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Interviewee: Clyde Hawks
Interviewer: Bob Brown
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Bob Brown: We’re interviewing Clyde Hawks, who was Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1961 and Clyde, your first session in the Montana House was 1949?

Clyde Hawks: That’s right.

BB: Now, when did you come to Montana?

CH: I was born here. My dad came out here in 1911 and homesteaded and he left his wife in North Carolina, so he went back to get her. She wasn’t coming to Montana, so he came back here in ’13, and met my mother and they were married in ’16, and I come along in ’18. I was born in a spring wagon out here on the other side of the big ditch. (laughs)

BB: And the big ditch is?

CH: Irrigates the Yellowstone Valley out on the Billings Bench.

BB: That’s the Huntley Project?

CH: No, that’s this side of the Huntley Project.

BB: So was your dad active in politics?

CH: No.

BB: But he was a Republican?

CH: Well, I knew he voted for Roosevelt. I do know that.

BB: What motivated you to be a Republican?

CH: F.D.R. [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] all the way. (laughs)

BB: What was it about F.D.R. that—

CH: I just didn’t like the guy or anything he stood for.

BB: I see.
CH: I was a novice. I didn’t know anything about politics or state governments or anything. I just didn’t like the guy.

BB: So you first ran in 1948?

CH: Well, let’s see, I was married in 1940. Oh no, I ran...Yes, I ran in ’48, yes.

BB: And you were elected in 1948...Sorry, the first session was the 1949 session.

CH: That’s right.

BB: Do you remember what motivated you to run for the legislature?

CH: Well, I was on the committee that got the REA [Rural Electrification Administration] in the county, and the attorney on the force was a good Republican. (Unintelligible) and I had been friends and we come back one night from a meeting, an REA meeting at Lodge Grass, and he waited until everybody else left and him and I sat in there; he said, “Hawk, we gotta have somebody to run for the legislature.” The old guy that was there wasn’t doing the job. I said, “If I run for the legislature, my wife would kill me.” He says, “Tomorrow’s the last day. You got to put it in tomorrow.” So he left and he signed me up. He says, “You pay me the 15 dollars next time you come to town.”

BB: Who was that guy? Who was that attorney?

CH: Bert Kronmiller.

BB: Bert Kronmiller, okay.

CH: He was the local county attorney and number one Republican attorney in town.

BB: Was the person that was holding the job—who was the state representative at that time, do you remember?

CH: Yes, Van Cleave.

BB: Was he a Democrat or a Republican?

CH: He was a Republican but he got so confused he voted against his own bill, the only bill he ever had up there.

BB: Did he run again in 1948?
CH: I beat him in the primary.

BB: You beat him in the primary, I see.

CH: Then I had no opposition. There was nobody on the Democratic side, so I was clear running.

BB: What was your impression when you first got there in 1949?

CH: Well, I went up to a convention in Helena in the first place. That’s where I really got acquainted with people. It was pretty far out for this old country boy, I’ll tell you. Well, they knew I was a Republican but they didn’t know what kind, so they sat me out in the middle with five or six of the old timers around me. Well, I shake them around a time or two before the ’51 session come around, so they didn’t have to worry about me anymore. They knew I was a team player and all that.

BB: Were there any people in your early recollection—like at that Republican convention or in that first session—were there people that especially stand out in your mind?

CH: Sam Ford, he was still governor.

BB: You met him personally?

CH: Oh yes.

BB: Yes, because Ford was elected in 1940 and I think he was defeated in ’48, wasn’t he? I think Bonner beat him in ’48.

CH: Yes, that’s right, yes. John Bonner was the governor.

BB: So he was just outgoing governor but you knew him a little bit. What were your impressions of Sam Ford?

CH: Oh, I liked him. He was great. He was my kind of man.

BB: How would you describe him?

CH: Very quiet and persevering and right down the middle road.

BB: Good public speaker?

CH: Yes, good public speaker.

BB: Do you remember any issue or any policy connected with him?
CH: No, I didn’t serve under him because he was out by the time I got in.

BB: When he was defeated in 1948, could you think of why that might have been? What did Bonner do to beat him?

CH: Well, I just really don’t know. I wasn’t as astute at that time. I got elected without any opposition, so I was there. (laughs) They seated a bunch of old Republicans around me but they didn’t need...I was in the groove before they seated these old timers around me.

BB: And so the names of some of the old timers—

CH: Archie Wilson from Hysham, Rosebud County and a boy up here from Stillwater—I can’t remember his name—

BB: Did you serve with George O’Connor?

CH: No, I never served with George. George was out of there. He’d been in there two terms. But I became real good friends with George O’Connor. He did come back in the legislature after I was there. Him and I became real close friends.

BB: How about Ory Armstrong?

CH: Well, of course he was over in the Senate, but a good man, good man.

BB: Do you remember a guy by the name of...Let’s see, he would have just started out. He would have been a Democrat in the House when you were there—Carl O’Neil?

CH: Where was he from?

BB: Up in the Flathead, a young fellow.

CH: No, I served with those Flathead boys but I don’t remember him. He must have just been there.

BB: Do you remember Dale McGarvey from the Flathead?

CH: Yes.

BB: A little bit later? He was a lawyer.

CH: I wasn’t well-acquainted with him, but I knew him.

BB: And how about Junior Spear?

Clyde Hawks Interview, OH 396-026, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
CH: He was my Senator from Big Horn County. He really was. I’ve known him since 1931. He used to be—he was County Commissioner when we first came to the county, and then he run for the legislature. He had no opposition in ’48 and I had no opposition, so we were both in.

BB: Now he was there for quite a while.

CH: A long time.

BB: How would you describe him?

CH: Very quiet and laid back, but he got things done.

BB: How did he do that?

CH: Personality. He had a terrific personality.

BB: And he apparently was a student of the process too. He must have understood—

CH: Well, he was there when he needed to be and he was on the right side. He’d been there long enough for that. Of course he’d been in a term before I got there.

BB: Yes. Now Clyde, the historians write that the Anaconda Company had big influence on the politics of the state from the turn of the century up into maybe the 1950s or 1960s.

CH: Was that bad?

BB: Well, I don’t know.

