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Interviewee: Robert Line and Ann Line
Interviewer: Jack Rowan
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Jack Rowan: Ready to go, all right. The first thing that I wanted to ask you about is if you would tell me a little bit about your grandfather. What brought him to Columbus and his wife, did he meet her here, or...?

Robert Line: This is my dad’s father, my grandfather? Okay. He finished his education, I think it was Chicago, and moved out to Nebraska, and started his medical practice and found that it was pretty hard times. People were not really able to pay their medical bills, and they were beginning to pay the medical bills with bringing in a chicken or some produce or something.

And he realized he had to get to some part of the country where he could get some money. So he jumped on a train, went out to the coast, to Seattle, and as he passed through Columbus, which is just west of Billings. He came across a paper, newspaper, something lying on the seat of the coach, and it said that there was a doctor needed in Columbus, Montana. He was looking for a place, of course, so he picked up on that, and he went back toward his home in Nebraska. He stopped by to inquire a little more about the situation at Columbus, and it apparently sounded good to him.

I think he turned around as soon as he got home and moved the family out, which included my dad—Robert C. Line Senior—who was I think about four years old, and a sister. My dad had a sister who was born eight years later than he was, so that was four years before she came on the scene. So, Grandfather set up to practice and, of course, since there was not necessarily any other drug store around, country doctors frequently set up their own drug store, which grandfather did and called it the Line Drug. I think early on, which stayed in the family little over 100 years, within a couple of years anyway. Finally, it was sold, but during all that time grandfather and then later my dad, Robert, took care of the store.

Meantime, Dad bought a ranch in West Reed Point, Greycliff. That he did in [19]23, which was the year I was born, and when Dad went out to the ranch to make final arrangements and take care of the business of transferring the property, apparently—as I understand—I was a little, tiny baby which they put in the top drawer of a bureau there in the kitchen. I suppose they didn’t, weren’t expecting to entertain a little baby and didn’t have a crib or anything, so that’s where they put me while they were making the arraignments for the ranch.
So I have been over at the ranch many, many times until we finally sold it. Also, oh boy, 20, 25 years ago, perhaps more, I spent a lot of time over at the ranch. I did a lot of electrical wiring, some odd jobs, fencing and building construction and so on.

JR: What year was it that your grandfather moved, brought his family, brought your father up to Columbus?

RL: It was ’94 [1894], do you remember that, Annie?

Ann Line: Well, what year was your father born?

RL: ’92 [1892], and he was four years old, so ’94, ’96...

AL: ’96 probably, 1896

JR: So do you remember him talking much about if there were even other physicians within a number of miles, or was he the only one in the area?

RL: I remember the name Blackstone and Dad had some connection with Doctor Blackstone, but otherwise I think it was mostly Doctor Line—Lemuel Line—was pretty much by himself as the doctor there. He was an aggressive fellow and did a lot of things while he was still in Nebraska. He was a...what is it called? A medical director for the state?

JR: Medical examiner?

RL: Yes, perhaps. I am not just sure of the term. Then in Columbus he became the NP [Northern Pacific] Railroad doctor for that district. So, he was involved anytime there was any accident, personal injury, and he’d frequently have to get up and go out take care of whatever needed taken care of. Of course at that time, as we all know, doctors went out into the country to see the patients and many of the stories that Dad used to tell me are ones where the doctor went out to take care of some person.

One time his horse buggy went off the edge of a little bridge, and Grandfather was thrown. Hurt his arm, dislocated his arm and went up to the farmhouse to tell the fellow that he couldn’t take care of his wife. She was expecting a baby, I think, and couldn’t take care of his wife until he got this arm fixed—the elbow or shoulder. The fellow said, “Oh, I couldn’t do that.” There’s a special technique of twisting the arm around this way and that way and snapping in position. It’s very painful, I guess, but it’s successful and the fellow said that he couldn’t do that. Grandfather said, “Well, you are going to have to because by morning that arm will be all stiffed up, stiffened up, and I won’t be able to take care of your wife at all.” So he did. Anyway Dad had a lot of stories like that where grandfather went out and took care of people.

Robert Line and Ann Line Interview, OH 395-001a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
He’d throw in the charcoal heater, which is over there in the shelf. A lot of people would go out in the buggies, and they’d put the charcoal heater on the floor and put their feet on the floor in an attempt to keep warm. Then they’d throw a buffalo blanket around themselves without realizing the carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, from the heater come up through the blanket and hit his face, be right at the top of it. A lot of people I guess were either killed, or very sickened by the carbon monoxide. However, the West survived.

He would frequently go out as much as 40 miles, or maybe longer, and in the buggy it was a long trip, in snowdrifts and all kinds of conditions, mud and all. He said to my dad, evidently, “Robert, I wish I could smoke during these periods of time, riding along, very boring. I smoked when I was younger, but I never felt it was to keep me interested in what was going on.”

He thought it would be wonderful if he could smoke, but it couldn’t. It made him very sick. So grandfather never smoked as far as I know, and Dad didn’t smoke a lot either as I remember. He sometimes would sit in front of the fireplace in a chair, in the evening he’d have pipe or a cigar, and he’d draw in on it and blow the exhaust—the smoke—up the chimney in an effort to keep it out of the house. But, I don’t remember growing up in a lot of second hand smoke, which was good. I didn’t smoke much, I quit 45 years ago...40 years ago.

AL: Your grandfather was quite an innovator.

RL: Yes. Grandfather brought the first x-rays into Montana. It, at that time, was a fluoroscope system, not quite x-rays as we know it now. It was a big device with a couple of mica disks, I think, and you turned a crank and as one mica disk turned in relation to the other created a static of electrical sort of situation. I think it held a patient up close to it. There were a couple of brass balls up above I remembered, and somehow the static electricity illuminated through the body. It was used particularly for gun accidents—bullet wounds. Grandfather used to have about one bullet wound a week in the wild old town of Columbus.

When he died, Dad took this machine to the high school thinking that the high school students would get a lot out of having that old static electricity machine available. He went home from the drug store one day, passed by the school and saw this...I wish I could remember what it was called. Anyway he saw it sitting outside under the eaves, with the rain coming off the roof of the high school. He felt terrible that they weren’t taking care of it. They were throwing it out, throwing it away.

But, he [Grandfather] did a lot of things, very innovative like Ann said. He got together with a connection with the Chautauqua tours, which I think was an organization of

Robert Line and Ann Line Interview, OH 395-001a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
southeast New York. At least there is a town or county there called Chautauqua. My grandfather would get groups of pictures, slides, which he put into this stereopticon, over there by the window, and I guess the lecture was all prepared. He would read it, and then put in these slides one after another and every now and then he would throw in a humorous slide. I remember one of some youngster up in a tree trying to stay away from an alligator that was grabbing for him. It was not a very motion picture like thing at all. It was all hand controlled, at least the audience got the idea of it.

So, we have all of those pictures, and I haven’t gotten the stereopticon working just right yet. I don’t remember any trouble in the past. We used to show those slides a lot, but when I tried it recently I don’t have the right light bulb or something. It was a gas illuminated stereopticon, and it still has the gas burner in it. We don’t use that at all, but Dad said that when his dad was going to be putting on the Chautauqua lecture all afternoon, he would build up some gas. I don’t know what the process was, but he somehow put it into a rubber bladder, which I think Dad described as being the size of a mattress or so. When the program was on, they’d feed this gas through a tube, I suppose, rubber tube into the stereopticon that illuminated the picture. Then as the evening progressed and the pressure got lower and lower, then grandfather would say, “Robert, get on that bladder”—whatever they called it—“to add some pressure to it to keep the gas coming.

Anyway he put on quite a few programs. I remember there was this series of pictures, The Crown Jewels of England and something about India. England, of course, owned or controlled India to a great extent. Oh, then he also had a series on Dr. Livingston in Africa, and there are lots of pictures of Africans doing what the Africans do while their...oh, who is the name of the guy who went to find Livingston? Anyway, the famous expression “Dr. Livingston I presume.” He comes across this fellow all bedraggled and bearded, he had been lost to civilization for I think for two or three years, something like that. They finally find him, and I’ve forgotten where I was going with that.

JR: Are those pictures that he collected? Did he do his own travels, or did he collect from someone else?

RL: No, no these were provided by the Chautauqua however that was done. There seems like there was some other series that grandfather either made available for himself, or that they voluntarily sent to him. I suspect that they periodically sent groups of pictures. They would be twenty or thirty on a subject and we have gone through some of those. I am dying to get that stereopticon going, I don’t want to go backwards and fire it up with gas. But, I got to get the right kind of projection bulb and I don’t have it and I don’t understand because as kids growing up we used to fire up the stereopticon and have a home show, frequently and I don’t remember having any trouble with getting it to project.
AL: Your grandfather was a city leader too.

