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Oral History Number: 396-020
Interviewee: Tim Babcock
Interviewer: Bob Brown
Date of Interview: April 29, 2005
Project: Bob Brown Oral History Collection

Bob Brown: We're interviewing Tim Babcock and Tim Babcock was, of course, a member of the state legislature from Custer County, I believe, in 1953, and then from Yellowstone County in 1957 and '59 sessions. He served as lieutenant governor in the '61 session and then was governor of Montana from 1962 through 1968.

Tim, it's certainly good to be able to conduct this interview with you. In terms of your background, where did you grow up?

Tim Babcock: Well, actually, I was brought to Montana when I was six months old by my dad and mom. They homesteaded near Glendive. They proved up on 160 acres of land and that was a pretty tough time growing up during the Depression times. We stayed there, and then I went to high school in Dawson County. From there, I went to California. In between times, I had a little dance band and we were going to play our way to California. I played the sax and clarinet and my cousin played the piano accordion. We trained a guy to play the drums because he had the car. We got as far as Salinas and I had to sell my sax and we got into Los Angeles and we had my clarinet for breakfast. But I had a friend down there that was working for Douglas Aircraft and I eventually got on at Douglas Aircraft. I remember I got on the second shift making 52 cents an hour. From there, I had made some progress in working my way up the ladder and was kind of in charge of raw stock when I finally went into the service.

BB: This would have been early in World War Two?

TB: Yes. Because I was working in an aircraft factory, I was deferred a number of times. I think about the fifth time they were going to defer me, I thought I just better get in. I was beginning to feel a little uneasy about being deferred. So I went back to...We sold our house in the Pacific Palisades, went back and...

BB: You and Betty were married at that time?

TB: Yes. We had a little girl at that time too. Lorna was born at that time. Went back and went in Dawson County at Glendive. Then the next nearly three years I was in the service. I was fortunate, I guess, to get in after they had taken Le Harve. I didn't go in on D-Day, but I got in on the edge of the Bulge. I was part of the units that finally closed the Bulge. Fought our way across Germany and was there when we took the Remagen Bridge.

BB: So you were involved in the Battle of the Remagen Bridge?

TB: Yes. I got a citation, a bronze star, for that action and three battle stars. After the war was over, that gave me some extra points. I didn't realize it at the time, but I had enough points where I wasn't scheduled to go to Japan, which some of my buddies were. Of course, events prevented that. But after I got back, I went back to Santa Monica to just kind of check with Douglas, where I had left. They wanted me to come back seemingly in the worst way and had a job for me and a promotion. But for some reason, in the short period of time I was gone—the traffic and the business and the highways—I thought I just don't believe we want to live in this kind of environment, nor do I want our children to grow up here. So we went back to Glendive and my father-in-law had a couple of old trucks. He was starting to try and build a truck line. So I went in business with him and we started from there, working night and day, pretty much, for about three years. We finally established a growing truck line. We were hauling petroleum and petroleum products. It was during the time that I lived in Miles City—that was in the middle of our trucking area—that I got involved in JCs and Toastmasters.

BB: That's the Junior Chamber of Commerce, right?

TB: And the Junior Chamber of Commerce. That was, yes, the JCs, Junior Chamber of Commerce. And Kiwanis and anyway I had a strong belief that everyone should give some public time to the community they lived in and I got busy doing that. I think I overdid it a little bit because some of my friends said you should run for the legislature. I've got to admit that I was very green in the legislative process and I had a lot of learning to do. But fortunately I was elected.

BB: That was in 1952?

TB: 1952, yes, I served in '53.

BB: And you ran as a Republican.

TB: As a Republican.

BB: Why?

TB: I remember when I had not been too involved in politics and didn't pay too much attention and I sometimes think of the fact that I could have been a Democrat. I don't think I would have been a Democrat very long, but I could have started out that way. But I was nominated and elected; served that session. It was at that time that I became acquainted with Don Nutter, who was in the Senate. We became fast friends then. We seemed to have some things in common and he was a great orator and he was an attorney and had been state chairman and had served in the senate and had flown the Hump and just was a truly great guy. Anyway, we struck it off real well. Then I came down with hepatitis and the pipelines were coming through and they knew I was going to have to move to Billings. So I was defeated during that time. It all kind of happened at once. But when I got to Billings, why, Yellowstone County...

BB: You ran for election in '54 and you were defeated?

TB: Yes. As I said, I was ill at the time and they knew I was having to move. But then my friends in Billings encouraged me to run from Billings, Yellowstone County, which I did and was elected twice from Yellowstone County.

BB: 1956 and 1958.

TB: Right. Then after serving three years, instead of a complete tenderfoot I was brought into the hierarchy of the Republican management group, you might call them. They were the old heads of the Republican Party to decide who should we nominate for governor. I recall that we were in Jorgenson's and I think there were seven or eight of us.

BB: Jorgenson's is the restaurant and bar here in Helena.

TB: Restaurant here in Helena. We were talking for about two or three hours and the name of Don Nutter kept coming up and so it was finally decided that he should be our nominee, at least we should ask him and see if we could get him to run for governor.

BB: Tim, do you remember some of the other people who were involved in that discussion?

TB: Yes, we had Bob Corette was there, George O'Connor was there, Earl Moritz was there, Elmer Schye was there, I was there, Leonard Eckel was there—Mike South.

BB: George O'Connor had been a legislator. I think he'd been your seatmate in the House of Representatives. Was Speaker of the House.

TB: I've said many times my first session when I came up here I didn't quite realize that a freshman senator wasn't to be considered too greatly to elect the speaker. But I had a speaker that I had known in Billings and so I started to campaign for him and almost got him elected. I remember the old heads told me a little later that they said we'll teach that young whipper-snapper. We'll set him next to George O'Connor. I'll never forget that because that was rewarding to me. George and I became very, very good friends.

BB: George had a tremendous mastery of the rules, I understand.

TB: He gave a dissertation to all of the newcomers each time they'd come up on the Senate and House rules. He knew them by heart, but in addition, he had a real good head on him and had a nice manner about him, but very persuasive on things he believed in. But it was a great privilege of my life to have been able to sit beside George and learn the process of the legislature.

BB: Then he went on to become the president of the Montana Power Company?

TB: Yes. In addition to meeting him in the legislature, I was in the trucking business and he was in the pipeline business. My trucks hauled a lot of his pipes, so we became business friends and then he later on became president of Montana Power.

BB: Now you mention also Bob Corette was involved in that same luncheon meeting and Corette was an officer also, wasn't he, in the Montana Power Company?

TB: I think he was their counsel. I don't believe he had any other official capacity. Of course, his brother, Jack Corette, was president of the company for a period of years.

BB: You mentioned Elmer Schye, who was a legislator from White Sulphur Springs.

TB: White Sulphur Springs. Elmer Schye was also a very good friend of mine. I think of him often. He was kind of the jokester of our group. He was an intellectual jokester, but we used to kid him a lot coming from White Sulphur Springs and he always had some great anecdotes. I remember one time he told me building the bridge in Glendive and the union was picketing him. He said, "I went to work there one day and they weren't there and I called them up and I said, get yourself down here. I don't want anybody to think I made up with you." He had those kind of humorous aspects and was tremendous, great guy.

