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Interviewee: Jules Karlin

Interviewer: David Brooks

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David Brooks: Okay, it's December 20, 2006, and I'm David Brooks, the interviewer for the University of Montana's Oral History Project. Today I'm interviewing Jules Karlin. Mr. Karlin, I was hoping you could start by just talking a little bit about your personal history and your educational background. What brought you to Missoula and the University of Montana in the first place?

Jules Karlin: It was pure circumstance. I had no intention of—well, I better start at the beginning. You want to know where my degrees are from?

DB: Yeah.

JK: I took my bachelor's degree at Georgetown School of Foreign Service, and then I went to Chapel Hill [University of North Carolina] for a master's degree, and then I had the misfortune of going to Minnesota for a doctorate. I say misfortune because it was a school of 15,000, which was huge then, and I never became accustomed to it. The department was excellent, but I hated the climate, I hated the size. I felt that when you had 500 students in a lecture it was unconscionable. Then the war [World War II] started after I had done a semester at the state teacher's college. In those times jobs were hard to get. I finally came out to Pullman [Washington State University] to teach in the Army program. Then from Pullman I went to Seattle to teach in the History Department, and from Seattle I went to Tacoma to teach in the summer school.

In the course of all these movings around I met Paul Phillips, of whom you've heard? He wanted to put me to work in the archives in Seattle and I didn't want to be an archivist. Montana then had a vacancy for one-year by M.C. Wren, and Burly Miller, having been told about me by Paul Phillips, asked me if I was interested, and since the courses weren't the courses I would normally teach, I said no. Then Hermann Deutch of Washington State, who had taught here in the '20s, came to Seattle and we had lunch. I happened to remark to him about the Montana questions and he recommended it highly, said that Burly would let me throw up my own schedule, and he said, resurrect it. So I resurrected it and Burly made me an offer to take M.C. Wren's place for one year, and I'm still here.

DB: [laughs] You know, I have heard a similar story from many people who became faculty here. That they came on a one-year contract and just never left.

JK: [laughs]

DB: So what were your interests at the time? You know, you mention that—

JK: Oh, my interests were American diplomatic history and American constitutional history, plus political theory. And that was about all I knew.

DB: Did it come to pass that you were able to design your own courses?

JK: Oh, yes. Burly helped me kill a course I couldn't drop but didn't want to teach. [chuckles] Burly was an extraordinary chairman. You probably have heard him mentioned.

DB: I have, but tell me a little about him.

JK: Well, he was originally from Kansas. Came out here and was chairman of the History Department and he also went on and became an administrator and dean of men. When he retired as dean of men in about 1947, the students came to his house, got him and took him to the University Theater and celebrated with him. The one ex-student of mine who casually said, "Well, Burly was very fair. He bailed me out, listened to the case on the spot, then threw me out." [chuckles] So the University at that time was run by, what was known as the Whig Oligarchy.

DB: And what does that mean?

JK: That means that it was run by four old-timers with perceptions of what a university should be. Burly was one of them. Mr. [Charles] Leaphart, who was dean of the Law School, was the second, H.G. Merriam of the English was third, and the fourth member was R.H. Jesse, who was a chemist, and they ran the University.

DB: In what way did they run it and what do you mean by, they ran it as they thought a university should be run? How did they think it should be run?

JK: Well, they got rid of as many survey courses as they could. Then they played to Montana's strengths. In other words, we had no deans except for the professional schools, so there was a vacuum in the leadership. And this was 10 years after the Simmons affair. So somebody had to take charge, and the four gentlemen took charge.

DB: Who was the president [of the University] at the time when you came?

JK: Jimmy McCain, came at the same time I did.

DB: And what year was that?

JK: 1945. Jimmy and I were regular tennis partners, since we were almost the only ones who played and since the courts were so terrible. So the students complained to Jimmy about the

courts, and he said, well, let's appoint a committee to decide what we should do. It was decided the students would appoint two [committee members] and Jimmy would appoint one. I learned quickly how you could manipulate administrations, because Jimmy watched as the students selected one girl from Illinois, who was a tennis player, and another girl from Missoula, which would make Jimmy's appointment the key vote, and he appointed me. That's what I call administration!

