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Interviewee: Francis Bardanouve
Interviewer: Steve Waldron
Date of Interview: April 29, 1983
Project: Francis Bardanouve Oral History Project

Francis Bardanouve: I say I'm louder in the legislature than I am [at home].

Steve Waldron: I think you are. So don't let that make you nervous because I'll edit out anything that's embarrassing. Although I can't remember you saying anything embarrassing.

FB: Saying too much.

SW: Except when you told me that Ellen Feaver shit in her own nest. That was embarrassing.
(laughs)

FB: What?

SW: When you told me that Ellen Feaver shit in her own nest.

FB: Oh. Was that embarrassing?

SW: I think it would be if you [said so] on tape.

FB: Oh. Well, she did!

SW: Yes.

FB: They use that as a rationale. They rationalize [unintelligible]. They won't give me away, but it is something to hang their hat on.

SW: Yes. Let's talk about me for a while. I [am] thinking about running for that state auditor job. I wanted your advice.

FB: I certainly think that...you're well qualified, probably far better qualified than the person who has the job now. I don't know how much he has grown in the job. If Andrea [Bennett] runs, it's going to be tough—awful tough. You'll spend a lot of money. You'll have that problem. You will shake that office up. Now, I'll imagine that the insurance companies won't rest too easy.

SW: No, I don't imagine they will.

FB: And they'll pour a lot of money into her campaign as a result—

SW: Well, okay. I really like the legislature. I like the appropriations committee a lot.

FB: I'd hate to see you leave the legislature, just from a purely selfish point of view. From a Democrat viewpoint, we're awfully weak.

SW: Yes, we are.

FB: If I'm not there, not saying I'm all that valuable, I don't know who will carry the banner for us. Ray [Peck] had potential. [Rex] Manuel is not bad but he'll never go out into the field like you do. You do the job, you do it well. But he won't be a burr under the saddle.

SW: Yes, I'll tell you what's sort of floating around. For one thing, I feel a responsibility as far as that appropriations committee goes. It's a serious thing with me. I think it's really important that we have some people there that understand the process fairly well and have a big, broad picture of what's going on there. Unfortunately, there's not too many people [who can do that]. It's easy for me to take a look at it and say "Okay, how does that affect everything else?" But there's darn few people [who] will do that.

FB: No, Ray, he's just so far, he's pretty much oriented to education. And he'll never, at least not for now, branch out. Manuel [will] help do that. Manuel helped out beyond his areas. He does well in his area, running good subcommittees. He does well, very well in long range building. But he won't bring those bills up. The ones that have fiscal impact. I don't think he would spend hardly any time on [them] like you were. You were bird-dogging all those bills. You're always down there on SRS [Social and Rehabilitative Services].

You were down there, you took care of all institutions. The problem solving, which is not directly related to your subcommittee, that's where a lot of your work is. So many things...like the last two days on those water bills, that wasn't really my area. But I think we saved thousands and thousands of dollars just by me overturning those Senate amendments. Maybe hundreds of thousands dollars and appointing a tough conference committee, and we saved literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest over the next 20 years. [Rep. Gary] Spaeth and [Sen Earl] Lory gave a real good talk. I'm sorry I didn't have that kind of a set-up to begin with [for] the first project. They were in terrible shape. I think we let them off the hook too easily. But those last projects that were thrown in there, they're going to pay their way.

SW: Yes.

FB: That's just one small thing, but there's a lot of other things like that. Got involved in the prison ranch. That's just a part of the whole process. I don't know whether Andrea will run or not. I said to her kiddingly one day, "I hear rumors about you in high office." She kind of brushed it off, "Nothing to it," or something. I don't know. She'll be tough. She's beautiful, but I believe she's tough. I can see that.

SW: She is very tough.

FB: She's tough. She'll be a fighter. A fighter is not easy to beat. For her good looks, and very attractive, she'll pick up a lot of women votes. In the primary and the Democratic primary, I don't know what kind of opposition you'll have. I don't know who else is even thinking about it.

SW: Nobody. Sharon Petersen approached me and we talked about it, and she said there's no one else even thinking about.

FB: Of course you don't know, a lot of people think about these things and never say nothing.

SW: Yes, that's true.

FB: Two years down the road.

SW: Yes.

FB: You'll have to get something going. You should get a campaign, at least announce. Sometimes by merely announcing you put other people off.

SW: Sure.

FB: With your legislative audit background too, that's beneficial.

SW: Sure.

FB: I think that will be one of your strong points—leadership in appropriations. You'll have an office in the legislative auditor.

SW: Yes.

FB: How many years have you been on it? Four years now?

SW: Two.

FB: Weren't you on it before?

SW: I was appointed in '81. [Waldron was a House representative from Missoula from 1976-1985. He was appointed to the House Appropriations Committee in 1981.]

FB: I mean you'll be four years—

SW: Yes, it'll be four years by the time—

FB: Yes this is your second term.

SW: Yes, right. Francis, I want to get out of the sawmill, and I just think that it will be difficult to do, to get into a job where I can use my mind and still stay in the legislature, because it's pretty tough for an employer to hire you knowing that you're going to be gone for four months every two years.

FB: Yes.

[Period of long silence]

SW: So?

FB: Yes, I'm surprised you defeat yourself.

SW: It's a state law that you have to—

FB: That's a bunch—

SW: But I think Champion would have fired me a long time ago.

FB: Yes.

SW: Champion International.

FB: I hear they're talking about strikes again.

SW: Oh, that's just part of the negotiations. We took a strike vote. It's unanimous in most of the locals. Before you can start negotiating and it just lets the company know that you're going to be a little tough (unintelligible).

FB: They say Louisiana Pacific was the toughest company.

SW: Oh, they got nasty this last time.

FB: Oh, were they?

SW: Yes. They were trying to renegotiate contracts and they've got a labor group, or a management group that they belong to and they were violating their own management group rules by trying to renegotiate.

FB: Are they one of these companies that are taking new courses on how to break unions and things?

SW: I think so.

FB: There was a piece in the paper yesterday [on that].

SW: Yes, I saw that.

FB: I don't know. I don't know how much money you can raise. That's what makes the campaign go round now-a-days is money.

SW: I figure I'll have to make a decision in the next week or two and start organizing. You start organizing a year before the campaign, if you're going to do it right. It's going to be a statewide race.

FB: Yes.

SW: It's an office that's not a glamorous office.

FB: That's why you can't get much money.

SW: Right.

FB: Of course I say, there's money in the office but it's in the insurance industry and they are not going to give you that much money.

SW: No, they aren't.

FB: They're much more comfortable with a Hemstad [Andrea Hamstad, married name Bennett] or an [longtime auditor E.V. "Sonny"] Olmholt because there are great things you could do at that office. Insurance companies fear that some state insurance regulator will become very controversial, very famous or whatever by their stand on insurance policies and things. A consumer representing consumers in insurance decisions. Of course if they get the idea you were tough in that area they might make a special effort to beat you. Of course I wouldn't play it up and maybe they're not necessarily inclined. It's been a tough year. But I'm sure there are things that they feel very comfortable with Olmholt.

