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Interviewee: Charles S. "Chuck" Johnson

Interviewer: Dennis Swibold

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Dennis Swibold: We are recording. All right. This is June 20, and we're at the University of Montana. This is Dennis Swibold with Chuck Johnson for our second interview for oral history that we've been working on. And I wanted to start this one talking about sort of the arc of the issues and people that you covered. I was impressed as I went back and looked at your interview with Brian Shover [with the Montana Historical Society] at just how pivotal the early part of your career was in terms of covering events that changed Montana to this day. And what an education and what a start that would have been for a reporter covering politics in Montana. Not only the constitution but the government reorganization, and you talked to him about what big stories they eventually were—some of the biggest reforms in Montana history. So it seems to be a theme early on. It's a time of reform and then it sort of changes to the more conservative politics that we have today. And maybe we could go through that arc today and talk about some of the people. But I thought maybe we would start, if this is okay, with a little bit of the political backdrop to Montana politics before you started covering those things – some of the political events that set up the Constitutional Convention and the trends.

Chuck Johnson: So Montana had had Republican governors from 1952 to 1968, and J. Hugo Aronson; Donald Nutter who was killed in a tragic plane crash at Wolf Creek; and then Tim Babcock. And in 1968, Forrest Anderson ran for governor and defeated Babcock on the sales tax issue with the slogan – probably the best in Montana history – "Pay more, what for?" And Anderson was kind of a backroom guy. They called him the "Silver Fox" or "The Fox." He stood five foot four [inches], and he had been—prior to being governor – he'd started out as a legislator from Helena, county attorney, Supreme Court justice, and 12 years as attorney general. He came in with a pretty limited agenda though the thing he wanted to do was pass reorganization, and he had a saying—something like, "Everyone knew—state government was full of nuts. I just wanted to know where they were all located," or something like that. [laughs] I've got the quote. Anyway, Anderson was a—quite a switch, and he was kind of a good old boy. [Great Falls Tribune reporter] John Kuglin had done a story about Anderson buying riverfront property in Craig from Montana Power Company. And so he was not what we call a "Modern Day Reformer," but he knew what he was doing.

I was an intern in '71 under [UM political science professor] Ellis Waldron, and Ellis wanted the four of us interns to each do a project. And we kind of talked about it. I was gonna do redistricting and apportionment. And then he said, "No, let's—why don't you follow executive reorganization?" So I did that and I...I can send this to you. I wrote a—like a 175-page paper on the politics behind reorganization. But they got this through, and it was a battle. And prior to that, there were something like 175 individual boards, commissions, bureaus [in Montana state government]. And the direct...these were run...the departments were run by board of

directors...boards...not board of directors, and they hired the director. And a governor didn't get control of these boards until his fourth year. So it was not a recipe for accountability or responsibility, and it was kind of a good old boys network. There weren't many women in it.

The one remnant of that old system is the Board of Livestock, thanks to the power of the Montana Stockgrowers, and it's I think most people would agree been the worst-run department since then. It's controlled by the stockgrowers and the dairy farmers and the wool growers and they're always screwing stuff up. It's not a good board. But Anderson got this through and among the things...I'll send you this story...he got through...I interviewed Forrest. I didn't cover him directly as governor. I tried to get an interview with him for this paper when I was a grad student and he was governor. I came over to Helena. I was supposed to interview him on a Monday and stayed with my folks. I was told he was ill and couldn't do it, but I talked to him a number of times after he was governor and among the things he did in this bill was he snuck in a...sneaked in...let me put it correctly...a provision to create a unified investment board. Prior to that if agencies had excess cash, they had agreements with local banks to keep the cash there at no interest. And it was considered an outrage by reformers. So what happened was one of the first legislative audits had said, "Hey this is nuts, you know, you're not getting any interest on, you know, millions of dollars." And so the bankers kept defeating the bill and somehow they were asleep at the switch, and they missed this in the reorganization bill. So he got this through, and it was the biggest accomplishment of his administration. It was a huge accomplishment.

So after that, directors were appointed by the governor. [Montana] still had boards like the board of health and the...that were...they called them quasi-judicial boards that would decide on board of health...environmental and health rules and permitting plants and so on. But it was a huge change, and all of a sudden government was more accountable. If the governor didn't like the way some director was doing—out he went. And it mirrored the federal agency, but it was a huge accomplishment that had been—never been able to pass before. So [Anderson] he had a lot of health problems, gastric problems, and he had surgery in Seattle and it didn't work. And so he ended up not running again and that opened the way for his lieutenant governor, Tom Judge, and they hadn't run together. [After 1972, governor and lieutenant governors ran as a team.] That didn't happen till after the Constitutional Convention.

I read an oral history Alec Hansen did with Bob Brown, and I think Alec said Anderson said to Judge when they were being inaugurated, "Well, we'll see you in four years." [laughs] So he was—and it was a part-time job. He presided over the Senate. And so they were not close at all—different generations. Judge gets elected in '72, the youngest governor in Montana history. I was in Missoula and covered some of the campaign. He ran against Big Ed Smith, a legendary rancher/farmer from Dagmar, Montana. I covered a little of it, and I covered a debate in Missoula I remember. And you know (I) interviewed him a number of times, and I knew both of them. Judge, when I worked for AP one summer, would come in every Sunday it seemed like for weeks, and he was a public relations person. He would bring in a press release that the independent bankers had elected...had their convention...always at Big Sky...elected

new officers for the year and passed these resolutions. The next week it was a different—so I knew Judge a little bit, but I came to Helena and started covering him. He was a reformer, but it was really an interesting time because you had the environmental movement, the women's movement, labor unions were strong, you know, Vietnam protests. So the legislature in '73 which I didn't cover full-time...I came over a few times...came over to Helena and covered the Missoula delegations in '73 and '74 in issues important to Missoula. But Judge's problem was the legislature was way more progressive or liberal than he was. But they passed a lot of stuff and one of the things they passed was, I think in '74 was...maybe '73 ...it allowed state employees...state and local government employees and teachers to organize into unions. And the next year I was still in...must have been '73 ...the next year I was in Missoula and employees at Warm Springs went on strike and [Missoulain photographer] Harley Hettick and I headed over a couple of times. So you had that. You also had all the environmental movements and at the same time you had coal mining...strip mining and coal strip that Montana Western Energy...it's Montana Power's company...had started doing.

And you also had I think in '70 or '71 the Nixon administration had the North Central State's Power Study. And it was by the administration—the Bureau of Reclamation and Utilities. And they came up with—you can look it up—but they wanted something like 40 huge power plants in Montana and a similar amount in North Dakota and Wyoming. That directly led to the formation of Northern Plains Resource Council. At some point, I think '74, the legislature passed the Utility Siting Act. And it got changed in '75 to Major Facility Siting Act because Burlington Northern was proposing a coal gasification plant up, called Circle West, out by Circle. Well I covered all that stuff.

I went out to Circle for a week and talked to the, you know, the company people. And then the environmentalists and farmers and ranchers were opposing it. But it was a serious proposal. I covered—so to get the power plant through and it was proposed as you know by Montana Power and like four or five other utilities in the Northwest—not MDU but Washington Water Power, Portland General Electric, Pacific Power and Light. I don't know if Wyoming or Utah were part of that. So they had these hearings. They had to ... first go through the Board of Health and then through the Board of Natural Resources. I get over here and Gary Langley was the [Lee State] bureau chief, and Sam Reynolds wants us to cover every hearing. And Gary polled the editors and they said, "No, we don't want to report up there all the time." But I went up there as often as I could and they were really interesting, you know, expert witnesses and you had some really good attorneys on both sides. The Northern Plains and other environmental groups opposed it.

Their lawyers were Leo Graybill, Jr. and C.W. Leaphart—the elder Bill Leaphart. And for the power company they had a guy named Bill Burlingham...or something like that...from Billings...prominent lawyer; Jack Peterson, later regent and bankruptcy judge; John Ross. So top-notch lawyers and it went on day after day after day. And the Board of Health approved it with some conditions. Then it went to the Board of Natural Resources, and these hearings were in the House chambers. The board was going to take action the next day, and I got a tip that the

power company lawyers were helping the majority of the board in this Travel Lodge Motel down in downtown Helena draft it. So I was knocking on doors and sure enough—well they said it was no big deal. They were just [laughs] there to help, you know. But it passed. They approved it on a split vote. The environmental group sued, and Judge Gordon Bennett put a halt to it. He found a lot of procedural errors.

This is kind of a funny story. I was with the *Tribune* Bureau then, and the *IR* published in the afternoon. And Bennett didn't really want the *IR* to get it because they hadn't covered any of it. So I get a call from his wife, Norma, the night before saying, "If you'll show up at the Clerk of the District Court at 3 o'clock, it would be worth your going there." So I go there at 3 and a young woman...you may know her...she's Leaphart's daughter, Susan Leaphart. She's a...I think an assistant to a judge over here. She says and the other one's, "No nothing here." And she says [whispers], "Come back at 3:30." [laughs] So I come back at 3:30. I get the story on this. And then the power...the utilities appealed it, and the Supreme Court overturned it.

But in fact that, I was in England that year, but it was very controversial because [Associate Supreme Court Justice] John C. Harrison and one of the justices rented a plane to go around the state and get people to sign it. Some judges were out in eastern Montana. But anyway, and then the whole issue of the coal mining—well, you know, could they reclaim it? And I spent a week out in southeastern Montana and toured the mines. Got to ride in a...one of those big diggers...what they call them? I can't think of the...they had a little I think even an elevator to go up to the top. I remember interviewing Wally McRae, who was the rancher from Colstrip who was one of the leading opponents ... and I think I didn't catch him. He was gone when I was out there, but I interviewed him [later] in Helena at a bar, and he said, "You can grow," he points to a pool table, "You could go grass on that pool table with as much fertilizer as they're putting on the stuff."

So it was always a big issue, and the reclamation and was it, you know, the law said it had to be restored to the former use. And it was really interesting. And during the Colstrip [hearing] they did like 10 or 12...or maybe 8 or 10...volume EIS on the thing. Gary Wicks was the DNRC director and after all...and they had hearings all over the state. This is before the board hearings, and he said, "Okay, let them dig the coal. If the utilities want them—let them haul the coal to their states and let them get the, you know, burn it in their states: Wisconsin and Minnesota and stuff."

Well, that infuriated Tom Judge who wanted the construction jobs which would [be] kind of timed to his reelection in '76. Anyway, he didn't retain Wicks in his cabinet when he took office again in '77. And Wicks ended up going to work for Cecil Andrus as the top assistant and came back and was highway commissioner under Schwinden. So it was really interesting and Judge tried to be an environmentalist, but he made some decisions that were probably pretty not environmentally sound. But he was...Judge was a reformer in a way...not as much as Anderson...but a lot of major reforms passed during that time, you know, besides the union

thing. They passed a lot of environmental protection laws. They were implementing the new constitution.

I covered the Board of Regents too and they were asserting their way with the power of autonomy, and the legislators did not like that a bit. [Longtime legislator and appropriations chairman] Francis Bardanouve was one of the leaders opposing it and he still wanted to do a line-item...or pardon me, a, you know...not line-item veto ... appropriate by institution, you know. Larry Pettit was the commissioner of higher education and legislators did not like him because he was very bold about asserting the power [the regents] that they had under the new constitution and legislators simply didn't agree with it. But it was the law, and there was a lawsuit...Judge v. Board of Regents...I think in '74 that then the court clarified, "Yeah, at the legislature's got the power to...got the power." and I think that's what's gonna happen with this suit over the legislature trying to allow guns on campus. I mean the constitution couldn't be more clear.

So it was a fascinating time to cover government. There was a lot of stuff going on. Anderson had had some bright young people like Alec Hansen, Wicks, Frank Sennett Sr., people like that. And Judge had good people too. Judge had an enormous kind of shadow hanging over his head with the \$94,000 in unreported campaign donations and \$84,000, I think, in 2000 in unreported expenditures. And we spent a lot of time trying to track that down without luck.

