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Interviewer: Bob Brown
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Robert Gilluly: What we're going to talk about today is let's do newspapers in general and then the company papers and then politicians that I've known. How does that sound?

Bob Brown: That sounds great. That's kind of what we did before.

RG: Yes, more or less. Does that sound—good level there?

BB: This is Bob Brown and we're interviewing today Bob Gilluly. Bob is a career journalist in Montana whose career in journalism spans the time when the Anaconda Company owned what are today the Lee newspapers, up into modern times and still writes a column for the *Great Falls Tribune*. Bob, how did you get involved in the news business?

RG: Oh, it runs in the family, Bob. My grandfather started out newspapering in Montana in 1901. My dad was an editor for about 35 years. My mother was a journalism graduate. I and my two brothers have all worked for newspapers in Montana. My dad used to say there's lots of darn fools in the family. (laughs) We've been going at it for 104 years now and we're going to keep it up for a while.

BB: One hundred and four years of combined experience.

RG: In the family, yes.

BB: Now your dad was editor of?

RG: He was editor of the *Glasgow Courier* during the Fort Peck Dam days and beyond. Later, he was director of the Montana Historical Society in Helena.

BB: Did you ever become acquainted with a fellow by the name of [Leslie "Joe"] Eskildsen, a legislator from Malta?

RG:: Just by name only. The person I came to know better was Ted Schwinden, of course, my favorite governor. Ted grew up just south of Wolf Point during the Depression. He's a few years older than me.

BB: Did you know him before he was a legislator or before he was governor?

RG: Not before he was a legislator, no. I played baseball in his hometown once. It was out in Vida, which is south of Wolf Point. It was a dirt baseball field and the outfield sloped downhill, so if you hit a hard ball to the outfield it would roll forever until it ran into a sage brush clump, and then it would stop. (laughs) But I always admired Ted.

BB: Well he was certainly a hands-on, competent governor.

RG: Yes, he was open, he was friendly, and he was honest.

BB: Now when you started out, you graduated from journalism school at the University of Montana about when?

RG: 1957.

BB: And then you worked in, what, Glendive?

RG: No, I went to work for the University for three years. I was a sports information director back in the days when the Grizzlies were winning about two football games every season. Then I joined the *Great Falls Tribune* as a sports writer. Then I jumped over to Hamilton as editor of *Ravalli Republic*. And then after that I jumped back to the *Tribune*.

BB: Now when you worked for the *Missoulian* in 1957, it was still owned by the Anaconda Company, I think.

RG: Yes.

BB: I think they sold their papers in '59.

RG: Right. Actually, I'd worked part-time in sports probably in '56, '58, and '59. Got to know the staff fairly well and, as you know, the Lee papers, or the Anaconda papers, were principally Missoula, Helena, Butte, Livingston, and Billings. I got to know quite a few of the people who worked for those papers. My impression was they were all good people. They were experienced journalists, but they knew what their parameters were. The parameters were rather severe in some respects. You never saw anything about a death in the mines in Butte, or here at the smelter in Anaconda. You rarely saw anything about workers' comp or mining law or even the logging industry because the ACM had a big lumber department, active all over western Montana. And there were only selected politicians who got their names in the company papers. If the company didn't like a politician, they just ignored them.

BB: And that was probably a better strategy than attacking them, I suppose.

RG: Basically their sins were of omission rather than commission.

BB: Do you suppose that the reason that they sold their papers was because radio and television were trumping the newspapers?

RG: I don't think so. When Don Anderson wrote a thesis about this for the Lee organization after they bought the papers, he said that the ACM was tired of getting a black eye from the rest of Montana because as everybody knew they owned those newspapers and the public was getting stirred up. We were moving into a period of progressive politics. Of course we were right smack in the middle of liberal politics, but the progressive movement was more broad-based and it didn't come to fruition until the seventies. But it was sort of evident out there back in the late fifties. The company paper, they couldn't win. All of the Democratic politicians and a lot of the progressive people continually harped over their controlling the media in Montana. That was actually a misnomer. The ACM controlled the *Anaconda Standard*, which became the *Montana Standard*, for about 60 years, but it didn't own any other papers until the 1920s, and so that control extended for a period of 35 years. And the ACM never had the most circulation in Montana.

The other papers, the independents, the *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Miles City Star*, which was a big paper at one time in eastern Montana, the Bozeman paper, the Kalispell paper, and all the weeklies, had twice as much circulation as the ACM papers. Now you can flip that around and say the ACM controlled the media in four of the five largest cities in Montana, and that's quite true.

There's an interesting anecdote, if I can get on a sidelight. In Butte there were never any deaths reported in the mines, even though 2,500 miners died underground. The only time it was reported was in 1917, the Granite Mountain [Speculator] mine disaster. An underground fire killed 164 [168] people, one of the worst underground disasters in the country, still is. Now that was national news for a couple weeks. But the individual accidental deaths in the mines were rarely reported in the papers. One reason was the ACM owned the paper, it owned the coroner's office in Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties, it had its own company doctors that would fill out death certificates, and they even had their own mortician. Duggan Mortuary would take its hearse right up to the mine mouth, where it always came up, they'd load the body on the wagon and take it down to the funeral home. They'd embalm it, the doctor would fill out a death certificate, and then the widow would be notified. That's the extent of their control in Butte and Anaconda. And the newspapers were part of that control. And you know, they were colorless and they were gutless. They didn't have local editorials. They rarely published letters to the editor, unless they were benign letters saying, "Participate in community beautification," something like that.

BB: Do you think the editorial policies controlled all the company papers from a central location?

RG: Not specifically. I think that the editors knew what the parameters were. They would occasionally call Butte for direction, but I don't think it was an everyday thing. They just simply knew what their limits were.

BB: Now Bob, you mentioned too that some politicians got their names in the paper and some didn't. How would the different editors and publishers know that?

RG: Word of mouth, more than likely. I don't know. The company did not support a full slate of Republicans every elections or a full slate of Democrats. It rarely supported Democrats, but occasionally if it was convenient, if it was politically expedient. They might even go after Burton K. Wheeler for an interview every now and then. But they certainly didn't interview Jim Murray or Lee Metcalf.

BB: I've heard it said that there seemed to be a difference in the Anaconda Company papers between their treatments of Senator Mansfield and Senator Metcalf.

RG: Yes, Mansfield laid off the ACM, which might have been smart politics. He didn't go out of his way to antagonize the company, either company, ACM or Montana Power. He did author some legislation in regard to workers' safety, but he didn't have any direct confrontations and I think the company laid off him too. Now Metcalf was entirely different.

BB: Yes, and that would be the explanation then.

RG: Metcalf wrote a book that just excoriated the Montana Power Company back in the mid-fifties, and he was number one on their hit list for a long time.

BB: Now how do we understand the relationship between Montana Power and the Anaconda Company?

RG: I'm not sure, Bob.

BB: I'm not sure either. That's kind of been blurry in my interviews.

RG: Yes, I just don't know. They all had a phalanx of lobbyists in Helena. It was like in the Army the whole company turned out in January and they went home in late April. There were lobbyists all over the place. The only one I knew real well was Owen Grinde of the Power Company, and he was the glad-hander, the back-slapper, the guy who bought lunch for journalists and politicians. He didn't do direct, intricate lobbying. But they all had different specialists. Some would pour the drinks and some would research the bills. And there were plenty of them over there.

BB: I knew Owen too because he was from Whitefish and he retired there, so I knew him after he retired. I didn't really ever understand exactly what his job was, but you say he dealt with the media people.

