Oral History Number: OH 411-003  
Interviewee: John Melcher  
Interviewer: Don Spritzer  
Date of Interview: January 12, 2007  
Project: John Melcher Interviews Oral History Project

Don Spritzer: I think when we left off yesterday we were about in the middle of talking about your second term and we were just getting started with the first couple of years. The next question that I have: you were credited with playing a major role in getting passage of the Farm Bill in 1985. Do you recall anything about the effort to get that Farm Bill passed?

John Melcher: Oh lots. That was tough. Bob Dole was the majority leader and he was on the committee. [Jesse] Helms from North Carolina was the Chairman, and of course the majority leader can call up a bill whenever he wants to and can take it off...you know, halt the debate...whenever he wants to, when nobody’s speaking that is, and then move to something else. It was on-again, off-again because we actually had fifty-one votes. We had to have one Republican, which was Senator [Mark] Andrews of North Dakota, and as long as he stayed with us we had the majority.

So Dole’s purpose, of course, as majority leader his purpose was to prevent it from ever coming to a final vote. Every time they would go back to the Farm Bill, we would talk and describe the attributes of the bill and why we wanted it that way. That went on for weeks. We were on and off of the Farm Bill because Dole would offer amendments, we’d vote on the amendments, and if there were amendments would change the Farm Bill we would have the fifty-one votes that would not permit it to be changed. The process for Dole was to keep it from coming to a final passage. Finally after, on and off discussion of the Farm Bill, and amendments that would have changed it, we had succeeded in holding it the way we wanted it.

Finally about two o’clock one morning he said, “Well, why don’t we go off of the bill and then some of us get together the next morning and see whether we can’t resolve this.” Which was agreeable. It was two o’clock in the morning. We wanted to go home. What he was saying was that if we go off the Farm Bill now and we meet in his office in the morning, maybe we can wrap this thing up, because he was by that time convinced that he was not going to change the 51-49 vote edge that we had. So we did go off of bill, returned for the evening...or for that day [because] it was already going into the next day. We met in his office about nine o’clock in the morning. He said, “Well let’s pass this thing. No use more debating it.”

We said, “Fine. Let’s pass it.” When we went into session and called up the Farm Bill for debate, we quickly passed it. We won and it came out the way we wanted.

When I say “we” I mean all the Democrats on the Committee which would include [Tom] Harkin of Iowa, [Howell T.] Heflin of Alabama, and [Edward] Zorinsky of Nebraska. We did pass it. It was more favorable to corn/wheat producers than the Republican version was. It was, at the
time, a major victory for the Democrats and for, what all of our constituents wanted. That sounds a little bit peculiar because Dole is actually from Kansas, a very big producing wheat state, but actually what most of the wheat producers wanted was something a little bit better than what Dole and Helms on the Republican side were willing to go. We always felt pretty good about that, and it was a demonstration that yes, we were in the minority. We Democrats were in the minority, but with the help of just one vote we got the majority on our side and carried the day.

DS: Do you think Republican opposition to that bill, was that based mostly on the amount of money in the bill or was there something else going on there?

JM: It was based on money in the bill for corn and wheat producers. For Montana it was the right vote, absolutely the right vote. For Iowa it was the right vote and I’ll leave it up to Dole and the Kansans to say whether he was voting right for them at that time. I suspect that most of Kansas wheat producers wanted just exactly what we had, the Democrats had, rather than what Dole wanted in that particular bill.

DS: I read that you got an amendment put in the bill that would help provide for the humane treatment of farm animals in federal research facilities...do you...

JM: Well, yeah. And Dole did not oppose that. In fact he had a lot in that bill that he had sponsored for better treatment of animals. He and I were together on that portion of the bill. And on the other portions of the bill, such as the bill for Food for Peace that was a little more helpful to non-governmental organizations like CARE and Catholic Relief Service, the Adventists, Lutherans, that he wanted also.

So it wasn’t like through all of the bill he and I were at odds. There were great portions of that bill where we were in lockstep on it and in fact Dole as a majority leader was really taking the lead in those areas. There was one area, the animal welfare stuff, that he was opposed by [Orrin] Hatch of Utah. But Dole was not giving in, and did not give in, and we carried the day on some critical factors in animal welfare, particularly on laboratory animal care that he’d long wanted to get enacted into law and I did, too. So there were great portions of that bill where he and I were working together, but not on this price supports for grain producers.

I should also say that there were portions in there on dealing with Food for Peace that Jesse Helms had come around to and was very supportive of. So there were great portions of that bill that Dole, Helms, Tom Harkin, Judge Hefflin, and I and others that were Democrats were very much locked together on, and were working to make sure it was in the bill. And [that] would be passed and accepted by the House, too, because it isn’t just one-side that gets all of this. You have to have agreement on both sides, House and the Senate. But on that portion that dealt with support prices for grain producers, Helms was at odds with us and by the good fortune of having Senator Andrews...he a Republican who was from North Dakota...having him on our side
was the only margin of victory that we had. And with all the Democrats and Mark Andrews we had the necessary number of votes to pass it.

DS: And Reagan signed it.

JM: Yeah. He did not block it.

DS: Among the foreign policy issues that came up when Reagan was president was the invasion of Grenada. Do you remember what your position was on that particular incident?

JM: I thought it was idiotic, but there wasn’t much we had to say about it. But it was very poor judgment on his part, to invade a little island like that over something that could have been resolved easily without showing military force.

DS: That seems to have gone on a lot over the years. Using military force...anyway dealing with the use and deployment of American troops without Congress having anything to say about it. Is that disturbing to you at all?

JM: Oh absolutely. My biggest objection to what Reagan was doing involved getting us involved in Nicaragua. It seemed like he was hiding things from Congress and from the public. I thought he was absolutely wrong in that, but didn’t seem to be able to stop it.

DS: There just wasn’t anything that came before Congress probably for you to debate and vote on?

JM: Not actively. I’m sure there were opportunities for resolutions voicing displeasure and all that stuff, but you’re mostly talking to yourself because there wasn’t anything we were going to get done where we had the votes to block him and there wasn’t any mechanism that we had that would really carry the majority of votes. So all we’d do, I guess...the word I would use...all we could do was bitch about it.

DS: [laughs] Yeah. Well there is one incident I read about at one time that the Reagan administration was planning to divert $300 million from a Food for Peace program that was targeted mostly for African countries, I believe, and sending it instead into Central America. You and Tom Harkin wrote to Reagan to oppose that. Do you recall that at all?

