

Maureen and Mike

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**Interviewee: Robert Burgess**

**Interviewer: Annie Pontrelli**

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Annie Pontrelli: Robert, could you tell me the years that you were here and in what capacity?

Robert Burgess: I came here in 1947 as an assistant professor. I had been doing graduate work at UCLA, and still had my dissertation to do before the doctorate was granted.

AP: And what was your field of study again?

RB: French. French and romance languages. There is a broad span of romance languages down there. It is not easy. I came here as an assistant professor. Dr. Bart Thomas was the head of the department at that time. And there were about seven permanent members of the department at that time. Dr. Shoemaker, Dr. Shaw, Dr. Mitch Shaw and Professor Thomas were in Spanish. Professor Hoffman and myself were in French. And there was a visiting lady from Luxemburg here just for the year. And she was an important member of the staff. Dr. Sorenson, Thora Sorenson, who was here for many years as a student here and also was here as a professor. And she was in Spanish too. And we had a couple of graduate assistants. But that was it. I think there were seven permanent members of the staff at that time.

AP: And you were an assistant professor for how long? And then you became a full professor?

RB: It took me quite a little time to finish my doctorate because I had to be going between here and UCLA. So I think I got my doctorate in '51 from UCLA.

AP: And then you became a full professor after that?

RB: Made Associate first, became assistant. Then I think in about '52 or along there someplace in '52 or '53, I became Chairman of the Department. I was acting chairman for a year and I think that I was made full Professor, while I was Chairman of the Department. I don't take this as I deserve all of the credit for all for this. The department went from seven people to 26 people when I resigned as Chairman in '63, I think it was, some big growth in those years. When I came here Dr. McCain was the President, but he stayed only for a year or two. He was a very fine president, but he was offered a job at the University of Kansas and so he left here and we had acting professors for several years. Then Dr. McFarland came. And when I talk about languages I have to give him credit because he was very language minded. In that period, classical and modern languages were combined in to one language department. And so we got one member, Mrs. Ethren, who is still living close by here, came into just the language department instead of modern and classical languages. So as I say, Dr. McFarland was very language minded and he was a lawyer, of course, and had been a very important assistant Attorney General of the

United States, was a graduate of this university. And his whole life was wrapped up in this place so he insisted that the Law School, of which he was most interested, that all the law school graduates be required to take Latin since so much of the terminology in law is of Latin origin. And it was that period too I think, he wanted a number of people from around the state, cause he visited a lot, and he saw what people were doing, so he would bring them in thinking they would be an asset to the University. In that period, Andy Cogwell was brought in as the Dean of Students. And he was a very fine Dean of Students. I don't think we've had a better, that is, of the men students. But I think overall, I think Miss Clow was under him, she was the Dean of Women. And he also brought in the man who became the President of the University a little later, Robert Pantzer. And I think he was the (tape skips) graduate of Law school of this University. He understood this state and he was also a very fine President. So I'm probably out of my depth I think in talking about things...

AP: That's alright.

RB: Then from 1947 until 1972, I was here for 25 years going from Assistant Professor to Associate professor to a full Professor sometime before I retired. I was a full Professor before I resigned as Department Chair.

AP: What was the University like when you were here?

RB: It was right after the war, 1947 just two years after, so the ROTC program was still strong. As a matter of fact having been in the Army for three and a half years I was asked if I would take a course in Military History along with my other duties. And that way I stayed in the Reserves for a while longer. As I say there were quite a few service people here, the University was quite small, about 2500 students, maybe. Everybody knew everybody else. We had a very nice Officer's Club in those years, so I think the University was more closely knit then it's ever been since. Now I can't speak about what happened after '72 but I come back to the campus rather often. I still have colleagues with whom I talk. And they never have had an Officer's Club since then I think. That was Dr. McFarland's doings too.

AP: What exactly was the Officer's Club?

RB: Did I say Officer's Club? I mean Faculty Club.

AP: Oh, okay.

RB: And it was a building right over here. A lot of ways now on campus were streets of Missoula. And right across...what was small building there; I don't know whose home it had been. And it was bought by the University and turned into an Officers Club, I mean a Faculty Club.

