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Interviewee: Bob Marks
Interviewer: Bob Brown
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Bob Brown: I’m interviewing Bob Marks. Bob was a state legislator from Jefferson County and other counties around Jefferson County beginning in 1968 and I believe ending when, Bob? I’m thinking about 1986.

Bob Marks: It was 1989. That was my last session.

BB: So first session was in 1969 and the last one was 1989 as a Republican from the Clancy area of Jefferson County. It’s January 11 and we’re in Bob’s home in Clancy. Bob, when were you born and where were you born?

BM: I was born in Helena, Montana, 76 years ago today. I’ve lived here ever since.

BB: Here on the ranch?

BM: Yes. I’ve lived here ever since.

BB: You were brought up in a ranching family here.

BM: That’s right, third generation here on the family ranch.

BB: What created your interest in politics and public service? Lots of guys grow up on a ranch in Montana and don’t end up serving 20 years in the state legislature.

BM: I think my biggest interest in service was when I became of age at 21. I ran for the local school board and I was elected to be a school board member here in my district in Clancy.

BB: At 21?

BM: Yes. So I got on the school board in Clancy and I was on that board for ten years, at which time, I had an opportunity to be elected to the high school board as well. So I served on both boards for a period of time, all together, some 20 years on the school board. I liked finance. I particularly liked budgeting, public budgeting. I learned a lot from that. It was an opportunity to serve.

BB: What motivated you at the age of 21 to run for the school board?
BM: Well, I guess my dad was on the school board for quite a few years and maybe that was a pattern I saw as being something that would help out in the community. Of course, we had six children and I had an interest in the education system as well.

BB: Was there an experience—I’m not sure if the service on the school board probably was part of the experience that whetted your interest in running for the legislature—but was there an individual, your father, or someone in the community, maybe an event or something in your life that particularly piqued your interest in partisan politics and legislative politics?

BM: Well, I followed the issues, particularly being a school board member. There were education issues and you drew your attention to the legislature that it was an important part of school activities. I guess the thing that particularly gathered interest was a former Governor Babcock, who I had known and was living in our county, and some other people I knew encouraged me to take a look at running.

BB: They were aware of your record on the school board?

BM: Yes, for whatever reason, they thought maybe I’d be good material to run.

BB: What caused you to become a Republican?

BM: Because I was always a Republican. My father was a Republican and he made no bones about it. The only guy that he disliked as well as Franklin D. Roosevelt was Hitler. He just did not like the New Deal. He used to talk about that. I guess I didn’t either.

BB: We have that in common. My dad used to say that the best way to pay off the national debt would be to put a pay toilet over Franklin D. Roosevelt’s grave.

BM: I think being on the ranch here, you’re pretty much a conservative ilk anyway. You had to be financially and other ways. You had to live conservatively and I think that probably played into my choice of being a Republican. I have to say that it probably wasn’t the smartest thing to do if you count the numbers because my district, for the first several sessions—I think I was in 11 sessions—probably the first several, there was always more Democrat votes cast in my county. I had an uphill run every time.

BB: Bob, someone listening to this tape some time in the future might be interested in knowing what Republicans think. How would you define the Republican philosophy, the one perhaps that you grew up with, the one that you became comfortable with? How would you describe a Republican?

BM: I think the way I would describe the Republican philosophy that I was acquainted with when I was a legislator and still am, is that you get along with as small amount of government and regulation as you could live without. You take care of the people who can’t take care of
themselves, that includes some of the institutional people we have. You fund the education system adequately. You try to keep taxes to a logical level so that business has a chance to survive and be profitable. I think those are some of the things that I think Republicans had when I was involved and also still do.

BB: What do you remember about your first campaign?

BM: Campaigns are so different today than they were when I first ran in the ‘60s. At that time, in a small district, you went around and tried to find key people, community leaders or businesspeople, and had a visit with them. Door-to-door campaigning was unheard of, or at least in my area. That just didn’t get done. You had a very minimal budget. I think probably the first two or three terms that I ran for in the House, I would guess I probably didn’t spend 500 dollars on any of them. I think after the Con Con, that’s when things changed. After the Constitutional Convention of 1972. That was a big liberal onslaught at that time. The liberals took control of the legislature and it seems to me that after that time, campaigning became much more intense and complicated than it was at first.

BB: There were opinion leaders that you could identify, though, in the rural communities that made up your district who are important to visit with during that period of time. That was an important part of how you campaigned. Did you buy advertising like in weekly newspapers or on radio stations?

BM: You may have run a couple of ads in a weekly. The first several campaigns, I don’t think I ever advertised in a daily even though Helena was in my district at one time. First of all, it cost too much and secondly, we didn’t go out there and seek great big campaign war chests like they do today. An expensive campaign in those days was 1,000 dollars. Now you’re looking at close to 30,000 dollars or so.

BB: For state legislators.

BM: On a House seat. That’s ridiculous.

BB: Did you have many opportunities to do public speaking? Were there gatherings then?

BM: Occasionally, some of which may not have been particularly political, but commencement speaking—I did some of that. I served on other volunteer functions as well, the school board being one. Some of the time I was on the school board, I was also in the legislature. I was on different foundation boards and so you get to know a lot of people when you have a lot of contacts with people. I think some of that was of great assistance in spreading the word of a person’s capability, if you had any.

BB: What are your first impressions after that first election campaign when you got to the House of Representatives? You lived fairly near Helena, so you’d seen the capitol building and
you’d been in it and probably had seen the legislature in session before. But for most people who begin service, there’s kind of a lasting memory—a lasting impression—especially of your early experience in there. What do you remember about arriving there and your early experiences as a state representative?

BM: Well, of course there’s a big learning curve for any new legislator. You have to learn the process even though you had a vague idea of what it was. There are a lot of small things that need to come to mind. One of the great things that happened to me was I got to sit in the back row right next to Bill Williams, who was the other legislator from my district at that time. Bill was a great mentor. He was able—

BB: He was an experienced legislator?

BM: Yes. I think he was in his second or third term so he was a great help to me in showing me the ropes, so to speak. Also, he was playing tricks on me from time to time, but he was a good guy and I think I caught on fairly quickly. It wasn’t a traumatic experience for me. It was just very interesting. It was educational.

BB: In addition to Bill Williams, your seatmate, who obviously was a mentor figure to you, were there other legislators who stand out in your memory during that period of time?