RG: Yes, and he placed advertising. That was sort of crucial because favorite newspapers got advertising and non-favorite newspapers did not get advertising orders. Same way in radio and television. They were rather selective in awarding advertising.

BB: And the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company, of course, were—I don't know, would the Anaconda Company have been a particular advertiser in newspapers?

RG: Yes, they ran some real benign ads for years about Montana history, and they placed them in weeklies and daily papers. I don't think that the papers rolled over just to get the advertising, because they were relatively small ads, especially in the weeklies. But the papers would gladly accept the advertising. But I don't think that influenced the weeklies very much.

BB: Why was that done? Maybe just as a goodwill gesture?

RG: Goodwill gesture and they could afford to spend 10 dollars a week in the newspaper in Deer Lodge or Columbus and gain a little goodwill. Montana Power did the same thing. There were institutional ads rather than anything that might be inflammatory.

BB: Now we understand too, I think, that the Anaconda Company owned some sawmills and they also owned all the Missoula Mercantile Company.

RG: Yes, for a time.

BB: And they would have been advertisers.

RG: Yes, the lumber department was organized in 1914 and that was after the scandals where Marcus Daly and some others denuded some of the federal land in Western Montana. By 1914, the company bought land, and it had large holdings in Western Montana. It owned timber rights throughout the Blackfoot Valley, all the way up to beyond Seeley-Swan.

BB: When the Anaconda Company went on hard times economically in the early 1970s, I know the first thing they did, the first cargo they threw overboard were their timber lands. They sold those to try to remain—

RG: Yes, they sold their retail lumber yards, which were pretty extensive. I think there were about 20 of them scattered around western and some areas of central Montana.

BB: Now Bob, you then went from the *Missoulian* to the *Ravalli Republic*, and that was an independently-owned paper?

RG: Well it was called the *Republican* in those days, Bob.

BB: Oh, *Republican*, okay.

RG: Yes, and I went under new ownership. I was hired shortly after a Colorado family had bought that paper. At that point in time, there was partisanship. Well there was competition all over the place. Miles Romney, Jr., had the *Western News*. He was a flaming liberal.

BB: And that was also located in Hamilton?

RG: Yes.

BB: I think that was a weekly, right?

RG: Yes, and the *Republican* was a five-day, afternoon newspaper. And then there was competition from the *Missoulian*, which always had a reporter in Hamilton. So it was a very competitive atmosphere. I came in right at the end of the strong partisanship era of newspapers. Up until the 1950s, most newspapers had a political slant.

BB: And it was commonly known there were Democrat papers and Republican papers.

RG: Commonly known, and most of them were involved in local politics and wanted to get the county printing contract, which was somewhat lucrative. They would compete with each other. They would compete to elect favorable county commissioners, who awarded the county printing contract. It was an interesting area. Frankly, I didn't like it. I was fresh out of the journalism school and had a feeling about being fair and balanced and none of the political papers at that time were fair and balanced.

BB: And made no pretense of trying to be, either, it sounds like.

RG: No. And frankly I thought it was better to try to follow the principles of journalism. It worked for us in Hamilton because over a period of ten years we had twice as much circulation as the other paper.

BB: And the *Western News* in Hamilton was an avowedly liberal and Democratic paper until the end, wasn't it?

RG: Yes, right to the very end. Miles Romney was a state Senator and a Constitutional Convention delegate, and he died of cancer about 1975. But he was still a flaming liberal right to the very end. And he was a gentleman. I had no quarrels with Miles, we got along fine. But it's just that when he sat down to his typewriter, he became as liberal as his friend Lee Metcalf.

BB: Now as I understand it—I'm kind of putting this together, though I think it has some statewide historical significance—Bill Groff was a member of the state Senate from Ravalli County and his father had been a member of the state Senate from Ravalli County before him.

They were a banking family and they were Democrats, members of the legislature. And Miles Romney's father had been a member of the legislature—I don't know whether the Senate or the House or both. (Senate only, though he ran several times for governor.)

RG: I'm not sure.

BB: And one time ran for governor as a Democrat and was well known for his liberal Democrat principles. And then Miles, his son, continued the publishing of the *Western News* and had the same kind of politics. So you had those two families there and there apparently was a considerable amount of rivalry. The Groffs were not the same kind of Democrats as the Romneys. Do you remember anything about that?

RG: I remember some friction in one election. Bill Groff was relatively moderate. He was a businessman, let's face it, and he wrote what came to be known as the Bankers' Relief Act sometime back in the 1960s. I think there were some occasional sparks between the two families.

BB: Well I know this, Norris Nichols has told me that Miles Romney was the Democratic County Chairman in Ravalli County off and on and when he wasn't a Democratic County Chairman he apparently was kind of the leader of the real Democrats. And so Norris said that Miles recruited candidates to run against him, to run against Norris. But ironically, Groff's father, according to Norris, recruited him to run for the legislature to begin with.

RG: I think that's true.

BB: So you had a kind of a strange alliance between the Groff family and Norris Nichols, who was a Republican, and Miles Romney, who was trying to defeat Nichols and others.

RG: Yes, the senior members of the Groff and Romney family were passionate people and they would do anything to get somebody elected to a particular office. Now Bill Groff and Norris Nichols were both pretty darn moderate when you come right down to it, and they were very influential in the session back in the fifties and the sixties. Groff usually drew up the state budget on a piece of butcher paper and handed it to the committee chairman and that's the way it came out. But the Bitterroot at that time was a great mix of passionate people on both sides of the political fence.

BB: And very narrow, closely divided, too.

RG: Yes, because there were a lot of—let's call them rednecks if you'd like—there were a lot of conservatives in the Bitterroot too, but I think the mix was such that there was a lot of turmoil. There was a big Birch movement in the Bitterroot at one time, John Birch Society. It only involved maybe 50 to a hundred individuals, but there was turmoil. Then a bipartisan movement, led by my newspaper publisher, sort of put the quash on those folks. They brought

in a national speaker and their only political candidate got nowhere in an election for town council.

BB: Now Bob we're conducting this interview in 2005 and people who listen to this sometime in the future may not know what the John Birch Society was.

RG: They had local cells. They monitored schools very closely. They looked at textbooks. They looked at some teachers who they thought might be too liberal for their children. They got involved in Americanism programs. They had a speakers' bureau in Montana. A guy by the name of Vic Overcash from East Glacier traveled around and spoke about the dangers of insidious communism, and at one point, Overcash accused the University of Montana with harboring 40 Communist professors. It was, well, let's face it, it was right on the heels of the McCarthy era.

BB: Senator Joe McCarthy was a U.S. Senator who made a project for a decade or so of attacking Communist infiltrators, real or imagined, in the U.S. government. So the 1950s is sometimes referred to, at least part of the fifties, as the McCarthy era. And eventually McCarthy got at swords points with President Eisenhower and that was pretty much the undoing of McCarthy. He was censured in the U.S. Senate. But as a kind of an echo of this, the John Birch Society was a fairly significant force around the whole country and apparently especially in some of the valleys in western Montana, including the Bitterroot Valley.

RG: It was an echo and it was an extension. Now it all died down by, I would say, the mid-sixties, especially after Goldwater's defeat for president in 1964.

BB: Because there was some at least perceived association between Goldwater and the John Birch Society.

RG: Yes, and the interesting thing is in the Bitterroot, a few of the sons of John Birchers became part of the Montana Militia movement 25 or 30 years later. So once that seed is planted, it remains in some people.