RL: Yes, he was on the school board of course and started the church there in Columbus.

JR: What church?

RL: Congregational Church it was.

JR: What were some of the other activities that...I guess being on the school board, what were some of the things, was it expected of him as the town doctor, or was it something he just...?

RL: I think so. I imagine the town doctor was the fairly important person in the community, so in that sense they would expect that he would be a leader in many things. Grandmother, Lemuel’s wife, of course, conducted Sunday school, various things like that, did extra jobs. Anyway, from what I know about Grandfather, who died a couple of years before I was born, with pernicious anemia. I admired very much the things he had done, gave me a good start in life in a way. When Dad came back from Harvard, he was walking up the street one time in front of the drugstore, sort of slouching along and then thought, “Gosh, I don’t have to slouch along. I can hold my head up because my father is the town doctor, and I can be proud of where I am.” So he did, he held his head up and walked along, swinging his arms. I think he told me that story thinking that maybe it would help my posture. (laughs) Now I have a wife that does that.

JR: So did you know your grandmother, and do you know...?

RL: I did know my grandmother. Dad’s sister, who came eight years later, was various places. She went to Holyoke and did some...learned some commercial courses, I guess. And was later out in Fresno, darn it, the name of that store...It’s a big department store there. The name slips me. She had Grandmother out there with her after Grandfather died. As Grandmother was getting on the streetcar, coming home one time, and a fellow grabbed for the handrail on the end of the streetcar to throw himself on it. His body swung out, hit Grandmother, knocked her to the ground, and she broke a hip. So the last few months of her life was pretty painful, I think, with that injury. Also she was beginning to develop diabetes, I think.

But during that time I did know her very briefly, I must have been about four years old when she died so of course I don’t remember too much about her. But, she was a very nice girl I think.

JR: You mentioned that she taught Sunday school. Do you know some of the other things...? What was her role in the family, do you know, or in the community too?

Robert Line and Ann Line Interview, OH 395-001a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
RL: I’m trying to think. Nothing very much comes to mind. She was an artist in a very amateur way. We have a chair, that black rocking chair, does that still have...She decorated it I think. She emphasized the decorations that you put on chairs. Anyway, there were a couple other bits of artwork that I remember growing up that were from her handwork. She was not an expert artist, but as an amateur, I think she was okay.

Oh yes she did a lot of coloring. Dad took a lot of pictures around Columbus and in the hills south of Columbus up toward the Yellowstone Park. She would frequently...what do they call it? Tinting? I think she tinted those pictures. She learned to do that, and was a quite a bit of help to Dad. Dad as I understood pretty much put himself through school on those pictures. He would send them over to Germany and have them printed up into postcards. Now why they didn’t do that locally, I don’t know. I don’t know that much about the economics of the time, but I suppose it was more economical to print them up. Then he would sell them in his own drugstore and other stores up and down the Highway 10. As I understand, Dad pretty much put himself through school on this photography that he did. Although I’m sure with the father a doctor, he must have had quite a bit of help from him too, I would guess. Though I think that this period of being paid off with chickens, with grandfather the doctor, I don’t think that constantly went on. Surely there was some income coming in.

AL: Your grandmother was educated as a teacher, wasn’t she?

RL: I think so, yes.

AL: She taught back in Nebraska before they moved.

RL: Yes. She was one of three girls in a Scottish family. She was I think the eldest of three girls. The others, who of course were aunts, my aunts, or my dad’s aunts, my great aunts, they were very much in the family picture, the aunts were. I remember seeing them quite a bit, quite often.

JR: So they followed her out to Montana, or would they just come to visit frequently?

RL: I guess I’d say they just came to visit. One of the aunts went on out to Claremont, in California and settled there for some reason or another. My younger brother used to see something of her while he was in school. He went to Pomona. So I guess she did more than visit. She actually bought a home in Pomona.

JR: While you mentioned that your father would do this photography, he went to Harvard?

RL: Yes.
JR: Do you know if he ever considered going into medicine, or did he always decide to go a little bit different route?

RL: I think his interests were in retail trade and business. I just doubt that Dad ever seriously thought of medicine. I remember he would say that when he would come back during summer time between courses at school—here at Missoula—he’d go back to Columbus and could hardly stand being around accidents. The sight of blood practically keeled him over. Frequently, his father would call to him, “Robert, I need your help.”

One time Calamity Jane rode into town. Well, her horse threw her out in front of the Atlas Saloon, and she landed with her arm against the boardwalk and broke her arm. Of course it hurt, but the terrible thing was she was thrown in front of a bunch of the cowboys around there. She felt terrible about that to have gotten unhorsed by this horse that was not particularly bad, but just bad enough to throw her. Dad said they brought her up to grandfather’s office which was upstairs and the next block down. Dad said he had never heard anyone, man or woman, curse as much as she did.

I suspect that Dad was not too thrilled going into medicine, to see all that blood and gore. Must have been unnerving from him. So I think he was interested in retail, trade from the very beginning and of course managing the drugstore. He also came at just about the time tractors really became more prevalent in the country, in the late teens. I suppose just after the World War One. Anyway, he started about five different businesses around Columbus, Reed Point, and Rapelje, and Black...oh, can’t remember the name of that community, Black something or other up north of Columbus anyway.

AL: Absarokee? Any up by Absarokee?

RL: No, actually, he did not start a business by Absarokee. Anyway, he sold implements, sold International implements. They have a lot of stories about delivering tractors from the rail where he unloaded them in Columbus, or Reed Point, and then driving the tractors up over these hills with very poor roads. But, of course, with the big cleats on the wheels you wouldn’t be able to drive on if they were paved like that. You wouldn’t be able to drive them then. He had a lot of stories about delivering stuff like that.

Also he talked about a couple fellows who had gone north of Columbus, up in Keyser Creek to get some timber to come down to build a saloon in Columbus. They got to one place where it was very muddy, they unhitched the horses—the team from the rear wagon—hooked up to the lead wagon in an effort to pull it through, and then they were going to go back and get the other wagon. But, they just got bogged down in the mud and couldn’t get through it all. So one fellow said the other, “Oh hell, let’s just unload the logs here. Any place in Montana is a good place for a saloon.” I don’t know how true that was, but Dad used to enjoy telling that.
Another thing Dad used to enjoy telling was as a dean he was frequently asked to come out to speak to graduating classes and various other civic affairs. One time they got...the administration got a letter from some small town in Montana saying that “We were getting ready to have a graduation here, and we’d appreciate getting a speaker from the University. We prefer to have someone who is sort of witty and lively, and someone who is not lower than a dean.” His answer he received was “Around here we figure there is nothing lower than a dean.” Dad used to tell that story, which is sort of telling a story on himself, any occasion he could get.

JR: Well, actually I was thinking maybe I should ask you a little bit more about your grandfather. So there was the incident with Calamity Jane, do you remember other stories about particularly unusual occurrences that your grandfather was involved in as the town doctor?

RL: Yes, they went up to...what is that lake south of town? Anyway, the power company put in a power plant, and they dug a tunnel under the lake. They wanted the water to come down through that tunnel and down through the pin-stock (?) to a generator down below. So they set a charge, and when everybody was all clear...except half the town of Columbus went up to see this thing, knew there was going to be a big splash of water when the charge went off. When they were out of the way, someone set off the charge. I suppose they used one of these plungers. I don’t know. I was not there. Grandfather was pretty busy because they had set a bigger charge than they needed. A lot of the rock went up and came down, and quite a few of the people in attendance were injured by rocks. No serious injuries, but there were a lot of injuries. But, the thing worked and was used for a long time.

I’m not sure that they’re used anymore. At one time the generator—a DC generator...It was used to somehow cancel off the static electricity on the current between Billings and I can’t remember, but it doesn’t make any difference. So that generator just constantly went to neutralize that extra current somehow or other. Grandfather was called in on all sorts of things.

JR: Do you know at that time there were not a lot of pre-made pharmaceuticals and so running a drugstore he probably made a lot of his own, do you remember hearing many stories about that?

RL: I don’t really. I do remember the prescription papers. They were a little paper about so by so (gestures with hands), and you folded them endwise. Put in the medicine and folded the ends over. They came in little boxes—prescription boxes I think they were called. I remember as a youngster when we had an upset stomach that was the sort of thing we used. We didn’t use prepared medicines like Tums or whatever else there might be. Grandfather, my father helped put up those prescription packages, and he was grandfathered in. You have to be a pharmacist now, but at that time if you had

Robert Line and Ann Line Interview, OH 395-001a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
been around a pharmacy...I don’t know if you even had to work in one, if you just walked close by one you were allowed to go ahead and have a drugstore if that was what you chose. So Dad, my uncle Jake, and my brother too, Lemuel, the doctor, they were all grandfathered in and did not take care of the grandchildren. No, I was never a pharmacist although I worked in the store many, many days. Went over every year to take inventory, and during that time I’d do a certain amount of clerking and also I realized I didn’t...