DB: So you got new courts?

JK: Oh, yes. We did almost everything correctly. We sent out questionnaires, even though Mary, Marva and I knew in advance what we were going to do.

DB: You know, you mentioned both your experience at a university, where you got your Ph.D., of 15,000 [students] and you thought it was unconstitutional to have classes with 500 people in them. And also the four gentlemen who tried to get rid of as many survey courses as possible. What about survey courses or large courses did you find unconstitutional?

JK: Unconscionable.

DB: Unconscionable. I mean, you know, now we're here at the University in a time where having lots of students sign up for your courses is sort of a feather in your cap.

JK: I could never claim that! I would frequently run with five students or less—fewer to be grammatical. No, I find with the surveys you have a tendency to use graduate assistants and graduate assistants should be doing their own work instead of the University's. Then graduate assistants are underpaid, they're overworked. And then a survey is simply skipping from high-point to high-point. The first survey to go was a chemistry survey. I think they called it—some kind of science.

DB: So you came in with McCain, and he lasted for quite a while as a president here—

JK: Five years.

DB: —compared to some subsequent [presidents].

JK: His predecessors. Jimmy would have stayed longer, except that he and a statewide committee had gotten a bond issue through and then the examiners—I think we've abandoned the examiners, the examiners—what did precisely they do? Oh, they reasserted the control over the money, so the University got less than it expected and Havre got more. Havre got more because one of the examiners was from Havre. Sam Mitchell, whose name is on a building in Helena. So Jimmy was unhappy with that, and then Kansas State made him a good offer and he departed.

DB: Before we get too much into the changing of administration here at the University, I want to talk a little bit more about the History Department, in particular. You came in and you were able to design your own courses. Tell me a little bit about the department in 1945, the people and the curriculum.

JK: Well, Burly Miller was chairman. Paul Phillips was on leave, but you've read about the trial.

DB: I don't believe I recall a trial.

JK: Oh. [long pause]

DB: In the History Department?

JK: Yes, downtown. He was accused of having made advances to a female student.

DB: Oh, yeah. And Merriam wrote about this in his history of the University. Yes, right. So he was on leave for that. [Phillips was accused of assault by a female Works Progress Administration employee. He filed a libel suit against her, and won, but the Board of Education refused to reinstate him. He sued the Board, and the Montana Supreme Court ordered his reinstatement in 1944. He was away from the University from 1938-44.]

JK: Since he ultimately won his case, the University had to restore him to his position, but it was pathetic. Poor Paul used to walk around the campus with his head down. They destroyed him.

Then there was Earl Bennett, who had a Wisconsin Ph.D. What can I say about Earl without being nasty? Well, he was a bad lecturer and not a scholar. And then there was Bob Turner, who taught European History and was an exceptionally talented teacher. He died very early, heart attack. Then there was M.C. Wren, one of nature's sons of bitches.

DB: [laughs] Why do you say that about him?

JK: Why? Would you like to have an oral history of M.C. Wren?

DB: Yeah, a brief one. I mean, he was chair of the department at the time, or soon thereafter. He served as chair didn't he?

JK: Yes, but 15 years later. You ever heard of Paul Culeda (?)?

DB: No, I haven't.

JK: Well he was one of those fired by Wren. Oh, I should start at the beginning about M.C.? Well, he came back after a year of leave. Burly had decided to keep me, and I was coaching the University tennis team. Boy, this was a small town then, no Reserve Street. I liked it. So I stayed

and then Wren discovered I wasn't attending the social science lectures. Not only wasn't I attending the lectures, but I wasn't listening to Harold Tascher, the sociologist, repeat his lecture for the benefit of the instructors.

So Tash and Wren went to Jimmy McCain—this was after my being here for two years—and asked Jimmy to fire me. Jimmy said he couldn't fire me, the chairman makes [those] decisions. Then Burly went to see McCain about getting me a promotion, an increase in salary, and Jimmy said, "I can't give him both. We play tennis together regularly." But he said he can have one or the other. Just ask him which one he wants. So, Burly told me, "By all means take the cash because you can get a promotion around here readily, but cash, no."