CH: NO! It was not. It was the best thing that ever happened to this country. And Montana Power. When we had Montana Power and Anaconda Company and the Montana Sheep Growers and the Montana Wool Growers; run this state and we run it good, working back with the local taxpayers, the local counties.

BB: Al Wilkinson was a lobbyist for the—

CH: He was a lobbyist for Montana Power, yes. I never had any pressure ever put on me by Montana Power or Anaconda Company. They were there. I knew they were there. We were friends. That was it.

BB: Did you ever have any—was Keith Anderson there at the Montana Taxpayer’s Association at that time?
CH: Yes.

BB: When you mention that the Montana Power Company, the Anaconda Company, the Wool Growers, and the Stock Growers, and so on, worked with the taxpayers—

CH: We worked with the people, you bet we did. We knew what the people wanted and that’s what we did.

BB: Can you think of an issue or anything that might—

CH: Mainly keeping the property taxes down.

BB: I see, yes.

CH: Look at the mess now we’ve got in this legislature. If I’d have been in that legislature, they would never have sold out Montana Power—never. That’s the best thing that ever happened to Montana was...I talked to a couple from Butte the other day. I play golf. He says, “You’re absolutely right. Montana Power was the best thing that ever happened to Montana.”

BB: And of course they sold but they had a legal right to sell.

CH: Well, I guess they did, but I don’t think I would have found something in there somewhere. I don’t know what it would have been.

BB: Tried to discourage them.

CH: Yes.

BB: I got in the legislature just at the tail end of the period when there were the hospitality rooms, but there was supposed to be one that the Anaconda Company had at the Placer Hotel.

CH: We always had a hospitality room. You’d go up there at four o’clock and have your beef sandwich, a highball, and that was it. Then you went out to dinner.

BB: So they were a gathering place where—

CH: Sixth floor of the Placer Hotel. They bought a room up there—601, I think.

BB: Were there other hospitality rooms in addition to that one?

CH: Not that I ever—they had to be Republican influenced or I didn’t get there. (laughs)

BB: I understand maybe the railroads may have had one, and the—
CH: Well they were kind of in together with the Montana Power and Bell Telephone. My brother-in-law was a Bell Telephone manager. They were in it I’m sure. But nothing went on. They served maybe a highball and a prime rib sandwich and that was it. Kind of a relaxing thing after the day’s session. You’d get there about four o’clock.

BB: Did you ever discuss legislation?

CH: Certain bills, sure, you’d discuss it.

BB: Let’s see, I’m just trying to think of some names of some other people you might have served with during that period of time that might have stood out in your memory. Was Jim Lucas there when you were there?

CH: Young Jim was there, yes, he was a freshman just before I left. And Archie, the guy from Roosevelt County up there—I can’t think of his name right now—he was a Republican, kind of a liberal Republican, but a good man.

BB: Archie Wilson?

CH: No, I served with Archie Wilson, Sr., yes. He was one of my seatmates. (laughs) Of course his son was my neighbor down on the Big Horn.

BB: Okay. When you were Speaker, or when you were a legislator—but especially when you were Speaker—did you have a group of people, maybe Junior Spear and Jim Lucas and some people that—

CH: No, we (unintelligible)!

BB: Well that’s what I mean.

CH: And the Floor Leader—Anderson from Billings.

BB: Jerry Anderson.

CH: Jerry Anderson, he was a good Floor Leader.

BB: Did you—

CH: And him and I ran that thing. I mean—

BB: Just you and Jerry?
CH: That’s it.

BB: And that was even in terms of appointing the committees?

CH: Okay, I got something there for you. And George O’Connor was in on this. I suggested to the guys that I was interested in the speakership because this was the first time a Republican had been in control. They said, “We’re behind you.” So George O’Connor—he was working for Montana Power then—I didn’t know he was a pilot but he flew down there in the twin engines but he (unintelligible) buzz my house and I went up to that old airport there at Fort Smith. He landed and I had a little get together and I decided on this early session, because we was going up there before we sat around (unintelligible) get nothing done. So we had the early session in Bozeman. It was the first time it had ever been done but I called it because I was the Dean of the House then. Set it up for Bozeman for such and such a date; had a two-day meeting there.

BB: Now why did George O’Connor come to visit with you at Fort Smith?

CH: Well, we were Republicans. He was the same thing I was. I didn’t think anything about it.

BB: But you were talking to me about putting together the committees.

CH: Well, I had a list of all the committees and their seniority. I said, “I’ll have these committees set up when we convene in Bozeman,” and I did. I had them all set up and we voted them in right then in Bozeman. Monday morning, after I went in on the first of January, after I give my little short acceptance speech, I said, “Well, now we’re going to set this thing out.” I read off the list of all the committees and they were all taken care of. Those that had seniority (unintelligible).

BB: The meeting in Bozeman, Clyde, was that a caucus? Was it just Republicans?

CH: It was a caucus, the same one that we had in Helena the night before the first session, the day before the first session.

BB: But you got the Republicans, the majority party, together in Bozeman before then, well before the legislature, to kind of get them organized and get them—

CH: Well, but I never read off any of the members of these committees until after we convened in Bozeman, or in Helena, the first day. And after my little short acceptance speech thanking the membership, I read off the committees—chairman, vice chairman, all the members. They were passed out and then the Senate sat over there for two weeks and never done a damn thing. We couldn’t even pay our bill because, you know, you’ve got to have both houses. That really teed me off. I don’t know whether they still do it or not, but that saved so much time. It was all done the first day.
BB: But you basically got it done.

CH: I done it my own way. I knew what the seniority was in all the committees—both Democrat and Republican—and I had chairman, vice chairman, and all of them. There wasn’t anybody left out. Everybody was there.

BB: And the Republicans had the majority so you had the majority in all the committees.

CH: Sure, sure.

BB: Now you mention—

CH: And I traveled all over. I said, “This is it fellows. You got any complaints, you know where to come. I’m the guy.” There’s nobody else helped me on that. Not nobody.

BB: Who was the Democrat leader in ’61—was it Schwinden?

CH: ’61?

BB: You were Speaker in ’61, weren’t you?