BB: And the Montana Militia movement, I guess the idea was that one-world government people, Communist or whoever they are, were threatening our freedoms and liberties and so the militia would arm themselves as the last bastion to protect—

RG: Yes, and they wanted a white enclave in the Northwest. They were more concerned about gun rights and whatever else they had in mind. I never did understand the militia except that in some ways it was very similar to the John Birch Society.

BB: Now Bob you mentioned that the *Ravalli Republican* brought a speaker into the Bitterroot Valley that talked about this. Do you remember who that was and what the details were?

RG: I don't remember his name. He was from Boston and he was known as a person who advocated moderation in regard to political matters and especially community tranquility. In fact, he was recommended to us by Bill Groff. He'd spoken to the legislature previously. It was just a call for moderation was essentially what it was. And then he also outlined the genesis of the John Birch Society. He also said that Mike Mansfield was one of the big targets for the John Birchers for many years because Mansfield had seemingly been soft on Communist China.

BB: That's what I thought I remembered too, yes. When Mansfield was a young congressman, he made a visit to China. He had been in the Far East as a Marine in the time of the first World War and in the early 1920s and he maintained an interest in that part of the world and was a professor at the University of Montana and studied East Asian kinds of things. Then apparently shortly after he became a congressman, he visited China, and then it was shortly after that that the Communists took over in China. I think that that sequence caused some of the John Birch kinds of people, some of the McCarthy kinds of people, to—I remember they called him China Mike and they tried to lay some of the blame on the fact that China was taken over by the communists on Mansfield.

RG: Yes, and don't forget, Bob, anywhere there's a liberal target is where those people will show up. But the Northwest has always been a ferment of political extremism. Some of it was on the far left. If you go back to the days of the IWW, [International Workers of the World] the Wobblies, who killed a former governor, assassinated a former governor of Idaho, started riots in the lumber camps, burned down company buildings.

BB: [Frank] Steunenberg was that governor, wasn't it?

RG: The only thing I remember is the actual killer was a hired killer and he blew the guy up. Clarence Darrow came out and defended the killer and got him off. (laughs)

BB: Is that right? Well, you know—

RG: Harry Orchard was the killer.

BB: Harry Orchard was the killer's name.

RG: But he was directly tied to the IWW.

BB: It's interesting you'd mention that because in my involvement in politics in the Flathead Valley area, it seemed to me the most liberal people in the state of Montana, and the most conservative people in the state of Montana were usually in my legislative district, and the same would be true, I think, where you were. In the Bitterroot Valley, the same thing would be true there. You had the John Birchers and you had Miles Romney. But that would be less the case where you grew up, over in Glasgow and that part of Montana.

RG: Eastern Montana was—

BB: Somewhat less that way.

RG: Yes, very loyal to F.D.R. and Fort Peck Dam. The dam provided jobs for up to 10,000 Montanans right in the middle of the Depression and that swung everybody around to the Democratic ticket.

BB: But I think there was more cohesiveness over there in the respect that there were some Farmers Union Democrats who might have been regarded as radical, but generally I think the rural part of Montana over time has been somewhat more moderate than the great conflict you find in the western part of the state between the extremes.

RG: Yes, both the Republicans and the Democrats were more moderate in the sense that—

BB: In the east.

RG: Yes, Ted Schwinden was a Farmers Union Democrat but you could compare him to a blue collar Democrat too. He was no different than a union boss in Butte, for instance. Well, he was different, but I mean the same philosophy. It was not radicalism that he preached. And the progressive movement had a strong following in eastern Montana, before Jeannette Rankin and Governor Joe Dixon became leaders of that movement. Eastern Montana, of course, wasn't settled until after 1900, for the most part, and the Republicans were respectable and the Democrats were respectable, whatever that means.

BB: Now Bob, we've talked a little bit about Senator Lee Metcalf, and he was from the Bitterroot Valley. I believe he was born and raised in Stevensville.

RG: That's right.

BB: Do you remember meeting him? Do you remember much about him?

RG: I interviewed him a couple of times and I covered his campaign announcement in 1966, when he won against Tim Babcock for governor—not for governor, but for Congress.

BB: The U.S. Senate.

RG: The U.S. Senate. They had a big rally at the Fort Owen in Stevensville and there were quite a few statewide writers there too. It was professionally staged. It was a good rally. Metcalf was mercurial, impulsive at times. He believed in what he was doing, passionately and usually with—I don't think that he was ever willing to compromise in the Senate very much. He had a strong environmental bent.

BB: And so would you characterize him as outspoken, confrontational?

RG: Yes. Compared to Mansfield.

BB: Compared to Mansfield, even though their philosophies might not be greatly different.

RG: Yes, I always thought Mansfield was more moderate, but maybe it's because he was more soft-spoken.

BB: You know Bob, interestingly, apparently—this is second-hand—but Metcalf was supposed to have said somewhere along the line that he and Mansfield voted similarly or identically almost all the time in the U.S. Senate, and yet every time election year came up, Mansfield had an easy time of it in the election and Metcalf had a tough time of it in the election. I think as much as anything it might have been their approach.

RG: And it was their personalities.

BB: And their personalities, yes.

RG: Interesting, another sidelight: Senator Metcalf was a member of the Elks Lodge in Hamilton and I was an officer of the lodge for a few years and every spring we had to send him three notices to pay his doggone dues, which I think was 15 dollars a year or something like that. He never responded to the first two notices. And then we sent out the third one and threatened to kick him out of the organization and he mailed his check in. But he was always the last one to pay dues and of course he only showed up at the Elks twice a year. It was his contribution to a local fraternal group, essentially, but his pattern was quite interesting. We used to joke about it.

BB: Did you ever know any members of his family?

RG: I did not.

BB: Because I understand from another interview that his family generally was Republican, or at least thought to be, and that he was a little different from the rest of the members of the family. That wouldn't be—

RG: I don't think I even met his wife.

BB: Well, I'm talking about his mom and dad, I think.

RG: They might have been. I don't know, I didn't get there until the sixties.

BB: They might not even have been living there.

RG: They might have been gone by then, Bob, I'm not sure.

BB: Now when you started out as a reporter, Hugo Aronson was the governor. Do you have any thoughts or impressions about him?

RG: He was a character. He was, of course, a Swedish immigrant. He made a pile of money working in the oil fields up around Shelby and Cut Bank and he was also a farmer. A real strong Republican. He raised money for the Republican Party and he recruited candidates. He won the election somewhat handily in 1952. I was still in school at the time, but I interviewed him in 1958 at a newspaper convention in Many Glacier. I was lucky, my dad introduced me. He and Hugo were friends. Here I am with my notebook and my pen, asking questions, and I had trouble understanding what he was telling me. He had a very thick Swedish brogue. I nodded my head on a few occasions and then I asked after we were done, and Hugo had moved on to another group to talk to, I asked my dad to interpret some of what he said because it was difficult to understand him.

BB: How could he have been elected to statewide office if he was hard to understand I wonder?

RG: I think the guy won respect everywhere he went. All you had to do was meet J. Hugo Aronson and you understood that here's a guy who built a business and a political reputation from nothing. He arrived in Montana on a freight train.

BB: As a Swedish immigrant. You were going to comment and I interrupted you, about his hand?

RG: He had a hand as big as a ham and when he shook your hand you'd know it had been shaken. I think he was just a popular fellow. He wrote a book about his humble beginnings, about his rise to prominence in the United States. He was proud of the fact that he and Eisenhower were both elected in 1952 for the first time to their various positions. He was very likeable. He had force of personality and he had a dedication to his adopted country. That's a pretty good combination here in Montana.

