

ARTHUR H. WAINWRIGHT

Wayne: Summers: Today is August 20, 2020. I'm **Wayne: Summers**, along with Ron Matson, and we are interviewing Art Wainwright at the Clinton County Historical Museum in St. Johns. Art, why don't you start off by telling us where you were born and maybe your early life.

Art Wainwright: Right when I started off, back in February 8, 1943, I was born in Pennsylvania in a little town called Moscow, not to be thinking of Moscow, Russia. It was Moscow, right outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania. I was only about five, six days old when we moved to Detroit. My dad worked on a railroad in Pennsylvania. He loved it. We went to Detroit because the war was in full swing then and he was able to get a job with Packard Motor Company. That increased the amount of money from what he was getting at the railroad and he was doing something for the country. So I lived in Detroit my early years up to about six, seven years old and went to Clawson which is about ten miles north of Detroit.

Then from Clawson, I went up to Houghton Lake where I finished up my final two years in high school and where I really got into broadcasting. I had a brother-in-law that was a super-duper. He was a manager of a station up there. I lived up there with them and I fell in love with radio. At that time we were called a disc jockey.

Ron Matson: What station was that, Art? Do you remember?

Art: I'm just trying to remember where--

Wayne: I have WHGR. Is that correct?

Art: That's WHGR AM and later it came on FM. It was owned by Sparks Broadcasting Company and Mr. Sparks owned also a station in Royal Oak at that time. WEXL is what it was. I started up there as a part-time. Like anything else, anything I could do around the station, I enjoyed doing it. I found myself getting involved in a country and western show. I had to tape it because it ran in the afternoon, two o'clock, and I was supposed to be in school, which I was, but I taped it the night before. Then I'd go to school. During history class or whichever it was, I'm there with a portable radio listening to myself. I forgot what the history was about that time. So I started off and then I went into full time in about 1966, '67. Brother-in-law bought the radio station down in St. Johns here. It was WJUD [1363 W. Parks Road]. It started off by a man named "Judd" [Justin F.] Marzke who, I think, ran an appliance store [Good Housekeeping Store in St. Johns] or something. The call letters are changed to WRBJ. Want me to continue with life?

Wayne: Why did you move to Houghton Lake? You said you moved in with your brother-in-law. Was it because of radio or was it for some other reason?

Art: Well, it was a combination. When I was living in Clawson, my mother and dad, I think, thought it was a bad influence maybe down there in a little bigger city. I was wearing a black leather jacket. A semi-clothed girl was drawn on the back of my black leather jacket, in a bikini or something. This is true.

Ron: They could see a course correction was in order.

Art: I was noted a little bit with running maybe with a gang or something and so I think they wanted me to--. I had a real loving sister and so forth and they didn't have any children at that time so I went up there and lived with them for them the last two years.

Wayne: They wanted to get you in with a better crowd?

Art: Yeah, I guess so. I didn't think I was in a bad crowd then either but it turned out. When I was young, I used to listen to *Rockin with Robin*, [*Swinging Time*] I think. Robin Seymour was his name. I forgot what the station was, WJ something. [WKMH] Well, I'd like to be a disc jockey sometime. Later on, this term, you can't be a disc jockey. You got to be an "air personality." I used to call myself a "disc jerky" 'cause it was fun, I guess.

Wayne: Did you have any training?

Art: None.

Wayne: It was just all on-the-air training, basically.

Art: You've heard people say they've graduated from the school of hard knocks? I think I graduated from the school of common sense. Just something came to me naturally.

Ron: Just something you liked very well.

Art: So yeah, I liked it. At those times we had big turntables, probably about fifteen inches in diameter and so forth and it was just how you can cue records up and so forth. It was just something I enjoyed.

Wayne: Now in St. Johns the call letters were changed from WJUD to WRBJ. What was the meaning of those call letters?

Art: Those are my brother-in-law's. He first wanted to have WJRB, I think, but WJR down in Detroit said that's too close to them. They had twin daughters, Judy and Jeanette. so there's where the "J" came from. My sister's middle name was Janette. "R" was for their son, Robert, and for his, the owner's, name too, Robert Ditmer. "B" was for my sister too whose name is Beverly and the "D." Also, they had another daughter, Renee, and that's where they are. So it was all initials after their children.

Ron: That's interesting to know.

Wayne: When they bought the station, I think I read that you were originally the program director and treasurer. Is that correct?

Art: I guess you could call it whatever you did.

Wayne: When you came down here, I assume that you helped get the station going with the new ownership.

Art: With Bob, yeah. I'm not sure what the terminology was at that time but it might've been very well like that, as treasurer or assistant or something like that.

Wayne: What did you do when you first took over the station? How did it change or did it not change?

Art: There were some, I thought, pretty intelligent people that we had at the beginning. There were older gentlemen. I was in my twenties, I think 24, 25, and we had some other gentlemen that were probably in their 30's and 40's and they moved on. I started, if I remember correctly, there was a program in the morning called *Homemakers Hotline* and it turned out to be pretty good with the women. It ran from 10 o'clock to 11 o'clock and I just kinda changed it with stuff, with a little music. People called in. I think I put a lot of emphasis on people calling in and I had women calling in sometimes with recipes. Then later on it turned into kind of a talk [show] where people could call up and express their concerns like some of the talk shows are now and it's--

Ron: Talk about current events and things, you mean?

Art: Yeah, or things that were going on in the community.

Wayne: Mostly local, however?

Art: It was all pretty much local. We had a lot of local people at that time. John Aylsworth would come in the afternoon with the Extension Service. It was small-time radio, geared at small-time interest but it was rewarding. I learned a lot, I guess. I like to associate with people and get their feelings, something I think that we've lost over the years, out of touch. It seems like now we're distant from each other, especially with this virus [COVID] that's going on now. You're afraid to almost talk to people. Then when you talk to someone, if they have a mask on, which I refuse to wear for various reasons, you don't know if they're smiling at you or what. Could you imagine going out on a date and you don't really know what your date looks like? I just thought of that the other day. I said, "Holy cow!" If I had to go out and you don't know what your date looks like!

Ron: That's a scary thought.

