

Thoughts

Interviewer: John R. Elsey (son), 5/20/24

John R.
Here we go.

John C. Elsey
Okay.

John R.
Got your breath?

John C. Elsey
I'm okay for the moment, so.

John R.
Okay, we'll try not to take your breath away with these questions.

John C. Elsey
Ooh, okay.

John R.
All right.

John C. Elsey
No, who takes my breath away is Mavis, but she gets it all the time.

John R.
Okay, so we closed the door so she can't come in, so we should be okay.
Okay, here's the first question of four.
If others were to describe you, what would you hope they would say?

John C. Elsey
I would hope they would say, I'm a good guy.

John R.
Okay.

John C. Elsey
That's basically it.

John R.
Are there any other attributes you'd hope they'd consider when they think of you?

John C. Elsey
Well, I was honest. Truthful. Never lied. Yeah. Empathetic, sympathetic to their needs and wants.
A friend, someone they could trust. And someone they could call on for help.

John R.
Yeah, I think you have, I think all those apply to you. First, I thought you were gonna go down to Boy Scout Law

for a second.

John C. Elsey

Oh, we could. Trustworthy, loyal, helpful... Well, yeah, we could go down that list.

John R.

That would all apply.

John C. Elsey

That's a good list, yeah.

John R.

Okay. Second question. What key life lessons have you learned and come to appreciate?

John C. Elsey

The Book of Mormon says that if you keep my commandments, you'll prosper on the land. And I think we've tried to keep the commandments all of our life, my wife and I. And we feel prospered. We're not rich, but we're not poor either.

We're very comfortable in our life, very satisfied. So I think the attribute of keeping the commandments is basically a good way to live your life. And I have learned that I'm happiest when I do that.

It provides me the greatest satisfaction and joy. And when I'm not doing maybe what I show that it's not so pleasant, but the gospel is the way to go. I guess, so the question, read it again?

John R.

So what key life lessons have you learned and appreciated?

John C. Elsey

Okay. I'm an engineer by profession and schooling. And I think, what do engineers do? And I think they try to make the best things possible. I try to optimize it, try to make better automobiles, better airplanes, better computers, better TV sets.

And I've worked all my life basically trying to make things better, get better algorithms, better ways to do things. And I think that you're trying to find the very best. You don't always do that. But I think the way to live your life, the Lord has said, is the very best way to do it.

It's an optimal way.

John R.

It's been optimized for you.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, it's been optimized. The laws are laid down, the rules. It's not restrictive, particularly. In fact, I wish, sometimes there was more guidance.

It's not, and you're kind of left on your own to ponder and wonder and kind of work things out. So which I think is wise on the Lord's part, but basically he's given us the way to live and to make life enjoyable and the best it can be because he's all-knowing, he's wise.

He knows everything and who can you get as a better teacher or confidant than that.

John R.

Yeah, I think I agree with all of that. You know, it's interesting when I thought of this question, I thought of an experience you shared with me, which I don't know if it completely falls under this question, but you talked about how in college you were just trying to plow through all your required courses and you felt a little frustrated that you had to take a music appreciation course.

And I thought about what kind of lessons you've learned from that experience and how that resulted out and then how that might've been a jumping off point for you as well and other things.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, well, that was the dean of the engineering school, said those classes will be your best ones, and a little 17 year-old guy said, no, they won't.

He said, yes, they will. And I said, no, they won't. And he said, they will. And he was right. He was an older and mature guy, been through more of life's experience than I had. And yeah, he was right.

But yeah.

John R.

I think that probably circles back to your original answer as well, right? As a, as kind of a metaphor.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, I guess. Yeah. Yeah, the Lord is the smart one, and he knows best. And he's loving, and he's kind.

He's not vicious, or he's not trying to get even. He's just trying to help you, because he loves you and wants the very best for you, and he wants to help you get there. So it's a win-win situation, right?

There's no reason not to keep the commandments, unless you want to be miserable, and unless you want to follow Satan, or he gets hold of you too much. And it's not always easy to do what's right, because there's opposition, but that's the best way.

John R.