And Judge first hired a woman who was a business professor and vice president here named Patricia Douglass—I think her name had two "S"s at the end to look at the books and found nothing wrong, but they wouldn't make it public. And then he hired [attorney Charles] "Timer" Moses. Well, the joke around Montana was always that if you're really guilty you hire Timer Moses. That didn't help...it just hung over and we didn't really find out for sure until Larry Pettit wrote his book, *If You Live by the Sword*. And he said, you know, the staff at the campaign had prepared the campaign finance reports, which were not as specific as the ones today. You just kind of wrote them down [laughs] on a piece of paper. And Judge...he said they...Judge scratched out all the work comp attorneys 'cause he didn't want them to be investigated by [Republican Attorney General Robert] Woodahl.

And then Lee Tickle, who was a character then who worked for Judge. He told me he was one of the people that handed out the samples at Costco after he retired. He said the other ones were Republicans that donated, and Judge didn't want them to get in trouble. So they just scratched these off. I don't know why he didn't just say that. It was probably—oh, the campaign laws were so weak. It was probably illegal but maybe not. But anyway that hung over Tom Judge the rest of his career. And as time went on in the '70s, the big Democratic majorities kind of shrunk. And I was gone in the '79 session, but I think by '79 maybe the Republicans controlled one house. But it was a time of big spending.

Judge got federal money...revenue sharing money...too, you know. We had all the problems with the old prison in Deer Lodge...the old dungeon. But the legislature wouldn't appropriate

money to build a new one. I think Judge used [federal] revenue sharing money to build [a new one] —which was a great, great move. The other thing that Judge did was he really improved the state institutions at Warm Springs and Galen and that sort of thing. His wife, Carol, his then-wife, had been an RN and during her rotations as a nursing student at MSU, she sneaked him in and he saw how bad they were. So that was one of Judge's great accomplishments, and I did have some stories. Other reporters did some too, but it was eye-opening to go down there.

When I went down—and then there was another strike at the prison, and I went in there I think in '75 or '76. And the [National] Guard...he called the Guard out to be there, and the place was just horrible and this Guard unit was a hygiene Guard unit—like pharmacists and sanitary engineers and stuff. The kitchen had raw sewage bubbling up in the drain in the kitchen, and they fixed and cleaned that up. So that was interesting too; I went down there with somebody. So you had the institutions. You had the environmental laws. You had...I'm trying to think...what are the other big things that happened then? You know, they never could pass a really good subdivision law [because] the landowners always resisted. They could still leave land to their families without a review. That was probably the big failure, but they had good clean water and clean air laws.

DS: A lot of those came out of the [new] constitution.

CJ: Yeah, to implement it and—I think this was under Judge, but they had a new health...a new director...air quality director and he proposed a bunch of new stricter rules. And the Board of Health wouldn't go along with all of them, and I was there. Tom Kotynski covered it for the *Trib* and this woman from the audience came and just blasted him with, you know, this is interesting. Found out the next week that it was the wife of the new health director who'd come from Oregon. And he...I think he either got fired or quit under all the pressure, and Mrs. Sheehy was on the board. So they did pretty well. They didn't do as well as they might have, and there was concern over—oh [UM professor of botany and environmental studies] Clancy Gordon and his students always—they sort of specialized in the Silver Bow Plant, the process, something over by Butte and had great pollution problems. So those were some of the big issues I covered then.

DS: You mentioned workers' compensation too and that's a story that ran for many years in Montana.

CJ: That was the hot button...one of the hot button issues of the '70s. I didn't...I was the new kid on the block so it was mostly Art Hutchinson or Langley that covered ... I later covered it. So the way it worked—there was a scandal that came out, and the attorney general was Woodahl...Bob Woodahl...small town county attorney from Choteau. And the allegation was that...so, you know, some worker at a plant or something gets hurt. The lawyers had these people they called "runners" that would hang around union halls and then call that lawyer and say, "Hey, Old Joe has hurt his back [laughs] at the sawmill." And then they would direct them to these lawyers, and I didn't do these stories.

They were great stories but then the head of Workers' Comp was a guy named Carden...Jim Carden, C-a-r-d-e-n, I played kid baseball with his kid, and Carden was thought to be taking bribes. And then the guy that made the decision on whether to okay the claims was named Bud Pillen, P-i-l-l-e-n. And the story said he was being bribed by buying...they'd take him to the KG Men's Store and buy him new suits. [laughs] So it was really seedy, and Woodahl...these were the allegations. I don't know if they were true, and Woodahl had a grand jury. And then he also brought in these California investigators and prosecutors who filed, you know, 114-count indictments. And I think only a couple went to prison. One was Luke McKeon—a very prominent Democratic legislator from Anaconda—a state senator who pleaded guilty and did a year or two in jail. And then I think there was a guy named Lavon Bretz. who was one of the lawyers. The rest of them fought it. And Judge—Woodahl ran against Judge for governor in '76 and lost big.

And [Democrat] Mike Greely became the next attorney general, and Greely ended up giving lie detector tests to these people—all the people that were charged—and based on those results dropped charges. And he invited two of the people that were covering it the most—Frank Adams of the *Tribune* and Sam Reynolds the *Missoulian* editorial page editor to witness these. And they were satisfied that this was okay so that ended the issue. But it was a major scandal that dominated the news...or alleged scandal...and Woodahl filed [a] big, you know, an indictment. And Lee got it early, and the *IR* published it that afternoon. It's a special section of the paper. I've got it at home somewhere. I can get it for you if you want to see it.

But it was sort of a lingering controversy and the trial lawyers also were thought to be, you know, big donors to Judge. And it turned out they were. So that kind of was one of the major political stories through the '70s.

DS: You mentioned campaign finance reports and how early on there wasn't much information. That it was...they were kind of haphazard in the way they were filled out. When did that change? When were the rules starched up for that?

CJ: I think it passed in '75 but might have been '74. It created the Office of was it politic...it's now political prac...Office of Campaign Commissioner. And it'd been a study that Judge had undertaken I think to try to remove the stink of all this from him. And his attorney played a big role in the new law—a guy named Steve Brown—I think you probably knew Steve. And it set up an independent commissioner's office. Previously, the reports were just filed with the secretary of state, and I don't even think they had forms. You just typed something out, and they sat at the secretary of state's office. No one ever looked at them except press.

So it's—the first commissioner was a guy named John Hansen who'd been the chief clerk of the House a couple of times. And so they headed up all the new rules, and they were initially in the capitol and then a little house a block north of the capitol. And I covered that from the start and, you know, because I thought it was an important office. And it turned out to be a really

important office. And it again had trouble getting off the ground cause people just sort of, “Who are they?” And then people would start filing, you know, what I call kind of penny ante complaints against their opponent to get a headline. And then the other side would file one. But in the end they had some really good commissioners and some that were total duds over the years, but it was an important office and although the problem we had was they were really slow to computerize it.

So you’d get these reports—filed like that at 4:59 on filing date, and you’d have to go through them. There was a time when we would run out the major donors, you know, just list them, and it took hours to punch them in. But we all thought it was...I was at the Lee Bureau then, and they thought it was important. And then when I was at the *Trib* we thought it was important too. Not many states had an independent commissioner like that. Some states...and they’ve always...the Republicans have always been trying to get to a, you know, a four-member commission like the FEC [Federal Election Commission] or six-member which has been a disaster at the FEC. Nothing ever gets done, you know, and they’re chosen by legislative leaders. Each of the Speaker and the minority leader in the House and the Senate president and the minority leader choose a representative for this commission. And then if they can’t agree, the governor...I think the governor may...and they’ve never been able to...maybe I’m thinking of redistricting. But anyway, the governors appoint them and, you know, there’ve been some terrific commissioners like Jonathan Motl. And there’ve been some total duds. But a good staff always.

DS: How were your stories about a lot of these reforms received? It seems like there was more openness on the part of the press to cover these sorts of things? Or was it a demand from the public? What was the dynamic?

CJ: I don’t know if there was a demand from the public. I guess we thought they were good stories, and I think the papers were interested in them particularly in light of the missing money from Judge’s [campaign reports]. I think that gave it maybe more significance than it might have had otherwise from the start. I mean I spent a week trying to track down a rumor that Judge’s \$94,000 had been used to buy a Chinese restaurant on Grand Avenue in Billings. Not true but, you know, that was the rumor. So you spent a lot of time tracking [laughs] these [unintelligible] down. But I think there was—well this was post-Watergate, you know, so there was I think a lot of interest in campaign finance. The papers were certainly interested.

DS: One of the questions I’ve had was the effect that sort of the national political atmosphere had on issues in Montana or a response to issues in Montana?

CJ: Well, I think it had a lot. And you know, you had the environmental movement really gaining strength nationally. In Montana you had the two leading groups on kind of most environmental issues were Northern Plains Resource Council, which always billed itself as an agriculture conservation group. And then Montana Environmental Information Center. But you also had Montana Wilderness Association—now Wild Montana—which had been going even further

back, but I think they primarily focused on wilderness. You had the Montana Wildlife Federation which focused on hunting and fishing issues—that sort of thing. But there was a lot of interest in that. So we covered it and, you know, it seemed to get interest. I'd occasionally hear from the public, but—

DS: What about the national political leaders from Montana, and you had some powerful ones during this particular period. Can you tell me a bit about [Senators Mike] Mansfield and [Lee] Metcalf and their successors?

CJ: Mansfield was kind of just the opposite of the senators today. I mean he would come back two or three times a year...three or four times a year, and he would come to...he'd fly into Billings Friday night, drive or fly up to Great Falls Saturday morning. He would come to Missoula through Lincoln and then go to Butte and then go to Helena and talk to the AP. And often he'd leave a national story with everybody. I don't know if I told you that Kissinger story? So when I just first started at the *Missoulian* in the fall of '72, the city editor was Jim Crane and he called me at home. I had Saturday off. Then he called me and asked me to come in—that Mansfield was there. Like, "Gosh, what do I ask him?" [laughs] It was right before the, you know, two weeks before the election. I thought, well, the Paris Peace Talks were going on. It was McGovern, Nixon, 'Peace is at hand' and all that stuff. So I asked him about that and he said, "Well, could I borrow your phone?" And he went over to the other side of the newsroom. He was on the phone for ten minutes, and he comes back. And he said he had just talked to Henry." [laughs] And I thought is he pulling this on me? But another reporter heard him call the White House and ask them to connect to Kissinger. And it was like, "Holy Smokes." And then we talked for half an hour or so and then he'd go down and have his lunch at the Oxford, you know. Or coffee at the Oxford.

So he would come in like that and then he also came back a week or so later to campaign for Metcalf. And in those days, they had a dinner in the major cities...the Dems did...you know, Monday in Butte, Tuesday in Missoula, Thurs...you know. Four or five dinners and I covered the one in Missoula, and he was mostly talking about the Vietnam War. I described it as I think strident. And the next day he said, "Well I don't think I was strident." At the bottom of my story was a line that he also announced he was gonna appoint a committee to look into the allegations about Watergate. I don't think I missed the story 'cause that's all he said. But I used to read the Theodore White books—*The Making of the President*, he did one called *Breach of Faith*—might have been one of his last ones. He leads the book off with Mansfield speaking in Missoula calling for this investigation. That's the first chapter of the book.

DS: Right. And he was an important instigator in not only that investigation, but he was important in his attitudes about the Vietnam War.

CJ: Yeah. And he was just a straight shooter. You know, you'd ask a question you'd get an answer. Now they said...the articles all said that when he was on "Meet the Press," the reporters had to have like three times the normal questions because he'd say—yep, nope, can't

tell you. I had met him before as a Sears intern. I don't know if I ever told you that story. In '71, '70 I should say—my senior year, two of us seniors got picked for this Sears Congressional Internship—Nedra Bayne and me. And we filled out a questionnaire form, and the program was started by Burton K. Wheeler's son, Edwin, I think. But it might have been John who was the vice president for government affairs at Sears, and he'd worked in his dad's office as a college student. He thought it would be valuable for upcoming journalists too and they picked like 25 or 26 of us.