BM: There are some others that you kind of pick out as people that you trust. That’s the way the system works, in my opinion. You can’t possibly read all of the bills intimately so you rely on people that have expertise in some of those areas. One of the foremost that I got huge respect and trust for, in spite of the fact that he was not in the leadership except once, was Oscar Kvaalen from eastern Montana. I became very close friends with him. He was a great mentor to me. I think it was a good experience to have him. He shared my views on most things as well. So he was a standout.

There were others who I thought were people that you get information from without bias. Some of which were not of my party. I found that I could go talk to some Democrats that if I asked them a question, they’d tell me a straight answer on a technical point without slanting it toward their direction. I felt very comfortable in doing that. One of which was old John Hall. He was a great mentor to many people. He had people of both parties going to him and asking him questions. He would give them a good answer. I never thought he tried to influence your vote very much. There were some people like that who were kind of pillars.

Another guy that was really good in that respect was a friend that you served with, Senator [Jean] Turnage. He was a great mentor to many people. He had people of both parties going to him and asking him questions. He would give them a good answer. I never thought he tried to influence your vote very much. There were some people like that who were kind of pillars.

Bob Marks Interview, OH 396-053, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
BB: You remember there was a great debate that most of us who were there at the time—you and I both were—remember at least a little bit about. It had to do with coal development in eastern Montana. My memory is that it might even have taken place late in the day, maybe the early evening or something like that. But it was between Jim Lucas, who was one of the great Republican leaders in the legislature at that time, and John Hall, the man you just mentioned. What do you remember about that?

BM: Well, it was a great debate. The debate was on whether they were going to develop coal or not, basically. It was a lot of fringe elements of that whole issue, but it was a big coal debate. Are we going to dig coal in Montana or not? That was—

BB: It was an energy crisis. It gripped the whole country at that point.

BM: Yes.

BB: So we wanted to make our nation more energy independent. The question was, does Montana become some kind of a sacrificial mining place for that or could we do it in a way that would strengthen Montana’s economy.

BM: Right, there were a number of issues. One of them was major facility Siting Act, which was created because of the potential coal mining activity. There were a number of issues that were brought to the legislature that, independent of some, would almost preclude any development because the restrictions were such that development would be so expensive that the developer would go to some other state to do his energy production. That was the center of the debate. It was a pretty good debate. I’m not sure any votes were changed on it, but it was an interesting debate for the people who hadn’t been warmed up on the issue. Mostly the people in the audience, or in the balconies, got a pretty good education on what the issue was. Both of those people were excellent debaters, I thought. It lasted, I think, an hour and a half or two hours. It was a long session.

BB: They were brilliant and beautifully eloquent public speakers. There were other people who joined in the same debate, but I think most of us sort of think of that as the Lucas-Hall debate. It was perhaps the greatest debate that I think most of us ever witnessed.

BM: It was quite interesting.

BB: Anything else about that coal issue? You were there for most of it.

BM: Of course, when that coal tax was developed originally, it was set up at 30 percent; 30 percent of the value of coal at the mine mouth. The opinion of a lot of people that thwarted great development, and I think the state today is still paying for that because Wyoming—our neighbor state, that has coal reserves that are all part of the great coal reserves in this particular geographical area—Wyoming went ahead and I think they’re producing some 14
times as much coal now as we are. Of course they’re getting great revenues off of it. Our revenues are significant, but not as great as Wyoming’s. Later during my legislative career, during Governor Schwinden’s administration, that tax was reduced to what people thought was a more livable production tax. I think that it’s still a higher tax than Wyoming’s. It wasn’t as atrociously high as it had been before.

BB: So Montana became more competitive.

BM: A little more competitive. There are some other factors involved too, transportation being one.

BB: Now there was a legislator who I think we’re both well aware of who was instrumental in a lot of this coal debate and the coal tax and that sort of thing. He served in both the House and Senate; Tom Towe from Billings. Any recollections about him?

BM: Yeah, I do have some recollections about Towe. He was an incessant—I guess he was a student. I didn’t trust him. I didn’t trust Tom Towe. I think he changed colors from time to time to try to convince people that he was perhaps a little more broad-minded. I think he had some personal family issues in many of the pieces of legislation that passed. I can’t remember particularly what the issue was, but it was in a conference committee. I don’t remember the issue, but I remember he came to my office and I was in the leadership at the time in the chambers, at the rear of the House. The conference committees were trying to agree on some important measure and he came into my office and tried to weasel his way into influencing me. I said, “Tom, if you don’t leave the office by the door, you’re going to go out the window.” And I meant it.

BB: And it was because of what?

BM: Some conference committee that was trying to deal with a complicated issue. I don’t remember the issue.

BB: But you remember that you felt he had some personal interest in the legislation?

BM: I’m not sure he did personally, but he was trying to get one of our members on the conference committee to bend to his direction. I said, “That’s not going to happen. We’re going to have to continue this until we get an agreement.” I was so disgusted with him because he’d done a lot of these, I thought kind of underhanded, tactics. I didn’t trust Towe.

BB: Francis Bardanouve?

BM: He was quite a guy. Francis Bardanouve was a great resource, great resource. He had an impeccable memory for particularly budget items. He could remember that stuff. Only one other person I met that had that same capability to remember past budget items and that was

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Jack Moore. He had a tremendous resource of memory that could remember what happened in a sub-agency three sessions ago. Bardanouve, of course—

BB: Jack Moore was a Republican representative from Great Falls.

BM: Right. Jack was from Great Falls. He was a colonel and he let you know it. He was an interesting fellow. He became a very close friend of mine. He was absolutely a loyal man in my caucus. I was in the leadership most of the time when I was in the legislature whether it was Minority [Leader] or Speaker.

BB: You were speaker two different times.

BM: I was speaker two times, 1981 and 1987 sessions, and the subsequent special sessions during those times. I was in a minority position all the rest of the time except my first two sessions. There was only two sessions when I wasn’t in the leadership. Jack Moore in particular was one of the most loyal people. He absolutely knew what leadership meant. Back to Bardanouve. Bardanouve was an interesting guy. He had a rather severe speech impediment. I think he had a hair lip when he was a youngster and he had a hard time speaking. But he got his point across. He was an actor as well. He could cry if he had to and he could get mad, or at least he acted like he was mad. He was profound actor and it was fun to watch him. He was a good friend of mine. I really liked him. I liked his wife. They were very dedicated people. I didn’t agree with Francis a lot, but I trusted him.