Of course Leonard Eckel was a lifelong friend of mine. He was the managing director of the Montana Motor Transport Association, and at that time I was in the trucking business and so we became fast friends. He was very active in politics too. He helped me in many ways. We just became real good friends. But he was active politically and I think a lot of my political success was through his being able to assist me in many areas.

Anyway, I was designated to go down and talk Don Nutter into running for governor. As I said, the reason I was elected, I think, was because I was flying my own plane. So I went down to the airport, got into my little airplane and got up to altitude and was sitting there thinking of all the things I should say to Don Nutter to convince him to run for governor. I had called him and he met me at the airport. We went back to his office. I started telling him all the reasons why I think he should run and I thought he could win and I think I reasoned with him for about a half an hour and finally he said, "Well, I'll run if you run for lieutenant governor." That was the farthest thing from my mind. I didn't have any aspirations other than two months out of every two years in the legislature. I could do that. It was a slow time of my trucking business. So then he started to sell me on the fact that the time I would give if we were elected would be no more than when I was in the legislature because you were only required to be in Helena if the governor was out of the state and the other duty was to be president of the senate at that time. That's no longer the law. And so finally I almost had to say yes to get him to run for governor. So that's the way that started.

BB: But you ran as a team with him. The constitution then didn't require that candidates run as a team, but you and Nutter were perceived as running with each other, I think.

TB: Yes, we were breaking some—I don't know whether it was rules or whatever. But we liked each other and we kind of said if one of us wins and the other doesn't, it just isn't worth it, so that's why we teamed up.

BB: Did you have a primary?

TB: Oh yes. Don Nutter had former congressman D'Ewart was running.

BB: Wesley D'Ewart.

TB: Yes, Wes D'Ewart. I had three. I had a Dr. Crissey from White Sulphur, Anderson from—no, no, let's see, Crissey was a Republican—it seemed like I had three. Both Nutter and I were nominated fairly handily and were successful in the general. I beat out Senator Anderson from Libby and, of course, the opposition for Don Nutter was Paul Cannon.

BB: Who was the lieutenant governor.

TB: He was lieutenant governor. One of the reasons, too, that we wanted to run as a team is we had just watched the discord between Lieutenant Governor Cannon and J. Hugo Aronson. Of course, he was Republican and Cannon was a Democrat. That didn't make for too much harmony. So if either one of us were elected, we didn't want that to happen and that's one of the reasons that we decided to run as a team. I thought it was quite successful. We campaigned pretty much in my Bonanza. I had an airplane at the time, so we were able to travel all over the state and put on a really, I thought, a pretty good campaign. In fact, we must have—we were elected.

BB: And that was in 1960, of course. So then Governor Nutter only lived for about a year.

TB: Mmm hmm. I served as President of the Senate that one term.

BB: 1961.

TB: In '61. And he was governor. And then the fatal crash was on February 25th, '62. So that was a...

BB: Just tell us briefly about that. Governor Nutter was, as I recall, he and two or three members of his staff were flying in a National Guard plane—it had been a WWII military vintage plane—as I remember, to a speech in Cut Bank. Is that right?

TB: Yes, he was en route to Cut Bank. There was a little more irony to this. I had flown my plane up to Kalispell to take a speech for Governor Nutter because he somehow or another had two of them at the same time. But the next morning, coming back and flying back, the wind was so rough that I was fearful that he was going to take this old Beechcraft that was—I don't know

what the vintage was, but it was awfully old. I had ridden in it once and didn't think it was very safe. I was fearful he was going to take that.

So I was going to leave my plane because the air was so rough here in Helena and take the train back to Billings. I called the governor's office and I told them that the air was terribly rough and that I didn't think you should take that old plane. And no, they said he was going to take the DC-3. I was kind of relieved because it seemed like nothing could happen to a DC-3. Sure enough, some of the wind shears that day sheared his wing off of the airplane. I was just getting on the...I was down at the depot getting on the train when I was paged. It was asked that maybe I better not leave town because the governor's plane was down. So that started a transition of my life and as I said, probably the only governor that took office crying because it was a terrible personal blow. We had been such good friends and he was doing such a good job. I, of course, liked my job. It was the best political job there was. And so then I became the Chief Executive Officer and...

BB: Who swore you in?

TB: Chief Justice Harrison.

BB: You left the depot and where did you go?

TB: I went back to see Mrs. Nutter.

BB: Up at the Governor's Mansion.

TB: At the Governor's Mansion. We were...

BB: Her name is Maxine, I think?

TB: Yes, Maxine.

BB: So you went up and it had been confirmed that Governor Nutter had been killed at that time?

TB: Yes. I gave her the final word. You know, there was hope for quite a while and then finally there was no hope left and I remember having to tell her. That was a tragic thing to have to do. Terrible for her and for all of us. Everything seemed to be going along so well and everybody was getting along. It took a little while to acclimate myself to it.

BB: Then the Chief Justice came up to the Governor's Mansion and swore you in?

TB: No, I was sworn in at the reception room in the Capitol.

BB: That same day?

TB: I think it was the next day—yes, the next day. That was at night. So that, as I say, started a new leaf in my life that was a big page to start with.

BB: Tim, I think I remember you telling me somewhere along the line that Governor Mark Hatfield from Oregon was very helpful to you in this regard. How did that happen?

TB: Mark Hatfield came down on his own. He just got a couple of his aides and said let's go down and help. He was governor of Oregon. He really did give us a lot of help, and then left a couple of his staff members. I remember after talking to him the next day—he stayed a couple of days—he said, "Well, there's sure no need for me to be here. I think you've got everything well under control," and I, of course, thanked him profusely because it was nice of him to come down. One of the reasons he came down is that they had had three of their state officials go down in an airplane a couple of years before, and so he had kind of gone through it and wanted to let me know of his experience and to see if he could be helpful.

But my term of office, it seems to me, was rather smooth. Maybe I was oblivious or something, but when I think of the problems today, even though many of them are the same, it didn't seem like we got as cantankerous as they seem to do today and it's kind of interesting today. Not only did we go through kind of a stormy session, they're having a stormy session back in Washington. I am quite fond of history and I still keep up on the affairs of state on the national (scene). I was National Committeeman for the Republican Party for some 12 years.

[Robert Line enters]

TB: Come on in! You know, Bob Brown.

Robert Line: How are you, sir?

BB: Great.

TB: Are you tuxing up?

RL: Well, if you're going to squeeze into that damn thing, then I'll squeeze into mine one way or another.

TB: Alright.

RL: Okay. You're not going to wear a suit tonight, are you?

TB: No, I don't think so.

RL: No, I don't think so either. No, we're not going that way again.

TB: I hope not. Two nights in a row with a tux. My goodness.

RL: We got our tractor out there loading today. Orders from Jerry. He has one.

TB: Oh, really?

RL: Yes, so we're set. We went and got it this morning.

TB: Oh, did you?

RL: Blade on the back. We can grade the road and do our thing. Nice to see you.