BB: So that just came through when you met him?

RG: Yes, it was very evident. And he liked to talk about his roots.

BB: I remember a story. It might be apocryphal, I don't know. But I certainly didn't hear him say this, but I heard about it, and I've heard this attributed to other people too, so that makes me a little bit suspicious of it. But the story is that J.D. Holmes, the capital reporter, was interviewing Hugo one day and there was an issue about how state government was expanding somewhat and that there were a fair number of new public employees. And so J.D. Holmes, I believe the Associated Press reporter for the capitol in Helena, said, "Well governor, just to kind of put this

in perspective, how many people now do work for state government?” And Hugo said, “Vell, about half of dem, I think.” (laughs)

RG: That sounds like Hugo. The other story is—and I think it’s true because I’ve heard it from several different sources—the first three words he learned of English were “ham and eggs” so that he could order a meal in a restaurant. The only trouble is he ordered ham and eggs for a couple three weeks before he found some other words. That would have fit the menu. (laughs)

BB: He was hungry and the food looked good in the restaurant and he wanted to order lunch and they kept on bringing him ham and eggs. Did you ever meet Governor Nutter?

RG: Yes. He was a good friend of my dad. He was from Sidney. He was a successful businessman and he farmed, but he was best known as a basketball referee in eastern Montana. He was forceful. He took over a game and he controlled it. He grabbed the microphone at a game in Glasgow once and announced over the public address system that if the crowd didn’t behave itself better he was going to forfeit the game to the visiting team. The crowd was stunned for a minute or two and then they settled down and behaved themselves and they actually gave him a round of applause. He was a Republican’s Republican. He was conservative, very conservative.

BB: But he sounds like a real take-charge kind of guy.

RG: Yes, he was, and he liked cigars. He was always smoking a cigar. I got to know him when he came to the university in the spring of 1960 and he spoke at the athletic banquet. Afterward, at a reception for him, I had a chance to chat with him and we did have a common bond through my father. A couple months later he called me up and asked me to go to work for him on the campaign. He needed a publicity person. I turned him down because my wife was still going to school at the time and we were living in Missoula. It was convenient for her to try to finish up her degree and I said, “Frankly, I don’t know that much about politics.” In later years, it’s probably a good thing I turned him down because one of the people he hired was in the plane that day in 1962 when it crashed, killing Nutter and two of his aides and three National Guard airplane personnel.

BB: And had you been his public relations man, there’s a fair chance you would have been on the plane.

RG: I might have been on that plane, yes. I didn’t realize that until a couple years after he died. I got to thinking about it. I also talked to Jack Hallowell, who had worked for Nutter in public relations, and Jack told me about some of the details leading up to that plane flight and it occurred to me that if I’d worked with him and he’d actually got elected and if I’d gotten a permanent job in Helena, I might have been one of the victims.

BB: Oh boy, wow. In terms of his...—et’s see, what were you doing when—Nutter was only governor for a year.

RG: Yes.

BB: Because he was killed in January of '62 and he was sworn in I think in January of '61. Do you remember, did you ever interview him during the time that he was governor?

RG: I did not. I was working for the *Tribune* at the time but I was writing sports. It was interesting. That plane went down late afternoon near Wolf Creek and the *Tribune* rushed two reporters and a photographer up to the area and they were sealed off on a back road outside of Wolf Creek by law enforcement. They had to stand around a bonfire tramping around for the rest of the night until they could get into the crash area. They spent the whole night walking around a bonfire. As it turned out, the plane crash was determined to be metal fatigue. It was an old WWII airplane that went down and the turbulence was terrible that day. It was estimated at 100 m.p.h. and it was so bad that it snapped a wing off the plane.

BB: That's what I heard too. The idea was the plane lost a wing and then it just cart-wheeled into the ground.

RG: Yes, that was pretty well pinpointed because the wing landed a mile or two away from the rest of the wreckage.

BB: Now you know, Bob, you characterize Metcalf as mercurial but also forceful, sometimes confrontational. What words would you use to describe Nutter based on your impressions of him?

RG: Pretty much the same way, only on the other side of the fence. I don't think that Nutter was quite as impetuous. I think he organized himself to the point where if he stormed about something it was planned, rather than at the spur of the moment.

BB: So Metcalf might have spontaneously just spoke from the heart and flown off the handle, whereas there was still that forcefulness and that power in his personality but in Nutter's case his forcefulness would probably have been a more calculated one.

RG: Right. There was one instance where he was very persuasive. He talked the legislature in 1961 into an austerity program. They cut 10 percent out of the state budget that year. Took the state about five, six years to recover from that budget, but it was largely through the force of persuasion that he managed to get that passed, and it was in a—Democrats controlled at least one house of the legislature, so he had to do some persuading. And of course the state was effectively broke. It helped that everybody could see that there was a need to cut budget.

BB: Now Nutter defeated Paul Cannon, who was lieutenant governor and was from Butte. Do you have any recollections of him at all?

RG: I met him once. He was a political hack of the first order. How he got to be the Democratic nominee is beyond me. He was incompetent, but he had a lot of political friends and Butte, of course, was the source of power for the Democratic Party during those years.

BB: Now another prominent Butte politician who was attorney general during the fifties, ran for governor against Aaronson, ran unsuccessfully for chief justice of the supreme court, and then ended up serving 10 years in congress, was Congressman Arnold Olsen. Any impressions of Olsen?

RG: Yes, I talked to him on several occasions. He was a good campaigner and he had a lock on the western district until, oh, I don't know—how many terms did he serve? Five?

BB: He was in there probably five terms, yes.

RG: Five terms, okay. He sort of lost it at the end, but up until that point he had a lock on his district. He was a typical Democrat. I don't mean to denigrate him by saying that, but he voted a fairly liberal slate. I didn't have any impressions about him personally that I remember. When he was running for Attorney General I tacked up some of his posters on telephone poles around Glasgow.

BB: Apparently a very likeable and charming kind of guy.

RG: I think he was, yes.

BB: Then when Nutter was killed in the plane crash, his lieutenant governor, Tim Babcock, became governor and Babcock was governor for the next seven years because he was elected once in his own right and of course he served out the three years that remained in Governor Nutter's term in office. He was governor for a fair amount of the time that you were at the *Great Falls Tribune*, I think all of that time.

RG: Part of that time, Bob, and then I moved over to Hamilton in 1964. It was interesting. Tim Babcock did me a good favor at one point. He came over to the Bitterroot and conducted a hearing. There was a proposal to establish a Job Corps center in the Bitterroot. This was right after the War on Poverty legislation called for Job Corps construction. Tim came and staged a public hearing and the feeling about it was sort of divided. The old timers didn't like the idea. It was partly racially based, I think. The businessmen thought it would be a great idea. They saw the cash registers ringing as a result of supplies and other purchases by this big government center. Babcock announced to the audience that, "Well, I'll have to think about this for a while and I'll make up my mind probably next week."
So everybody filed out of the meeting hall and I went up to him and asked him a couple of questions afterwards. I'd met him previously and he knew my family. He said, "Bob, we're going to have another meeting downstairs in about five minutes. Would you like to come to that?" I said, "Yes!"

He said, "Well, just tag along."