BB: Anybody else? I can think of two or three, like Norris Nichols or Tom Haines, or—

BM: Norris Nichols was chairman of the House Appropriations Committee when I first came in the legislature. They used to meet in a little room in the corner of the floor of the House Chambers. I think it was a 17-member committee. There wasn’t any room for any witnesses. They’d have to stand out and try to hear what was going on. I think Francis kind of liked that because it kept the discussion short. Norris Nichols and Francis Bardanouve were great friends. They alternated being chair of the Appropriations Committee depending on who was in power. Norris Nichols was the chair of the Appropriations Committee my first two sessions. We had a special session in 1983.

You might remember that after that ’83 session, both Bill Groff in the Senate and Norris Nichols took jobs with the state. They went to work at the Department of Revenue. So Norris Nichols had to leave the committee. This was in ’83, I believe. Sorry, ’73, not ’83. That left a vacancy on the Appropriations Committee. Here I was in my second term and Oscar Kvaalen went to bat for me. He was on that committee and he got Bardanouve to appoint me to that committee even though we only had one bill during this special session. So that’s how I got on the Appropriations Committee and I was on it for many years thereafter.

BB: Bob, do you remember anything about the territorial integrity?
BM: I sure do. Territorial Integrity Act was an issue that came before the legislature. It concerned the utilities. Montana Power Company, of course, had their network of power lines and services throughout the state. At that time, the rural electrics and the cooperatives were starting to serve the rural areas because Montana Power had not done that. Through the cooperative effort, they were able to afford to stretch lines out where it had not been served before. The Montana Power Company didn’t like that at all even though they were—it’s kind of a “dog in the manger” sort of an attitude. But they had the votes. The Territorial Integrity Act came up, I think it was in the ’71 session.

BB: That’s when I—I think it might have flickered a time or two before then, but it was a huge deal in the ’71 session.

BM: That was the big session and the Republicans were, generally speaking, favorable to keeping it to where it was. The bill would have, I thought, thwarted the efforts of the rural electrics. Territorial Integrity Act, I remember that was the first time I voted against my caucus.

BB: Me too.

BM: There were only a couple of people and we prevailed.

BB: It was you and I and Ed Smith.

BM: Ed Smith was strong on that and Lou Perry maybe. There were only a few people that voted for it and we got it passed. It really kind of put that fight to bed after that. It turned out that it wasn’t such a big issue after all.

BB: In fact that compromise that we voted for, the amendment that we voted for to the big bill, actually is a compromise that holds essentially to this day.

BM: That’s right. It kind of settled the matter forever or at least up until now. I think that thing pointed out one other thing. It pointed to me that Montana Power had lost their clout right then and there. They used to get their way on almost everything. But right then and there, they lost it. It was Republican legislature and I think their fortune in the legislature and their terrific influence started downhill at that time. I’ll probably have to say some more about that on another issue before this interview is done.

BB: What do you attribute their big influence to? Why did they have such great influence?

BM: It happened before my time in the legislature.

BB: Although when you were there in ’69, before this incident occurred, they obviously had it.
BM: I guess in ‘69 they had a lot of influence because they always had. I’ll put it that way. They teamed up with the ACM Company and they had common lobbyists. In fact, they lobbied—some of the same lobbyists lobbied for both firms up until about that time. Then they separated. They basically had had control of the legislature, Democrats and Republicans up at that time.

BB: I’m curious for your interpretation of why. Why did the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company have such a big influence?

BM: Some of it came from their business connections with each other. Montana Power, of course, provided the power to Anaconda Company that needed it in Butte and Anaconda. In fact, there’s a power line not 2,000 feet from here that was built to service the needs of Anaconda. It’s called the Rainbow Line. It came from Rainbow Dam in Great Falls on the river. They had to send that energy to Anaconda and Butte to run their smelter and mining operation. So they kind of got a marriage there just by business. Then of course, I think ACM had a great influence in the legislature even back to the Copper King days. I think that existence of that influence over those years, I think Montana Power kind of joined in on that and profited from it.

BB: But there was resentment toward them too. You and I both maybe had a little of that in us. We weren’t—when we started out in the legislature, we weren’t going to be controlled by any big interest. So we both felt somewhat—our independence was somewhat important to us. I sometimes wondered why you hear these stories how for decades and decades the “terrible twins” dominated the state legislature. Then you can talk to many legislators and they’ll say, “Heck, I was almost never lobbied.” They seemed to be kind of a benign influence in the background. A lot of us have been kind of mystified by what exactly did they do? How exactly did they exert this controlling influence?

BM: I think they took a lot of things for granted. That if you were a Republican—I think that they had Republican lobbyists and they had Democrat lobbyists. Generally, John Lahr was the one for the Power Company that used to lobby the Democrats mostly. They kind of picked that out. Of course they followed their party’s legislators around and helped them out in their campaigns if they could. They went to the party conventions, so they got to be kind of friends with them. I think it was just a perpetual influence element.

BB: Do you think they maybe had a statewide network? There were perhaps law firms and businesses that they did business with, the Anaconda Company and/or the Montana Power Company. And so they had people that had maybe a better network of connections than either political party during that period of time. Do you think that’s accurate?

BM: I’m not sure that was the case. I don’t think so. I think they were big enough—Anaconda Company was big enough that they didn’t need any help. It was the industry in Montana for many years.
BB: It was the big employer of Montana.

BM: They made money. It came out of the Copper Kings’ influence and it just continued up until it all went to hell.

BB: I’ve had other people in my interviews indicate to me that they felt that the Anaconda Company—and/or the Montana Power Company, because as you’ve indicated, they frequently cooperated with each other. At one time they were the same company if you go back far enough in time. Also, they paid some attention—you mentioned that their lobbyists were at political conventions and perhaps other major events around the state, not necessarily political party conventions, but other big meetings and things around the state. They may also have been actively interested in recruiting candidates for the legislature.

BM: Oh, there’s no question about that. That’s part of the reason they went to these conventions. As you know, the conventions—every other convention is a platform convention where parties develop their platform, which is what their party is supposed to stand for. I think they had an influence there. They lobbied people to get those platforms so that they were not unfavorable to their interests at least. They were always there to help. If somebody didn’t know how to write a resolution, they’d help them. Part of that was a grassroots sort of a thing. They did travel around and make themselves known. I think in that sense, there might have been a connection with other businesses, chamber [Chamber of Commerce], and some other people.

BB: So the local chamber guy or some attorney or some small businessman or other who might have had some business connection or other and kind of knew the lobbyist, and the lobbyist is in town and there’s this young fellow who might be an excellent legislative candidate, and they introduce each other and they talk a little bit about it. And then when the fellow does end up in the legislature if he wins the election, he remembers this guy who was supportive and helpful.

