

Maureen and Mike

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**Interviewee: George F. Weisel, Jr.**

**Interviewer: Annie Pontrelli**

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Annie Pontrelli: This is Annie Pontrelli interviewing Dr. George Weisel on August 8, 1991. George, let's go ahead and state some of the information that we were just talking about.

George Weisel: As I said, I've had a long association with the university because as I was a small child, our next door neighbor was Dr. Morton Elrod. He was the great biologist at the university for so many years and established Yellow Bay. We were very friendly with him, we used to go on trips up to Flathead Lake, when he first established the station and the girls were still wearing bloomers. As a little kid he took me out to the university and give me dried up starfish and things like that. I assume (although I've never really thought about it) that probably it made some impression on me, it probably stimulated more of my interest in zoology.

My next experiences with the university (other than living close to it) was...my family had then moved up the Blackfoot valley, and in those days, a family that had any possibility never sent their child first to the University of Montana—you had to send them out of state. They had to get culture. So, they shipped me off to Cornell, where I was for a couple of years. Things were pretty bad during the middle of the Depression, so of course my family couldn't afford to send me off to receive any more culture, so then I attended the University of Montana for about three years, where I received my bachelor's degree and also received my master's degree.

After that, to continue my graduate work I went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor for a year, but then this was at the start of the war. So then I joined the navy. After the navy, I went back to my former professor at Michigan [who] had moved to California to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. So I went to school then at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and then UCLA to get my doctor's degree. While I was attending the University of California, the University of Montana football team at that time played in the Pacific Coast Conference and they came down to play UCLA. That was the year particularly when UCLA was sworn to the Rose Bowl fame, so you can imagine what the score was.

But anyway, with the University of Montana team was Dr. Gordon Castle who was chairman of the zoology department at the time and was also the faculty advisor for the football team. So, he was down there and at that time the university was searching for some particular position in the zoology department. Dr. Castle (I didn't see him down there then) got together with my professors at UCLA and the university sent me a letter offering me a position with the university. I was all ready to accept it, it had been quite some time since I had been back to Montana. I had been off to war and doing graduate work, so I thought it would be nice to go back to Montana.

They sent me an offer—the salary was 2,000 dollars a year (laughs) and when I showed that to my professors at UCLA, they were shocked. So, I wrote back to Montana and said I couldn't come for that salary. So they upped the 2,200 dollars a year and I accepted it. (laughs) They all thought

that I was nuts because at that time there was a great need for university teachers. Anyway, I accepted it and that fall started up at the university. I'll never forget, I had a little open convertible, a second hand car, and I came over Lookout Pass from sunny California (this was over Lookout Pass the last of September) and right into a blizzard on the Montana line. (laughs) Having been down in the south pacific and in California, it was really a shock! So, I put on all the clothes I could and said, "By God, I'll work there my first year and then I'll get the hell out and go back to California or Hawaii or someplace!" (laughs). Anyway, I came back to the university and was there ever since.

AP: So what years were you a student then?

GW: When I first started teaching at the university?

AP: Well, when you were a student.

GW: At UCLA?

AP: Well, okay, the University of Montana?

GW: Oh, Lord, I can't remember the dates.

AP: Was it the '30s?

GW: Yes, it would have been in the '30s.

AP: Then you went to UCLA for graduate school?

GW: And then after the war was over I went to UCLA and was there after 1941. I hadn't really completed my degree at UCLA; when I came to Montana I had to finish my thesis work and go back and take my exams. I started teaching at the university then about 1941 or '42 and I taught then for, well altogether—after I retired I was still on for half time, quarter time really—I taught out there, I think, 38 years, which is a long time.

AP: Did you have any regrets after you came across that blizzard?

GW: No, I never did once I got somewhat acclimated to Montana. I've always loved this state and been interested in it, so I stuck with it. No, I've never regretted in at all. At the time when I returned to teach at Montana, the school was relatively small. Everybody knew everybody. When I was first teaching, [the] zoology department was the botany building. I don't know what all they use it for now. It's probably botany, well it's part of the biological division and it's still used. But anyway, in that one small building was housed zoology, botany, microbiology and home economics—all in that one building. Home economics had the top (third) floor. So, you know it was rather cozy. If we got hungry, we could go up to the third floor and get cookies or cake.

AP: (laughs) What were some of the other changes? Obviously the campus was smaller and...?

GW: Yes, the classes were smaller. One thing though, the course in the post war there were a lot of GI's going to school off of their federal grant. They made up well over half the class, these ex-G.I.'s. Some of them were as old as I was or older. They were hard working students. When they first started in their classes, they had been gone so long from school work, they had forgotten how to, you know, study and take notes and things like that. But after about the first quarter why then they stuck with it and they really worked hard. Many of them were married and they were really an excellent group of students to work with. Quite different from those in the late '60s and '70s. (laughs)

AP: Tell me about that. What was it like?

GW: Well, it was entertaining in some respects. (laughs) Some of the classes were quite large and of course the students dressed in even more abnormal ways than they ever do today. Many of them would smoke pot in class.