TB: Nice to see you.

RL: All right, my friend.

TB: All right, partner.

[Robert Line leaves]

BB: Who was that, Tim?

TB: Bob Line. I thought you probably...I think we're back on...

BB: Okay, so you were just mentioning that you felt that the issues maybe weren't quite as intense and politics wasn't quite as contentious back in 1963 or 1962, rather, when you first became governor.

TB: I really don't think so. I think even the campaign against Forrest Anderson was...We had our little barbs going here and there, but I think we dealt mostly in facts. I came out for a sales tax, I guess, as you might remember. I was getting a little concerned that we didn't have enough money to properly pay the right wages to the university. The university system was having trouble to start with. So there wasn't enough money to do the job I thought we needed.

BB: Now, but this wasn't until 1967, I think. Is that right?

TB: Yes.

BB: So you had been governor during the '63 and '65 sessions and this problem apparently had occurred to you as you had been governor and you finally decided to propose a sales tax in the '67 session.

TB: Right, because, as I said, we didn't have enough money and property tax was too high—they are today. We need sales tax today probably worse than we did then. But nevertheless, I remember at a governor's conference talking to some of the governors and they found out Montana didn't have a sales tax and I could remember some said, "Well, how do you run your state without any revenues off a sales tax?" I said, "I'm afraid it wasn't too well." So anyway, I blame myself somewhat of the sales tax being that political. Of course, taxes of any kind isn't very palatable to the general public but I thought we really needed to do it and it was the right thing for the state, but that seemed to be the thing of defeating me. And that's all right, because Forrest ran a pretty clever campaign. I can kind of be amused by it now, but I remember his campaign was "Pay More: What For?" It worked pretty cleverly against me, and I didn't...

As I say, I want to take some responsibility for it becoming politicized because I didn't sell it right. I didn't emphasize the fact that it would be a replacement for property tax, which it was. I just didn't press that hard enough and I should have. I've thought of it many times that if I'd have done that right we would have had the sales tax this whole time. Of course now it's become political and the Democrats are against it and I think the Republicans generally are for it. But it's never going to be put on if it will go to the people because the general people are not going to vote a tax on themselves.

BB: Now Tim, you succeeded Governor Nutter after the tragedy of his death in 1962, and then you ran in your own right in 1964. You had mentioned that when you and Don Nutter ran, you ran as a team. In 1964, the Republican nominee was a fellow by the name of Ted James from Great Falls, but he had a contested primary against Frank Hazelbaker.

TB: That's right.

BB: Did you take a side in that? Did you take an interest in that?

TB: No, I didn't. I really tried to stay out of that one. Ted James was my...Frankly, we were never very close. I suppose it could be partly my fault because Don Nutter and I were so close that I don't think a combination like Don Nutter and I could ever happen again. And Tom and I didn't quite eye to eye in a lot of things.

BB: You and Ted?

TB: Or Ted, yes. So we lost and I remember one of the things. When I came out for a sales tax, I remember Ted James publicly saying it's an albatross around our neck, so he wasn't very helpful in that campaign.

BB: But then he ran against you.

TB: He ran against me when I ran for re-election.

BB: He was elected lieutenant governor in '64 when you were elected governor in your own right for the first time. And then you mentioned maybe you didn't have as good a relationship with him, certainly, as you and Nutter had had, and that he was somewhat critical of your leadership in regard to trying to get a sales tax passed. And then he actually ran against you in the primary in 1968.

TB: Yes, in the primary. In the primary he only carried his home city of Great Falls, but nevertheless it made it difficult.

BB: Caused some disunity in the Republican Party and that sort of thing.

TB: Tom Selstad was the candidate for lieutenant governor.

BB: Tom Selstad was also from Great Falls, like Ted James was, a young state representative. So he, then, was your running mate in 1968 and the Democratic nominee was the Attorney General, Forrest Anderson, who used the sales tax as an issue against you. And his running mate was, I believe, state Senator Tom Judge.

TB: Tom Judge.

BB: Who then went on and defeated Selstad.

TB: Yes. But it was a good campaign. I had been there seven years and every once in a while you need some new blood.

BB: Did you have any issues to use against Anderson?

TB: Well, just the general ones: being a Democrat and being a spender and so forth is the philosophy I always thought...

BB: But he was able to mitigate that by the fact that you had come out in support of the sales tax and his slogan was "Pay More: What For?"

TB: Yes, every time...I remember the ad he'd have in the paper. They'd show a refrigerator and they'd say that it cost so much and Tim's tax was so much. It looked like we were going to buy a refrigerator every day or something. But they did a good job. They called Forrest Anderson "the sly fox" and he was foxy, there's no question about that.

BB: Now, Tim, I want to jump back a little bit if I could, because you spent some interesting and memorable years cutting your teeth in politics back in the 1950s. I'd just like to check your memory about perhaps your impressions of Governor Hugo Aronson.

TB: Well, you know, after you got to know Hugo for a while, you just admired the guy. I was always in a little awe of him because of his brogue and his background, coming from Sweden. It's a shining example that if you apply yourself and you work hard, which he did. He started in the trucking business and then he started to haul oil field equipment and he was in the oil field business and of course at that time the trucks and the equipment was pretty primitive compared with the trucks that I was buying. He used to kid me about being—I forget what the phrase was. Anyway, he let me know that the way he drove trucks and the trucks he had to drive and put up with was far inferior to what I was doing today. I forget the phrase; it was kind of funny. I really admired the guy.

I remember we had a faction in the legislature that, because I was in the trucking business, they were always threatening a ton-mile tax. The Democrats controlled the legislature and they finally got it passed. So I took it down to Hugo Aronson and he said, "Well I'll be damned. I'll tell you what, we'll wee-to it," which he did. [Laughs]. Gosh, I'll never forget, he came back and the Democrats couldn't override the veto. But he was a man of his convictions. He was honest as could be. I'll never forget the time in Billings that he introduced the candidate at that time, Dick Nixon. It went on quite a while and it got funnier than it can be. I remember I was watching Dick Nixon and Dick, of course, had a smile on his face. Finally, when he got done introducing him, why, [Vice] President Nixon said, "You know, I'd sure like to have you join the campaign." [Laughs].

But there's some other interesting things while I was in office, of having met and made so many good friends, presidential friends. I really, truly was privileged to have met. I first met General Eisenhower when I was a freshman governor. We were having a Republican function at the Gettysburg Farm in Pennsylvania that as he retired, he retired to a farm in Pennsylvania. I still, to this day, can't figure out, but we got to visiting more so than normally you would. You know, when you're talking to somebody like that you don't want to take all his time, but he seemed interested. And I was an old doughboy and he was general of the Army. I often thought, you know, as I was slogging along, I'd never get to meet a general, and here we were conversing.

BB: Do you suppose that's why he was fascinated with his conversation with you? Maybe he hadn't had very many opportunities to just talk to a guy that had been an infantryman in his command before.

TB:: Yes, could be. There was something that I didn't completely figure out, but we did like each other and seemed to interest each other. But the nice part about it, when he moved to Palm Springs, he invited me to come down. So I visited him three or four times, had lunch with him, played golf. He was a real nice person, really.