DB: [chuckles] So half the department had you on the chopping block, but the chair was going to bat for you.

JK: Yes, essentially. And then after I'd survived that I got in to trouble with the new president, Carl McFarland, who replaced McCain. You've heard about McFarland haven't you? The best line I've read about McFarland is Leslie Fiedler's line in H.G. Merriam's book, that "McFarland was a master of bad public relations." True. He dreamed that this would be the Harvard of the West, and contributed to its not being the Harvard of the West.

DB: How so?

JK: He was convinced that he knew more than anybody else. He was a Montana AB, LLB, and then he made a fortune in Indian law, then came back to run the university. And he was, well, he became acquainted with me early because he had given Clover Bowl to the high school for band practice at 11 in the morning. Well I had a class in Political Theory overlooking the area and the band was a damn nuisance. So, I wrote McFarland a note, urging him to withdraw his permission, saying the band and Plato could never coexist. Well, he got Burly on the telephone and raised hell with me for *lèse-majesté* apparently.

Then when he met with the chairman, he zeroed in on me in this meeting with Burly, and said I should be dismissed. That I couldn't teach. Kurt Bazley (?), who's a gentleman and served as graduate manager of Athletics and also as treasurer of the university, he said that his son said I was the best instructor on the campus. Which I think was overstating the case, but in any event, Burly wouldn't give way, so all McFarland could do was hold me in rank and hold me in salary. But he was making so many enemies so rapidly I figured that I would outlive him. And so it came about.

DB: So that's two presidents and both of them have been pushed to fire you, or else take it upon themselves to fire you! Who comes in after that?

JK: Only one of them wanted to fire me. Jimmy didn't. Jimmy wouldn't.

DB: Right, he was asked to fire you.

JK: Oh, yes. That was a frequent reaction.

DB: Usually when I've talked to people about their initial experiences in their departments, I often get the description that the University was very collegial at the time and personable and friendly and faculty and staff got along marvelously. You're not necessarily painting that picture for me right now.

JK: Can you name a department which is collegial?

DB: Well, I just came from an interview with someone in the Math Department who described the Math Department as collegial. I've even had the History Department described for me as that.

JK: Well, you've seen the Harvard, the guide to Harvard courses?

DB: No.

JK: They call the History Department the least viable. In other words, a brilliant teaching staff, all of whom hated each other. Every time you have David, Donald and Co., you have a department, but when they don't talk to each other—

DB: So that was the case when you were in the History Department early on?

JK: No, but it became that way later. In other words the department didn't survive, in my opinion, the purge of the 1960s.

DB: And what was that purge all about?

JK: Again, Wren was at the foreground. He wanted to be chairman, but the department selected Oscar Hammond, who was a gentleman and a good scholar. Finally, Wren did so much politicking up and down the corridor that he got a majority, and so he was elected chairman in place of Oscar Hammond. As soon as he became chairman, the bloodshed started. He fired Hugh Beatty and about five other members of the department. I remonstrated with him, and I told him he suffered from blood lust, which he did. Then finally, he said he couldn't get rid of me since I had tenure, unless I committed sexual offenses on the Oval, and gave me a full sophomore schedule. Of course teaching sophomores was beyond me. I couldn't.

DB: Why's that?

JK: I believed in scholarship and not—I hated lecturing in the first place. Then I held them to the same standards I would hold others, you know, the majors. I just wasn't good with sophomores.

But luckily Wren went off to the University of Maryland's overseas program and the acting chairman was Mort Borden, who was a friend of mine, so he told me [to] go to Helena to do my research: Leave the course behind, and I'll take care of it. So I got a lot of work done.

DB: I have had people comment to me about your teaching methods and style and your dislike of large lecture classes. Tell me about your teaching method and style and what you were doing at the time.

JK: The course I preferred to teach was Political Theory, because then the whole class would, say, read Plato's *Politics* or Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and then we would discuss it. I would ask what I thought were Socratic questions. [chuckles] I feel that that way they retain more and analyze more. But they had to have done the reading. Frequently I would lose students who just didn't want all that work in the spring quarter. It was a three-quarter course. Then I finally lost the Political Theory [class].

DB: Well, at some point the Political Science Department was created, separate from the History Department.