Art: Maybe good for her if she's hard to date.

Wayne: Besides hosting that one-hour show, what else did you do?

Art: I did some selling. At that time you're kind of a man-of-all-trades in a way. I did that, public relations, I guess you could call it. I did selling to earn some money as well, disc jockey. I had a show.

Ron: You mean advertising?

Art: Radio advertising.

Wayne: What time shift did you have for the disc jockeying?

Art: Our station was a "directional" [daytime only] at that time. You went with early sign-on sometimes. In the summertime, it was six o'clock and then in the wintertime was like seven or eight o'clock in the morning. I was mostly a morning personality up 'til about noon. Usually you went on four-hour shifts and I think a lot of them they do that nowadays too. Nowadays everything is computerized. It's amazing. I haven't been on a radio station in a while but you don't have the person behind the mic so much. Everything is computers. Sometimes, you're listening to a radio station now, and there's dead air

for five or six seconds, eight seconds. When you were in radio back then, you didn't want a split second of dead air. You had to be right in tune with stuff.

Wayne: Didn't you take over broadcasting the news on the local station at one point?

Art: I don't know if I ever took over the news.

Wayne: --or did you just do news as part of your regular job?

Art: It was news at the top of the hour and so you're doing your regular programming, your regular playing of the records, advertisement, commercials. Then top of the hour was five minutes of news and weather.

Wayne: Did you prepare though, those news--?

Art: When you said "prepare," yes. We called it, "rip and read" (RR) and that's what it was 'cause we'd have a teletype, either Associated Press or UPI (United Press International). While maybe your last record at the top, even two minutes before the hour, you run in the other room; you rip the news off the teletype; cut it on your corner table; and you started reading: "Here's the news of such and such," and you just read cold. There wasn't a lot of prereading or anything else. You just read it as it came in the office.

Wayne: Whatever was there.

Art: Exactly.

Wayne: Did you add any local news to that or was it mostly just national?

Art: No, there was local too, I guess. I'm trying to think how we did that. I think we just mixed it in with it. It might've started off at the top and then--. I don't really remember.

Wayne: How long did you stay with WRBJ?

Art: I think it was about seven years. I think I left about late 1972.

Wayne: About the time they added the FM?

Art: FM had been there for about a year, maybe year and a half. When I came down here, I did go to Chicago for a course in electronics 'cause we were a directional [daytime only] radio station here. You had to have a person with a first class-. We called it, "first phone license." So I went to DeVry Institute in Chicago to get my first-class license because I had to have a first-class phone on the wall there.

Wayne: How long did that take? How long was this course?

Art: Oh, I think it was a month or so. Before I went there, I was doing a correspondence course as well through DeVry. I was learning some basic--what's electrons and so forth.

Ron: Electronic fundamentals.

Art: Then later on, when I went to school was more or less the text of what electronics was about. At that time we were still talking about triodes and diodes, tubes. The infancy was going the other way. It was starting to get into the transistors and so forth. It changed so much. When I was working at the station, I was also an engineer in a part. The one thing it taught and it was a gentleman from ILS Radio, John Whitaker--I'll never forget. Super guy. He says, "Okay now, when you get your hands in the transmitter, if something goes wrong with it, keep one hand in your pocket so you don't make a connection to the ground." That was very important at times 'cause I did see sparks fly, my share of sparks.

Ron: Good advice!

Art: It was. I'm still above ground.

Wayne: I take it your job in the morning when you got there was to turn on the transmitter, make sure it was up and hummin'?

Art: Push the buttons or the warming up the filaments and so forth and then you hit the power button and you're on the air hoping that everything is ---; the tubes are lit up and that's a good sign; and see what the board looks like. You're off and running.

Wayne: Did anything ever go wrong?

Art: Oh shoot, yeah. Things go wrong! In radio, if you're playing something, maybe an ad or something or playing some tape--. We had tape recorders and sometimes the tape recorder would be running sloooooow and aaa. So what you did, you put your finger in the thing and you give it a little assistance So it goes from slow to, and it's, "This is regular speed now. Okay boys, here we go!" Oh, greaaaaat! I mean, you never knew what was going to--. Sometimes you have practical jokers and sometimes you're reading the news and all of a sudden somebody snuck up behind me and you're reading the news and you look out and you got fire in your hands 'cause someone has touched a match to your print. So you're beating it out trying to carry on. Things can go wrong but usually you find a way. That's where your adlibbing comes in.

Ron: Did that really happen?

Art: Oh yes. I did my share tricks too. A guy was reading and I take shaving cream and spread it on his news one time.

Ron: You can get away with that in a small station.

Art: I'm sure they had their tricks at the bigger stations too.

Wayne: With the call-in, did they have tape delay? Did they delay or did you ever have people sometimes say things on the air that you couldn't bleep out?

Art: I figured that out myself one time 'cause we had some controversy going on here in St. Johns at one time and people were expressing their opinion and there was some officials that didn't really appreciate some of the--. They wonder why you can't edit things out. Someone said, "Well, why don't you just tape the program and then edit all this stuff out next day?" I said, "because you're defeating the purpose. You want to hear from the people." We had two tape recorders and I finally came up with the idea of, okay, if I run the first one, would tape it through. Then I'll run that tape right over the second recorder and that'll give me about a three or four-second delay so if something did happen--. I don't think I ever used it.

Wayne: At least you have the ability to --

Art: I would tell somebody if they complain we could say, "We do have a tape delay. If somebody comes and says something we can--." So we were behind where the person was, listening, was behind about three, four seconds to what I was actually saying. That was a cobbled-up system.

Ron: but it worked.

Wayne: Were there any other interesting things that happened while you were at that station besides the practical jokes that you mentioned?

Art: We took in for a night, a lion.

Wayne: A lion?

Art: What happened is, at the city park they brought in a circus. I'm not certain what the year was but the guy who ran the circus, for some reason they couldn't keep the lion there. It was a pet lion and they needed a place so my brother-in-law says he could keep it in the station. I forgot who it was the next day that came in here was a lion right in the front room.

Wayne: Not a very large building.