BB: What did he want to talk to you about?

TB: Well, he was still interested in government and how it was getting along and how the party was doing. Of course, we both knew a lot of people that was in public life and we would discuss

them. One of the things that he talked about...It wasn't by my coaxing, but after you'd get him playing golf, he replayed the game as we were having lunch and he still had the old army language. When he missed a putt, he'd be profane with himself in the regular army lingo. But he did love that golf game. One time when I was down there he said, "Tim, do I call you governor?"

And I said "No, call me Tim." I said, "Should I call you president or general?"

He said, "No, you can call me general." [Laughs].

Anyway, he said, "You know, I used to like to pass out silver dollars for souvenirs and things. I know you had the silver dollar in Montana. Do you think you could still get me a hundred silver dollars?"

I said, "I'm quite sure that I can."

Of course, it was that time we were kind of starting to fade out of the silver dollars also. So when I got back home I went down to the bank and got out a hundred silver dollars and wrapped them up in an old cigar box and sent them down to him. And about two weeks later, here comes this check for a hundred dollars from Dwight D. Eisenhower. I, of course, didn't want to cash it. So the next time I was down—I think it was just a couple weeks—and I said, "General, if you just don't mind I'm not going to cash that check."

He said, "Well, Tim, I wouldn't want you to think I'm a damn fool. You can do whatever you want."

So I got his check for a hundred dollars in cash, which I prize. And I've got some correspondence between he and I that's really kind of nice to keep, a nice keepsake.

Then, of course, Richard Nixon I really liked. We became really close friends. When we were having a governor's conference in Washington, D.C., and Nelson Rockefeller was running for the nomination, as well as Dick Nixon. Dick came to me and he said, "I'd like to have you come out for me. Nelson Rockefeller is saying that he's got all the governors." And I said, "Oh, boy, I'd be pleased to do this and I want to do it, but it would seem to me like it might even show a little sign of weakness, this little state of Montana coming out for you. But I think I can get some of the other western states too. But if you need, you can say that I'm supporting you."

BB: Now Tim, you knew Rockefeller.

TB: Oh yes, very well. He was governor while I was governor.

BB: How did you know Nixon and why would you have been more prone to support Nixon than Rockefeller? What was the connection to Nixon? What was the motivation to go with him? Because you had to stick your neck out somewhat.

BB: Yes, well, to me Nixon was a brilliant person. While he was vice president is where I got to meet him a couple three times.

BB: But you were lieutenant governor, you were a state legislator, when he was vice president.

TB: No, I was governor at the time.

BB: Well remember, though, he was Eisenhower's vice president, so he stopped being vice president in 1960.

TB: Yes, I think that's where I met him first, when he was vice president.

BB: Okay. Do you remember your impressions of him and meeting him and that sort of thing?

TB: Yes. Of course, to me...I know a lot of people think that he was kind of hard and cold and indifferent. But you get inside of that kind of a crust I guess he had, he was fun. I remember when he came to visit me here when he was running and I had him over to the mansion. He stayed all night at the mansion. It was kind of funny when Elsie, our cook, who was probably the nicest person in the world and was so nice to us, and she said, "Well, what should I fix him?" Being on the campaign, this roast beef and chicken and roast beef and chicken trail. She made some wonderful salmon loaf. I said, "Why don't you make him some salmon loaf?" I'll never forget, she couldn't hardly believe that the presidential campaign designee was going to come by and she was going to feed him salmon loaf. But anyway, she did, and after his third helping, why, she felt good about it. But I don't know what it was, but I liked Dick Nixon. As I say, I'm the first governor to come out for him. Then I got with Wyoming and Nebraska and a lot of the other western governors came out for him too.

BB: So that was probably pretty important in terms of getting Nixon elected.

TB: Well I think it was, because Nelson [Rockefeller], you know, had all of the eastern block people. I liked Nelson. We had fun together too. I'll never forget one time, I think we were in Denver at a governor's conference and there was Wyoming, Cliff Hansen, and Bob Smiley, who had Idaho. There were three or four of us sitting and having breakfast and Nelson came over and talked to us. We were talking about a few of our problems that these small governors had. I can see that old Nelson is kind of smiling and he said, "Let me tell you guys, compared to New York, you just don't have a problem at all." And he would list through, you know, how much garbage you had and the population. They had so many Puerto Ricans and the ethnic groups. He made us all feel good, I'll tell you that. But I liked Nelson. Nice guy. I think maybe his money made him a little too liberal for a lot of the guys. But he was nice and I enjoyed him. We were on a trip together. We had a governor's conference on a ship to the Virgin Islands that sailed out of New York. His cabin was about three doors from mine and Ronald Reagan was just the next door of mine. So we got very well acquainted with Ronald Reagan. He and Nancy, they were just wonderful people too.

BB: Now Ronald Reagan was briefly a candidate, also, for the Republican nomination in 1968, wasn't he?

TB: I think he was in the mix, I'm pretty sure. I can't recall entirely, but yes. Of course he gave that great speech for Goldwater. That's where he became kind of to be reckoned with, because he made a lot of sense and had a charm and intellect about him that people just generally liked. I remember when they first mentioned his name, before I got to know him. My first image was the movie star, you know. I heard him speak a couple of times and there was more than movie star in his makeup. He had some wisdom and he had a plan, he had a role and he pursued it and didn't waver. He was a great guy. But then, of course, Agnew was his vice president.

BB: Nixon's vice presidential choice, yes.

TB: Nixon's.

BB: And he was a governor too, wasn't he?

TB: Yes, he was governor of Maryland. That was a kind of an interesting thing that happened. I was at...President Nixon wanted Wally Hickel and I to be the chairman of the 11 western states.

BB: And Wally Hickel was the governor of Alaska.

TB: Yes. So during the convention in Miami, he had us all together. There was, I don't know, about eight of us I guess, because there was other district chairmen. So he said, "Now, when we have this sixteenth ballot or something, I am quite sure I'll get the nomination and I'd like to have you all come up to this room in the Fountainbleu because I want to talk about the vice president." I think that was about 11 o'clock at night. Anyway, we went up to his room and started talking about who would be his vice president.

BB: And there were eight governors—or eight, not necessarily governors, but eight of Nixon's key people from around the country.

TB: Yes, they were the main people in his campaign. But I remember, oh, we went through a whole bunch of names and it was about two o'clock in the morning and finally Nixon turned to me and he said, "Tim, how about Spiro Agnew?" And the thought ran through my mind, "Well, you know, when I see old Spiro tomorrow I'll tell him he was under consideration." Nixon had him picked I'm sure.

BB: Until then he hadn't come up much in the conversation?

TB: His name hadn't come up, but of course, I really liked Spiro and, again, it's one of those things where you unintentionally get thrown together at different functions and so forth and it seemed like he and I were put together. He, too, was a brilliant sort of a person. I felt terribly bad when he got into problems. I guess in those times—and I think he was from Maryland—that corruption had been going on for almost forever. But anyway, he got entangled in that. But

I did visit him a couple of times when he moved to Palm Springs. But I'll never forget that, when he said, "Tim, how about Spiro Agnew?" and I just knew that I was going to tell Spiro that he was under discussion. I'm watching television the next morning and here comes the choice of President Nixon, or candidate Nixon, or Spiro Agnew as his choice.

