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Interviewee: George Dennison
Interviewer: Robert “Bob” Rydell
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Bob Rydell: Here we go. So, just very quickly, Bob Rydell from Montana State University Department of History. This is an interview with President George Dennison, pertinent to the 125th anniversary of Montana State University, and more than a century of history, and the MUS system [Montana University System]. So I'm here in Missoula in the archives [Mansfield Library's Archives and Special Collections] and looking forward to a good conversation about many things pertaining to how higher education has developed here over the last 25 years. We can go back farther than that if you like.

George Dennison: Glad to be here, Bob.

BR: Well, I just so appreciate your making the time to visit with me. I mean, obviously, you have spent—since your dissertation on the Dorr Rebellion—you know history. You've lived history. You've made history, and you've given a lot of your time to the people of this state and to this University, so thank you for all of that.

GD: I appreciate it. I have a book coming out in September that you probably know about—a biography of Morton Elrod.

BR: I've heard about it, yes.

GD: Oklahoma's going to do it.

BR: Oh, super.

GD: It's out in September.

BR: Yes.

GD: Gone through all the copy editing, so—

BR: Oh, congratulations. I hope they throw a big party for you here. To celebrate that.

GD: Well, I hope so too.

BR: Well, I'll give you a little bit of news as well. Your department, History, has just hired my daughter.

GD: Oh, great.

BR: So she'll be starting here as an assistant professor in the fall, so—

GD: Glad to hear that.

BR: —I couldn't tell you how thrilled I am with that.

GD: That is wonderful.

BR: She's really delighted, so she's...

GD: What is her area?

BR: Her area is U.S. intellectual, sort of earlier national, but she's—as an intellectual historian—she pretty well covers it all.

GD: Well, you got to do that if you're—

BR: But you'll enjoy meeting her, and she'll enjoy getting to know you.

GD: I'll look forward to it.

BR: Yes, it's really an exciting time. So, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, I'm really interested, and what I've been struggling with, is trying to get a sense of some of the changes at the MUS level since you've been here and the growing shift towards consolidation—control—coming out of Helena. I guess I should just ask you, do you think that's a correct perception? Do you see that as something that's shifted over time?

GD: Yes, I do. I do agree with the observation that you make about increasing effort, at least, to pull things, pull all things, to the center and make the primary decisions in the center. I think it probably is the case, also, that much of that occurred after 2000, rather than before. Some people might want to put the restructuring that occurred in '94 and '95 into that context, but it really doesn't fit, it seems to me, in that context. I was an advocate of that restructuring that occurred. Jeff Baker was really the mastermind for it. The argument there, or the purpose of it, was to try to bring together the two parts of the system so that they could collaborate together much better than they were before. You know, with the six entities, plus the vocational-technical centers out there, and then the three community colleges that had too many people, as Elrod used to put it, too many heads. (laughs), You got to do something about trying to get them to work together.

BR: Well, and they had a lot of autonomy, right?

GD: Yes they did, and still had autonomy in the two systems.

BR: Yes.

GD: I mean the two universities once that was established. I thought that worked pretty well. It began to morph into something other than that, it seems to me, after 2000, primarily, I guess, with the push from Schweitzer [Brian Schweitzer] as governor to really have the political power in Helena. Not just in the commissioner's office, but in Helena, in the governor's office.

BR: So, in the governor's office?

GD: Yes. There was an effort on the part...You might remember there was an effort on the part of Governor Racicot [Marc Racicot] to transform the higher education system, to eliminate the constitutional provision which gives them control and management, and to bring all that into the governor's office. But that failed. People like me were out talking to everybody in the world, saying, "This is not a good idea."

BR: Yes, so this a CA-30 (?) ?

GD: Yes, this is not a good idea. Most people resonated to that. They didn't see it as a good idea, either. You can go all the way back in the history of higher education in Montana, and think about the election of 1914, when the consolidation move was resoundingly defeated. But even then, the creation of what was called the chancellorship, there was a little more centralized control. But nevertheless, even as the critics of the chancellor system put it, it did lead to more collaboration than outright squabbling or fighting among the institutions. So for a considerable period, there was a good deal of cooperation under the leadership of the chancellor. No question that Elliot [Edward C. Elliot] was a little more...tended toward intervention on the campus level than most people would have liked, but then nevertheless, it was very helpful to have. This whole conflict over duplication and so forth just went away for a considerable period until after the Depression, and then it all came back again, when the chancellor was no longer around. So I think there is a need to have this collaborative kind of thing work.

Jeff's thinking about that was to...Jeff Baker. His thinking about that in '94 was that if you get the two presidents working together with the commissioner, you have an opportunity to have a better sense about who's going to do what, when, where. That's still without pushing too hard from the center. I used to argue with him about it, and his response would be to say, "Well, you know, intelligence isn't all out there. There's some of it here." (laughs).

BR: Yes, so, one of the big events that occurred system-wide, mid-'90s with Racicot, with MSU [Montana State University in Bozeman], it was called the P, Q, and O (?) and here it was your 4 plus 2 (?), right? This was the —

GD: Yes, the bargaining.

BR: The bargaining agreement.

GD: Yes.

BR: That was absolutely huge, and from a faculty perspective at that point in time after years of negligible pay increases, all of a sudden there's—for the first and maybe only time in my duration here in the system—some really meaningful pay increases for salary. So a lot of the funding for that, as I understand it, comes out of students agreeing to have tuition raised. That must have been a...some kind of a negotiation, although it may also have been because there really hadn't been that kind of tuition hike before. But all of a sudden there's tuition tied directly to faculty retention and, maybe, faculty recruitment. I should just also add to that, one of the things I'm coming across over at MSU is that it's really U of M [University of Montana in Missoula] and the faculty union and the students here that lead the drive for that, and MSU kind of hops on board that train. Is that—

GD: I think that's true. Well, it's called the LFA (?) today. It was the union. They had a union title before. But it was a willingness on the part of the representatives of the union and me, and then coerced Baker and then after him, Richard Cross, into thinking through this. Then we brought in a guy from United Airlines, who was a good friend. I can't even say his name now. We published an article on it that you may want to take a look at.

BR: Oh yes, I'd be interested in that.

GD: It's in the *Collective Bargaining* journal. I'll give you the citation to it.

BR: Okay, perfect.

GD: I've got your email address, and I'll send it to you. He and I and the president of Eastern Washington, at the time, got together and decided we ought to try this new approach to bargaining, and there was a willingness on the part of the faculty union here to do it. Dick Barrett was a leader of the union at the time. The whole point that Dick wanted was to get all of the political leaders together, and to agree on what we all needed. What do we need at the institutions? What do you, Racicot, need? What do you, legislators, need? You know, that kind of an approach. Once we get all of the people to agree, all of the leadership to agree, then we write out what we're going to be searching for. Then that will be tied to what the increase will be coming from the state, what the students would contribute, and what else we could figure out that would go into the mix in order to achieve what we wanted to do, which is over a six-year period of time, bring salaries closer to the market. That was the whole point.

It took a lot of arguing. We had to give up some things along the way. Something that on this campus was called the TICs, Time in Class where you had to do that. You went through that.

BR: Oh yes, we had that too. Oh, sure.

GD: (laughs) You had to do that. That was a loss, because it was a...Well, I think it was counter-productive. It didn't really accomplish anything, because everybody fudged it anyway, so why even bother with the damn thing? But Dave Lewis and others insisted that we had to have some metrics to go into that. So it was fine to do it. I remember we had a couple guys here on campus—couple of faculty members on campus who worked out the strategy—and then we simply implemented it.

BR: Yes, so tell me about the student side of this, because—

GD: The student side was they were involved in it (unintelligible) from the beginning. I had a good relationship...I have had a good relationship over the years, or did have over the years, with all of the presidents [ASUM presidents]. Met weekly, almost, with them, to talk about what the issues would be, and they bought into it.

BR: So you didn't get any blowback from them about—

GD: No, long as we had them in the door at the table at the beginning, and this is what the increases are going to be, and we're going to look over a long period. We're not going to do it in one jump. Part of the theory was also that we would try and hold as closely as possible as we could to the rule of tuition being 25 percent of the cost for residents. That was enough to persuade them to go along, and the years before that, as one of the faculty members accused me, I had begun to play the tuition card anyway. We're going to have to raise tuition this much. I had a computer program where you'd put it up on the screen and say, "Well, now here's what we need to do, so if we're going to do that, we've got to get the money from somewhere. We can't just say we're going to do this. So if the state gives this amount, then we still have this hole. How much has to come from tuition?" They were willing to bargain and to argue in that, and we finally got to what was a good position.