So we went back there, and we took this test to kind of see what we were interested in. Nedra got assigned to Bob Dole's office, and I got assigned to Frank Church of Idaho. And she was a campus Republican and stuff like that which was great, and we're there about a week and there hadn't been any press about it—shouldn't have been any. But we get a call from Peggy DeMichele, Mansfield's executive assistant or I think she was chief of staff, said, "The Senator would like to meet with the two of you." And it was like, "Really?" So we go in there for about an hour. He makes us Sanka and gives us these cookies. "Now where are you from, Nedra? What do your parents do?" And, you know, we're just sort of like, "We're wasting this guy's time." At the end of the discussion he said, "Now do you have tickets to the President's State of the Union speech on Thursday night?" Or whenever it was. And I said, "No." He pulls out a ticket for each of us, and I went back to Church's office and the people who worked for him for 15 or 20 years had never gotten to go. We were just stunned. We went together and then he did the same when [French] President Pompidou came. Peggy called and gave us tickets.

So I'd covered him before. In the summer of '70 I'd done a story on it was his last election and there was a guy named Daniel Massie who had "Poor Henry's Bar." And he organized, "100,00 Gun Owners Can't Be Wrong Against Mike Mansfield," for his vote on...his leadership on gun control after Robert Kennedy's assassination. So I knew him a little but didn't talk...he didn't call by the phone very much. He didn't put out many press releases. Metcalf didn't come back much either, and he wasn't quite as friendly as Mansfield. I think he was kind of gruff. He didn't care much for the press I don't think. I covered him—probably interviewed him five or six times, and he was okay but not—sort of like someone had told him to do it, you know. And I've read a lot about Metcalf and the people that worked for him just thought he was the best. He did a lot of great things in my view, but he was never terribly friendly to the press.

And [former state AFL-CIO leader] Jim Murry used to tell a story that the AFL-CIO office used to be on Last Chance Gulch, and Dan Foley at the Lee Bureau was starting to ask them to produce—give their campaign reports to him and their personal financial disclosures. And he was pretty huffy about it...Metcalf was...so he was using Murry's copier to make copies. And Foley happened to come into the office for something else and they came right into each other as Metcalf said, "That ought to hold that goddamn Foley for a while." [laughs] So it was different times, but I think he mellowed out a little bit. I covered his...this was real embarrassing. He died and Tom Kotynski did a story about the death and his legacy. I did one about who might be, you know, considered for appointment. And the *Tribune* to our embarrassment ran my story first and the news of his death...the bottom of the page it was

really a...we took a lot of deserved crap for that. But I really got to know Donna Metcalf, his widow, well over the years and she couldn't have been nicer—just very helpful, always nice.

DS: One of the things I read somewhere was that Metcalf regularly complained about the kind of coverage Mansfield got in his campaigns compared to the coverage he [Metcalf] received..

CJ: Yeah, and their voting records were pretty identical...that's true I think. But there was sort of a...I don't want say mythology, but I mean everyone knew Mike Mansfield and you know. But Metcalf had been a rep...he'd been in the House since...he got elected in '52, and he'd been a Supreme Court justice. So I mean I think his legacy is great, but he was rougher around the edges, you know, there were stories about him beating up an elevator operator and he had a temper. They were all afraid of him. [laughs]

DS: Well you have these two lions in the Senate. What did they accomplish for Montana? What local impact did they have?

CJ: A lot of it was dam [reservoir building] type stuff and then Metcalf—I got interviewed by someone from the historical society [who] was there for the summer. The issue was how did Metcalf go from being a, you know, dam-it-up [guy] to wilderness and protection? That was also true of [Utah Congressman Morris] Udall and [Idaho Senator Frank] Church. And I don't really...we never did really find out what had happened, but he became a leading figure in the environmental movement, and I think he was the principal sponsor of the '64 Wilderness Act. So he got a lot of national attention, and we did stories on it. Tom did most of the coverage of wilderness because he was out and about [in] all of the wilderness areas. He could describe them and had photos. But I interviewed Metcalf on wilderness sometimes, and the battle was always between [Democrat] John Melcher who then succeeded Mansfield but even in the House he was always one to not go along with what Metcalf wanted. And there was no great love I think between Mansfield...Mansfield and Metcalf got along great but Melcher was not part of the...he was sort of more sympathetic I guess to the timber industry and that sort of thing.

So I mean those stories...well I don't know but I assume they got covered big time in the '60s. And then [Missoulian environmental reporter] Dale Burk did the stories in the late '60s on the clear-cutting in the Bitterroot National Forest and, you know, with great photos. And Metcalf called special...had a select committee that looked into it and then they appointed Arnold Bolle the [University of Montana] forestry dean to do a study and that led to reform in the Forest Service. And they didn't eliminate [it], but they limited greatly clearcutting as an option. And that led to a lot of national coverage of forest policy in the late '60s/early '70s. So I didn't cover that as much...Dale was still working. He covered...there was nobody better than Dale on that issue.

DS: What about Melcher? He's one of the figures of this era that rises in the '70s. How did you know him and what kind of relationship did you have with him?

CJ: I didn't really cover him very much until the '76 campaign when he ran for Mansfield's seat, and I was assigned to cover that race. And he ran against a guy who was head of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation in Bozeman named Stanley Burger. And Burger was a leading right-wing figure of the day, and Melcher had been in the House I think since '69—eastern district. So I did profiles on them both, and Melcher was...he was far more conservative than Mansfield or Metcalf. He was friendly to cover. He had an odd policy in his office that could be good and bad but if a reporter called, his staff couldn't answer any questions. He insisted on calling you back but often he wouldn't call you back till 7:00 [p.m.], you know. But, and when you were just calling to straighten out some numbers on a wilderness bill ... so it was a good and bad, but I always got along with Melcher.

He became kind of arrogant I would say, and he was not...he got some bad press over the years. I think he had a DUI in Washington. The battle over wilderness was a big one and in 1988 when he lost to Burns, there was a wilderness bill that went through it and the Republicans got to Reagan and told him to ve...Reagan pocket vetoed it I think right at the end. And that hurt Melcher a lot. But Melcher kind of lost touch with Montana.

When Burns started campaigning, the story was, he'd go out to Eastern Montana and say, "Anyone seen Old Doc lately?" And Melcher devoted a lot of his time in the last two or three years to Philippine immigration and naturalization issues. And kind of bizarre—and he was the last member of Congress to defend the Marcos Regime ... So Burns when he ran that fall—it was the simplest ad in Montana politics, but he's standing by the wall with two maps—one of Montana, one of the Philippines. "This is Conrad Burns. This is Montana. This is what I'm gonna concentrate [on]. Here is the Philippines. That's what Melcher's gonna concentrate on."

It was pretty effective and by then Melcher had made a lot of enemies. Environmental groups didn't like him a bit. I think he was pro-choice. He was a Catholic and everyone said, "Well, they hoped he won but by one vote," you know. And he ended up losing to Burns who everyone kind of thought he was a clown then, but he was solid with agriculture in Eastern Montana and Billings, which had been strengths of Melcher's. I don't remember the margin, but he beat him. So Melcher stayed back there for a while and was the lobbyist for the American Veterinary Association. But you'd hear stories about Melcher like people that worked on his staff said there were cats all over his office. And when one died, he'd do autopsies in the bathroom and not clean up, you know, there'd be cat guts...blood all over. So he was kind of weird. I always personally liked John Melcher. He [would] always get back to you. Talked to him way more than Mansfield or Metcalf, but he'd...I think he kind of lost track of Montana.

DS: Was Montana changing at that time do you think?

CJ: Well, the height of the real progressive movement I think, you know, was the late '60s to the mid '70s. Melcher had also ticked off some of the good Democrats when he announced...Mansfield had called a meeting of the delegation and told them he was resigning.

And then we got a telegram when the meeting ended that he wasn't running. Melcher announced like two minutes after the meeting. That offended people that liked Mansfield, that thought he should have waited a day, but I don't know if it made any difference. And Judge was rumored to want to run too and they always...people said well Judge was aced out. I don't see how that would have stopped him if he wanted to run.

So then Metcalf was the real darling of the liberal progressive movement. I mean he was strong on labor, environment. He announced in maybe '77 that he was gonna retire. So you had Baucus who was the western district—he started campaigning right away. And then Metcalf died I think in January or February of '78. And so Judge had to make the appointment, and the gossip was that he was gonna appoint himself and he always denied it. Although I'm getting in the realm of gossip here, but I ran into [longtime Missoula attorney] Milt Datsopoulos about 10 years ago at some event. And when Judge was on his deathbed down in Arizona, Milt said he went and paid visit...spent a couple of days with him and Judge told him—Milt was kind of in Judge's kitchen cabinet, you know, consulted on things and was obviously a big donor. He claimed that Judge said, "That was the worst piece advice I ever got. I never should have listened to you guys who told me not to run—get myself appointed to the Senate. I could have beat him," you know, so who knows?

But anyway so all of a sudden Metcalf's gone, Mansfield's gone, and you have [Congressman] Max Baucus and Melcher first. And then Baucus who went on to beat—Judge appointed Paul Hatfield, the Supreme Court justice. A really interesting guy, but he was...had never run a partisan race and he got...Baucus had a campaign that had a steamroller behind it. So all of a sudden you've gone from those two liberal leaders to Baucus and Melcher who were quite a bit more conservative I'd say...conservative Democrats or middle of the road Democrats. Whatever you want to say.

DS: Your relationship or understanding of Max Baucus goes back a long ways. I mean back to the Constitutional Convention. You watched his career from almost the beginning.

CJ: Yeah. In 1975 I rented a house—was married to Kate and we rented a house that was right next door to his parents' house. [laughs] He had come back from...I may have the...I think have the sequence right. He had gone to Stanford and Stanford Law School, and then he traveled in Africa for a year or something like that. And then he got jobs with the FAA and SEC, I think, might have the order mixed up. And then decided he wanted to do a career in as he put it "public service." And the story is...I heard it from enough people I know it's true...but he said he wanted to come back to Montana and so he went around to Mansfield and Metcalf and Forrest Anderson, Babcock...said he didn't know what kind of...what party he wanted to be in, but he wanted to come back and make a difference here. And some people...like I heard that Metcalf was like, "The guy doesn't know what party he's in?" [laughs] And his stepfather, John Baucus, was very conservative.

Well, he made the probably the right call and ran as a Democrat. But first he was...I can't remember his title...maybe executive assistant to the Con-Con. And the director was a guy named Dale Harris who had pushed for the Con-Con and worked on the referendum to put it...he'd worked for it for four or five years. And Dale and [Con-Con President] Leo Graybill didn't get along very well, and he needed a break. I don't know...those people said he had a nervous breakdown or was exhausted. I don't know, but he left and then came back as kind of over the staff. So then Max was put in there for the last couple of weeks. And by then I'm in...so in 1972 he filed while he was a still a Con-Con staffer. He filed for the legislature from Missoula, and he joined up with I think the guy's name was Alec George...a single practice lawyer...veteran lawyer here. And it was George and Baucus, and I don't know how much law he practiced here but he immediately started campaigning and he went door to door. I think I covered this story in '72 when I just start...he led that...I think at that time they ran countywide. And he led that...he had more votes than anyone I believe. And because the door to door campaigning and he was kind of the young Kennedyesque guy. And he served in the legislature in '73/'74, the only time we've had annual sessions.

And I came over and did a story on him along with the other delegates...or legislators, and I think his big claim to fame as a legislator was he put in a bill to create the...it was called the ombudsman but governor's...I can't remember what they called it. But it was a staffer on the governor's office that I think still exists—maybe it doesn't. But you know if you call and say, "My father had trouble getting his fishing license," sort of to cut through red tape. And I don't know if it still exists, but it certainly did through Bullock. That was his bill and then in '74...and I had...Dick Shoup got elected in 1970. He was kind of a moderate mayor of Missoula...popular mayor of Missoula as a Republican, and he got elected...he ran in 1970 against Arnold Olsen who'd been in Congress I think since '52. Liberal Democrat who'd kind of not been very...kept in touch with Montana...had a drinking problem everyone said. Didn't come back very often, and Shoup beat him. I covered them that summer. I worked at the *Missoulian* and then Shoup ran in '72, and Arnold made a comeback and didn't do well at all. Shoup narrowly beat him. I think I covered some of that.