BB: Now Tim, he apparently took the advice of the group under consideration but he didn't announce any decision that evening when he met with them. And do you remember what your response was when he asked you about Agnew?

TB: Of course I liked him. He was an intelligent person. Spiro was really a sharp, intelligent guy. Too smart to let have what happened. And so I liked him and I gave him my evaluation of him. I thought I said, for one thing I thought he'd be very loyal to you and I think he's smart and I think he gives a little ethnic flavor to this. And so I gave him quite a buildup because I...And on the minute, I wasn't just...Maybe it had a little something to do with it, but I just kind of think that he had his name in the back of his mind.

BB: But when you left you were surprised the next morning when you saw it on television.

TB: Yes, I was really surprised.

BB: Do you remember who you thought it might have been?

TB: Well, I don't now, but there were quite a few. I think we went through 15, 20 names to come up with the right one.

BB: Now you were governor during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson. Did you ever meet him?

TB: Oh yes. The picture on my wall—

[END DIGITAL FILE A]

BB: Did you ever meet him?

TB: Oh yes. The picture on my wall says "To Governor Babcock from his friend." I was at the White House three or four times when he was...He was very kind to the governors. He'd bring them back and brief them. That was during the Vietnam War. I remember one time I was there with Westmoreland. Let's see—is that Westmoreland there? Yes.

BB: I see some generals in the picture, some military officers, yes.

TB: I remember when he introduced me to him, he said—because I was supporting Johnson in the Vietnam War—I remember when we introduced me to Westmoreland, he said, "He's one of us." And then he had Betty and I to some function—I forget what it was—but Lyndon was

always kind to the governors, bringing them back and briefing them. In fact, when we had an exchange with the Japanese—10 governors would go over to Japan one year and the next year 10 would come over—and while we were over in Japan he sent his plane. He said, “I’d like to have you go down to Vietnam and bring back your impressions.” So they flew us down to Saigon and we stayed a couple days in Hong Kong—I think a plane problem or something—and then we went on to Saigon. Then he sent Air Force One to pick us up. So I remember there was a little humor.

When we went into General Westmoreland’s dinner that evening, why, they had a nice big porcelain elephant, a little stand, and I told his aide, I said, “Gee, I’d sure like to get one of those.”

He said, “You can get them here easy.”

And I said, “Gee, could I get about three of them.”

“Oh,” he said, “sure.”

So I paid him the money, got the...They were all crated, of course, and they kept telling me there’s plenty of room in Air Force One so whatever you want to take back, why, you can do that—[Tim answers phone]: Yes. Why don’t you run over...Can you do that? Yes, or you run them off at the office, you meet me about one o’clock—one thirty. Thank you. Bye—Where were we?

BB: We were in Saigon and you were buying porcelain elephants.

TB: And of course the good natured gibing was that I had a herd of elephants in the bay. I remember I brought one back and I gave one to George, George O’Connor. It was a nice...But yes, Johnson was...

BB: Tim, before we leave this, the other governors in that group—there were 10 of you?

TB: Turned out to be nine. Chafee, the father of the senator was there, and Reed from Maine, and of course my good friend Bellman.

BB: Henry Bellman from Oklahoma?

TB: Yes, nice, nice guy. And another nice, nice guy was Cliff Hansen.

BB: From Wyoming.

TB: Yes. Nice person. We had a good group. And then the—

BB: Was Governor Romney in that group?

TB: Yes, Governor Romney was on that. They took us by helicopter and we flew around the Mekong Delta area and I was taking pictures all the time. I happened to get this picture of

Romney, kind of a distinguished person anyway, and he was looking down and on the other side was a machine gun. They had a machine gun in both doors and they were open, of course. And it just happened to be a picture that you catch once in a while that's really exceptional. He had kind of a ruddy face, and so I had it enlarged and when Nixon appointed him the head of HUD, I went to see him one day and gave him that picture. I think it hung on his wall there until he left. But Romney was on that. That was the trip that he said he got brainwashed by the military.

BB: He ran for president, I think.

TB: Yes, he ran for president.

BB: And he made the comment—this was in 1968 and we talked before about you supported Nixon in 1968 and that Reagan ran briefly and that Rockefeller ran, and I think Romney also ran briefly.

TB: I think that was the year he ran.

BB: And so a reporter asked him questions about his thoughts on the Vietnam War and he made some reference to the fact that he'd been brainwashed and that was the result of the trip you were on.

TB: That's right. I was there when he said it.

BB: Is that right?

TB:: Yes, yes. They were having, you know, the press was following us around. We were all together. We'd have a briefing and they'd ask questions and we'd tell them and that's when he made that statement in front of one of the press conferences we had.

BB: And that just killed him as the presidential candidate.

TB: Yep, for some reason that's like coming out for the sales tax. [Laughs].

BB: That really hurt him. So if I asked you to use one or two words to describe Eisenhower, one or two words to describe Nixon, and one or two words to describe LBJ, what would you use? First, Eisenhower—how would you briefly describe him?

TB: Well, of course, you know, Eisenhower is my hero. He'd be the guy that not only did -- I think he did a great service to our country -- but I liked him personally. Of course I did Nixon too. I got to know them all really quite well. I met eight of them. But Johnson was always good. Ford was always very kind. In fact, the last big dinner they had, that he had before he left the White House, Betty and I were in attendance, he invited us in. But President Nixon used to

always be very kind when I was back in Washington working for Occidental. I kind of think whenever they had an empty place or something and didn't quite fill everything up, why, he asked me to come over. I went to, I don't know, six or seven state dinners and met the King of Jordan and Westmoreland and whenever he had some dignitaries, he'd...But he was very nice to me that way. I was invited to his State of the State. I had kind of a nice position watching that, and that was kind of an experience too. You sit there and watch all of the senators and representatives and of course, the Supreme Court.

And of course, knowing Reagan was fun too. When I had the Western Governors' Conference in West Yellowstone when I was chairman of the Western Governors' Conference, why, of course Reagan came in a Jet Commander. Remember he'd never fly, and I guess he finally realized that he was just going to have to after he was elected governor. He came in a Jet Commander and I'll never forget he was telling me, "I guess air travel is here to stay." [Laughs]. We outfitted all the governors—there were 15 or 16 of us—with western clothes and hats and I gave them all a 20-dollar gold bolo tie. In fact, that chair I got in the next room is the one he gave me. He gave all the governors one.

BB: Reagan gave all the governors a chair?

TB: Yes, Reagan. He was a nice guy. He was fun, too. He could joke, you know, and you get out by yourself and tell stories and so forth. Great guy.

BB: Tim, going back to the fifties again, we've talked a little bit about Governor Aronson and you've shared your impressions and your warm friendship with Governor Nutter. You served with a fair number of state legislators back in the 1950s in those three sessions that you were there. Are there any legislators, Montana state legislators, that kind of stand out in your mind?