BR: Yes, and then, to follow this story, as you move into the turn of the century and into the new century, tuition continues to rise, and tuition rises some more, and tuition keeps going up. Of course, state support in real dollars—

GD: Goes down.

BR: —Because in the aftermath of this 4 plus 2, PQO Agreement, it's almost as if the legislature has an epiphany and says, "Well, the students and their parents are willing to pay, so we can basically retrench on some of our commitment to the higher ed." Do you think that's an accurate observation?

GD: I think that was going on before.

BR: Was it? Okay.

GD: Racicot used to say, any time we got into a discussion, even for the legislators, this will be the last decision they'll make. They're not going to decide early on what the pay plan is going to be or what higher education gets. That's going to be the last decision, because there's another source of revenue there. They can throw it off on student tuition. Very often they did. I'm trying to say his name, John Mercer from Polson, who was—

BR: Yes, the chair of the board.

GD: Before that he was Speaker of the House. He used to try to tell me that, "You've got to come in early, the beginning of the session, and then we'll come to an agreement. We'll hold to that agreement, and then you don't have to argue about it." But I discovered very soon, that agreement didn't hold very long. He could weasel out of just about anything (laughs).

BR: Yes, so how would you describe the...It's a puzzle to me, and looking at my experience with higher ed in this state, because the people of the state overwhelmingly—it seems to me through their decennial commitment to the 6-Mill Levy—there's always been support. It seems to be maybe going down a little bit, but overwhelming support for this. If you ask people about their support for the universities, there's tremendous support for higher education at the level of the people. You get to the legislature and you get to the governor's office, and that support does not translate into increased, or even sustained, support for higher ed.

GD: Right, it doesn't. It doesn't. You're right. But on the other hand, it's not unlike going out and talking to people about how do you feel about Medicare, how do you feel about provisions for Social Security—all these other things. They'll tell you by an overwhelming majority, "Yes, we're very supportive of that. We think it ought to be done." But they're not the people who have to raise the taxes to support it. The people in the legislature have to raise the taxes. Then there's a tendency on the part of...for raising the revenue, there's a tendency on the part of the people at large to say, "Yes, we supported that, but they used the money for something else. And so, if they're going to continue to use it for something else, well then we just won't give them." The Reagan approach. Let's starve government, because they're using the money in ways that they shouldn't be using it. That's what I've found, anyway. I didn't find a lot of people who made, or held firm, that higher education was getting too much money. I mean, it was easy to talk to people, and I think it still is today, if you demonstrate to them what you're using the money for and how little of it is going into administration. Most of it is going into teaching students. They're sympathetic, and they also appreciate research—I've found in any case. But there's a problem putting those two things together.

BR: So what about the Board of Regents? They exist for multiple reasons, and one would think that one of their primary reasons for existence is to support, augment, support for the University at the legislative level. But I am not convinced that that's always been the case. The

Board of Regents has not been necessarily the most effective board when it comes to promoting higher education in the state.

GD: Well, I think that's...I think there's a kernel of truth in that, but on the other hand, who runs the 6-Mill Levy all the time? It's the Board of Regents that do that. Fundamentally, it's the Board that has to go in and talk to the legislators and persuade them of this, and Board members are not unlike legislators. They have to figure out how you're going to pay for this. These are not easy issues to deal with. I've always found the Board here...I don't think I remember any time when I had a board that I didn't think I could get along with. But I always took the view that the Regent is always right, even if they're wrong, and you have to persuade them to see where they're wrong.

BR: Yes, do you think the Board has...the Board members have an understanding of higher education?

GD: I don't think they do when they arrive, and that's why the terms are as long as they are and that's why it would be better if they were longer. But most of those regents that I worked with over 20 years were willing to give time to the issue. You got to educated them. You got to go around and talk to them.

BR: Yes, so, just because we're talking about terms in office, how does the term limit...how—

GD: Oh, I think that's a disaster in this state. In any state.

BR: So, how does it affect higher education here?

GD: Well, the term that I would use is that there's simply nobody who understands it. They don't have time...By the time they understand what's happening and what's going on and where the money is going and all that, by the time they get that, they're termed out, and they're gone. But one of the forces in the legislature, that I remember, was having people around who had gone through budget cycle after budget cycle, and who had gone through first, the use of a formula, and then not a formula, and something else, and had an understanding of why you don't do things in particular ways. Increment to base doesn't work very well either, and just general requests won't work very well. You've got to have some sort of a guide to go by. And who's the old guy from up around Havre?

BR: Peck.

GD: No, he died some years ago. I can't say his name. He had a harelip.

BR: Bard—

GD: He was never Speaker of the House, but he was always a very influen—

BR: Well Bardanouve was—

GD: Bardanouve.

BR: Yes, okay.

GD: He was a force to reckon with because he'd been through all of this since the '50s. He could recite arguments over and over again to tell you why you shouldn't do this or why you shouldn't do that. But on the other hand, he recognized the reality of trying to get something done. I remember having a sharp fight with him. Oh, it must have been about 19...well, it was in the early '90s. It was when we were trying here to get the business building, and it had been approved, I think, in 1989, in fact, but never authorized. Never put the money up. So we were trying to get that, and it was a tradeoff with another building at...MSU was trying to...I think it was the engineering building.

BR: Probably EPS, yes.

GD: Those two buildings were big ones and they were on the agenda and they'd both been approved. Bardanouve then took account of the money that we'd raised privately to contribute to this business building, and he reduced the state appropriation, then, that was going to go to this and added it over to MSU. I just didn't think that was very fair of him, but he said, "We've got to keep things fair. You've got money coming from another source. We've got to keep these things working together." I appreciate that. I appreciated it very much, even though I didn't like the decision. (laughs)

BR: Yes, yes. So in terms of the term limits in the legislature, I would assume one of the handicaps that you confronted was you were, I guess, decreased ability to carry through or have people remember agreements about what had happened in the past.

GD: Yes.

BR: I remember Malone (?). He was in a state of just great despair, because the legislators that he'd worked with historically were people he knew and they knew why things had been decided in the past for particular reasons and all of that knowledge, just—

GD: It's gone.

BR: —basically vanished. So each session it was a starting over from the very beginning.

GD: You had to keep, and you still do, you have to keep doing it over and over again. It's amazing how ignorant they really are when they start. They think they understand higher

education like this guy, now, who is running for governor. Gianforte [Greg Gianforte], is that his name?

BR: Yes.

GD: I don't think he has a clue about how it really works, listening to him.

BR: Oh, I'm completely sure that's a fact. He's Bozeman-based, but of course, the Bozeman legislative world is a miracle unto itself.

GD: It's a little different.

BR: I want to go back to the term limit and the legislators who come into office with each elective cycle, and some will cycle through—they'll stick around in the Senate. How do you actually represent higher education when you have to start over each time? How does that work? Because the issues themselves, in many ways, remain the same, but there are all kinds of pressures tied to fluctuations in enrollment, tied to perceptions of different things going on at the university...people like and don't like. The legislative session here is effectively, you know, three, four months. How does that work?

GD: Well, you don't concentrate your effort during the session. That's only to remind people of what you've already told them. "I told you this, I told you this, I told you this. We were discussing this (unintelligible)." Oh sure.

BR: And do they remember?

GD: Well, they will after a certain amount of reminders. Even then, issues look a little bit different under pressure of doing the budget build, and they did when you're sitting around in a restaurant talking about this is going to be our major priority.

BR: So, one of the arguments is this system—and I've never heard a legislator actually say this but I can imagine them thinking it—what are you guys complaining about at the universities? We provide a tremendous amount of support for a system that's a state that has a million people. Look at the number of campuses we support here, and look at how much money we are putting into higher education.

One might think, and I believe historically when Havre, Billings, Dillon, when all of these campuses were basically turned into four-year colleges, there was an argument that this would actually work to the University System's favor, because it would build this kind of outlying support for higher education. I am not convinced I see that. Historically. Now, I could be wrong because I'm not there on the front lines like you were. I mean, does this system, with all of its units, does that augment support for higher education?