SW: Yes they do.

FB: Unless it's an outright violation of law, Olmholt is not going to say anything. He's not going to rattle around chinaware or ruffle any feathers or drop the vote. As long as things are running

quietly, he's happy and the insurance people are happy. Of course there's more to that office than just insurance. But that is really the area that would have the most potential.

SW: Yes, and I'd be able to do politics full time, essentially, and administering, that sort of thing. [I will be] using my mind, my abilities and so on. That's one of the reasons why it attracts me.

FB: That's what you've got...a searching mind. That's the word I was trying to find a while ago. That's what we don't have on that committee—a mind that explores areas all the time. Just like the way you shook up the Supreme Court. (laughs) Course you probably lost those nine votes right there. (laughs) Himsel [?] came out of the wood on that one.

SW: Yes, he did. All the lawyers did. I put that amendment on so that they could—

FB: I wonder why they would do that much.

SW: I don't know. I've got to call Dan Kemmis and see how much prodding he did.

FB: Oh, I don't know. I think he'll prod very gently.

SW: Yes. He's going to prod SRS to get that kicked up to the Supreme Court so that they can deal with it.

FB: Yes, he might be next. What could they do on that case?

SW: I don't know. I talked to Keeting about it. Mike Keeting [Business representative for the Operators and Engineers Union].

And I talked to six lawyers, six state agency lawyers, each one from a different agency. And they all say that [Judge Gordon] Bennett exceeded his authority. So I suppose the Supreme Court could rule that. Then the question comes down to who's going to pay for the cost of that vision quest that that Romero kid was sent to.

FB: We'll end up paying.

SW: I suppose.

FB: We'll be there two years from now. About a 200,000-dollar bill.

SW: That's right, I figured it out. It's about 200,000 dollars.

You know I would have paid for it, I would put the money into the bill to pay for it if Bennett would have just agreed not to do that anymore. He wouldn't agree to it.

FB: No, he just [unclear]. He does this. I see they ruled unconstitutional today the right that they are required regular payment at a certain time.

SW: Yes and they took more than 90 days to do it too! (laughs) So that should tell you.

FB: There are three ways, they cover all their bases. Three different ways that they will find unconstitutional. They want to make sure they did this. Well, you can't trust them bastards. We're getting off the subject a bit. But I think that money will be difficult. I don't know who you will go to that's interested enough to put money into it [your campaign]. Unions don't care much. They'll make a token contribution I imagine.

SW: That's one of the reasons why I have to organize now, is to do the fund raising. And I've got a few groups that will be supportive, unions being one, a lot of women's groups.

FB: Now if a woman runs, you'll lose that.

SW: I don't know if that's necessarily true.

FB: Of course you have been quite identified with women's legislation.

SW: Yes. A lot of social groups, social services people.

FB: Sure, but they're not the kind to put money in [to a campaign].

SW: No, but they would do some work. So it would be just a lot of small fund raisers. [That is] essentially what it would be and well organized. You know, it would require good organization as well [as being] organized.

FB: You haven't heard anything about Andrea's father, have you?

SW: No. Is he ill?

FB: Pardon?

SW: No, is he ill or something?

FB: Didn't you know?

SW: No, I didn't.

FB: The last day of the legislature she left. He had a serious stroke or heart attack the last day of session.

SW: No?

FB: Yes. Didn't you know that?

SW: No.

FB: She left the floor that afternoon.

SW: What do you know?

FB: I haven't heard anything. I haven't seen anything in the papers. Yes, it was serious. He was critical that afternoon. She took off, early in the afternoon.

SW: I feel a real responsibility, having all this, gaining all this knowledge which took quite a bit of work as far as appropriations. I'd feel almost like I'd be deserting.

FB: I'll tell you something, like I said from a selfish viewpoint, I'd hate to see you leave the legislature. Whether I'll be back or not is really questionable.

SW: Why?

FB: Well, because after 26 years—

SW: Twenty-six years?

FB: I'm not a kid anymore. My wife would just as soon I wouldn't be in office.

SW: Does Venus get lonely when you're gone?

FB: She's not happy with politics anymore.

[Long pause]

SW: How do you feel about it?

FB: I guess I still like the process. Of course if you're in a minority it isn't as much responsibility, but it isn't as much fun either.

SW: I get tired of the hearings about half-way through the session.

FB: You know, I never do. I never do. That is one strange thing. I don't know why. I've practically heard more at one time or another. I never get tired. I never do. I think you're a good speaker. You're fairly fluent. You're not a [Dan] Kemmis or a [Jack] Ramirez. You're not a lawyer, which a

lot of people in the rural areas don't like. You're a working man. You've got good credentials for a primary. You have to have grass roots organization too. Out in the boonies, sometimes they help, sometimes they don't do much. You get the right people in them, get people committed early who are fairly well respected in their areas, that helps. I mean be very careful of people who...who will only get you in trouble. There are people that like to get in politics, [who] want to be in the organization, but they're not very popular at the local level.

SW: I thought I could use, as a base for a statewide race, since I know all the Democratic legislators, start with them in developing an organization. Because generally they know all the leaders in a community.

FB: Yes. Of course I think that's where Kemmis [started].

SW: Yes.

FB: Kemmis put in a lot of work pre-session.

SW: You bet he did.

FB: And before the election, he was really—

SW: I watched that. I watched him do it.

FB: And I watched how he made appointments. He was super cautious, not to offend anybody—to, well, I see little things, all the time.

SW: How do you feel about this 1983 Legislative session? Do you think we did a good job?

FB: You mean this session?

SW: Yes.

FB: It seemed like as if nobody [was] really blasting us at all. A lot of these blasts I heard came out of Missoula with [Ann Mary] Dussault and [Robert] Palmer. [One does not] joke much with legislators.

SW: This session seemed to be a lot harder to me than any other session I've been in. How did you feel about it? A lot more of my time was spent [working].

FB: The harder you think, [the less] money [you] have to play with. You have to keep pressure on all the time to hold down the spending. Republicans spent more than we did last time.

SW: In 1981 they spent more than we did.

FB: In proportion they spend more than we had, they were more generous with dollars, far more generous than we were this time.

SW: How did it start? How did you ever decide to get in the legislature? What made you decide to run? That was in, what, 1959? 1958?

FB: 1958. I've always been interested in—I used to read everything about the legislature. It's something I always wanted to be involved with, the legislative [process] just from a local level. I was.... so intensely interested in everything they do. A lot of people think well, why are you really in it? I was just interested in the government—interested in the legislature and the committees—and the people who were in the legislature at that time. I followed their careers very closely. I had my favorite "hates" and my favorite "white hats."