JM: Just vaguely. We had so much difficulty with him on his actions in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua but it slopped over into San Salvador and involved both countries. I think it was disgraceful, and much of it illegal, but there didn’t seem to be enough votes to shut it off in any manner or form. But that was one of the instances where I thought he was outrageous. And as a consequence I was not a real admirer of Reagan. I know a lot of people have been writing in the past decade or two about Reagan’s philosophy and how effective he
was as a president, but I guess I saw more warts on him than I liked. [chuckles] I objected to him and was not a fan of Reagan at all.

DS: I think today you hear very little about the so-called Iran-Contra Affair and that whole incident, but at the time there were congressional hearings if I remember...

JM: Yes there were.

DS: ...and everything going on. Were you involved with that at all?

JM: I wasn’t on the right committees to be involved with it at all, but I took note of it and voiced my opinion frequently enough, I thought, to make clear that I objected.

DS: Reagan seemed to come out of that fairly clean, though, it seems to me.

JM: I wonder how history will treat it, because I think there were violations of law that were covered up. I think it was a poor policy, and to me it’s a big black mark on his record.

DS: Guess time will tell.

JM: Yeah, time will tell. History will tell.

DS: Another Reagan foreign policy thing in 1983, going back a little bit in time...Reagan sent American Marines into Lebanon, mostly to guard the airport, I think. This of course led to that tragic bombing of the barracks in October of that year. Do you remember anything you said or did regarding that?

JM: No, I don’t recall. I recall the incident very well but I don’t recall that I had any much of a voice in it at all. A senator could always take the floor and make your statement. But I don’t recall exactly what I did on that.

DS: Well, there was a Senate Resolution in November, which was a month after the bombing, just to remove the Marines from Lebanon and I think you signed on to that.

JM: Yeah, I imagine I would have absolutely [chuckles] signed on to it because I thought our involvement was a mistake. Of course I wasn’t on the committees that would voice that officially for the Senate, such as the Foreign Relations Committee, or deal with it on the Appropriation Committee...I wasn’t on either one of those. But Reagan’s attitude and Reagan’s philosophy was not mine and I frequently voiced objections to it.

DS: You were talking just a minute ago about the judgment of history. There are historians who have credited Reagan and his big arms build-up during his administration with ending the Cold War. Do you think that’s a correct assessment?
JM: I think in all fairness he was effective in dealing with the Soviets. Had he not built up the military as much as he had, I don’t think the Soviet Union would have been as cooperative as they became afterwards. Tearing down the Berlin Wall and leaving off of their occupation of all those European countries, was something that should go to the credit of Reagan.

DS: There was one Reagan foreign policy matter that could have affected the West, and that was his Star Wars anti-missile system.

JM: I thought that was leading us in the wrong way. The concept that he was sort of buying into...no he was buying into it...was the wrong way to go and I think he kind of backed off, or he got defeated on it and he didn’t get the money for the Star Wars venture that he wanted to get.

DS: I know there were all kinds of different plans as to how to deploy them, I remember...put them in the desert in Nevada underground, and put them on the railroads that already existed and just move them around.

JM: Yeah. [laughs] It was a pipedream.

DS: When you were senator, and I think this goes way back throughout a lot of your two terms, it seems that you had a special interest in the Philippines. You made several trips there. What were your reasons for that?

JM: Well I had the idea that we had to increase wheat exports and I learned that we could increase them in the Philippines. I got very familiar with their situation and what they actually wanted from us in wheat. It started with their Secretary of Agriculture, they call it Minister of Agriculture, who had studied at Columbia and to Harvard or...some U.S. colleges, and I got to meet him when he was over here as Minister of Agriculture.

I had this idea, why don’t we increase exports of our wheat to...I mean Montana wheat, too, by the way...to the Philippines and asked him to meet with me. I said, “What can we do to increase the exports?” He immediately said, “Well you can do Section 4.10 of the Food for Peace law, and that will subsidize some sales to us.” He said, “I think, as a matter of fact, it will do what you want to do and that is to increase the exports to us.” So I became very vigorous. I’d had something to do with Section 4.10 in the Food for Peace law. And I became rather vigorous in espousing that with the Department of Agriculture, our Department of Agriculture, to increase the wheat sales to the Philippines.

It worked to a moderate amount right away. As a consequence of that, the Minister of Agriculture invited me to come to the Philippines, and I happened to have a Filipino working for me that expedited things in dealing with them, dealing with the Philippines. They actually, at that time, were...had the government being the importers. That meant that if you wanted to sell more U.S. wheat, you actually had to get their government to agree to buy it. That did
change after a couple years and the flour millers themselves were the ones that actually did the buying. The cousin of this Filipino who worked for me, was one of the flour millers out in the Philippines. We made several trips out there promoting the idea that they should be buying the wheat they wanted from the U.S. rather than Canada. Canada was subsidizing their sales rather vigorously, and sometimes their Canadian prices were lower than if they bought U.S. wheat.

We worked diligently with them for a number of years and I’m pleased to say that we doubled the amount of spring wheat that they bought from the U.S. and virtually all of that spring wheat came from Montana. So...I was on the right track and it’s still the same today. Most of the wheat that they buy is Montana spring wheat and I believe they buy 73 million bushels a year. Not all of that is spring wheat but more than two-thirds of it is...three-fourths of it is. And it can either come from us in the U.S., meaning Montana wheat, or it can come from Canada. We’re still getting the bulk of those sales and I’ve asked Jon Tester to keep that in mind and keep contact with them.

And it is not the government of the Philippines buying, it is the flour millers, it’s private business, and they make the decision to purchase from whom they’re going to purchase. My contention is that...they like us a little bit better than they like the Canadians, they’ve got stronger ties with the U.S. than they have with the Canadians, so let’s keep them coming to the U.S. and buying, and it’ll be Montana spring wheat that goes to the Philippines. It’s a big export market for us and specifically for Montana and our spring wheat growers.

DS: Well as a wheat farmer, I’d like to think Jon Tester would probably stay interested.

JM: Oh he cottons to the idea immediately. I said, well you know the flour millers from the Philippines, they’re going to be over here and I want to be sure that you talk to them and meet them and keep this relationship going strong.

DS: Sure.

JM: It isn’t that Senator Baucus hasn’t been doing the same, but Jon Tester, as a wheat grower himself, is really in a stronger position to deal directly with them than anybody else in the Senate.