AP: In class?!

GW: Yes. They were always holding radical movements on campus. Some of them were good students but a heck of a lot of them weren't. (laughs) They were interesting times.

AP: Since you had been there for so long, there were several presidents who came and went...

GW: I tell you, I've spent a long time at the university and I love to teach; I like the students and I like that age group; but I had very little to do with academe and the administrators. I stayed away as far as I could from them. So, I can't say too much about them. I used to hate faculty meetings, I hated meetings with the president and so on, but I really have nothing against any of them except one I won't mention. I think they were all fine and capable people and sometimes were the right man at the right time, which made quite a bit of difference. Bob Pantzer I think came at the right time. McFarland was a most remarkable man, I got along very well with him. He had great vision, but he was not realistic about the finances of the state, but I wish he could have accomplished everything that he had proposed.

AP: Now he was the one who wanted to make the "Harvard of the west" out of the University of Montana. Is that correct?

GW: Lord, I don't remember. It seemed to me they came and left so rapidly, I have a hard time keeping track of them. (laughs) It's a difficult job. When I was offered the job at the university, there were several faculty members that didn't want me to come because they didn't believe that you should hire anybody to teach that had been at the university—going to the university. They didn't believe in "in-breeding." Bring in fresh blood which I think is a good idea if you don't carry it too far, particularly in my case.

The state is so entirely different than New Jersey or West Virginia or even some of the western states. The presidents who come in and try to operate with the legislature and the board of education and so on, and so it's difficult for them. They are maybe unrealistic about what the state can offer as far as finances and so on and so forth. I would like to see a Harvard in the

western states. What amazes me is with the poor financial support it's received in the last ten or 20 years that the university has had such a good reputation. Having been a student here and gone to one, two, three, four other great institutions, I found that what I had learned at this university was as valuable and even better than what I was getting at those institutions. Even some of our equipment in beginning classes was superior here than was in these other institutions, because I taught as a graduate assistant in beginning classes in some of the other institutions. I'm sure we provided them even better opportunities than the big schools. Of course, in some of those bigger schools you take any class and you'll have 150 or more students. I still think you have to have a personal touch. That's what I liked when I got far enough along in the zoology department, I could just teach advanced courses with relatively few students.

AP: Some of the changes you've already talked about, but did you observe any changes just within teaching? Either in teaching approach or the attitude toward the teaching in general?

GW: Well as I mentioned before, I do like teaching. I like people in that age group, I don't think I could get along with high school students very well, but by that time why they're pretty well worn down, so to speak. (laughs) My approach as a teacher was not to teach from a text book, but to try to organize all of my lectures along with the text book and I really probably was a relatively hard teacher, but I had hard classes. I had classes like comparative anatomy where I had pre-med students, pre-dent students, pre-vet students, some pharmacy majors, and some wildlife majors. And those types of majors all are hard workers if they have something to go for. Other classes I had were ichthyology, comparative histology, and courses like that.

After teaching for so many years I found that you have to keep up with the literature, particularly in science. So you couldn't give the same damn lecture year after year after year, you had to keep changing it and adding new material. I finally found that I was adding so damn much new material that it really would have taken two quarters to do what I was supposed to cover in one quarter. But I really loaded them down and I got very few objections about that. Most of them once they got their nose in it and got to work were interested enough and stimulated enough that they were willing to work.

AP: As a student, I'm assuming you studied zoology as a student, is that what your degree is in?

AP: How did you know you wanted to study zoology?

GW: That comes to another president of the university, oh Lord...[trying to remember].

AP: Clapp?

GW: No, oh Lord...Dr. Simmons. Yes, see Dr. Simmons was a zoologist and a very fine man, although he left here under somewhat of a cloud, but a brilliant fellow and personally a very likeable guy. My mother became very good friends with his and they used to come up to our ranch on the Blackfoot and go fishing and so I got to know him and my mother thought I should go into zoology. When I first went back to Cornell, I was going into law, but with the influence of Dr. Simmons and so on, when I look back on it, my mother probably directed my paths in life. (laughs) But, he was a stimulating man. Between Dr. Elrod and Dr. Simmons why, I became...I

always loved animals! I think that made a difference too.

AP: What was Dr. Elrod like?

GW: He was a very, of course, kind and gentle man, a gentlemanly person. When I look back and think of what that man accomplished...he became the first naturalist in Glacier National Park, possessed a medal in getting the National Bison Range, and of course established Yellow Bay Station on Flathead Lake, but he did so many other things besides doing some all original biological work in Yellowstone Park. I came across in the zoology department some old glass plates, photographic plates, that he had made. These things were made with those tremendous, big old cameras that weighed about 60 pounds. You had to have tripods and carry glass plates and by the time you got it all together, you had 150 pounds. He carted that all around the country where there were no roads. But anyway, I came across a photographic plate of his that he had made I think in 1912 of the Chinese Wall in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It was taken from a place I had been called Haystack Mountain, which is right on the top of the continental divide and it looks down this tremendous, sheer wall of limestone called the Lewis and Clark overthrust. To pack in there today, you have to go by pack horse for 25 or 30 miles, and somehow or another he packed it in there and got up there and took a picture of the Chinese Wall—probably the first one ever taken. But he did things like that. He was a remarkable person and quite a researcher too.