And then in '74 Baucus got in the race, Pat Williams got in the race, and Arnold Olsen got in the race. Baucus launched this thing to walk from Gardiner to Yaak. You know, people kind of scoffed at it. I think it was brilliant, you know, he...there are pictures of him with icicles coming down [laughs] on his eyebrows. And Pat Williams had a little Winnebago he rented. Winnebagos don't beat walking and then Arnold was just kind of past his prime. One of the fun parts of it was when the *Missoulian* was down on North Higgins, Worden's was on the other side of the street, and it was owned by this couple named the Sherwoods—George and Laura Sherwood. And their son Mike's an attorney here. And it was a little grocery store that sold a lot of kegs of beer. So he – George was an old school Democrat – and he would say, "Jack, come on over here. Arnie Olsen's over here." So you'd sit on a keg of beer and then he'd cut off...had this big roll of cheese. He'd cut you off [laughs] a piece of cheese.

But Olsen was kind of over the hill by then, and Baucus beat Williams. I don't remember how much but the thought was that Olsen and Williams split a lot of the labor votes. So Max runs, and he and Shoup in 1974 are running against each other. And I think he beat Shoup by...I don't remember...a pretty close race. And I had...I think I was traveling. I traveled...spent a day on the road with each of them when I was at the *Missoulian*. I remember I think covering Baucus over in Anaconda. I can't remember where I covered Shoup. So then I came to the state bureau in December of '74, but you had...so when Baucus then ran for...I'm jumping ahead but when he ran for the Senate, Pat Williams, Dorothy Bradley, Gary Kimble, George Turman—I think there were six Democrats in the race and six Republicans. And Pat Williams was the Democratic nominee, and Jim Waltermire was the Republican nominee. And then I missed that election. I was in England for the year, but Pat Williams beat Waltermire and then started a career that I think ended out. He ran in '94 and didn't run in '96. So it was...Pat was definitely the liberal of the delegation and represented, you know, Missoula, Butte, Anaconda, Helena.

DS: Move back to the state level for a bit to talk about the '80s. It's Schwinden and his race against Judge and there's two halves to his administration...a promising start and then economic trouble. How would you assess that?

CJ: Well, the economy had been booming through the Judge years...the federal economy had. And of course in the late '70s came recession nationally. So Schwinden...we never did hear quite the full story. But Judge in my view was...I don't think Judge really wanted to run for another term, but he didn't have anything else to go to. We heard he was trying to get a job with the Carter administration. Judge had a lot of personal baggage. He was divorced by then. He was drinking a lot. He wasn't someone that probably was gonna get hired. So nothing came up so he ended up running again. And Schwinden was getting asked by a lot of people to run, and Schwinden...Judge as the last two or three years as governor was traveling abroad a lot. You know, going to Europe, going to the Middle East, going to Asia, China, Japan, Thailand or Cambodia...wasn't around much at a time when there was an energy crisis and a time when there was an ag crisis. And Schwinden was assigned those two issues and so he was having town meetings and everyone said, "Well you should be our governor."

I should go back and add Judge was the least accessible governor I ever covered. And he wouldn't...you could get time with him now and again, but he wouldn't respond to your questions. He would just go through what reporters will call the "laundry list"—"My administration"—so he was hard to cover. Schwinden on the other hand was very open, and he listed his phone number in the phonebook. And you know, I called him sometimes at home on a late story and you'd say, "Governor Schwinden," "You got him." And every Montanan could call, you know, if you're out in Chester or Sidney and got a question. And he was really down to earth whereas Judge wasn't. I used to run into Ted and Jean Schwinden at the grocery store, you know, wearing their matching Wolf Point Wolves plastic windbreakers that every school sells. It was a refreshing change, to be honest, and should make a copy of that brochure. But he had an article...did it run in the *Missoulian*...an op-ed about the Con-Con? It's a good one. We

can copy it afterwards, but he was of the view that the press in the post Anaconda Company days, that Montana press played a really important role. And he did his best to be open.

All meetings in his office were open except...unless the people he was meeting with declined. Wasn't perfect...we learned there were some meetings at the governor's mansion that we didn't know about. But he was one of the most open governors, and you could easily get access to him. And he would needle the press, but he liked the press. And the press I think found him good to cover. He was very accessible and quite a contrast to Judge.

So he and Judge are in this primary, and I don't remember—and Schwinden picked George Turman and Judge picked a guy named Joe Roberts who was his chief lawyer on his staff which I thought was kind of odd—nothing against Joe. But anyway Schwinden beat him in the primary. A couple of days later the Democratic Party powers had arranged this meeting at the Civic Center—public meeting to try to get the picture of them holding their hands up, you know, like Judge endorsing. The truth is the two guys did not like each other, and there's still people in politics that, "He was a Schwinden guy," "She was a Judge person," you know. So [it] left a lot of bad blood. And they all said, well Judge people said, "Well Schwinden would be a nobody if he hadn't gotten the appointment as lieutenant governor." He'd been Forrest Anderson's land commissioner and then Judge's land commissioner too, I think.

Anyway it was a refreshing change from a reporting standpoint to cover Schwinden because of his accessibility. So by then the financial picture was pretty gloomy. You had Reagan as president. You had the recession that started under Carter—continued under Reagan. Schwinden was more conservative than Judge—no question, but the money situation prevented him from doing much innovative stuff. He tried to make state government operate better.

DS: Build Montana.

CJ: That was in 1982, and Dan Kemmis played a big role. They had an initiative on the ballot...or, yeah...an initiative to use some of the tax from the...the coal tax money to loan to farms and businesses in Montana. And it...the Democrats made a comeback in the legislature in '83. Although I don't think he ever had both Democratic houses. He had one house Democrat. Well it was...and the '81 legislature passed a bill by Fred Van Valkenburg to create the Commerce Department. And the first Commerce director was a guy named Gary Buchanan now running as an independent for [Congress] ...and Gary was a real go-getter, and he hired a great staff...great young people with finance degrees. And one of the brains behind the whole Build Montana stuff was Dale Harris, who'd been the Con-Con guy. And they tried everything and, you know, some stuff improved. Some didn't.

And in '84 Schwinden ran for reelection against—the Republicans couldn't find anyone who wanted to challenge him so the party chair got in the race—a guy named Pat Goodover from Great Falls who owned a radio station, and Goodover had two issues. He said Schwinden was

too close to Boss Murry...Jim Murry. And the other one was that we needed to lower the coal...the state's coal severance tax.

Well the severance tax was passed in the early...like '73 maybe...and was...I think was initially—anyway at its peak it was 30 percent—highest in the country.[This was during the year's Arab Oil Embargo.] National publications and critics from the Midwest called it...called Montanans "Blue-Eyed Arabs," and it was immediately they were challenging it in the legislature. They challenged it at the state level. The Montana Supreme Court had a hearing and the coal companies and utilities brought in William Rogers who'd been Eisenhower's attorney general to argue the case. I got to talk to him a little bit, and the Montana Supreme Court ruled against the coal companies and utilities. It went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court which okayed the...which said...I think it was like a 5 to 4 or 6 to 3 decision in the early '80s that allowed Montana to continue to do it.

What had happened though coal production had dropped and Wyoming coal production had really picked up. And there were competing views. The industry all said it was because of Montana's higher taxes. People like Arnie Silverman and [UM Environmental Studies professor] Ron Erickson and those folks did studies and said, "Well it was cause Wyoming had competitive railroads." Anyway Goodover attacked...said he would lower the coal severance tax. Schwinden was against it. So lo and behold in a state of the state address he proposed this thing he called the "window of opportunity." And it would...you were probably there then. It would...a new coal production that exceeded their current production...the tax would...I think it was it dropped to 15 percent or 20 percent. It passed with support of...solid support of Republicans, Butte Democrats, and kind of conservative Democrats.

He had a caucus—the Democratic legislators were infuriated and furious about it, and they wanted to meet with him at a caucus. And they met in that governor's reception room and course they were closed then, and [Associated Press reporter] Bob Anez and I were there and the door was slightly ajar. So we literally had our ears up to the crack of the door. And then two of the governor's staff came out—Dave Hunter and Dave Wanzenried. I think Wanzenried was chief of staff and Hunter was budget director, and they shut the door and they went into the governor's office and brought two water glasses [and] said, "Here, it's supposed to be easier with those." [laughs]

Well ,anyway, it was very controversial, but it passed and eventually the tax got down to 15 or 10 percent. And it'd been a big issue before Congress as well. There were bills in to try to limit the ability of states to tax coal, and Governor Schwinden had worked—hired two Washington lobbyists—a Democrat Leon Billings son of Harry and Gretchen Billings and a Republican lobbyist back there. And they kind of held things down and then the Supreme Court decision happened and then all this. So the Democrats were pretty mad at Schwinden for doing this ... The criticism was that it was not a very innovative administration. Kind of their defense [was that] they didn't have any money to do anything. There was a series in the '85/'86/'87—there were like three or four special sessions, and I think Schwinden felt like he wasn't gonna do the

cutting by himself. And he would—raising taxes was out of the question. So it was—he's generally considered a conservative governor although I think he was liberal at heart. He just didn't have any money to do anything with.

DS: And the political ground was changing—

CJ: Yeah.

DS: —across the state.

CJ: I'm pretty sure he never had two Democratic houses, and it was definitely changing. They tried to raise the tax on railroads, and I think that was challenged in court. His revenue director the last four years was a guy named John LaFavre...who was very aggressive, and they were trying to find other ways to raise money. And there's a great story that the president of BN...just BN then...came out to Mon...I heard it from Schwinden...came out to Montana in his private railcar and wanted to have dinner with Schwinden.

They met in the car, and his chef cooked them a fine meal or a fine lunch or something. On the table...on this fancy table was a leather-bound copy of Schwinden's master's thesis which had argued that railroads hadn't paid enough for ... the land they got. [laughs] He did it at the University of Minnesota or here. I'm not sure which one. So there was...he did not like the railroads, but Schwinden was...set an example for open government that I have always appreciated. I don't think his accomplishments as governor aren't...maybe not the greatest.

DS: Was also a part of that sort of farmer/laborer coalition from—

CJ: Definitely.

DS: —Eastern Montana that was so powerful for a long time. But he was kind of the last—

CJ: He was.

DS: —one standing.

CJ: He was elected I think to the legislature in 1958 and same year as Francis Bardanoue. They were best friends. He always called Bardanoue—the name he had for Bardanoue was “Torp,” the nickname for torpedo cause the early Bardanoue had quite a temper, and he was best man at Francis's wedding. They were great buddies.

The Chamber of Commerce in 1960 or '62—he lost the race for the legislature after he'd been in it two times, and he always blamed that—they were calling him a Communist and stuff like that. He always said he ran for the legislature three times and won twice and learned more the time he lost. But he was...and then he was very active in the Grain Growers [Association], and

he was really interesting to talk to cause he'd grown up in the Depression. He was working on a doctorate at the University of Minnesota and had to come and help his parents farm because his dad had a heart attack or something, and he had a brother that had some issues. So he went back to the farm. Otherwise, he might have been a college professor.

DS: Would you like to take a break for just a minute?

CJ: Yeah.

DS: Okay. Let me pause this.

DS: Yes, I think we're ready to go again—are recording, and we were talking about the Schwinden years and toward the end of the Schwinden years. And his dealing with, you know, agricultural drought and trying to make attempts to help rebuild the state's economy in a difficult environment.

CJ: One thing he did is he appointed an economic development committee. I don't remember the formal name, but they got a lot of I think donations and they hired a team from—I think it was the McKenzie and Company. It might have been—I think it was McKinsey and Company. [McKinsey is correct.] And the lead person for them was John Sawhill who'd been a cabinet member under I think Nixon and Ford. And they did an evaluation of Montana, and the committee consisted of kind of people from agriculture, business leaders, labor people, and the like. It was like a 20-member committee, and the consulting firm sent these young MBAs into Montana and, you know, they came up with a report that called for a sales tax, called for an appointed public service commission, called for a lot of changes that were extremely unpopular.

I had gotten—well he's dead now. Jim Murry leaked it to me the night before. And then I went to Gary Buchanan, the Commerce [Dept. director] ...he gave me it. So I attributed it to Gary and the critics like Murry called it a corporate wish list. And Joe McElwaine was on the committee too. He was then the chairman...CEO of Montana Power. And Murry and they wanted "right to work"—they just like this. And the chairs of the thing were Schwinden and Ian Davidson. And it just kind of blew up. And Ian Davidson always blamed me for going apart cause I report all this stuff but so do the other reporters.