DS: How well did you know Ferdinand Marcos, President of the Philippines?

JM: I met with him two or three times. He was a dictator. He was corrupt. He was the head of their government, however. He had...I suppose you could say, like everybody else even though they’re dictators, he had some good points. He liked the U.S. He was very much tied to the U.S. and wanted to have that relationship as strong as possible. So that part of him was good.

DS: Were you surprised when that government was overthrown?
JM: No, not surprised. I think when it was overthrown...as a matter of fact, the general that arranged to get him out of there was a friend of mine. I knew him very well and I was pleased when Marcos was deposed.

DS: One time when you visited in 1985, there was a pretty sizable demonstration against Marcos, right at the time of your visit. Do you remember that at all?

JM: Oh somewhat, yeah. The flour millers that I was in close contact with were...well they didn’t like Marcos. They didn’t trust him, they thought he was corrupt. So yes, I’m familiar with the demonstrations. It wasn’t bloody demonstrations, it was street demonstrations battered down by the police. They didn’t kill anybody, but they could be very forceful.

DS: Were you ever worried about your own safety when you were over there?

JM: I never was, personally. But when we were there and moved around the country they were very careful that somebody...I guess you’d call them body guards...were around to make sure that nothing could happen to us.

DS: Did Conrad Burns make an issue out of your work in the Philippines when you two were campaigning, do you remember?

JM: Yes he did, and I wasn’t smart enough to point out, over and over and over...I ran a poor campaign when he beat me in 1988. I should have continually drummed away at, well don’t you want to sell Montana wheat? This is where we’re selling it! Now we’re not talking about winter wheat. It’s spring wheat that the Phillipines buys...the high-protein spring wheat that they buy. I suppose we produce twice as much winter wheat as spring wheat.

But nevertheless it was an important item in county after county across the highline and I should have been drumming away, well don’t you want to sell the wheat? That’s where we’re selling it to. This is the result of a lot of things that I’ve been helpful in arranging. I just made a lousy pitch at it...I didn’t run a good campaign then. Otherwise, I’ll tell you, it would be on ad after ad after ad. [chuckles] So that people would understand that yes, I had a relationship with the Philippines. I spent several years trying to develop a strong relationship and make it stronger in order to get these wheat sales. And I’m pleased that it’s happened that way, because it has made a real customer out of the Philippines and since we’re the state with the spring wheat that’s available to the West Coast out of Portland, we’re the ones that benefit when we sell that. Does it make any difference in price? Of course it does. It probably adds ten cents a bushel to our spring wheat from the very fact that we have that market.

DS: True, and I think by then, by the time of the election, Marcos was gone...

JM: I forget when...yeah he was gone.

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John Melcher Interview, OH 411-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
DS: And you were still selling wheat.

JM: We were still selling wheat. We’ve sold it since then. You know, the Philippines has a pretty big population and it’s a growing population. They’re one of the biggest countries, I think probably the eighth or ninth largest country in the world in population, and wheat is a basic commodity. And they do not produce any wheat at all. Their climate is not right to produce wheat. So all the wheat they’re going to use in making flour and selling it in the Philippines has got to come from outside their country.

DS: Okay. A little bit closer to home. In 1985 you were successful in persuading officials somewhere to get a military helicopter to place the Lady of the Rockies statue on top of the mountain above Butte. Who persuaded you to do that, or how’d that happen?

JM: Well the Butte people expected me to do it. This is all voluntary money, voluntary work by people in Butte building this...the statue of the Blessed Virgin. I think it’s 90 feet high. After they got it built...gorgeous piece of work...they had it in two pieces but each piece was metal, steel. And each piece weighed so much that there was no possibility of—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
DS: Okay. You were talking about the statue.

JM: There was no possibility of moving this statue...it was two pieces...up on the mountain where it was going to be placed. This is on a mountain that you can see from Butte... you can see it from the highway traveling towards Butte from the west, you can see it for, I suspect about fifteen miles. There was no possibility of moving that up there except by large helicopter. They found out that the cost of doing that was tremendous...but the large helicopters they needed were owned by the military. So the request to me was, from the people in Butte, can’t you get the military to do this for us? And so, the only way I knew was to go to Barry Goldwater, who was Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee in the Senate, and explain it to him and get him to ask them to do it.

When I approached Barry he said, “You want the military to take this statue?” These big...” I think he called them Hewey, “helicopters up on top of that mountain?”

I said, “Yeah, the people of Butte expect me to get it done and I don’t know how I could possibly get it done unless you could get it done.”

Oh, he waved me off the first conversation, and when I came back the second time he said, “Well, I’ve looked at that stuff you sent to me, and that’s a big undertaking. I don’t know...”

I said, “Well, they expect me to get it done, the people in Butte, and the only way I’m going to get it done is if you’ll help me and ask the military to do it.”

“Oh all right, all right.” So he got it done. It wasn’t me. It was Barry Goldwater, as chairman of that committee. And they did a marvelous job. They put the military crew in there with that big helicopter and everybody watched them do it and was in awe of how they could take that much weight up and just drop it down where it’s supposed to be. It was really a first-class job. So after it happened I told Barry how happy the people were and showed him some of the newspapers from Butte and I said, “They’re so grateful to you Barry for doing it, they’re just really in awe and pleased with you.”

He said, “Well that’s fine John, that’s fine. We did a good thing I guess.”

Well that was fine, but about three months later we got a bill from the military for doing it. So my task again [chuckles], from the people of Butte was, well can’t you get Barry Goldwater to knock off that bill? I approached Barry again and then rather sheepishly said, “Now they want you to influence the military so there’s no charge for it.”

“Oh, wouldn’t you know!” he said, “wouldn’t you know!”
He stomped off, and so I had to catch him again on the floor and say, “Barry, they’re still asking that you get the military to knock that off.”

He said, “They got me to agree to ask for that to be done. Now they want me to get the military to cancel the bill?”

I said, “That’s exactly right. No bill, it’s just paid. That’s what they want.”

He said, “Gah. Well, I’ll do it.” Then he looked at me and he said, “Would you say that that was a good training exercise?”

I said, “Barry it was the most marvelous training exercise anybody would ever have.”