Art: No, it was small. I'm thinking if it was in a cage or not, but whoever was in the morning--I don't know if it was me or somebody else came in--and all of a sudden they're looking at--. "What's a lion doing here in the station?"

Ron: That would wake you up even if you hadn't had your coffee!

Art: Then the time we had one of our major snowstorms and I lived out in the country about six, seven miles north. Bob called me up, my brother-in-law, said, "We're on the air, but there's nobody else coming in." I said, "okay." So what'd I do? There's an old country western song where a guy was running around and his wife says, "That'll be enough for you," and took away his car keys but she forgot he had a John Deere." I got a John Deere Model M tractor and I had a snow blade on the front. This is six, seven, eight miles north. I drove that John Deere all the way into the station and I was plowing snow. I was working for the road commission; didn't know I was working for the road commission. I left early in the morning and got there and I went out that night. That was interesting.

Wayne: Probably didn't go more than 10 miles an hour. Most of those old tractors didn't go very fast.

Art: No, they wouldn't. I had the throttle all the way up on it but then when you hit a snow drift or something--and I made it. I was dressed like an Eskimo.

Wayne: How long did you have to stay there once you got there?

Art: It was for the rest of the day 'til we signed off. At that time, since we were directional [daytime only], we were on probably in the wintertime--. Eight o'clock in the morning was sign on and sign off about five, five-thirty.

Wayne: The short days of the winter.

Art: I don't think I slept over the night. I think I went home. Those are memories and there's so many things. If I had time to think it all over, I could probably tell you a thousand stories, some you wouldn't believe, some I don't believe now that I did. Of course, when you're in your 20's, you do all kinds of challenging--. I always thought it was a challenge and I thought it was something I needed to do, keeping the people informed of what's happening. It was that kind of a drive too.

Wayne: It was the days of small-town radio. There's very few left anymore. I'm shocked if I get to a place and there's actually a station that's a small-town station where they call in items they want to sell and all those kinds of things.

Art: If they have anybody live and someone actually there. Well, like right now, the station, it was sold several times and it was sold to one group that was doing a good job, I thought, of country and western station there, but they only had it for a couple of years. A former employee bought it out one time too. And now it's owned by a black company, religious, and so they have all religion, but they're on 24 hours a day now.

Wayne: Not very strong at night. I think they have a translator now, don't they on FM? In Lansing, I think there's a translator.

Wayne: Why did your brother-in-law buy the station back after he'd sold it? I know he sold it.

Art: I think maybe some people just couldn't make the payments. I think it fell back that way. At that time I was working at WILS Radio in Lansing.

Wayne: After you left, you went to WILS, did you? Around '72?

Art: '72, '73, and I worked there for 'till 1980. I had some good times there. I had a super boss. Keith Cummings was his name. He was the news director. Erik O. was Erik O. Furseth, he was a well-known name in Lansing, used to do record hops and everything else down at the civic center.

Wayne: I remember him.

Art: You're smiling! Erik was a super guy. It was interesting when I was hired there. I was hired into the news section and reporting, basically, on local politics and city hall, the state capitol. At that time you'd maybe put four hours in the morning reporting news and then you go to the station and you report news from there. They turned me into a full-time reporter just covering the city hall and the state capitol.

They left me on my own. That's kind of unusual. You know why? I think it was 'cause I had that energy to dig for stories instead of--. Usually they'll say, "Okay, the governor's going to have a news conference at such and such. Here's another thing." Everything was kind of planned out for you. I did, not only cover those, but I looked for something else. I just didn't report one or two stories. If I could find another story or two other stories, I covered that. I dug up news at that time.

Ron: You obviously enjoyed doing that.

Art: Yes. They gave me flexibility and they enjoyed it. Then I think that's why they decided, instead of bringing me back in for four hour on the air reading news, just leave me out there and cover--.

Wayne: Did you miss being a disc jockey during those times?

Art: In a way I did but then, I didn't. At the station I could see the guys playing--. I was getting to that age there, up in the 30's. Music was changing too. I got enthused with news. It's just something that I kind of took over and I enjoyed it.

Wayne: Were you still living in St. Johns at the time driving back and forth every day?

Art: Yeah. I had an opportunity one time to join a station down in Detroit, outside in Monroe or something. They were looking for a news director. I went down there and they offered the job to me but I would've had to pull the children out of school. My wife had just, I think, started and it was more than just me. You get started in something and you want to keep going. You go higher 'cause you're going to get an increase in pay and so forth.

Wayne: You want to be in a major metropolitan area and maybe move on to a bigger station there.

Art: You can be a member of this golf club and everything else. I said I wasn't really interested in too much of that at that time. I was more concerned about the family and what it would do to them. You pull kids out of school from one area and you put them in something else, new environment. Sometimes it's good. I liked it out in the country. I got a little bit of country in me. When I say that, I was born in Pennsylvania, like I mentioned before, and then went to the city. I went from a country bumpkin to a city slicker. Then when I went up to Houghton Lake, I was a city slicker up there but I became a country bumpkin again.

Wayne: After WILS, where did you go?

Art: I worked there up until about 1980 and I got acquainted with Tom Green, who was a reporter at that time for Channel 2 WJBK, I think it was. He had an offer to WDIV Channel 4, out of Detroit, wanted to open up a Lansing bureau. Tom took that job and he wanted somebody with him that was kind of, I think we called a digger. I had contacts with news people and officials and so forth. I don't know if he had a knack for getting stuff out but anyhow he asked me to join him and be a photographer too. So we opened up a Lansing Bureau, the first Detroit TV station to have actually a bureau--. We had a house right across from the Capitol. I worked there for two years and we ruffled some feathers during that time. I was into investigative reporting, to investigative news. There's a thousand stories I could tell you about how we confiscated records from the governor's office that was going to their historical place. We found all kinds of things inside there: how one wife complained that her husband, who was a state rep,

was running around and wanted the governor to intercede, and the little things--. The governor found out who got the records. We got it from somebody else that delivered it to our doorstep. They threatened, the state police, to come and storm trooping into our office so we returned the records.

Wayne: But you'd already read them.