So we went downstairs after the crowd had left, crowded into the office of the Elks Lodge, and Nichols and Groff were there and there were some county commissioners there. There were Forest Service people and somebody from the Chamber of Commerce. Babcock told the group, he said, "I think I'm going to approve this thing." The group—

[At this point, the file skips back to previous page and repeats the conversation: "Then when Nutter was killed in the plane crash...]

RG: That small group of maybe 15 people thought that was just great. He says, "You can expect an announcement in a few days." I didn't take any notes, I just fixed it in my head and went back to the office and wrote a story saying that Governor Babcock indicated that he was inclined to approve the Job Corps center and it will be announced in a few days. We had a clear beat on all of our competitors in the newspaper business, so he actually did me a favor.

BB: Oh yes. And you did him a favor too by not saying what he—because he didn't say "I'm going to do this," he said "I'm inclined to support it [inaudible]."

RG: Yes, he wasn't 100 percent certain, but—

BB: But you still got the scoop.

RG: Yes, the comment says he's leaning very favorably to the proposition. And the center opened. It was the first Montana center to open, about a year later.

BB: Now Babcock, when he ran for election—not really re-election, because he was lieutenant governor and then ran for election in his own right in 1964—was opposed by [Montana State] university president Roland R. Renne. Do you remember ever meeting Dr. Renne or anything about that campaign?

RG: I did not meet him. I knew him by reputation. He was a great professor, a very learned man. He didn't relate to people very well. He had some strong ideas about what to do in Montana. He was an honorable person, but I think his major thing was he just didn't relate to people very well. And Babcock was riding a surge of popularity. Montana wasn't Republican in 1964. Goldwater didn't carry the state, but Babcock had enough of a reputation and he had the legacy of Nutter carrying him as well. I don't know what the breakdown was, but I think he beat Renne by 55 to 45. [51-49 percent.]

BB: Bob, we've talked a little bit about the personalities of Metcalf and Nutter. Any words that you might use to describe Babcock, his personality?

RG: I thought he was a pretty good political operative. I thought he was on top of things. I think he knew how to win an election, not for Congress, not for the U.S. Senate, but for reelection as

governor. He was precise, he was well-organized. There was money behind him. I'd say he was efficient.

BB: The terms "forceful" that you used to describe Nutter and Metcalf don't come to your mind, but "efficient"—

RG: Efficient, smooth, knew what he was doing—not initially, but after a year or two, I think he had a pretty good grasp of what the governorship was all about.

BB: And of course he'd served in the legislature and as lieutenant governor.

RG: Yes, and he was a successful businessman and he used business principles in government.

BB: Now, also in that 1964 election there was a fellow from Great Falls who was elected lieutenant governor by the name of Ted James, and I believe Ted was the brother of [William] Scotty James—

RG: Scotty James was executive editor of the *Tribune* and they were different as night and day. Scotty was short and Ted was tall. They both grew up next to the coal mines in the Sand Coulee outside of Great Falls, they both worked their way through college, and they both had distinguished careers in different fields.

BB: And so then what happened in 1968 was that even though they were both Republicans—Babcock was the Republican governor and Ted James was the Republican lieutenant governor—Ted James challenged Babcock for the Republican nomination in 1968. What do you remember about that?

RG: Very little, Bob, because it was a primary race and the candidates didn't get around all that much. They didn't come to the Bitterroot, not in the primary.

BB: Okay, and you weren't back at the *Great Falls Trib* at that time?

RG: No, and I just didn't hear much about it. Later on, it seemed to me it was no different than Schwinden challenging Judge in 1980. I think there was a schism or some sort of a clash within the ranks.

BB: Yes, and of course Babcock had been a proponent of the sales tax. I don't know where Ted James was on that, but Babcock had—

RG: Ted was probably more moderate.

BB: I would think, yes. He had been county attorney in Cascade County, hadn't he?

RG: Yes, and a good legal reputation and he was a good person.

BB: And later was I think chairman of the Board of Regents if I remember correctly.

RG: I think so, yes.

BB: So you were at the *Ravalli Republica* for what, three or four years did you say?

RG: Oh longer than that—from 1964 to '76. And then our kids were getting up toward college age and I needed a better paying job, Bob, and so I called Scotty James at the *Tribune* and I said, "Would you take me back?" He checked with the publisher and they took me back.

BB: Now I want to ask about Governor [Forest] Anderson, but I'm also interested in your thoughts on Governor Judge and Attorney General Bob Woodall in the election campaign of 1976. But we don't want to skip over Governor Anderson. Any thoughts or...?

RG: I didn't know him real well, Bob. Interviewed him. He only served one term and his health sort of went bad toward the end of that term. He was a Butte politician.

BB: He was from Helena, I think. [Anderson lived all his life in Helena, except for his years in school.]

RG: Well yes, back and forth.

BB: But his demeanor said that he was a Butte politician?

RG: Yes, he had roots in Butte, that's for sure. My dad worked for him as director of the Historical Society and my dad was a Republican and Anderson was a Democrat. But frankly, I didn't know the fellow. I didn't know him well because the only time I interviewed him was when he was campaigning in '68.

BB: Yes, he defeated Babcock in '68 and served one term until 1972. It was at about that period that Senator John Melcher got into the scene. I'll get you in a minute here. [pause] Senator John Melcher—did you interview him or have any thoughts or recollections?

RG: Yes, I liked John. He'd come into the *Tribune* and he'd sit down and put his feet up on the desk and chat with you. But he'd stick around for half an hour and chat with you. He was an effective politician. He had foresight originally. He was a veterinarian, although someone in Washington, D.C., described him as a vegetarian, not a veterinarian. (laughs) I liked him because he was folksy and once he got elected he stayed elected until Burns upset him in 1988. And I was frankly surprised.

BB: I was too, yes, I was too. I would have predicted that that would have gone the other way, and it was close, too, as I recall.

RG: It was fairly close, yes.

BB: Now in 1976, you're back at the *Great Falls Tribune* and the attorney general, Robert L. Woodahl, Bob Woodahl, was the Republican nominee for governor against—

RG: Tom Judge.

BB: Tom Judge, who had served as lieutenant governor under Forrest Anderson from '68-'72, then he defeated Big Ed Smith from up in the—what are your recollections of Big Ed Smith?

RG: Big Ed Smith was from Dagmar. Typical eastern Montana Republican. Imposing figure; he was about six foot six inches.

BB: Kind of a Hugo Aronson kind of a figure?

RG: Sort of on the same mold. I don't think that his reputation spread far enough in Montana. I was a little surprised that he even became the candidate. But he was probably as good a legislator as you could find, but I don't think he was good enough to become governor, or well-known enough to become governor.

BB: He didn't come from a population center at all.

RG: Goodness no, Dagmar had 200 people and the nearest population center was Billings, which was 400 miles away.

BB: So Judge defeated Ed Smith and as I remember, too, that was a fairly close one. And then he was opposed by Woodahl in '76. What propelled Woodahl into the—?

RG: Well Woodahl, of course, gained his reputation as attorney general and he investigated the workers' comp scandal. He wasn't very successful in prosecuting people in that scandal. As it turned out, it was a scandal but you couldn't pin the goods on very many people. I think he became so obsessed with that investigation that it hurt his chances for the governorship. It may have propelled him into the nomination, but he had a one-track mind. It was all work comp.

BB: I remember, too, something about—remember his nickname in some circles was Bingo Bob.

RG: Yes, he cracked down on gambling across Montana. That did not endear him to the voters.

BB: Well including Catholic Church bingo. That was why they kind of derisively nicknamed him Bingo Bob.