GD: Well, I don't think the system as such does. There are advocates who talk about the Montana University System as if this is some sort of wonderful thing that operates all by itself. I do believe, however, and I think it can be demonstrated, that the restructuring that occurred under Jeff Baker's leadership did provide a way in which you could explain how the resources are being used, and how these two...how all of these entities, now, are working together. It seems to me that to answer your general question, you've got to have a consistent line of budget requests and budget proposals that you don't just throw out the window after the session is over. Those presentations about proposals, requests, and vision—if that's a good word to use—have got to stay as a part of your portfolio that you share with whomever. My view on all of that was that you ought to be able to trace every request you make, right back to the beginning.

I started working in 1990 to get speech pathology back on this campus, because I thought it was a mistake to throw it out as they did during the planning sessions under...when Jim...oh god, I can't say his name now...my predecessor, when he was still president here [Jim Koch]. I thought we needed to get that back, so there's a consistent record, if you go through those files and look at what I was arguing about, speech pathology was there all along. We finally got it, when? Ten years later. A little late for meeting the needs of people, but nevertheless, those senators and representatives who had been there, even for four years, knew that was there. They knew it was coming, they knew I was going to talk about it, and they knew that sooner or later we were going to have enough support for it. I think those are the kinds of things you need to have.

Another one, if you believe, as we did, as I did, that there's going to be savings that result from putting together these two universities—this one and this one and each of them have four campuses within them—if you believe there are savings there, you better demonstrate when those savings occur and how they occur, and what they are. So, there's a whole record that I developed that I could share with people about how much we saved on bond issues, for example, when it was the university-wide rather than each campus. It worked a good deal better.

When we got our budget allocation from the Regents, it wasn't a case of simply taking exactly what they said for each campus. It was a case of looking at what the needs were of the four campuses, and the big one would be pay enough to allow the small ones to flourish. That created even more support for the University—for those two Universities—if you did it that way. Seemed to me.

BR: Then there's the third University that gets created, and that's the Western Governors University.

GD: Yes, well that didn't play very much. Never has, in my experience.

BR: I was really quite surprised to see that it's still in existence.

GD: Yes it is, but, you know, it doesn't go very far. It's competency-based, and it doesn't attract a lot of students.

BR: I think they've got about 30,000 students, you know. Or at least they claim to have 30,000. I don't know if that's an accurate number or not.

GD: Yes, signing up here and there, and maybe they take courses and maybe they don't.

BR: So, do you think that its impact on the state was pretty negligible?

GD: I thought it was.

BR: Okay.

GD: I knew about it and supported online education, but the big ones were involved here much more than Western Governor was. I mean, the University of Arizona and Arizona State. They're offering graduate degrees up here online. We were doing that, too.

BR: Yes, well, so was and is MSU.

GD: Well, I went down to Colorado, then, after I retired, and worked as the academic vice president for the Colorado State University System, because I'd been down there years before, before I came to Montana. Or, went to Michigan then came to Montana. They have an entirely online university as part of the Colorado State System. There are arguments that go on. There's a tension between the online one and how they're competing with the local institution, because they all have online courses as well. (laughs)

BR: So, I mean, Gamble, after he steps down as president, goes to Texas—

GD: Yes, I know, I know he went down there.

BR: —works with North Texas and helps refashion that institution. You're in Colorado, so you're stepping outside of this system and then looking back at it. What does this system look like?

GD: I don't believe that there's a lot of difference between the way they actually function. CSU has a system board—used to be the Board of Agriculture, because the Board of Agriculture controlled the A and M School, which was CSU. Then it became...called itself a university. It's a big one now—really big.

BR: Yes, it's huge.

GD: It was growing when I was...I was there about 18 years, so I watched it grow. Or helped it grow, as far as that goes. But I don't think they function any differently. As the academic vice

president sitting in that central office, it was not a case of dictating. It was a case of minimalism, I guess, is the way that Tony Frank used to put it and still puts it. He's the president of CSU, per se, the one in Fort Collins. You should have minimal interference from the center, because that's what will allow innovation and all the kind of creativity to occur. You got to be there when you're needed, as for example, with these rape kinds of things on all of the campuses. You ought to be there and help out and make sure that they're alert to what those things are, but you don't want to be intervening in curricular development.

BR: Yes, so, in the early years when you were president at this University, rape cases, sexual harassment kinds of issues, I mean, every university does, but they really don't become major news until quite—

GD: They don't have to become. But if you make them major news, you're going to pay.

BR: So then, what accounts for the rise in interest in all...because it's an ongoing problem, and it has been for years.

GD: Yes, well, the rising interest has to do with, it seems to me, with the increasing demand on the part of women and others, to have this issue explored and make sure we take care of it. It comes also from the unwillingness on some campuses to do anything about it. You really get the flare-ups, it seems to me, when a campus recognizes there's a problem, but instead of dealing with it, tries to go public with it. Well, that isn't going to help you at all.

BR: Yes, my wife and I watched a very, very good, troubling documentary last night called *Hunting Ground*. I don't know if you've heard of it.

GD: I've heard of it.

BR: In some ways, I wasn't eager to watch this. I didn't know what it was...exactly how it was going to deal with the issues, and I thought it was just, it was brilliantly done.

GD: Was it?

BR: And the universities...they do not come off well, at all. And some very prestigious universities. The reporting...I thought the film was just so well-produced, letting the students speak. Then actually talking to the administrators, many of whom went into, just cataclysmic denial mode. that was the most shocking part of the film.

GD: It's incredible. One of the guys that I thought very highly of—served on a lot of national councils with him—Graham Spanier, president of Penn State University, got caught up in that issue and got fired as a result. You might remember that.

BR: Oh yes, yes.

GD: But I remember him from the Board, the NCAA Board, where he was not only very careful and very cautious in the way they dealt with issues as they came up, but he made sure that everybody else was looking deeply into the issue, even if it was a minor issue like a bat. Using metal bats, those kinds of things. Or discrimination in your athletic program. He just insisted that we had to keep pushing and keep pushing. How in the world, then, he got caught up in that situation on his own campus? It just blew me away. I would never have predicted that kind of behavior, where they came and said there are these issues but we're taking care of them. Well, his usual response in the NCAA and other places was to say, "I want to know a little bit more about this before you say you're taking care of it." How in the world he let that happen to him, I don't know. It happens on campuses, I think.

BR: Oh, and it does.

GD: Spanier is just an example.

BR: Well, and as you know, couple of days ago, the Montana Supreme Court held a hearing over in Bozeman, and I attended most, not all, of it. It's a fascinating case about privacy—public right-to-know—and it'll be really interesting to see how that plays out.

GD: What's your prediction?

BR: Oh, should historians make predictions? Having listened to the justices question both of the attorneys, I would be surprised if privacy trumps right-to-know here. It was one of the most marvelous moments was, Malloy, at the beginning of his statement, comes up to the podium, and is carrying a hat. Nobody knew what the hat was. Before he could almost say a word, Justice Wheat just shut him down and said, "Put that hat away," and laughed, then went through the 30 minute presentation. It wasn't a presentation. It was mostly grilling by the justices of Malloy. At the very end, I think Wheat said, "Well, don't forget your hat." Of course, that was Malloy's opening, and he said, "Well, let me tell you about this hat. It's a hat that has the University of Montana motto, 'lux et veritas,'" and I thought that was...he got the final word in, which one doesn't often do in front of the Supreme Court. The interesting thing, and you'd enjoy this film, because of the way FERPA is presented here, because FERPA is generally seen, I think, by many of the students, as...sorry, not FERPA. Title IX and the Department of Education. Seen as an ally in these cases, going after the universities. But what's very clear in the current case, at least it seems to me is clear in the current case, is that what the University System is saying, is that FERPA prevents us from revealing anything about process. So, FERPA is about privacy. The University System is claiming it's about process. It seems me to that what Krakauer is after is trying to get at the process.

GD: I think he's after the details.

BR: My guess is, for his story, he's probably after the details as well.

So I was planning on talking with you, George, about the Krakauer book, but what was your response to it? I confess, I haven't read it yet, I've only—

GD: I haven't read all of it either, and I don't know that I will. I've read some of his other books, and I'm not much into muckraking, so. I know enough about this one to think that there was a lot that was done wrong. There's a lot of blame to be handed out, but I don't think that we're going to find very much without...that will explain anything other than what we already know.

BR: Yes, so do you have any idea why he fixated—

GD: Why he wants it?

BR: Well, why he fixated on Missoula, because Bozeman certainly has had, Bozeman's had—

GD: I have no idea why he did that.

BR: Bozeman's had scads of problems. There were a couple of rapes in Bozeman last year that—

GD: These are minor episodes compared to those that you see at some of the larger institutions. East Coast, West Coast, wherever.