CH: Well, yes. We run the show and we didn’t do it overbearingly. We just ran it. We had the votes. Jerry Anderson, he was a superb Floor Leader, the best that ever was.

BB: I think Ted Schwinden might have been the Minority Floor Leader then, in that session.

CH: Well, I’d have remembered it if he had. (unintelligible) liberals in there.

BB: No, no, on the Democrat’s side.

CH: Well, he could have been. He could have been.

BB: Are there any Democrats that stand out in your memory from when you were a legislator?

CH: Oh yes, the little old guy from Stillwater County up there.

BB: Web Keller?

CH: Web Keller. In fact, I went over to listen to a vote one time and he was interested in the Stockgrower’s (unintelligible) he was...I was standing in the back there and he was wanting me to get on the floor and talk (unintelligible). I was smart enough not to do that. (laughs)

BB: Do you remember Eugene Mahoney? Gene Mahoney?
CH: Oh yes. Gene was all right. He was a little too liberal for me, but we got along all right. I got along with all of them.

BB: You mentioned someone was a liberal Republican. Were there any other Republicans—

Hawks: Yes, the guy from Jordan, you know who I mean—

BB: Charlie Mahoney.

CH: Charlie Mahoney! One of my best friends. You didn’t know quite where he stood, but he was always there. I just admired that guy. In fact, him and I bought that prison ranch up there. We knew we needed a new prison ranch and we didn’t get the job put together, so we set aside money in the appropriations bill and leave it to the Governor to (unintelligible). He appointed Charlie Mahoney and I, and Arnold Olsen was in on the deal then. He was Attorney General. We bought it from Bill Foxley. Twenty bucks an acre for that 30,000-acre ranch.

BB: That’s the one near Deer Lodge?

CH: That’s the one in Deer Lodge. They built it right out of there, right up the creek. We had a guy in there that come up—he worked for Montana Power—he come home one night and his wife was in bed with some other guy at his house and he killed them both so he got a life term. But he was a good man. The first thing we did was build him a little square house up there for his (unintelligible) new prison. He put together that whole prison, architectural designs and everything.

BB: What was the guy’s name, do you remember?

CH: I don’t remember, but we got our money’s worth out of him, I tell you.

BB: I’ll be darn.

CH: Yes, we got our money’s worth out of him. The last time I was out to one of these prenuptial things, these two old guys from Deer Lodge—I’d known them way back, they were active in politics but they weren’t in the politics but they were always active—said “Hawks, that prison ranch was the best thing that you ever did for my county.” I says, “Knew it.” (Unintelligible) many years. They were going out to these farms, you know, they had security problems and everything. He said, “That’s the best thing that ever happened.”

BB: Well of course it’s still owned by the state.

CH: Yes, sure. It was a lot of money then. Twenty bucks an acre. Now it’s cheap.
BB: Clyde, your mention of the prison ranch reminds me of Wellington D. Rankin.

CH: Yes. Well, when I first got in the legislature—now my son, he was raised a Republican but he’s...you go to school a while, he’s kind of turned Democratic. He was in the legislature this time and he and I don’t talk politics because I don’t agree with him. But he was up there (unintelligible) a couple times with me. Then he worked up there one session. Got a good head on him, but he’s got too many liberal—plus, he lives with a liberalized woman, you know. That doesn’t help him (unintelligible).

BB: But you were going to tell me about Wellington Rankin.

CH: Well, wasn’t he the warden then?

BB: No, that might have been Austin Middleton?

CH: Well Middleton was in there too, but—

BB: Wellington Rankin was a prominent old Republican.

CH: He was acting in that prison, too, in some way because he used to get all the guys out of there to work on his ranches.

BB: Yes, that’s what reminded me. When you talked about the prison ranch I knew about that.

CH: So after our first session about a half a dozen of us guys we got together up at Bill McKay’s ranch one Sunday and had a little picnic and get together. At our next convention we had our own people signed up. Mr. Wellington D. Rankin was out as National Committeeman, and we had a new guy in from Kalispell.

BB: Jim Murphy.

CH: Murphy. That took care of that situation. And so my son says, “There’s a few things Republicans don’t—”

I says, “If there is, you get in there and change it.”

He said, “Both Democrats and Republicans want me to run.”

I said, “That’s no good.”

So he ran as a Democrat. He got beat by three boys. “See, I told you. If you’d have stayed in there you would have been in there.”

Clyde Hawks Interview, OH 396-026, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
BB: But you’ve got a son that’s in the Senate now.

CH: Well yes, but he’s a damn Democrat.

BB: Oh, he’s a Republican.

CH: No, he isn’t.

BB: Well he was elected as a Republican.

CH: No, he wasn’t. They might do it different now than they did, but he’s not a Republican.

BB: Well, your son is Bob?

CH: Bob.

BB: Well Bob Hawks is a Republican senator from—

CH: No he’s not. You check it out. You check it out. I don’t know where the hell he is now. There he is with his family. He was in the Air Force. He’s got kids of every country of this union. But he did educate them. He got them married. But he sowed his oats. I got (unintelligible) six years, we had six kids. I got 25 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

BB: Well, that’s great. Well, tell me about Hugo Aronson.

CH: Oh the best, the best. He was the governor when we bought that ranch. We went out there with Alex Stevenson, head of the highway patrol, he was our driver. Hugo got out and opened all the gates for us that day. Those three guys—Charlie Mahoney and I forget who the other guy was now—in the back. We had Arnold Olson. I didn’t like him but I could get along with him.

BB: And Arnold Olsen, of course, was the Attorney General.

CH: Well sure, he was on that committee, see. We sat down to the—been out there all day. We sat at the Placer Hotel one morning until one o’clock closing the deal; 20 bucks an acre (unintelligible) the legislature. I wasn’t there then after that so I wasn’t in on the finalization. We had it all set up.

BB: You met and knew Governor Aronson?

CH: Good Lord, yes, he was State Finance Chairman for years. He used to travel all the counties before election. I knew him then and I was on the House highway committee, he was on the Senate highway committee. This tax bill that we have now with the farmers with the 20
percent; who do you think put that in? Hugo Aronson and I. It’s still in there. I don’t think they’ve ever changed that bill.