JK: It was created—I got here and we had only one department and no political scientists. Then after a couple of years we got a political scientist named Ellis Waldron. Then we picked up another one named Tom Payne. Then we were really—

DB: An appropriate name.

JK: Yes! [chuckles] Considering he came from Westminster College in Missouri and was suitably pious, and suitably Republican. But he was confronted consistently by the problem of my teaching Political Theory, because when the two departments separated, the political scientists had agreed to let me have the Political Theory as long as I was here, and then as soon as I left the course would evolve, be taught by political scientists. Well, they got tired by about 1960 of waiting for the Political Theory class. They got a new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, a guy named Bob Coonrod, another clown. He came from the Ford Foundation where they had a program to train administrators. Coonrod was the last one to be placed; he was a historian by the way. You've heard about him?

DB: No, I haven't.

JK: Well he was a historian. He had taught at Arizona State before going to the Ford Foundation. In any event, the political scientists convinced him that the welfare of the students was more important than their commitment to me, because they claimed that a number of their students had to have political theory but were afraid to take it with me.

DB: Well, I have heard that many students would start your course and then weed themselves out of it. What's the truth in that? Or is there any truth in it?

JK: Of course. I would say it's reasonably accurate.

DB: Why is that? Was it your method, approach to it?

JK: I feel that the only way you're going to get anyplace academically is by working. So I had them work. A thousand pages of reading, with notes. I didn't use textbooks. I used the Heath Series, you know those problem books? So if you weren't willing to work consistently, you shouldn't have taken the course, and they came to that conclusion.

DB: Were you more inclined to be working with graduate students?

JK: We had very few graduate students, but I did have about a dozen.

DB: You know, now there are not only a healthy number of graduate students but they've re-started the Ph.D. program in the History Department. Were there not many graduate students at the time because there simply wasn't interest, or there weren't the facilities for it?

JK: We lacked the staff, the facilities, and the placement skills, if you want to call them skills. In other words, we couldn't compete with Harvard.

DB: Was there any interest at the time in getting to that level?

JK: Not on the department's side. No, the department didn't propose the Ph.D. in the first place, killed it in the second, then it was resurrected since I left the department.

DB: Were you in favor of moving towards graduate study?

JK: I felt we could teach undergraduates very well, but when you have 2,000 students you can't give a legitimate Ph.D., in my opinion. It wasn't fair to the students.

DB: So after World War II, most universities, in fact, grew due to people coming home and starting in on higher education. Was that the case here at UM? Or did the end of the war change this university at all, in any way?

JK: I came here after the war, and there were 1,800 students, and we made slow, slow progress. We really stressed the undergraduate work.

DB: What were some of the other strengths of the department at the time?

JK: We were essentially a teaching department, and we were strong in that respect. Then we killed the Social Science survey [course]. [coughs] Pardon me. We killed the Social Science survey so that we were set up to handle undergraduates. Then we had some very good people.

Paul Carter, you may have read about him in Merriam's book. He married a co-ed, then taught—he was the son of a Methodist minister, graduate of Wesleyan and he was Richard Hofstadter's first Ph.D. candidate, according to a new book about Hofstadter.

Paul was an idealist, but an excellent teacher, very good with discussion. As Merriam points out, he was opposed to the Vietnamese War, and Harry K. Newburn, who became president briefly, encouraged Wren to fire him. The AAUP [American Association of University Professors] wouldn't come to Paul's rescue because they said that [while] he did have seven years in, which was the requirement, one of the years was as a lecturer at Columbia and they couldn't count a lectureship in the seven years. So Paul went to four different colleges in four years—Stanford, Smith, etc.—and then he got this job at Arizona and published four more books.

Mort Borden left because he delivered a talk at a farmers gathering in Billings and he said that co-ops were as American as apple pie, and Tim Babcock, who was the governor—a lunatic fringe right—I think pressed Harry K. to get rid of him. Mort was astute, he left under his own steam and went to Santa Barbara, which he liked eventually, of course. Who wouldn't?

So we did have a good department, but the casualty list was enormous. One man I know, who was here only briefly, decided that he was in danger of being fired with everybody else being dismissed, so he moved on to Maryland, I mean Nebraska. He had a Maryland Ph.D.