RG: Yes, I remember I was in Hamilton and there was a rumor that Woodahl was in town and all the bars pulled their punch boards right now. Well it turned out he wasn't in town, but the bar owners got scared and the punch boards disappeared for a couple of days.

BB: So he took on Judge. Did you ever meet Woodahl?

RG: Yes, I think I talked to him in Helena on one occasion. I don't recall what the occasion was. It was probably during the legislative session. And there was—I don't know, there was some news angle and frankly I forget what the news angle was. And bear in mind, I was in Hamilton and I didn't get out and around all that much. So unless they came through on a campaign, I didn't see the governors that often.

BB: Now, Governor Judge would have been somebody that you might have also had some familiarity with because you would have been—after he defeated Woodahl, he was governor for another four years and that was when you were in Great Falls.

RG: Yes, of course he was elected in '72 and I was still in Hamilton. Tom Judge had roots in Anaconda. His father was a contractor here. The family lived in Helena but his dad built a lot of houses here in Anaconda, including the house we're sitting in right now.

BB: Really? (laughs)

RG: But I met Judge on the campaign in '72. I never quite figured Tom out because he had a very successful first term. It was right in the middle of coal development in Montana. Right as the Constitutional Convention was convening, he had some success in the legislature. Now he wanted economic development and some Democrats weren't too happy with that, but Tom courted business.

BB: Do you remember anything about a scandal involving 64,000 dollars of unreported contributions or something like that? [The allegation was that \$94,000 of contributions were not recorded.]

RG: Only what I read in the *Tribune*. And the source of that 64,000 dollars was never pinpointed. There was smoke but no fire. So I honestly don't know. It was an issue around Helena. I think it was an issue in his reelection in '76, but what struck me was that Judge was articulate and sharp and he knew how to mobilize a political campaign. He was very successful his first term. He was far less successful in his second term. He had personal problems at the time.

BB: I think he was divorced, wasn't he, during his second term?

RG: Yes, right, and he turned into sort of a jet-setter. He was frequently absent from Helena.

BB: And in fact I think he was traveling in the Far East or something in part of the primary election campaign when his lieutenant governor, Ted Schwinden, challenged him for the gubernatorial nomination.

RG: That was sort of a surprise in 1980, but of course there was a split in the party and Schwinden was not a puritan but he was troubled by Judge's shenanigans. Basically, Judge wanted a third term, which hadn't been in the mix previously, to my knowledge, and Schwinden says, nothing doing, and he set to work and wrestled the nomination away from Judge.

BB: So Judge was running really kind of contrary to the idea that Montana governors had not served more than two terms. I think there had been only one exception to that where a governor had been elected three consecutive times and that was Governor Erickson and he didn't serve out the third term. So he was running against that tradition. And he had some personal problems. There was sort of this lingering suspicion of the 64,000 dollars that found its way into his campaign fund, never reported. He was kind of an absentee landlord. He had the reputation as a jet-setter.

RG: I think some voters considered him a playboy at the end of his second term.

BB: In fact, I think I remember the story about the ski rack. The governor has a car, then had a Lincoln Continental, that was paid for at taxpayers' expense and apparently when Tom was governor, for a while at least, there was a ski rack on top of that car and some people raised their eyebrows a little bit about that.

RG: Yes, and he broke his ankle on a ski run too. I don't know if Tom just forfeited his chances for a third term or if he was just bucking the trend, but Schwinden effectively captured that nomination.

BB: Do you remember anything about the Mount St. Helens's disruption? Mount St. Helens is a great mountain over in Washington State. It was a volcanic mountain and it erupted in I believe May of 1980, just a couple of weeks before that primary election. So one theory that may have contributed to Tom Judge's loss in that primary was that he may have overreacted by closing the state down and getting the word out that people who breathed in that dust from the volcano were breathing in the same thing as little particles of glass and it would do terrible things to our lungs. And it turned out that that probably was not the case.

RG: Well, we got a dusting of that stuff and it was mostly silica. I don't know. I think a sensible person would have shut down things for a day or two. A lot of schools closed and that wasn't because the governor told them to. Some businesses closed for a day. I was in Great Falls and what I remember is going into the *Tribune* on Sunday. The ash plume hit us mid- to late-afternoon and we had to put out an extra section the following day, so everybody went to work

on Sunday. A couple of the reporters came in wearing face masks. There was a certain amount of panic by that situation. I think it disrupted the primary in that it was sort of suspended for two or three days with the election only two weeks away.

BB: One school of thought, and I don't know that it was a very important one, was that that might have been at least a small contributing factor, that Schwinden appeared to maybe be a more stable kind of an individual and Tom may have overreacted to the volcano.

RG: Yes, I think Schwinden, one of his strong points was that he was considered stable.

BB: Yes, I remember, too, not directly related to this, but a fellow who was a state senator with me, Joe Roberts from Libby, was Governor Judge's running mate for lieutenant governor when Lieutenant Governor Ted Schwinden filed for governor, then Judge had to find another lieutenant governor and he chose a young fellow who was then on his staff. He was a member of Judge's staff and had been a state senator from Libby by the name of Joe Roberts. Joe told me that Judge was out of the state off and on during that period of time and so he said he went out and touched some bases in eastern Montana, primarily along the Hi-Line, and he said he came back to Helena and he told the guys on the governor's staff, "We're in a lot of trouble here. There are a lot of people that Ted has cultivated here in recent months or maybe even in recent years and maybe he's thought about this. This wasn't just a whim on his part. Maybe he's been thinking about this for some time. He's lined up a lot of support." He said they were all mad at him. They said, "Well gee, Joe, we're going to be reelected. We're the incumbent. We're not going to lose the primary election." Joe said, "I'm telling you, there are a lot of important and prominent Democrats that Ted has cultivated that are in his camp and not in our camp."

RG: Yes, well, it's only natural that Schwinden would be strong on the Hi-Line and you take the length and breadth of the Hi-Line and there's a lot of votes up there. And especially in Havre, which was pretty much a union town at the time. I think Schwinden must have lined up union support somewhere along the line because he probably wouldn't have won the nomination without it.

BB: And of course organized labor was more important in Montana then because the mines were still operating in Butte. They only had a few more years of life left in them. There were many sawmills operating then that aren't now. So the blue collar vote would have been more important.

RG: Yes, I think the unions were capable of turning out 50,000 votes. Now they weren't unanimously for a Democratic slate, obviously. A lot of union people have two cars in their garage and a boat out in the back yard and the union strength was beginning to ebb, but it was still pretty solid.

BB: There was probably some old Farmers Union support then. The Farmers Union is an organization that's been in decline in recent years, but 1980 was a quarter of a century ago and I would think that Schwinden would have had an important—

RG: Yes, Farmers Union and labor had a strong coalition and whoever could crack that coalition was usually guaranteed quite a few votes. I think Schwinden picked up at least a fair percentage out of that coalition. He couldn't have won the nomination otherwise.

BB: And so he won the nomination in what was maybe at least a minor upset, and then his Republican opponent in the general election was a state legislator from Billings by the name of Jack Ramirez. Do you remember much about that campaign?

RG: Not until later. I may have talked to Ramirez. I did when he was in the legislature, I remember that. But I talked to Schwinden on one occasion during the general election at the *Tribune* office and we compared notes on eastern Montana. We always did that. I don't know that Ramirez—well let's face it, Montana elected Democratic governors for twenty years from 1968 to 1988. I don't think that he had much of a chance. He was an effective legislator.