AP: And was that every Friday night?

RB: Every Friday night. And the Department or School that charges the program, whatever we did and the refreshments for that evening. We had games and we had all sorts of things.

AP: And I understand that was required by Dr. McFarland?

RB: No, it was just something he originated. You didn't have to go at all. Now what exactly it did do was it was another way to get to know the people who were in your own department.

AP: What were some of your more significant memories of the University? Whether they were having to do with teaching or were...

RB: You asked what University was like then, we taught much heavier hours, I've taught as much as 24 hours a week. And that's unheard of now. We also in those years along with heavy teaching program had to sponsor thesis for the graduate students, which was a lot of extra work. We served on a lot of committees. I couldn't tell you how many hours a week I put in on committees. Dr. McFarland loved committees and sometimes we were here till ten-thirty in the evening. He brought in a vice president who was quite a scholar and also favored languages and quite a mathematician. He left here and went into one of the think tanks down in California. I can't think of his name. Maybe it will come to me. Personally, in those years I was made by the French vice Consulate in Denver a member of the French Academic Palmes (l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques.) I think today there are three people in Montana who have the French Academic Palmes. It's the same honor that they bestow on their own teachers in France. So when you are a member of the American French Academic Palmes you're a member of the whole French Academic Palmes, with the French teachers and everything, who had been praised in that honor.

AP: What qualifications do you need to...?

RB: Well obviously, since this was recommended by the French Consulate, who was Claude Veteuve (?) in those days. He came here every year to visit the university, but found out what we were doing here and this is something they like to promote too. We were promoting French culture and learning and language and literature. Right now Bob Brock, who is in the language department, has the French Academic Palmes. And I don't know if you know Susan Talbot or not.

AP: Yes, very well.

RB: She has the French Academic Palmes.

AP: How wonderful.

RB: She got it before she came here. Her family was a great newspaper family. I think from Great Falls if I'm not mistaken, maybe Billings.

AP: I'm not sure.

RB: At any rate, she and her mother-in-law speaks French beautifully, and of course Susan speaks French. And these were all people who in their own way promote an interest in France and French culture.

AP: Next question? What changes have you observed over the years with students, social attitudes, teaching, and activities? I'm sure there were a number of changes which occurred over those years.

RB: I'd like to add one more thing.

AP: Please do.

RB: For three years, during the National Defense Education Act, beginning in '61 I think, '62 and '63, I directed a National Defense Language Program for French and Spanish for the Department of Health Education and Welfare in Washington. So that was another thing we did here that was interesting and very important. And then Dr. Sheppard, who was my Assistant Director, took over for two years after I decided three years were enough for me. And I think that for two years after that I was Department Chairman.

As for the changes that concern...the changes could have been multiple and some for the better I'm sure and some, one wonders. But then I'm speaking as a super emulative person. It seems to me that we had...well in the first place, students were not of age until they reached their 21st birthday. So therefore they were still under the discipline of their parents which extended to the university. Because they were not of age and you could still enforce discipline. And the things that one hears that students are involved in these days, you just would never have dreamed that this could happen in those years. I've never thought, maybe I shouldn't say this, but I never thought that having the of-age to become 21 years to 18 was done because people said that they were old enough to defend their country and bear a gun, therefore why aren't they old enough to vote and take all the other privileges of manhood, womanhood. But just because you've got a strong back doesn't mean you also have a developed mind. I think they need a couple of years of discipline under a University system before they reach 21, and had studied Civics and History and any many other things. They are better qualified then to take over the responsibilities of voting age and manhood.

So that was the biggest change I think. The university has continued to grow. It is still a fine university, particularly certain departments. I think it's too bad that things are being eliminated because they are also being taught at another university. With a limited number of inhabitants

and a limited tax base, therefore the implication now becomes almost ridiculous as we just don't have the money from the state to take care of everything.