DB: You know that sort of coincides with the time frame in which the University became known as a graveyard for presidents, because the presidents were turning over so quickly.

JK: They always do. After all, this is a small state. The Legislature is customarily almost indifferent to the university system. You can't handle four to six separate parts of a university with a population of less than 800,000, in my opinion. So presidents would come and discovered that the obstacles to doing what they want to do are insurmountable. In other words, this became a jumping-off place. In the '60s we came up with—I would say from Jimmy McCain's time to Bob Pantzer's time, we came up with a whole series of lemons.

DB: How was Pantzer different?

JK: He had common sense. This is what I mean when I say he has common sense. I was chairman of a committee dealing with recreation facilities and we were getting funds from Snowbowl, and then the men who were turning them in were getting, of course, tax breaks. So the skiers—I knew nothing about skiing, but I appointed a committee of five skiers to tell me what should be done, to tell the whole committee what should be done. They came back and said the place is out of functional order: that higher up you have beginner slopes, down below you have [more difficult slopes], and so on. So they recommended that the University take over the ski run and then rebuild it. It would be excellent recreation. We presented our report to Bob Pantzer, and Pantzer and I met and he said, "I can't go along with you." He said, "Have you

ever studied the balance sheet of a ski run in a year when there's no snow? This could cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars!" He made almost perfect sense.

DB: So the University never took over Snowbowl.

JK: No, it never took over Snowbowl.

DB: And it's wildly successful to this day. [chuckles]

JK: It is?

DB: It's fairly successful.

JK: Are they making money?

DB: Enough to stay open.

JK: [laughs] That's just about what I had suspected.

DB: They don't seem to be developing a world-class resort up there.

JK: That was their aim. Then Bob—we had a guy in the English Department who wrote bawdy stories, allegedly bawdy stories. Pantzer came to his rescue.

DB: Who was that?

JK: The guy? I'm drawing a blank on it. It's in Merriam's book anyway. [coughs] What was his name?

DB: He wrote *Fiction About the West*, right?

JK: Not Leslie Fiedler.

DB: No. [long pause] Is he the guy from Idaho? He wrote about the Snake River Country. I think he taught here for a few years. [Denny Blouin]

JK: Oh, really?

DB: We'll come up with his name. But McFarland had to deal with the bad PR from him writing supposedly bawdy stories.

JK: Then Pantzer defended him. I would say he defended the faculty, which has always been difficult to deal with, don't misunderstand me. You notice, for example, George [Dennison] proposed that they eliminate this ridiculous winter quarter.

DB: Yes.

JK: And how the faculty rose almost as one to defend their prerogatives?

DB: And President Dennison—

JK: Pardon me?

DB: And President Dennison saw the light, according to the faculty. [laughs]

JK: George is going to have to discover some other method of killing it.

DB: I suspect so.

JK: It's going to be difficult, because it's become part of the faculty prerogatives.

DB: So how about your own research while you were here. You mentioned going off to Helena.

JK: Oh, my major work was a two-volume biography of Joe Dixon. We had the Dixon papers, which were voluminous, and then Dixon figured in a number of Progressive Party biographies. I wrote an occasional article. I started off working on Rob Velasquez's *Resident Aliens*, but the problem was that the resident aliens most concerned were the Chinese, and I felt that you couldn't do research unless you knew the language and I didn't know Chinese. Nor was I likely to learn. So Dixon, was, I suppose, not only was a participant in the Progressive movement, but he was also a mover.

DB: How did the University support research for its faculty?

JK: Again, I was on a committee and we had very little money. You normally had to get the money from outside. Yes, you did.

DB: In terms of grants—?

JK: And they, of course, come less frequently in history than they do in science. [chuckles] Because you can get your project [proposal made] in a scientific way, and not political.

DB: But you eventually did finish a two-volume book on Dixon.

JK: I'm a perfectionist. If you're a perfectionist it causes you more trouble when you're trying to do research and write. Some people are perfectionists in that they want to see every last bit of paper involved. Others are perfectionists when it comes to writing.

DB: Which of those do you fall under?