SW: What was it like the day you decided to run? What did you do?

FB: That was an awfully tough day. I'd never been involved in politics in my life before. Nobody even knew I was interested in politics. Not even my own family. And there was an opening that year; our House member filed for the Senate. Yeah, two years before, he filed and ran for the Senate. And the Republicans took over for those two years so we had a Republican legislator and it was almost the end of filing in April and nobody had filed. So I decided I would file, and I got up to Chinook and I found out that the night before, they [the Republicans] had prevailed upon a farmer to file; a very fine and very popular man.....so I almost backed off then. Then I went out to see him, he was farming south of Chinook. "Well," he said, "Francis, they came out and asked me if I would file." He'd been a very prominent organizer of the telephone Co-op of this area and was in the ASC [Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service] Agriculture Committee for years. A very fine person. And he said, "If you want to file, go ahead Francis."

So then I went back to Chinook. I went around, I drove around the court house for about half an hour or more, a block or more. I went around and around. I couldn't get nerve enough to file. Finally I walked in. I asked the clerk and recorder, "I want to file for office."

"Do you want to file?" [Said in an hysterical-sounding voice.]

That almost frightened me out of there. "The Legislature?" A selfish reaction, but, oh my God. But he took my 15 dollars, so I was in. And that was how I got in. I had a very close race the first race. The man who [ran against me in] the primary...it was the closest race I've ever had. I won the primary by 89 votes.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

SW: So how about the race in the fall? It was a close race for the primary. Eighty-nine votes you said?

FB: Yes. And he was a lawyer and [a] law partner [of] Harry Burns. One of the most prominent Republicans in Montana [Bernard W. Thomas]. He was chairman of the Montana Highway Commission. At that time the commission was much more important than it is today. Chairman of the Montana Highway Commission, a member of the John Birch Society, ultra-conservative Republican. A very able man whose law partner was Harry Burns. Thomas, that was the man I ran against, was later appointed judge and just retired last fall as district judge. He was a very fine person, but he never worked hard at all. Had a young family and so really never cared that much for the job, and they assumed [that] when I beat him in the primary, that the race was all over with and they wouldn't have much of a race. But I worked my—worked real hard. I went from one end of the county to the other end, beat on every door in the rural areas and I wrote articles. [That has] been my main way of campaigning ever since. I wrote articles about government problems and such. I won, and it surprised me. [My victory] even surprised the senator who was my close friend, who said "I voted for you Francis, but I didn't expect you to win." So it was kind of a dark-horse situation.

SW: How did you feel about winning? Were you pretty excited?

FB: No, I don't think so. I guess I can't really ever feel much about winning. I never feel much about winning the race. I can't really say. You win, you win; you lose, you lose, I guess. No, I never was overjoyed about winning the race. I was really interested. I can't say. Well, that was how it all came about. Then we had a big blizzard that day of the election. I said, "Well, there goes the election. The people in the country can't vote." It was a bad storm, an early November storm. Lots of roads were closed. It didn't cost me the election, [but] it could have. Anyway, I got enough votes somehow to win. I won by 129 votes. Then I went down there [to Helena] and the rest is history I guess.

SW: Didn't you put a sign up or something downtown?

FB: Oh, that came much later.

SW: Really?

FB: Oh yes. That came much later.

SW: Were the rest of your elections pretty easy elections then?

FB: Oh, no, it was getting increasingly harder. They threw everything at me. [At my] first session I was appointed to the appropriations committee. And I was very concerned about

arrangements of state school lands. We were getting about 10 cents an acre for them, 15 cents an acre. And I sponsored about four bills to raise it. There were some real battles as a freshman. I really shook them up. But I made a lot of people mad that year I guess, at least they used it against me. I became somewhat controversial as a freshman because of that. Then in the spring I came back and I found that Harry Burns' law partner was a very bitter enemy of mine.

I was asked to appear in a—I don't remember what it was—Lions Club meeting or a Chinook Businessmen Club meeting after I came home. And they asked me to appear and then to speak. Tell them about a little, about the legislature. Well, man oh man. Burns was a prominent member. He got up and then he took me apart. And he really roasted me. I was kind of naive yet and I was taken somewhat aback I guess. I got up and I tried being nice with him and said "I'm sorry." Then I spoke to him. It was the beginning of a bitter war between us.

So a few years went by and Larry Lexington [?] in the spring—it was the heyday of [Gov. Donald] Nutter and [Lt. Gov. Tim] Babcock. That was the year they reigned; the most reactionary period of Montana history, I think. And the John Birch Society was riding high. And there was a woman organizer for the John Birchers, a former Communist. John Borg [?] will tell you about her. He told me about her one time, how he got involved with her.

SW: Who is that?

FB: John Borg, the president of MEA. She set up her headquarters here in Blaine County. Oh, she was a radical. She had been a Communist in the Midwest, at least she said she was. Of course she went from a stream of communism to a stream of fascism really—a John Bircher. And there was a radio personality here in the county who had a radio program on. Senator [Stan] Stephens' radio program in Chinook and Havre, he had a branch program in Chinook called the "Chinook Hour." A very nice Republican lady ran the program. Everybody listened to the "Chinook Hour." It was a kind of gossip hour or friendly hour, she was a lovely lady and had all the local news, and if somebody needed some help, she'd have them on there. This lady, this Helen Birney, this field agent or organizer or whatever she was, got on her program and took that program over and really split the county wide open.

There was quite a liberal lady up in the north country here, a publisher. So, I made a mistake I guess. I wrote a long letter to Mrs. McCartney, a lady that ran this program, telling her that I felt she was harming herself and causing so much controversy [and] that Helen Birney was not a very wholesome element politically, that she represented an extreme reactionary philosophy. I don't know whether Mrs.—she was probably naive, she showed it to Mrs. Birney. Anyway, she read my letter on the air, which was really a personal letter, but she read it on the air. And then the Birchers really took after me. Of course I think it was done on purpose. They challenged me to a debate up in Turner. That was in April before I had filed and it was a horrible experience for me, oh man. I guess that was the low point of my life that night, my political life. They had tape recorders sitting around the auditorium or stage up there in the high school gym. I never been around a tape recorder before. And Helen, she read it. She spoke first [about it]. All the good

American Legions and all this and that and Communism and things. I spoke afterwards. It was kind of horrible to speak. She was a professional rabble rouser was what she was. The audience was just packed with people clear from Libby to Ennis, to Circle, to Great Falls and all the Birchers.

I began speaking after she spoke. She would gasp, and I'd say something, and she would grab her heart and almost have a spell about the thing I was saying. She was that wrung out, it was so horrible. And then I finally managed to get through that. I didn't do a very good job because I'm sure I did a horrible job. I wasn't prepared for anything like that. They just applauded everything she said and kind of gasp at anything I would say. Of course there were friends there, there were neutral people, but they were taken in too or else they were mute. There was a silent majority of them. Then she said, "Well, we'll now have questions." I didn't know about any questions. Of course, this had all been rehearsed before. And then they began these questions. These people, I didn't know who they were. They were all strangers. "Have you read this book?" "What's your philosophy on recognizing Red China?" and all those kinds of things.