The campus has changed enormously, many buildings are gone. When I was here the old Simpkins Hall was in back of Main Hall, and the athletic field was a big oval back there. And there was also another building that served as the Drama building. They were all frame buildings, a great big women's athletic building, also frame. All of those were torn down and the athletic fields were moved out where they are now. And a lot of other buildings were torn down. But lots of new ones, better buildings, have gone up, the music hall, business administration building. Now they want a new building, and need it, I think. But it was built since I was there. The music building is a great building I think, a great contribution to the University. The Life Science building's been built since I've been here, another science building over there. The big high-rise dormitories had extensions on at least two of them, big extensions. Well it's just a different campus, a more attractive campus.

In those days, Montana itself, I mean Missoula itself, was not a particularly attractive town. The streets were barely paved, the parking lots on campus were swamps almost, in half of the year, there was that much water in them. Well, they had stone on them but in the winter, they were frozen over and in the summer, half the time, they were wet. All of that is been, tons of new parking lots have been added and the old ones have been paved and are in good condition. Of course since I came here the road around Mt. Jumbo has been, or Mt. Sentinel that is, has been put around there. And all of that parking lot, and all of that nice space between Main Hall and Mt. Sentinel all of the nice landscaping has all been done in more recent years and so it's a much nicer campus. And of course the University Center was entered, that was a great asset, and the new library, most of all, is a modern library. They don't have nearly enough money to acquire the books that are needed now. But let's hope that that will improve with time and better financing.

AP: Did you notice any other changes with the students as far as their attitudes?

RB: I've been gone now for 19 years.

AP: But just as far as the years that you were here, Vietnam era?

RB: We had that period in the '60s and '70s. I was here for part of it in the '60s. In the first part of the '60s we had all kinds of disturbances and demonstrations and meetings and what have you. But during that period, Pantzer was President and he kept that down to a minimum. We had no buildings burned. We had no deaths, or shootings, or any of those things. Another reason why is that he was a state person and Montanans, I am not a Montanan, I should be now after 40 some, 44 years. And I do, I've lived here longer than I've lived anyplace else in my life. But he was a Montanan. But I do think Montanans make better Presidents. Now, I hope this man is going to be a very good President because he is a Montanan, and I think he will understand what the problems are.

We've had minority groups who have felt that they were the intellectuals of the campus and always wanted to rule things. As a matter of fact, I think they were largely responsible for getting rid of Dr. McFarland because he could be rather tactless. He could be rather domineering to get what he felt was good for the faculty, but I thought he was a great President. A lot of people wouldn't agree with that, (unintelligible). He went back to the University of Virginia of which I'm also an alumnus. I have a Masters from the University of Virginia. I am also a Virginian. Born and raised in Virginia. He went back to the University of Virginia in the Law School there. I went to see them once when I was back there (unintelligible) and I stopped by to see (unintelligible) gorgeous house, which he designed and built. I think he was trying to rival Thomas Jefferson because Thomas Jefferson's Monticello is my ideal of what a fine estate should be like. He built a beautiful red brick home up on top of another mountain, not Monticello but another mountain. I went there and to see him and his wife Pat. His wife Pat still lives in Charlottesville, she never left. And his secretary went back with him and continued to as his secretary at University of Virginia until he resigned, then he died several years ago. She is a wonderful person, a great person, a Montanan. (unintelligible)

AP: That must be quite a switch from Montana to Virginia.

RB: Well they lived there for some time before she died and (unintelligible) she must have made many friends there. And I think she had relatives in Washington, and Charlottesville is a lovely town so I'm sure she had lots of friends there. They were very unhappy about her departure from here.

AP: What did you like best about your years here at the University?

RB: There are so many things. As I said, this is Montana and Montanans are marvelous people. They really are. But one might consider them as being rather parochial or provincial. They don't realize that there is a lot of money in this town, and a lot travel. People travel. And they have their representatives not only in Helena but also in Washington. And they are very tolerant people. By that I mean that they take you just as you are, by and large they are not a judgmental people. Politically speaking, that's something else again, because the state is divided not equally I think even in two parties. There are some very liberal people in the state.