Another thing I forgot to mention in the case of teaching, even on the graduate courses, is that I think that the instructor should carry on research work at the same time. Because to me, that stimulated me so much and opened up new avenues in the stuff I was teaching to undergraduate students. You know, some originality but also stimulates you intellectually. I think some people are such damn good teachers they can just teach, but particularly in areas such as science you have combine them.

AP: What kind of research did you do?

GW: Mostly on fish, on the osteology of fish, and the structure of fish, the electro organs of paddlefish and sturgeon and things like that.

AP: What were you trying to determine?

GW: Just out of curiosity. I wanted to know, for instance, on the some of those sturgeon and paddlefish that we have in eastern Montana, what those little pits along the snout of the paddlefish were for.

AP: Did you find out?

GW: There had been some guesses as to what they were. One thing they knew was that if you put an iron rod in a tank with paddlefish, they'd almost go crazy. Then the Fish and Game Department tried putting radio trackers on paddlefish and the fish were just completely disoriented. Quite apparently from the work I had done, (I just did it on the morphology, the physiology of it was taken up later by some characters in California), but those things are

electroreceptors. They can even detect such low voltages that something like a mayfly would put out. It probably has a great deal to do with their orientation and the electromagnetic field of the earth. Some of those things were fascinating.

AP: Who were some of the other interesting people that stand out in your memory such as Elrod and Simmons?

GW: Amongst the administration?

AP: Not necessarily, just people throughout your years.

GW: Well, I liked all of the people in my department, although socially, I didn't have nearly as much to do [with them] as people who were not in my department. I was very fond of some people in the English department, like Walter Brown and Jessie Bier, socially. I always liked the men in the zoology department. Lud Browman, sometimes I'd get mad as heck at him, and he'd get (apparently) mad at me. (laughs) But anyway, Lud was that way, a very positive minded person, but the other people I really enjoyed.

AP: What did you like best about the university?

GW: That is in Montana? I hope it retains its Montanishness! It's amazing because in some of the courses I teach, I get wildlife students from the east: Pennsylvania, New York, and Maine and so on. Of course, they are interested in the outdoors in the first place to go into wildlife, but they are just really stimulated by the state. I've had so many of them that just really, you know, want to stay in the state, but can't for obvious financial reasons. But there is something attractive about this state that it attracts too damn many people. The location in Missoula is super.

To me now, it's gotten to be a large town, semi-city, but it has been so for many years. There used to be a very close downtown relationship, very close, but now since the university has grown so and the change in the population has swelled that is no longer so evident. The people in town associated socially and continuously with the faculty. The faculty members probably saw more town people than they did fellow faculty members at social get togethers. It was a nice relationship.

AP: What do you think could be done to bring us back to that?

GW: I think because of the growth of the two, you really can't get it back to that same level. Just like people living in a small town know everybody on the street: today you can't. There are some efforts like the Oktoberfest and so on that are all right, but it's all Chamber of Commerce type stuff that doesn't go very deep.

AP: What did you like least about the university?

GW: Least? My salary! (laughs) Some of my research had to be directed in certain channels that didn't require a lot of expensive equipment because we didn't have the money for it. I could have done much, much more, but I think you can organize your research so that you don't have to

have expensive equipment.

AP: You had a lot of family members who went to the university?

GW: Yes. My mother went to the university.

AP: Oh is that right? What did she study?

GW: I don't think they studied things in those days. (laughs) She didn't graduate from it. She later went on to a business school in Boston. She was there about the same time as Mary Ellen Lochford.

AP: Does your mother have pictures or do you have pictures of when your mother was attending the university?

GW: I'm pretty sure I do, yes.

AP: That would be worth looking at, to see if there are some pictures showing the university the way it was.

GW: Yes. Another thing that I remember are the May pole events. On May Day they erected a pole in the Oval and there were girls with bloomers again and flowers. They went around this pole until they wound their ribbons up around the pole, you know. That was quite the event. (laughs) Another thing they used to do too, every spring was the tug of war, I forget, but I think it was between the freshman and the sophomores or something. They went down to where the big ditch from the river goes under Van Buren Bridge and one team would get on one side and one on the other and they'd have this tug of war and try to pull the other team down through the mud. They did that for years. (laughs) Aber Day used to be quite important. It got pretty wild sometimes.

AP: Tell me about that.

GW: Oh, you mean the wildness? Well the point of it was to clean up the campus and plant trees and so on. They all pitched in and did a pretty good job. If you get that many hundreds and thousands of students with rakes and shovels, you accomplish a great deal even though each individual doesn't do very much. (laughs) But they did, they cleaned up the campus somewhat. Then it got a little out of hand because right after they felt they had done their work, it became a beer party and raucous time. They got all the girls they could in T-shirts and sprayed them with water and things like that. (laughs) Great fun.