Art: I think I even photocopied-- and I tell Ron, I think I've got some of those things somewhere hidden in my house. I imagine the black helicopter would be flying over my place sometime and landing in the front yard but that was funny.

Wayne: So for those two years you were behind the scenes primarily?

Art: I was behind the camera at certain points and digging up more information.

Wayne: More of a researcher.

Art: I was arrested. I don't know if Ron ever knew that. That was when I was working for the station and Tom was at the local Y[MCA] working out and so forth. I wasn't charged to cover a hearing. That was on Congressmen [Charles Coles] Diggs. I think it was, he's trying to get his mortuary license back. I made a check with the attorney general's office. At that time, they were kind of sketchy about if you could record things or not. If you're there with a newspaper, you had your pin and they have photographers there too. I wanted to make sure that it was okay to be there in the meeting and doing a video recording of it and so forth. We were given assurance. Stanley Steinborn--I think he was underneath Frank Kelly [Attorney General] --and I talked to him personally and we got the okay. So we went over there and Sen. Basil Brown at that time objected to the cameras. So the hearing officers said, "Stop recording." I said, "No, we have the right to be there to record." So one thing led to another and they had a recess of the hearing and then in comes a state police. They said, "Are you going to remove that camera?" I said, "You can. I'm not going to." The next thing, I found myself in handcuffs. The one ironic thing and I feel sorry for it--I'm surprised I'm still married to her--is my wife because at that time my wife was working in the state and she was a court reporter at that hearing. She was actually recording and here she sees her husband being arrested and taken in handcuffs. We were held in the state police headquarters there and then the prosecutor, Peter [D.] Houk, who was a judge, I think. [Ingham Co. Prosecutor and circuit court judge]--I don't know if he's a still judge or retired now, but he refused --. What happened is I had a lot of this stuff on tape. When the police came in, we were recording. I told my photographer at that time, 'cause I had an assistant too, "Whatever happens, keep recording." Just whatever and kept the cameras going. So when the cop got ahold of the equipment and he dropped the camera, dropped it. You could see all that. You could see the camera falling, hitting the floor, and turning down and on its side. I had the tape and we were in the headquarters and there was a gal from the AP [Associated Press]. I attempted to get that tape cassette out of there and give it to her to be safe but the guy said, "Don't touch your equipment." So we didn't, but we kept it and that turned out to be--'cause we went to court later on--and I think that's why I lost a job a few months after that. I was working also part-time for WJR and broadcasting from the Capitol for them part time. Then I got the job with Channel 10, but anyhow, that's the story.

Wayne: Did that cause you to lose the job? They didn't want to deal with the issue?

Art: Yeah, I think it was. There were some big political figures there and there was something else too. I had dug up some information on some other judge, a high judge in Detroit. Don't know what his name was but when I gave the information to my boss, Tom Green, he wrote the story up there and called him

a crook or something. I know that brought a lot of flak and I was paid a visit and said, "Your service is no longer needed." So I was out of a job there.

Wayne: Channel 10?

Art: Yeah. At that time I was also forming a radio network, Michigan News Network. That's still in existence now. It's a long story there, but "Denny" McLain [Detroit Tigers pitcher] got his hands into that. I objected. He wanted whatever was controlling interests and at that time Denny McLain had bought into Farmer Peet's and did them in. He did the same thing with the Michigan News Network.

Ron: You had a connection with WJR, you said?

Art: I was doing part-time reporting, contracting with them, and I would give them information and tell them what's coming up because they had a full-time bureau at one time.

Ron: in Lansing?

Art: uh huh. Things are being cut back on budget. That's another part of my life.

Wayne: At the same time, you said you were starting the Michigan News Network. It was for capitol reporting primarily?

Art: [Robert T.] "Bob" Driscoll, he worked a little bit at the station too here in St. Johns. I got acquainted with him. He was doing a farm show and I think that's still going, Michigan Farm [Radio] Network or something. He got me involved with the network. In fact, I was still working at WILS too and then feeding information to the network. That was run out of Milan, I believe.

Wayne: Was it primarily to serve smaller town stations?

Art: Yeah, it was. I think they started off with something like about 10 or 15 stations. I think [it] grew up to maybe 32 or 35 but it's still going now. I think it's still under that same--. If I had to do it all over again, I probably would have made a little more contribution but I had my hands tied in with WILS Radio and WJR and even at DIV at that time. So many irons in the fire.

Ron: Had your hands in lots of different places.

Wayne: When you lost the job, you then moved to Channel 10 kind of part time, full time, but you're still doing the Michigan News Network on the side? Was it in Jackson at the time or had they moved?

Art: No, it was Jackson, but they had an office there in Lansing. Sparrow Hospital now has taken it. It's where the parking ramp is. That's where the parking ramp is, right there on the corner--

Wayne: Pennsylvania and Michigan?

Art: It was right there at the corner. The studios were in Jackson.

Wayne: So you didn't have to go to Jackson. You just worked out of the Lansing?

Art: Yeah. We did stories there, put the stories together. Five o'clock or something, we had a shuttle. You put all the tapes in a mailbag and run it down to the station; you get down to the station just a few minutes before airtime and they're shoving these cassettes in there. Howard Lancour--he was well-known--. He used to work for Channel 6 WJIM, Mr. Mayor and Al E. Khatt, I think it was. Howard was a super guy too. One time I can still remember, we were driving there and we got into a traffic jam and I

think it was Mark Wilson, whoever was driving, says, well he knows a better way, get out of the jam. He took that and that put us back. We heard from Howard on the two-way radio. He says, "Where are you guys? We mentioned the road. He says, "Okay, that's all I need to know. You're not going to make it in time." So he was putting the stuff--. I can still remember. We got to the station and somebody ran in with the bag of tapes and jammed them in there. Howard continued reporting the local news after he had filled in whatever it was. If I had told you some of those stories before, you wouldn't have believed it. It's like watching a Alfred Hitchcock movie. We never know what the end's going to be like.

Wayne: So you worked in news for a while.