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
JR: I wanted to ask you more. You mentioned that your father started selling farm implements particularly after World War One, and there was a big economic bust in Montana, especially eastern Montana like 1919. Did he branch out into other things, or how did he weather that?

RL: No, he stayed with it, but it was a pretty traumatic time—a desperate time. Dad had a leather package, which there are all kinds of sales receipts. Well, not so much receipts because a lot of people couldn’t pay, and Dad called it his correspondence course in credits and collections. He would write a letter and say, “This bill is way overdue. Can you pay?”

The guy would write back and say, “No, I can’t. I’m sorry I don’t have any money.”

That was his experience with credits and collections. He had lots of credits, but very few collections.

I remember going out with Dad quite a few times. We went down the Bitterroot one time talking to a fellow that had come from around Reed Point. As a youngster—I suppose I was five or six years old—I was very impressed by the way the fellow was just hanging on by his fingertips. When we drove away I told Dad, “You can’t ask that guy to pay anymore. He’s clear down on his luck.” That would have been mid-30s. The Depression was still on pretty strong then so I think I talked Dad into leaving him alone and not pressing him any further. I had a feeling he really wasn’t going to get anything from him anyway. But, as far as changing to something else, not really. He just hung on, well that’s about all. Anyone could do pretty much changing to another situation didn’t necessarily put him into a higher bracket.

AL: Your father did sell cars.

RL: Yes, he brought the first Chevys into Montana, down Billings. That was difficult because the automobile business had not been figured out very carefully. Dad had opportunity to get some Baby Grands. It was a big Chevrolet, cost a bit quite a bit more than smaller cars. It was called a Baby Grand for some reason. The other car was the 490, which cost 490 dollar plus little extra for headlights, little extra for a starter, and a lot of these things we take for granted were extras. So Dad would put an order in from the Chevy company to have four or five Baby Grands, or 490s and one Baby Grand. The car would come in, of course be four or five Baby Grands and one of these easier to sell 490s. This is all before my time, although I’ve seen a lot of pictures of cars that they sold. So that the Baby Grand was a pretty good car, much more elegant that what you might assume for that time. I always understood that the fellow by the name of
Chevrolet was a racer in France—automobile racer. He agreed...for a price I guess, agreed to let the company use his name, Chevrolet, that’s how that came about.

It was difficult selling cars, and Dad stayed with it. He must have stayed with it six or eight years. Of course when he came over to Missoula, why, that was some ten years later, he was out of the auto business by that time. In that case you didn’t get paid by chickens. You just didn’t get paid at all.

JR: Now you mentioned he had at least one sister, right? Did he have other siblings?

RL: Just one sister.

JR: Just the one sister?

RL: Yes.

JR: So when your grandfather passed away, did he take over the drugstore as well, or did he bring in somebody else to help him then?

RL: Later on he did, but for a good many years...I think until we came over here in about ’27, I think pretty much Dad ran the store. With of course, extra help, but he was the main wheel there. Then he went through a series of—not too many but a few—sort of partners in the store. Then he engaged this fellow, Bill Boston from Anaconda. Bill was very capable, and Dad pretty much let him run the store. We would go over once a year to do inventory, around the first of the year. I spent most of my New Year’s evenings, for many years, down in the Atlas, down a block from the drug store. They usually had a dance going on there, and I was down at that time of year so I would show up for that.

The fellow, Bill Boston, worked with Dad, for Dad originally, and then Dad took him in as a full partner, I think. When he was going to school here in Missoula, in the pharmacy school, because he was a regular pharmacist, he had a job on the side—sideline—with the Lucy Furniture and Funeral Directors off of Higgins. Furniture people and funeral mortuaries were together, and Bill used to tell a story about how during a funeral...I suppose that was at the church or whatever, maybe they had a place for holding ceremonies. Anyway, Bill would have to run around get all the flowers and everything, throw them all in the back of a paneled delivery truck and go racing out to the cemetery to put all that up. He’d find himself just barely outracing the funeral procession in order to get the flowers out in time. Bill was a very funny guy and he had a lot of stories. He had a lot of expressions that were very funny. None of which that I remember at the moment. I thought maybe if I got started saying that it would bring it to mind, but it didn’t work
JR: So, your aunt, your father’s sister, you said that she went to Holyoke, and then did she come back to Montana for a while or did she...

RL: I don’t think so. I think she did some work here at the university, but other than that she must have got...Capwells [Emporium-Capwell Co.; The Emporium] was the name of the store in ‘Frisco [San Francisco, California]. I think she got that position without, other than just visiting here I don’t think she ever really lived here. They have had very three nice children, who are my cousins. More recently we have seen more of them, and that’s made life a lot more interesting. One of them is much more interested in what’s...

AL: Genealogy?

RL: What?

AL: Genealogy?

RL: Genealogy! Thank you, I needed that. So she’s very interesting from that standpoint. She’s followed you with that sort of thing.

JR: How did your father met your mother?

RL: Well, Dad went to Holyoke as an instructor and then again in retailing. Business, although it wasn’t called business administration at that time, it was economics. After Holyoke, after the university here...I think it was in 1910 I think it was, he went down to New York and worked with who we would call the Chamber of Commerce now. Darn it, I lost that thought. I was going somewhere with that.

AL: He went to Harvard after here first, and then to New York?

RL: I think so, not sure of that sequence there. But after New York anyway then he went up to Holyoke and met mother. I don’t know that they had much interest in each other at that time. Later on, and Dad came back to Montana, was working with the store and ranch he had bought by then. No, I wasn’t even born then. Anyway, he decided then that he wanted a wife and was thinking of the various girls he had known through college and one thing or another and remembered Louise Chapman. He went back east to court her, and it worked.

AL: And she was from...?

RL: She was from Illinois. The family lived pretty much on Lafayette Street in Chicago, but Grandfather, her father, was a publisher. He had several magazines that he published. Frequently as a publisher of...They were agriculturally oriented. Often people
that had agriculture equipment would loan them or encourage the publisher to use them on his ranch in an effort to get a good place in this ad in the paper I suppose. I keep losing my train of thought.

AL: Well, did he use that up in Lake Geneva, those pieces of equipment?

RL: Yes, yes, Lake Geneva.

AL: Your mother grew up there.

RL: They had a summer home there, yes. So they did have a lot of equipment which these manufactures had provided. They had a very nice home on the north side of Lake Geneva which is 75 miles or so west of Chicago. Grandfather used to get on the day train to get into work, but he was not a particularly tactful fellow. The unions began to give him a bad time, and he was not amenable to the union idea, I think, and did not go gladly into meetings with the unions. Some of the fellows got pretty rough and started pouring carborundum grit into his presses, so he lost a lot of money trying to replace the machinery that had been damaged.

JR: Even though it sounds like she spent most of her life in Chicago in a fairly, relatively urban...no, no, she had a background in agriculture, or a familiarity with it.

RL: Yes, that is about all you can say.

JR: Do you think it was difficult to convince her to come out to Montana?

RL: I don’t know about that, but when they were in Columbus, and President Clapp [Charles H. Clapp] got to know Dad through his dad’s being in the Board of Education. President Clapp wanted him to come over to Missoula. Boy, Mother jumped at that because the idea of life in a little Montana town like Columbus was not too thrilling for her with all of her background in Chicago, Mount Hoyoke, one thing and another. She encouraged Dad, matter of fact I don’t think she gave Dad a chance, probably, didn’t give him a chance to think about it. She just told him to jump for it. Go ahead.

AL: Well, she graduated from Mount Holyoke—

RL: Yes.

AL: —and was a teacher—

RL: Yes.
AL: —and after she graduated from Mount Holyoke, she taught...was it in Illinois or in Wisconsin, at normal school?

RL: I was thinking maybe that was before Mount Holyoke, but I think maybe you’re right. But quite a connection with Mount Holyoke because as my mother and Dad’s sister, Aunt Ruth, and Harriet’s daughter Leslie, who is no longer with us—

AL: And Louise

RL: —and Louise, my older sister Louise. A lot of them did more than brush by Holyoke. They were actually students there for a while. Did either of Leslie’s girls go to Holyoke? I know it doesn’t make a lot of difference, but Holyoke has played quite a part in their family through the years.

AL: So your father went and found your mother teaching in Illinois?

RL: I suppose. I don’t know just how the time works there, but she probably was teaching when Dad went to see her. I just don’t remember any of the details about how that romance progressed.