AP: That's great. What were some of the other traditions you recall? You mentioned Aber Day, were there some other traditions?

GW: Uh, there might have been. Of course, some of the fraternities had traditions, but I don't recall any other than that.

AP: Were you involved with many activities or organizations on campus or affiliations with education?

GW: Well, sometimes they put me in a position. I was editor of the University Press for a while.

AP: Was that as a student or a faculty member?

GW: A faculty member, yes.

AP: What was the University Press?

GW: Well we put out publications, in fact, I wrote a book on some Montana history before the war. They published that and Katherine White's book on David Thompson, the earliest explorer of this country. They did one on mathematics—quite a number of things. They published the Montana Almanac, kind of like the almanac of the United States, but just for this state. It was handy. I still use it occasionally. They did a very good job in the print shop, a beautiful job on the books.

AP: Do you remember what year?

GW: That it stopped? Oh I can't remember exactly, it must have been around probably the early '60s or the late '50s. I can't remember the dates. It's too bad they couldn't have retained it.

AP: What were your favorite classes?

GW: Oh I think probably the favorite class I had was ichthyology or fish. We had wonderful field trips. That's another thing that's doggone hard to do today. Professors are maybe just too lazy to take their classes out. But we had wonderful field trips, we'd go out and get fish and electrocute fish and take water samples and things like that. But, aside from the field trips I liked that best, because I had been very intrigued by fish.

The next one I think was comparative osteology. One of the main things I liked about it was because it was so easy. I just adore lab practicals where you put the actual objects out and the students have to answer questions on them. Hands on. And histology was wonderful, although we were looking at everything through a microscope. It was so easy to have lab practicals because I could put out about 15 or 20 microscopes and have a slide on each and the students ask terrible questions about them. But it was interesting, histology.

AP: Did you have a lot of field trips in your own classes when you were teaching?

GW: Well, in ones like osteology it wouldn't be in your course, but in ichthyology I did. They did it, I think they still do in ornithology and mammalogy at the university. And I had a course in water quality and that was interesting and we did work on the superfund site, oh hell, 20 years ago. We had water analysis. We showed there was arsenic in there and so on. Nothing was done about it. Nobody seemed to be worrying about it. We had quite a complete biological survey and all of this was published and we all received an award from the superfund.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

AP: About your philosophy and your approach to teaching, you addressed that a little bit earlier, but is there anything else that you would add as far as your attitude or your approach was in teaching?

GW: Well I think one of the main attributes of a good teacher is having an honest interest in the subject he's teaching. It's horribly boring to be taught by a teacher who is bored with his own subject matter. You have to keep up some kind of enthusiasm. Teaching is not really easy work, even though you know the material well, you have to put in some preparation: reviewing it, keeping it together in some kind of a decent sequence.

Another thing I've found too in teaching is that I love to illustrate, as you can see around here. I would clip up pictures on the board in the lab and I found that one thing was you had to think of the student -how long it's going to take him to copy what you put down. (laughs) Not only in illustration, drawings on the board would show some relationship, but also writing something on the board. At least give the poor suckers enough time to put it down. Or if you come to like a lot of scientific terms, you know, mumble off something like *pymelamelaponpepacorn*, and expect the class to know what the hell you're talking about, or to write it down, but to spell it out on the board for them. And not to talk too rapidly—I had a tendency to do that, but try to slow down.

One of the greatest difficulties that I had in classes I think, was making out examinations. That's why I like lab practicals. Written examinations—I hate true and false, multiple choice, things like that. Try to figure out one that will pretty much cover the material you want to test them on for at least semi-essay answers. If you have a class of more than 20 students it is a terrible labor to grade them and to grade them equitably. But, I do think that examinations shouldn't be true and false stuff.

I had an old instructor at the university in botany—a great man who actually went on to do great things—C. Leo Hitchcock. He wrote the *Flora of the Northwest* in about four or five volumes. I remember his tests. I took a course in agristology (?), which is the study of grasses, and his tests at the end of the quarter he had a lot of these pressed grasses on big sheets of paper and he had a whole stack on his desk and he called you in individually. He would shuffle through this pile of pressed grasses and you'd have to name the genus, the species, and the group that the grass belonged to. Also, he'd time you, by shuffling cards. The faster you could name those off as he shuffled through, well the higher your grade would be. I don't know whether it was a fair test or not, but it was stimulating when you look back on it! (laughs)

AP: I bet!

GW: But he was a great man. You would go out on a field trip with him and he ran all the time. We'd go up on Waterworks Hill. He'd practically run up the hill and the students would be panting up behind him. He'd reach down and grab some plant up like that and throw it up in the air in a cloud of dust and go "What's that?" and keep on running. Then a bird would call (a birdsong) and he'd stop and turn around the class, (although it was a class in botany) and go "What bird was that?" (laughs) He'd know! But he showed tremendous enthusiasm.

AP: Oh I bet, it sounds like it.

GW: Some of the best instructors I had I think were botany instructors, Chuck [Charles] Walters and C. Leo Hitchcock.

AP: Chuck Walters and...?