BB: Which one’s that?

CH: The Highway Tax bill. We cut the farmer—you know, they would tax the farmer the same rate as the (unintelligible) trucker. Farmers couldn’t saddle that so we got them the 20 percent tax cut and it’s still that way.

BB: I see, okay.

CH: All these years they’ve never changed it.

BB: And that happened when you were in the House and Hugo was in the Senate?

CH: That’s right.

BB: And then Hugo was elected governor in 1952.

CH: Yes, this all happened before he (unintelligible) but him and I we had a good rapport with that guy, I tell you, he was the greatest.

BB: How would you describe him?

CH: Just an honest, down to earth guy. As honest as you’d ever get. What he said, he meant, and he did it. My kind of citizen.

BB: And he defeated Bonner, John Bonner.

CH: Yes, I guess he did. Old John, he got tanked up down in Baton Rouge. Governor of Montana on his overcoat. He didn’t know whether it was going or coming down there. This happened before the election, of course. Yes, he defeated him, yes.

BB: So the governor then lived in the old, what we call the old Governor’s Mansion, in Helena.

CH: Yes, yes.

BB: Do you remember ever being in any kind of a function or anything there?

CH: No, no. I was kind of against the new Governor’s Mansion but we went for it anyway. (Unintelligible) served as governor a few times after Nutter was killed. When Nutter was killed I took that Lincoln Day circuit. First time I’ve ever done anything like that. Started at northeast Hi-Line, Missoula.
BB: Governor Nutter was killed in a plane crash in 1962, I think in January of ’62. And Republicans traditionally have Lincoln Day dinners in the winter; January, February, and March. So after Governor Nutter was killed—well, you were Speaker of the House.

CH: I took his circuit that he had lined up to go on.

BB: So you did some of the speaking that he would have done.

CH: I did it all. Nobody else (unintelligible) but me, and I wasn’t a speaker.

BB: Because Tim Babcock was busy being governor.

CH: He was busy being governor. Then he wanted me to run for governor with him. He says, “You and I run just like Tim and I,” you know. Twenty bucks a day? I had a feed lot full of cattle losing money. I said, “You’ve got to be crazy. Sure, I’d like to be lieutenant governor, but not those conditions.” I don’t know what they’re getting now, but I know they’re getting big money.

BB: But you might have run with—

CH: I would have because he didn’t like the guy from Great Falls.

BB: Ted James.

CH: He didn’t like Ted James. It was a personality thing. I always liked Ted. I didn’t see anything wrong with him. But he says, “You and I are like Don and I,” but it didn’t work. They were elected.

BB: Now Ted James, sometimes people consider him a liberal.

CH: Well, he was a little more liberal than Tim and I were.

BB: Yes.

CH: On the liberal side of the Republican Party.

BB: You mention the same thing about Charlie Mahoney.

CH: Well yes, we never knew quite what side Charlie was on, but if he was for something, he was for it. You could depend on it one way or another.

BB: You mentioned you were involved in the rural electric coops?
CH: I was on the board down in Hardin (?) but I wasn’t involved with him. He was on this central thing, the two-state deal. He was on a little bigger co-op than I was. No, when I ran down there, of course, we had a bunch of board members that were Democrats and they said, “Well, you’ve got to resign now. You can’t be on the Board of Directors.” I found out later I could have stayed on but I didn’t. I just resigned and got out of their hair.

BB: Well Charlie Mahoney, I think I remember, because of his connection with the REA made some kind of—

CH: Yes. He was the northeast corner of Montana and part of North Dakota.

BB: He had some kind of a conflict with Montana Power Company as a result of that.

CH: Maybe he did. I wasn’t involved in that.

BB: I think that might have been the basis for that, I don’t know. You don’t remember that?

CH: Well this was a bit before I got in if that was the case. That could have been. Yes, I think maybe there was a lawsuit or something. So maybe that’s why they said that. I didn’t fight it because it wasn’t any big deal with me.

BB: Do you remember a guy by the name of Lloyd Crippen?

CH: Oh yes, Lloyd Crippen; the best as far as lobbyists. He never put the “B” on you. And was it—Boo McGillivray.

BB: Tell me about him.

CH: Okay. Boo and his wife—of course my wife couldn’t come up there, we had six little kids. I loved to dance and those guys loved to dance and I used to go (unintelligible) Junior Spear, and the four of us would go up partying and we’d have a few drinks and whatnot. What was I heading to?

BB: Boo McGillivray.

CH: I was kind of a slow campaigner. I never liked to campaign. Geez, I just hated that campaign, asking people to vote for me. So one fall I had sugar beets. I was just about through them. Down at the end of the (unintelligible) puller here was old Boo McGillivray. He says, “How’s the campaign coming?”

I says, “I’ll tell you, when I get these beets out, then I’ll campaign.”
Well, he went to leave and he reached in his pocket, three 400-dollar bills. I said, “Boo, I’ve come this far by myself and I’m going the rest of the way by myself. You take that and give it to somebody else. I could use it but I don’t need it. I can get my own money.” I never borrowed a dime from anybody in all the 16 years I was there. I paid it all myself.

BB: You mean just for like campaign signs and things like that?

CH: Yes, there wasn’t much...Well now, I take it back. The last year I was there I signed a right to work position one time, way back in the ‘30s. Well that labor bunch down there (unintelligible) they took after me. So I did, I got a committee and I suppose we raised 40, 50 bucks for the campaign. Hell, I got beat anyway so it didn’t make any difference.

BB: You got beat?

CH: Yes.

BB: When was that?

CH: Nineteen sixty.

BB: Well you were Speaker in ’61.

CH: Well it was the next session, ‘62.

BB: Okay. I didn’t know that.

CH: Oh (unintelligible) took out after me and not only beat me but they beat every Republican in the county by 1,000 votes.

BB: Who beat you?

CH: The labor union!

BB: So who was the Democratic candidate that beat you?

CH: Oh, Bill Christiansen.

BB: Oh, okay. I served with him.

CH: Bill was a good man.