AL: We know when they were married. We can look at that. September 7, 1918, is when they were married. Your father had been out of college, out of the university [University of Montana] for eight years, and out of Harvard...I don’t know when he graduated from Harvard.

RL: [19]18. Grandfather Lemuel, the doctor, must have died the year or so before. Didn’t he die in about ’16?

JR: From what I understand some of the materials that you are going to donate to the archives [Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections], or maybe already have, this correspondence, is it between your mother and her parents?

RL: Well, most of what we have, I think, is between Dad and his father—the doctor and his father. We have letters back and forth, and back and forth. People apparently wrote an awful lot of letters in those days and saved them. We have a whole chunk of letters tied together in groups, I suppose periods of time, and they are kind of interesting to go through. One when Grandmother...they were making their plans of where they were going to live after they were married, and this is shortly after they both finished school. Grandfather writes to, “Dear Mary, it doesn’t make much to difference which apartment we are going to be taking because we probably may not be taking an apartment at all.” The letter said the corn was tassling out at 18 inches and you know it was never going to make anything with that short a start, so we may not even be here next year. That was
in Ogalala, I guess. I may be mixing up the time there a little bit. That was before they were married, I think.

AL: Were you heading toward the little swatch of the wedding dress that was in the letter you found?

RL: Oh yes! We did find a little swatch of a letter, and Mary wrote her prospective husband and said, “This is part of the wedding dress I am going to be wearing.” Sure enough in the picture that we have, their wedding picture, she is wearing that dress. That was a nice little extra little connection with old times, older times.

AL: It was a brocaded lavender color.

JR: Now I’m sorry, I got confused. That was your mother writing to your father, or your grandmother writing to your grandfather?

RL: Grandmother, yes.

AL: But the letters that are in the collection, all most all of them center on grandfather, Bob’s father, because it’s between Bob’s father and his parents when he was here at the University, and then from Harvard, and then when he was over in Germany for a while, Bob didn’t tell you about that, and from Holyoke, Mount Holyoke. So it’s kind of a complete history through letters of all that period of time between when he left home to come here at first to the university, until he got back to Columbus and lived there again. We haven’t read them all, there’s hundreds of them.

JR: Wow, that’s really interesting.

RL: Of course, a lot of letters are probably be of more interest to business people, where he would write to the person operating the store, or ranch. They would be trying to decide if they wanted to sell cattle now or wait a bit later, hurrying to sell some of the steers—what’s the price like, and all those little business details. Dad, although he wasn’t over at the ranch all the time, he did frequently go over enough so that he was able to keep a pretty good opinion of how the ranch was operated and the drug store. Then in addition those interests he would be called to give talks—speeches—at various places. I didn’t realize he had spent quite a bit of time up in Manitoba in connection with...I think he went up there several times according to these letters, Dad must have never mentioned them. I didn’t know about it. That must have been fairly early on at least in the early ’30s, or perhaps earlier, though he was involved in quite a few different things.

JR: Most of the letters are the letters your father received, or you have in many cases both of them?
RL: Both of them. The way Dad filed things...He would file the letter from Manitoba and then his answer, one after another. That much is fairly easy to take care of. I hope that’s not too difficult for whoever is doing that if their working on those letters.

AL: Then all the letters that he wrote to his parents...They saved all those letters so you have both way communication on each end.

JR: He did that? It wasn’t someone else who came later and brought those together? He kept those together?

RL: Yes.

JR: Interesting. Now I am intrigued to follow...Ann mentioned that he spent a lot of time in Germany. What brought him to Germany?

RL: Well, not necessarily a lot of time, but I suppose his interest was probably piqued, originally, by his contacts with having postcards printed over there. May have been more to it than than, just don’t recall. Anyway, he went over I think for a summer, and it was just before the war started. The people he was staying with were very friendly and cooperative with him, and the women in the family said, “Robert, you better be thinking about going home. We are about ready to have war with each other, and you’ll be picked up as an undesirable alien”—or whatever you call it. Dad was a little slow on the uptake on that, I think he indicated to me he was around quite a bit longer that he should have before he finally jumped on a boat and came paddling home. So he came very close to getting trapped in that situation.

He was over there again following the war, second war. As you remember, there was a lot of fellows that could not be sent home immediately following the war. There just wasn’t enough transportation, and some of them stayed for as long as a year or so waiting for a ride home. During that time I think the government—our government—thought it was really important for these fellows to continue with their education and not have a big open blank part in their lives. Dad was called to go over and also Shelly—Shellenbarger—and two or three other Dad’s acquaintances went over. They taught in the army schools. I can’t remember...doesn’t make any difference, United States Army schools anyway. First in England, and then later over in Germany. Dad was over there at that time much longer than when he was student age. I think that went on for a year or so, in mostly Germany.

JR: When he went the first time, do you think that was as much for personal interest as business?
RL: Yes, I’m just guessing it would be a matter of personal interest. I don’t know if he was too thrilled with the German culture. He learned a little bit of the language, not a lot.

AL: Did he go over with some of his classmates from Harvard?

RL: Grandfather Chapman did, Annie. He took a group of guitar playing students over. I’ve got a picture some place of Dad standing on the deck of the...I can’t remember the name of the boat he was on. There was a picture of four, five of them. I suspect that they were classmates...

AL: That’s when your dad went over?

RL: Yes, when Dad went over. I’m sure Dad is in the picture, though, why Dad wasn’t taking the picture I don’t know. We don’t have too many pictures with Dad in it because he’s usually the photographer. You know how that goes.

JR: Did he ever talk much about what it was...his feelings about after the war started, and how the Germans were perceived in the United States?

RL: I don’t remember that. I remember hearing in other ways some very bad things about the Germans. It was difficult to get this country off the starting mark in that war because this was traditionally a very peaceful country and the last thing to go to war. As a matter of fact in the Second World War, the poor English were over there battling the Germans for a year—year and a half I think—before we got into the war. At the time of the First World War they sent pictures back of little children with their hands chopped off—pictures that were staged. They weren’t actually true, in an effort to really hate the Germans for how they were behaving. Well, in their own way many of them behaved pretty badly. With the prisoner of war situation, or the Jewish extermination thing, sort of thing they might have been accused of, but I don’t recall Dad ever expressing too much feeling about that.

Surely, he must have gotten caught up in it certain extent. Then around then in an agricultural community, like Columbus, in the country and the wheat basin north of Columbus there was a lot of anti-German feeling. People who were able to change the spelling of their last name which could easily suggest that they had German backgrounds...A lot of people did change their name their name when they could do that. I can’t think of a single example now, but you know how you change one or two letters and change from German to some other background? A lot of people did.

JR: We’re getting down towards the end. How are you feeling? Would you like to keep talking some more?
RL: Sure

JR: I have lots more questions for you.

RL: Oh well good, I need the questions. I keep running out.

JR: You mentioned that Grandfather Chapman took a group of students to Germany, or to Europe as well? That’s your mom’s father?

RL: Yes, my mother’s father. You know, I can’t think of where they went. They must have gone to Germany among other places. I was given that guitar that he used on that trip. I think it was a bunch of guitar players he took over there, and I don’t know that guitar is we have had it around here...

AL: Downstairs

RL: Okay.

JR: So he was a publisher and a teacher, or this was something that he did separately from his other enterprises?

RL: You know I can’t just recall what you’d call Grandfather except as a publisher with an interest in agricultural things—agricultural magazines. Some of the magazines that he produced are still around. That is the leftovers. The name of the magazine would move from one to another at the thing progressed, and some of those that are still successful had their start with one of those that grandfather produced—published. I get stuck.

JR: No, your father, or paternal grandfather died before you were born. Your paternal grandmother you only knew...she died when you were pretty young. Did you know your other grandparents? Did you have more of a chance to know them?

RL: No, I did know my grandmother—my mother’s mother—Louise Chapman. Now I am confused there for a moment how old grandfather was. I think I was a little baby when mother took me back to Chicago, and I visited him before I was old enough to even remember him. I think our lives overlapped a little bit there. But, he was not a good business man. He probably had made quite a bit of money with his publishing business, starting out as a young man, and they built a very handsome home on the north side of Lake Geneva. I think he lost a lot of it with his stubbornness...

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
JR: You did have a chance to get to know your maternal grandmother?

RL: Right, right. She came out and lived with us and lived nearby for quite a while. We were living down on Beckwith, and she lived in a little house around the corner, down in the alley there. She made a home there for her youngest, Uncle Jack, who’s just recently died. He became an attorney, practiced in Helena for quite a while and then later out in Seattle. So we saw quite a bit of her. I did not learn too very much about Grandfather, the publisher, from her. I don’t recall ever talking about them, but I learned a lot about their life growing up. Mother had five or six siblings, and Grandmother used to say that boys, Fred and—

Ann Line: Ed.