GW: Chuck Walters was a botanist at the university too. They had a little wild area up the Bitterroot [Valley] named after him.

AP: Oh, okay.

GW: You've got to keep up your enthusiasm.

AP: What were some of your goals as a teacher? What did you want to set out to do?

GW: I wanted to impart what I thought was valuable information to my students, although they and most other people might not think it was that valuable. (laughs) You know, something that they would use. During the late '60s and '70s, when we got all the hippy types, they criticized classes all the time. That is, what practical use is this for me, you know. They really wouldn't know whether it had any practical use until got out on their own and then they found they had some use for it. But I tried to keep some of my information useful, you know, they'd have some use for it. I mean there is no field of knowledge that you study that doesn't have some impact on your life or your abilities, whether you're studying philosophy or women's studies or whatever it is, although I have some doubts about the last one! (laughs)

AP: You have doubts about women's studies?

GW: Well I never took a course in it. (laughs)

AP: Oh yes. What were some of your greatest accomplishments during your years at the university?

GW: Not getting fired. (laughs)

AP: Why do you say that?

GW: Well, I got a lot of satisfaction and accomplishments I think in publishing research papers. Part of that probably was equal credit. I think my best serious accomplishment was influencing some students because I see students today (and there are a lot of them, a lot of doctors and believe it or not, a lot of wilderness outfitters and guys from the Fish and Game Department and so on) and it pleases me to no end when I see them after having had them in class for 30 years or more. They'll say, "Oh gee, yes, it was a wonderful course!" Or when a doctor comes up to me like Dr. [Walter] Peschel downtown that I had as a student and says, "Gee, if it hadn't been for that histology, comparative anatomy...That gave me the ability to sail through medical school with no

difficulty at all." That is extremely satisfying. Although the ones who maybe thought of me otherwise maybe just don't mention it! (laughs)

AP: Are there certain students who stand out in your mind, really having made it and you had a part in it? Like Dr. Peschel was one.

GW: None of them have made it in politics. A number of them have done very well. One fellow who I had as a student...I liked the non-conformist students more than I did the conformist students, maybe we had something more in common. But anyway, one of them is now in charge of all the bear studies up in Alaska, another one is chief of the inland fisheries up in Alaska, one chap is the head of all this cougar studies in Idaho. Maybe you saw him TV. Another one has done extremely well with the Smithsonian and is one of the assistant directors. But they're, you know, (unintelligible). But I can't say any of them have become a governor of North Dakota or anything.

AP: They don't necessarily have to be in politics.

GW: Some of them have gone into entirely different areas. One student that I had in comparative anatomy went into insurance. I asked him, "Why the hell did you take those courses? Have they done you any good at all?" because I couldn't see any relationship between that and insurance.

He laughed and said, "I'm one of the main adjustors in my department for automobile wrecks because I know more about anatomy and can determine what happened to these guys when they get bones crushed or internal injuries. It's been invaluable." So again, you can't tell what somebody's going to use for value in a life.

AP: What were some of the challenges you met at the university?

GW: Most of them I ignored. There weren't any real challenges that I can recall. I just kind of went along.

AP: If you had the chance to go back in time, what would you want to do differently or what memory or experience would you want to relive?

GW: Oh, I wouldn't change much. I would have liked to have been able to travel more. I rather regret that even after I retired, I hadn't gone back to school. I'd love to learn more about geology. I did go back one semester and took some more agristology of grasses, because I keep horses and mules and they eat grasses. I thought I ought to be interested in grasses too.

AP: Now why would you want to study geology?

GW: Just curiosity. I mean I like botany, I've taken botany. I became extremely interested in not only grasses, but the plants and the animals. I think it makes life so much more fulfilling. If I walk around here anyplace, I can recognize it as this and this and this. If I call it by name they become old friends and I become much more observant like, "Gee, that's different, something entirely different." I just returned from a pack trip to the Bob Marshall. Late in the season as it is, it was so wet back there because the season is so late there was just a mass of wildflowers. I thought that I

knew most of them when I started. I had a couple of flower books with me and at least eight of those plants we couldn't find any place at all.

One thing that we found (there was a group of other people with us—a guy from Texas and a couple from New Jersey and one from Missouri and one of the packers was also interested in flowers. He had no education in that, but he just wanted to know what they all were. Just within a couple of days all of those people were out there gathering flowers and trying to identify what the heck they were, who previously had no training or anything like that. Fortunately they had a normal curiosity which I think is something we shouldn't lose from childhood, but should try to retain. It makes life so much better really even in your dotage.

AP: What period of time was your favorite or most memorable?

GW: At the university? I would say probably after I became accustomed to teaching but still had that group of more mature students. Not that some of the younger ones aren't mature, some of them are mature, and we weren't hit by that Vietnam syndrome, which was interesting but in an odd sort of way.

AP: How did the university affect or shape the person you are?

GW: Well obviously the number of years there. A somewhat loose association, but most of my life. Undoubtedly, it must have had a great influence, but I can't just pinpoint (unintelligible).

AP: What advice would you give today's university teachers and students?