This was for many years a strong union state. Which you could assume was Anaconda and Butte and the copper industry, which controlled a lot of the newspapers in the state. So in those years it was a great union state. I don't think that's so true anymore, I'm not sure unions have that much power anymore. I don't think that fact affected the University too much. There was a union here when I came here but as far as the government is concerned we've had just as many Republican voters and Democratic, just like the presidency. The houses now are dominated by the Democrats but the president is a Republican. I don't think one way or another it would affect the budgets of the state, because there was just so much money to be had. And then there was the southern part of the state wanted a University down at Dillon. And there was

Butte that wanted to stay the School of Mines and there was Bozeman and they wanted the agriculture and technical part of the teaching in the state. And then a college began in Billings, it may be a university now I don't know if it's a college still or not. Is it a college or not? Eastern, it's Eastern. Is that a college?

AP: I think it is still.

RB: And there is still a school up at Havre. So in a sense this is the dividing of the pork barrel and that has limited budgets for all of us. But that's politics. And I don't think that will change unfortunately.

AP: Probably not. Are there other things that come to mind as far as things or characters or certain aspects of about the university that you liked?

RB: I think that one of the problems with this University is that we are a training school for Presidents. People come here, as our last president did, who had never been a president. And he got three, four, five years experience being President. So where has he gone? Back to the Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, a place which is a big, big school, a brand new school, but now a big one. And so this has happened after Dr. McCain it happened, when I first got here, and with others. Dr. umm, I can't remember the names of all those people right off. Let's go on to something else.

AP: You mean Dr. Bob Pantzer?

RB: No, just before Bob Pantzer, we had Dr. Johns. And then just before him...

AP: Let's see there was McCain and Johns...

RB: Before Johns.

AP: Melby?

RB: Melby was before James.

AP: Newburn?

RB: Newburn. Yes. Newburn went from here to a University in Arizona. So I don't know what ever became of Johns. It's been a long time. God rest his soul.

AP: What were some of your favorite classes that you taught?

RB: I taught French Literature of course. When you get a degree from UCLA or any other University, you get it in language, not so much in Language, they assume you know the

language. So I studied (?) which is the University of Paris School of Letters and Science. They said that you know the language and then we were studying the literature. Not only in France from its beginning back to Middle Ages, up to contemporary. You also have to have the equivalent of a Masters in Spanish, an AB in Italian, a great knowledge of German and of course Latin. I don't know what I started out on. What did you ask?

AP: Favorite class?

RB: Oh the literature classes then were my favorite.

(Side 2)

RB: They study periods such as the Renaissance, Age of Reason, or Naturalism or (unintelligible) or what have you. Those are individual courses. But the survey course gives them a briefing of everything so they can fit other things into that survey and I enjoy teaching that class.

AP: Did you have a certain philosophy or attitude or vision or approach that you had in your teaching?

RB: I suppose my attitude, my philosophy toward life.

AP: Which is?

RB: Which is that, one is duty-bound I suppose, to try to make the universe a bit better than you found it. So I don't know what kind of model I was, I'm sure I was a role model. But I hope I was never influenced by evil of any kind. And I hope I stuck to the subject. There was never any politics in my teaching as there have been on this campus. There has been politics, not too much, but a few people a little over did it. But I never expressed a political point of view. That it is not to say that I didn't talk about politics entering in to French literature or French culture or something of that nature but I don't think anybody ever know whether I was a communist or a Republican or a Democrat or a Socialist or what, I hope they didn't. That sounds a little pompous I suppose to say I left something a little better than I found it but I do hope that. I don't know what area or how many people one would have touched but I never was one for being buddy, buddy with students. And I hope I didn't hold them up. They were always welcome to come to my office when they had business but I was not a psychiatrist and I was not a somebody who could advise them about their more serious problems, other than student problems. So one always wonders what (unintelligible) do anything other than what they learned in the class itself.

AP: Where you involved with certain organizations or activities on campus beyond, you know, beyond faculty club?

RB: Faculty club and of course I was never a member of the senate that came to be after I was here some years if I remember. I was on dozens of committees, just about every committee you could think of. But, including the curriculum committee...

AP: The curriculum committee? Forming the curriculum?