And it was a disaster, and the recommendations were written by, you know, 23-year-olds with Harvard MBAs that had never been to Montana. And saw—they adopted a few things but nothing very significant. So it was a bust and the other thing that they did at Commerce—you probably saw some of these—may have written about them, but they got businesses—they got an ad agency involved and they ran these half page ads in Friday's *Wall Street Journal* in the region's section of the west. And the theme was, "It's always Friday in Montana." And they'd have, you know, Banker Joe Smith who can leave his job at the bank and go fly-fishing 30—you know, half an hour away or, you know, Attorney Joe Blow who can go to the golf course and...or

go...somebody can go floating or... and they were costly and very professionally produced. But it kind of in the end I think the consensus was that sort of sent the message, "We don't work very hard in Montana," or "You sneak out of work to go fishing," or golfing or floating or take kids motor skiing or waterskiing. And I don't think they really did much good, but I'll say this for Ted Schwinden. He tried a lot of different things and a lot of it was the national economy. A lot of it was Montana's economy...and remember...oh we've got to go back to this.

The Anaconda Company in I think October of 1980 announced it was closing the smelter in Anaconda, the refinery in Great Falls, and then in '82—well it was then ARCO. And then in I think '82 or '83 announced they were closing the mining in Butte. So there were things like that that were huge complicating factors. I remember reading once where at the early 1900s, three out of four paychecks in Montana were paid by...Amalgamated then the...was predecessor to Anaconda. So there were a lot of economic problems and nothing really seemed to...there were no magic wands to improve the economy.

DS: And how is that reflected in the elections toward the end of that period?

CJ: In some ways. In '88 the Democrats needed to find someone to run, and Frank Morrison ran. He was a Supreme Court justice, and he had to...he had to resign to run. And he was definitely the liberal candidate. His dad had been a three-term governor in Nebraska—a really interesting guy. And then Mike Greely ran and Greely a year or two before had had a terrible DUI driving to East Helena down Prospect on the wrong [way], you know, 3:00 in the morning. His blood alcohol content was three times the legal limit. So he was not gonna win.

So who do they turn to? Old Tom Judge again, and he'd lost in his own party's primary and Judge later said it was a mistake to run in '88. So they had nobody and [in] the Republican primary you had Stan Stephens, prominent broadcaster, been a Senate leader; Jim Waltermire, the secretary of state, kind of a young Republican; and Cal Winslow, kind of a moderate Republican legislator from Billings. Who knows what would have happened had Waltermire not been killed in a plane wreck, but he was in I think April of '88. So you ended up with Stephens and Judge, and Stephens had been running for two years and Stephens was a good public speaker ... as a broadcaster he did editorials on the air. He'd won a national award or two for his editorials on work comp. He was really a go-getter, and Judge was kind of, you know, last Saturday's dinner reserved and just didn't do very well.

So Stephens comes into office, and he'd been running for two years like I said. So he took three weeks off after the election and went to Barbados where his brother had a place. So they didn't get a good jump on making appointments, and he didn't pick good staff. He had a couple of appointments that blew up in his face. One was the budget director—a guy named Shackelford who claimed a Ph.D. [master's degree in economics] and didn't have one and turned out was married to two women at the same time. Then there was the health director, health and human services director, a guy named Leon Houglum, H-o-u-g-l-u-m. He'd been Winslow's

campaign manager, and he had gone—been fired late in the campaign by Winslow and then he helped Stephens.

And then throughout the summer the Winslows would get these 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. calls to wake them up, and no one would be on the phone. So they put a...the phone company put something to trace the call, and it was Houglum making these wakeup calls. And Winslow told Stephens—he said, “If you appoint him to a cabinet post which was rumored, I’m gonna come public.” And he did. So Houglum had to step down and sort of one thing after another. And Stephens was someone people thought had be a decent governor because he’d been a longtime legislator, and he really struggled. And he was running for reelection in early ’84 and January of ’84 there was a special session, and it was very contentious. He had something...they were like mini strokes, TSAs, TSIs, [TIAs] is that what it is or...something like that.

DS: I know what you mean.

CJ: Yeah and he went to the hospital and then he went to Seattle to see a specialist. He was there about a week and then I think the doctor had told him—well Stephens’s version, “I could run, but I don’t want to risk my health.” And Stan Stephens was a guy who when he got angry got flush red, purple, and—you know, he lived to be 90/92. So it was a real smart decision for him personally, and it was a smart decision politically cause the popular young attorney general, Marc Racicot, ran and he was urged to do it by people like Bob Brown and I think Bruce Crippen and some of the powers that be. All the while well while Stephens’s running mate is Denny Rehberg, and Rehberg agreed to wait. And that was kind of stunning cause he was pretty ambitious.

And then he and Racicot ran together, and Racicot won the election against Dorothy Bradley, which was probably the most interesting election I ever covered. You had two kind of baby boomer candidates that were—well I don’t know how old they were in ’92 but—well they were my age so I was born in ’48 so that’d be 44 or 4—very well spoken. Dorothy Bradley had been a longtime legislator—very articulate. Racicot had been not in the legislature but been an AG and prior to that had been the state’s special prosecutor. Prosecuted big named cases like the guy who killed a person and injured a Kari Swanson—Swenson—Kari Swenson.

DS: Kari Swenson.

CJ: At Big Sky—and so he was a big name prosecutor who’d done very well, and it was really an interesting race cause they were the first modern-day candidates to me anyway. The one thing they did is they had—and they both talked about it later. They had 32 debates, joint forums, joint appearances. They both joked afterwards they could give each other’s opening and closing. I mean they...and they probably said...they said it was probably too many, but they were out there available. And that was the first time that had ever happened. And Racicot narrowly won.

They each of them were right in the middle of another revenue crisis, and each of them said they would ask Montanans if they wanted a sales tax on a referendum. Dorothy's came up first, and she would have used a lot of the money...for more money...for education hire in education K-12 and social services. His would have given a lot more for tax rebates and lower tax rates. He won and was a pretty pop...really popular governor. He was smooth and, you know, he traveled a lot. He was very well-liked by the public as I think she would have been too. And they were...they couldn't have been more...he was very open and forthright and cruising along pretty well...easily won reelection against...oh, he was running...nobody would step up so Chet Blaylock...longtime legislator, former party chairman, ran against him and had a bad heart and ran.

He insisted on driving alone on the campaign. He'd driven a truck for Cenex in the summer for decades, and he became sick over by Anaconda driving to a debate in Missoula—a public television debate—and died of a heart attack. I remember Erin Billings was working with us...was over covering the debate and she called, "You won't believe what just happened." So I don't recall if Judy Jacobson was Chet's running mate. I think her name appeared on the ballot, and Racicot won decisively. This is like Ted Schwinden with coming in with the bill to lower the coal tax after he's been elected by a big margin.

Racicot comes in in support of the utility deregulation bill that was being pushed by Montana Power. It proved to be a disaster as you know, and it was...the bill was originally included Montana-Dakota Utilities and co-ops, and the co-ops at MDU said, "No way. We don't want any part of this." In the end it gave co-ops the ability to join it...to be part of it and the one that did came to regret it. It was Flathead Electric, and they just about went bankrupt. So it was the big issue of the session that time, and it was a real rush job.

The bill came in after transmittal. It was called a tax bill so it had come in late. The skids were greased like no other bill I ever saw. You know, the two smartest people in the legislature probably were John Cobb and David Ewer, and they led the opposition and couldn't stop it. The bill gave the...what they I think they called the incumbent utility the ability to sell its assets if it wanted. So later that year I think, it might have been in '98, Montana [Power Co.] announced it was selling its dams and power plants to a division of Pennsylvania Power and Light called PPL Montana. And then they sold the poles and the lines and stuff to Northwestern Energy, and I covered it. The guy that really covered it terrifically was Mike Dennison. He had some really good sources, and he did a much better job than I did. I'll be the first to admit that, but I covered it. Well, the first thing that happened a year or so later was Montana Power wanted to become a...essentially a phone company named Touch America with what were the power lines...or the phone lines. I'm spacing the name of it.

And they had looked at mobile television...mobile telephones which were deregulated and the prices of long distance calls really went down. Copper—fiber-optic, fiber-optic. Sorry. Well it became a huge controversy and there were a group of big industrial...big industries like refineries in Billings and Laurel, cement [factories] like Ash Grove Cement and Trident. Summer

of 2000 they couldn't get power. They were—an end run was manipulating the western power market, you know, releasing some and releasing it at really high prices. It was a disaster and at one point Touch America was in bankruptcy and so was Northwestern—the company that bought the lines. And it was kind of a two-bit utility from South Dakota that actually had sold appliances in their stores. Although I guess MDU did too. It struggled and Touch America basically went out of business; and Frank Morrison and others, Wade Dahood filed lawsuits on behalf of the employees. The nonunion employees had their 401k retirement and all ...was all invested in Montana Power stock. People lost millions total, but I mean it...I had a guy I knew who used to work for them. And he said he was okay cause his wife was a retired teacher. A friend of his had to stock grocery shelves at night to make ends meet during retirement.

So it was a horrible decision that was extremely damaging to the state. Eventually Northwestern bought the dams and the power plants back from PPL but millions if not billions of dollars was spent to restore...tried to restore the utility to what it had been. And it was...it created an enormous upheaval, and I did a much better job covering aftermath then the during. But Mike was on top of it and it was a...it was nothing short of a disaster for Montana. Mike would do stories looking at the rates of utilities in the Northwest and co-ops and the ones that were owned by cities. And Montana Power...or Northwestern had gone from one of the lowest to one of the highest, and it was a really detrimental thing for Montana because our cheap power had been an asset for businesses that did want to come here.

DS: And you had a blue-chip stock that had been a player in Montana and not only a part of people's retirements but also the political power in the state since what, 1913, 19—?

CJ: They were created [19]12.

DS: Oh.

CJ: And it was created by the Anaconda Company which needed power plants to get power to the mines and so on. It had been a huge player in Montana politics. Anaconda and Montana Power through much of that time had shared a lobbying effort. They shared a legal department. And through...I think through the '60s had what they called "hospitality rooms," what critics called "watering holes," where they would...legislators could go get free drinks and meals. And back before the legislative counsel or legislative services division was created, they did the bill drafting.

So enormous influence and power, and I covered the last annual meeting that Montana Power had. And maybe it was named Touch America by then. The stock had risen to like \$65 bucks a share, and it was in [Butte's] Mother Lode Theater and all these people are applauding. And I saw...recognized some of the old executives. They had their hands on their knees. They weren't clapping. So it was not a unanimous decision, and it made, you know, *60 Minutes* covered it with Bob Gannon, the CEO who was the chief engineer along with Goldman Sachs and, you know, was Enron involved—who knows? We still don't know the full story.

DS: Considering the economic impact and the power that they wielded, I was always surprised that there wasn't much of a public reaction or a political reaction. Or was there?

CJ: Well Racicot couldn't run again. The bill came in after transmittal, and it was a rush job and they wouldn't take any amendments. It was certainly covered extensively. But I, you know, if the public—the main opponents were a couple of environmental groups led by MEIC and their big issue was trying to get the universal service benefits at a certain rate which they would get from the utility to do conservation stuff. Idaho Power had a similar proposal before the Idaho Legislature the same year, and Idaho's legislature met annually. The Idaho Legislature which I think was no doubt Republican all the way said, "This is a pretty serious proposal. Let's study this for a year and then decide—a yearlong study." They said, "No, this makes no sense."

DS: Was that before or after Montana's decision?

CJ: Was it simultaneously.

DS: Oh wow.

CJ: So I think had [Montana] done a good legislative interim study I think it would have shown the folly of it. But the Montana Power Company wanted...they felt really constrained by being...having its rate of return limited by the PSC. And they were I think really swept away by it...looking at what was happening to mobile telephones, and it was a colossal mistake. Morrison and Dahood—they won some lawsuits and the employees got compensated, but it was a fraction of what they probably deserved. So that goes...that takes us through Racicot.

DS: This is also a time of term limits.