Of course, I made probably the best remark of the evening, [which] nobody probably appreciated. I said, "Well, a Democrat could probably never recognize Red China because they will be accused of being soft on Communism." I said, "It will probably be an administration, a Republican administration that will recognize China." That was many years ago, which eventually came about.

Well anyway: "Have you read this book?" I said, "What? Of course not." Afterwards I realized they were all right-wing books. "What it says in this book" and it would go on and on and on. And this guy from Libby—I don't know if you ever heard of J. Niels Lumber Company at Libby? It was a big lumber company. One of the big companies bought them out later on, maybe Champion or some of those big companies bought them out. They had big holdings up there in Libby. He was there, this Wayne Montgomery who was a candidate for U.S. senator. Lyle Mungey [?] was one of the guys there from Ennis or down [around] that area. This J. Niels came up pointing his finger at me and said, "Would you, would you want your daughter to marry a Negro?" Of course that was—I couldn't win on that question hardly. If I said, "Yes," then I was a terrible person, but if I said "No," then I was a bigot. I came out of that, that's the only laugh I got all evening. I said, "Well sir, I'm not married, and I have no children."

The people laughed at that. I said, "I wouldn't know about that one." "I have no children," I just said and they kind of laughed. Anyway, I left there just crushed. Next day I went up there and they were hooting and hollering and applauding and booing and this minister, one of the first fundamentalist ministers [that] I've ever run into, I mean, he made [Jerry] Falwell look liberal. He got up [and] went into this tirade about communism. [He was] from Arkansas or Alabama or someplace, he was from the south. Boy, he was awful.

I lived 30 miles north. I lived up on the hillside then and I went home in a daze, and next day I went up to Chinook and I told that secretary of the party, "You find somebody else to file. I'm a liability in the Democratic Party after what happened up there."

She said, "Francis, you just go on up there and you file." She said, "Don't let those so and so's run you out. We're behind you."

And by gosh I went and filed. I wasn't going to. I was out. They ran the strongest Republican in the county then. I had beaten an incumbent lawyer. They ran the chairman of the county commissioners. A neighbor down here—I wasn't living here then—he was a neighbor of ours; he's dead now. His wife is one of Venus' closest friends now. Anyway they ran him against a real hard campaigner [me]. They beat me on the head about me raising the rental on grazing lands, or trying to. I wrote long articles and things—

SW: You wrote articles to newspapers or what?

FB: Yes, that was my weekly campaign letter. A lot of people read my articles. My enemies were writing things, some things, and beating me over the head with them. I guess a lot of people liked me. Anyway, they really beat me over the head about ruining the ranches, ruining the ranchers. It was a tough campaign. And Burns, of course, was behind it all. And they really worked hard. I just ran and that was it. I think I ran, I forget now, but 400 votes I won that by that fall. I never have had any primary opposition since that first [election]. But I won by 400 votes. After we were married, this Harry Burns was still after me and he took my voting record. Some of the things were right in it, and they got the motions twisted around. You know how a motion will sound like it is for the bill or against the bill, and they got some of the motions. That was the time you asked me about, that sign. I was way out on the reservation.

Venus, that was the year we were married, the following year, 1968. There she comes in her little red car. I don't know how she found me out there [It is a] big lease, several thousand acres in it. But I saw her little red car coming across the hills—that's big country out there. [In] arriving, she came up all excited and said, "Oh Francis, they've got a big article in the paper about you and how you voted wrong and what terrible things you've done."

I said, "Well, I can't do nothing about it now. You go back home, and tonight I'll take a look and see how bad it is." So I came back that night and got the House Journal. I didn't remember how the motions went, but I searched each one out very carefully, really did my homework that time, and found what the motion was, what the bill was, and things I found that they had made errors. Some of the things, they were right, but they had enough in there that they were wrong in part. Venus was all shook up. That was her first campaign after we were married. Of course she's very clever about making signs and things. I said, "Well, it was the last week of the campaign and there was no way of getting anymore news in the papers, see."

SW: It's a weekly paper?

FB: Yes, only weekly papers we have for Harlem and Chinook, and there was no way of answering it. [The charges.] And I said, "You get a big white sign. You know the kind of paper you get in the news office. Get about three of them." I said [to Venus], "I'll have you make me three posters and we'll put up a couple in Chinook and one in Harlem." It [the article] was signed by the Republican Women's Club of Blaine County. Some conservative ranch women from Bear Paws. Bear Paws has always been the epitome of Republican ranchers' conservatism, really strong ultra-conservative people. Very fine people but very conservative. Of course, most of them are gone now. Anyway, I said, "You put in big red on top: 5,000-dollars reward." Oh, I had asked the lady [of the Republican Women's Club] the night before I had called her and asked her in a nice way, could we meet that evening and review what was written?

I said, "There's some errors in it. I'd like to sit down and visit with you. Maybe we can somehow work something out on these errors or something. I'll come up from Chinook if you come in from the mountains. We'll meet in Chinook at about nine o'clock." Well, anyway, I don't know if we [were to] meet in Chinook. I said, "I'd like you to come down. There are some errors."

Her husband said, "Well, she ain't in now."

"Well, that's enough." About nine 'clock nobody showed up there that evening. I called again, and she wouldn't answer the phone. Her husband said, "She ain't around." I called at ten o'clock. They wouldn't answer the phone, and that's when I got Venus. I said, "5,000-dollar reward to the Blaine County Republican Women's Club if they can prove that the advertisement they carried in the Chinook and Harlem newspapers did not contain serious errors on my voting record."

I signed it with my name. They knew I wasn't going to give away 5,000 dollars very easily. I put it up in the most prominent spot in Chinook, and the other one in Harlem and that ended that campaign right there. (Laughs) It wasn't easy that time.

SW: There's a word that really travels fast in small communities.

FB: Oh, yes. Especially when I was so controversial and I had an awful [time]. My people who were for me, they would die for me. And those who were against me, they would die to kill me. They would die to. I was like Lee Metcalf. Lee Metcalf was always the guy [that] his enemies were those who'd go through hellfire to get him and his friends would do the same. But anyway that was then; after that campaign [it] kind of died down. I have had the lady that ran this radio program, she was a dear friend of mine. She ran against me, and I said nothing. I never say anything bad about my opponents. I always write up something nice and I try in my last letter [to] sum it up. Funny, I always do think I care about them, and they're nice people, and I write nice things about them. So I have never yet said anything bad about anybody who ran against me and I guess it has paid off all the years.