“All right, that’s what I’ll ask them. I’ll ask them to knock off the bill because it was such a good training exercise.” Of course the bill was knocked off. Barry was a gent, I’ll tell you. He was a real great kind of guy. When he wanted to do something and he was sure it was right he just stuck with it, he just thought it was a good idea to get that statue of the Blessed Virgin up there. He just thought it was a good idea for the military to be of assistance to people who had done something on their own, because that statue cost quite a bit of money to get the people to build it. First of all to design it and put it in clay, then to replicate that in steel. It was expensive and was all donated by the people in Butte. It’s still there.

DS: I think, given Barry Goldwater’s politics particularly way back in ’64 it’s just, it seems ironic that the people of Butte would be grateful to him. [chuckles]

JM: [laughs] That’s right. That’s right, I don’t think many people in Butte voted for him in ’64. But he was one of the finest people I ever got to know. I did go to his memorial service down in Arizona, down in Phoenix, when they had it after he died. I think there were about twenty either current Senators or ex-Senators that showed up for that memorial. He was well-liked. And there was a reason to like him.

DS: Okay. Do you remember your position on the proposed Coal Slurry Pipeline?

JM: Oh yeah. It took water out of Montana and I was always opposed to it. It was a big issue. But imagine having a four or five foot pipe that had enough water in it to carry this coal ground up into fine chips wherever they wanted to carry it. You can easily imagine how much water it would be taking out of Montana continuously and we’re not a state that you’d ever give away water. That’s our lifeblood here, if we’re the farmers and ranchers that irrigate, and it’s our lifeblood for the people that like to fish, like myself. It was a no-go for us. Thank goodness we were always able to beat it. It came up for a vote once when I was in the House and then perhaps again when I was in the Senate, but I was consistently opposed to it and thank God we always had enough votes to kill it.
DS: Other than wilderness, which we’re going to get to here momentarily, can you think of any other important issues you focused on during your second term other than what we’ve already talked about?

JM: Well...I can never quit talking about what we did in Food for Peace because that had a lot of attributes that always had to be cared for. Sometimes it was not new legislation, it was brow-beating people within the State Department and within the Department of Agriculture to make sure it was used and used a lot. That was a continuing effort and the associations I garnered by necessity with both people in the State Department and in the Department of Agriculture to make sure that they were attuned to it and using it properly was sometimes a big scuffle. The Animal Welfare issues that would come up, it was a continuing scuffle too because while I thought the law was clear enough, they weren’t always doing it. They weren’t always following the law or being, I guess zealous, in pursuing their own activities to make sure that animal welfare was protected, particularly in laboratory animals. So those were on-going things, some of what was not legislation. After you get the bill passed [and] after you get the amendment passed you still had to fight it out with the agencies to make sure they would adhere to the law and were actually using the authority that was given to them by the law.

DS: So you probably, then, had people in your office contacting agencies or looking into things like that?

JM: Yeah, and go down myself.

DS: So you looked into it personally.

JM: Yeah. Well I’d ask them to come up and sometimes they’d come up to the office, otherwise, if they were a little bit snifty about coming up I’d go down and visit with them right in their office. The communication with them was not always on the basis that, oh I came down here to see what you’re doing. It was on the basis of, I came down here to see why you’re not doing what it is so clear in the law that you must do. Those are on-going scuffles.

DS: So mostly Agriculture Department officials?

JM: Yeah, and Food for Peace so some of it had to go through the Agency for International Development [which is] part of the Department of State. As a matter of fact I remember one scuffle I had where I had to go down to the Assistant Secretary of State’s office and say what they weren’t doing about Section 4.10, that was part of Food for Peace law, it’s just called Section 4.10. He called in the people who were responsible. I discovered that they weren’t doing what we’d directed them to do at an Agricultural Hearing up on the hill in the Agriculture Committee. So that’s when I asked to have a meeting with him [Assistant Secretary of State]. I know that one important part, or one pleasant thing about it...he actually had a Monet. A picture, of his own, that he brought with him. [chuckles]
DS: An original?

JM: An original Monet, yeah. I looked at it and I said, is that an original? “Oh, of course it is,” he said to me. He was a very wealthy person. A very nice person, as it turned out, and he called in these two underlings of his that I’d had the argument with before the House Agriculture Committee, and he cut right to the quick. He said, “Now are you either doing what the Senator has asked about under Section 4.10, that is clear in the law that we do have that authority and are supposed to be exercising that authority.” “Tell me,” he said, “are you actually exercising that authority?”

They looked at each other and very sheepishly said, “No, we’re not Mr. Secretary.”

He said, “Well, isn’t it nice that the Senator will take his time to point out to me that we’re not doing what we should. Are you going to do what we should?”

They said, “Of course.” [laughs]

Point one. It’s one of those circumstances that if you don’t go right to their boss, it won’t get done. They can bluff it off on the Agriculture Committee Hearing and say, well we’re doing this or doing that and act like their getting it done, but they weren’t. The Assistant Secretary who was their boss wanted to abide by it. He agreed with me. It’s a good program, use it. That was his attitude and I thought maybe that would be the case.

DS: How did your office usually find out that these laws weren’t being enforced?

JM: You’d find out by either asking them, you know, what’s happening. A lot of times you find out through the hearing process. It’s called oversight. When you hear about these oversight hearings, there’s a purpose for them. They are absolutely essential, because, although you pass a law, it has to be implemented, it has to be exercised, it has to be done. Agencies are often…and I say that about the Department of Agriculture, about any of those departments of the federal agencies…I would say that sometimes they’re lax. They don’t agree with the law, they didn’t want the law, they never asked for it and when they get the amendments in place and they become law, they [the agencies] have a tendency if they don’t like it, to avoid it. To ignore it.

DS: Drag their feet.

JM: Drag their feet, absolutely. It’s like it never was passed. That’s what oversight hearings are all about and that’s why these committees have them. To make sure that the will of Congress, which is supposedly the will of the people by their elected representatives, is carried out.
DS: Okay. We’ll move to wilderness. In 1986 you sponsored a separate Montana Wilderness Bill of your own after repeated attempts failed to get the Montana delegation to agree on a single bill. Why do you think it was so hard to get consensus?

JM: Well, for one thing, we all have a little bit different slants on different parts of Montana. Max [Baucus] and Pat [Williams] were very much together in their discussions with wilderness advocates in Montana, much more than I was, and that’s to their credit. It wasn’t that I was ignoring the wilderness people, but they were in better discussion with them. At that time [Ron] Marlenee, the Republican House member, was not so enamored with a lot of the stuff and if we were going to get an agreement among the four of us, some of it [had to include] points that Marlenee insisted on.