BR: Yes. I know about Krakauer's presentation here, when there was the big beating about the book. It's something I've never really seen addressed, in terms of what brought him here, as opposed to...he could have singled out any number of universities. In this state, obviously, MSU is not exactly lily-pure when it comes to the way that it's handled a lot of these issues.

GD: Well, I think maybe one of the explanations might be, seem pragmatic and crass to say it, but one of the explanations might be that here was a situation which involved all of the elements that he wanted to see, and also, there was a new president who was a little reluctant to address issues and was eager to seem to be transparent. Got it all out there and said, "You all help me solve this now." Krakauer had the opportunity, then, to get into that, and get everything that he wanted out of it and to exploit it in detail. He didn't get that same kind of response, though, from the district attorney. Fred Van Valkenburg just set him on his ear, refused to deal with him, and refused to deal with the Department of Justice, too, if you remember all that. The position I would have taken, myself, was that we would have solved that problem on campus and tell him to go to hell. I mean, they don't have a right to be coming in here and doing that sort of thing. If all of your procedures are correct and if you're operating them in a safe and sane way and you can demonstrate that they are working that way.

BR: So, what do you think...I'm curious about the...I've never talked to the commissioner about this, but I was curious about the case presentation before the court in Bozeman. It was curious,

because they had...the commissioner's office makes an argument about standing. So does Krakauer have standing? Can he bring suit against the commissioner because he's not a Montana resident? The justices, I think, just raked that argument over the coals.

GD: Yes, they wouldn't, they wouldn't accept that argument.

BR: It was just kind of silly to go there, but that just made me very curious about what the commissioner...just why he would respond the way he would to this inquiry for records about process, even redacting names that would assure privacy. So, the process itself seems to me to be part of something the public does have a right to understand.

GD: Well, yes, but the process is there in all the public documents from the commissioner's office. You know exactly how the process works.

BR: So the argument then, so then it really does come back to privacy?

GD: You bet. He doesn't need access to what the process was on this campus. I mean, it's pretty clear what it was. What is not clear is what the testimony was by all of those people, in each of those confidential sessions.

BR: So that he hasn't had access to?

GD: No. He's not going to get it, I don't think. Montana on the other...You're quite right, I think, in saying that Montana is very strong on right-to-know. No question about that. But also, equally strong on privacy.

BR: Well, and that's the thing I found fascinating about the line of inquiry that one of the justices took, was this whole idea of person. It reminded me of the Montana statutes, that persons have a right to have these documents. Persons have a right-to-know. So what is a person? How do you define a person? That sounded like the whole Clinton-Lewinsky, so it just got into all of that.

GD: Oh, you bet. Define "if." (laughs)

BR: But the backstory, see, will out in all kinds of interesting ways, because, of course, "person" erupts as an issue in Citizen's United, and the "what is a corporation." So I mean this case, I think, is much more interesting than many people understand, because the way it gets argued and the way it gets reasoned is going to play out in arenas that I don't think many people are thinking about right now. So I'm going to be really intrigued to see how this...how this—

GD: So am I, and so are all administrators, I think, because there are some implications there.

BR: Well, there sure...yes, there are all kinds, and it just...I was walking out of the hearing with one of the MSU administrators, who will be nameless here, but this individual told me, "First thing I'm going to do is I'm going to...Students are going to be on all of my committees. I'm going to cc students on every one of my emails, and nobody will ever access to anything that I write anywhere." I think the implications and the decisions, the ramifications, are going to be quite profound. Not just in this state, but elsewhere. So it's a huge case.

GD: Right. Yes.

BR: Let me get to the more recent history, and just... I think some huge changes...they were probably beginning before the Recession hit, but the Recession—2008 Recession—was really, I think, a catalyst. I, at the time, was just so struck, between about 2008, 2012, that some of the profound shifts in the way legislators, college administrators, began talking about higher education in this state. Especially governors. Especially Governor Schweitzer. As you know—you know this as well as anybody—the land-grant colleges, public universities from the get go, have been about access.

It's access. It's access, and we want to provide affordable access to the great multitudes. How we do that--we have different kinds of colleges, we have community college, we have the four-year college, we have vo-tech colleges—but it's access, access, access. By 2012, at least, maybe it's even 2010, about the time you're stepping down here, increasingly the rhetoric is moving away from access to outcomes. The policies coming out of Helena are increasingly linked to what's called performance-based outcome. It's the motto of Montana State University, as you know, once upon a time, was "Education for Efficiency."

GD: Oh, I didn't know that.

BR: We're now back...That was "Education for Efficiency" from about 1913 until Malone got rid of it and replaced it with "Mountains and Minds." I've actually tracked down the origin of that slogan, which is really quite fascinating. But it's an aside, George, so forgive me. Students will often ask me the question, "So I don't really understand postmodernism. What's postmodernism?"

I say, "Well, here I can sum it up for you. Modernism is summed up by MSU's first motto, 'Education for Efficiency.' Postmodernism is summed up by the current motto, 'Mountains and Minds.'" So, if you make that (unintelligible) and you're living out that transition right here. This is it. I mean, you guys have been pretty consistent over time. I mean, it's...that works. But the whole performance-base and money now tied to graduation rates—the flattening of the system where there's transferability of credits for—

GD: Yes, well, all of that got started before, though. You can't just date it, it seems to me, from the post-2000 period. For example, I was at Colorado State in the '70s and '80s, and leading the effort there to bring this whole process of evaluation—outcomes assessment—bring that into

the campus so that we look at our programs on the basis of what students are actually learn and know and can do as a result of going through the programs.

BR: But was that really tied to graduation?

GD: It came to be tied to graduation rates, as well as to what you could demonstrate as a result of doing the outcomes assessment. It's even more advanced in Colorado than it is here. But this all got pushed, too, as part of the transfer issue, which has been an ongoing problem everywhere, but particularly in this state, it was an issue for legislators. Why is it that my son or daughter went to Billings and then came up to Missoula, and we find that the economics course won't be accepted up there? So, why is that? Why is it that we have all of these courses that students take, and then they lose their money? Well, as it turns out, if you do that analysis very long, it becomes very clear that the reason they lose credits and lose out is because they're taking non-academic courses and want them to be counted as academic courses. They don't understand what they need to be doing, so the whole process of having these guides and equivalents, all of that really got started as a result of the transfer issue.

That leads you, then, into outcomes assessment, and it also leads you into what Sheila Stearns was responsible for putting in place, which is the Common Core Numbering System [Common Course Numbering System] or the Common Numbering System. Well, you know, when you think about that very long, so these two courses have the same number. They had nothing to do with what happens in the course. So if you're really going to make this work, you'd have to do as the online institutions do. You'd have to have a syllabus and almost detailed description of what's going to happen every day, and you don't vary from that. Whenever you offer that course, that's what you're going to be offering. Everybody's going to be offering the same one. Well, that's not happening on the campuses, so it was all kind of a façade from my perspective. If you really want this to go, all right fine.

BR: So what drove that? I mean, what—

GD: It was transferability, really.

BR: But what drove that...I mean, I understand. I've heard the stories about the legislators whose kids got stuck, and they're—

GD: Not just kids. I mean not legislators. There were lots of stories.

BR: Right, but, constituents. There were lots of stories, but legislators hear lots of stories and they don't always act on them. But this is one that just...It seems to me, as I recall, it just raced through. I mean, they got this done in almost no time, and it became, it just became the mantra of the University System. This is a place where you can...wherever you go to college, you're courses...it's going to be interchangeable—

GD: The common core is.