Nobody ran against me [for] several years, then somebody ran [against] me; a woman from the Bear Paws [region] ran. A rancher, a farmer from north [?] ran. And then three elections, four elections, nobody has filed. They used their chairman or commissioner, their incumbent legislator, their best, most popular Republican lady in the County [and lost]. And so they kind of gave up. And the county chairman of the Republican Party, he ran against me one session but he didn't run very well. So that's about all on the local level. It seems now like I have Republicans [as friends]. I went to a funeral. I was honorary pallbearer. One of the ladies, she was 99 years and some months old this week. My mother worked for her in the Bear Paws where I stayed with them. A hierarchy of the Republican Party.

And the Kuhrs. There's a lawyer in Great Falls named Kuhrs—architects named Kuhrs [William Kuhr.] That's some of their relatives. So they asked me if I'd be their honorary pallbearer and I was sitting amongst the cream of the Republicans. But they all seemed to be my friends at the funeral [and] they all [were] pretty well reconciled to me. They will forgive me for my errors. I'm fairly conservative with money. That's a saving grace I have, I guess. They all say, "You're sure doing a good job down there. You're sure working hard." So I guess that's one thing I think that has helped. They think I'm honest and they know that I work hard. I guess that's two things that they like about politicians; to be honest and you work hard. I don't party around, I don't drink anymore, I don't party. So I guess they forgave me for my sins.

SW: Do you ever get calls from people that live in your district?

FB: On occasion, quite often. Some problems and I've solved some of them. I've found where to get information. Some of them are very interesting problems I've solved. I had one this fall. There was a child, a very mentally disturbed child. His mother was divorced and was trying to support the child, and [she didn't] have [much help] for a very difficult child. Up in Turner, which is a small town north [of here]. She was a teacher's aide up there and supporting herself and her child. But the child was getting more and more difficult for her to handle. Finally, her sister and her brother-in-law came down and she was almost at wit's end. The child was very difficult. Physically he was very strong and very difficult. Then so I worked with her. They didn't know what to do. And she knew that he (Sean) was getting too much for her, but yet being a mother she didn't want to do anything. You know what I mean, she didn't want to. Well, it ended up [that] the boy is now at Yellowstone Boys Ranch. And they are very grateful now. I went—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

FB: —but there was a case in Missoula, a local boy was hurt, I think, in a car wreck. A Chinook boy [from] a very fine family. He was having mental problems then, and it was really difficult for him. Really a nice boy. But his parents got him into a program through my efforts, I guess, a program over in Missoula to help him out. He's become self-sufficient, living by himself now. He's doing fairly well. Oh, you know. Small things like that.

SW: What would you say would be one of the best things that you've done in the legislature? What has pleased you the most about being in the legislature as far as things you've accomplished? You carried the major facility siting act.

FB: Yes. I guess there are several areas where there are certain things that you do. In the area of the environment, I suppose that some people will consider the major facility siting act one of the highlights of the environmental movement in Montana. Of course, we came in in that Golden Age, I call it, of 1973-75 when we wrote the clean air laws, the clean water laws, the reclamation laws, the coal mining laws, the major facility siting act. That was a whole package of legislation which made Montana one of the most progressive states in the Union. And I suppose the major facility siting act would be part of that package. I won't say which one was the most important, but that was my direct contribution. Of course, I fought for and helped the coal severance passage, mine reclamation laws, water laws, air laws and all those. I was involved with all of them. That was my contribution in areas of environment. It took me almost a whole session. I owe a lot to [Rep.] Mike Meloy for writing. [Rep.] Herb Hunnekens probably did more to—his subcommittee that handled it—to getting it on the books then I did maybe. Compromises with the power companies, the Corettes of Montana Power, this Phillips of Pacific Power and the lawyers from Portland Oregon—I forget their names, a law firm about ten names long—Loble from Montana-Dakota Utilities. It took many long nights of subcommittee meetings and things to iron it all out. Real battles on the floor. I guess that would be my contribution in that area. I don't know. But I can't say which one is the most important. In human relations, right or wrong, I think I believe I was a leader in the de-institutionalization. I was probably the first legislator that really made an effort to [push the issue]. I was horrified by 1,900 human beings packed into Warm Springs [mental hospital]. Nine-hundred some in Boulder [facility for the developmentally disabled]. Of course, this was early in the '70s in that same period when we entered that "Golden Age," as I call it.

SW: Tell me about Boulder and Warm Springs. You visited those places. What did you find there? What was it like? What did it do to you emotionally?

FB: Boulder never was a bad place. What impressed me was, and what shook me up was, that I would visit there, and I would see these patients doing the janitorial work, cleaning their rooms, making their beds, preparing their meals, waiting on tables, doing most of the work. I asked myself, why, if they can do these jobs here, why can they not function in the outside world? They had some mental problems. Retardation. But they were physically in fine shape, most of

them. What is left there now of course are the severely retarded or many of them have physical problems. There were some that were severely retarded too. That was the reason that I really felt that they should function on the outside. Warm Springs, however, was so overcrowded and had so little care that it was a horrible place, really.

As I remember, there were four rows of beds side by side, pushed against each other in a little room. How could people, mentally ill people, sleep with a room full of beds side by side, four rows of them? Probably the most horrible thing, when I wandered around there, I came into this one room. It was a bare room. Big room, nothing in it but small children. Oh, I liked them, I can't remember their ages. Ten- fifteen- sixteen-year-old kids, all with mental problems. Some of them were lying on the floor. There wasn't one adult in the room. Big room, big dormitory-like room, nothing in it. No beds, no furniture, nothing. Just kids in it. Some are lying on the floor, some sitting in the corner, some beating on each other. And I came in the room, and they got ahold of my hands, my legs and they were wanting attention so bad, that they just hung on me, hung on me and pulled me across the room. I went out the other side and when I got to where I left the room, I had to take their little hands and unclasp them. They were hanging on to me. I had to take their little hands off my legs. They were really wanting some human care or attention. Not a person, not one attendant in that room, not one! A whole room full, I don't remember how many there were, 25 or so. Not even anybody there to show me to the room. You just had to go by yourself. That was horrible. And some beating on each other and things. I think that's the most horrible thing I ever saw at Warm Springs.

Then rows of benches of people just sitting on them, looking at the wall. Maybe one person in the whole ward. Rows of people or people wandering along, yelling. Of course these were the days before the new drugs came in. The drugs themselves made it possible to put many people out of Warm Springs who could not be out if it were not for the drugs. It leveled them off. It was a noisy place. They had bars and some of them were in cages behind the bars. They were really severely, violently insane. But they didn't have any means of controlling it back in those days. It was a smelly place, Warm Springs was smelly. Urine everywhere almost because they didn't have enough people to properly—you know, it was a fair size city. Many county seats, cow towns in Montana, don't have 1,900 people in them. Plus what people that worked there. I don't know how many worked there in those days—a couple, three hundred, I imagine. So you have a town of...a small city of over 2,000, 2,200-2,300 people. About the size of Chinook. A whole city of Chinook in one place. Every building really full. Well, you put 1,900 people in those buildings, you've been there. Of course a few of them have been torn down. There have been some new ones built since then too. And very little care, very little care. So this is what really is bothering me a little bit.

