it up. You can ask people in this community about MAPS and everybody knows. They may not know exactly what it is, but they'll view it as a positive statement.

JE: And the newspaper wrote in '97 in October, it says, "Mayor Ron Norick confident, sometimes angry, sometimes cocky, sometimes funny and always generous to a fault, arguably exudes the personality of the City he represents. Those aren't bad words to have.

RN: Who wrote those? The Oklahoman you say?

JE: Yep.

RN: Really?

JE: Yep, they did and they've been very, very complimentary. You remain still enormously popular. We have a downtown library named for Ronald J. Norick. And that had to make you feel really good.

RN: And that was really a...it was a surprise. Especially to my English teachers in high school, (Laughter) I mean...Mayor Cornett is really the one that initiated that. You know I didn't ask for anything and didn't expect anything. The library opened in 2004 or 2005. When they named it, I was really excited. And then when we had the dedication, they closed the street off and they set up the bleachers and there were several hundred people that came down when we actually cut the ribbon and it was really.

JE: So you did not know until that day?

RN: Well, I didn't know until the Council passed the resolution. Though I got a call the night before that it was on the docket from I think that Mayor saying, "What do you think about this?" And I said, "You've got to be kidding me. You know, I don't know. I don't know what to think about it." It's a great building and just a wonderful place. And it's well used. I go down there once in a while and I talk to, the lady's Donna that's the administrator and she says that it is just packed all the time with kids and groups coming in from school, which is just great. It's great.

JE: You know a lot of communities have adopted a policy you never name a building after a living person.

RN: Yeah.

JE: But that shows you what you've meant to this community and they did it anyway. And you mention all the kids, and as we do this for future generations, for them to hear the voice of a man whose name is on the library, I think that will have special meaning to them.

RN: Well, it has special meaning to me, it's really a neat deal. And I'm very, very proud of our City and I'm very humbled by what they've done. And I always give credit even today when I give a speech I give credit to the voters. I mean, it's their money, they're the ones that have done all of this. I gave them some ideas and tried to lead them in the direction that I thought was right. But really it's up to the voters. We've had very supportive voters in Oklahoma City and I'm very appreciative of that.

JE: A phrase I took over in Tulsa when we passed a bond issue I said, "This is the day the voters have made let us rejoice and be glad they're in."

RN: Yeah.

JE: And do...

RN: Yeah, it's the voters.

JE: Yeah.

RN: It's not the politicians. It's the voters.

JE: And then we can update because the work you did with the North Canadian River, has an Olympic tie to it today, why don't you just tell them here on July 20th, 2009 what's happening.

RN: Well, today we announced that the Oklahoma River is being-

JE: And let me just stop you there because you changed the name.

RN: Yeah we changed the name-

JE: From North Canadian River to-

RN: It's a 7-mile stretch that's changed. It's actually North Canadian coming in and leaving but the 7-mile stretch is the Oklahoma River and that's really Ray Ackerman who got that going. And it had to go through the House and Senate and be signed by the Governor to change the designation. It is a lot better now. People know where the Oklahoma River is. But anyway, it was designated today and an official Olympic Training site for the US Olympic Team for kayaking and rowing. And then University of Central Oklahoma is the site for Paralympics which is the handicapped part of the Olympics, and that will be their training site. So it's really a phenomenal thing. And just a few years ago we wouldn't even have any water in the river. We mowed the river and now we have the Olympic Training Facility and lots of events going on and it's really worked out beautifully.

JE: And as visionary as you are, there's no way you said years ago, The Olympic Committee is going to be interested in this river. (Laughter)

RN: There is no way I would have ever even have thought that. I wouldn't have even thought there would be rowing I just thought there would be water and that would be pretty

for scenery. But now we've got rowing and cruise boats going up and down and it's phenomenal.

JE: Ron, I want to thank you for this enormous time you've given us. Generations beyond the two of us will be able to listen to this thanks to today's technology.

RN: I hope so. That will be neat, because one of these days people will go MAPS what? There was MAPS what's that all about?

JE: And who is this Ronald Norick anyway?

RN: Yeah, who was this guy? (Laughter)

JE: Thank you so much.

RN: Okay, thank you John. I appreciate it.

JE: You bet.

### **Conclusion**

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**John Erling:** XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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