BR: Yes, and it's going to get you through college faster. I don't know if there's any evidence of that or not, but it strikes me as a...it's a curious idea. I don't for a minute believe that these folks in Helena came up with it on their own. So this leads me to my grand conspiracy theory, and maybe you can help me with this. Because beginning about 2000, you start to see the influence of the educational non-profits, as the Gates Foundation, and especially Lumina, beginning to move into the states and starting to work their magic with commissioners' offices, legislators, and whatnot. It's around 2011, Lumina's giving about, I think, 300,000 dollars a year to MUS. Purportedly this is to help with community college education. I don't know if that's the case or not, but it seems to me undeniable that there is this outside pressure that's driven by a particular agenda. You can go through the documents out of the Lumina Foundation, and it's pretty clear that their agenda is...it's straightforward. It is fundamentally opposed to research at universities like U of M and MSU. They're not opposed to research at Stanford, UCLA, Berkeley, Michigan, Wisconsin, Yale, Harvard. That's all well and good. But if you look at the middle-sized state schools, what are they doing promoting research when that money probably should be...Money that goes to underwrite research could be invested more properly in undergraduate education, and getting these students through the system more quickly. Am I being just a wild-eyed Tea Party-er here, in my conspiracy theory, or—

GD: Well, I think you might be pushing it pretty hard. On the other hand, there's always a kernel of truth in these things, because they do have that kind of an effect when they come into the campus. I don't know that Lumina or the U.S. Department of Education, on the other hand, either one of them, I don't know that they were pushing the institution to change so much as they were pushing very hard for workforce development and for preparing people for meaningful lives. That's the kind of emphasis that comes through there. It can happen, as it's seen sometimes in the debates that we had before the Regents about any of these projects as they came up and when they wanted to have a new deputy commissioner for community colleges—all that sort of thing. It did seem to me that very often they were getting...They were acting as if the community college was the big thing, and the universities were the little thing. These got to have the attention. Well, why does it have to have the attention? Well, I don't know the answer to that. I don't know why people would even...members of the Board of Regents would even give that impression, but they did and they seemed to slip into it. They had to be reminded from time to time, that we cannot make the university the handmaiden of workforce development. It just won't work that way, because if you don't have research as the foundation of what the institution does, pretty soon you're teaching what is no longer relevant to anybody. Who is it...Slaughter (?), who had that comment that I'm trying to remember exactly how this goes. "Research is as related..." no. "Teaching is..." "Research is related to teaching as heaven is to hell." You don't have any need for the one without the other.

BR: Without the other, yes, yes. I think you quote that in your...Was that your last lecture here?

GD: I think so.

BR: I think that's where I saw that, George, yes that was—

GD: I think it's a great line.

BR: I think, no, I think that's marvelous.

GD: Great line.

BR: But let me drill down on this a little bit, because I think it's really critical to understanding, or helping people understand some of the transformations that have occurred over the last ten years. If you go back to the commissioner's Office ten years ago, I believe they had a deputy commissioner who basically was in charge of research.

GD: Yes, yes.

BR: If I go to the commissioner's homepage today, I don't see a research deputy. It's been folded into something else.

GD: Yes, I think it has. I don't recall.

BR: If I go back to the commissioner's office, again, ten years ago, 15 years ago, it wasn't unusual to find at least a few people at the deputy level with PhDs.

GD: That's true. Most of them did have.

BR: Now, I think there might be a couple of the deputies. There might be a couple of people up there with PhDs, and I've never met the people. I don't know them personally.

GD: I think the academic person has a PhD. Is that a person from here? I believe it is. Who used to be here.

BR: Yes, that could be.

GD: But there used to be a rule if you remember this, part of the job description of the commissioner, they had to have a PhD. Changed that when the most recent commissioner was selected.

BR: Yes, so you were...he became...He was on the Board when you—

GD: Yes, he was a board member and board chair.

BR: Then he got elevated, that's putting it passively, to the commissioner's office without a search.

GD: That's right. What they did was hire a consultant to come in and outline...consultants usually do. The consultant was going to outline the process by which they could conduct the search, and the consultant's also going to identify some candidates that would be worthy of looking at. In the process, discovered that, well, why don't you think about the guy who is now your chairman? That was the consultant's suggestion. They looked and said, "Sure, we'll do that, and then we'll change the rules also." I think it was a bad move. But it happened after I was here. Gone.

BR: It's a product of something else, and it's going on right now at MSU. We're searching for a new athletic director. Okay. That's another story, I mean, I have to get into and try to figure out exactly what's been going on there, because that's a wild one and I don't understand it. But be that as it may, this search for the athletic director is being run by an outside firm, and for the first time ever, they are announcing the names of candidates on the day of the interview. So candidate's here, morning we get the notice. Here's the CV. Come meet and greet, and then go away. In caricature, it seems to me, that's one of the great tragedies that's befallen higher education. The reliance on these outside search firms. I think that got started...I'd gamble...trying to remember if he was the product of an outside search firm—

GD: I don't think so.

BR: I don't think so. I think it was a faculty, community—

GD: I don't remember the...I guess they did use a search firm when they recruited for Waded.

BR: Oh yes, they certainly did. Yes, and I think it was the same one that they used for the commissioner, and I don't know if they used one for Royce when he was hired here or not.

GD: No.

BR: But at MSU, that's now completely commonplace for virtually all the administrative positions. We've relinquished faculty control over these searches.

GD: Yes, it could very well be the case here too. I just haven't followed it very much. Didn't happen during the years I was president.

BR: Yes, okay. It's just one of the...I'm trying to figure out again how that, how and why that happened.

GD: Well, I think it happens for...There are probably a lot of reasons. One is that the outside consultant has a lot more information and understanding of how these things work. Secondly,

the candidates don't want to be identified too soon, because if they're identified too soon, it'll look like they got overlooked. They want to be able to withdraw and to protect their privacy. They don't their names out there. So there's an unwillingness to be a candidate if the names are out there too soon.

BR: Yes, but it's had, let's just say, not altogether positive consequences—

GD: (laughs) I know. I agree with you. I agree with you.

BR: —with the number of hires, because the faculty—

GD: I just simply wouldn't do that. I don't think it makes any sense. If you can't find your own, there's something wrong with your processes on the campus, and you really shouldn't be the administrator if you can't figure out a way to get—

BR: Yes, I think that's just one of the changes I've seen over the last ten years at MSU, is that increasingly our administration is a product of outside search firms coming in and going to their files—

GD: And imposing on the culture of the campus, rather than—

BR: Well, and they would say, no, what they're doing is they're just streamlining the process and being sure that it's fair and protecting peoples' privacy and all else. But just in terms of process, it raises lots of questions. So what can you tell me about Governor Schweitzer and his—

GD: Well, I think there's no question everybody would probably tell you the same thing, that what he wanted to do was be in control. He tried every which way that he could to be in control. He had enough influence with the board members and also because of the majorities.

BR: Well, he appointed them.

GD: Pardon me?

BR: He appointed them.

GD: He appointed them, yes. The majority in the legislature, he had enough influence there, because he was...to be able to persuade us, as the institutions, to go along with him—limit tuition and take the state appropriation. That worked okay until 2008 hit. Even after that, he was willing to push pretty hard through his administration to use some of that stimulus money in order to buffer or back-up the funds for the higher education. So we came out pretty well in all of that, I thought. From a budgetary point of view.

BR: What do you think his agenda was for higher education? What did he want?

GD: He wanted more workforce development. He wanted more technical, professional development, rather than liberal education. He wanted to control it.

BR: And control it to what purpose?

GD: Oh, for his agenda for the state. Economic development of the state. His idea of what economic development meant.

BR: So tied to clean coal?

GD: That, as well as virtually anything that would have that...Wind power—all of those were part of what he pushed very hard for. But I don't think he understood higher education at all. He really wanted to control. I mean, I can't stress that enough.

BR: So did he get into appointments at the University?

GD: He tried to. When I got down to Colorado, when I was visiting with the people down there, I heard these stories about Governor Schweitzer seeking to get the outgoing governor down there to be a candidate for the MSU presidency. Schweitzer proclaiming he could deliver that. (laughs) Well, I didn't think he could deliver it. The search was already over by the time I went down to Colorado, but that's the story that was circulating down there.

BR: Because I know at MSU, he put pressure on administrators to take care of particular problem faculty. Did you encounter that here?

GD: Oh yes. And he exerted...let his irritation be known that Bob Brown was working in the Center for the Rocky Mountain West here. "The hell are you doing that for?" Pat Williams was also in there. "Why are you doing that? These worn-out politicians, don't keep them around." (laughs)

BR: Then, so how did you—

GD: Well, they're doing fine. They're teaching. I don't take them on straight away, but just let him know that that's my business, not yours. He backed off.

BR: So he backed off, okay.