RL: —Ed, would go out on their motorcycles after dinner and go out. She said they would come back in just all excited—we would say they were wired. Her idea was that, anyway. I don’t think she was too thrilled about this motorcycle riding because the boys would get all keyed up. I don’t think they had accidents, but they were just thrilled about motorcycles. I inherited all of that, I think, feeling about the motorcycles.

AL: Uncle Jack went to law school here and graduated here.

RL: Yes, and our son Timothy went to law school here. Saw Uncle Jack’s picture or name or something—

AL: Picture.

RL: —down in the law school. Course there’s quite a difference in age. Uncle Jack must have graduated in the early, mid-’30s I would guess, and Timothy here several years ago.

AL: Ten years ago. Uncle Jack just died about two years ago. He’s the baby of the Chapman family. He was a very successful attorney over in the Seattle area. He was about 91 years old when he died—very wonderful man.

JR: He stayed with your grandmother while he was going to school here?

RL: Yes. She came out to make a home for him, and I don’t know that she was a house mother before or after that. I just really don’t recall that detail.

AL: Do you know what sorority?
RL: I don’t, but I suspect it was the same one Aunt Ruth was in the same block as Burly Miller, lived...I am afraid that doesn’t do it.

JR: Maybe switching gears a little bit, but you said your mother was a school teacher. When she came out to live with your father in Columbus, did she teach school there?

RL: I don’t think she was ever formally in the school, teaching. I’m sure she did things a mother would do when you have children in the school.

AL: So she didn’t teach after she married your father?

RL: Yes, not formally. I don’t think she was ever engaged as more than just as a fill-in or something like that.

AL: She was a very civic-minded woman.

RL: Oh yes!

JR: What were some of the things she was involved in?

RL: Pardon me?

JR: What were some of the things she was involved in?

RL: Oh, University Church Women...what’s the women’s...? University of Women’s Organization...what’s that...? AAUW [American Association of University Women], I think, and other church things.

AL: Then she worked on the setting up of a lot of the parks in Missoula.

RL: Yes, she did.

AL: She initiated development of some of the park systems here.

RL: So she had an interest in children and children’s welfare, of course.

AL: She and your father were very interested in theosophy.

RL: Yes.

AL: Or philosophy.

RL: They pretty well ran the theosophical study class for many, many years.
AL: And they belonged to the Cosmos Club, which was—

RL: Oh yes!

AL: —was very interesting.

RL: Cosmos Club was an interesting club of townspeople and University people and some business people. Each member gave a talk, at least something like once a year, and they'd meet at various...the members’ places. There was a very interesting club, and if you followed it very much, you'd get quite a bit of information about the world from the various that talked about it. I remember Elers Koch was one of the members. He was in the forest service. As I understand it, Elers was climbing with the mountaineers up on Stuart. See you can see this cirque (?) on the right hand side. Somehow or other I suppose he got too close to the edge, and the snow broke off and down he went. The snow was such that it rolled into a snowball variously. They went rushing down to take care of him. As I remember the story, there was just a hand or two sticking out from this big snowball, and they had quite a time of getting him out, I guess. Elers, and I don’t remember his wife’s name, they had three or four children, and we were in school with them. They were a little older than I, about the age of my sisters.

AL: Have you often talked about what it was like to be a son of a university professor in those days?

RL: Yes. You may be thinking of the fact that there were a lot more faculty picnics, and we got to know all the other kids—children of faculty—at that time. I’m sure there is nothing quite like it now. So I used to know many of the names of the other kids and many of the other instructors. I suppose kids now in school would know—certainly in their own department—would know the names of their instructors, but not necessarily their families, at least not in a picnic sort of social setting.

I think some of our first friends were the Merriams—Harold and Doris Merriam. Partly, because Mother had known him as an instructor, I think, in (unintelligible) north, northwest of Chicago when she was in school. When she came out here, she was delighted to see that Harold Merriam was on the faculty. Then I grew up with Dr. Merriam’s and Doris’s children, Alan and Allison. We got to know them very well. I think he was my main friend growing up as a youngster.

JR: He was very much into folklore too?

RL: How’s that?

JR: He was very much into folklore and as well?
RL: Alan?

JR: Yes, Alan, I think...

RL: Yes, he had an interesting education in anthropological music, I guess was the term, and he studied the music in Africa to the point where he could trace the music from one tribe to another. Evidently, there were some important differences in the music so he traced the movement of Africans all over their own continent by following their own music.

JR: I kind of led us off into a bit of a tangent. So when your father came out here, was he the first dean of the business school?

RL: Well, in a sense because they didn’t call it that before. There was a fellow I think his name was [Shirley] Coon before Dad and perhaps another person before that. I wouldn’t know how to nail that down, but of course Dad came in ’27. I think there were two other predecessors, I guess, you would say.

JR: You mentioned, yes, that I guess they called it economics back then.

RL: I think so, yes.

JR: You remember moving to Missoula?

RL: Yes. No, I guess I shouldn’t say that so positively. I remember soon after when we moved from the Rattlesnake up here. At that time we moved across town in the hayrack. Mother drove up to Central School, where I was in school, and got me out of school. She had a team of horses and a whole bunch of the furniture and whatnot from the house in the back of this hayrack which is very much like my hayrack out here. I remember that, moving up here, but that was ’27 to ’32, ’33, several years after we moved from Columbus. At that time also frequently you would rent a railroad car, put all your things in that railroad car, and that must have been in a railroad car coming over from Columbus. Since all that was taken care of the railroad we came over by way of, off south of Hamilton...

AL: Skalkaho?

RL: Skalkaho! We drove over the Skalkaho Pass which seems so crazy now. I mean the normal way of course since we got the 90 Interstate that would be the way to go. But, in those days there wasn’t much difference in speed on the regular roads through here and the Skalkaho, so we took that route. Things were a little different then.
AL: Have you ever been over that one?

JR: No, I never have.

AL: Terrible.

RL: Yes, it goes over the hills, and it would be considered pretty slow travel now, well, as compared to the freeway. One of the first cars, I think, we came over was in one of those Dad had handled there in Billings. For a long time we always had Chevys, because Dad was selling Chevys then, but I think it was about a...I was going to say a ’29, but if we moved over in ’27 than it had to have been something a little earlier than that. You remember those cars frequently. I remember some of them had quite a bit in detail, but I am getting fuzzy from one year to the next. I remember the wire wheels following the solid artillery wheels on the Chevys. A lot of cars came out with the very fancy wire wheel around about that time.

Dad exchanged with another professor down in Berkley one summer, and we drove down there in a...I was going to say a ’32, but it had to be a couple of years before that. Anyway, I remember we lived in a place where there was a little chute up from the street level, up to the level of the garage, and it was lined with concrete. One of us had left the door open, and Dad was driving up and wiped the door off the car because it was not wide enough to drive up with the doors open. I think we exchanged the car, broken door and all. So we came back, I think, with a brand new Chevy, and Mother was driving and Dad said, “Louise, do you realize how fast you’re going?” Mother was driving 60 miles an hour, in whatever it was a ’31 or ’32 Chevy.

They always had, often had, a Potter trunk in the back. The trunk folded backwards and didn’t drop all the way back but enough so that you had room to put groceries and whatever you used it for. One time Dad was coming back from the ranch...he always brought some produce back from the ranch. One time he came back with a load of piglets in that Potter trunk. He hit a track at Three Forks, a bump in the highway, and the latch that held the trunk in place jarred loose and dropped the little piglets all over the highway. He rounded up a bunch of kids, I think, to round up those piglets, put them back in the trunk drove over here. It must have been a bunch of skinned up piglets, I would think. I wasn’t on that trip, but we used that Potter trunk for a lot of things—those old Chevys.

We had a Chevy one time that had free-wheeling. You go down the hill and put it in free-wheeling, and the engine wouldn’t hold back. They were outlawed, of course, soon after, outlawed in California. But, for a while that was the big thing! Us kids would sit in the car, and we’d say, “Coast it, Daddy, coast it!” We wanted Dad to coast down the hill out of gear. Putting in that free-wheeling...it was a knob that you pulled on the dash.
JR: So after your father started working at the university, he continued on the ranch and still owned the drugstore and later with the partnership, and did he continue to sell cars as well?

RL: No, I think he must have quit the car business about ’28 or so, before he moved over here. At least I don’t remember any connection there. He kept friendly with his partner over there, Percy Gowan, I think. Gosh, where are these names coming from? I think he did not continue a business relationship with Percy Gowan.

AL: Did your father sell pianos too?