BM: They mentored to a certain extent. They were mentors. I think the Anaconda Company and Montana Power Company’s influence decline happened about the time that Territorial Integrity Act passed. After that, I think their influence, both of those corporations, started to go down hill. Then I had some personal experiences with Montana Power Company that led me to believe that first of all, they can’t be trusted, or at least the hierarchy. Their word was not as good as it might have been. That happened when the Colstrip power units came on board. They were producing a lot of electricity, that Colstrip one, two, and then three and four.

They had to get enhanced transportation systems to get their power out of the state. So they started building a power line from Colstrip to Taft, which is in western Montana. That was the theme. They came to the counties and they came to the meetings around the state. They said, “Look, if this power line goes through, it’s got a tremendous valuation. Your counties and schools are going to do very well. Even though you don’t like the sight of the power line, just think of the dollars that are coming in.” A good share of the people thought, Well, if we can
them to move the power line a little bit here and there so it doesn’t look quite so bad, we’ll like the money.” Well it got to Toston, Montana, and they ran into some real opposition.

BB: And that’s in your district or right near your district.

BM: It was—at that time it was not. It was getting close to it. The power line corridor was supposed to go through the center of our county. We were due to get some big taxes out of it. That was the promise that was given. Well, there were some environmental concerns that came up at that time about how to get from Toston to Taft. Rather than go through the process of the environmental impact statements as it might have needed to be done under privately owned line, which it was from Colstrip to Toston, they decided to apply to the Bonneville Power Administration who had greater authority and could go over the top of some of these regulations. So the word came out that the Bonneville Power was going to build it from Toston to Taft. Of course, it would be a public power line and no taxes. So I went and talked to the President McElwain.

BB: President of the Montana Power Company.

BM: Joe McElwein, and I went to his office in Butte. I said, “Don’t do this. You’re double-crossing the people. You told them one thing and now you’re backing out.” I used a different term, one of which is related to urination, but I said, “You’re pissing backwards” in no uncertain terms.

He said, “Well, that’s the way it is. We’re going to have that power line built. You can’t do anything about it.”

I said, “You’re going to be sorry you did this, Joe. It’s not going to go favorably with you.”

He said, “Well that’s the way it is.”

The next session, I was Minority Leader, I believe. I was in the leadership at least. I was really chagrined that this was happening and the power line was under construction. So I concocted a bill to put a Beneficial Use Tax on the users of the power line for the benefit of using that line. It was a tax that it created that was equivalent to what the private power company would have paid had they been the owner. That included four of those big companies, Montana Power, Washington Power, Puget Sound, Portland GE, and so on. It was going through the legislature. I was really surprised that the Power Company and others didn’t overtly oppose that bill. I was Speaker at the time. I don’t think they wanted to pick a fight with the Speaker, but they had something else in mind. They were going to find that it was unconstitutional.

BB: The Interstate Commerce Act.
BM: Yes. So they filed a lawsuit in Montana courts and it got appealed. It went to the, it ended up in the [Montana] Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said it was constitutional. So they appealed that and tried to get another review of that to the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court basically told them, “Pack your lunch, guys. This is over.” I think some of that untrustworthiness of the Montana Power Company came through. I had another experience, personally, where they wanted to put a gas pipeline through my ranch right within 600 feet of my house, a four-inch pipeline from East Helena to Boulder. Of course, they came in and they paid you the damages and the right of way. They went through my hayfields and all this. I said, “Well part of this now, when this gets done, I want you to bring gas over to my place as part of this deal.”

The appraiser and the front man said, “Oh yeah, sure, we will. When we get done getting this in, we’ll do all this stuff.”

Well it got down time to do it and they said, “No we’re not going to do that. It’s going to cost you, whatever it is, two dollars a foot or five dollars a foot.”

I said, “I can’t believe you’re doing this. We made a deal.”

“Well, it isn’t in writing.”

BB: Really?

BM: Yes, so then when the interstate highway came then in 1968, the Power Company had to move some power poles because it was impacted by the new right of way. They wanted to buy some right of way from me across my land to put these power poles on. He said, “Can we even go out and survey a line?”

I said, “You stay off my property.” I knew the guy. I said, “I don’t have any problem with you, but your company is not any good for its word. Just don’t come on my property.”

So they built the power line right on the property line next to the highway and they left the cross-arms hanging on my side. I said, “Okay guys, you’ll have to move those poles. I told you I didn’t want you on my property. You’re taking some of my space.”

“Well, we can’t do that.”

I said, “Okay, see you in court.” They moved the poles. It points out that in years before that, my relationship with Montana Power Company was a handshake. We knew the local people. We traded. If they had to go across our place to get to their lines, they’d come back and say, “You need a few old power poles? Do you need a steel tower that we took down?” You kind of helped each other out. That day was gone. I’m speaking of little things in the scope of state affairs. But it shows that they didn’t give a damn anymore.

Bob Marks Interview, OH 396-053, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
BB: The corporate attitude kind of took over.

BM: Right. And of course, we can see what happened later with Touch America and that debacle.

BB: When they basically went bankrupt.

BM: Yeah, they did. They took a company that was a fairly well-run company. Stockholders took great stock in it because it paid a five percent dividend.


BM: Power stock was good stock. My grandmother had some. Oh, that was great stock. When the new “whiz kids”, I’ll call them, took over, namely Gannon, “We can make more money in this telecommunications business.”

BB: Bob Gannon?

BM: Yes, Gannon. Bob Gannon took over and they thought they were going to walk with the tall dogs. And they didn’t get it done.

BB: Bob, we talked about some lobbyists and certainly the lobbyists must have been effective during that period of time. There weren’t lobbyists just for the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company. There were others too. Are there any lobbyists that particularly stand out in your mind?

BM: I didn’t get lobbied much. I think one of the reasons certain legislators didn’t get lobbied as much as others is because they were probably pretty consistent in the way they voted. I think lobbyists and others that were observers kind of figured out where you would be on an issue and if they were pretty sure that you were going to be at a certain position, they probably didn’t lobby on it. The people that wobbled all over the place and voted conservative on one and liberal on another, or spending on one and tightwad on another, those are the people that got lobbied. Because they were malleable. They could be influenced to a different point of view. I got to be friends with a lot of lobbyists and I don’t think any of them ever abused that friendship because we trusted each other. I guess I just can’t remember any particular ones that lobbied me very hard. I would visit with them more casually and socially than anything else.