GD: But I remember some of those meetings we were having a...To give you a sense of what he was like, we were having disputes about research and what research ought to get approved, and shouldn't the governor's office have a role in approving the projects that were going off? We were going to put them together and take a book back to the legislators. Shouldn't the

governor's office sign off on these before they ever get out of the state? We took the position— Jeff did and I took it—that we should not have that kind of a process. And his rejoinder was “I at least ought to know about what's approved and know what you're doing with those funds.” There was the one project which was a joint project under the USDA with New Mexico State and some other institutions, and Jeff was trying to explain how that got approved. The argument that he was using is that you're diverting state money in order to support this, because there was a matching requirement there. He called a meeting one day that we were to come in and talk about this. Didn't let us know, but he had the press there when we arrived. Then he started asking questions about details of this project. He was...that kind of a person that—

BR: So had you encountered that with Racicot, or—

GD: Oh no, Marc was easy to deal with. Very. A story, which will give you a sense of the relationship you could develop with Marc, sometime in about '97, '98, you might remember this incident. His brother was...No, it was early than that. It was about '95, I guess. His brother got arrested for landing along the Missouri on private property. About that same time, we were buying, or Bob Derringer (?) was buying a new car for me here, and he was just going to lease it, as we'd always done. Just go down and get it. So he went down to do that, and they sent the paperwork over to the...over to the office and the office sent it to somebody else, and finally we had legislators saying, “Why the hell does Dennison need a new car? If he needs a new car, let him get a Harley with a sidecar, and that'll be just fine.” (laughs) So this is hassling. His brother is being...Now, he's being hassled for his brother, and I'm being hassled about a car. We were having a meeting there, and I got up to leave and he came rushing out before I was gone. He said, “You know, before you leave, I just wanted you to know that we'd probably both be better off if we put my brother in your car and push it over a cliff.” (laughs) That's the kind of guy he was, though. I mean, he really was fine to work with. He didn't always decide in the way that I wanted him to decide. That really didn't matter. The interactions were good. At the end of the day, we get most of what we wanted, not all of it. Most of it. Without him, we couldn't have done that 4 plus 2 program.

BR: Oh, there's no way.

GD: No way.

BR: No. I remember Malone would tell me stories about how...and he was always...It was quite surprising for many of us to hear Malone wax eloquently about what a good relationship he had with the Republican governor. But he, I think, got along famously with—

GD: Oh, he's easy to get on with.

BR: Yes, so in terms of relations with MSU, there is a rivalry between these institutions.

GD: Yes, always has been.

BR: Sometimes it becomes really, amazingly intense, and, in my opinion, incredibly stupid, especially when it comes to athletics. So what are your thoughts on that? I mean, the rivalry in some ways, it's structural. It's build into the system, and there always will be competition between them.

GD: There always will be. Competition is going to be there.

BR: So, there's no doubt about it. But it plays out in ways that can sometimes be, I think, destructive of both institutions.

GD: I think it can be. We tried to mitigate that when Mike was president, and right on through when Jeff was there, by having these sessions jointly of the administrative groups from each campus—vice presidents and the president. We would simply meet and talk over where we were going and where we wanted to go, so that there were not going to be any surprises. I think that worked pretty well. But there also is the tension that exists even right now. You know, I have to say straight away, I was one of the advocates of a formulaic approach to appropriations. You use enrollments—resident enrollments primarily—and you send the general fund where those residents are, because that's what the money is for. That isn't to say you don't have proper use of some of that funds for research. I didn't mean that. But it seems to me that most of that money that's coming from the state is coming primarily to do the undergraduate instruction.

We were really out of balance, if you remember, in those years—really out of balance. I kept saying, "We got to make a change. You've got to straighten this out. It's got to be equitable some way." Ultimately that was done, but after 2010. After I was gone, they started implementing that process. Now it's the other way.

BR: Now it's the other way. So there's the ebb and flow, and—

GD: But I think I ought to keep arguing for an equitable approach to all of this. The only one that I could ever come up with was the formulaic thing.

BR: Yes. So what do you do about the outlying campuses? U of M doesn't really have any campuses that are in the tank. MSU has, you know, Havre, and it must be one of the most costly public institutions to operate anywhere in the—

GD: Well, it used to be the case at Dillon also.

BR: Well, but Dillon has turned. Dillon, that turned around and—

GD: Yes, but it took a long time to do that.

BR: Yes, so how did that happen?

GD: It happened by having Sheila down there to do it, and then also supporting—before people would really get into it—one class at a time. Bringing it from Colorado and putting it in place down there. Took a lot of heat for that. Some of those people in Dillon didn't think that would ever work, but it did work. It came also from a project that we put into place in the late '90s, which was to put together a fund of about a million dollars out of the University budget, and have grant proposals from those other three campuses to make themselves more competitive and give them the money to do it. If we didn't give them the money to do it, somebody else was going to, so people on campus bought into that. On this campus, I mean, bought into it, and it worked. You know, Butte became competitive.

BR: Highly competitive.

GD: Dillon became competitive, and the Helena College worked pretty well, too. Still works pretty well.

BR: You know, Havre, as far as I know, is economically in a desperate shape, and the Billings campus right now wants to secede from MUS, so it's a... (laughs) They want to become Billings State University. I saw that the paper here a few months ago.

GD: Oh, I imagine, yes.

BR: So it really gets to be pretty interesting. Just to come back, because I...it's been wonderful visiting with you and I've got a lot of questions left, but I don't want to exhaust you. I'm hoping maybe we can visit again later this summer to—

GD: Oh sure, yes. No problem. I'm okay for another hour, I think.

BR: Okay. Your farewell speech—your last lecture—here is really quite marvelous to read, I think. You covered a lot of terrain—

GD: Oh, I appreciate your comment.

BR: What I especially found compelling was towards the end of the speech, you talk about the Bradley Peace Dividend, and in all of the questions I ask people—"So what can we do about higher education?"—I must say that yours is the first concrete approach that moves beyond the, "We've got to raise tuition, things will never change, and it's all pretty hopeless and we're stuck." So I took heart from that, and I hope you got credit from your colleagues for actually thinking outside the box. But could you just tease out for me a little bit what you wanted to convey with that Peace Dividend idea?

GD: Well, it was the opportunity, I think, because of the situation at that time—the end of the Cold War and all that. That's where he was coming from. This is the means by which we can put up some money to provide to every citizen, an educational account that can be used before you're 30. It can only be used for education. That was his approach. Unfortunately, we didn't get the dividend out of the peace because we started doing other things with that money. But I still think that kind of an approach is possible. It is really, in a very important way, it's a Keynesian approach to the funding of higher education. You know, Keynes' theory is that once demand is falling, then you've got the heavy government step-in and create the demand. Well, that's what you can do with this sort of thing. But what is the demand that you're creating? You're creating a demand for access to something which will benefit the citizenry at large, and you do that by making this large appropriation, putting it into a revolving account. People will pay back after they've been well-educated—they'll pay back. It takes from some of the theory that's gone into...What's it called? Compensation-based repayment, where you're income-contingent repayment, your repayment is based upon how much money you make not how much money you borrow. It's how much money you're making as a result of it, and it kicks in five or ten years after you graduate, so that you have an opportunity to establish yourself. Once that's started, it seems to me that it is possible from there to go on with a system that can be self-funded.

BR: So, did you get any buy-in from Baucus?

GD: No, just as Bradley didn't. The only buy-in that ever came out of any of this is the income contingency and the direct lending that Obama finally made for every student. Then the ability for students to collapse those and get a lower interest rate. All of that...those are minor adjustments on the margins. Nobody has really done a big thing. The Australians have got something like this, however. So it is possible to think through how to do it. I really believe that Larry Summers is right when he talks about what kind of situation we're in now. We're in a situation today of what he calls "secular stagnation." That is, demand is so low that we simply can't get out of it. We use quantitative easements and a lot of other approaches to try to create the demand, but where does the money go if you use monetary policy, rather than fiscal policy? It goes into bank reserves. It doesn't ever...It goes into the financialization of the society. The financial sector today accounts for what, 40 percent of corporate profits? So you've got to have something else. His argument is essentially that the interest rate has not reached the equilibrium point. You've got to figure out how to get that interest rate at an equilibrium point so it will support full employment as well as control inflation. That's what you need to do, and it takes fiscal policy to do it. This will be one of the investments. Another one of the investments could very well be three trillion dollars invested in a new power plant—solar-power—in the desert someplace and then build a grid.

BR: So, have you talked to Tester about this?

GD: I've talked to a lot of people about this. Richard Duncan, in his book *The New Depression*, has got an absolutely wonderful description of that sort of thing. I'm full of this, because I teach a course now on the Great Recession of 2008.

BR: Oh, do you?