RL: No, but he got into pianos in trades and things in the store. This player piano around the corner there was one he picked up north of Columbus in connection with some sort of merchandise exchange. He went up there with a little old trailer. People would take the axels out of cars and build a trailer out of them, though I don’t know that anyone built a regular manufactured trailer. They build up their own pretty much. He threw that piano in the trailer and pulled it down to Columbus. When we came over from Columbus we brought that piano with us. That piano was down in the basement of the Congregational Church for eight or ten years. The church used it as a player piano. We brought it up here, I think, directly from the church, though I am not sure of that. We brought it up almost without any player piano rolls with it. Little by little we began to accumulate rolls. I think, we have 228, 225 rolls now. Many of them from about the period that us kids were interested in at the time were war songs.

JR: You mentioned that your mom was very involved with the parks, so do you remember more about that, particularly what kind of role she took to get parks started?

RL: I don’t remember too much about that. I don’t think I can help you too much. I remember one time a park was being opened on the north side, and we went there and entered in some of the footraces. I don’t remember much more than that. But, I think she worked with...what was the name? Vinyl—Dean Vinyl’s older sister in the program, the children’s program.

AL: But she was somehow instrumental in getting some of the parks developed. She said that was very important.

RL: Then she was instrumental in cleaning up some of the parks. Down there by the river, the McCormick Park had a bunch of overgrown...what’s the plant? Anyway we brought a bunch of plants up, planted caragana. Planted a bunch of caragana up above the landing up there. That came from McCormick Park. They had one too many bushes, and we helped them out.

Robert Line and Ann Line Interview, OH 395-001a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
JR: What were some of the other things your mom...? You said that she was very civic
minded, do you remember what were some of the other things she was concerned
about?

AL: Just to help you along here, Bob, had she got involved in the development of the
League of Nations?

RL: Yes. She went down to ‘Frisco as a delegate, I think, at the time. Of course that was
after the League of Nations, and I can’t remember the name of the organization at that
time.

JR: So after the League of Nations fell apart, but before the United Nations was present?

RL: It was the beginning of the United Nations, I think, at that time. I don’t understand
why it started down in ‘Frisco. It was certainly a very preliminary part of the Nations.

AL: She went to Montreal for something. Was it in relation to that—the United
Nations—or...?

RL: That I don’t remember. I think you’re probably right, but I don’t recall.

AL: I’m trying to remember. I wasn’t around at the time. I’m trying to remember some
of the stories, but I know that she was involved in that. She also was involved with the
peace movement. She was friends with Jeannette Rankin.

RL: Yes. Jeannette came up one time and said that when she was a member of the
Nonpartisan League, about which I know nothing. They would have political meetings up
here. People would come up from town. She said she stood up in the back end of a
wagon up here by the big house and rang the crowd out here. She said there were a
hundred buggies in this lower field. That was before we lived here. I think the
Nonpartisan League was about the time of World War One sometime, a little before or
later.

Whitaker that lived on the place here at that time was very involved in that part of the
government. He was the sheriff here. The pictures of the gallery of sheriffs down in the
courthouse now, he shows up there quite prominently, no more prominently than any
of the others. Anyway, at one of those political meetings there was some rowdiness
going on, and the sheriff came up, came in to see Whitaker and said, “Do you want me
to take care of these rowdies?”

Whitaker said “No, you get out of here. I’ll take care of them myself.”
After that he ran as sheriff and made it, I guess, one or two sessions. I can imagine Jeannette Rankin standing up in the back end of this buggy, or wagon, and talking to the crowd out this way. It must have been quite a crowd. That was probably when she was a pretty young girl during World War One. World War One was late in the teens [1900s], and that was 10 or 12 years before we moved here.

AL: She must have known her later then.

RL: Mother?

AL: Yes.

RL: Yes. I don’t know when she met—

AL: Jeannette Rankin.

RL: —Jeannette Rankin, yes.

AL: Your mother also was involved in theatrical presentations.

RL: Oh yes! She loved to be in plays. She often played the very funny elderly character, because by that time she was getting a little older herself.

AL: Did she play in *Arsenic and Old Lace* at one time?

RL: I bet she did. That sounds familiar.

AL: I think I saw her in that. It was the only thing I saw her in. I met her when she was 65, and so she must have been in her late 60s when she did that.

RL: Dad was interested in drama too. At Holyoke, when he was there teaching, the girls were going to put on a pageant with a bunch of sheep. It was out in a large, green, grassy area, and they asked Dad, “How do you handle sheep?” They figured a Montana rancher ought to know all there is to know about sheep. Dad didn’t know too much, but he figured he’d spread...I was thinking of breadcrumbs, but that doesn’t make sense for sheep. He spread something, and the sheep sure enough...they followed it along across the staged, as they were supposed to...the lawn. When they finished picking up all the food that they spread, then the sheep went wild and Dad had quite a time trying to round up the sheep.

JR: So your father had a lot of interests beyond...Was he also involved with the peace movement, or were there other things that he was more interested in?
RL: Not too directly, not as much as Mother. He was very supportive of her.

AL: Your mother was kind of the original women’s “libber” [women’s liberationist], too, in a sense. She started...was it the Unicorn Publication...[The Company of the Unicorn]?

RL: Yes.

AL: That she developed on her own, and then later brought in another person to write. It was mostly about women and their role in life and so on and so forth. She mailed that all over the country—all over the world, really. She had people on the list. It was more really than I could understand. She was quite a...oh, what’s the word, writer and thinker.

RL: A little too much of an...

JR: Intellectual.

RL: Yes. These hard words are tough. More of an intellectual than either Annie or I.

AL: She’d write things I couldn’t quite understand. But she did, and other people knew what she was talking about too. She did that clear up until her late 70s. Never really gave up trying to put forth some of her thoughts.

JR: You mentioned that your parents...It was important to get to know the other faculty’s children and so forth. Where did you go after, with a grandfather who was a doctor, and another grandfather who was a publisher, a father who was...?

RL: You mean why did I become a CAT operator?

JR: Yes, I am just interested about the choices you made.

RL: I was very, very shy, and I think anything that would have drawn that out like standing in front of a class to teach mathematics, that sort of thing was clear out of the question for me. So a lot of what I was directed into, I got squeezed out of what I might have done.

AL: Also you are your own entrepreneur in a sense. You wanted to run your business, your life and didn’t want to have to work for someone. That’s what you told me in the past.

RL: I think so, yes. I was a great disappointment to Dad because he had started this import business and he took over a building that I had built as a poultry house, used it as a warehouse for his imports and supplies. Dad thought, Here’s a business that is already started, and we got all kinds of customers, everything is all set and ready to go. He...
wanted me to take over. I had to say, “Dad, I’m sorry I just am not interested in imports, knickknacks, and stuff like that.” I had to be careful what I called them because it was disgracing him too much already. I did want to do my own thing.

I was trying to think of after the import business, the poultry business, I had 2,000 birds in the poultry house out there which is now gone, fortunately. Then I sold some fire extinguishers and some alarm systems—fire alarm systems. Then I built a jogger which jogs paper. In the printing shop most of the paper comes off the end...maybe you know what a jogger is. Anyway, the paper comes off end for end, but the edges are not straight. In order to go into the next process of folding or stapling or whatever, they have to be in such a way that the grippers can pick up the paper. This is all done automatically now, but at one time the joggers were quite important.

I manufactured some joggers, and the difficulty is to vibrate the paper. The machine that did the vibrating, which was a motor with a little off-weight at the end of the motor, would shake itself apart. After producing quite a few I decided, well, I should try to find a motor with better bearings. I just couldn’t get anybody to answer this little ranch guy out in Montana. I’d write and request a figure for maybe 50, 75 motors, and they a lot of times wouldn’t even answer me. That was one of my introductions to the problem of manufacturing something out in western Montana. I finally decided to quit that, and some couple years later the people in Power Company—Montana Power Company—had a jogger in Butte which they were using in connection with their printing operation. The fellow said he wanted another jogger, when I said I just can’t guarantee this jogger I know it’s going to come apart.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]
RL: Well, you’d put the lift put the paper in the jogger, then touch the button with your foot. Vibration would make it line up, and people soon learned that where you had a whole bunch of stacks of paper it was pretty difficult to step over and touch the button. So, they put a chair, the leg of a chair on the button to keep the jogger going. Of course, it just couldn’t handle that long a period of vibration. I wrote to the Montana Power people in Butte, and said, “I’m sorry I just don’t have a jogger and haven’t been unable to find a motor that will take that kind of abuse, and I just got this one left.”

They said, “Well, send it over anyway without any guarantee except other than it’s almost guaranteed to tear itself apart.”

AL: Lasted for years though.

RL: Yes, yes it did.

AL: And then you actually got a patent on that.

RL: Yes, I have a patent on the jogger. It was like, guaranteeing that it would not work is like the fellow that bought these cows, and he didn’t get any calves from them. He said, “I thought you told me these cows were pregnancy tested.”