RB: Yes, reviewing the curriculum, forming the curriculum. As the departmental chairmen I met frequently with the administrators to look at our budget and to defend whatever it was we needed. When I first took over with those seven people we didn't even have a secretary. And I had such a miserable typewriter that I bought my own typewriter, which was an Underwood I remember very distinctly, finally after a certain number of years Dr. Jesse, of whom most people were sort of half afraid, I think he was a vice president or something, he was here for years, he approved a typewriter then finally I got from his secretary in the morning, all this time the department is going up, up and up and finally after we got those NRTA institutes, with all kinds of typing that had to be done I was approved a full time secretary, Mrs. Peterson a very wonderful secretary. And then after I resigned as secretary, I was killing myself, they got two secretaries so they have two secretaries in the department now. They have about 32 people, several of those people have been retired and not replaced so I don't know how many they have now. But they need these people. The language department has not soaked up the mimeographing need for supplies, scheduling, well not scheduling of course that the divisions in the department for French, Spanish or what have you. They make up their own schedules, the classes they are going to teach but that all has to be typed by somebody and submitted to the administration for making up the quarterly schedules for the children, the students, to choose their courses from, it's an enormous amount of work. We used to do that all ourselves.

AP: Times have changed.

RB: I'm glad for that. Now I know that nobody has had the department chairmanship for 11 years as I did. I think they sort of rotate now, two or three years, but those years, well after being appointed acting chairman for the first year or two by the administration then the departments began to choose their chairmen so then I was elected by the department until I retired and then I retired, I was not asked to resign I had just, really was worn out. So then two years later, no seven years later I retired.

AP: What did you like best about being a chair, a chairman?

RB: Well I had, you asked me if I had any philosophy for the department, I definitely had goals for the department. We were...

AP: And what were they?

RB: To grow, for each one of these departments to grow. The departments had seven or eight people in one department more than we had in the whole language department, and for it to

become a better department. And then we began to require that people coming in have a doctorate degree, or at least have everything finished except their dissertation, so we got better qualified people. I don't know that all of them were better teachers but you're judged not only by the people in the University you're judged by what kind of presence you make at the University of Washington, the University of Oregon, you asked me what positions I held. I was president with the Northwest Conference. I was part of (?) I was president of the, I forget what... we had another conference that met in Denver that was a more inland conference. This is a more Northwest conference which still is going. I insisted that our people attend those conferences and I belong to the Who's Who in America, Who's Who in the West, the (?) learned society's, a dozen other organizations and those were all part of being a professional, and this what I worked toward in the department. I don't know if that is done yet(still), I don't know if they attend the meetings, I think a few of them do go, read papers there, which is great for your reputation not only in your campus it's important because to your yearly report, your yearly report to the administration. So, it's important locally but it's also important when other people think of The University of Montana. So twice we had a meeting of the Northwest Conference here. There were a lot of little things (unintelligible) belong to our language association of the United States. I think the membership is something like 50,000 language teachers; the University of the United States and Canada. It's a big meeting, when they meet they have to be New York, or Chicago or some big city where they can be accommodated. While all those were nice, they were also nice for me because I usually attended the meetings and met a lot of interesting people, saw people I knew from the Northwest. Those were part of the things I worked toward to make the department a better department, a better known department, I hope.

AP: What do you feel your greatest accomplishment was during your years at the university.

RB: I, of course, did not do this all myself. We had wonderful people in the department in those years. I don't know now, I don't know half of the people in there now. Some of them I know from the past years and I think they're very fine people. But they change and I just don't (unintelligible). So I can't speak for what the department is like today. I know there's some fine people like Horst Jarka, you probably know, he is a (unintelligible). He is a great asset to the department, he's retiring too but (unintelligible).

AP: I have him on my list, my interview list.

RB: Another fine University person, very fine person. He came here while I was still department chair. Bob Brock while I was department chair, um... I think that's about all there is left. The others came, a lot of them, still in the department the final seven years like Phil Lutes and Maureen Curnow and a lot of those people so I met them but they didn't come when I was a chair of the department.

AP: Were there other personalities or characters or people that stand out in your mind in these years?

RB: (Unintelligible) There is no better person or teacher than Marguerite Ephron. Have you met her?

AP: I haven't.

RB: Get her on your list.

AP: She's on my list.