[Phone rings]

BM: I think the lobbyists in general in the legislature were sometimes called the “third House” or the “fourth House.” I did get provided a lot of information and, you know they do a lot of
research. The good lobbyists are the ones that will never tell you a lie. They’ll tell you the truth because if they don’t, it’s all over. If they’re found to be telling a lie, their influence is gone. So I got along fine with lobbyists.

BB: How about other interest groups that sometimes I think people consider to be on the other side of the spectrum. We talked about the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company and in addition, maybe the stockgrowers, the railroad, and so on might have been more or less in that camp, perhaps the banks. On the other side, you might have had the AFL-CIO, the schoolteachers, the public employees, the Farmers Union. Any thoughts about that?

BM: You kind of classified them, from a legislator’s point of view, as those people who were for business or against business. That’s one of the ways of doing it. Of course the environmental organizations, the MEIC [Montana Environmental Information Center] and Sierra Club and all those people, they were generally on the side that I was not on. I got along with them fine. I didn’t get lobbied much. They were kind of classified as those people who were probably, in the opinion of development people, they were against it.

BB: How did you see them and why did you generally tend to disagree with them?

BM: I think some of the issues that they were fostering were detrimental to business growth, reasonable business growth. I think they went too far in what they were...

BB: We’re talking about environmental issues.

BM: Yes, that’s right. I was surprised when you mentioned labor groups in that same utterance. I was surprised that the attitude of—particularly the AFL-CIO—at the same time that the environmental movement started. It seems to me like they joined up. It seems to me like it should have been a rocky marriage. The guys that were union guys needed work. Anti-development forces prohibited new jobs.

BB: So it seemed like a strange kind of alliance.

BM: It was a strange alliance and I think later that thing fell apart when the leadership of that union changed and Jerry Driscoll became president.

BB: Of the AFL-CIO.

BM: Yes. Jerry Driscoll...

BB: Replaced Don Judge.

BM: Jim Murry kind of stepped out of the picture and he went some place else. I think all that time...
BB: You associate Murry and Judge with the leadership that attempted to work out some kind of an alliance between the environmentalists and organized labor. Then when Driscoll came into the picture that changed.

BM: It did and it was kind of strange. I say it was a strange alliance to even form because it seemed to me that it was absolutely counter to the best interests of the working men that they said they represented. It’s kind of strange to me because the Butte-Anaconda area was a very strong union town. They would often go against them if it came to a bill that was promoting work. They’d often not vote with the rest of the Democrats on it and the labor unions. It was a work issue. I think at that time, two or three things: Jim Murry left for whatever reason. Jerry Driscoll took over from other more liberal—Don Judge. And I think that Jerry Driscoll, I knew him pretty well...

BB: He was a legislator from Billings.

BM: Yes, he had been for a long time. I think he was always a promoter for work. He realized that businesses had to make a little money or else there wouldn’t be any work. So he was a lot easier to deal with. I don’t think he was on the side of these extreme environmentalists any time. That was an interesting system that they tried to put together.

BB: Was the Farmers Union still an important influence in the legislature?

BM: It was for a while. It was very strong. They were pretty liberal when they first—when I first went in. They were quite liberal. Then I think it changed as things changed. Terry Murphy, who was a legislator with me for a while, became the president of the Montana Farmers Union and I think it changed at that time. They became little more mainstream, I should say, of ag issues. They still had their issues, of course, and they still are. I think they became recognized as a little more moderate than they were before when they used to have Clyde Jarvis on the morning program “Featuring the Facts.” He was very radical, in my opinion, on issues. I think he hurt the cause more than he helped. That happens with other unions as well. The teaching union would be another one. Their prime mouthpiece was Eric Fever for many years. He was so radical in his utterances and performance that I think he hurt the company and the cause he was working for more than he helped them. I think he became—

BB: You say “company.” It hurt who?

BM: Company, meaning school business. The schools, Montana Education [Association], which is the Teachers Union. I think he actually hurt them more than he helped them because he became a target of hate for people. He was so violent in his testimony many times. It got personal. I think he hurt the cause. I think he’s still hurting it.

BB: The cause of education?

Bob Marks Interview, OH 396-053, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
BM: The cause of education. Well, his cause was education. His cause was teachers. That’s not to say that’s not good, but there’s a difference.

BB: Bob, kind of related to that, do you see in your experience when you started out in politics and now looking back now that perhaps there was a rise of the public employee kind of unions, not just teachers but maybe that the public sector unions have become more influential, and perhaps the old blue collar industrial unions are less influential?

BM: Well yes, the Montana Public Employees Association has some, I think it has considerable influence. It probably, in my opinion, is more influential than the old blue collar unions.

BB: That would have been the case, say, in the ‘50s or ‘60s?

BM: No, it wouldn’t have. A couple of things happened. I think Montana’s economy has taken off some. Non-union work in places that was formerly union only, is now more prevalent than union work is. The workers are satisfied and apparently pretty happy with the benefits and compensation they’re getting without being a union member. So I think that has caused the demise of some of the rigid union shops, so to speak. You even see it in Butte. The mining company now that took up after Anaconda left is a non-union company. The workers are doing very well. They are getting big bonuses. So it’s working that way. So I think that’s kind of broken the back of that extremely strong blue collar union. Collective bargaining on the public sector I think is stronger than it was—MPEA and some of those associations.


BM: Yes, I think it’s stronger than it was when I first went in. It seems to be working okay.

BB: I was going to save this question for a little later, but I think we’re kind of there. I’ll ask you about it now. You’ve seen a whole lot of Montana history, and the Montana that you grew up in and the Montana now may be some different places. There may be some important differences. Do you have any thoughts on that? You’ve just mentioned that the economy has changed. Just, any observations about how and why?

BM: Well, there are a couple of things I believe that—when Montana was first opened up for development was, I suppose, the Homestead Act and the Mining Act, both of which took place in the mid-1800’s; people came here to seek their fortunes or because they couldn’t make it any place else. It wasn’t any gold mine here. It was hard work and it was natural resource oriented exclusively. That was it. If you didn’t have gold or hay or cows or horses, it wasn’t here. So that’s the way Montana got developped. Montana really is kind of two states, the eastern half and the western half. Now, I see the eastern half, which is primarily natural resource, but agriculture is kind of falling apart. There are still some big farms. A lot of it has gone into subsidized non-production for whatever reason. The little communities are falling
apart. The reserve program that—the Conservation Reserve Program has idled a lot of acres. Farmers don’t need machinery and machinery dealers closed up shop in the little towns, particularly the Hi-Line.