TB: Well, of course there was a lot of very prominent people in the Senate and the House. When Jerry Anderson was Speaker of the House, we—

BB: Jerry was Majority Leader, I think.

TB: Yes, he was Majority Leader, you're right. I became very good friends with Jerry and he provided some leadership. So did Rex Hibbs, a senator from Yellowstone County. There was a number that were very competent, very good senators and House of Representatives. I don't recall them all, but they...Earl Moritz, a senator from Lewistown, contributed a great deal. Had a very level head. So did Brenner from Beaverhead and George Gleed from Beaverhead. George used to fly with me once in a while when I'd take a solo flight in my Bonanza. We went down to Acapulco right after one session. He and Fred Broeder. Fred Broeder was another nice guy. Fred went to Alaska when I flew to Alaska with me in my little plane. But we had some good people in those days. I sure can't remember them all, but they were statesman.

BB: How about, not a legislator but a memorable figure, I think, in Montana history during much of that period of time was Wellington D. Rankin.

TB: Oh yes. I had heard of Wellington D. Rankin for years and I never met him until about the second or third session. He was always kind of an enigma. I finally got to...Heard so many stories about him, I thought I'd like to meet this guy. So Leonard Eckel took me up to meet him and I remember that he was everything I didn't think he was. That's when he had all this old office in a building downtown. I remember getting in the elevator and it was one of those electric...It would spark and shudder and finally it would get you up to his office. He kind of became...

BB: His office was in disrepair, I understand.

TB: Oh, it was awful. You know, he had a bunch of ranches and he had harnesses and work gloves and it was just strewn around. But I'd heard about him, what a great attorney he was. I was looking forward to going up into his pretty spacious office.

I got in bad with him. He used to use a lot of prison labor on some of his ranches and this one guy that he was using was...I think he was charged with manslaughter in Louisiana or someplace. Of course, it's pretty well an agreement between governors that if you got somebody that you need to have extradited there's no question but that you do it. Well Rankin came up and made a big pitch about why I shouldn't extradite this miserable rascal. I think he thought, you know, "Because I'm Rankin, he'll surely want to do this." But I extradited him and the remarks that I got later that he made about me weren't very kind.

BB: Is that right? So he had a pretty forceful personality?

TB: Oh yes. He was well thought of as far as an attorney. His ability as an attorney was pretty good. In fact, I think he would have been the top attorney in the state at that time.

BB: But he ran for public office several times and never was successful.

TB: Yes. Never successful. He was National Committeeman for a while. But he ran for, I believe, the Senate one time. But he didn't have the outward charm. He was kind of rough-hewn and smart, really maybe brilliant, but he didn't have that acceptance for some reason.

BB: Historians, I think, have written some about the great influence of the Anaconda Company in the economic affairs of the state and political affairs of the state. I don't know whether, as with many things, maybe that's exaggerated somewhat. Perhaps there's truth to the fact that the Anaconda Company had a significant influence in our state's politics and maybe even a controlling influence in our state's politics. What are your impressions from when you were a legislator in the fifties and then lieutenant governor in the sixties.

TB: I mentioned I was probably as green a legislator that ever arrived in Helena. I had been warned about, gee, you know, these lobbyists would take a hold of you, or don't listen to them. I thought to myself that sounded kind of peculiar. When I got to Helena it didn't take me long to pick out my friends and people who I thought had good judgment. Whenever I had a problem on either an industry or whatever I would talk to the lobbyist. In fact, I'd call them. No one can go to the legislature and know all of the facets of what goes on. You just can't cover that much space. But they wouldn't come to me. I'd go to them occasionally and say, you know, "I know that you're representing the Anaconda Company and I'd like to have you give me some facts and figures and taxes and what." I never found them ever unreasonable.

It's no question that they had a pretty good hold on the state, but of course, they were probably the biggest industry in the state. A lot of the...The adage back then, if it was big it was bad. That's in a lot of people's mind. Of course, the Anaconda Company was big and they had a number of people working for them as lobbyists and so forth. But I never thought they were over-demanding. They needed to live and make money, which they did. They were helpful to the state. Same thing with Montana Power Company. They were good citizens and paid a lot of taxes. But like any legislature; there's got to be lobbyists that's going to represent various economic factors of the state. And a lobbyist alone can only make a mistake once to you. They know they've got to give you the truth. I never really caught any of them trying to give me any false information. So I generally respected them.

BB: I guess just because of what you're indicating is because of their bigness they were presumed to have a controlling influence. But they obviously had some important influence, didn't they?

TB: Yes, and should. As I said before, I think they were probably the biggest industry. Maybe the railroads were bigger. No, I think that the copper industry was the biggest. And so they had to protect themselves from being over-taxed. They've had a lot of problems with their labor. I remember one of the problems I had during my term in office is when they had the big copper strike.

BB: This is when you were governor?

TB: I was governor. I got together with the governors of the other five or six states, because it was Arizona and Utah and Montana and New Mexico, I think, that shut the whole copper industry down. We finally got them all talking together. But when you're in a company that big you've got to protect yourself. You've got to be part of the legislative and administrative...because of your vast interests.

BB: Some of their key lobbyists were Al Wilkinson. Did you know him?

TB: I knew Al. They had Democrat and Republican lobbyists. Lloyd Crippen was a Republican. Lloyd was a nice guy, always honest. Ask a question, you can depend upon it. In fact, I still talk to Lloyd every now and then. His wife just passed away, so. I keep in touch with him.

BB: If you had a question perhaps about a status of a bill or when a hearing might be scheduled or that sort of thing, were those lobbyists helpful in those kinds of regards too?

TB: Well, I don't recall...A lot of these bills, of course, affected them and I'd counsel with them and they'd counsel with me. Usually they weren't too hard to decide what was best for the state or what was best to do. I never had trouble making my mind up. Maybe it wasn't always right, but I didn't labor and bemoan these decisions. You have to make that your job.

BB: When you were governor, of course there were many decisions that crossed your desk and there were many big issues, as well as when you were a legislator. Is there an issue or two or three that when you think of your long life in politics...We've already talked about the sales tax. Are there any others that kind of are prominent in your mind, either when you were a legislator or when you were governor?

TB: Well, there were so many and I never did really...I guess you'd call them problems, but there were always agricultural problems, like they're having today. They were drought and land management was always a big problem. Of course, the metal mines tax and the tax on coal. That usually was the biggest problem. And the environmental movement was starting when I was first in office. It got to the point where we were suffering economically because of the restrictions placed on our timber and mining has brought us down. When I was in office again, and it's far enough ago that I wouldn't say this to be bragging at all, but we just seemed to get...We were in the top three quarters in our economy of all the states. We never had any real, real serious problems that I could recall.

BB: The Montana economy, statewide, was much stronger then than it is now.

TB: Yes, we were doing fine.

BB: What do you attribute to the difference between then and now?