The optimal path.

John C. Elsey

The optimal path. Yeah, it's been laid out for us.

John R.

Okay, third question. What would you consider to be some of your favorite accomplishments and experiences? I know throughout all these sessions, you've been asked about various experiences in particular times during your life, or while you're doing certain things.

But if you're to look back as a whole, it could be something that you mentioned previously, or just something that's kind of spanning a period of time that you'd consider to be a favorite accomplishment or an experience that might have crossed multiple years perhaps, I don't know.

John C. Elsey

I think my dad was a pioneer in a way, and that he was the first one of his family to go to college. And he pursued it, and it was an inspiration for me. And I think the fact that I wanted to go to school, I didn't always like it, but I felt I needed to do it just in order to provide and take care of things.

And the fact that I finished schooling with the university and pursued, I've got a PhD, although I'm not sure it did me that much good, but it was a good thing to do. Then I think the fact that I was able to provide for myself and the family, able to earn enough and provide enough.

We weren't wealthy, but we never went without. There was always food to eat, and there was always enough around, so... I thinkn, accomplishment that way. And also, trying to live the gospel, I always hesitate to say too much and not say how righteous I am, because I don't feel like I am.

But I have held the temple recommend all my life, which is some measure, I guess, of how you're doing. And the fact that we had church callings all along, and they were privileges to be involved. We served missions, and I was thinking about our mission.

I can't ever remember a time when I wished I was somewhere else instead of there. They said, I never wished I was home, I wished I was out of there. It wasn't always enjoyable, but it was not something that I really wanted to get away from, which is kind of interesting.

And I've appreciated all the blessings that have come. Serving as bishop was a blessing to me in a way. I don't know if it was to anybody else, but it was to me to be able to be involved with people and kind of help them and work through some of the situations and problems.

It was a real blessing. So, I don't know, just the fact that I was able to get an education and provide for my family. And then to have a family too, to have a wife and children, and now grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

John R.

But I'm kind of, that's your responsibility. But I can enjoy all these grandchildren and great -grandchildren we have... I don't know if I've accomplished much, but I enjoyed having them around.

It's interesting to me that you have at least one patent, right?...

John C. Elsey

Um, yeah

John R.

...and you've been key in the development of different things in your career, but those weren't the things that came to mind initially, so as far as accomplishments and experiences.

John C. Elsey

I've always thought that you work in order to provide for your family, and if people would say, well, the career, that's the big thing, I'd say, well, supposedly we're going to give you the same amount of money, the same compensation, you could choose to come to work or not, what would you do?

I think most people would say, oh, well, I'm not going to work, I'll go play or something like that.

John R.

The other thing that I've remembered on occasion, especially when we were growing up, because you graduated ultimately with a PhD, and I remember you getting some mail, in the mailbox that was addressed to Dr. John Elsey and you always seemed to shy away from any sort of title and never wanted to be presented as a doctor or whatever, even though you earned it.

John C. Elsey

Well, I feel a lot of people are the same, basically, and they ought to be treated the same, and there's no special privilege for one or the other- titles or whatnot, but the titles don't...

John R.

Well, that's been a good lesson for me.

John C. Elsey

The aristocracy, the British, is something I find a little annoying, the titles, and the lords, and the barons, and whatever, the servers.

John R.

Yeah, yeah, all of that.

Okay, last question. You ready?

John C. Elsey

Okay.

John R.

What words of wisdom would you like to dispense to your posterity?

John C. Elsey

I thought about that, and what would I wish for my posterity? I would wish that each of them could somehow develop a very personal relationship with their Father in Heaven, and it could be an intimate, personal thing.

It would be of great value to them, and it certainly would be a great benefit to them if they could have that guidance. And then have the peace and the security of knowing that you're loved and cared for and guided.

I would hope that that would be something they would develop. They've got to do it on their own, however, but there would be a personal, intimate relationship with that, with deity, with their Father in Heaven.

John R.

That is so true. And I think you set a good example for that.

John C. Elsey

Well, I hope so. I hope so.

John R.

Dad, I love you.

John C. Elsey

We love you.