Art: I started off as investigative reporter and did that and I was getting kind of burned out. I mean, I enjoyed it to a certain extent but then everything was kind of so much negative stuff. It was good and bad. I had my various run-ins and you're worried if you're going to make it today. The wife is worrying about closing the shades at night 'cause you don't know who's going to be outside? I was stepping on toes and coming across stories where I had one guy meet me in a van. He tried to pull off a story and he had a hot dog in his hand. He said, "You can have a hot dog." I say, "You're going to have to offer me more than a hot dog to buy me out." They say a man has his price. I said, "Mine is more than a hot dog and a Coke," but after a while--.

There was so many good stories out there. Also it was kinda over one lawsuit that was against this station. Her lawyer wanted to know all my information and I gave him a stack. I'm not kidding. It was probably about seven or eight inches tall. All the stuff they did on the story, digging up information. You know what the attorney said one time? He said, "You did too good of a job." They didn't want to go into it 'cause they're on a retainer. They said, "It's easier to settle," and they settled for some paltry amount. Wasn't very much, but anyhow, I told the news director, "I'm done with that." He looked at me. "You're sure?" I says, "You see my face? Does it look like I'm serious?" I gave him my serious face look, of course, and I said, "I'm not going to do anymore." I said, "I'd like to do something more of a human interest." I started up with the idea of *Route 10*. I guess I took that a lot from *Route 66*, the old TV show and I said, "What can I get for a good name?" I said, "*Route 10*." So I tried it out with management and they liked it and it went on for quite a--. I thought it was corny at times.

Ron: Route 10? You mean US-10?

Art: Route 10, TV station, TV-10. I named it after that.

Wayne: How many of those stories did you do in a typical week or month? I'm trying to remember.

Art: At that time, when I first started, it was every night. It was five days a week.

Wayne: You'd have to come up with five good stories?

Art: I don't know if they're good stories but they were --. I didn't say, "Is this story going to be good or not?" Usually, if I found one, I'd turn it out to be what I thought was good. It was just five stories at that time. Things have changed so much in TV. A lot of stuff, they feed this stuff into a computer and they put data together here. We had to do it with editing machines. You had to have one editing machine go back seven seconds and the other one go back seven seconds; they both come and they--. That's how you made your edits. It was really interesting in a way. It's amazing we got some stuff on there. Then

they always say, "You got to keep your stuff to a certain number of seconds or minutes." I always went beyond that. Sometimes I said, "I can't do it in 59 seconds. I got to have a minute and 10 seconds."

Ron: You want a good story?

Art: That was an interesting part and I enjoyed that. I think I did that for at least eight years or so. Actually, I retired in '98 because at that time my wife and I, my family, were taking care of an uncle who had Alzheimer's. We brought him home to live with us and it was four years. That was difficult 'cause I was doing my stories. I'd shoot them on one day and then go in at night and the station was very good at allowing me to do stuff. I'd go home in the morning and then my wife, who was working, would leave. So we were taking care of my uncle at that time, had Alzheimer's. She would watch him during the night and I'd watch him during the day and I was still putting out stories and stuff like that.

Wayne: Were a lot of these story ideas that were suggested to you? Did people call you up and say, "Hey, why don't you interview--?"

Art: Sometimes I have that. I'd be mostly digging and looking, like one up here. There are so many stories around that. St. John's, not too far from my house, there was a sign said, "home of the happy hog." Well, home of the happy hog. There has to be a story there and it was a farmer, Jim Jorae. He passed away here a few years ago but he had a farm there. He was raising hogs too but they had this potbellied pig and that was their kinda pet. That was home of the happy hog, I guess. That story itself led to all kinds of, "Who's the hog here? Certainly isn't your wife!" I have a kind of a sense of humor. Some people would call it--. I don't know what they would call it but I always did it with a smile on my face. I know that I didn't mean any harm by it.

This one story that I was telling Ron about. This was when I went to semi-retirement. When I told them I want to retire, they wondered if I could keep on some way. I said, "Well, give me a camera and I'll take my dog, named Duke." My old Dodge truck at that time had a hundred and some thousand miles on it-- "So I'll just hit the road." Then doing the stories, which I did, back in 2000, when the gas prices were high and it cost more to run that old Dodge--it only got about 12 miles a gallon--I tried to figure a way to save money on gas. I was going to drive my old John Deere, put a trailer in the back. John Frolka at Shephardsville says, "Wait a minute. You're only going to get so many miles a gallon on that." So I stopped out at Cochran's Golf Sales and talked to the owner there and I kind of gave him an idea. I said, "What kind of miles do you get in a golf cart?" So I gave him an idea. "How about me taking that golf cart on a trip?" He had his son there. His son is there now, Mark, and put together this--. He put, on golf cart, bigger tires and it had a motorcycle trailer in the back; decked it out; and I even had a canvas on the top. I still have that cart today. So I was off and running it; put a tent in the back; and took the dog and we were off, just hit the road.

Wayne: How many miles did you go?

Art: Oh, shoot. I don't know how many miles it was but I started going into Shiawassee County and then I went up to Gratiot County.

Ron: You went from your house to Gratiot County and Shiawassee County with a golf cart?

Art: Yup. The first stop was Shephardsville, John Frolka, and I stayed overnight there in some neighbor's trailer. Next day I ended up in some camp up in Gratiot County or Montcalm. It was a motorcyclist club. That was an interesting at night. I told my dog, I said, "Stay close to me inside this tent." I kind of found another little thing. I'd go traveling. I'd come across 10-cent cans, so stop the golf cart; "Okay, Duke, stay in there;" get the can; throw the can in the back. So I am driving my golf cart with a load of cans, cleaning the highway, and making some money for my gas. This a good way to go. I think I was on the road for a good week or so. I did stories on that along the way. You can run across stories and interesting people you run across.

Wayne: All the stories were edited after you got back? Filmed it as you went along?

Art: I would record it and send the tape in. I think my photographer ended up putting the editing together. I would just record to voice it and give him the tapes.

Wayne: They pick them up along the way?

Art: Either that, or I mailed them. I might've mailed some, I'm not sure how I got them now. That's a good question. How did I get them back? I got them back somehow. It might've been I met some of them when they had other news crews in a way or something, drop it off to them or something. Oh, I know what it was. I had a gal, Meymo Lyons, I think. She worked for a country station, WITL. She came to work with us. She lived on [M]21 and I used to drop tapes off to her and she'd take it into the station. I do remember some things once in a while.