I hear [Rep.] Nancy Keenan say, "Well, all we're doing at Warm Springs now is warehousing them." If this is what we're warehousing, what we're doing today, what was it then? It's a different world. It's clean. There are attendants that do have drugs and medicines, tranquilizers and things. They have a much higher ratio of care—personnel to patient—than they used to have. They try to have the ratio of (unintelligible). I remember Governor Nutter saying in his

State of the State message, "It's a terrible waste of employment that we have in our institutions. All these people working there, we have to reduce that number. There's too many employees in our institutions." I don't remember how he put it. He was at that time attacking the high number of employees. You have to cut down expenses. We had too many employees in our institutions, proportionally.

SW: Didn't you tell me, Francis, one time that you went to Boulder? They invited you for dinner and they had rutabagas? Tell me about that.

FB: That was another budget. We severely cut the budget. I was just saying about the employees there. We cut the budget.

SW: That was under Nutter?

FB: That was Nutter. That was in 1961. Year 1961 or 1962. We cut the budget for Boulder so low that they ran out of food and we actually were being encouraged, Montanans being encouraged, to send care packages to Boulder. Yes, that was quite common. People were urged to send food packages for Boulder. I was there that night and they asked me to have dinner. They had rutabagas and bread and milk. The bread they made in the kitchen. Rutabagas they raised on the farm and the milk they milked on the farm. They had a dairy farm. So that was their dinner. Well, first, I don't like rutabagas and I felt that I couldn't take the food out of their mouths, so I declined dinner that month. But that was their menu that night. Rutabagas, milk, bread. We had a bad period in there.

SW: What part did you play in the de-institutionalization? What did you do to get those people out of there?

FB: It was basically the foster home, the group home programs. Encouraging them not to have so many admissions. We dry up people coming in by—I supported the special education programs and things.

Of course I wasn't the originator of special education programs. They were people like Representative [Gary R.] Marbut. He probably turned the special education around in Montana for educating the people at the local level. Senator [Artis] Zody helped rewrite the law in special education and treatment of mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people. I supported all those programs and tried to get appropriations for them and appropriations for foster homes, group homes and other things. That was primarily where we had the big push. To have these homes and have people released into a self-sufficient and independent living situation. And we developed programs on the local level, like Helena Industries and Eastern Montana Industries. I never played any major role in any one particular program. I guess supporting the work, advocates of people on the local level helped push them. I tried to get money for them or channel money into those kind of programs, despite my supposedly rationary spending ways. I have tried to support many of these programs. [In] the actual

operation of these programs, I was in the background or I was supporting and advocating. Often times we'd do things through—as you found out in Institutions— we do things in a subcommittee oftentimes.

SW: You had a hand in developing the Legislative Fiscal Analyst's office too, didn't you?

FB: Yes, I would say so. One session I hired a part-time fiscal analyst. It was kind of a radical move, hiring anybody to help the committee. And he proved so helpful in just a few cases of analyzing and saving money. I did not like to play a leading role in it because of my position of being accused of promoting something like making Appropriations Committee more powerful. Al Kosena of Anaconda took a role in sponsoring the bills which members of the appropriation committee were behind. Al Kosena was a member of the appropriations. One of the most able Anaconda legislators we've ever had. And he sponsored the bill which our members signed, and that's how we got the first fiscal analyst. It was run through the legislative auditor at first. We had no staff, and Morris Brusett was really the person to hire John LeFavor.

SW: Morris Brusett was the first legislature auditor?

FB: Yes.

SW: He hired John LeFavor, who was the first fiscal analyst?

FB: Yes. I don't know how it was done. It was just attached to the legislature auditor's office in order to get the thing organized that first year. And then we went separate ways. But Morris, if I remember right, did more than anybody to hire LeFavor, and then we built around that.

SW: What was it like doing budgets before you had the professional staff?

FB: I shake my head every time I think about it. We just did it by the seat of our pants. We created a budget office in 1959 and Winfield Page from Missoula, opposed it very much because he said, "You will find that you'll be helpless as legislators. They would develop all the expertise and you will not be able to cope with the executive branch." You know Winfield Page? He was down there every day. The last day of the session there he came down for that Old Timers dinner, and he was right. But I still fought for the Budget Act the first session because we had nothing. The executive branch had nothing. Each agency just asked for something. There was no coordination. There was no overall goal of how much money you were to spend. There was nothing! There's no relationship between what was needing [money] and what money there was available. We just arbitrarily divided up without any expertise or budget. [The] executive branch had no organization.

So we got a budget off and then it became apparent as time went on that we needed some counter-analysis too. So I'm happy to have a budget office, but we had to have something also that the legislative branch had some voice, because all the expertise was on their side, and we

had no way of answering them. But early on we were just sitting around and saying, "Well, we'll give them so much money," and that was all. We had no way of knowing why we gave it. They spent two million dollars last time, and we'll give them two million fifty-thousand dollars this time. That's about the way it was done. As government became bigger and bigger it became progressively more difficult for us to control it. And then when we went in with Executive Reorganization and made big departments, then it became more difficult. When each new agency was by itself it was easier to keep track of what they were and how many people were in it. But we had no figures of how many people worked in the government. No figures on how many people were in the agencies. We had no relation of what pay [they made]. There was no pay plan. Each person got, each agency got, whatever the subcommittee felt like giving it. I mean one agency might have a secretary getting twice as much in their agency doing the same kind of secretarial work. I know how it went, I know how it operated. We muddled through somehow. I used to sit down there at night when I was chairman back in 1965, my first time. I used to sit down there at night figuring out how much we give each budget. I mean how much we had, [how much] money we give them....the division or boards. Kind of weird.

SW: So you'd be up till midnight or so?

FB: Yes, oh at times, yes.

SW: Just you would be doing the fiscal analyst's work yourself?

FB: More or less, yes. Or the subcommittee chairman would do it, or figure they would do it. That's about the way it was done. But we had no information. They never gave us any information, how many employees they had. We had no figures on how many employees were in the agency. No, I shake my head at how it ever functioned—

SW: You mentioned the pay that people were getting.

FB: There was no relationship to pay from one agency to another. Just what ever a subcommittee gave them.

SW: You developed the pay plan in about 1975?

FB: When was [John] Driscoll in office?

SW: That was in 1975.

FB: Meloy?

SW: That was 1977.

FB: Oh?

SW: When Driscoll was speaker and Meloy was majority leader. That was my first term.