GW: And students? Well, I would say for any university instructor be able to maintain his interest and his enthusiasm, and if he has it, his sense of humor, and not to be bored, which is pretty easy to do in a university. The same thing I would say to the student: go to school with the idea that you're going to work and you're will to enjoy it.

AP: Did you enjoy your years as a student there?

GW: Yes. I was a terrible student in grade school. I was in the first class that ever attended Paxson School, which they're tearing down now, one of the grand wonderful old schools. The wonderful woman who was the principal of the school had me in the office one day. I had a tendency not always to attend class. She told me I didn't have to attend classes any time I didn't want to, and the longer I stayed away the better. That greatly influenced me, I think I attended every single class after that. (laughs)

AP: Reverse psychology.

GW: Then when I got in high school, I wasn't very good in high school either. I was a bad boy in high school. Then I went to the university, Cornell and the university here, I became interested. All of a sudden "bang" you know, I became interested in physics. I don't know, maybe grade school and high school were too easy. I loved chemistry in high school. I was always interested in making horrible things like gun powder or flammable materials. (laughs) It's a bad age.

AP: Any other observations, insights, memories, stories that stick out in your mind?

GW: No. I wrote two short articles on the history of the university though.

AP: Oh you did?

GW: They're different from any you've ever read! (laughs)

AP: Oh, do you have those? I'd love to see them. When did you write these?

GW: [Searching for articles and speaking inaudibly] ...Usually it's about, you know, well, some of the questions you've been asking me. So I thought I'd do something different and I wrote a history of dogs on the campus and another one on the history of chewing tobacco on campus.

AP: Oh. (laughs) Can I see these?

GW: They used to have a lot of dogs on campus.

AP: Now this was written in 1975. CAS Forum. CAS, what does that stand for?

GW: I don't know.

AP: Do you want to read something then? Why don't you read some of that?

GW: Well, this was entitled "Canis Familiarus on the University of Montana Campus" or "The Demise of the Dog and the Rise of the Administrators."

[Reads] I've been around the University of Montana for a long time and although not an acute observer, I've formed definite opinions as most casual observers will. One is my gut opinion that the dogs we used to have on campus had a greater impact on the student body and were held in greater respect than the faculty, and certainly more so than the administrators. Consequently, a review of the canine history on campus is apropos.

As a green instructor in 1948, I simply could not face my large eight o'clock class in biological sciences 101 without a belt of whiskey and my dog. This dog, whose name was Squeeks, is important in canine history of the university. He was a remarkable English Setter. He could both hunt and put up with academes. True, we have humans on the faculty that hunt, but they can rarely put up with academes.

Within a week of his introduction to the university, Squeeks knew the schedule of classes and meeting places. The biological science lectures were delivered in journalism 204. The room with the useless stage, useless, except for Squeeks. As a lecturer, I would stand below the stage where there was a small, crappy blackboard. Squeeks took over the stage, rolled over on his back and ridiculed my every mistake with a large yawn and a snore. I found that I was fitting my lectures to his interests, and consequently, to the level of the students. Squeeks was by no means the only

regular dog on campus. I will continue with his historical importance after review of some of the other regulars.

An outstanding example was Tag, faithful companion of Dr. G.D. Shallenberger. This established, according to administrators, a bad precedence because Shally was chairman of the physics department and although an endearing man, as all dog lovers are, he was a man of influence. This brown and white terrier followed Shally's every step and enlivened many a class.

When Shally went to the barber shop, the terrier would sit on the foot rest of the barber chair and would enjoy the sensations when the chair was swung around to better snip Shally's locks. Tag went to every physics class, graduate seminar, and faculty meeting and never caused a brawl.

Another old timer was Whiskey. Whiskey was a small, white-haired type that lived with Mel Morris in forestry. This dog never created any waves to my knowledge. He was devoted to Mel and was ever present. Whiskey set a good example for steadfastness, honesty, and devotedness, qualities he copied from his master.

A third faculty dog was a kind of sheep dog with hair over his eyes. He was a companion to Walter Brown of the English department and went by the name of Pippy. Squeeks and Pippy were friends, so that at staff and faculty meetings there was no trouble except once.

These were the days when faculty had some say and this particular once was when the group of faculty and Pippy and Squeeks met in the president's anteroom to select the department head. During the discussion, Pippy slipped through the meeting room door and delivered a large "upchuck" in the front of president Carl McFarland's office. Squeeks, who had remained dutifully by my chair, walked out and aided the apparent cleaning efforts of professor Walter Brown by licking up the mess. Tag and Whiskey and Pippy were important members of the campus canine (unintelligible), but Squeeks was historically more so.

Squeeks resided with me in the old biology building which, besides zoology, also housed botany, microbiology, and home economics. This was a cozy group. Whenever you felt hungry all you had to do was to climb to the third floor for a snack with the home economists. In this era, practical things such as cooking were taught.