JK: I fall under both of them.

DB: Both of them! [chuckles] So that's why the original manuscript for your Dixon work is here in the Archives and is quite a bit longer than the published version?

JK: Oh, yes. In fact, they had to take it out of my hands and turn it over to an editor. Have you read or know of a new biography of Thomas J. Walsh? [*Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana: Law and Public Affairs, from TR to FDR, 1999*]

DB: No.

JK: Well the author of that [J. Leonard Bates] suffered from the same problem I did. The University of Illinois Press had to take it out of his hands and turn it over to an editor.

DB: Later you wrote about race and race riots, is that right?

JK: Earlier.

DB: Earlier. At a time when really there wasn't a lot in terms of history, or people publishing in history, on race.

JK: That's right.

DB: What got you interested in writing on that?

JK: Stupidity. I happened to come across the Italian-American incident of 1891. You familiar with that?

DB: Yes. But describe it briefly for those who aren't.

JK: I did some seminar work on it, got more deeply interested, and then my advisor, who was chairman of the History Department, urged me not to go any further with it, on the grounds it was a dead end. That it would do for a dissertation, but it wouldn't lead to anything more. He, of course, turned out to be right. But the research was fascinating. The research you could do in a nice part of the world, New Orleans.

DB: Though issues of race in history have certainly become far more, both accepted and popular, and would not be considered a dead end now.

JK: Oh no. I have a sheaf of books of course, the new research. But it was a dead end then. Today they even use statistics on the problems.

DB: What was the reaction to you writing that then?

JK: Academically?

DB: Yes.

JK: I never received much comment, but I didn't have much trouble getting the articles published.

DB: There just simply wasn't interest—

JK: Yes.

DB: —like today.

JK: Today you can get almost anything in the field published.

DB: Before we started taping I was talking to you a little bit about the fact that you came at a time when the company, the Anaconda Company, still had a strong presence in the state. So much so that it's been called a company state: company towns, company newspapers. How or to what degree did the company affect the University?

JK: Have you read Louis Levine's book on taxation? [*The Taxation of Mines in Montana*]

DB: No.

JK: You should, because he's the one who brought the University into disrepute. He wrote a book on taxation of mines in Montana and proposed ways to increase the taxation and increase the yield. [chuckles] And the Company got rid of him, literally. [Levine was a UM assistant professor of economics who was suspended in 1919 for publishing his results, over the objections of the Board of Education and the chancellor, who were responding to criticism from the Anaconda Company.] Then when I started working on Joe Dixon, I wanted the Company's side, and one of its main lobbyists wrote me that he had never heard of Joe Dixon. Then a friend of mine, who was with the Company, asked them about their manuscript policy, and they threw everything out every five years. That is, everything not relating to financial problems. So I got nowhere with the Company. I would say that—have you read the new biography of Rankin?

DB: Jeannette Rankin?

JK: Yes.

DB: Yes.

JK: You can see the problem she had.

DB: Being a politician in this state.

JK: If you had available a book on the election of 1928, you'd see that the Company had tremendous power, and I think the book makes it fairly clear. Then in 1944, they went after Leif Erickson and elected perhaps Montana's weakest senator, Zales Ecton.

DB: The Company had him elected.

JK: I would say that. There's a letter in the Walsh collection in which one of Walsh's followers warned him against attacking the Company in 1926, saying that when the Company goes after you, it's fatal. He said, look at Joe Dixon. I would say that the Company may not be interested in history, but they were interested in the present, and if they had to have somebody they didn't want, they'd rather have him in Washington than in Helena. Which is why the governors had such problems.

DB: Is there any way you could say that affected the University in terms of being funded through the Legislature?

JK: Yes, because the Company was opposed, as much as possible, to taxation. Without taxation, the University can't exist.

DB: So simply the funding of the school was affected.

JK: Then the doctrines that you want to teach—after all, an economist, mulling over the fate of Louis Levine, would certainly be careful what he said in the classroom.

DB: You were also here in 1972 when the state's new constitution was written, which seems to be a turning point for the state and hence the University, in terms of Company power.

JK: The Company, essentially, committed suicide and got out of business. Would that have happened if the price of copper had gone up?