In that particular bill, it really did not satisfy a lot of people in Montana who wanted wilderness in this area and that area, etc. It wasn’t until the next Congress, when Marlenee sort of withdrew himself from the discussion, that we were able to, between the three of us, reach agreement. We thought that would be sufficient. [laughs] I did anyway, and I think Max and Pat did too. However, that’s a bill that Reagan vetoed in the long-run. [He] made a political issue out of it and my re-election efforts.

DS: Right, we’ll get to that.

JM: Yeah.

DS: Conservation groups and environmentalists were often critical of your going it alone, I guess you might say, in your 1986 bill. I can remember reading some of the letters in the Missoulian, for example. Do you think the criticism was fair?

JM: Oh yeah. I think it was fair enough. But if we were to get it done we had to have the four people agreeing with it, which did include Marlenee. That was the way we operated and that’s the best we could do at that time. It wasn’t good enough. As I recall we didn’t vote on it either in Committee or on the Floor because we simply didn’t have firm enough agreement among all four of us and it wouldn’t have gone anywhere. So, that was just the beginning effort of the joint effort by everybody in the delegation, and it wasn’t until the next Congress, with Marlenee out of the picture, that we did get [agreement]. Between the three of us it was much easier to get it ironed out.

DS: So then in ’88 the three of you agreed on a bill.

JM: We did.

DS: Do you think it was a good bill?
JM: Yeah, I think it was a fairly good bill. I think, looking back, there still wasn’t enough done, and all three of us I would say, [were] not looking at it in a way that was an essential part of a huge wilderness bill. That is, I don’t know that we paid enough attention to the corridors of wildlife. Elk and other wildlife deserve to have special attention to making sure that we did not interfere with corridors that they, the elk and the deer and other wildlife used and was necessary. Grizzlies aren’t very much here, but there are some. Most of our grizzlies are either down towards Yellowstone Park or up in the Bob Marshall. The Bob Marshall grizzlies are all right, they’ve got their established corridors there, but I don’t know that we were careful enough about making sure about corridors in the new wilderness that we were going to designate. I get that from the wildlife experts out here. I don’t recall that we really zeroed in on that enough, and if a new wilderness bill would be drafted I would recommend that, above all, you look at the corridors that are necessary for wildlife because that’s the best, in my book, that’s part of the best of Montana is the wildlife we enjoy here.

DS: But you did get the bill passed.

JM: Did get the bill passed. I had always said that, in an election year, I would not be in Washington after the middle of September. I would be out in Montana talking to people. But as it worked out the Republicans contrived to make sure I was back in Washington, if that bill was going to pass, if the Wilderness Bill was going to pass because they were blocking it from coming up on the Senate Floor. I did stay back there to safeguard the passage of that bill, which was a huge mistake on my part, and didn’t really get out from Washington until sometime towards the 10th of October, which was really a very short period of time for strong campaigning. I goofed. I should not have stayed there. As it was, it wasn’t necessary to pass the bill anyway because Reagan vetoed it. Marlenee had told me, he said, “You know, they’re going to veto that bill if you ever get it passed.” And I said, “No wilderness bill has ever been vetoed by any president. What makes you think Reagan would veto it?” He said, “He’ll be requested to veto it, and he will.” I wouldn’t believe him at all.

DS: Marlenee told you that before...

JM: Marlenee told me that.

DS:...before the bill passed?

JM: Before the bill passed.

DS: Wow.

JM: And I didn’t believe him.

DS: So anyway, Reagan did veto the bill. Maybe an obvious question here, do you think the bill was done deliberately to hurt your chances of being re-elected?
JM: Absolutely. Sure it was. I wouldn’t say...I suspected that the Wilderness Bill, I mean it’s passing, would be tough on me in some areas. I found out it was. People don’t want to be interfered with, and little saw mill operators here and there, thought they were being interfered with and why would you take out some potential timber harvests in their area. I got that ahead of time and I knew that was going to hurt me to a certain extent with some people. I tried to be as careful as I could with them but there would be areas that they were looking at in their particular area...an example was over in Lewistown. That is not big timber country but there are saw mills over there and I knew some of them were having real misgivings about anything that would interfere with potential sales of timber in that area. It wasn’t very big and they really weren’t threatened that much, but nevertheless they felt they were and I knew it would hurt me some.

Setting that aside, it should help me also with a lot of other people who had been, I was convinced, wanting a Montana wilderness bill to be passed for a number of years and would have been glad to have it passed. After I did get out here and found out that it wasn’t being touted as a very good bill by a lot of wilderness advocates. They thought it was a rather weak bill and weren’t all that happy with it. So I didn’t win much on that side of it.

Having said all that, the real difficulty I had in my efforts in campaigning in 1988 was that I was back in Washington when I should have been out here. I should have actually done what I said I would always do, and that is in an election year spend my time from the middle of September on through the election campaigning and talking to people and letting them talk directly to me. Paying a lot more attention to how the ads were being presented and what ads were working and what ads were not working. And doing that firsthand from reaction of folks out here in the state rather than sitting back in Washington and trying to generate support. That’s not the way to do it. I did it wrong. I knew what was wrong but I thought, well, I hope the tide carries me or something, and it did not.

DS: Do you think you might have underestimated your opposition?

JM: Oh, of course I did. I had done exactly what I said I would not do, and that was the main thing, and that is if you are out there you can see folks firsthand and react to what they’re saying rather than guessing at it. It’s a long ways between here and Washington, and you’re not going to have the mood or the tone of the electorate unless you’re here campaigning. I didn’t do that. That was my fault, not anybody else’s.

DS: Getting back just briefly to the veto. Pat Williams, years later, called Reagan’s veto, quoting, “...the most politically cynical veto of an environmental bill in contemporary history.” Would you agree with that?

JM: Oh yeah, it was cynical. He did it because it would hurt me and it was a small thing for him to do. He’s the only president, period, that ever vetoed a wilderness bill. Insensitive.
DS: Somebody must have asked him to do that.

JM: I’m sure they did and, you know, a Senate seat is a big thing for either party. Republicans naturally would ask him to veto it and given the fact that no other president had ever done so, I guess wouldn’t change it for him. That had no bearing on his decision; it was a political decision on his part, thinking it would hurt me and I think it did.

DS: Do you think Montana will ever get a wilderness bill?