CJ: Term limits got put in in 1992. It was by an outfit called U.S. Term Limits and later reporting nationally showed U.S. Term Limits was largely funded by the Republicans...Republican sources. The Montana sponsor of...it was an initiative...the Montana sponsor of it was Fred Thomas of Hamil...pardon me, Stephenville. He was also the lead sponsor of utility deregulation. I think it passed 2 to 1 on the ballot in '92. Back in the day, we used to do a lot of polling at Lee. We polled on a number of times whether to abolish it or to lengthen the term limits. Support for the original term limits was always about 2 to 1. I always thought it was a simplistic solution to something that really wasn't a problem. So what you saw happening in the legislature pre term limits you would have veteran legislators that would stay in the House like Francis Bardanouve, like Bob Marks.

Well now the House is kind of a farm team for the Senate. People get to the Senate as soon as they can cause there's more influence there with just half of them and longer terms—four years versus two. There's some like Jim Keane, Mary Caferro, Llew Jones that have bounced back and forth a couple of times. So people can kind of get around it. Some people filed a

lawsuit to challenge term limits and kind of to my surprise the Montana Supreme Court upheld them. So now we have them. We have a legislature—I don't know if it's still the case. There was a period when we had the...I think Montana and Texas had the only states with biennial legislators with term limits. So it's a...you really see it up there when you see newcomers coming in and they don't...a lot of the new legislators don't have time to really learn...master a topic or it's very difficult.

DS: I was always sort of surprised or just kind of dumbfounded by the idea that executive reorganization really gave the governor power to be more accountable and to get things done. And if they hired good people, good things could happen. But and term limits took away the legislative power in a lot of ways because you lost a lot of it...expertise, over time. And it sort of left the governor really in a much more powerful position – and lobbyists.

CJ: I would agree, and it's, you know, they always say the three-legged stool and while the legislature's far weaker than it ever was before under term limits and, you know, had a pretty strong judiciary over the years. And by meeting only every two years for 90 days, you know, imagine a school board or a corporation board or a city council meeting that...I mean issues they'd never dreamed of can come up nationally or in the state and nothing can happen. And there was a period when we had a lot of special sessions, and I think governors don't want to call special sessions because it's so easy to expand them. So they might call them to deal with a problem at the prison. Bingo—they're dealing with higher education. And so they don't want to call them. I think legislators would like to call them themselves but it's thought to be...you call a special session the voters will remember who wanted to do it. So we really have a legislature that's absent for all but 90 days every two years, and I don't think it's a good way to do business. For all that everyone likes to criticize the legislature, they are the branch that's closest to the public. You know, they go door—to win a legislative seat in most parts of the state, you need to go door to door. And you need to keep in touch with your, you know, surveys or info to your voters. And it's been a...I think all in all really a disaster for the legislative branch.

DS: Over this period of time you start to see names that would be around for a long time. I mean I think of [Congressman] Ron Marlenee in the eastern district. He ran and ran many times. Racicot's long, you know, tenure. [Senator] Conrad Burns and Rehberg you mentioned, and Rick Hill. You know, so this was kind of a time of Republican—

CJ: Ascendancy?

DS: Yeah, certainly in Montana. And in some ways Eastern Montana has...was sort of solidified as kind of a Republican part of the state where it had been sort of mixed over time.

CJ: That's true and I think the farmer's union had been a real force in Democratic politics. And as time went on, it wasn't so much. I'm not any expert in ag but from what I read over time a lot...there was a lot of consolidation in agriculture. Maybe the kids don't want to follow the parents example—running a farm or running a ranch. So and the equipment is so pricey. I've

heard figures that probably way over...way more now but that a tractor...a new tractor's a quarter of a million...a new combine a half a million. So a lot of farms and ranches have been sold to neighboring farms and ranches. You also have had the practice with ranches where a lot of wealthy out of staters want their, you know, their beautiful ranch in Montana and they hire someone to run it and they come out, you know, spend a week or two there every now and again.

I mean the classic is Rupert Murdoch and Jerry Hall, his supermodel wife, buying a big ranch over in the Beaverhead at the end of last year—a \$200 million ranch. So you know ag politics...the Farmer's Union was the one that backed Democrats. The Montana Stockgrowers, solidly Republican. The Farm Bureau's solidly Republican. There's sort of a demo alternative to the Stockgrowers. I can't remember the name of them—Montana Cattlemen. But at the same time then you get Brian Schweitzer, a rancher, a mint farmer from agriculture. You look at the Democrats who've won in the last 20 years: Schweitzer, agriculture background; Jon Tester, a farmer from the Big Sandy in Chouteau County; Baucus, grew up in a ranching family; let's see, who else do we have, let's—

DS: Rehberg had—

CJ: Rehberg's family was ranching; Marlenee was a farmer from Scobey; Racicot not; [Gov. Greg] Gianforte not a ranching...he was a, you know, high tech; [Governor Judy] Marks. not from agriculture. But if you look at the election returns the last maybe 10 or 12 years or so, the Democrats don't win in rural Montana. When I started reporting, there were legislators from Libby, from Roundup, from even a few from Miles City and Glendive. Not a majority but they...Democrats would...a railroad worker would get elected from Glendive or Miles City. Columbia Falls would elect a Democrat now and again. Go across the Hi-Line, Havre used to be Ray Peck, Bob McKinney, you know, strong Democrats.

That doesn't happen now. For the Democrats to win a statewide race they have to take, you know, Missoula, Silver Bow, well I'll just use this—Missoula, Butte, Helena, Bozeman which is one of the more interesting stories. It's gone from pretty solid Republican as a county in Gallatin County to Democratic. It was one of the few counties that supported Hillary Clinton for president in 2016. Yellowstone leans Republican, but Democrats can win statewide if they hold that margin down like Tester has.

DS: Great Falls?

CJ: Great Falls lost every Democrat on the ballot. Legislative and statewide [candidates] got thumped in Cascade County in 2020. So I mean unless Democrats can figure out a way to win in those rural state...and the Democrats win the counties with Indian reservations. That's it. They win like 12 or 13 counties, and they haven't been able to carry the rest. It's very difficult.

DS: There are some other stories we could talk about through this particular time. Prison riot again in the '90s and ballot issues...lots of ballot issues. And I know you've covered a lot of those. Were there any in this period that's sort of indicative of what was happening in Montana?

CJ: Well term limits was a big one. There were tax limitation ballot measures I think in '96 maybe? And then in the '90s emerged Rob Natelson—law professor from here [UM] and he and some people formed “Montanans for Better Government” and they wanted to go after state budgets. It was Natelson and a legislator from Bozeman named Joe Bayleat, a CPA—B-a-y-l-e-a-t. They had a...they had several of them but one of them that passed...it was a constitutional amendment I believe. It was that any tax or fee increase approved by a school board, a local government, state government had to be approved by the voters. The slogan was “Have a Say in What You Pay.” And the critics said the ballot would be as thick as a big city phonebook, you know.

So as Mosquito District increases its fees out some county, all the rest of us get to vote on it. And they challenged...it was challenged in court, and the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional. And Jim Goetz was the lawyer for that. Incidentally he's retiring, and he sent me an oral history he's done with another lawyer. It's real...I've just started reading it. It's really interesting.

DS: I would think so. He's been a force.

CJ: He's been a force in a lot of that. So, oh we had some ballot issues to...I don't remember the years on this, but we had some ballot issues over the years to ban heap-leach mining.

DS: Right.

CJ: And there was a ballot measure to ban corporate contributions to...I think these were in the late '90s...to ballot measure campaigns. That was found unconstitutional. There were at least one or two concerning outfitters—giving them special permits I think. There were ballot issues on...gosh I...I mean there were usually two or...well 2004 on medical marijuana.

DS: Right.

CJ: And then 2012 recreational marijuana. I think you could make a case of the ballot issues are as import...at least as important as the elected officials elected. What we saw happening too were the emergence of paid signature gatherers that used to be just kind of advocates of the proposal—go stand in front of the post office or Walmart or Safeways. And there may even be a law that bans out-of-state paid signature gatherers. I don't...I can't remember. But you saw a lot of that.

The Realtors put one in to forbid the legislature, and it passed to implement a realty transfer certificate which is common in other states that if you sell your house or your business you are levied a certain tax on that. There were some...well some that went down early on where they call them the "bottle bills"—require deposits on bottles and cans. And they were...there were huge amounts of money spent by the beer and pop industries. They were saying that if Safeways had to collect cans, there could be vermin in the can [laughs] ...the used—

DS: They were big economic players in almost every town.

CJ: Yeah. And those went down. I remember they had stickers on the six-packs of beer and pop saying "This initiative will cost you more." Whatever. The other one I would mention is...and this was in '92...again big budget crisis. The first one didn't get a solution. Stephens has his health problems, and they passed another one in August. And the two parties, I think the Democrats had the Senate—House was Republican. And they put a ballot measure on that was a 7 percent surcharge on income, gas tax, cigarette tax, and so on. Every tax and fee had a 7 percent, and this was the idea of Tom Towe and Jerry Driscoll. I was at the *Tribune* then and one of the copy editors ... called it the "7 Percent Solution." And if you've read Sherlock Holmes, that was the cocaine. And so it became known as the "7 Percent Solution."

Well it, you know, you go to buy gas there's a little sticker on the pump, "This gasoline will cost you more because ...," and it went down big time. And every Republican voted against it. And Stephens let it take law without a signature and that really crushed Democrats. That was the beginning of Democrats [Republicans] controlling the House and then the next election the Senate. And if you look at...I'll send you this, but the makeup of the legislature since then—it's been largely Republican and often big margins.

DS: We're at the point of back in statewide politics where we have Judy Martz and Schweitzer. Do you want to talk about them now or would you like to save that for another time?

CJ: Is this probably the end of it?

DS: This and then I know you wanted to talk about reporters and people you'd helped and mentored. And I think that's a...would be a great addition to this. And—

CJ: I can talk about Martz and Schweitzer.

DS: Okay. Maybe we can do that and then maybe have a final one to talk about other people you've worked with. And I'd like to sort of go back a little bit to talk about what sort of role national politics have played in today's sort of mood.

CJ: Yeah.

DS: Cause it, you know, some of the I believe I agree when people say, "All politics are local." But there's things going on now that are...you're seeing sort of national things happen and—

CJ: Yeah, what do they say, "the nationalization of state politics." And that's certainly what I think Republicans have done.

DS: Yeah.

CJ: Well Martz gets elected in 2000. She'd been Racicot's lieutenant governor his second term. I remember the rumors had been that he was gonna pick John Harp, a Kalispell legislator. And that didn't happen supposedly cause Harp had had a marijuana arrest as a high school kid or something like that. So we were told, "He's gonna announce his running mate at the Butte Sports Hall of Fame at the Butte Civic Center." So I'm driving to Butte, and it's like, "Hmm." It's got to be Don Peoples.

Another is Judy Martz, and I'd met her a few times. She was a field rep for Conrad Burns there. I certainly knew of her reputation. She'd been an Olympic skater, and she was the nominee and the Democrats had a three-way primary in June between three state guys who'd been statewide elected officers. Mike Cooney had been secretary of state since '89. Mark O'Keefe had been the auditor for eight years before that...since '93, and Joe Mazurek had been attorney general since '93. All well-known...well-liked Democrats, but it was like, "Why are you all three running?" [laughs] And Martz beat Natelson in the primary, and Natelson had challenged Racicot in '96 in the primary. She was a I would say well intended person without a lot of real practical politics experience. And she kind of followed Stephens's example by not getting good staff around her and she paid the price.

Her campaign manager was a guy named Shane Hedges—an affable young guy, and she made him her chief policy adviser but for all practical purposes he was like the chief of staff. And he was young and pretty inexperienced at state government. So in the fall of '91, I think September, she's having an event with her consult...her national consultants and her political staff up at Marysville House. A restaurant up near the ski run...the Great Divide Ski Run in Helena which involves you drive out 20 miles and then go up the hill for about 5 or 10 miles. And Hedges is driving back at, you know, midnight or one in the morning, and he's...the vehicle overturns and he's riding with Paul Sliter—the House majority leader, a prominent young rising Republican, and Sliter is killed and Hedges is taken to the hospital. And the gossip at the time was that the first ones on the scene that followed tried to move Sliter into the driver's seat and take Hedges down there kicking beer cans in the woods. I don't know how true that was.