FB: We had another proposal in 1975. It failed. The unions didn't want something, they'd kill it. And then we finally came through, we authorized this commission. We hired this professional consultant firm and they were give the job for, I don't know how many thousands of dollars we gave them, to draw up a pay plan in the two-year period. They were supposed to classify employed and things. And then it was two years later when we adopted what they proposed, but it was not a very well-done job. It [the plan] had an awful lot of trouble a lot of trouble with ironing out all the problems with it. I'm not sure if it's—well, there's no such thing as a perfect pay plan.

SW: And you had your vice-chairman, Carroll South, carry the pay plan then?

FB: Yes, yes. Carroll was very good there. He carried it off and somebody asked Waldron does it stink [?].

What are you waving at me? Are you lonesome?

Venus Bardanouve: You can do one thing for me—

[Break in audio]

FB: —the agency here. And take the boat across up the highway, halfway to Harlem.

SW: You were marooned for how long?

FB: About three weeks up in the hills. We were all right, but we couldn't get to town.

SW: That was when you were a kid?

FB: Oh, no, that was about 1951. Yes, 1950 I think it was, or about 1951. Yes, that old highway there, the one that goes by those trees up past there, quite a way up. [Points to area.] That was even higher this last time. We rode a boat right up that old highway where you came in on.

SW: Really?

FB: Oh yes.

[A long pause]

FB: Now what do we do?

SW: I'm still taping you.

[Long pause]

SW: Maybe I should tell you what I want to do with this?

FB: Yes.

SW: One of the things that I'm going to do is put together a radio program for public radio so I can share this stuff. Another thing that I want to do is to have the tapes available so scholars can go back and look at them. Because you played an important part in history. And if I can get together the willpower to do it—it's going to take a lot of work—I would like to do a biography of you because you played an important part in Montana. I just can't promise myself that I'm going to do that because it just takes a tremendous amount of effort and work and time. I figure about eight months that I would have to take off work and take off everything to do it. Probably get a master's degree.

FB: I think you overemphasize my role in Montana. I'll probably be a small footnote in the history of Montana at the bottom of some page or reference. That's about my role in Montana history. We have a tendency of overrating people at the moment. They are soon forgotten.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

VB: Don't worry.

FB: I have a lot more lawn fertilizer.

SW: So how important do you think your role in Montana is?

FB: Not as important as some people seem to believe. The press always plays up the powerful appropriation chairman. Many people make the process work. Where one contributes more, I can't really say. I play a part in it as you do, as Kemmis does, as [Jack] Ramirez does, as many others do. It's like a jigsaw puzzle where you have little pieces you put it all together, and whether one piece is more important than [another] probably isn't questionable. I'm [better known] just probably from more seniority I've been around longer, but that doesn't mean I'm more qualified. That is a part of the seniority system. I feel there are equally able people. I'm sure if you had been chairman it would have probably functioned just as well, maybe even better. If Carroll South had remained, he'd probably do a better job than I would do. [Gene] Donaldson did a very good job. Art Lund got the job done, and so on.

SW: Who is the best governor that you served under? Or perhaps you can discuss some of the governors?

FB: I came in under Hugo Aronson [in 1957]. He was a conservative person. He was a nice person, a decent person, surrounded by very conservative people. Basically an oil man, interested in oil and business. But Hugo Aronson was a decent person, a kind of humble person and if he received the right advice from the right people I think basically [he was] wanting to do the right thing for Montana in a very conservative way.

SW: What other governors did you find interesting that you served under?

FB: They were all very interesting I guess. Each one had his personality, his way of operating politics. We went from Aronson to Nutter. Nutter was a man I personally—he was a powerful man. I fear he was a ruthless man and an ultra-conservative John Bircher, and I kind of feared him as a governor. He may not have been a bad person, but he could have been a dictator. Very, very powerful, very powerful. And very ruthless, I feel. Of course we only had one session with Nutter, and he was killed the following February, a year after his inauguration.

A year and two months after his inauguration in a plane crash, and his Lieutenant Governor, Tim Babcock, who had served with him in the House in my first session, became governor. He was governor for seven years. Tim was ultraconservative but not as ruthless as Nutter was, or as powerful as Nutter. Very conservative. We went through the most conservative era I think that Montana has seen, probably from 1961 [to 1971]. Very conservative legislators and the Republican Party became ultraconservative. Far more conservative than it is today. We had the

Babcock years. They weren't the best years but I guess they weren't the worst years. Montana never made much progress. We were kind of on dead center. There was some new innovation in government, but not much. We were pretty much—everything remained about the same. Both Houses were controlled in those years by Republicans, from 1961.

In 1965 we [the Democratic Party] took over the House. We tried to make some changes but the Democrats were wiped out again in the election of 1966. And they [the Republicans] ran the House in 1967, 1969 and 1971. Governor [Forest] Anderson took over then. Governor Anderson was I think, a very able governor. Very positive. He brought about Executive Reorganization, consolidation of government into about 17 or 18 departments. We had a famous battle over the sales tax under [House Speaker] Jim Lucas, who looked like he would be the governor of Montana, until he fell when the sales tax lost so badly. He was a very influential leader but the people of Montana rejected the sales tax so heavily that he went down with it. The end of his political career, which I think would have ended up in the governor's office. And he probably was the most fluent leader that I served under in my years. Tremendous ability to sway people.

The term of Governor Anderson was a one-term governor, primarily because of ill health. [He] decided not to run again. He had serious medical problems and retired after four years and Lt. Governor [Tom] Judge became governor. We had eight years of very liberal progressive government under Judge. Labor played an important role in those years. Governor Judge was probably one of the strongest labor-backed governors we have had. He supported labor almost on everything there ever was. He also supported much liberal legislation, environmental legislation.

SW: How did you get along with him? With Tom Judge?

FB: We gradually parted ways quite a bit, more over fiscal matters than political philosophy. I agreed mostly with everything that he did support, but he was not a strong fiscal control governor. Some of his appointees were rather poor in work in the area of finances. And we fell out over fiscal matters. He became a very violent opponent of the finance committee, and the finance committee probably responded by being pretty much anti-Judge. Of course then it appeared [Ted] Schwinden would become a candidate, and I was probably more oriented towards Lt. Governor Schwinden. That probably caused some separation. He figured I was probably, and maybe rightly so, that I was in the corner of Lt. Governor Schwinden. I felt he was playing some politics [with some issues] that I could not agree with on Milwaukee Railroad and things, we fell out all over that. Rightly or wrongly, he felt that he should put the Milwaukee Railroad back into operation, and I couldn't see any way that we could ever operate the Milwaukee Railroad with all the fiscal responsibilities, fiscal liabilities. It would be a financial rat hole as far as I was concerned. We fell out over that.

There was a [Pat] Melby, the case of the S.R.S [Social and Rehabilitative Services]. We fell out over the S.R.S. We tried to convince the department that they were overspending their budget and Governor Judge took the side of Melby and it became a bitter battle.