JM: Sure, if we want one. We can get one. There’s no reason not to. I haven’t discussed this with Max [Baucus], and I didn’t discuss it with Pat [Williams]...Pat was in after I was out...but I’m sure if Montana wants one we can have one. I would add this word of caution again [to] whoever drafts it: pay attention to the corridors that wildlife use and make sure that those corridors are not interrupted to the extent that it’s detrimental to the wildlife.

DS: Election in 1988 that we’ve been talking a lot about. Other than your sponsorship of the Wilderness Bill and possibly your advocacy for wheat trade with the Philippines, were there any other issues in that campaign that you feel might have hurt you?

JM: I suspect there were but none pop into my mind right at the moment. The main issue was, why wasn’t I out here being accountable? That’s a tremendous issue in a campaign. Where are you? Why aren’t you here? It isn’t that people were calling me up and continuously badgering me to get out there. I did get plenty of calls [asking] “When [are] you coming?” That’s a tip-off. That means, “Why aren’t you here?” I was getting a lot of those calls. So I look at it not on the basis of if the Wilderness Bill hurt me...which I think it did with some people. Was dropped off, I recall Cerovski from Lewistown, when I talked to him after the election he said, “John, I don’t know much about your Wilderness Bill, but I had an unusual occurrence. I was down in the dumps when you got beat and was talking to some of my own employees in Lewistown and I was shocked when I overheard them saying, ‘Melcher got beat. Good to get rid of him.’” He said, “I asked them why they felt that way and they said, ‘The Wilderness Bill’.”
DS: So he was talking to his employers and they weren’t particularly upset that you had lost?

JM: No, they were happy I had lost. He was a little bit shocked because he was so much for me. He said he didn’t realize that there was any question that they had an axe to grind. He said, “Well, why don’t you like him?”

They said, “That f’n Wilderness Bill.”

He said they were working for me, they weren’t working on the saw mill but he said he was shocked to learn that it had been a factor. But then I don’t how much of a factor it was because the biggest factor was, frankly, that I wasn’t out here and being accountable to the electorate as I should have been.

DS: What about the usual charges that come up every campaign by both sides, it seems, that your campaigns depended to heavily on money from out of state?

JM: Well, there’s not much to that, I don’t think. That’s an argument that is made and that’s tried to be made. But Burns had his money from out of state, let me tell you, a tremendous amount and we knew it at the time. Some of it wasn’t being handled properly according to election law but that is not a big deal. Burns had a little more money than I did as it turned out in that campaign and virtually all of it came from out of state and not in state. Though I would say that I had probably a thousand different contributors, may be two thousand in Montana. We were always soliciting money and we get it from people here, either through the organizations working together to raise it themselves in individual donations, that is county chairman and Democratic Central Committee, but we also send out a lot of mail asking for it. We always had good response. Does that add up to a huge portion to the bulk of what you get? No, it does not. The bulk of what we get comes from PACS, and for Burns also... so that was not a significant issue.

DS: Do you think the fact that Michael Dukakis, at the presidential campaign level, ran such a weak campaign, particularly in Montana; do you think that might have hurt you? The coat tail effect?

JM: Oh yeah that hurt some, yeah the coat tail effect going to the other side, going to George Bush, not George W. but the first George.

DS: What about negative television adds? Did that play a role?

JM: Yes it did and they were continually after me and the Democrats, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, they were after me to go negative and I said, “No, no, no we don’t run negative ads.” I heard one negative ad that was aired on radio and when I heard it I said to my
campaign manager, “Don’t you ever do that again, knock that ad off, we’re not going negative.” I was asked by the Democrats in the Senatorial Campaign committee, to please go negative or I was going to lose the election. I said, “Well I am not going negative, put it down that way and forget it.” I didn’t think it ought to be a personal criticism. I don’t like that because it isn’t just the....when you run a negative ad, personally criticizing the other person, you are sort of criticizing his backers or his family first of all. They’ll feel it right away, and then I think it’s an insult. But having said all that I do recognize that negative ads have taken over and he [Burns] had some negative ads against me and I didn’t admire him doing it. I didn’t admire it in anybody. I wish they wouldn’t use it but I know it’s done and people think, well, a lot of them think it’s part of the scuffle I guess in the campaign, but I still don’t like it.

DS: Today it seems like it’s almost taken for granted that both sides are going to use it.

JM: Absolutely and I don’t agree with it. I was told over and over by the campaign managers on the Democratic side, “Well you’ve got to, John. It’s always done and it’s the way it’s done now” and I said “Well I didn’t run them for six years ago and I’m not doing it now, I’m sorry I may be making a mistake as far as getting elected but I’m not making a mistake in what I feel is right and wrong”.

DS: Were you acquainted with Conrad Burns prior to the campaign? Did you know him at all?

JM: Oh sure, I knew him and as a matter of fact I had Mrs. Burns and Conrad and may be one or two of their children, at least one, in the Senate dining room as my guests for a luncheon the year or two before.

DS: Was he lobbying or was just up there for a visit?

JM: He was visiting and we knew each other and I said, “Come on and let’s have lunch in the Senate dining room” and he was all for that and loved it and particularly liked it for his kids. I don’t know if there were one or two of the kids present but there was at least one.

DS: So the two of you got along okay?

JM: Oh yeah, sure we did.

DS: Well now that his tenure in the Senate is over, how would you assess his job performance?

JM: I think he did pretty well. He did a lot of things for Montana State that I think are meaningful. I think he did a lot of things for the University here in Missoula, The University of Montana. I think that he was very diligent in keeping track of talking to folks out here and trying to as much as he could as a Republican and given his own feelings as he could for the state. You know, I think there is a lot of handicap as far as I’m concerned, or not handicap...I don’t know how to put it but I think a lot of what you should be doing for Montana is better done by
Democrats because they are closer to the people that need help and I don’t know how successful he was that way given that he was a Republican because sometimes they have the feeling that maybe it’s a worthy cause but not the responsibility of federal government.

DS: Are there any thing in particular that comes to mind that you might have done differently.

JM: Than Burns?

DS: Say you had been re-elected? Yeah.

JM: Oh absolutely. He mocked my efforts to have a stronger relation with the Philippines in order to sell more wheat. He didn’t follow up on that, I don’t think at all as far as I know. I never heard of it, if he had, though I don’t want to be in the position of saying that I know that he didn’t because I don’t. He might have made efforts that I wasn’t aware of though I think I would have been aware of it. There are a lot of things philosophically that he would not agree with me on that I would be working for and he being the type of Republican that he is and me being the type of Democrat that I am, there are a lot of things that we would never agree on.