BB: The Hi-Line being the northern part of Montana.

BM: Yes. And if you go travel through there, gas stations are closing. The post office might still be there and that’s it. It’s losing population. At the same time I see the economy moving more toward the Rocky Mountain Continental Divide area where it’s geared more to non-agriculture, non-natural resource stuff. It’s technology to some extent. Recreation is a big item. Tourism, a little bit, it isn’t as good as people say it is, but it’s developing a whole different economy. Education system, of course, is centered primarily in the western part of the state.

BB: What do you see as you look into the future?

BM: Well, I think Montana, if it’s going to be a prosperous state, is going to still have to take advantage of some of the natural resources it has and market that. I’m speaking oil, coal, I don’t know if we’ll ever market any timber again, but those are very important things. Of course, I guess you could say recreation might be a natural resource too because it’s the use of our natural resources. I see Montana in the next 30 or 40 years being a place for second or third homes for people that are of great wealth. I see it already right now.

BB: And we’re going to be able to communicate with a lot of the rest of the country because of the modern electronic communication systems and computers.

BM: Our communication system is just—I can talk to my son who lives 10 hours away in Qatar for two cents a minute on my computer now, for heaven sakes. We can look at each other when we’re talking. So I mean it’s just—our marketing system now is exploding. It’s unreal. It’s happened in the last 15 years and I would guess we haven’t seen anything yet. It’s just going to keep going. The thing that—when you start talking about change though and the legislature, Montana is a citizen legislature. We get criticized for that sometimes because we meet once in a while. In my opinion, that’s often enough.

BB: Once every other year.

BM: Yeah, and sometimes a special session, but if you meet for 90 days every two years, that means that people who decide to serve do have some sacrifice to themselves because they’re gone from their business and their families. I don’t know if much credit is ever given to the people that are left behind when they serve in Helena. But I know from my own experience, and I live pretty close to Helena, that running a ranch when I was in the legislature for many years fell back on my family. That included my six kids and my wife. I would guess that’s not unusual.
When people leave their domicile to go for 90 days or more to serve away from home, you lose track of your business. So somebody has to do it. Those people that are left behind deserve a pat on the back because they served the state well too. Because they kept things together while their husband or wife served. I just think that my kids and my wife did a hell of a job for me when I was serving. I think probably my commitment might have been more than other people in the legislature because I was in the leadership position. So I think the demands on that were a little greater. I’m not bragging or complaining, I mean, it just goes with the job. You have more things to do.

BB: It monopolizes your life too. In the years I served in the legislature, my wife used to sometimes shake her head because she’d say something to me and she’d say, “You’re preoccupied. You’re thinking about what’s going on over in Helena, or something like that.”

BM: It does. It gets to be a—you call it a disease perhaps. Your life is centered around it. I spent 21 years there and then I spent four years as an administrator under Governor [Stan] Stephens, which was a different role. After you get out of it, you still remember a lot of things and you keep track of what’s going on, but you get a different little perspective on it. I think you can kind of put it into a priority rating. It’s probably not the most important thing you’ve ever done. The most important thing you’ve ever done is have a family and be connected to your friends. The politics business was a really good experience. You met a lot of people, but if you look back on it, there are a lot of things that are more important. They still are. It was a good experience and I enjoyed it tremendously.

BB: Before we leave the topic of the legislature, and you mentioned Governor Stephens just now, maybe I’ll ask you for your thoughts and observations on some of the governors with whom you served. Are there any—we talked about the Territorial Integrity Bill and the Coal Tax Bill—is there another bill or two that maybe stands out in your memory, another piece of legislation in the 20 plus years you served in the legislature that you remember particularly? There were lots of—hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of bills.

BM: I don’t know how many thousands of bills I was involved in one way or another, but there were so many, you forget most of them. It seems to me like the greatest controversy, and of course my interest was on budget generally. I think the budget issues were the predominant issues all the time. Some of the governors had some pet projects. Ted Schwinden came in and he wanted to have a flat tax on cars. So the legislature did that.

BB: Without regard to the value of the car.

BM: Yes, it was just so much for a car. That was Schwinden’s campaign thing. It went good and we passed it. We later got it changed back again to where they were paying taxes on them, fees or whatever. Those things kind of come and go. It was a controversial one. I had different relationships with different governors. If I was in the leadership, of course, sometimes you got a little closer to them. Some of them were more open to visit with you than others. I didn’t really
get to know Forrest Anderson very well because he was governor when I first was elected for the first four years. He was a salty cuss. He was an interesting man.

I later found out, when I was in the Department of Administration, there were people that submitted bids for work or services in the government, which I was in charge of at that time, from people who had been there for many years. They would come in and say, “Well, does the governor need anything? Can I get something for the governor?” I said, “No, Governor Stephens doesn’t do that.” Well it used to be, you used to have to come in and one of the previous governors, without naming him, he happened to be the one when I was first elected, used to make contracts a little easier if there was a little honey on it. I think that was true.

BB: In the form of a bribe or in the form of like a favor?

BM: A favor I think, maybe a contribution to the campaign or something like that. I won’t say it was illegal, but it was questionable. But he wasn’t a bad governor. I thought he had pretty good—he did executive reorganization while he was governor. Some people thought that was the wrong thing to do, but it wasn’t. It was the right thing to do. There were too doggone many agencies and he kind of combined them. I kind of happened to think it’s time to do it again because it’s getting pretty profuse.

BB: There were—

BM: Then Tom Judge came in. I thought that Tom Judge was just kind of lackluster administration. Not much happened. He had, I think, Judge had some kind of bright young fellows around him and he kind of let them do things. I guess I’d have to say he didn’t hurt the state much. He probably didn’t help it much. But I don’t dislike him at all.

BB: If you could tell a story, if you’ve got an impression of both Governor Anderson and of Governor Judge. Is there an example or anything you can remember about either one of them—

[Phone rings; background conversation]

BB: What I was going to ask you, is there anything that kind of typifies them, their leadership style, who they were?

BM: Between those two—

BB: How would you describe Forrest Anderson in a few words? How would you describe Tom Judge in a few words?

BM: I’d say that I think Anderson was a little bit like our current governor. I think he liked to make pretty short statements. Well, I shouldn’t say that about our current governor, but I don’t
think Anderson talked an awful lot, but he kind of let people know where he was and that was it.