RB: She is one of the best persons I have ever known and one of the finest teachers. She somehow managed, her classes are small usually and she got to know her students much better, particularly in the upper level when they were beyond lower level, she might have two or three people in the class so she could make a great impression on those people. So one of them went to student talks and is still in England, married an English girl, I don't know, I think he's with maybe Britannia Encyclopedia or something like that. But she's a totally lovely person. And (unintelligible) was a very fine Spanish teacher, he's still in town, retired.

AP: He's on my list too.

RB: I don't like to miss anybody because we had very fine people in those years. I would not want to, have it thought that because I missed a person, that (he or she) was not an asset to the department.

AP: Any students that stand out in your mind?

RB: Oh yes, lots of students. I was also on the foreign language student committee that was an interesting thing. At that time we had a couple in town who were very interested in the foreign student program, Ted Jacobs and his wife Marjarie Jacobs, she still lives right down here on Beckwith, he died some years ago, but they were wonderful for foreign students so we had a lot of foreign students, I think we still do and some very fine ones. One of the students who went to the University of Paris on a French government award was a young chap from Red Lodge. He's still in Red Lodge, a great citizen there, he puts on this international thing every year that they have over there, all sorts of celebrations and things.

I remember in particular Mary Barrington (?) also studied on the French government award thing at our recommendation, she taught at Olympia for years and years and years. She always stops to see me when she comes through because she's a Montanan and is retired now by the way, great person, studied in Paris at our recommendation.

We had lots of students going to France in those days to study but they had to be recommended. Some of them went on the Fulbright award that was the ideal one. No that wasn't ideal one, the ideal was, of course, the Rhodes scholarship. This University has had more

than its (share), lots and lots of them. And I believe this young student, that Marguerite will tell you his name, is, who went to Oxford and is still in England, I think he went on a Rhodes scholarship. He was a Latin major. We had lots of fine, fine students and they went out all over the state.

One of our students was a good student, he didn't major, he went to Hong Kong he's still living in Hong Kong, I think, Bill Moritz(?), I think he is an importer to America, the Chinese representative. He is still up there and he came to see me a year or two ago. But he was here when I was first here. We were not responsible for him getting that job, I don't know how he got it. But he must have been very fine person because he lasted all those years, I think he's either retired or semiretired. But I would hate to fail to mention somebody but there were dozens of them, other people in the department can tell you about them.

Doug Sheppard and Ted Schumer (?), I'll tell you about him, he was a graduate student here when I came here. He got some kind of reward to study in Spain. Then he came back and got his masters here and went to University of Wisconsin I think and got his doctorate. (He) came back here and taught for a short while and became my assistant director of the institute, NRTA institute. I was asked if I would come back to Washington to the office, the language office, the NRTA. Well I had my retirement program all planned here and I didn't want them all messed up so I refused to take that but recommended Doug Sheppard. He went back there and as a result of his years there went to a university in New York and from there went to the University at Tempe and became the hit of the language department and has now returned I think, Doug Sheppard, I forget ... The University of New York? No, the State University, anyhow it was a step up for him and he did very well, very bright man, very bright student. His son and daughters have done very well so (unintelligible). I'm getting so I can scarcely talk, I haven't talked this much for a while.

AP: Do you want to take a break?

RB: Do you want me to go on?

AP: I don't want to ruin your voice. I've just a couple of more questions down here.

RB: Why don't we continue and if you think you can make anything out of this?

AP: Sure, sure. What were some of the challenges that you met during those last years, the last few years you were there?

RB: Well I think this all comes back to the challenge of measuring a present department chair of people both (unintelligible) and Bob Pantzer, after that, having enough confidence in me to let me proceed to do what I thought could be done in the area of languages. That was the biggest challenge. And I hope we realized that. Maybe I was there too long, that's a long time for a department chair, eleven years.

AP: Any other challenges that come to mind?

RB: No specific ones. To turn out well prepared students who if they went on to other universities would succeed their, which they did. By the way Jim Flightner was a grad student of the Spanish department, went on to get his doctorate and to Buffalo, the University of Buffalo, in New York came back here as a member of the department, became dean I believe of Liberal Arts, and now is the Vice President, or what is he?

AP: I thought he was still the Dean, maybe he has an additional title that I'm not aware of.

RB: Very fine man.