BB: He was an effective legislator but here you had Ted Schwinden who already was kind of the Jack the Giant Slayer. He'd won a rather impressive victory over the incoming governor in the Democratic primary and he had a statewide reputation, having been lieutenant governor for four years before then, and while Billings the most populous town in the state—and Ramirez was from Billings—still, he wasn't nearly as well known as Ted Schwinden.

RG: No, and Montana would have been like Massachusetts—if you win the Democratic nomination you're going to win in the general election too.

BB: Yes, then the Democrats had a big advantage, I think, statewide. I think that's true. Do you remember anything about an issue regarding a road that was built to Schwinden's ranch up at Tooley Crick near Wolf Point? Ramirez tried to make that an issue.

RG: It was a major highway, from Wolf Point to Scobey was a state primary road. It was in awful shape and it needed repairing and as you well know the state's divided up among highway districts. There are five highway districts and the road up to Schwinden's ranch made the priority list and eventually got improved. The only thing that seemed odd was that the improvement ended right at the turn-off to his farm. (laughs) I don't know. I think that was just a minor thing. I doubt that—it certainly wasn't an issue to the farmers who needed good highways.

BB: No, that's for sure. It wasn't a killer issue in the campaign, but because it was, as you described it, it appeared maybe like a misuse of influence on the governor's part—or the lieutenant governor's part—to get the highway built right to his mailbox and Jack Ramirez attempted to use that as an issue. I remember a funny story about that too. Shortly after the

election, in January it would have been, 1981, there was a big dinner gathering in Helena at the Colonial and newly elected Governor Schwinden gave one of his first speeches to the legislators who were just there at this big social dinner. I think it was sponsored by the Montana Chamber of Commerce.

He talked about the gut-wrenching decision and the process of making it that he had to go through to actually challenge the incoming governor and the anxiety that he experienced in going through that. I'm not sure how real this was, but that's what he said. And then the physically tiring, exhausting flying in the small airplanes and raising the money and all the huge amount of work that goes through running in the primary election, and then he had a tough and hotly contested general election against Jack Ramirez, which was fairly close, although he was the odds favored in that thing. And he said, "At the end of the campaign I was so tired I could hardly see straight. The little airplane landed at the landing strip at Wolf Point, and he said, I got into the old pickup. Folks, at least I had the satisfaction of driving home on the best twelve miles in the state of Montana." (laughs)

RG: Well, look at that logically. Most highway improvement projects are eight to ten miles long. They don't repave a twenty-mile stretch at one time because there isn't enough money. So frankly I think that was a phony issue.

BB: And that's kind of the way he handled it, I guess, too, yes.

RG: And I know the distance because I drove past the ranch turnoff a couple of times during my career as a newspaper man. I knew where the place was.

BB: And his ranch was somewhere in the community called Tooley Crick.

RG: Yes, it was up north and slightly east of Wolf Point. I think it was twelve miles from Wolf Point but it was ten miles from the intersection. Of course he'd grown up south of Wolf Point, but by the time he grew up and found enough money to buy a farm, it was about 20 miles from where he grew up.

BB: Now, he was opposed in 1984 by a Great Falls senator named Pat Goodover.

RG: Goodover, of course, was sort of a last-minute candidate. Pat was a pretty strong conservative. He'd made money operating radio stations in Great Falls. He was the leader of the Republican clan in that community.

BB: A member of the state Senate.

RG: And a state Senator. I liked Pat personally but he never got his act together running for governor and I think at one point he characterized himself as a sacrificial lamb.

BB: Yes, in fact Schwinden won overwhelmingly for re-election in 1984 and some people derisively referred to Pat during the campaign not as Senator Goodover but Senator Pushover. (laughs) He just didn't really have a chance from the beginning. What are your thoughts about Schwinden? We've used some terms to describe other governors. How would you describe Schwinden?

RG: Schwinden was open and honest and friendly and accommodating to the media, and he was accommodating to everybody. He was the first of the modern governors to have his name and phone number listed in the phone book. I had a great experience with him in Glasgow. He came to Glasgow in 1983 or '84 and they'd been having trouble with the old Glasgow air base, which they wanted to turn into an industrial park and there'd been some mismanagement up at the industrial park and the county commissioners were about to close the place, shut it down. Schwinden came to Glasgow and called all the community leaders together, and the townspeople, at a night meeting and said, "You've got a great facility here. Keep it open. Hire a new manager if necessary." Because he knew the manager was about to be indicted for theft.

He brought the community together and a lot of people that he knew were in that audience. He brought the town back together again after it was split right down the middle. I was just amazed. I talked to him afterwards about this. I said, "How do you feel about trying to bring something together after it was virtually torn apart?" He says, "I know the people in Eastern Montana. They'll pull together. They may need a cheerleader or someone to give them a push. He said that's why I'm here. I'm going to give them a push." As it turned out, the industrial park survived. It was never a roaring success. The inept, crooked manager was prosecuted by Marc Racicot and wound up in prison.

BB: Well I think that's kind of characteristic, too, of eastern Montana, as we've discussed before. I think there's more cohesion in eastern Montana, more of a community spirit, than there is in the west, where people are more divided along ideological lines.

RG: Once they make up their minds in the east, they'll pull together.

BB: Any thoughts or impressions of Schwinden, any additional ones?

RG: Oh, I don't know.

BB: You characterized him as your favorite governor.

RG: He was, just because he was a nice, friendly guy and he grew up about 50 miles from where I lived. He was not a—let me think. I can't remember if his farm was on the [Fort Peck] Indian reservation or not. I don't think it was. But I just liked the guy, and we've talked on the phone since. I interviewed him down in Phoenix one winter. I was doing a column about Montana snow birds and what they do during the winter down in Arizona. We spoke for an hour, and it was just like talking to my best friend. As a newspaperman, I've always tried to be a little bit

aloof from politicians, but I didn't feel that way at all about Schwinden. I considered him a friend. I still do.

BB: My impression of him is similar to yours. But also very competent. He knew the details of state government when he was governor, when I was a young legislator visiting with him in his office. He didn't need to have some expert sitting in on the discussion. He knew in detail what he was going to do.

RG: Well he was 20 years in the legislature, or close—no, 15 years in the legislature.

BB: He was in the legislature, he was the Commissioner of the Land Board, the Commissioner of State Lands, he was lieutenant governor, and he was governor.

RG: I was going to say that probably the most disappointed I was in governors was Stan Stephens.

BB: I was just going to ask you about Stephens, go ahead.

RG: Fine legislator, great compromiser—he could bring people together—trouble is, when he ran for governor—

BB: He ran for governor in 1988. Schwinden didn't seek a third term, probably could have been elected to a third term. I guess we'll never know, but he chose not to seek a third term, and so Stan Stephens, who had been the Republican president of the state Senate, was the Republican nominee. He defeated a guy by the name of Cal Winslow in the Republican primary, after Jim Waltermire—who was Secretary of State—was killed in a plane crash. The three of them were running at the same time and Stephens, or Waltermire, was killed just before the election, a couple three weeks or month before the election the plane crashed. And then Stephens prevailed over Cal Winslow, who was a young state representative in Billings, in the primary election. And Tom Judge, who had been governor, and who we talked about earlier, won a three or four-way Democratic primary. So Tom Judge was running, trying to make a come back in 1988, against Stan Stephens.