BB: He was a Ford Dealer in Hardin.
CH: Yes, he was not as conservative as I was, but he was a good man. And in fact, the time before (unintelligible) get somebody next time, somebody with a little more class to beat you next time. This was the guy with the class.

BB: Yes, I served with Bill Christiansen myself. He was the Democrat leader in the House of Representatives in ’71; my first session when I was a freshman there. And Lucas was the Speaker.

CH: Lucas?

BB: Jim Lucas from Miles City was the Republican Speaker in ’71.

CH: Oh really? I’d forgotten that. Because I got out of there, I just—well, when I ran the first time I got up there and I see how important seniority was. I didn’t make this decision before the session, but after that session I said, “I’m going to run until they don’t want me anymore.” I made that decision, so I did. I ran until they beat me out of there after I was Speaker. Now the Republicans wanted me to go back in a second time like George O’Connor. But I had a feed lot full of cattle that was costing me money. I’m sure if I had run maybe the next time I might have got in. I don’t know, I’m not sure. Wouldn’t make a difference anyway. It was a public service job when I was in there. I mean, that was it. If we had a state meeting up there, we did get five or eight cents a mile up and back, that was it. Then Tim put me on the Water Resources Board. That’s a six-year term. That pays your expenses; if there’s any travel it pays your hotel and all that. So I was on that for six years. And then from that I went to the Western States Water Council. That’s 11 western states. We had a meeting every month in a different state. My expenses were paid for that. I think we got 15 dollars a day when we were out of state for motel. It pays its way and that’s about it.

BB: Yes. Clyde, when you were a legislator from Big Horn County in the ’50s, your district, Big Horn County, had a lot of Indian voters.

CH: Always did, yes. We always hit the Indian precincts.

BB: And did you get along with them?

CH: Yes, I got along great with them. Had to support the damn peyote—I wasn’t in favor of it—but I did.

BB: What was the Peyote Bill?

CH: The Peyote Bill, you know. (laughs) Oh yes, they had peyote leaders. (Unintelligible) I got in on that.

BB: Now explain what peyote is.
CH: Well, it’s a drug that they use. They boil it and make a tea out of it. I never had any, so I don’t know whether it did anything for you or not.

BB: But the Indians used this drug as a part of their ceremonies?

CH: Yes.

BB: And they wanted to be able to do so legally.

CH: Yes.

BB: So you helped them do it? And the legislation passed?

CH: Yes.

BB: I see, okay. Do you remember some of the Indian leaders that were involved in that?

CH: Two brothers, they were World War Two flyers. What was their name? I can’t think of it. They’re still around. I seen one of them here the other day.

BB: Real Bird?

CH: I knew all the Real Birds too, but they were (unintelligible) that sort of thing but they weren’t in the hierarchy like these other guys. One of them was a historian for the Crows.

BB: Medicine Crow? Joe Medicine Crow? Was Joe Medicine Crow involved?

CH: Yes.

BB: Did you ever know Robert Yellowtail and Bill Yellowtail?

CH: (Unintelligible) that buddy of his, yes.

BB: Now there was a controversy involving Yellowtail Dam, wasn’t there?

CH: Well, not per se. I worked for the Yellowtail Dam every day of my life and it was the Yellowtail Dam that (unintelligible) is what beat me.

BB: There was a congressman named Orvin Fjare.

CH: He got in back in Washington. Then he come back to Montana. Him and I were seatmates in the legislature.
BB: Somehow or other, I’ve been told that Yellowtail Dam—the issue involving Yellowtail Dam—defeated Orvin Fjare.

CH: Well that was them anti-dam people in the works, then, I guess. They never did bother me. I always worked for Yellowtail Dam. I don’t know whether he got mixed up some way or another in local politics. I don’t know. Well yes, because the liberals, they were all for all that stuff back then. But I was a Republican and was for it. I lived eight miles from it.

BB: And you wanted the jobs and the irrigation project and so on.

CH: No, I wanted to clean up that river. That’s the worst thing that ever happened up Bighorn River there; you’d get (unintelligible) water wouldn’t even run down the ditch. The old red silt you know?

BB: The dam was named for Robert Yellowtail.

CH: Yes. They did that to kind of appease the Indians, I think.

BB: Who was Robert Yellowtail?

CH: He was the Chairman of the Crow Tribe.

BB: I see. And you met him?

CH: Full blood Chairman. Oh yes, he was a good man.

BB: How would you describe him?

CH: He was a sincere politician. He was—he was a good one.

BB: Good public speaker?

CH: Yes.

BB: Would you have any idea what his political leanings were?

CH: He was a Republican.

BB: That’s what I heard.

CH: Until Kennedy come in and that changed the whole damn thing around. (laughs)
BB: He switched to Kennedy?

CH: Well yes. Hell, they all switch around, you know. But he was still loyal to the Republicans. But I was out of it by then.

BB: Yes. I knew his son, Bill, and served in the legislature with Bill Yellowtail.

CH: Is his the son or—

BB: I don’t know. Could have been a nephew.

CH: I think it’s a nephew.

BB: Could be.

CH: See, Bob Yellowtail was not a full blood Crow. He was from one of the other tribes. But he had an education. He had a better education than I ever had.

BB: I understand he was quite a good public speaker?

CH: He was good. He was good.

BB: Now Carroll Graham replaced Junior Spear in the Senate?

CH: Yes.

BB: Did Graham beat Spear?

CH: Yes. When I went out, every Republican in the county went down by 1,000 votes, me included. (laughs) Just because the change in politics. Junior Spear, you know. Kennedy came in and the whole political thing changed.

BB: I served with Carroll Graham also, and Carroll had a reputation for being a pretty conservative Democrat.

CH: He was pretty conservative. I graduated from high school with him. I used to go with his wife all the time.

BB: Nellie Yvette?

CH: Nellie Yvette. She was a good friend of my cousin, Helen. Went with her for several years before she met Carroll. I knew Carroll’s uncle and I knew all of his relatives. They were
conservative Democrats. I didn’t have much trouble with conservative Democrats. (laughs) It’s when they got into that liberal thing, that’s when I got away from them.

BB: Do you remember...I think he was regarded as a liberal Democrat—Gene Huntley? He was in the Senate. He might have come after you.