Anyway Hedges is in the hospital. There's a dispute between the highway patrol and the sheriff's office whether he should be released or not. She takes him out of the hospital with the bloody clothes he has on saying it's the motherly thing to do to wash the clothes. He's later charged with negligent homicide. That's where I quit covering it because my brother-in-law was his attorney. So Kathy McLaughlin covered it and Hedges I think got a sentence to something

like six or nine months in the local pre-release center. This is a weakness of Montana law. There's no database that shows what similar...people charged with similar crimes...what kind of sentences they get. There was a feeling among some that it was not an adequate sentence. Others felt it was. I don't know, but you can call and get anecdotal stuff but there's no...I don't think so yet. There's no database showing where's the feds have that, and you have the federal sentencing guidelines. There's none of that here.

Well it became an enormous controversy and her handling of it got a lot of press attention...national press attention. I was on the...working with [then Montana's AP bureau chief] John Kuglin on the FOI Hotline, and we filed a lawsuit to get the investigative files. Got them and what did they show? Well they showed Hedges was just as drunk...both Hedges and Sliter were drunk, and it wasn't a popular thing to get those and get those out. We got a lot of flak for that, but we thought it was important that people should know. Anyway I had previously made arrangements to travel with Judy Martz on her first...she did this thing that other governors have done—"Capital for a day." She was going to Laurel, and they had a bus to take them. And I'm getting the cold shoulder from everyone so I go to the back of the bus [laughs] and sit there. And anyway she...I always got along pretty well with her, but she was...she had gotten a lot of bad press since the start...even before she became governor. I think Erin Billings had asked her based on her comments if she was gonna be a lap dog for business. And she, "Oh, yeah. I'll be a lap dog for business." [laughs] And that went national and people said it was a loaded question. Well it really wasn't.

So I went on the bus and, you know, she spoke to people down in Laurel. But it just kind of snowballed, and she had lots of trouble. And we polled regularly and her job approval rating was down. I think it reached a low of like 23 percent. She brought in some new people. One of them was Chuck Butler who had been with Blue Cross. They kind of improved things, but it was...the damage had been done. She didn't run for reelection. She...I think she wanted to, but it was...there was a lot of baggage and she was I guess I would say well intended but made a lot of mistakes and didn't have the best staff around her. But she did some things that...like environmentalists should like. She gave the...she signed off on the Milltown Dam cleanup. She approved Libby being a Superfund Site.

DS: Silver bullet.

CJ: Used the silver bullet. And her record was better than her poll ratings would show, but I think that the whole Shane Hedges handling hurt her from the start. And she was kind of gaff prone.

DS: And then we have Brian Schweitzer.

CJ: So Brian Schweitzer had surfaced in 1990 as an opponent to Conrad Burns. Never heard of him before. He kind of emerged...he was a mint farmer from Whitefish who'd worked overseas, and he brought dairy cows to Saudi Arabia in a 747 [laughs] which must have been a pretty

sight. And had...he was in some ways the opposite...he was very kind of a charmer. He was smart. He was...he narrowly lost to Burns, and he really never quit running. I remember going to a Democratic convention in Billings I think in '91—

DS: 2001?

CJ: 2001...sorry. And I don't know if you ever went to the Northern Hotel, but it was a kind of a mezzanine level. And O'Keefe and Mazurek are all up there kind of waiting for...sitting in chairs waiting for people to come up to them like, "Hey, you ought to run again." Schweitzer...I went down to get a quick breakfast and some coffee, and Schweitzer's taking the coffee pot away from the waitress. And, "Hey Joe, how you doing? Let me fill that"—you know, he knew everybody by name. He never really quit running, and he was a very strong candidate. He ran in 2004. He had a Democratic opponent, John Vincent of Bozeman, and Vincent was furious that Schweitzer...and some Democrats were furious that Schweitzer had picked a moderate Republican legislator from Billings named John Bohlinger [as his running mate]. And I remember Vincent ran with Mary Sexton who was later in the cabinet for Schweitzer, but their motto was, "D2—Two Democrats." And it was an issue with some Democrats. I think it was a brilliant stroke to have a Republican, and I think it may have won him the election. You know he ran against Bob Brown in 2004, and I traveled with each of them. We usually did. You travel with Schweitzer and his plan...he shows up early at senior center before lunch...like an hour early. So they're lining up. He's met every senior lining up for lunch. Bob went to the senior center but was there at noon.

So he's there anxious to get on to the food, and he would go into a business and...or on the street. Introduce himself, you know just sort of not shy at all and would meet everyone. He had his dog, Jag, with him and they were, "Yeah, this is Jag." And Jag would do a little trick. He was a really good campaigner—probably the best I've ever seen. Baucus was probably the hardest working campaigner. I mean he...but Schweitzer I remember we had a little extra time so he goes in the Rocking R Bar in Bozeman. "Hey, every"...you know. He'd go up to peop..."I'm Brian Schweitzer." And you know, he's not shy in the least. Bob...we went over to what was it [unintelligible] in Butte and there's 30...30 or 50...about 60 people around the table. He goes and talks to the two he knows and, you know, Schweitzer didn't leave a hand unshaken and met everybody. We went over to this...the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind in Great Falls. Bob and I...and Bob went and called on the director...didn't go visit. So it was...Bob was kind of shy, smart, good legislator, didn't have the—

DS: Civics teacher.

CJ: Yeah, he's a civics...didn't have the chutzpah or whatever you say to go shake hands with them. That's what it's all about. Bob...I can't remember how close it was, but I think Schweitzer won pretty well. And Schweitzer's taking over after...well, let's see, eight years of Racicot, four years of Martzen, and four years of Stephens. And he brought in a cabinet from all over the state. He had at least one Native American person. Really kind of went out of his way to get

people from all over...not just the Helena insiders, and he was very aggressive and he was open. Every meeting was open. He said...the other day he spoke at the Con-Con thing and he said, you know, when he first got...he had never been in the governor's office before. There was a key in the door. I didn't witness it, but some reporters that he said took the key out and threw in the door. He said, "These doors will never be locked or closed." And they weren't. You could go into his office anytime. If he was meeting with corporate people or whatever. It was on his schedule. You could go in and do it, and we did. He and Ted Schwinden were by far the more successful. Racicot was pretty good too, and he was just interesting. He would...for a while there he was trying to look at a way to...he wanted a coal gasification plant, and he would take the carbon dioxide and pump it in the ground to stir—

DS: Sequestration, yeah.

CJ: And that was his big thing for a while and that didn't get off the ground. Coal gasification has to be heavily, heavily subsidized. I covered it some and there was a...the only plant in the U.S. is in Beulah, North Dakota, and it's a government run plant. South Africa had it during the Apartheid, and Hitler used it to get fuel for the tanks in World War II. So it's not an idea that's...but he pushed it. He had an energy conference in Bozeman. A lot of big energy players there. His philosophy is if a Democrat can show that he or she can handle money, they'll do well. He was...he always had these lines like, "We got to keep a little grain in the bin for tough times." He had these good lines that were, you know, pretty accurate. And he did that, you know, went through some tough times financially, but they were able to survive them. I'm trying to think what else?

DS: He was quick with the retort.

CJ: Quick with the retort.

DS: When the Republicans would attack he would knock the ball back over the net so fast that they couldn't respond.

CJ: Yeah. He had a pretty sharp crew around him, and they...I'm trying to think what some of the big issues were. Well I know that the...I think this was in '11. Might have been '09...Jim Peterson was the Senate president and Mike Milburn was the House Speaker...might have been '09.

DS: The infrastructure then—

CJ: Well this...they were far apart in the budget, and they had negotiations going on. They had a...they called it the Good Friday Press Conference...the Good Friday Agreement and they had a press conference in the Governor's Reception Room. And they'd reached an agreement to...on the budget to...they added a bunch of money...federal money, mostly. And I kept saying to Peterson and Milburn..."Well what did you guys get out of it?" "Oh well, yeah...we think we got

a deal here.” “Well what’s”...you know, they got a get of jail card. They got...and Schweitzer had totally mastered the ...he was very good with budgets. He had good budget directors in David Ewer and Dan Villa. He was...I’m trying to think other things...I should have prepped on this. I—

DS: Well he used his veto a lot. I mean—

CJ: Yeah. I had gone back in to...when Judge was governor, he vetoed a lot of bills. And I went into the vault of the secretary of state and I had a spreadsheet that went back to 1919 or something like that. Schweitzer would veto and he’d say, “Chuck, that’s a record, isn’t it?” But the most famous time was I think in ’11. We’d done a story that he’d applied for a branding license—it said “Veto” and I said, “Oh, you gonna veto some bills.” And he said, “Sssh!” So he had this press conference out in front of the Capitol, and he had a barbecue going and three sized branding irons that said “Veto.” And he’d have a staffer put the front page of a bill up on a...on kind of a clipboard or something like that. And he’s, “What do you think, Bill? Is this where a small...no let’s get the...it’s a big one.” So he’d get the big one. [Sound of match striking.] It’d light on fire. Well, the coverage of that went national and made great video, you know, to see the flames. Well, it just drove Republicans nuts cause he didn’t have the votes to pass a lot, but he blocked a number of their bills. Particularly ones to restrict abortion, to tax bills, that sort of thing. And—

DS: That would prove to be sort of the strength of the governor’s office for Steve Bullock when he handled...and he followed Schweitzer into that. Did Schweitzer sort of set the table for Bullock do you think?

CJ: Yeah. In some ways although I think Bullock was trying not to be Schwei...he wanted to be his own person. And Bullock had been AG and worked with Schweitzer. I don’t think they were ever close buddies or anything. As AG one of the things Bullock did, and it kind of moved into his governor’s term, [was] campaign finance. And they...you had the emergence of a group called initially ...Western Tradition Partnership and then it became American Tradition Partnership. And I did the first story on it. Someone slipped me a copy of this letter that went out. [Former Congressman] Ron Marlenee and I think John Sinrud, a legislator from Kalispell, were the two names on ... They were raising money. And it sounded like it was gonna be against environmentalism.

Well they start showing up and we found out later what. It was sort of a fund by the National Right to Work—they kind of posed as an anti-environmental group. And there was extensive litigation that ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court a couple years after its Citizens United ruling came down against the Montana law that was passed in either [19]12 or ’14. It was called the Corrupt Practices Act that forbade corporations from giving to campaigns directly. And this was probably Steve Bullock’s legacy as attorney general, and he won at the [Montana] Supreme Court level. And then it went to Washington, and I don’t think they even had an oral argument. It was one legal expert told me that the court ruling came down. They said it was like a pimp slap, you know.

And so that...that was a huge setback for Montana trying to control corporate influence in political races. But Bullock had the same...he was sort of the backstop against a lot of Republican bills similar to the ones that passed the last session. He vetoed I think even more than Governor Schweitzer did. I wasn't there. I left in '15 so I didn't cover the last five years but that was...and there were more budget, you know, budget issues from time to time. But that's kind of a continuing theme. The revenues run short and sometimes it's federal. Sometimes it's...we rely heavily on natural resource taxes, you know, so if oil prices drop, coal prices drop, that kind of thing.

DS: And maybe this is something we can save for a final time but part of the sort of more conservative Montana would be that a lot of things that had passed fairly easily in the past like building bills, bricks and mortar kind of things, became objects that a real controversy.

CJ: Absolutely and there were a series of for lack of a better word "infrastructure build projects." And to that required bonding and to bond takes a two-thirds majority in each house. Got through the Senate fine...they couldn't...there was a group of about, you know, 15 to 20 Republicans in the House that wouldn't go along with it. And that would have funded university buildings like Romney Hall, the historical society building, and I sort of jokingly referred to them as the "cash and carry Republicans." They were against bonding even when the interest rates were 1-3/4.