DS: So how do you feel about our new senator, John Tester?

JM: Oh, first rate. I like the way that he is Montana from the ground up. By that I mean he knows what we have to have to succeed here in Montana or improve our way of life. His background, having served in the Montana Senate, his background in being a farmer, his background in being elected as the majority leader to the Montana Senate, are not small things, they are large things. I look at him as a natural. The other senators of both sides, whether Democrat of Republican are going to like him and they are going to listen to him. That’s a first step you have to be able to portray if you are going to be successful in the Senate.

DS: After the election you decided to stay in Washington and begin working as a lobbyist. How did that come about and why?

JM: I think it came about because I felt, well, I could still contribute and help pass bills. I’ve had the opportunity on the outside to still work for a lot of the things that I think are significant and paramount. In that regard I’ve worked for veterinarians, for the American Veterinarian Medical Association and the American Association of Veterinarian Medical Colleges, that’s the college end of it. I think I also wanted to do some stuff in Food for Peace and was able to continue that. I did maintain relationships with flour millers in the Philippines, straighten out a couple things and keep working from the outside to make sure that they were continuing to buy Montana wheat as much as possible. Part of that means the pricing has to be to an advantage or at least match the pricing that Canada is willing to sell spring wheat for because they do it through their government. Some of what we sell, was for a period of years still through our government, you had to make sure that they were paying attention to what they could do under the law in making wheat available at a subsidized price to match the Canadian price.
DS: So it sounds like it really wasn’t a hard decision for you to make to stay in Washington.

JM: No, it was an easy one and I was asked to be on the board of CARE, you know the non-profit that is so active, along with Catholic relief services, CARE is probably the biggest users of Food for Peace and I was able to be active with them in getting amendments for Food for Peace law that would be advantageous to the non-profit organizations that utilize American food in the programs that we have for helping the hungry abroad.

DS: Well I know lobbyists, especially lately, last election have come under pretty harsh criticism from a lot of quarters.

JM: Yes and I understand that and I accept that for what it is. When you lobby for something that isn’t in the public interest or rather selfish, that’s one thing, but lobbying for the veterinarians is not selfish, lobbying for Food for Peace is not selfish, paying attention to what we can do in our agriculture in making it possible to move agricultural products is not selfish, I think that’s always in the public interest.

DS: So maybe they are unfairly being painted with the same brush.

JM: Well lobbying, being able to express to your government, to the legislative branch of your government what you think would improve the law is in the public interest if it’s in the public interest. Lobbying that should be criticized is that that is not in the public interest. Because there is so much lobbying done that is not truly in the public interest, or in my judgment is not, we are all free to make our own judgments on what’s in the public interest or not, but lobbying that is selfish and contrary to the best interest to the people of this country is bad. Lobbying for what is good for the interest of the people is good. I know that’s a judgmental thing but I do repeat lobbying for veterinarians to make life more easier or possible for animals is not anything but good, and lobbying for food for peace, I maintain, is something that we all ought to be doing and pursuing it as best we can. I once tried help potatoes, we don’t raise much spuds here in Montana but we raise a lot of seed potatoes in Montana that are sold to people in Idaho or Colorado, Washington and Oregon that do raise potatoes. I’ve tried to help but we’ve formed what we called the potato lobby, meaning Senators and House members, we are banding together to try help potatoes out. I don’t apologize for that sort of stuff because my view would be what I was working for when I was in the House or the Senate and I’m continuing to work for what I tried to do when I was in the House or the Senate and I feel good about that. I feel good about my lobbying, I’ll say that. I don’t want to indicate, lobbying actually involves asking somebody to do something in Congress when you are being paid for it. There’s a lot of stuff I do that I am not being paid for. I get a stipend from the Veterinarians, I get a small stipend from the Veterinary Colleges, it’s not much, but I am being paid for that. When I lobby for Food for Peace I am not being paid for that so frankly it isn’t lobbying because the payment is part of that. Sometimes when I am talking about potatoes to somebody I’m not getting paid for that either so my efforts are not...well, lobbying does infer or does require that...
there be a payment. I am paid, not handsomely, but adequately, by the colleges and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

DS: Something like Food for Peace might fall under that category, citizen advocacy.

JM: That’s it exactly and I think it is worthwhile to do it and I enjoy doing it and will continue to do it and there aren’t any dollars that exchange hands or no payment whatsoever. My lobbying does not infer much money is involved and none in the case of Food for Peace.

DS: You feel you have been successful, let’s say, in Food for Peace?

JM: Oh, absolutely. I am not bragging about that. There are a lot of people helping to lobby for Food for Peace. I throw in my help on top of that, working with them.

DS: What about your work for the veterinarians, the AVMA. Do you think that’s been by and large successful?

JM: Oh, yeah, we’ve passed several bills. The first time they called, the veterinarians asked me to do something and I said, “Well have you drafted your bill?”

They said “Well we’ve been trying to put a bill together.”

I said, “Well that’s fine, get your ideas down and if I’m going to help you, the first thing I’ll help you on is getting a sponsor.” I said, “I’ll try Judge Heflin, Senator Heflin from Alabama.”

He was glad to see me and I gave him a cigar. He always liked Filipino cigars and I had some Filipino cigars especially for him and I gave him a cigar and he said, “Well my wife doesn’t want me to smoke it but I’m damn glad to have it. You got anymore of them John? I chew them now,” he said, “But I might light it up every now and then too, when she’s not around or when she can’t smell it on me.” So he said, “What do you want me to do John?”

I said, “I want you to introduce a bill?”

He said, “What do you mean, introduce a bill?”

I said, “We veterinarians have got a bill and we need it.”

He said, “I don’t know if I want to do that.” He said, “Why don’t you talk to my aide here and explain it and maybe I could support it.”

So I explained it to his aide and we had papers then and suggested what they needed and what the bill would look like and they would run it by the Legislative Council of the Senate and have
them really draft the bill in proper language. He came back into the meeting after we visited for an hour or so with his staff and said, “Now what is it you want me to do about this John?”

I said, “I want you to introduce it, we need somebody to actually introduce it and I think you would be the perfect one to do it”

He said, “Oh, well I’ll think about it,” but sure enough he took it up. He did introduce it as soon as he got it back from the Legislative Council and it was a beginning of getting that bill passed and it was the right type of beginning. We did get it passed and we have passed several since then.