CH: Well he was a reporter, a national reporter.

BB: Not Chet Huntley.

CH: Oh, Gene Huntley. Let’s see now.

BB: He was from Baker. He was a lawyer.

CH: Yes, he was a little too liberal for me, but I never did serve with him.

BB: Do you remember a guy by the name of John Schiltz, Jack Schiltz? I think he was in the House here from Billings?

CH: Oh yes, yes.

BB: And I think he might have been a Republican.

CH: He was.

BB: But I think he was regarded as something of a liberal.

CH: He was part of the “Straight Eight.” Who was the other...big, tall...Battin.

BB: Jim Battin?

CH: Yes, he came in about the time Jim Battin did. And I suppose he was more liberal than I but that didn’t bother me. As long as you were Republican, that’s all I cared about.

BB: Now Clyde, what was the “Straight Eight?”

CH: Eight Republicans from Yellowstone County. I was the ninth from Big Horn County.

BB: I see.

CH: I was. I knew every damn one of them personally. Old George Pierce, hell he started back here in the ’20s selling Ford Cars; used cars. I used to stay in Hardin with his sister and brother-
in-law in Morrison; he was the local Continental man there. I used to stay with them when I went to high school. See, I worked my way through high school too. I didn’t have anything.

BB: Did Boo McGillivray ever tell you any of his stories? Boo was apparently legendary for telling stories.

CH: Left-handed Indian looking south? (laughs) Oh yes, he’s a great guy, that Boo McGillivray. There’s no better lobbyist in the world. He put the ‘B’ on me, wanted to give me some money and I just give it back to him, and says, “Here, give it to somebody else. I’ve come this far.” I says, “I’ve paid my own way.” It never cost me much, you know; 40, 50 dollars a year. I was a young, married guy with six kids and I said, hell I could handle that some way or another.

BB: And then, as you mentioned, political campaigns didn’t cost very much money.

CH: No.

BB: Boo, he was pretty well informed, too, in terms of the issues in the legislature?

CH: Well he was [in with] that Indian bunch up there too, yes. He kind of kept me lined out on this peyote thing. Oh he’s a good man. A good man. And his wife, she was a great gal too.

BB: When you say he was a good man and an effective lobbyist, what did he do? What was his technique?

CH: He just got to know people.

BB: I see. Did he travel around then? He must have traveled around the state some.

CH: Well, he come to my house one time and I turned him down. I said, “Go give it to somebody else.” I suppose he’s around probably all the young Republican candidates, I don’t know. That’s the only time I ever had a lobbyist offer me any money. I said, “I’m on your side all the time, one way or another. That’s the way I think and that’s the way it’s going to be.” When I left the house up there, I figured by...oh, what’s his name here, the local artist?

BB: Jim Haughey?

CH: Jim Haughey.

BB: He painted that picture for you?

CH: That’s his picture. They gave it to me. House membership—350 dollar picture.

BB: That’s beautiful.

Clyde Hawks Interview, OH 396-026, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
CH: That’s the prizest possession I’ve got.

BB: Yes, that’s beautiful.

CH: This is down on the town where my wife was raised, up above the Flying V there. That’s my son Chase that was killed, Chase Hawks—grandson. They have that Chase Hawks memorial rodeo here?

BB: Yes. He was killed in a rodeo? [Struck by a car while riding his bike]

CH: The first day of school. Six years old. Then I got a 15-year old. His uncle was killed. Well, that’s Howard. The uncle that was killed was next to Howard. See, that’s Howard and his boy and me and the grandson. That’s four generations there. Chase, he’s still over there in Iraq. I wished he’d get home.

BB: He’s over in Iraq in the Army now?

CH: He was a bull fighter, you know. Now he’s fighting them damn Iraqis. I’m scared to death he’ll get himself—he’s not in the service anymore, he’s with a private outfit. But he’s going to be home here in the middle of July. I didn’t like it when he was fighting bulls (unintelligible) over there fighting them Iraqis.

BB: He was a bull-dogger, is that what he was? Or a bull rider?

CH: No. He rode them and—

BB: Rode the bulls.

CH: Yes. I turned down here one Sunday, they were out here (unintelligible), this buddy of his; his grandparents lived down here about four blocks. Turned down there, this bull had this buddy of his down on the floor. They were really working him over, you know, and Justin went around and tickled the bull’s nose. Well the bull took Justin, caught up with him, threw him up on his back and last I saw Justin he was going off the back end. I shut it off. I never looked at a rodeo after that.

BB: I can imagine. Were you involved in the Stockgrowers Association?

CH: Yes, I was on the board.
BB: The State Board?
CH: Yes.
BB: Did the Stockgrowers take a role in state politics?

CH: Well, just inadvertently. They were always at the—you know, the Stockgrowers and the Sheepgrowers. They had two separate chairmen, you know. They all worked together. We worked together, you betcha.

BB: In the legislature? Generally just to promote the livestock industry?

CH: Yes. We didn’t go along with the Farmers Union bunch.

BB: What are your impressions of the Farmers Union?

CH: Well, I fought them ever since I was a teenager. They tried to indoctrinate me when I was a kid. It didn’t work. Their indoctrination didn’t work because it was absolutely opposite the way I fought.

BB: Describe how they thought, and how you differed with them.

CH: Oh, they were just liberal and wanted all these government programs. I like some government programs, within reason.

BB: And you said when they tried to indoctrinate you—the Farmers Union had camps, didn’t they, for kids?

CH: Oh yes, they tried to send me to a camp and everything. I never bought on that one. I didn’t buy on that one. They even come and lobbied my folks. My dad didn’t know anything about them. But they had been working on me as a youth program, and I just didn’t like their philosophy.

BB: Did they have some power in the legislature?

CH: Not when I got there.

BB: Do you remember a big battle? I think it would have occurred in the 1959 session, over what they called PUDs; Public Utility Districts?

CH: Yes.

BB: What do you remember about that?