They had hearings where one of the guys that testified was the number two person at Dick Anderson Construction. He said, "When interest rates are this low, we don't buy heavy equipment. We rent it, you know, it's way cheaper." [laughs] But they wouldn't do it and that was a frustration for Bullock for sure. Although he finally got the Montana Museums Act passed in 2019, I think. And that provided for a slight raise in the bed tax with monies going to museums, and they finally got an appropriation for the Romney Hall building in Bozeman. Yeah there was a feeling that this group in the House did not support infrastructure and study after study showed, you know, there are bridges and highways that needed repairs. I think the national trade association for engineers gave Montana a "D" rating for infrastructure. There were...well maybe we've seen it with the [laughs] flooding near Yellowstone.

DS: I remember some frustration from folks I used to know out in the oil patch.

CJ: Yeah.

DS: Who figured they'd sent a lot of money to Helena and were—

CJ: Not gotten much back.

DS: Yeah.

CJ: So on Bullock...Bullock was a different kind of leader than Schweitzer. Not as colorful but I think a pretty strong governor. And then was reelected against...who'd he run against? I can't think of who he ran against? Let's see—

DS: Gosh I'm going blank too.

CJ: Roy Brown.

DS: Yeah.

CJ: Right?

DS: Yeah. I think that was one of them. I'm trying to think is second one.

CJ: First one...the first one was Rick Hill. The second one was Roy Brown.

DS: Yeah.

CJ: He barely beat Rick Hill, and Hill had been a congressman for four years and had been chairman of the Board of Regents...the Board of the Workers' Comp Board of Directors. Roy Brown had been a Billings state rep.

DS: Oil.

CJ: Oil and gas guy. Or did Schweitzer—

DS: I'm getting a little confused **[unintelligible 2:15:12.6]**—

CJ: Schweitzer may have beat Roy Brown.

DS: Yeah. I'm trying to think of who the—

CJ: He called him "Big Oil Roy," I think was...who did Bullock beat? Sorry.

DS: We could check. [Bullock defeated then-Congressman Greg Gianforte in 2016.]

CJ: But and so then...maybe we can...and then Bullock ran for president in 2019 and 2020 and, you know, fared very poorly in Iowa and then dropped out. And then he had said a 100 times in press conferences he had no interest in running for the U.S. Senate. And then Barack Obama and Chuck Schumer and all pushed him to run for the Senate. He ran and lost.

DS: I never understood that presidential bid. I mean other than his work with the National Governors' Conference, what gave him a national platform?

CJ: I don't know. I don't know. We may want to briefly touch on this too going back a ways. Max Baucus announced in the spring of '13 he was gonna leave the U.S. Senate. And then in early 2014, I think, he resigned and then President Obama appointed him Ambassador to China. And then the governor appoints a Senate vacancy, and he appointed his lieutenant gover...Bullock appointed his lieutenant governor, John Walsh. And then Walsh was running for reelection in '14 ...or for election in 2014, and the *New York Times* reported that he had basically plagiarized his master's thesis at the Army War College which was about a 14-page paper. So he resigned under great pressure from the Montana editorial writers saying this was awful. And they put in...oh, gosh...the woman who's now the head of the...took Eric Feaver's spot...Amanda Curtis.

DS: Yeah.

CJ: And Steve Daines who'd been the congressman won pretty easily. Who did Bullock beat? Don't know.

DS: We'll figure it out. The other player here on the national level here who's had some success despite...and it's always close is Jon Tester. He's a phenomenon.

CJ: Jon Tester is kind of like Lee Metcalf. He wins but barely, and Metcalf famously said, "All I need is 50 percent plus one." And, you know, he used to make comments about...that, "Mike Mansfield and I vote the same on 99 percent of the issues. He wins with 65 or 70 percent, and I get 50.1." And Tester beat Conrad Burns in 2006. Have you read his book?

DS: Tester's book?

CJ: Yeah.

DS: No, I haven't.

CJ: It's called *Grounded*. It's a good read.

DS: Is it?

CJ: Yeah. Tester was—

DS: I've tried to avoid memoirs in the middle of careers. [laughs]

CJ: Well he's got a message for how Democrats need to win rural parts of the country and rural Montana. He...I don't know if he started out the race as a favorite, but he was running against John Morrison—the two-term state auditor who was very aggressive going after, you know, insurance and securities scams. Kind of a handsome guy...scion of a family that, you know, his grandfather was governor. His dad—

DS: His mother too was—

CJ: His mother was a prominent lawyer. John was a prominent private lawyer. So there've been this rumor out there that Morrison had had an affair with a woman who was the wife of a guy who was sort of accused of being a con man. I think his name was Takke, T-a-k-k-e. And his...he was trying to raise money for this idea he had. So if you went to an arena for a concert or sports or whatever, they would have these binoculars built into the back of the seat in front of your...and the usher would show you to your seat and then say, "Would you like binoculars?" And then you'd put your credit card in. And I always thought, "Well if you want to go into a game, bring your own binoculars." But anyway so the criticism was that Morrison should have recused himself cause he had had a personal relationship with this guy's wife. Oh, it was before they were married or after? I don't remember.

So Mike and Jennifer and I did the story, and it was a pretty devastating story. And I went up and interviewed the Mrs. Takke...her name was Harding...Laura Harding or something like that. And Morris...then we wanted to interview Morrison the next day, and he brings his wife in and we're in this little cramped little conference room in the basement of our office. The three of us and George Lane with his camera. Mrs. Morrison's kind of tread...she's not happy about it all. Anyway the story was...ran and there was a lot of about...I did a follow up call and when I called Larry Sabato of University of Virginia who puts out a newsletter. And I called...I think I talked to Amy Walter of the *Cook [Political] Report*, and they said, "Oh yeah, you never went after a scandal like that." Well then came the next week and then meanwhile, John Adams was at the *Missoulian Independent*, and they did a good story. And it was like hint, it wasn't about the sex. They were saying it had a lot to do with the decision.

So at the next...the debate at the *IR* in Helena was at Carroll College. The *IR* put it on. And supposedly Schumer had told Tester, "You better not make an issue of this." I don't know if that's true or not. But anyway Tester says, "I'm the only one who can go belly to belly with Conrad Burns on the ethics issues." And by this time, the whole Jack Abramoff scandal had blown up in Burns's face where a couple of his aides went to the Super Bowl on Abramoff's private jet. And (Burns, not Tester) was raising a lot of money from Abramoff...Abramoff and his clients. The third candidate was a guy named Paul Richards who was kind of a...had been a one-term legislator...kind of a...had freelanced...kind of a gadfly. And he had the best line of the campaign, he said, "Jon, from the look of things you could go belly to belly with anyone in Montana." [laughs] So that became the way that Tester would raise the issue at appearances. And then you'd in your stories, you'd have to say that was a reference to John Morrison.

Well he beat Morrison and it was a pretty bitter primary. And then he's running against Burns, and Burns made some decisions that he probably came to regret. One of which was a story that we did. There had been a fire east of Bill[jings]...a forest fire and this outfit called the Virginia Hot Shots, an elite firefighting group had come into do it. And they put the fire out after quite a while and they're in the Billings Logan Airport with...waiting to go back to D.C. to go

down to Virginia, and Burns is in there. Burns comes over to him and tells these guys, “You sure did a shitty job fighting the fire,” and some other profanities. We get a tip that this had happened and called the Forest Service, and we got this expurgated report that...and then we later find out that there was a real report...what he actually said and got that. So all of a sudden there are bumper stickers “Fire Burns.” All this is breaking, so you had the Abramoff, the fire fighters, and then his kind of gratuitous comments about women and African Americans and Arabs. It all kind of...it all kind of came back to haunt him in that race, and Tester narrowly won and I think...and that was...and Conrad Burns always blamed the press. He also blamed—there was same day voting starting that year and kind of everyone was at fault but him, and he really keyed in on my colleague, Jennifer McKee. Although all...Mike, Jennifer, and I all covered aspects of it, and she had done some stories about him trying to...something to do with trade and minimum wages in some country.

And after he lost, he would...our office was then at Capital One Center across the street from the capitol on 6th, and Burns’s office was in the same building, and then Tester’s office still is in there. He would come in and blast Jennifer, and I’d say, “Senator Burns, Mike and I would have done the same story she did,” “Well, I couldn’t get a fair deal from you guys.” I think by then too all the papers endorsed Tester. He was very bitter about it all and then he came in one time unannounced after Tester had taken office and wanted to meet with me on a Saturday when the session was going on. I said, “You might not want to come in here. Tester is having a grand opening of his office.” So he was very, very bitter and blamed everyone but himself.

DS: Is that surprising? I mean—

CJ: Well I don’t know. Burns’s record was pretty interesting. He was on Senate Appropriations Committee, and Baucus was on the Senate Environment and Public Works. They brought probably together more money into the state than anyone ever had. But he, you know, he would tell off-color...make off-color comments and the Abramoff thing was a huge national story. I think *60 Minutes* did something, and he always pleaded ignorance. But you know, it was some pretty hard-hitting coverage of it all. And he took it very poorly, and he’d also said he would only run for two terms and then ran for a third term. And Tester barely beat him and then Tester the next time beat Rehberg.

DS: Right—

CJ: And then Rep. Rosendale would...Trump coming out here four times. So Jon Tester is kind of the modern-day Lee Metcalf. He wins, but he doesn’t win by a lot. Oh they beat Rosendale I think by 18,000 or 20,000 votes.

DS: The Rehberg race was another tough one that he lost from what I recall. Mostly because he couldn’t carry Yellowstone County.

CJ: And fire played another role there. Rehberg's family had a ranch on top of the rims, and he turned that in to kind of a subdivision and there were fires up there in some of the homes. It took...and Rehberg filed a lawsuit against the city of Billings over the...saying that the fire department had done a bad job, and again, that totally backfired. That was in '12, so the same year that Obama was reelected—same year.

DS: That he was...I remember him not...he wasn't very...I mean it's difficult to lose. But, you know, with Burns and Rehberg both there was no sort of...they were angry and they blamed the press and—

CJ: Yeah, the press got a lot of...and I think again with Rehberg...you'd have to go back and look, but I think most of the papers endorsed Tester. And there was definitely a feeling among Republicans they weren't getting a fair shake from the press. Rehberg was on the House Appropriations Committee, and I think he came back fairly often too—maybe weekly. But for whatever reason, he didn't do very well.

DS: Yeah. Well the Lee Bureau sure covered a lot of stories. [laughs] A lot of—

CJ: It was a busy time.

DS: —scandals and you had some...you had a...you were gutsy and so was your staff.

CJ: Well and maybe next time we can talk about the Lee poll, but our...I'll just say now our...we wanted...the editors and us wanted to get the poll as soon we could to the, you know, as close to the election without being that clo...you know, right on the day before. And our last poll in '12 showed Hill slightly ahead, and Rehberg tightly...it narrowly had about both were within the margin of errors. We always were right on the AP style guide that said if it's less than...if the lead is not twice the margin of error, you have to say it's basically a tie. Which we did, but everyone...the headlines and stuff, you know, "Hill, Tester Lead." We got a boatload of crap for that poll, and we were really upset with it. And the editors wanted to have a conference call with the pollster, a guy named Brad Coker with Mason-Dixon, and we did.

I went back and looked at all of our polls from 1990 or 1992 on and how close they were. And you know they're not supposed to be predictive, but everyone takes them that way. They were pretty good early on, but I think the pollster said he needed to poll a bigger sample size and he wasn't getting enough cell phone...people with cell phones which was starting to be the norm. To do it right it would cost triple the cost and that was the end of the Lee poll.

DS: And even today response rates are so low it's hard to do.

CJ: Oh yeah. I think the whole polling industry is going through sort of an existential crisis because, you know, you hear these theories like, "Republicans lie." It's like...I just think people don't want to answer their phone. And it takes many times the calls to reach the people you

want. But we, you know, I was prepared to say, "Let's just drop it." But we wanted to hear the...when he said that it would cost it'd be triple, it was like, "Nah, don't think so." And that was the editor's view and I agreed. But those were...those were some really good races. Bullock that year...Bullock versus Hill, and Tester and Rehberg, you know. You had big names running almost every time.

DS: Well maybe we'll stop for today and—

CJ: Okay.

DS: —and pick up later when we wrap it up. Maybe be an hour long session, and I'll be glad to come to Helena to do that. We could do it at the library again if you want.

CJ: Whatever works, yeah. That'd be—

DS: Yeah, it's not hard.

[End of interview]