Squeeks was a perfect gentleman, an example any Republican legislature would accept for his child. He had however, one nemesis, Dr. Ludwig Browman, who is now retired and prominent in civil affairs. Squeeks annoyed Dr. Browman for slight reasons. Admittedly, Squeeks occasionally urinated on one of the stairwell posts of the biology building, either to establish territory or in appreciation of what a poor job the janitor had done. Then, there was that faculty meeting during the February blizzard.

The faculty meeting used to be held in the auditorium of the now Venture Center. The faculty had gathered in there en masse to hear about the state of the university as interpreted by president McFarland. I was so respectful of and intimidated by this great man that I left Squeeks out in the cold. Squeeks, hunkering down from the winter blasts barked outside the decrepit doors of the meeting hall. Some kind, or stupid, faculty soul let him in. Squeeks, a good nosed

hunting dog, immediately tried to find his cowering master. As setters do, he tracked back and forth, and in so doing, had to pass through the narrow space between the blackboard and the lecture table. This space was somewhat occluded by the portly McFarland, so that with every pass of Squeeks, the honorable president had to flatten himself against the blackboard, resulting in a posterior white with chalk. During this episode, I attempted to remain more anonymous than usual, but Squeeks nosed me out and settled down by my chair. The meeting proceeded resulting as usual in nothing. President McFarland, bless him, made no issue of dogs on campus at this time. It took more than dogs to lower his dignity.

The final event that led to the ukase regarding dogs on campus took place in the biology building. We used to have biology seminars with mandatory attendance by students and staff in botany, microbiology, and zoology. We all fitted neatly into a small lecture room. At one particular seminar, a fine botany major was in the middle of delivering his review of a recent scientific article when into the room ambled his St. Bernard. Squeeks arose from beside me to defend his territory. The two dogs met with great growlings in front of Meyer Chessin's chair. Dr. Chessin executed a rapid retreat to the far corner of the room. Without stopping his speech, the botany student collared his dog and lead him out to the door while I pulled Squeeks back to my chair. The seminar was hardly interrupted. Unfortunately Squeek's nemesis, Dr. Browman, seized upon this incident to pressure President McFarland to order that henceforth, and perhaps forever, no faculty or student would be allowed to have dogs on campus. Tag, Whiskey, Pippy, and Squeeks continued to make their regular classes regardless of the directive. But after they died they were not replaced. It is sad to look out over the sterile, green lawns and only see an occasional mongrel chasing a Frisbee. In years past, the campus was full of rollicking canines and persuivant (?) students, but damn few administrators. [End of reading]

AP: Great! What you inspired you to write these?

GW: Well, what inspired me to write them was that nobody had written about such small things—but just dull things about their classes and stuff.

AP: Why don't you read this one too? I've got another tape too if we run out. If it stops while you are in the middle...I had heard about Shallenberger's dog before.

GW: Shalley's.

AP: Yes.

GW: [Reads] This is a concise history of tobacco chewing on the University of Montana campus. An aspect of the university's history that has never been told and perhaps has been avoided is the use of chewing tobacco and snoose by faculty members. The use was prevalent and flouted in earlier years. Faculty addition was rampant in the school of forestry, and that school had knowledgeable and real timber beasts who taught such practical courses as how to cut down trees.

The first example that comes to mind is the late Dave Clark. He chewed Cut Bug rather than the more effete snoose and he chewed it while lecturing, probably to impress students with the

reality of how (unintelligible) of the woods. During warm days his expectorations were through a convenient window by the lectern. Students told me that one spring day the window had been recently cleaned and closed, and that Clark, believing the usually clouded panes were open, discharged his projectile to what he thought was the outside world. He was dismayed to see it splatter and drip from the pane.

Paul Bishoff, president emeritus of foreign languages was another devotee of the delectable mixing of saliva with nicotine. Although Paul was a teacher of Spanish, he was a forester at heart and had cruised timber in Central America. Paul was never obvious in his use of tobacco like some cigarette smokers I know. He chewed Masterpiece which is the champagne of plugs. His plug was always carefully wrapped in tinfoil to preserve the moisture and rather than biting off a chew, he cut the morsel to desired size with his penknife.

As aside from strict university matters, I am compelled to relate the astounding abilities of Judge Duncan, District Judge of the Fourth District here in Missoula. (He includes a generation of boys.) Judge Duncan was a most imposing gentleman: a man from the south who was an authority on the Civil War and wore a spring tie, a wide brimmed black hat, and a cape like the Phantom of the Opera. Besides his judicial expertise and consumption of bourbon, he was also renowned for the accuracy of his expectorations.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

GW: In his times every respectable hotel and mercantile business had spittoons strategically spaced not more than 30 feet apart. These receptacles were also present in every court of law. On the left hand side of Judge Duncan's bench there was always kept a large spittoon of polished brass, which he never missed even though he apparently never took aim. This so intrigued his bailiff and general hangers-on that they determined to test the judge's remarkable marksmanship. They'd moved the spittoon from the left to the right of the bench. Impeccable witnesses claimed that the judge looked to the left and spat to the right and hit the container dead center throughout the lengthy trial.