It doesn’t sound like much because these, to most people, these would be very small bills but they are very important for veterinarians, how they function in their practice and how they relate to what they can accomplish. So, are they earth-shaking bills? To veterinarian medicine they are.

DS: Do some of them deal with treatment of animals?

JM: Absolutely and having the proper drugs to treat those animals. It is something that requires legislation. Another bill we got passed would copy what we did for physicians. It would actually subsidize them in underserved areas and subsidize them by paying off their debt, their school debt and we got that bill passed for veterinarians too. It hasn’t been implemented yet but it will be over the next couple of years.

DS: Did any of them deal with wildlife at all, diseases in wildlife, that kind of thing?

JM: They do deal with diseases and wildlife. Let me tell you, what’s called chronic wasting disease or mad cow. It’s in wildlife, it’s in deer and it’s in elk and it is a huge interest to us that we have veterinarians that are able to work with wildlife and to work at research centers where they attempt to find out exactly how the disease is transmitted and what could be done to prevent its transmission. So far the animals that have chronic-wasting disease, which is the same as mad cow, only it’s in deer and elk, we haven’t had a case where it’s been passed on into humans but we know that that’s a possibility.

DS: You probably have a lot of old friends from the Senate that you still get to visit from over there?

JM: Oh yeah. I don’t try to bother them too much, but I do like to see them every now and then and of course when we want a bill passed, we do see them. We offer it to their staffs mainly, but there are points when it is absolutely necessary to sit right down with the Senator and describe exactly what we want. We are working now, we have been for the last couple years, working with Senator Allard, who happens to be a veterinarian on a bill that’s our number one bill that we are lobbying for. It’s his bill, but we helped him draft it and made sure it would
accomplish what we want it to accomplish, so we do meet with Senators from time to time. Otherwise we work through their staffs.

DS: Sure. Allard from Colorado I think?

JM: Allard from Colorado, a very fine guy.

DS: Well I want to talk to you just briefly about one more election campaign you engaged in six years after the Burns thing. In 1994 you decided to enter the Democratic primary. Why did you decide to run again?

JM: Oh to try and get back in, you know. I kept in mind that I ran such a lousy campaign in ‘88 maybe I deserved to try it again and run a good campaign. I didn’t get the nomination so all I had was the primary, but it did give me some satisfaction that I did try to rectify what I did wrong in 1988 and be available to see whether they wanted me and if they didn’t want to give me the nomination so I never got beyond that but I tried and I felt good about trying.

DS: How did your family feel about your deciding to run?

JM: Well none of them were excited about it he said, “You want to try that again? Didn’t you have enough of it?”

Ruth said, “All right if you want to do it but I don’t know why you’re doing it.” But I gave it that effort and I did feel good that well at least I tried to come back and run a good campaign. I did run the campaign that didn’t get anywhere. I at least had given it my effort.

DS: You lost to somebody from Missoula, Jack Mudd in the primary. Why do you think you didn’t win?

JM: Well I think Mudd was looked at as new and might be successful and was at least I knew one big difference which didn’t help me in the primary and that was he was pro-choice. I was pro-life and I think that was a decision by a lot of Democratic voters. I’m not faulting them for doing that but I was beyond the stage of changing my stripes. I am pro-life and he was pro-choice and that’s the way some people make up their mind and I don’t criticize them for that.

DS: Do you ever give any thought at all, after that election, to going back into politics?

JM: No. I have done my part and I think trying again sort of gave me the satisfaction of well, I ran such a lousy campaign and I lost a seat for the Democrats, I’ll expose myself again and see whether I can’t gain one for the Democrats. I felt good about having tried and having done that much to make up for what I’d lost. Because it wasn’t just me, it was the Democratic Party that lost and I felt badly about that, losing that Democratic seat. I know it didn’t sound like much to somebody who is not politically involved but believe me it is what a lot of people think: “Why
did you ever lose that seat, Melcher, that was a Democratic seat don’t you know, that was a Mansfield seat”. That’s Democrat and it should be Democrat. Now at last we’ve got Tester elected, it’s back where I consider and a lot of people consider it ought to be, a Democratic seat.

DS: Well it sound like you’re still enjoying working as a lobbyist.

JM: Oh yeah, I do enjoy trying to get bills passed and I think that’s a function a lot of us should be interested in and I have the know-how from experience. So I feel good about using my know-how in the right way for good purposes and I tell you if you do anything for veterinary medicine it is a good purpose, it helps animals and it helps humans.

DS: No plans to retire?

JM: [laughs] Oh, Ruth overheard that and she’ll tell you—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]
DS: So no plans to retire then?

JM: I’m going to continue to do it as long as I think I can contribute and I want to tell you that a lot of this lobbying is done by telephone and the telephone connection here in Missoula is just as clear as it is in Washington and I like to do everything I can to help veterinarians. I don’t think anybody or I think anybody who can help animals and help veterinary medicine should try to help them and I’m in a position where I can help and I like to do it.

DS: So is your lobbying limited to the veterinarians and there issues?

JM: Yeah that’s all I do.

DS: So you are not doing Food for Peace?

JM: Well let me back up. Yeah, I am trying to help Food for Peace and I always will. Technically it’s not called lobbying because no money changes hand and that’s all volunteer. I do maintain relationship with Food for Peace organizations and that coalition that has been built up there in Washington that works for Food for Peace in their lobbying efforts.

DS: I think and number of years ago didn’t the veterinarians give you an award for the work you’ve done on their behalf?

JM: Yes, that was very nice of them and they thought nicely of me the last few months by saying, “We’re going to give you a raise John.”

I said, “Well I haven’t asked for one or anything, it’s not necessary.”

They said, “Well we’re going to give you a raise anyway it’s going to be in the checks that come out in the beginning in January.” So I thought that was nice recognition too.

DS: Well I am out of questions unless there is anything else that you can think of that you want to tell me?

JM: Well I did tell you but we’ll put it on the record. This dog here is named for Benton Strong, we call him Ben. And despite his breed and his lack of knowledge he looks smart. He looks wise like Ben looked wise.

DS: Was Ben as stubborn as he is?

JM: [laughs] Ben, to his credit, was one of the most stubborn people I ever knew. But that was to his credit. He was stubborn for the truth, he was stubborn for agriculture, he was stubborn
people who made their living in agriculture and I think that was one of Ben’s greatest attributes.

[End of Interview]