AP: Yes.

RB: He also has two very fine children, a son and daughter, of whom he can be very proud. So you say well this you didn't calculate, didn't do this in a calculated fashion, you didn't see this person coming up and deliberately map out a route for him to go. But it happens as a result of general planning and general quality, what I think the instruction was and I hope it was.

AP: Do you have any certain anecdotes or certain stories that come to mind during your years here?

RB: I don't really. One that used to amuse people, we had, I've told it so often I'm not sure it's true or whether I've made it up, I think it's really true. We had a beginning class, most of us, even the department chairman, had (taught) beginning classes in those days, I don't think that ever happens anymore. But I loved the beginning classes, because you took them not knowing anything you know. They hadn't had language in high school or something. So we got on, but I had this student way at the back of the room and the other students, maybe 25 or 30 in those days and went on a year with the background you need for language, I'm speaking for French, just the most elementary things, maybe you are not talking about the language itself and this student put up his hand and he says, "Is this chemistry 201 or 102 or 101?" But that is, as I say I'm not sure, just a story I've had for years. If not that, something very near that. It was a long time in the telling and it was a long, long time ago.

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

RB: You do what you can do. Unless you are born with a silver spoon and your parents with a million dollars or a billion. I started our teaching grammar school and I taught one year and earned enough money to go to college. I just had a supplemental, a preliminary qualification for that first year, fifth and sixth grade, I taught seven months and I got fifty-five dollars a month in that little school. But I earned enough to go to a local college where the tuition was practically

nothing and I went one year and I knew I didn't want to go back to teaching elementary students so then I worked summers and I borrowed a little money and decided I would continue summer and winter and get my degree in three years and two summers. At the end of that time I got a job at a high school. Well then things become sort of routine where you say "Do I want to stop here, do I the rest of my life mean to teach high school students and also put on plays and also take tickets and also coach or whatever, serve as athletic director." So the answer was "I'm going back for a masters". So I went to the University of Virginia and got my masters in French. And after that I taught one year and I got a job in a private school in California where this head master was a Virginian by the way and, he interviewed me in Virginia, and I taught there for four years and I got a graduated assistantship at UCLA and went on to my doctorate there. The army interrupted for three and half years so I had to go back and almost do every thing over again, I certainly had to review everything again. But each step, it was what was possible in the next step. It wasn't so much what was planned from the beginning it was just what route opened itself, what gate, what door opened itself next.

When I got out of the army, I met Dr. Sorenson, I spoke of her, Thora Sorenson, who was teaching in the language department at the University of Mexico. I spent a summer down there after the army, because I had to review my Spanish, to go back to UCLA to pick up all that again too. So I met her there, I never heard of Missoula, or the University of Montana. After I finished my course work at UCLA I began to think, well you only got 65 dollars a month as a graduate assistant in those years. I think I did get 180 dollars a month when I came back after the army, because I picked up my assistantship and became a member of the faculty then, or became an assistant instead of a graduate assistant which gives you faculty standing, not tenure. So I thought, well I got debts and I can't live on 180 dollars a month for the rest of my life so I think I'll just apply for a few places and I applied for a half a dozen places and one of them was The University of Montana and it just happened that there was a vacancy here and I got the job and I've been here ever since.

AP: "The rest is history".

RB: So it was a wonderful study, it was a wonderful life, it was not an easy life but it was a life which I think was fulfilled, it was a rewarding life. Not for everybody else so much as for myself. I hope I've contributed something all those years while I was also getting something through assistantships, or through some help here and there or whatever. I was graduate assistant for three years, no, two years. Two years at UCLA and an assistant one year. So I've had a rich experience, not only, I love to travel so I've been, I was in France as a student in 1934-35 and for many of those years I was a camp counselor for the Herald Tribune fresh air camps outside of New York, that was an excellent experience and wonderful people I met there, young fellas from all over the Ivy League schools and schools to the south too. I've traveled just about every place except South America, and India and central and southern Africa. So I've traveled lots since I've been retired and that's been fulfilling, very fulfilling and teaching made a lot of that possible particularly while I was still teaching and had the summers, some of the summers at least, off.

[End of Interview]