CH: Well, I don’t remember anything specific, but this was when...Of course they were always in the background, even in Republican politics. When we got in, in ’60, we got rid of all that stuff. Maybe that’s not the way to run it, but that’s the way we run (unintelligible).
BB: Do you remember the bill—I think I mentioned Dale McGarvey to you. There was a fellow named Cy Tonner from up in the Flathead—representative Cy Tonner—and I think he was the guy that introduced the Public Utility District bill. And Gordon McOmber was involved.

CH: Oh yes, I served with Gordon. He as a Republican but he was a little more liberal than I was.

BB: Well Gordon, remember, he was a Democrat. He went on to be Lieutenant Governor.

CH: Well, I guess he did later on, but he was a Republican when I knew him, in the beginning.

BB: Well, he was never elected to the legislature—

CH: Well he may not have been, but when I got out of it, that was it. I put in my apprenticeship and I did everything I thought was right and I knew someday would come. My wife, she didn’t want me to get into politics to begin with, but she was up there, she was chairman of the Legislative Wives when I was Speaker, so she kind of got—even though she raised six kids—she got with the program.

BB: Clyde, do you remember (unintelligible) you served in the legislature too, although he was in the Senate when you were in the House with Don Nutter, and then of course—

CH: He was in the House all the time that I knew Don Nutter.

BB: Don Nutter?

CH: Yes, he was a Republican from Richland County. He was the best.

BB: What do you remember about him?

CH: Oh he was just a no-nonsense, down the road kind of guy. I mean, he didn’t deviate for anything either. And if he hadn’t got killed, he would have got rid of this—we wouldn’t have this liberal bunch in there in the mid-‘60s. He’d have straightened that thing up. He would have.

BB: Did you ever meet him personally?

CH: Oh, played cards with him every Monday morning when I was Speaker. We’d have a policy meeting down in the governor’s reception room, all of us that were—we’d get down there and the side door would open. We’d all stand at attention: “All right, you sons of bitches, that’s enough of that.” That’s the kind of a guy old Don Nutter was. And he was that way all the time. And a perfect gentleman with the ladies, you know. His wife, she was a neat gal too.
BB: And so in the policy meetings you’d just discuss the legislation that was coming up and what you were trying to do.

CH: What our agenda was for the week, you know. We had Republican committees. I set them up to begin with. And we had all the committee chairmen there too.

BB: It sounds like Don Nutter had a good sense of humor.

CH: Oh, a good sense. “All right, you sons of bitches. That’s enough of that.” (laughs) He was a good one.

BB: Did he smoke cigars? Do I remember that?

CH: I think he did, but not—well, I quit my first session. I was a smoker too but I go up there and I come home and I quit. My sister, who was eight years younger than I was, she was a heavy smoker. I tried to get her to quit. I said, “Sis, it’ll kill you.” They buried her on her 75th birthday. Pancreatic cancer. Heavy smoker. She socially drank. Well, I socially drank too, but always knew when I had enough.

When I went back to the boot-legging days—hell, my dad was raised on the south side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Do you know where that comedian is from back there? I can’t even think of his name now. He come from his same town. Hell, there was a still in every one of those coulees. My dad was married when he was 15 and his wife had a little girl and she died of a brain tumor. He was a widower then with a little girl; 15 months old. That’s when he came to Montana. His mother-in-law, his in-laws, they were Baptist preachers. They took the little girl and he come out here. He was going with a school teacher so he went back there to pick up the school teacher when he homesteaded, and she wouldn’t come out here, so then he married my mom and they come from a family out here in (unintelligible). They moved out here from Illinois.

My granddad, he was a responsible old guy. He had Carbide lights; he had running water; he had a hydraulic ram of water in the corrals. He had it all.

BB: What were your recollections of Tim Babcock?

CH: The greatest.

BB: You served in the legislature with him, as well as just briefly while he was governor.

CH: Well, I served with him from Yellowstone—Custer County. Then he went into the service. Betty, I thought the world of her. Of course I knew Tim’s brother, that’s the one that run the (unintelligible) Yellowtail. I knew him real well too. Yes, he come from about the same kind of a
background as I did, I guess. ‘Course then he went to the—he hadn’t married yet. He went to the service. He got married in the summer of ’39 and the draft come along in October.

BB: But you served—when Tim was in the House—from Custer County, and then as well as when he was in the House from Yellowstone County. You mentioned too Jerry Anderson, Jerome Anderson, who was the Floor Leader when you were the Speaker.

CH: Tim come in here, he was part of the “Straight Eight” too.

BB: Yes. And you worked closely with Jerry on leadership in the House.

CH: Oh yes. Well, I worked with Jerry; him and Felt. They wanted to know if I was politically ambitious. I said, “No, I’m not politically ambitious. I’m not a good speaker. I could probably get to be one, but I’m not. I’ve got a ranch to run. I’ve got kids to raise.”

BB: Now Clyde, you mentioned that Governor Nutter had a policy meeting in the governor’s conference room that included the legislative leaders. Was Jerry Anderson—

CH: It was a combination thing between the leadership in the House and the—

BB: Was Jerry Anderson in on those meetings?

CH: Oh yes. Sure he was. Jerry Anderson was in on everything. When I decided I wanted to run for governor, he says, “I’ll run for Majority Leader.”

BB: And so did you and Jerry then also have your own little separate meetings?

CH: I worked with him but I put it all together. I had the committees and everything together before we ever met in Helena. I didn’t show them to anybody. I kept them in my little black briefcase, but I had the committees and everything set up.

BB: Tom Haines was the Speaker pro tern?

CH: Yes, he was a foot behind me all the time, a little dubious I think in my little upper—but he was a good man. We thought alike. He was with the local grocery concern. He was executive secretary for them.

BB: Yes, for the grocery stores out in Missoula, I think, as well as when he was a legislator.

CH: Good man, good man. I think I had one more year on him, I don’t know. I’m not sure.

BB: Now Clyde, you mentioned right at the beginning of our interview, when I asked you—you know, part of this project has been to try to better understand the supposed involvement in the
politics of our state of the Anaconda Company, and you mentioned right at the outset of our interview that you didn’t think there was anything wrong or bad.

CH: It was the greatest thing in the world, the Anaconda Company. The Montana Power was the greatest thing that ever—look how they kept that thing going all those years. Sure, the Democrats, they had strong leaders, they got (unintelligible). They worked with us on a bipartisan basis.