DB: The changes would have been more subtle and slower to take place, for sure. As a professor of constitutional history, how involved were faculty members, was the University, in the writing of the new constitution in '72?

JK: I couldn't answer that question.

DB: I know there were a number of young law professors here that were involved.

JK: I think the faculty did work on it, but how much I don't know. I think you had to be elected. God knows I was never going to run for office, even [for] a Constitutional Convention.

DB: [laughs] So you taught here from—

JK: '45 to '79.

DB: '45 to '79. So in 34 years, what are some of the major changes that happened in the [history] department and on campus in general?

JK: Again, I can't answer that. Have any major changes occurred? would be my response. We've gotten bigger enrollment, but then, almost everybody else has. Why the 15,000 I complained about in Minnesota is now 50,000. I would say that our increasing size—the only major change is football. Montana used to have one of the worst football teams extant. Intellectually we probably haven't kept up because we're using adjunct professors who are underpaid and overworked. No, I would say we've gotten to the stage, now that we're bigger, we can be as bad as the ones who were bigger earlier.

DB: [chuckles] So the size of the University is not a plus in your mind.

JK: Oh no! Is it a plus in your mind?

DB: Well, I've never experienced anything much different. I don't have the experience.

JK: What about the college you went to in Colorado?

DB: Yeah, I suppose, you know, a school of 3,000 is definitely different than a school of 8-, 9-, 10,000, in that undergraduate courses where your numbers are 5-to-10 people resemble a graduate seminar much more closely.

JK: And that's what we like. Undergraduate seminars.

DB: You know, it's interesting, you brought up the football team because you coached tennis here for quite a while. That's something that's certainly changed, professors both teaching and coaching.

JK: Oh, my God. It was pure accident again, as most of my career seems to have been.

DB: How did it come about?

JK: Well, I had coached at Pullman, and when Jimmy heard that I had coached at Pullman he decided that I'd like to coach here. But again, it was nothing planned.

DB: You know, I would offer that now not only do people not do both of those things but that often athletics have been seen as extracurricular, if not a distraction from school, much in the way that, you know, you've talked about too large of classrooms being a distraction to learning. How, for you, are athletics important to education?

JK: Oh, my god.

DB: As a supporter of both of them.

JK: I would say that, looking back, I would say that athletics is antithetical to academia. That includes tennis, because it's almost impossible for one to concentrate on academics and a tennis team simultaneously. [Now] it's a whole new era. When the football team was in the PAC 10, along with all the other sports, and yet the football team had one coach—it had a head coach and two assistants. That was it.

Then the students always assume that the athletes are getting breaks. I remember the girl who came up to drop my second quarter of American History, and she said, "Well, I know if I'd been an athlete I'd have gotten at least a C." Well, I suspect that's a large part of the thinking. Yet the athletes would complain that I was merciless on them. So I was getting it both ways. A member of the tennis team, who my assistant coach had great hope for, took my history class, got an F, and thus became ineligible. The tennis team was almost riotous. No, you shouldn't do both.

DB: Though, you know, in the last week or two there was an article in the newspaper about, well lauding athletics for having the highest graduation rate of any group or type of student.

JK: I'd like to know where the statistics are, and whom they're comparing them with.

DB: I believe it was just an article in the *Kaimin*, the University's paper, comparing athletes versus non-athletes, just very broadly. And that athletes are graduating at far higher rates than non-athletes.

JK: I hope it's true, but I'm a little skeptical. Do you think the two have a relationship?

DB: I know that I was a better student because of the coach I had in college.

JK: What sport did you play?

DB: I ran. I was a distance runner. And he was just such a motivating person that it carried over into making me a better student.

JK: Oh.

DB: That's certainly not, you know, an across-the-board assumption on all athletes or all coaches or all students, but that was my experience of it. I don't know whether I was the rule or the exception. So you've made it sound like you were fairly controversial as a person and as a professor on campus. Who were some of the people that were your supporters, that you got along with and that thought in many of the same ways you did about class size and the rigor of education?

JK: I would say, Burlly Miller of course, though he could handle almost any size. Jack Van de Wetering, Bob Turner, and then outside of the department, oh, many.