BB: He was very direct.

BM: He was pretty direct. I kind of liked that. Because you kind of knew where he was. I'm not sure that Tom Judge was that way. There was some interesting legislation. It was during kind of the start of the environmental years when Tom Judge was in. I don't know if I ever knew where he was on those issues. It just kind of happened. It just kind of happened.

BB: There were some important things that took place during his administration, but you don't feel that he led them particularly. He just kind of—

BM: They just evolved.

BB: You think Forrest kind of made things happen?

BM: Yeah, yeah he did.

BB: Executive reorganization. That was his 20 plan.

BM: That was a big deal. It came about and it had a few little warts on it when it came in, but it was all taken care of. You don't have to do it all at the same time.

BB: How about Governor Schwinden and Governor Stephens?

BM: Governor Schwinden, I liked him. I think he was a trustworthy man. I was the Speaker when he was governor. We had some issues and he'd say, “Come on over to the house.” So sometimes I just would break away from the capitol and walk over to the Governor’s Mansion and sit down and talk with him. That was a relationship we had. I thought it was beneficial. We did it as friends and we understood our positions with each other. I thought it was a real benefit. I liked that.

BB: Did he seem knowledgeable and well-informed? Did he understand the issues?

BM: Yeah, yeah he did. He had been a legislator for a spell from Tooley Creek. So he’d had some background there. I thought he was a decent man.

BB: I had some visits with him too when I was a legislator. It always impressed me that he seemed to—he didn’t necessarily need to have some expert sitting in the office with him. If I came in to discuss a problem with him, he wouldn’t need some guy there. Some guy might be there, but for the most part, he seemed to have a real good grasp.
BM: He did. That was good. He didn’t have to have a department person there or anything to talk about it or one of his staff. He was well informed and I thought he was a real easy guy to visit with. I appreciated that.

BB: And he was willing to try and find some creative way or some kind of solution to get around the problem.

BM: Yeah, yeah. He was all right. I liked him.

BB: Governor Stephens?

BM: I liked Governor Stephens. He started the legislature the same day I did back in 1969. He was out for a while then after, before he came back into the Senate. Then when he chose to run for governor, I was also harboring that same illusion.

BB: You were considering running for governor?

BM: Yes, I was. I was considering it. I talked with my family and I was strongly considering it. I have to tell you, Bob, the middle of one night I got the message that I wasn’t going to do it. And it was loud and clear. And it was over.

BB: What happened?

BM: I got a signal that, “You’re just not going to do it.” And I was totally happy with it. I was content.

BB: What form did the signal come in?

BM: Well, I think it was a message from the Lord. I really do.

BB: You were just laying in bed.

BM: I was sleeping. Wow, all of a sudden it was there, it’s over.

BB: You just had a powerful feeling that you shouldn’t do it?

BM: Yes. I was content. So anyway, at that time I told Governor Stephens that, “I’m going to support you.”

BB: That was when Stan was a state senator.
BM: Well, he was in the process of running at that time. And it was at a convention when he had to make his announcement that he was definitely in the act. I said, “I’m not in it, Stan. So I’ll assist you if I can.”

BB: That was a tough primary, remember?

BM: It was.

BB: You remember that it was Stan Stephens and Jim Waltermire and Cal Winslow.

BM: Yes.

BB: You and I, you supported Stephens?

BM: Oh yes. I let it be known right up front. I said, “I’m in your camp and I’m going to support you.” I think I helped him some. Then of course after he got elected, I was also elected to the legislature at the same time. I became a cabinet member after the legislature. He asked me to serve in the Department of Administration. I think Governor Stephens had some trouble putting his executive organization together. I was involved in the transition a little bit, helped him out. I tried to find good people to run some of the departments. I think the worst thing that happened there—the unfortunate thing is I think—some of the long-time state employees were overlooked as potential people to fill some of those positions. There was a good share of those people that are probably not too partisan, overtly partisan at least. They’ve got some institutional memories that are of great assistance.

I think there was a real resistance on part of the folks that supported Governor Stephens that “you can’t trust those people.” I think it hurt his administration. I think he had some unfortunate appointments, Mike Letson being one of them. I think it hurt the heck out of him. That was friendship being greater than common sense, I think.

BB: Letson was a fellow from up in Shelby that Stan had known and he was also the director of the Department of Commerce.

BM: Commerce, yeah. Oh, boy.

BB: Kind of a wild operator.

BM: It was. It was like, “We’re in charge now. We can do what we want.” It caused some headaches.

BB: Do you think Stan felt that—he was a private sector guy. He had a private sector background and it was my impression that he felt that rather than go with these career public service people, who had been associated with 20 years of Democratic administrations, that if
his election was the first Republican governor in 20 years meant anything, he should try to introduce some private sector concepts in the government and bring some new fresh air from outside into it. Is that your impression?

BM: Yes. Well, even more than that, I don’t think it was Stan’s. I don’t think he was biased as much. But he had some people that were in his little group that were really pushing him. I wasn’t in that group before the election. I’m not going to name names there because they’re all my friends, but there was a group of people that were just ultra-against government. They were strong contributors and backers of Governor Stephens, in my opinion, and I think that influence carried on through at least the first couple of years of his administration and it was kind of a background mentor brain set that you can’t trust anybody. It’s the government. You can’t trust those workers.

BB: So the workers themselves came to resent that.

BM: Well, they did. Although, I think he treated the public employees very kindly. He set up some programs for recognition of individuals, which I helped him do. I thought that was good. But as far as managing some of the agencies, I think that he could have used some of the talent there that was there in some elevated positions. That doesn’t mean that you can’t put some businesspeople in. Some of those people didn’t understand state government.

BB: Some of the people Stan brought in to be top administrators?

BM: Right. They didn’t understand how it works. There’s a learning curve there. Some people—it was very ineffective, I thought.

BB: I think the impression of the Stephens administration is that it got off to a really rocky start and then it reached some kind of a stable equilibrium the last year or two in office.

BM: Yes, it got weeded out, but—

BB: By then the people had formed an impression of Stan and—

BM: At the same time I think that because he was the first Republican in many years the Democrats really took after him, I mean unmercifully on anything.

BB: In the legislature?

BM: The party people.

BB: The Democrat Party people.
BM: Outside of the Legislature too. They picked on him all of the time. His wife couldn’t even pick out the color of the carpet in the house without—it was just one of those miserable nit-picky things that kind of wore itself out after a couple of years.