SW: You had an interesting interim finance committee meeting with Pat Melby over that.

FB: Yes, very bitter.

SW: What happened?

FB: We told him that he was overspending the budget by six, eight million dollars, and he denied it. He denied it and said that he was not, and Governor Judge took us apart for saying so. Blasted us in the press. Eventually we were right. It was obvious that he was overspending the budget by several millions. But it wasn't so bad he overspent it, but [that] he would deny it. He was denying that he was overspending. But there was no way that he could avoid it. At the level he was spending, he was going to run out of money. And he ran out of money. I forget how many millions it was. It was something like seven or eight million. That was one of the areas where we fell out. Then of course after Judge lost the primary [in 1980] and there was Ramirez and Schwinden in that race—

Then we have Governor Schwinden, who I have always been close to—I believe that Governor Schwinden is probably basically a moderate governor, not a liberal, not a reactionary. Probably a middle of the road governor. Probably reflects the time Montana is in now. Not all Democrats are happy with him. He has supported some pretty fair programs. Tried to compile some new areas which maybe I haven't always been so absolutely supportive of, but basically I can't find much fault with the governor. That's about all that I can say.

SW: You called Nutter ruthless. Why did you call him ruthless? Was there some experience you had with him?

FB: No, just his, I would say the way he delivered the State of the State message. I felt it was—he would cut government back. Like I said earlier, he would cut employees out of institutions and there were far too many patients in the institutions for what employees they had, I felt. He would have cut one third. He cut their food budgets to a point where they never had enough to eat really. And cut agencies. He felt that Montana government was far too big, and pursued a rather a ruthless manner in doing it [reducing the size of government]. His mannerisms were of a very harsh approach to the needs of human beings, I would classify as ruthless, I suppose. Maybe I am over-emphasizing. He had a look [that] would give you the impression that he would run you over if you got in his way. Very firm jaw, set jaw—tight mouth.

Maybe I shouldn't use the word ruthless, but as I remember him, he could be ruthless. I can remember him delivering the State of the State message almost as clearly now as when he delivered it. And I can't remember hardly any governor delivering that in the manner that he

delivered it. It was so forceful. I thought it was so reactionary and that's why I say ruthless. He frightened me. He's the only governor that has frightened me as a potential of doing harm to Montana. Maybe I shouldn't speak of the man who gave his life for governor, but the manner of his death shows his determination, very strong not wanting to listen to people. He was told not to fly that day. It wasn't safe. They say it was very bad flying conditions. High, terrible Chinook winds blowing through the mountains, and he said, "I'm going anyway. We are leaving." Well, he left and he died. Took down several other people with him. I mean he did not ever take no for an answer. Maybe Montana wanted a strong governor, and he has admirers yet today. But I fear that Montana would have suffered much from his governorship if he had continued. Babcock was not nearly as strong or ruthless as Nutter. I don't know why I come back to that word ruthless. Maybe it's not a proper word.

SW: How about Lucas? How did you and he get along? Jim Lucas?

FB: Pretty well. We were in the minority mostly. We [the Democrats] were in a minority when he was at his power and we never really had a lot to say. They [the Republicans] ran the House and they ran it much harsher than we ever ran it. They ran it and we came along for the ride. We never received the consideration that we gave Republicans, not during that period. There were some rough times all during the '60s. They were much tougher on Democrats than Democrats were on Republicans in the '70s. Personally, got along pretty well. Only once did I ever really get in a tangle with him and I was surprised at the result. I questioned him on an issue. Of course Lucas was so quick, his mind was so quick, that he could come up with answers. Snap your fingers and he had an answer for you. I forget the issue. I asked him a question and in his usual brilliant use of words he surrounded the question with words but no answer. I asked him again. I said, "The gentleman has not answered the question."

He gave me a great outpouring of fluent words but no answer, and I persisted. I forget the issue. I said for the third time, "The gentleman has not answered the question. He has talked all around the question." And I was amazed [since so] many members of the House were [there], he completely blew up. He became angry, he became flustered, his face got red and he lost his cool completely. He tried to snow me with beautiful words, and I knew that he knew he wasn't answering the question! But he lost his cool. That's the only, one of the few times. Well, right now that's the only time I ever remember [that] he really lost his cool. But I really cornered him and he didn't want to answer a question because he knew it was hurting his case, whatever it was at this time. But we got along reasonably well. I suppose at that time I was more of a minor member. I probably couldn't quite play a big [part yet]. Of course, I had been chairman for the appropriations committee in 1965, but there were other Democrats in the House that probably shined brighter than I did. It wasn't always Lucas. He never had many outright battles, personal battles. I would say fairly well. A very pleasant man. Lovely wife, wonderful wife. Very nice person. We're still friends. I was a guest in his home a while back a couple of years ago.

SW: Was there any legislator that you really disliked?

FB: Oh, I would prefer not to [say]. It was maybe my fault if I didn't like the person. It may show something about me. There's one right-wing Louisiana oil man who just made me mad every time he'd begin spouting off Louisiana rightwing, John Birch programs and things on the floor. Ultra-rightwing. I remember I jumped on him on the floor and I was a fairly junior legislator at that time. He called President Eisenhower, who was president at that time, a "Pinko." Personally, Eisenhower was a fine man, but I never had a high opinion of his running the presidency. But I sure didn't think that he was a Pinko. A man who had served his country as well as he had. I got up on the floor and I chewed him out, I was so mad at him. I think I took him back somewhat. But I thought it was highly improper to call our president a Pinko. I never had any use for him. There's been a couple of Democrats I never had too much use for.

SW: You disliked Tom Conroy. He's the only person I've seen you be around that you actually dislike. He was a Democrat.

FB: I guess we might have had our differences, but again, like I say, it might be me. I may have been at fault. We saw issues differently. I think Tom Conroy had a lot of personal ability. Of course I remember the time on the floor that he said, "Somebody said I'm arrogant," and he said, "Darn right I'm arrogant." I think that rubbed me the wrong way. Arrogant people are not popular people. But I look at positive things. I may have failed to understand sometimes it shows your shortcomings when you don't get along with people. I guess we don't like to look at our own shortcomings. I guess I haven't answered that very well.

SW: You answered just fine.

FB: There was one young legislator, a real nice legislator, very conservative. Really nice personality. Was an ultra-conservative, sometimes he bothered me. I said he was the youngest member of the House yet his mind was the oldest mind there. He was set in the days of his great grandfather, [the time of] President McKinley, yet he was the youngest man in the House. A real nice person.

SW: When was that?

FB: Oh, it was 22 years back. A very conservative young man. But it wasn't a personal dislike. It was just that it amazed me that a young man should be so not living in the world of reality. A very wealthy young man.

SW: Which legislator did you like the most that you've worked with?

FB: I would hesitate to say. I have enjoyed working with so many that I would hate to point out one above [the other].

[End of Interview]