GD: (laughs) So you go from what caused it to how can we get out of it, and we're still trying to get out of it. But in any case, I think this fits right in there. Because that's what he's talking about. He's saying, "We need an injection of a Keynesian approach in order to shock the economy back into operation." If you did something like that, for example invest in education, but also invest in solar power and new grid and all of that, just think of the surreptitious research results that are going to come out of that. It's just amazing, just to think about it.

BR: Yes, oh, it is. Is yours a lower division class?

GD: No, it's an MBA class.

BR: An MBA class, oh interesting. Because yesterday I wrapped up my freshman survey course, and they ended the semester reading Robert Reich's *Supercapitalism*. They're riveted by it. I promised them I would get them up to the near present, so I show them the documentary that Reich made, *Inequality for All*. It's a profound shift in the tenor of a class. The tractor caps actually go up, and they're riveted. I mean, this is the kind of thing, suddenly the Gilded Age begins to make sense, and it's really quite remarkable.

GD: (laughs) Yes.

BR: So, I'm not convinced that one couldn't get traction for an idea like this.

GD: Well, Bernie's [Bernie Sanders] getting a lot of attraction for it.

BR: Well, he is, but he doesn't spell it out as lucidly as you do. He just, he has a bumper sticker.

GD: The problem is, he doesn't spell out anything.

BR: No, it's just a slogan-filled campaign.

GD: Same with the guy on the other side, Trump [Donald Trump].

BR: Yes, I was listening to far too much Trump analysis driving over here this morning, and that's just—

GD: Well, I think the comment that applies, particularly when you put it in the context of the Republican effort to get an indictment against Hillary [Hillary Clinton]. If you put it in that

context, it's kind of like the French context, when Sarkozy was running against Le Pen. Who do you want, the crook or the fascist? (laughs) I'll take the crook any day. (laughs)

BR: Yes, which straw do you draw? It's really quite terrifying, but I hadn't seen the Bradley idea. I remembered it distantly, but I hadn't seen that really addressed as specifically with respect to higher education. One of the things I'm asking people to do who've had a hand in shaping the University, especially MSU—but you can't do MSU without talking about U of M...I've asked Teats (?), Gamble (?), some of their research VPs, some of the faculty who've been around there for a while, that I will be in touch with them in the next six months or so, asking for their reflections on the future, not only of MSU, but higher education in this state. I mean, what are the things to watch out for? What are the things to take some hope from? So, I'm hoping I might be able to impose on you for a few short reflections, maybe drawing on this idea, because I think it's a—

GD: Well, I'd need to think about that a little bit before we...maybe on the next session we can do that.

BR: But it's an idea that I...William James' phrase, "It has a practical cash value," which I think is something that...I mean, the system right now is...I feel so badly for these children—these kids and their families—coming out of a very poor state, being saddled with debt that I never had. You never had when you were a student.

GD: No, I didn't.

BR: This is a very recent development, and it's catastrophic for the way young people have to think about starting their lives. It used to be you went into debt to get a house. Now you start your life in debt before you could even imagine.

GD: With an overhang, yes.

BR: You've had a couple major levels of debt you have to retire. At some point, one more Great Recession, or even lesser recession, and people are not going to be able to pay back. I think that's inevitable, and at that point, you've got a political system rife for all kinds of explosive change and not for the better.

GD: Agreed, agreed.

BR: So that's, I think, a very serious problem. So, do you see any prospect in this state for public funding of higher education to turn around, or do you think we're just...The line nationally, and it has been for a while, is that public institutions are going to follow the lead of Berkeley, Michigan, UCLA—you're going to get down below ten percent. In real dollars right now, I'm not quite sure where MUS is and where MSU and U of M are in terms of what they're getting by way of dollars—

GD: From the state, you mean?

BR: —from the state. The percentages, it's somewhere in the 40 percent down from upper-70s when you became president, and it seems if Gianforte is elected, my guess is it's going to go down.

GD: Go down farther. Because those who benefit are the people who ought to pay—the students, of course.

BR: Well, but that's an argument, we can date that to our lifetimes here, because I saw that emerging in the last 6-Mill Levy debate. It was made very clear by the Gallatin delegation that—

GD: Well, it was emerging long before that.

BR: I know it has an earlier history.

GD: 1970s.

BR: But why does it take hold?

GD: Well, in part, higher educators, it seems to me, are responsible for part of it. Because one of the arguments that we used to use during the '70s...I remember being a spokesperson for the Colorado State System during the '70s and '80s, early '80s. One of the arguments we used, and we still use today, "Look at the payoff." If you have a baccalaureate degree compared to a high school or even some college, you're return over a lifetime is tremendous. It's way up here. Now you can't tell people that over and over again and not expect them to take account of it. If you do that well, why shouldn't you have to pay for it? That economic argument, that way, if you take from it the part of the argument which relates to the benefit to society at large, you are setting yourself up to be knocked off. That's what happened to us.

The old guy who did this initial study of higher education financing, Harold...I can't think of his last name right now, but I will. In any case, he argued...I use, I think in that talk, I use the argument. He argued that the major beneficiary of higher education is the society at large, and therefore, the society at large ought to pay for most of it. In his period of time, he suggested it should be about an 80-20 split. Twenty percent should come from tuition, and 80 percent should come from the state. Because you're leaving aside...If you don't take that into account, and take into account as well the foregone income of the student who goes into higher education, you've got to count that. That's a contribution to education as well. If you count it all up, it comes out to be a pretty even split of the 80-20 that you start off...You've got all these other costs, living costs and the foregone income and books and all that sort of thing. So we have to take that into account, and when we settle our arguments, or based our arguments on the revenue you would get as a result of getting a degree, we pushed higher education into the

practical side. So now it only is a money issue, and now it only is which job will give you the most money.

BR: There's a meeting coming up here in about a half hour on the future of liberal arts, so I'm going to try to get over to that.

GD: Yes, that's right. Yes, you should.

BR: I'm very curious to see what the conversation is about, because at MSU the liberal arts are generally considered in terms of...The argument we always make with respect to our students is, "You can get a job majoring in history. You can get a job. You can do," is what it boils down to. I understand that and I agree with that, but if that's your beginning point and your endpoint—

GD: You've lost the battle.

BR: —then you've lost. Then you've totally lost. So my fingers are crossed that what I hear this afternoon is—

GD: Well, you know it's a central issue on this campus, because the most recent budget cuts that have been proclaimed take positions from what are the central places—the arts and sciences. It's symbolic, to me, in any case, that we changed the name of the major college, or they did here. It was the College of Arts and Sciences, and that's what it always has been traditionally. It was the University back in the early days. It was.

BR: Right, that was it.

GD: Now it's the College of Humanities and Sciences. Well, that's a whole different animal, and that does say, it's going to be the humanities as they can contribute to the sciences. That's the way people are taking it, in any case. If you looked at where those budget cuts are coming, they're coming in the humanities, they're coming in the liberal arts areas. Suggestions are being made, where we should go is in technology. We should go into healthcare. We should focus on these areas. Well, why? Is that an education? I mean, that's what the faculty are saying. Is that an education? Why is it that we're cutting out languages and putting in computer programming courses?

BR: Well, in the short-term, it's a response to MSU's short-term success. But it's a short-term success, as you well know.

GD: Yes, but even that won't explain it, because the MSU growth over these years has not been confined to engineering and technology.

BR: Oh no, not at all.

GD: The growth has been all across—all disciplines. Particularly some, I think, amazing growth in languages and in the humanities.

BR: Well, our humanities are...We are not growing. My department is—

GD: Is it going down?

BR: It's going down.

GD: There are only 11 historians here now. That's crazy!

BR: Yes. No, it is crazy. We are not getting positions replaced, and it's not good.

GD: Well, over here they all look over across the mountains and say, "Those guys are in high clover over there."

BR: Well, to the extent that we...Yes, there are worse situations to be in when you have growth and you have dollars tied to growth. But that growth...then those growth dollars get distributed in ways that don't necessarily advantage those that you think are being advantaged. I mean, we've certainly had some success. Because I was one of those chiefly responsible for getting the Ph.D. program in the history department over there, so that's where you and I met up at the Regents meeting. My argument at the time was, this is really going to insulate us, not only from cuts, it's also going to help us in the future make a case for growth. Strike one, strike two.
(laughs)

I've only got one swing left. I'm not department head anymore, George, so it's...I don't know what the outcome's going to be, but it's really interesting to see. I think, from my perspective, MSU looking over here, this is a...it's an opportunity here for this University to really cement its reputation as being dedicated to the liberal arts.

GD: It should. They're not doing it.