BB: He served with them. He was a long-time respected legislator. I wondered at the time, “Why are they making such war on Stan Stephens?”

BM: I think they resented the fact that they didn’t own the governorship. That was it. I think the same thing happened with Judy Martz. I couldn’t stand it.

BB: Although she followed two Republican governors.

BM: Yeah, but hey sure didn’t like—they made her life miserable.

BB: They did.

BM: The press did too. The press bought right in on it. Speaking of which, the press has changed immeasurably. When I first was in the legislature, we had some people that were reporters that probably reported facts without laundering it. The one I remember was J.D. Holmes as probably the best one we had. He was good. He was a local in Helena and he was there. I thought he did a really good job. You could trust him. If you told him something that you didn’t want to be attributed to, he’d just keep that in the back of his mind. He was good about that. Another one that I liked a lot was a young fellow from Great Falls Tribune, was Tom Kotynski. I got to be personal friends with him and liked him. I liked his style. He was smart. He dug into things and found out whether it was true or not. I liked him. He kind of left the State Bureau and went to work in the offices in Great Falls. I think Tom Johnson was pretty good for a while. I think he’s got a liberal bent about him now.

BB: Chuck Johnson, not Tom.

BM: Yes, Chuck Johnson, Chuck. I thought when he and Kotynski were running the Great Falls Bureau, they had a pretty good reporting service. I think the press stinks.

BB: You feel they’re less objective and more biased now?

BM: Not only more liberal, they are really liberal, anti-business. The major ones are. That’s unfortunate.

BB: You know, the Anaconda Company, you talked about it earlier in our interview, owned most of the daily newspapers in the state until 1959. That was before you were importantly involved in politics, but you were aware then. Do you have any thoughts on that? If you compare the press coverage and the news media then to now, do you—?
BM: I don’t think it’s any less biased now. The Lee [Lee Enterprises] newspapers are just as big an influence on—who owns most of the papers in the state—Lee newspapers cause just as much bias that the Anaconda Company did, I think.

BB: You think the press is as biased now as it was when the Anaconda Company owned them?

BM: Yes, I do.

BB: A different bias, perhaps.

BM: They had their own bias. The Tribune might be an exception to that. They don’t belong to that organization. They’re a pretty good paper.

BB: We’ve just got a few minutes left and I want to ask you just a little bit—we touched a little bit on the 1972 constitution. You served in the legislature prior to the enactment of the 1972 constitution and then for a number of years afterwards. Any thoughts on the constitution, maybe there’s a significant thing or two in the constitution that stands out in your mind?

BM: I’ll speak a little bit to the convention. That came because there was a constitutional call set up by the legislature. So the people that ran for that office got elected, I think on the same basis that the representatives were at that time, as far as reapportionment. I was disappointed and I think it hurt the Constitutional Convention. They didn’t want legislators to even be around as resources, I thought. If you were to show up, they said, “We don’t need you around here.” They went their own way.

BB: Did you attempt to kind of nose around there?

BM: No, I didn’t. I didn’t because I didn’t feel like we were welcome there at all.

BB: What gave you that impression?

BM: I think there was a certain amount of arrogance on the part that these guys were going to do what they needed to do. “You legislators obviously don’t need to be any part of it.”

BB: What made you think that?

BM: I think probably the chair was one.

BB: Leo Graybill.

BM: Yes.

BB: This was on the basis of what you read in the newspaper or you had a conversation?
BM: No I didn’t have any personal conversation, but I think just the general feeling that the legislators just didn’t need to show up, didn’t need to be involved. “We’ll do our thing and you do your thing.” As far as the merits of the new constitution, I guess I think it needed a new constitution. The biggest mistake they made was separating gambling from the constitution and putting it on a separate ballot. I think that was probably the worst disaster that happened to Montana.

BB: What was?

BM: Allowing gambling in the state.

BB: Because the 1889 constitution had a prohibition.

BM: Yes, it prohibited gambling, period.

BB: And the ’72 constitution, when the people voted on it, they voted on the constitution and then separately they voted on whether or not to continue the prohibition against gambling.

BM: Right.

BB: And the constitution barely passed, and eliminating the prohibition against gambling also passed.

BM: It passed and it allowed the legislature to set up whatever gambling there would be. It got out of control. Now we have what we have.

BB: You feel we have too much gambling now?

BM: It’s a joke. It’s a joke. The state lottery is a joke.

BB: A joke, meaning?

BM: Well, what was it set up for, help education? The administrative costs of running that thing are horrendous. Any damn fool buys one of those tickets ought to have his head examined because your chances of winning are zip. I think it’s encouraged addictive gambling in other sectors including some of the coin machines. Coins, and now credit card machines. You plug in your credit card and you can do—

BB: It’s become part of our culture almost.

BM: Part of our culture, but at the same time, we’re having people with tremendous financial problems. I think a lot of it is because of this gambling addiction. That’s not to say that they

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couldn’t have gone to Nevada and done it too, but you sure made it pretty convenient. I think it was a terrible mistake for Montana. It’s a tragedy.

BB: Any other thoughts on the constitution?

BM: I think it will probably be around for a while. We probably don’t need to have another revision for 50 years. It will probably make it. I guess one other thing in spite of the fact that I’ve been a Republican all my life, and different administrations change by party, but I’m convinced that no matter what happens, this next election or the one thereafter or the one thereafter, we’ll survive. It isn’t as bad as some people make it. It probably isn’t as good as some people make it. But we’ll make it.

BB: Related to that, Bob, or maybe just to kind of close out our interview, can you draw any conclusions? This is your 76th birthday today. You’ve been involved in public activity since you were 21, since your first election to the school board. So you have a long history of close involvement and being a close observer. Any conclusions you can draw? Any interpretations of being a close observer now for well over half a century of Montana and our economy and our politics?

BM: I don’t know. I wish you’d have forwarded that question to me. I don’t know what to say. I was in the volunteer fire department for 41 years too. I guess, I think we have a good—Montana is a good place. I think they have a bunch of good people and I think there are a bunch of survivors here. I’m optimistic about Montana. Look where we came from and we kind of talked about that, the homesteaders came in and people following natural resources. Development came in and it was tough. There was some leadership developed amongst them either in business or in politics. Those people advanced. I think the state has advanced fairly well. I think we have a good future here. It’s a good place to raise a family. That’s the most important thing there is.

BB: Anything else?

BM: Nope.

BB: Okay, well thank you very much. Thanks for your public service.

BM: No sweat.

[End of Interview]