TB: Well, of course, our mining and timber and everything were growing along pretty good. The employment was up. I think we were growing. During my office, during my time, we put together a centennial train and took it to New York and stopped along the way and got our cowboys and Indians out. We made quite a tour. We had twenty-five cars with seventy-five horses. It was quite an entourage. That started the tourist industry. I'm not so sure the tourist industry is what we want to depend our livelihood on too much. I just don't think it's...However, everybody seems to want to come out to Montana. I don't think our business climate today is as good as it was then.

BB: Certainly you don't have as much mining or timber as we had in the 1960s.

TB: No. And I think we need to revitalize that. I think the president's speech last night was...We've got to start developing more coal. I never could figure out why we shut down the nuclear industry, because of one little incident. I think we need to get that going again.

BB: Now I'm just going to ask you for your thoughts and observations on a couple more folks. We've already mentioned Congressman Wesley D'Ewart. Did you know him?

TB: Oh yes. I knew Wes real well. If you could be too nice a guy that might have been his problem. He was very sincere and kind of a quiet-spoken person. I think he was a very wise gentleman, and gentleman is the word to use because he was always a gentleman.

BB: He'd been a congressman in the forties and fifties.

TB: Yes, and a good one too. He had done well for the state and was well-respected. I can't imagine why he didn't run. I don't think he was defeated, I think he decided he wanted to run for governor.

BB: Well, but remember he ran against James Murray for the U.S. Senate in 1954.

TB: Oh, you're right, that's right.

BB: I think that was a pretty hotly contested campaign.

TB: Yes it was, if I remember right. But I remember when he ran for governor in the primary. He had, not a whole lot of money, but it was 1,500 bucks and his campaign committee came over and gave it to Don, Don Nutter, so that's the kind of a guy he was. Nice person.

BB: Did you ever have any experiences with Senator Mansfield?

TB: No.

BB: Senator Metcalf, of course, you ran against him.

TB: I was kind of persona non grata back in Washington. I remember I went back to see the senator and I kind of now forget, but it was pretty important. Anyway, he said, "You know, just because I'm the Majority Floor Leader it doesn't mean I can do anything." It disturbed the hell out of me. I thought that doesn't seem to be the way that you ought to treat somebody. I was governor at the time. But there was never any warmth there. I guess the time we were together the most was when we had a float in the Rose Bowl and started our centennial in Burbank. We all got together on the Rose float and sat next to each other at the football game. But I was never close to Mansfield.

BB: Mansfield had kind of an aloof personality anyway.

TB: I thought he did. I'm sure he must have had his warmer moments, but he never seemed to be that way with me.

BB: Then Metcalf, did you know him before you took him on for the U.S. Senate in 1966?

TB: No, not very well. He came on about the time the environmentalists started to show their muscles and so forth. So he was a great environmentalist and the environmentalists were kind of shutting our state down, so we didn't have too much in common.

BB: You had some pretty deep philosophical differences with Metcalf.

TB: Right, sure did.

BB: Now, Congressman Jim Battin, of course, was congressman back in Washington during that same period and you probably knew him. In fact, you served in the legislature, didn't you?

TB: Yes, we served two sessions with him. Yes, Jim was a sharp young man. When he was back in Congress I thought he did a good job while he was there. It was a tragedy that [inaudible] he had Dick Nixon appoint him as a judge. We lost that seat.

BB: Yes, that's when John Melcher went into the House of Representatives. Did you ever work with Battin on any issues?

TB: Oh, yes. It seemed like we correlated our things that involved Montana, you know, of course, naturally. But on any laws that were passed and we counseled back and forth. I went back to see him several times on issues that he helped me with. But, yes, he was a good congressman and we got along fine.

BB: Congressman Orvin Fjare.

TB: Old Orvin, of course, he was manager of my campaign when I ran for re-election and then was re-elected.

BB: 1964.

TB: Right. Then he had been State Advertising Director, I believe, before that. But Orvin had a great ability. Great speaking...He was a great orator and just was a good guy. But I think that one year he was in there, with the exception of his position on the Yellowtail Dam, which, incidentally, later on I hauled all the material to build it.

BB: Fjare opposed the construction of the Yellowtail Dam?

TB: Yes.

BB: Now apparently his Democratic opponent was General LeRoy Anderson, who supported the development of the Yellowtail Dam. I found that kind of curious. That happened in the early 1950s, I think, or the middle 1950s. Today, as we speak—now, this is 2005—generally, Republicans are for development and they're for creating more power and they're for creating more jobs. Democrats generally, for reasons of protecting the environment, would be against a big development like Yellowtail Dam. Is that the...?

TB: I think that's right. The nuclear power that we've been idled on for 20 years is just crazy. France has 40 percent of their entire power nuclear. The thing about it is it's clean. I don't think we've lost one person. We had that Three Mile Island or whatever it was, but I don't think anybody was killed there except maybe one. When you think of all the fatalities that's been in the refining business and the other businesses, it's just infinitesimal. But I kind of think, and the president mentioned last night in his speech, that we need to develop nuclear energy. You're right, the power plants down in Colstrip, that was done through a Republican administration. [inaudible] were generally Republican. We just believe in creating jobs and doing things for the state.

BB: Why do you suppose Fjare opposed Yellowtail Dam?

TB: You know, he just got some bad advice. He had a young guy that was managing his campaign for some reason, who advised him against it. I never could figure that one out. That's one that I can't get the answer to, other than that.

BB: That was probably the issue that defeated him.

TB: Yes.

BB: Now, Tim, we've just got a few minutes left on the tape and I know you've got an interesting story to tell about Governor Marc Racicot. I'm a contemporary of his and knew him well. We're about the same age and we served in different aspects of politics, but at the same time. But you have a rather interesting and unusual connection with him.

TB: Well, really I do. It started way back when I started the trucking business after I got back from the service. That was in Miles City. He was the new coach.

BB: His dad, Bill Racicot, was?

TB: Yes, his dad Bill Racicot, because Marc was only two. We became...We lived not too far from each other. I don't know how we got thrown together the first time, but we became very, very good friends. I used to drive their bus once in a while, their football bus. I remember one time I

took them to Rapid City. He couldn't get a driver or something. All of a sudden he'd call me and I'd always help him. But Marc was about two. In fact, when they had the twins, one of the twins was named after me—Tim. He's up in Missoula right now coaching.

BB: So that would be one of Marc Racicot's brothers was named after you.

TB: Yes, because we were that close.

BB: Now, Tim, Bill Racicot was a pretty outspoken Democrat, as I remember, Marc's dad. And you were a young guy just kind of starting out, but probably identified as a Republican at that time. But you were still good personal friends?

TB: Oh yes, very good friends. I can classify Democrats. They probably wouldn't like me to do that, but you know, you've got a lot of conservative Democrats and Bill was one of those. When Marc...I lost track of Marc. I visited him a number of times when they were in Libby. In fact...

BB: Because his dad, Bill Racicot, was the basketball coach in Miles City. Then the family moved to Libby and his dad became the basketball coach there. Marc was probably just a toddler, I suppose.

TB: No, he was on the team. He was a forward.

BB: How old was Marc—he was a little boy, wasn't he, when the family moved from Miles City to Libby?

TB: Yes, I think he must have been four or five or six or something like that. I knew him first when he was two.