He said, “Yes, they were. They were all found to be open.” (laughs)

JR: Your father had owned a ranch, you said near Greycliff—

RL: Yes.

JR: —and then did he start the ranch up here?

RL: Well, Dad was—

JR: Or take over the ranch up here?

RL: —never was a rancher. He bought this as a home. The fellow we bought it from wanted Dad to buy the section up on the hill, which has the area of all the trees that you can see from town. Dad said he was busy at the university, and he didn’t want to take on a lot of ranching type activities. This fellow Zogg—Arnie Zogg—said, “Bobby, you better buy that section up above. You are going to want it sooner or later.”

Dad kept dragging his feet saying, “Oh, we really don’t want that.”
Arnie said, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. You buy it for 1,000 dollars a section, and you pay for it when you can.” I remember being with Dad out in Seattle when he was on the War Labor Board for a couple of years. We had a little mortgage-burning ceremony there where we finally paid off the section. I keep forgetting where I am going with some of these things.

JR: I guess where I was leading...I was going to ask you. So he had the ranches, but it wasn’t really his passion—

RL: Right.

JR: —it was more something you were interested in?

RL: Well, he sort of got talked into the extra size place, by the section above, but we never really did operate it as a going concern. More recently, Ann and I tried to get a little bit more out of the place. We got it to close to 60 cows one time, and we found that was way too much. The place couldn’t handle that much. But, we tried to work it a little more to the point it could pretty much pay for the taxes, not give us a lot of income in addition to that—sort of self-sustaining anyway.

AL: Well, you and David had been running some cows here before I met you, about 45 years ago.

RL: Yes.

AL: How long were you running cattle?

RL: Well, we had cattle right from the very beginning, but not too serious. We’d have a milk cow and so you’d have the calves from that operation. We also had some beef animals, but you know actually the animals we have out in the field right now. Some of their background is from one of those original milk cows. We’ve used beef bulls with the cows for so long that the milk strain must be getting pretty thin. Don’t think it’s worth anything.

AL: I think it would be interesting for Bob to tell about your father’s activities on the War Labor Board.

RL: Yes.

AL: And that cute story of the phone call.

RL: Yes. During the war, of course there was quite a bit of intense pressure to get wages up. Out on the coast they were building a B-17, which is a pretty important plane at its
time, first part of the war. That’s before the ‘29, and so Boeing would have to struggle to keep the workers around there because they would be siphoned off by the ship building area over in Bremerton and some of the other businesses. When you had a business and you needed laborers, you would apply to the War Labor Board to get an increase so you were allowed to pay your workers, increase the amount enough to keep them working for you. On the War Relation Board, Dad frequently would get telephone calls from people. This one guy called from Yakama, and he had to just get some relief from the government regulation in order to keep his business going. Dad on the phone kept saying “No, no, no,” over and over again. He finally said, “Yes, no, no, no.”

Someone said, “What was that yes for?”

He said, “Well, the guy asked if he could hear him.”

That was pretty tough job to hold a line on prices, and it was a pretty important job that dad had. We’d talk a lot with Kenworth, had some equipment over in the Hawaiian Islands they were using in muddy fields. They irrigated fields—pineapples I think—and they were breaking equipment and sure enough drive lines, axels, and so on. Yes, it was important to keep going, keep those trucks going, so they had to get special dispensations or special allowances to keep that going. Dad was involved with all sorts of different things—shipping all up and down the coast—railroads and whatnot. That was a very interesting job, and it was right up Dad’s alley as an extension of merchandising. So, anyway what else about Dad’s business over there?

AL: That’s all I know about. He was on the Board for how many years?

RL: Oh, a couple of years anyway—two or three years. Then he was given a little ashtray, with a little airplane on it that sat on a swivel. That’s got nothing to do with what I was remembering.

He had the gal call, he was supposed to go down to ‘Frisco, or Seattle. He had her call to make a railroad, plane, reservation, and she wanted to make the reservations for R. C. Line.

The gal said, “Well, is your sea lion in a crate, or in a tank, or just what?”

“No, the name is R.C. Line!”

She thought it was she was trying to make a reservation for a sea lion.

(phone rings)

Do you want to turn that off for a minute, Jack?
AL: I don’t know where you want to go with the...

JR: Well, I was going to ask...I didn’t even really think to ask this before was he involved with other...some of the New Deal legislation agencies, before the War Labor Board?

RL: No. The New Deal came earlier than that, and Dad did have some work with one of these local government charities situations. He got sort of a reputation...People thought he was a government agent. It put him in sort of an interesting situation in a couple of occasions where he went to talk to someone. This guy just didn’t want to talk with him at all. He was afraid that Dad was spying on him. I can’t remember any more about that. It’s getting pretty vague now as the years go by. But, he had had some contacts with the government through the years, even though there is nothing lower than a dean.

JR: So after the War Labor Board did he do other...Labor Relations Board...did he do other government related organizations?

RL: Well, yes that situation was an entree into some other advisory situations. He was called on by some outfit in the Midwest that was putting in electric power plant somewhere, and Dad was called in to advise on the price, I think, of some generators. I remember seeing some letters that indicated that they had gotten Dad in on what seemed to be quite a bit out of his line into engineering—electrical generators and turbines. It was an interesting sort of situation. Dad spent several weeks in the Midwest working on that, and I remember one situation he was getting 100 dollar a day! I thought, Holy Toledo, that’s a lot more than I was making as a poultry rancher. Of course, it lasted but a very short time, now you wouldn’t think anything of that, I guess. That’s sort of a lower level entrance figure.

AL: No, your father was in with the Montana Business—

RL: Associated Merchants of Montana.

AL: —Associated Merchants. He did an awful lot over there.

JR: Oh, okay.

RL: He would go around with our own private car that he was...our own family car, which was paid for and get memberships and dues for various merchants. So, he knew an awful lot of people as an instructor here. Many of his students would be out in business and stores and places around the state, so it was very easy for him to get around. I think the Associated Merchants had sort of a three-level membership. There
was a five dollar a year, a ten dollar, and a fifteen dollar. Something like that anyway. He would collect money for the Associated Merchants, and we’d frequently run across typewriter paper with the heading Associated Merchants. Even now...Well, I guess I haven’t recently, but when I was going through some of Dad’s things a year or two ago, I’d run into those Associated Merchants. One of the fellows with Dad at that time was J. Otis Mudd, who had a son in my sister...my older sister’s class. Joe Mudd, who had a boy who went into law, is someone that Ann knows.

AL: Isn’t it Jack Mudd?

JR: Jack Mudd?

RL: Jack Mudd, oh, so sorry to...interesting these various cases, layers of generations people meet here or there.

AL: Because of his association in that group wasn’t he...someone wanted to nominate him to be on the Board of Regents or something of that sort. We found something in the papers that we were going through. We didn’t know about that. Do you remember what that was, some state board?

RL: Well, he was on the Board of Education.

AL: Was on the Board of Education.

RL: I think it was in connection with that...someone was mentioning his name in connection with running for governor. Dad never did do that. Well, he ran for the Congress of the United States but didn’t make it through the primaries. He was running at the same time that—

AL: Mike Mansfield.

RL: —Mike Mansfield was running, and everybody jumped out of their own party and moved over to elect Mansfield and left Dad out in the cold. But, Dad knew a lot of people; otherwise, I think he might have made a much better running, showing.

AL: That’s his card up there on the...with his picture on it when he was running.

JR: Oh, okay.

RL: Where’s that, Annie?

AL: Right on top of that shelf there.
JR: Yes, right there.

So one thing that I was asking you before and I didn’t quite follow through on this, that it seemed that you had a little bit more mechanically interest and...

RL: Yes, oh yes, my interest was much more mechanical. I went up to Alaska in ’43 and worked on the highway just after the original Negro crews moved out. I was driving not only dump trucks but CATs—CATs and CANs. So, when I came back here I always wanted a CAT. When Ann and I were married, I said there was one thing I want to do. I was saving back the privilege of buying a CAT.

I went to a sale where they had some used CATs, and I bid up to 1,200 dollars. I lost it because someone else bid more. I guess it went for about 3,000 dollars. That evening a fellow gave me a call and said, “Do you still want that CAT?”

Well, yes I was interested in that CAT.

“Well, the fellow never did pick it up. He bid that much, but he didn’t pick it up. How much would you be willing to pay for it?”

I said, “Well, I quit bidding at 1,200 dollars. That’s what I’d pay for it.”

The guy said, “Well, that’s not the right price. It really went for about 3,000 dollars.”

I had that one bit of knowledge at the moment to say the right thing when he said it really went for 3,000 dollars, and I said, “Apparently, it didn’t.” Once a lifetime thing when you happen to think of just the right thing to say.