DB: I know that you've mentored at least one person that has gone on to quite a bit of academic success, in terms of George Dennison, [who] was a student of yours and speaks very highly of his time in the classroom with you. What would you consider some of the most important things you did while at the University? Your legacy, in general or—

JK: I had some good students...you've heard of Marty Melosi? He was a diplomatic history student here and Marty was astute. He moved from diplomatic history into what I would call public history because, when he went to Texas A&M there was a diplomatic historian with considerable seniority on him. Then there was Joan Hoff [Wilson]. I would say they were the two best students I've had. [long pause]

Then, what else? My legacy? I think I had none. [chuckles]

DB: For people who would have spent the time here when you were here, you know, if I were talking to someone else, what are they going to say about Jules Karlin's time here?

JK: Depends on whom you talk to. It'd be interesting if I could only hear—I wonder, for example, what Harry Fritz would say?

DB: Well, having spoken with him, he said you were very highly regarded as a teacher and tough and not many students survived your classes. But those who did were the better for it.

JK: Well, that's kind of him.

DB: So what's kept you here? You've been retired for 25 years.

JK: Yes.

DB: And you still live in Missoula. That seems to be a trend amongst retired faculty and staff, that this place holds them.

JK: Particularly when—well, first I must emphasize that I hate the winter. This is only the second winter in 25 that I've spent in Missoula, and that's because old age is catching up. But I can't explain it.

DB: Do you keep up with the University since you've retired?

JK: To a degree. Not as much as I used to, when I was teaching. In other words, I'm more of a spectator.

DB: Well even as a spectator, you've, at this point, been either teaching or a spectator in Missoula for...60 years?

JK: Oh, god!

DB: Who has been the most effectual president [of the University] in the 60 years and why?

JK: Most effectual? I would rate them, George Dennison first, Jimmy McCain second, and Bob Pantzer third.

DB: What have they done to garner that?

JK: Well, Bob Pantzer had a successful administration, but it would have been more successful if Larry Gale hadn't died at the age of 40 of a heart attack. [Gale was academic vice president. He died in 1967.] Pantzer was going to handle the outside and Larry Gale handle the inside. Which reminds me, I never did tell you what happened to Mel Wren did I?

DB: No, you should.

JK: I should. He came back from his Maryland experience and then got involved with Larry Gale, because Larry had warned him—Wren used to resign periodically until he got his way and Larry said the next time he resigned [Larry was] going to accept it. Well, Wren decided that he wasn't being treated fairly, and Mort Borden applied for the chairmanship in Toledo. Wren wrote him a letter of recommendation, and then took the job himself. So he went off to Toledo with one final blast at Pantzer, and at the University in general.

Then he discovered that his wife hated Toledo [because] all her friends were in Missoula, and so Wren decided he'd come back. Well, Coonrod was afraid of him, so what they decided that in order to bring him back it would have to be a united department. One member alone could kill the proposal, so I refused to go to the meeting on the grounds that it was an insanity to discuss it [because] he had resigned. Then the next morning Jack Van de Wetering said, "Well,

the vote was unanimous but your vote hasn't been counted yet; what do you want to do?" So I said, "I'm going to hold firm. He went to Toledo voluntarily, that's where he can stay." So that's where he stayed. In view of all the bloodshed, I have no remorse.

DB: Were you ever the chair?

JK: Oh my god, no! Can you see me carrying out administrative duties?

DB: [chuckles] It doesn't sound like the reputation of you I've heard.

JK: Oh no. I would never be a chairman.

DB: How about Dennison? What has he done that earned your accolades?

JK: He is one of the first presidents, except for the other two, to be able to have a handle on what was really going on at the University. He seems to be very skillful at handling the Legislature and the Regents.

DB: And he was one of your students.

JK: [laughs] Well, there are other students of mine whom I wouldn't recommend!

DB: [laughs] So do you have any other memories or thoughts or comments about your time here that you'd like to share?

JK: I can't think of any at the moment.

DB: No favorite memories of your time here?

JK: Well as a perfectionist, no.

DB: Well, I appreciate your time.

JK: Thank you. I enjoyed the conversation.

DB: Good.

[End of Interview]