Ron: How long did you do this golf cart thing?

Art: You mean on this particular story?

Ron: I mean, used the golf cart.

Art: Basically, that was just for that one. Everything else was in my old Dodge truck. I went down to Florida. I went out west to South Dakota to the big buffalo roundup out there. Interesting to see Crazy Horse, the big monument up there. It's beautiful and saw things that normally I wouldn't see, hadn't seen.

Wayne: Didn't you go overseas at one point?

Art: That was another avenue too with the travel agency. We went on trip, my wife and I, to be host to this travel company, Holiday Travels, I think was the name of it. So they'd advertise and people wanted to go. They used whatever talent I had and people were interested in going and they'd sign up to go. We went all over the place with it: Germany, Europe, Switzerland, Greenland, Australia. That was one of my dreams in life, was to retire young enough so I could travel and then travel other countries. When this came up at the station, it was a godsend. I could go over there. I was recording at that time. I was doing a lot of the recording myself and my wife. Here I was going on trips that I wanted to take but I didn't have to spend any money. It was fun.

You met a lot of people. I met a guy on there down in Mason. Turned out he had a--I told you about this the other night--caboose that he had in his backyard for years in the city. This is right in the city where

you have houses right together and here he had his caboose. He was a train man. You get people like that. I met one gentleman, Ray Schomish. He owned the Kurt's Appliance Store here. I didn't know, after I got on the trip with him, that he had owned the property where I have a house there now. You meet so many different people and they have so many different stories and you reach into their inner souls. You find out, you know what? We got a lot of good people out there. There's a lot of good people but you don't hear their stories that much. You know why? Because at the station, and a lot of stations probably had it, *If it bleeds, it leads*, which means, if it's bloody, it's going to be the lead story. That's the way it was.

I was able to add, at least at the end--that's where *Route 10* came up—I gave them something at the end that they could maybe bring a smile to somebody's face or say, "That was interesting. I didn't know that." There is some good news out there. You just got to find it.

Wayne: When did you finally retire from doing that?

Art: From the whole thing, completely severing? About 2002, 2001. In fact, I was in Pennsylvania when they had the attack on 9/11. If I had to do it over again, I guess I would have been more involved there. I'm surprised the station didn't contact 'cause they didn't know I was out in Pennsylvania, about 80 miles away from where the planes went down, but there was so much stuff going on there. What's a small-time reporter going to be--? It has to be about 2002.

Wayne: And what was maybe one or two of the strangest or funniest or most unusual interviews you ever did?

Art: I thought I covered some of that.

Ron: I was hoping you'd ask that question.

Art: The funniest one? Oh, I guess there is one and this was brought to me by a schoolteacher. I'm trying to think his name, down by Eaton Rapids, I think. Almost had it there. He told me about this. Sometimes you get somebody, a viewer that watches a story. He told me about this fish and we got an award for it at one of the where they entered it into an award thing. He says, "How would you like to go out and have dinner with Buford?" "Buford who?" "Well, come on up here." He ran across this guy that had a friend called, Buford. So I'm not going to give you the whole story right off at the beginning. I'll tell you what it was. So we go up there. Hicks, I think, was his last name, that schoolteacher. So we go up and this is somewhere up around Harrison, I believe. We pulled in this guy's driveway and he says, "You're here to have lunch with Buford?" I said, "Yeah." So we get out and at that time I had my photographer, Keith, with me and so we get out and he drags equipment out and so forth, and we go over to this pond, big old fishing pond and he says, "Okay, we're going to have lunch with Buford. Here, take this minnow and put it in your teeth and bend over to the pond, over the edge of the water." I said, "Okay, you guys are setting me up 'cause someone's gonna give me a big push from behind and I'm going to go in minnow-in-mouth and all." If I do that," I said, "I'll throw my wallet on the shore because I don't want to get that wet." "No, go ahead." I put that minnow down there, dipped in the water, dangled it in the water and then a split second, pshew! There it comes, a big old bass, grabbed that minnow! That was Buford. I've got that somewhere in my archives of tapes somewhere. That was my adventure with--. That was fun and the guy had mentioned, when he was just a little fella, he used to follow him around on the pond and then finally gave him this. Then he fed him and he got him to eat out his hands and then his mouth. When I did the story, I had the music of the popular movie at that time, *Jaws*. dun, dun, dun. I had fun editing that. When you can edit your own stuff a little bit, instead of having somebody else edit it. I mean they can do a good job but sometimes you know exactly how you want things played. I said, "I want that *Jaws* music"

Ron: That's probably the craziest thing I've ever heard.

Wayne: Was that one that got maybe the most response from an audience?

Art: Well, we played that. I don't know if you ever saw that or not. If you saw it, you would have known it, 'cause I ended up playing that--. Sometimes, whatever it was for a reason, I couldn't make it a studio or something, we have a *Best of Route 10* and so forth so that got played several times and got a lot of response from that. That was fun!

I won't go into stories where I thought I was going to be shot or I was going to be run over or anything like that. When Ron said, "Come out and do this interview," I don't see myself as a personality. People would come over and say, "Oh you're a celebrity!" I met some lady over here coming out of Owosso. She said, "I recognize that face." I used to always say, "Where, from the post office where they used to put your FBI most-wanted?" "What's your name?" I told them. "You worked at the station. I got to call up my mother." I said, "What for?"

Ron: You are famous! Stop being so humble!

Art: I didn't look at myself as being a celebrity. So she brought her husband out and I told him, 'I was your wife's heart throb when she was about that tall.' I said, "I've been retired for 18 years. You have people still recognize you." In a way that's rewarding, makes you feel good, but I never looked at myself as anything but as a reporter, whether it's serious or hard stories or light stories. I just, as I told my boss one time--I said, "Hey, I'm not here for a long time. I'm here for a fun time." That's the way I approached my work situation.

Ron: I think the bottom line is you enjoyed what you were doing and you did a heck of a job.