RG: Okay, and Judge came to the *Tribune* for an interview with the editorial board and he was pandering for votes, he was reliving his past. I don't think he stood a chance of being elected governor in that race. Stephens was not an overwhelming favorite by any means, and he sort of fell into the nomination because Waltermire died. It could have been a three-way split and who knows who would have got the nomination. But I think Stan Stephens was an effective campaigner. He sort of grew as the campaign went along.

BB: Do you remember the gimmick he had of the trumpet?

RG: Oh yes.

BB: He was a musician and he played the trumpet as a young boy and he could play a stirring little thing on the trumpet that he'd use at the campaign rally.

RG: Yes, in fact, he played at the jazz festival in Helena on a couple of occasions.

BB: Is that right? So you had a race of kind of a used-up politician, Tom Judge. The people were maybe in somewhat of a mood for change. Stan Stephens is an appealing candidate, good campaigner, he's got that trumpet. Then he becomes governor. You'd mentioned you were disappointed with him as governor.

RG: Yes, because after he won the election he was totally worn out and he took off for a two-week vacation down in the Caribbean somewhere when he was supposed to be organizing his cabinet and preparing the state budget. He lost two valuable weeks and he never got started right. He picked some deadheads for cabinet posts, a couple of them anyway, and when he got into the session the Democrats were almost vicious in opposing everything he wanted.

BB: I know him quite well personally and I share your observation about what a risky thing that was, even though he was bone tired, to have taken that two-week vacation, because that was at a critical time. But I think what always really disturbed Stephens was that he had, as a state legislator, as the Republican floor leader in the Senate and as president of the State Senate, had a reasonably good working relationship with the Democrats. I think it astounded him that they came after him like a school of barracudas after he was elected governor.

RG: Yes, it wasn't all his fault, first of all. His own party disappointed him. He'd offered cabinet positions to some reasonably well-qualified people and they turned him down because they didn't want to take a 50 percent pay cut to work for the state of Montana.

BB: He told me he got his third and fourth choices sometimes for important appointments because people weren't interested in moving to Helena.

RG: So his own party didn't support him after the election. The opposition party turned into a bunch of tigers and they smelled raw meat and they went after it. And then Stan developed health problems. I say he was a disappointment only in the sense that his world came crashing down on him. I'd had a pretty good relationship with Stan. I'd met him out at the Havre golf course. This was just prior to his campaign. But I knew he was finishing up a round of golf so he and I and a mutual friend went to supper together and we talked politics for two hours and it was sort of enlightening because I was not a Helena regular by any means. At that time I was traveling around as a regional editor for the *Tribune* and covering things in Havre and Glasgow and all over. But it was a very entertaining evening.

BB: Oh, I bet it was.

RG: And I respected the guy.

BB: Engaging conversationalist.

RG: Yes, I respected the guy, but he was disappointed and I think the voters became disappointed in him as well.

BB: So he had some kind of a health episode that was a—I don't know what it was exactly—but he had a fainting spell in the governor's office, the Governor's Mansion. He was rushed to the hospital in Helena, after he'd already announced for reelection in 1992 and they took him home a couple of days later. He was, I think, pretty frightened by what happened to him and at that point he decided he wouldn't continue on.

RG: I believe he consulted some specialists out in Seattle.

BB: I think that's right, and I think the prognosis was that if he wanted to live too many more years he shouldn't try to maintain that stressful job. And he was being opposed at that time in the Republican primary by state auditor Andrea Bennett. So it appeared as though she'd be the likely Republican nominee. And then Marc Racicot, the popular, young, one-term attorney general, surfaced and decided to run and he ran with Stephens' lieutenant governor, Denny Rehberg. So that kind of made it appear as though the Stephens imprimatur was with Racicot and Rehberg more than it was with Bennett. Racicot won the primary election and then ran against Dorothy Bradley, a Democratic state senator—

RG: Probably the best governor's race in Montana.

BB: Tell us about that.

RG: Well, okay, let me start off with a sidebar. I met Racicot when he was about a ten-year-old kid. I'd gone up to Libby with a friend of mine who'd applied for a coaching job up there and I was killing a little time so I went down to the gym and sat on the bleachers and here was this tow-headed kid dribbling the ball and shooting baskets and I asked an adult sitting there, I says, "Who's that boy out there? He looks pretty good." And the gentleman said, "Well, I'm Bill Racicot. I'm the basketball coach and that's my son Marc. He practically lives in this gym." And sure enough, six or seven years later, Marc Racicot was an all-state basketball player. His team won a state championship. And later he played at Carroll College for his father. That's where I met Marc Racicot. Of course, he won his reputation as a prosecutor. Seems to me, if I remember my numbers, of the criminal cases he prosecuted, he got a conviction in 56 out of 59 cases during his term as an assistant Attorney General and Attorney General. He won an awful lot of respect. Montana's always been a law-and-order state and let's not forget that Montana was starting to shift a little bit toward the Republican side in 1992.

BB: Because Burns had been elected in that upset against Melcher in 1988.

RG: And Stephens—

BB: And Stephens in that same election, Racicot in that same election, for Attorney General.

RG: You begin to see a Republican swing, even in the western part of Montana.

BB: You mentioned that the 1992 race between Racicot and Bradley was maybe one of the best choices we've ever had. Tell about that.

RG: It was. They had 16 debates, or 18. They were civil toward each other. They had some strong arguments, but they treated each other as decent human beings. They gathered strength as they went along. I think it was a toss up until the last week or two of the election.

BB: Well, it was real close even so, I think.

RG: Yes. It was a clear choice and two darn good choices.

BB: And then Racicot went on to win and ultimately became the chairman of the Republican Party nationwide and so forth. Bob, any comments in conclusion? I know I talked with you a little bit before about the future of newspapers.

RG: Yes, we've talked before about is there a future for newspapers and I say darn, yes—yes, absolutely.

BB: You don't see the Internet as replacing newspapers where people will get their news.

RG: Well, especially local news, I don't think you can get it on the Internet. Sixty percent of adult Montanans are regular newspaper readers. Now the national average is around 45 percent. I don't know that the newspaper product will be delivered to everybody's door twenty years from now. It might change. It might be conveyed on the Internet. Most of the papers in Montana, the larger papers, do have a website on the Internet. I go to it three or four times a week. But I think the feel of a paper in your hands as you're drinking your morning coffee is something that can't be replaced. There's still enough traditionalists in Montana.

And interestingly enough, I live in Anaconda, which is pretty much a retirement community. And for some reason, the *Great Falls Tribune* delivers about 60 papers in this town. Now there's no particular reason why it should, but the *Tribune* covers about two thirds of the state and I see people going out at seven-thirty, quarter-to-eight in the morning, grabbing that paper—they also take the *Montana Standard*, obviously—but when I drive down for morning coffee I see people picking up the newspaper off their porch. Now that's a lifetime habit. It is ingrained. And granted, most of those people, like me, will be dead twenty years from now, but I still think there's a future for newspapers. And there isn't a broadcast outlet, or an Internet outlet, that is

going to give you your home team's basketball score at ten-thirty at night or seven-thirty in the morning like a newspaper can do.

BB: So especially for local coverage, newspapers will have a future.

RG: Yes, the *Anaconda Leader* has a circulation of 3,000—a little better—and there are only 6,000 people in Anaconda. They cover the whole darn town. It comes twice a week and it's just as regular as a visit from an old friend. You go out there and you caress that darn thing. (laughs) At least you pick it up and you hold on to it.

BB: That's right. Anything else?

RG: Can't think of too much, Bob.

BB: Okay, well, I sure appreciate the interview, Bob. Thank you so much.

[End of Interview]