BB: And the idea was to hold taxes down and move the economy forward?

CH: Well, yes. Hell, they’ve done away with county government and everything now. This thing’s gone plumb wild. Crazy! The amount of money—when we finished the legislature we appropriated so much money, and we got back up there, we wanted it spent and the balance turned over to us, and it was.

BB: But you’ve said that you were personally very independent of the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company.

CH: Well, I didn’t have anybody coming around telling me what to do. If (unintelligible) my political philosophy, I voted for it. I didn’t have to have them tell me.

BB: And so you also said that you kind of thought they ran the state and that it was good that they did.

CH: They didn’t run the state. They knew what was going on, but there’s nothing wrong with that. (Unintelligible) my dad was in the farming business. Same damn thing. You’re looking out for the family. We was all looking out for the family. The family was the taxpayers and people of Montana.

BB: And so there was a kind of a cooperative arrangement.

CH: That’s right. They never had to put any “B” on me. (Unintelligible) might write me a letter every once in a while. If I agreed with their thinking, that was it. I never—

BB: And the thinking was just generally conservative policy on taxes?

CH: That’s right.

BB: So how do you associate the Montana Power Company with the Anaconda Company?

CH: I never did.

BB: You saw them as very separate and different?
CH: They were separate and different. They worked together politically, but that didn’t bother me any because they both thought the way I did; conservative.

BB: We talked some about some of the lobbyists and I think we mentioned Boo McGillivray. We mentioned Al Wilkinson. Let’s see...Lloyd Crippen.

CH: Jim Haughey was up there in later years.

BB: And he represented the railroads, I think.

CH: Yes.

BB: And Ty Robinson, do you remember Ty?

CH: Yes. What’s the old boy from north of Missouri over there—Robinson Bridge?

BB: Fred Robinson?

CH: Fred Robinson. I started with him. A good man, good man.

BB: He was a Senator for many years.

CH: Yes. Good man.

BB: Do you remember anything about Gurney Moss, a Senator from Whitefish?

CH: I never served—that must have been before my time.

BB: He was just finishing up just as you were getting started, I think.

CH: Yes, could be.

BB: Well, anything else in conclusion? Anything you’d like to say when you look back over your long career in politics?

CH: When I was into it, I was talked into it in the first place. The guy who talked me into it was a Republican. Of course he talked enough with me, he knew I was pretty much Republican.

BB: And who was that again, the county attorney? You mentioned his name, that’s okay.

CH: He’s got a couple of brothers that are doctors. He was from Nebraska. He got his law degree in Nebraska and he was born and raised down here in Wyoming.
BB: That’s okay.

CH: It’ll come to me. I tell you that fall I took the other day, I don’t know the hell I ever did it. It’s the hardest fall I ever took in my life.

BB: Yes, that’s a heck of an (unintelligible).

CH: I’ve never had a black eye! (laughs) I never did get in a fight because my nose is always so damn tender, you know. Look at that. (Unintelligible) glasses (unintelligible). And hell, all these tubes in here, they’re all broke up too.

BB: Let me ask you just a couple more names of legislators and see if you’ve got any reaction to them, and you can remember them at all. There’s a fellow named Mervin Dempsey out of Butte—do you remember anything about him?

CH: The name is familiar, but I never knew him. It must have been before my time.

BB: Jake Frank?

CH: Oh yes, the red-eyed liberal up here (unintelligible). You bet. He was a liberal if there ever was one. Him and I never saw eye to eye on anything. (laughs)

BB: But you served in the House with him?

CH: Yes.

BB: Let’s see. Do you remember—this would have been pretty early in your career, and he was over in the Senate—Troy Evans, a Republican Senator out of Butte?

CH: Well, must have been just before my time. I never really got acquainted with him.

BB: LeRoy Anderson; went on to become a member of congress?

CH: Yes, he was a good liberal. I was never in favor of him, that’s for damn sure. But he was—

BB: Did you know him personally at all?

CH: No, I hadn’t got into it then.

BB: Fred Broeder?
CH: Oh yes, Fred Broeder. Good old Fred. Yes, he’s a guy, he’s a guy. One of the best. All that bunch from Kalispell were great. They were all great in later years. I can’t remember who was in there when I came in.

BB: Con Lundgren? Marshall Murray?


BB: A guy named Charles Cerovski from Lewistown?

CH: Yes, Chuck, he was a Democrat but he was pretty conservative. He was in business up there, so I get along with them guys alright.

BB: John MacDonald?

CH: Yes, John was a little on the more liberal than I, but I got along with John fine. He was a liberal Democrat I’d say. I get along with liberals if they’re straight-forward (unintelligible) with everything. This dealing behind the counter I don’t like.

BB: Well, anything to say in conclusion or anything? Just as you look back over your career in politics?

CH: I look back on it and it’s been a hell of a life. I’m just so fortunate to have done then what I did, you know; Western States Water Council. Old Forrest Anderson, when I got a Dear John letter: “Well,” he says, “due to geographic considerations we can’t use you anymore.” So we put this water—the guy sold water softeners, a little guy up in central Montana. Put him on the water board. Here’s a farmer and rancher on water board. Irrigate land—put him on the water board. That’s the damndest thing I ever heard of! I should have blowed that all over the paper, but I didn’t.

BB: Seems like kind of a funny connection.

CH: Well, hell, he probably did more than anyone else to turn the damn faucet on, that water softener. (laughs) That’s old Forrest Anderson; he didn’t know anything about agriculture.

BB: That’s for sure. Do you have any recollections about him? Did you ever meet him?

CH: No, he died of Alzheimer’s. My wife died after 19 years of Alzheimer’s. I took care of her for 10 years and he died—he was a neighbor to my son there in Bozeman. He died of Alzheimer’s in his own little house back there. He was a liberal. We didn’t see eye-to-eye on anything. I was pretty conducive to getting along, but when it comes to that liberal politics, no way.

BB: You didn’t like that.
CH: No way! (Unintelligible).

BB: Well Clyde, I appreciate the time you’ve taken for the interview.

CH: I hope I’ve done you some good.

BB: Thank you.

[End of Interview]