Art: I don't know about a heck of a job but I did a job. I enjoy being retired. Now I look at what--and there's a lot of talent out there. Now you have to have a college education. I didn't have a college education, just came up there with, like I said, school of hard knocks or whatever you want to call it. It was something that was--. I had a desire. Look at some of the great inventors of stuff.

Ron: Look at Thomas Edison.

Art: Look at Einstein. He was smart, but he couldn't make change, he said. You go to the local drive-in, McDonald's and so forth, and if they don't have a computer there, something that tells them how much they give back, they don't know how much money to give you back sometimes.

Wayne: After you retired, did you ever do go back and do any specials or did you basically just walk away from radio and television?

Art: Yep. That's it, except sometimes when I hear a siren going. I'm out in the country and on the farm working around and I hear siren. There's one siren, there's two sirens, three. Okay, somethings going on. That was my interest, the news. Something's going on. What is it? So I'd get in the truck or something, run down and see. If it's something big, I would call into the station and say, "Hey, there's a traffic jam here. It looks like there's a semitruck over."

Wayne: Okay. So call-in tips occasionally.

Art: Right. I've done my share of that. As far as working though, I've never had that desire to go out and go back to work.

Wayne: I think, Ron, you mentioned to me that you wanted to talk about Shephardsville.

Art: You want to hear that one? You say interesting story, here's another interesting story and it's a good one and it still lives today in a way. The [Clinton County] Historical Society here was very important in helping me. In fact, they're the ones that really started things off with a small sign. So I'm

traveling and I was looking for different stories. This was in 1995. The reason I know that is because the first professional football game played in Michigan was in 1895 [Michigan Rushers].

Ron: You were working for who at that time?

Art: Channel 10 and so I'm out doing my *Route 10* stories and looking. I just driving by and I told my photographer, "Let's stop in and see John at Shephardsville."

Ron: Shephardsville, you knew John before this?

Art: No, I didn't. I may have heard his name or something, but I didn't know him as such. I did know Wayne Ackles and he had a place where he did radiator repair out on the corner. He used to work at Bee's [Chevrolet & Oldsmobile, St. Johns] years ago. Anyhow, I said, "Let's go to Shephardsville, because that's a small town. What is in Shephardsville? You got one little market and you had this radiator shop; then you had this other thing. It just said "parts" on it [Frolka Auto Service]. So I stopped into the parts place and going to do a story on, *Here's a Small Town*. So, "What's here in Shephardsville? You've got two or three businesses." I learned the guy's name is John Frolka. I said, "Ok, John, tell me." He says, "Well, it's where the first professional football game was played." "Ha, Ha!" That's the kind of response I gave him except maybe a lot louder. "Yeah right! Give me a break here! I don't see any stadium." I'm thinking if there was a stadium, there's going to be some bleachers or something. There's gotta be something that you can see. He said, "No. There's a sign out there." I told the photographer, "Let's go out there." We go out there and there's a--. It's about like a bookcase thing.

Ron: About the size of that up there, isn't it?

Art: Yeah. Maybe a little smaller, whatever that would be, 10' by something. Anyhow, it sits there and it says, "This is where the first professional football was game played in 1895." I said, "Well, all right, Keith, shoot. Give me different angle shots or whatever you can do and we'll go back and talk to him." I said, "That's interesting." So he's shooting at it and I'm looking at it and I've got 1895 and this is 1995. I said, "John, are you having a celebration here?" "What for?" I says, "First professional football game, according to sign was 1895. This is 1995. So let's subtract that from 19--. That's a hundred years! You've got to have a hundred-year celebration going on. You got to have something going on." I did a story on it anyhow. Besides that I went and got canisters. I brought a canister to John; I brought one to Wayne Ackles; and brought one to Clare Alderman, at that time was Alderman's Party Store [Alderman's Country Store] or whatever it's called. I say, "Let's take up contributions and get something so we can have some celebration going on. You got to have something." That was July 4, 1895, is when they had it. This was March or April maybe when I ran across that story, about two months away from it. I got ahold of Betty Minsky. I forgot to tell you about this. I was not only reporting for the radio but I also did some reporting for *Lansing State Journal* through Betty Minsky 'cause sometimes Betty would have meetings to cover and she couldn't cover it and she asked me to cover them and a photographer. I took some shots for them sometimes, train or car accidents. I do have a little bit of print in my blood too. Go back to the story here--I know I'm boring guys with it--but anyhow, I get the canister going. Then I got ahold of Betty Minsky and told her a bit of what I was doing and pretty soon we got a committee together. Now committees normally are committees and you don't get much done but in a two-month time, we got enough to make: Let's recreate, in honor of those back in 1895, a football game. Then I got connections with--I think it was Doug Japinga. He was teacher and he had a Sports Action [Sports Section] place where he made sports stuff. We had shirts printed up and hats and so forth. Then I got

ahold of Roger Beebee, who is an insurance man downtown, but he also did referee on the side. So there's my referee and pretty soon we got going because of that sign. I said, "Well, let's have a football game." So we got this all together in about two months' time. Shephardsville is a community, maybe 35 people. We had about 400 or 500 people gathered in the church parking lot. At that time it was dirt and we got ahold of somebody from the Ovid-Elsie School. Those guys chalked out the football field for us. We had a football field and had another guy make goal posts and so forth. Here comes July 4th, 1995. We had a football game.

The next year we decided to replace that sign and Betty Minsky from the Historical Society went to work again and got contributions. We had some guys that worked in foundation and builders and so forth. We had them dig a hole down there in front of Alderman's Market, which is different now. It's Country Market now or something. We put a memorial sign up there and it sits there today. That was the next year's project.