BB: You have recollections of him when he was two?

TB: Yes. His family...One of the reasons that he turned out to be a great guy is the discipline that his dad and mom gave him. I remember when he was a little kid and had to get a chair to wash dishes. They had him wash dishes. We were both poor, that's one thing that brought us together. I was just starting the trucking business and he was just starting coaching, Bill was. His dad had a great sense of humor, was a very pleasant person to be around.

BB: Bill Racicot had the great...Marc's dad?

TB: Just a nice guy. Then when they lived in Helena we would get together quite a bit.

BB: So but you did reconnect with Marc a little bit when they were in Libby?

TB: Yes, oh yes.

BB: That's when you were governor, wasn't it, by then?

TB: Yes. They wanted me to come to the playoff, which they won, in Butte. So I was pleased to be there. Then I lost track...

BB: So you saw Marc win the championship game?

TB: Oh, yes. They were hustlers. Of course, old Bill would make them hustle all right, but they won it. I was pleased that I was able to be there because it kind of made them feel good too. Then I lost track of him and all at once here is Racicot running against Haswell, the Chief Justice that I appointed. I called Marc and I said, "Marc, I can't support you against one of my appointments." He lost that one. And then the next year...He didn't counsel with me on any of his political decisions at that time. He ran against another one of my appointments, which I didn't think he'd do. It wasn't a big appointment, but...

BB: Local district judge.

TB: It was Loble.

BB: Judge [Lester] Loble, yes.

TB: I call him again and I said, "I can't help you on this one either. I appointed him to a commission." And then the third time...He ran a third time and lost. He lost three times. Finally...

BB: Tom Honzel beat him, I think, for judge about the third time he ran.

TB: I think you're right, yes, it was Honzel. Anyway, when the attorney general's position opened up, I said to Betty, "Get Marc on the phone. This is his time." And so we talked to him and he said sure. I'll never forget that one morning I'd called some business people in Billings and I said, "I've got a young man coming down I want you to meet. He's running for attorney general and we'll have lunch." So I got a hold of Marc. We had my big old Lincoln and we stopped at McDonalds and we got one of those breakfast biscuits, whatever it is, and took off for Billings. Had this meeting with about ten business people. That's all I had to do. You just introduce Marc. He'd sell himself.

BB: Made such a powerfully good first impression, yes.

TB: Yes, sure. The next morning I took him to Great Falls. I got some guys like Bill Scott and a bunch of the guys up there. Same thing, you know. They formed a club right there for him. And then when I found out that Stephens was not going to run again, why, we did it again.

BB: He was elected Attorney General.

TB: Two times, yes.

BB: And then he replaced Governor Stephens. Governor Stephens had the health episode and couldn't run and he was elected governor in his own right and served two terms as governor.

TB: Right.

BB: Now Tim, we're near the end of our tape here and I do remember too that, as it turned out, you became the Republican National Committeeman from Montana so you were a member of the Republican National Committee at about the time that President Bush requested that the Republican National Committee make former Governor Marc Racicot the Chairman of the Republican Party for the whole nation. I think you got to make a nominating speech, didn't you?

TB: I nominated him twice [laughter] back in Washington. He filled out that term and then filled another term. I've had kind of an interesting experience.

BB: But you got to stand up as a member of the Republican National Committee and nominate this guy to be Chairman of the Republican Party of the whole country who you remember as a two-year-old toddler.

TB: That was really quite a stretch, but I enjoyed doing that. Of course, you know, he was so competent. And then the chairman that came next, Nicholson, I nominated him. He was elected. He came to me and he said, "I'd like to have you nominate me," because he had been a National Committeeman from Colorado and I was National Committeeman from Montana. I said, "Well, golly." He said, "One of my candidates I'm running against is a governor and I'd like to have you, as a governor, nominate me. I think I'll win on the fourth ballot." [Laughs]. I nominated him and, sure enough, on the fourth ballot he got enough votes to be elected. He became ambassador to the Vatican. He sent me a book that he had written about the Vatican. It's still laying on my desk. He's now Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs.

BB: A member of the president's cabinet.

TB: Yes.

BB: Anything you want to say in conclusion?

TB: Well, nothing I can think of. Of course, after I left office I went to work for Occidental Petroleum on their international division and traveled the world, pretty much. I totaled up the countries I've been in. I think there was 35 that I've been in traveling around the world. I like to travel. Of course, I had my own plane. I did a lot of traveling. I flew from Alaska to Acapulco. Then when I got the Baron we were going to fly to Africa. I had a trucking contract down in

Panama and my brothers were running that, so this was when I was in office. We flew down there. I had a pilot with me. We flew across South America and we were going to meet at a point called Recife and the weather turned bad on us, so I sent the plane back but I took Pan Am and went all through Africa and around through Athens and Greece into Egypt. So I did a lot of traveling and so I hope to think that I've kept myself active constructively and still read until about two in the morning.

BB: I know too, Tim, that you mentioned that you feel it's important to do public service. You and I, when I lived here in Helena, always went to the Kiwanis Club meetings together and you've always gone to the Pachyderm Club meetings and I know that you're the kind of a person who actually helps out on projects and things like that too.

TB: We try. We built the Colonial here, you know, in '70, right after I got out of office. It's kind of funny. I'll look out over the Sleeping Giant and I labored for quite a while to put an antenna up there when I bought the radio and television station. So that gave us real good coverage in this area where before it wasn't very good at all. And we've done some things like refurbished that old governor's mansion. That was kind of nice. I got the Broadwater property now that we're going to make. It looks pretty nice out there. I get a lot of compliments on it. It looks like it's a park. And I enjoy that. Part of the community.

BB: I don't know. The tape is probably about to run out, but you mention the old governor's mansion. So after you had left office as governor, for several years you and Betty remodeled the old territorial Governor's Mansion. I think it had been a convent at one time when it was an old mansion.

TB: Yes, we bought it from Carroll College.

BB: And so you restored it beautifully and when Governor Stephens had the health episode that he had—he had some kind of seizure in the Governor's Mansion, and a day or two later decided not to seek reelection after all. That was when Marc Racicot stepped into the picture as the Attorney General and announced that he would then run as a Republican candidate for governor. I remember that announcement was made in your house.

TB: I think it was.

BB: I happened to be here in Helena at the time and I got contacted by somebody that said, "Meet me at Tim and Betty Babcock's house for sure this afternoon at four o'clock," or something like that. There must have been two hundred of us crowded in that house. I remember the rooms were kind of small because it was an old mansion. There were a couple of staircases in it. Marc couldn't really stand where he could see everyone or everyone could see him, but he had that prosecuting attorney's ability to project his voice well. And of course he just had this huge event occur in his life, and yet he was so beautifully poised, so articulate. He remembered the names of people and he spoke about them that he couldn't even see from

where he was standing in the room and just did such a beautiful job. I know that I went away from there that night...And of course you were the person that had got us all organized and got us there that night so he could make that announcement. When I left there, I thought, "Boy, there's no question about it. This guy's going to make it."

TB: Yes, a very confident guy. He'll be a good part of history.

BB: Thank you, Tim.

[End of Interview]