When I first arrived in this August campus as an instructor, I was chewing both cut plug and snoose simultaneously. This was not advisable as it created too much oral fluid to void in an emergency. The solution was to reduce consumption to snoose alone which can be swallowed when need arises, such as in meetings with the deans and so on. I thought I was getting away with this so-called revolting habit without sullyng the purity of the students until a particularly quiet coed upset the notion. Her question at the end of the lecture was not on metric evolution, but was more direct and personal. "You chew snoose, don't you sir?" I shuffled my feet and finally admitted to the fact. She confided that she knew because, "You know, we never knew Ma dipped snoose for years because she put it under the plates of her false teeth." Since my confrontation with this astute student, I have found that a number of students not only are aware of my addiction to Copenhagen, but are consumers themselves. This is particularly prevalent among male graduates who are under a great deal of stress and can't afford cigarettes. They frequently bum a dip and invariably have such large rachulet [?] thumbs, that in one swoop they can scoop out a third of a can's contents. But no coed has approached me yet for Copenhagen or anything else. It is probably not the actual sucking of snoose that is the giveaway of the user, nor is it the blurred speech. It is the telltale circular bulge the can gives to the shirt or pants pocket. You can always recognize a user by this sign. I have a sneaking suspicion that snoose is more prevalently used on this campus than the administration and student health service realize. It is easy to wrap the can in a handkerchief and to partake such small quantities that vile spitting is not necessary. The halcyon days of the timber beasts are over, and we must be circumspect and conform. The end. [End of reading]. At least it's a different aspect of the university's history.

AP: Are you the only one who has copies of those, or are those in the Journalism building or...?

GW: I don't know if they still put (unintelligible) out or how many years ago they put this out. This is volume five, 1977. These were put in all of the faculty mail slots when it came out.

AP: Now are these other written pieces histories?

GW: I found some of the things that weren't biological. I became very interested in the history of some of the (unintelligible). I did another one on animal names and all of the terms of the ethnozoology of the Flathead Indians.

AP: Anything else that comes to mind? Those are great stories.

GW: Well they have them over there someplace. I don't know, did the school of journalism ever put those out?

AP: Could have.

GW: You still have that print shop over there, don't you?

AP: Yes.

GW: That print shop used to be pretty damn good.

AP: I think it still is.

GW: (Unintelligible). The Anaconda Company held the water rights on Georgetown Lake and somebody else tested the water right laws. The people who tested the Anaconda Company hired Paul Phillips to look into the history, the background, the ownership of this water right. It was so important to the Anaconda Copper Company. Paul Phillips did the research and I guess the Anaconda Company lost in court and then the Anaconda Company tried to get Paul Phillips.

AP: Is that right?

GW: Yes and they had a trumped up charge against him. They hired some girl to testify that Paul Phillips was chasing her around the library, something like that. They tried to hook him on that. It worked too successfully. He was really discouraged and went to work for the WPA here and in Washington and then came back here and was reinstated later on.

AP: Now he was on the faculty when you were?

GW: Yes. His last years, yes. But, anyway, he was one of the (unintelligible). They did a good job.

AP: So you wrote this?

GW: Yes.

AP: *Men and Trade*.

GW: From the ledger of Fort Owen.

AP: [reads] *Men and Trade on the Northwest Frontier*, by George Weisel. This was published in 1955, Montana State University, before the name changed.

GW: Did you see this? They did a beautiful job of printing it.

AP: Oh yes, this is wonderful.

GW: In the print shop they had those old linotypes. They don't have those now do they? Old

clankety-clank, clank, clank, clank—you have to put in the bars. It was really quite an art to set the darn things up. I don't know how they do it now probably with computers somehow or another.

AP: No, I know they still have a manual press, I just don't know exactly what the process is.

GW: They had two presses, you know, about the size of that fireplace, put hot lead into.

AP: I don't think it's the same process as before, but they have a couple machines about that big though. Maybe not quite that big, but pretty good sized. Now you did the research for this book while you were teaching as well?

GW: Yes, yes.

AP: That's a lot of work. It's obvious you have a lot of different talents and a lot of different interests which is really interesting.

GW: Paul Phillips (unintelligible). He was a rather self-effacing guy. (Unintelligible; comment about politics and Paul Phillips' support or lack thereof by university administration.)

AP: Yes, it's been interesting in the oral history because so many people have different perspectives and insights of how they viewed different presidents.

GW: Yes. This town-gown scandal really split the town in two.

AP: Now tell me what happened in that again.

GW: I don't know all the details, but I'm sure it's been written up. You've seen that history of the university by Merriam and I think he has. Some presidents can be really fine men, but have some weaknesses (unintelligible). The faculty can't be oversensitive in many ways and hypercritical. Many organizations have administration and faculty (unintelligible). I think the faculty should have as much or more input to the selection of presidents than they have had in the past. They could do it.

AP: Did you not have a say in the selection process when you were on the faculty?

GW: Oh, not much, I don't think many of the faculty do. Usually they set up a committee you know and they'll have individuals from (unintelligible). Maybe he'll come around for a few minutes, the individual candidates.

AP: Anything else?

GW: Nope. That's always the way.

[End of Interview]