So he said, “Well, if you want it, you can have it at 1,200 dollars.” I’ve been all over the valley with that CAT. I’ve built roads all over, and then it began to get my shoulders, got a couple of big levers in...you know about a CAT?

JR: A little bit.

RL: Well, you have to pull about 75 pounds on those steering levers, and I told Ann...I didn’t tell her before, but I have to get another CAT. So I picked up this newer CAT for about 30,000 dollars, and I’ve enjoyed running that. Now the boys run it. I don’t run it anymore—either one of them—but I enjoyed that very much.

AL: You had a pretty big job with that CAT early on, with Marshall.

RL: Yes I installed the towers up at Marshall Ski Area with it, put an A-Frame on the backend of it, and hoisted towers up. So I was more mechanically inclined than Dad. Dad
said that he found **that Rears (?) rain gear** in the differential on the 490s was the same as the Ford rain gear. Well, he went across the street to the Ford garage and bought Ford rain gears. People would come in with the teeth stripped on the rain gear. People would come into buy a car, and Dad standing in the running board beside them, “Now, just let the clutch out easy, and when you feel the car start to move ahead, don’t get excited. Don’t let it out with a jerk.” Well, they never remembered that, and when the car started up, which was kind of like driving a team of horses, they let the clutch out. The car would lurch ahead, and of course now and then it would go through a couple of teeth on the rain gear. Dad said he changed a lot of those rain gears. Well, I never caught Dad at much of a lie, but I don’t think Dad was the sort of guy who would crawl around under a car, pull out the rear axle, pull it apart and change the rain gear. You got to go all the way. Pull the side axels and everything to get at the rain gear.

AL: Didn’t he admit that he had it changed?

RL: I think he did. But, I don’t think of him as being very mechanical, though he was pretty practical—not too mechanical. For delivering goods to the store and other stores up around the Big Point, around Columbus, he fixed up a trailer the way people did and hauled his own goods. He’d have them sent into Columbus, and then he’d pick them up, distribute them to the various stores. He had five stores at that time. Wish I could remember the name of that Black, something or other, north of town...Black Eagle! You’d think I’d remember that. Eagle is the main, prominent bird of the country. Well, not the black eagle, the Bald Eagle.

JR: So how did the two of you meet?

RL: I was square dancing, and Ann talked to one of her patients at the hospital and he said, “Why don’t you come down square dancing?” So she did, and I saw Ann coming in. I was there a little early, and she walked down the stairs—the old Paxton school—which is a little different from the present Paxton school, and I just never got my eyes off of her. That was really love at first sight.

AL: They call his wife...knew Bob is looking for someone. Bob was 37, and he was looking for someone and so she saw me coming in single. So she grabbed Bob and brought him over and introduced us, right there. You know, as we said we just looked at each other and that was it.

RL: We were gone.

AL: Yes. We didn’t get married for four years.

RL: We didn’t want to hurry things.
AL: Didn’t want to hurry things along.

I’m Catholic and he’s Protestant, that was a big deal back then you know—big deal. So, it took us quite a while to figure out that...We did, and now it all seems so silly to think that we were concerned about—so silly.

RL: Well, for a lot of people it is quite a problem.

AL: There’s lots more to be told about this place, from the time they moved here until the time Mother and Father passed away.

RL: We had a summer camp for children 11 to 17 years old. We’d have 15 to 20 campers from all over the north, or the Midwest and New England. Mother had a lot of friends left over from Holyoke which is Massachusetts, and a lot of college friends and so on, so we had entrees to a lot of different names. We did that primarily to put my two older sisters through college. One of the things we did was to put the kids in the car and drive them all around western Montana to show that a lot of people in Montana did wear shoes after all. Along came the war and gas rationing so that part of the camp was much more difficult to do.

It was a sort of working camp. The kids were expected to put a certain amount of time in the garden, and they would have to take care of the horses and other things around. So it wasn’t a dude ranch where everybody was taken care of, the kids had to work at it.

Apparently, that was one of the appeals for many of the parents. They sent kids back over and over again. Several came back more than once. Then by the time my brother and I came along, we no longer were running the camp. It was during the war, and it wasn’t possible to continue.

AL: Well, you helped out for a little while with the kids.

RL: Yes.

AL: You were in charge of getting the horses together. You had about 14 horses, didn’t you, dear?

RL: Yes.

AL: Getting them all rigged up, take the campers on horseback rides.

RL: At that time the Rattlesnake area was open. The Indians have restricted it pretty much now, but we went clear over...what’s the divide name? Down into Crazy Fish Lake. First time I went down in there, there were a small group of Indians. I don’t remember
how many, but we tried not to get in their way and pitched the camp a little distance away. We noticed as the evening progressed they picked up their camp and moved someplace else. We think our being there bothered them. I always felt badly about that, sort of their country in a way. I wouldn’t have wanted to disturb them, but now that area is closed off to white persons, or at least people who are not a member of the Flathead tribe, Salish tribe.

JR: And that was part of the camp?

RL: Yes.

JR: Do you remember what years the camp operated from?

RL: I think it was ’38, ’39, ’40, ’41, ’42, and then the war was pretty well on. Five years, I think maybe it started one year before that.

JR: Do you remember, was your mother the impetus behind that, or both your mother and father?

RL: Yes, they were equally in on it. Mother did most of the cooking until she could train the girls to help with the campfire and the cooking.

AL: It was quite a project.

JR: Sounds like it. Did you have bunkhouses built up here?

RL: We built this log house as a dormitory for boys. When Ann and I came, we added all of this out here.

AL: Then you had a pavilion where they ate.

JR: So there were boys and girls that came to the camp?

RL: Yes.

JR: So was there a separate facility for the girls?

RL: Girls pretty much stayed up in the big house and then the girls’ cabin above the house, and then the pavilion. We had an upper floor in one part of the pavilion and two girls stayed up there. We had some displaced English kids, happened to be girls particularly, during the war. Quite a few people from England wanted to get their kids out of harm’s way, sent them over to this country, and we had some of them. One girl that we still keep in contact with...with which we still keep in contact.
JR: Well, I think we’re about to run out of time, let me check. Oh, we still got a few more minutes. How do you feel? Do you think maybe we should…?

RL: Oh, we can go for a while. The cows don’t have to be fed right away.

JR: Okay. I don’t hear them screaming for you. I had another question in mind…

RL: I appreciate you coming up with questions because I’m running out of ideas.

AL: Well, part of the things that we…are down in the archives are the camp newsletters. You maybe know that. I don’t know if you know that?

JR: No, actually I don’t.

AL: We gave a lot of the material from the camp to Donna [Donna McCrea], and that includes…They wrote a newsletter every month, or every week, or…

RL: I don’t remember that detail, Annie, but it was frequently.

AL: But anyway those newsletters contain a lot of the activities that were going on in the camp.

RL: We hiked the kids up on Sentinel one time, and there was an item that appeared in the paper the next day about strange lights up on Sentinel. At the beginning of the war there was a lot of paranoia, and I think at that time we had displaced Japanese, a Nisei, living with us and people were suspicious of that Japanese boy. He turned out to be a wonderful person. He was no more Japanese than any of the rest of us. I mean, he was a full American—a two generation American. But, the rumors started flying about this Japanese spy out here at the place.

AL: How did your parents get hooked up with Martin Haribashi Is his name?

RL: I think Dad was over in Seattle attending some sort of conference, and…I don’t remember the people’s names, they knew this Japanese, Nisei, that was in school—very capable young student. He was going to get caught up in this fact that all the Nisei had to be moved away from the coast. Many of them were put in camps as bad as the concentration camps the Jews were put in, around in Utah and some of the very dry areas, I think, also in Arizona as I remember. If he could be given a home where there was a sponsor that could take care of him, he would not have to go to one of these concentration camps. Dad said, “Well, sure, we could use a helper.” It just turned out to be a wonderful situation for us. He was such a nice fellow and very helpful. Dad was being away from the place more and more on various jobs, project.
So we were milking cows at that time just for our own use—the milk—and so it was helpful to have someone around when Dad was gone to milk. Dave and I were beginning to be away from the place, so Martin helped us with milking the cows. We just enjoyed him very, very much. He had taken the Japanese language when he was in school I think. Martin grew up around Seattle. Anyway, you’d think as a Japanese he’d know the language...wouldn’t have to...but he was not really...Born in this country so he had to learn. I think he had to learn about 2,500 Japanese characters in order to write the language, and he was this sort of guy who would do that.

AL: We still have Christmas cards from him every year. He came back, oh, about 15 years ago to visit Bob—he and his wife. I got to meet him then. His parents were like that. They would do things that were helpful to other people. Did they have any other foreign students, or anybody else that...?

[End of Interview]