Every year we've had a celebration right on up until this year. Everybody's canceling out stuff because of this COVID scare. Everybody's running around with tails between their legs. I said, "You know what, John, we never made a decision about holding another game until about--." I said, "John, are you going to have a thing here this year?" "Yeah, I guess so," about three weeks before. So then we're putting all this stuff together. I mean, one time we had a tractor parade; we had a guy fly over. I had a guy, Robert's Auto Repair up north of town. He's a pilot, built his own plane. That's another great story I did with him. We had him flying over overhead. He had a walkie talkie up there and I had a walkie talkie down there. We were feeding it through the speaker system. You wouldn't think it would work but it did. (muffled broadcasting sounds). I said, "Let your smoke out now." The crowd is down below. Anyhow, back to this year, I said, "Everybody's canceling it. Let's not cancel it." I said, "It means too much to me and others." The memory of those, if you ever read the story, go back and he's got hundreds of stories. Those guys traveled up to Ithaca and other places like that in a buckboard and on horseback. Could you imagine driving a horse or riding a horse, in a wagon all the way up to Ithaca? At one time one of them said they had played in a snowstorm. Then they come back. Can you imagine that? It just struck me so much. I said, "Those guys, they were tough. They were tough!" Anyhow, we did have another celebration, not as many people. We gave free hot dogs. That's how we had the first year in 1995. I said, "Let's have free hot dogs and pop."

Ron: This year.

Art: We had it the first year too but then it developed into some potluck and stuff and it was pretty much the interest. That's where the [Historical] Society came in and they helped out a lot. They got a lot of funds brought in there and then we had a lot of people donating stuff; guy donated the brick work. If you ever go over there--. In fact, the next year after we had that, there was a pastor [Merlin Pratt] and his wife built a little metal foot with a football there and that sits on top of it.

Ron: Have you ever seen it, Wayne?

Wayne: Yes.

Art: Did you ever stop there and look at it?

Wayne: I haven't gotten out. Next time I go by, I need to get out.

Art: Did you see the little football on the top of the foot?

Wayne: Just from the road.

Art: Have you seen the iron thing up top? I know it's hard to see sometime. I always wonder maybe we ought to paint it a different color.

Ron: That's a nice monument.

Art: John Teare, I think it was his name. He was in the Historical Society. He had that kind of fire that I found there. When I saw that sign, maybe John Teare was there saying, "Hey, we had this sign here. We saw the story too." The *Detroit Free Press* did stories on it back in '55 and so forth. You've got copies of that here. That's my life history and I'm sticking to it unless you got some more questions.

Wayne: Do you have anything, Ron?

Ron: I can't think of. I think we've covered it pretty good.

Wayne: We've gone about an hour and 20 minutes, so we probably should--

Art: You told me it was only gonna be an hour.

Ron: He didn't know you were that interesting.

Art: Every day, you wake up in the morning and when someone questions whether there's a God. I said, "Listen, just look about you." I said, "Look up there in the sky at night and see all those millions of stars or whatever they are. Even with the powerful telescopes, nobody has found even a bug or anything else that's living on there. Here, this planet is far enough away from the sun so it doesn't burn up and not close enough that it freezes. It's got life and the different amount of lifes that are on here." I said, "We take life for granted so much." I'm going to be gone here in a few years and you guys will be following me. You've got to figure out what did you contribute to life.

Ron: You might be following us.

Art: Who knows? The man upstairs or the woman or whatever they want to say, or it. Nowadays you don't know what to say. You don't know if you're offending somebody. My philosophy is, and I probably offended other people, but I don't mean to do it to hurt somebody. I might just say flippant, but I think we take things too serious. We don't see the joy in life sometimes, that you can needle somebody. Nowadays you can't even tell a joke anymore. You don't hear any Polish jokes. You don't hear any other jokes and you can make jokes with me and I don't care. In fact, my wife calls me the biggest joke around. I do say I have a lovely wife. She's been one that's stood by me and when you get somebody like that--. As I told Ron the other day, we all have our differences. At home, at times we have disagreements and so forth. I always mention to my wife. Sometimes I say, "What happens if this is our last day on earth, our last day to see each other? How do we feel the next day? So we've got to take this relationship and cherish it and forget about this." I can be a bad person at times, I guess, but we got to value other people. Whatever I contribute to life--. I had great parents, some good friends.

Wayne: Thanks a lot. I really enjoyed this.

Art: I hope it added something to it.

Ron: I learned a lot sitting here today.

Art: You learned that I was arrested.

Ron: Fascinating! Maybe we should have another session sometime, Art.

Art: You'd probably ask about some of the people that have impressed you too, some that I've met. I've met my share of presidents and so forth like that: Ford when he came in the Capitol to meet with [Governor] Milliken. One of the ones I really enjoyed when I was on in the morning--I found out he was coming to be our guest on the morning show--is Soupy Sales. Soupy Sales was different than me because, you know why? 'Cause I was in Detroit at that time when he was working for--

Wayne: He was on Channel 7, wasn't he?

Art: I think so. At that time you go to school and we had lunch hour and we had to walk. So we left the school. You went home and you had lunch with Soupy and White Fang, Black Tooth. You remember?

Wayne: I did not grow up in the area, but I had relatives in the area so if you were visiting them, you had to watch Soupy Sales.

Art: He was a character. It was at noon he'd come on. After that, then you go back to school.

Wayne: I don't think he wasn't scripted or anything ahead of time, was he?

Art: No. He had a performance in Jackson. This is when I was still working so it had to be 1998 or '97, somewhere around there when I was filling in doing morning anchor, when he came in there. I couldn't resist it. I'm sorry. He had a publicity man there too. So I went into the other room and he came in there where we were going to do the interviewing and I had it ready. Of course, he was noted for pie in the face. "Hey Soup, how about that?" And I threw it to him but it was just confetti. Then he says, "That got in my coffee!" "We won't charge you nothing for it, Soup."

Ron: You've had an interesting life. I'll tell you that!

Art: One of the funniest things about Soupy Sales I can still remember in my days. He always opened the door. "Who's there?" Someone's knocking. Did you ever see any of his programs?

Wayne: Yes, I know what you're taking about, who the people are.

Art: Soupy's there. I think it's his birthday. He's doing his show and so forth. Door knocked. He opened up that door. All of a sudden he burst out laughing. It turned out to be, for his birthday they had a stripper. She was nude. When he opened up that door and he sees this nude lady standing there, that just brought it out of him. That's what I learned later on was so funny.

Wayne: That was live television in the '50's.

Art: You never knew what was going to happen. Well, Wayne, it's been a pleasure meeting you too.

Wayne: I enjoyed it.