BR: It's so important for U of M to do that, and it's so important for U of M to remind the people of the state and the legislature and the governor of the importance of liberal arts. So, from my vantage point, the universities that got it right were the systems in Texas and California that actually required things like civics. At Berkeley and the UC System, you've got to do your American institutions requirement. You've got to take history. In this state, the idea is, we want you to take AP courses, we want you to get all that stuff out of the way in high school so you never have to darken the door of a civics-related class again. The result is a nation that can imagine electing Trump as president.

GD: (laughs) Yes, my god!

BR: Because there's no civic basis. It's just not there.

GD: One of the interesting arguments that I hear from people across the campuses I talk to, I spend a lot of time here in the library because I'm doing a history of the University. You know that? I don't know if you knew that or not.

BR: Oh yes, Donna [Donna McCrea] told me that.

GD: Yes. So I'm walking across the campus, and I talk to people as I...They still remember me, interesting now. But they say, "When are you going to get this done?" Because nobody has a sense of what this place is. That's just overwhelming to me.

BR: Yes, it's crazy. But the last history here was Merriam's, right? I mean, that was the last...

GD: That's a memoir more than it's a history.

BR: Yes, but there just hasn't been that kind of—

GD: 1970. Then before that, Charles Clapp's wife was charged pretty much, I think, the way you described yours. They were going to have the public relations people do a short piece in 1948 or '49 to be used with the public and with the legislature. Instead of that, Merriam recommended that Mrs. Clapp—Mary Brennan Clapp, who is the widow of the longest serving before me—that she take on that job. The president provided some release time in the summer, so she spent five years. It was supposed to be a 50-pager, and it came out to be much larger than that. She never did publish it, because the relatives of former presidents were so outraged at some of her characterizations that—

BR: Oh really, I've never seen that. So next time I'm over here, I'll have to take a look at it.

GD: There's a copy in the archives, and I have a copy. But it was never published. It wasn't all that bad, the kinds of things that she said, but it just drove them...So there are those two records, and I use those.

BR: So how far are you on your history?

GD: I'm about, somewhere in the '40s.

BR: Are you, okay.

GD: Well actually '35.

BR: Are you going to try to bring it up to near present?

GD: I'm going to come up, I think I might say something up to '94. Then Harry is supposed to do the final chapter on Dennison presidency.

BR: Oh, is he? Oh, great. Okay (laughs).

GD: Because he accused me of thinking about the university in terms of B.D. [Before Dennison] and A.D. [After Dennison]. I'm dealing with a very interesting tenure of George Finlay Simmons, I don't know if you—

BR: I don't know him.

GD: 1935 to 1941 when they finally threw him out. It was a horrendous period. From day one he was hated by the faculty because he was an assistant professor who was designated by the down-towners, according to the faculty, as the president. A guy who'd been here a year-and-a-half, something like that, and had never, well, he'd never gotten advanced beyond assistant professor and he becomes president. So it started as a battle and it got worse until finally they forced him out.

BR: Will U of M publish this, or are you—

GD: I don't know. I haven't talked to U of M about doing it. I'll try to market it to Chuck Rankin. You remember Chuck Rankin?

BR: Oh sure, yes.

GD: He's the editor-in-chief at Oklahoma. He was one of my students in Colorado, so it's kind of nice to—

BR: Oh, that would be marvelous. No, Waded said she wants MSU to publish this next history that I'm working on. Of course it's not going to get the play, but—

GD: It helps to have the big marketers for you. That's the reason I wanted Elrod to go there. Elrod's a fun book.

BR: Oh, I bet. Well, from what little I know about...How did you get hooked on him?

GD: Well, he was here from 1897 until 1934 when he had a paralytic stroke. So the first thirty...one-third of the University, Elrod's central to all of it. He's involved in everything. He was the first additional faculty member after the original complet, and he was in conflict with people from there on. He and Oscar John Craig got into big battles.

There are lots of myths that I'm having fun with. For example, that Craig was a great leader who left with the admiration of all of the people. Well, hell, he got fired. Nobody really talks about that anymore. He tried to fire Elrod, so they had a good fight about that all summer.

BR: Well, that's the beauty of doing these institutional histories, is that the fights are just extraordinary. If you can find the records, and you've got them here. You've got a marvelous—

GD: Elrod's papers are all here. Nobody had ever used them, so I read through all of them.

BR: You know, if I encounter him...What I do with my life, as you may know, is I study world's fairs. So that's been my research area for almost 40 years now. World's fairs have taken me into many facets of the modern world, and one of them is actually the eugenics movement. So that's how I discovered—

GD: Yes, he taught eugenics in the '20s.

BR: Yes, so one of the things that I've been trying to work on, off and on for years, when I'm not distracted by university histories, is eugenics in Montana and the institutionalization of eugenics in K-16 education. There was a chancellor here, I think it was Brannon who was just at the top of the pyramid when it came to advocating for eugenics—very powerful, powerful figure. Who was the guy...what's the name of the hall over in Billings, McMullen Hall? Ernst McMullen (?) ?

GD: Yes.

BR: I've got him on record, "Adolf Hitler's not such a...I don't like the guy very much, but his sterilization policies would do wonders for the United States." So there's a flow of ideas here that become enmeshed in different ways. Here at least, for better or for worse, there's a course that Elrod teaches it, it's called "Eugenics." MSU, I can't find a course called "Eugenics," but eugenics is absolutely everywhere from engineering all the way across to home economics. But it's masked. You're not going to find the keyword search. It's as if MSU is clean. I remember talking to Teats about this, and he said, "Well, MSU had this vibrant Protestant culture, and those Protestants just wouldn't let eugenics anywhere near them."

GD: (laughs) At least not the name.

BR: You've got that one wrong. That's not the case.

GD: There's a couple of pieces, if you ever want to look at, that Elrod did. One is in...It was in the *Missoulian*, in which he suggested that eugenics may provide some solutions to problems that we have within the society. Then the speech that he delivered for the Inland Empire Education Association, I think in 1929. He was president one year. In his closing speech, he tries to pull together those ideas about eugenics, that's ten years after. Tried to pull those ideas

together, and he comes pretty close to the position...Maybe you know it, the genetic...Genesis Manifesto? Comes pretty close to that position. Mullan (?), isn't that his name?

BR: Yes, that's right, yes.

GD: Comes pretty close to that position. He just pulled back. Recognizing, as he said, that science has not...Eugenics has not developed as a science sufficiently as a science to allow us to be able to accomplish these great objectives that we have for improving the race.

BR: Yes, so when is your book coming out?

GD: In September.

BR: In September, so that's right around the corner. I'll look forward to it.

GD: I don't spend a lot of time on it, but I spent that, and he does identify the problem. I mean, in a eugenics fashion, the Negro problem is not solved, the Chinese problem is bad, on and on and on.

BR: Yes, I just remember seeing his multiple choice test—his eugenics test—for the extension course he taught, and it was true-false. It was really quite incredible, so I don't have that at MSU, but I've got their College of Engineering records. It's the applied university. They were very good at applying eugenics measures to all of their engineering students.

GD: (laughs) Oh boy!

BR: (laughs) Well, we should put a wrap on this.

GD: Okay.

BR: Thank you so very much. Look forward to another conversation with you.

GD: Whenever.

BR: Yes, thanks for making the time. I feel much better educated.

GD: I'll send you the citation. It's in a negotiating journal or something like that.

BR: Oh, super. Okay, I'd appreciate that.

GD: It was published, I think, in about '96. That 4 plus 2 went all the way through until 2000 though.

BR: Yes, it did. Well, and the fact that it went that far was pretty...I mean, because you got the 2.

GD: It was an amazing accomplishment, I thought.

BR: Yes, I mean it really was. It was just, it was stunning, and it was the last moment when we saw that kind of infusion of money into salaries. Now the salaries are driven...I don't know about U of M, but at MSU, salaries are increased only if you get outside offers.

GD: Oh, really?

BR: So yes, we're in a very different mode over there right now. We have the base salary and the base increases, but the way you get a bump in salary is you demonstrate marketability, which is a risky—

GD: That's the way it was when I got here.

BR: It's a very risky strategy.

GD: In 1990.

GD: There were two people in a Physical Therapy Department who resigned and put their names in the list in the contest to get their positions back, so they got reappointed (laughs). That's how far it can go! How absurd it is. God!

BR: Yes, it's the wheel of history. Thanks so much.

GD: Thank you.

[End of Interview]