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Interviewee: Marty Knowlton and Tim Welsh

Interviewer: unknown

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Unknown Speaker: This evening we're talking with Marty Knowlton and Tim Welsh. Marty Knowlton is the founding father of Elder Hostel, and Tim is the local coordinator of the University of Montana's Elder Hostel program. Marty, could you tell us a little bit about what Elder Hostel is.

Marty Knowlton: Sure, I'd be delighted to. It's not a word that everyone is used to since it's a word that was coined specifically for this particular program. Elder Hostel is a program of educational hosteling for people of retirement age, and generally where elder hostels are established at...there are a number of hostels within the vicinity and a number of [unintelligible] college campuses. We encourage the elders who participate to live for a week at a time on a college campus, attends courses that are regular college courses, but that are designed to be one-week long courses. Then if it's possible for them to do so, move on to another college. While at the college they live exactly as college students. They live in the dormitory, and no special provisions made for them in that regard. They eat in college dining rooms. They have a regular student activity pass. They live the life of students—regular students of the campus.

Let me go back now and say that Elder Hostel is still a very, very young organization. It began just two summers ago in New Hampshire, when we got five colleges to agree to put aside a dormitory or a piece of a dormitory for an educational hostel. Each college agreed that it would teach at least three courses each week for these elder hostellers. We were able to get grants that covered tuition so that the elder hostellers pay only the cost of room and board in the program. It's a one fee program. There's never any hidden cost. There's absolutely forbidden to charge an elder hosteller for anything else while they're on the campus. We don't want any unpleasant surprises for them.

The program was difficult to get going, and it was hard to convince older people originally that the activities—the life of the college campus—was pertinent to them. However, we succeeded, and with enough people so that that first year we got 220 individuals to participate. By word of mouth, they went out and told about the marvelous experience they had had and generated for us an immense demand from people that caused us to expand the program in the second year to 21 college campuses in six states capable of housing approximately five times as many students as we could house in the first year. Actually, that first year we could have housed as many as 450, but we couldn't get them into the program. The second year we could have 2,200. By the middle of June, our program was totally filled for the year, and within the next month we had turned away enough people to fill another 2,200 accommodations.

Now then, we're going into our third summer, and we have 63 colleges in 13 different states. New England has already suffered its annual...what I'm afraid is going to be its annual catastrophic influx of mail, and the program is totally full and people are being turned away already. As a matter of fact, within three weeks of the announcement of the Elder Hostel program in New England this year, we already had enough applications to more than, to fill more than twice the amount of accommodations we had for the summer. So that what had started is a difficult program is just turned into a sort of a wild avalanche of people who want very eagerly to come to college and have a college experience and have the kind of excitement that is present on a college campus.

US: Is the excitement the only reason that you...What do you attribute to this increasing elder population?

MK: Well, we think that the program has been extremely successful in having older people come and experience a kind of a regeneration. They literally have an opportunity and a virtually alien atmosphere—a strange atmosphere. These people have never...have not been on college campuses for 50 years, if they've ever been in their lives before. They come onto the college campus, and the experience they have is so successful and so exciting and stimulating, they see for themselves that this old mythology that when you get old you don't think as well is a lot of nonsense. That they are not only thinking just as well as they ever thought before, but perhaps better. This is reflected in the excitement that the college professors have over having them in their classroom. Usually, it's an unexpected excitement because the college professors frequently have never had an older student in their classes. They don't know what it means to have a person come onto the campus, who comes not for a credit or not because they need a particular grade, not because they are seeking a degree, but who come purely for the love of learning. On top of this unusual feature, these people come with 70 years of life experience behind them. That gives the college professor the kind of treat that he'll never get over. [laughs] It's been a very exciting program for everyone. It gives the people who come a new vision of themselves as people who are still potent, still people who are capable, who still have contributions to make. It's a marvelous experience, and it's, in some ways, you could call this a rebirth.

US: We hear so much about elder Americans being on fixed incomes. How does a program like this...obviously, somebody has to pay for their food and lodging.

MK: At this particular point, we're able to offer this program in most of the United States. We're able to offer this to the elder at a cost of 60 dollars a week. Now, this 60 dollars a week is their payment, and it covers their room and board and certain activities on the campus. We go and we seek grants to cover the remaining cost, which is the tuition and administrative cost. So we're able to keep this price at that level as long as we can have the grants to back it up. We've found that that the people who are coming into Elder Hostel, for the most part, have no problems, or do not have problems, that act as insurmountable barriers to them to generate

this 60 dollars. Some have to plan Elder Hostel a long way in advance in order to have the 60 dollars available. Some are in better position, and the 60 dollars is not a matter of such great consequence to them. We do know, however, that there are a large number of people who would benefit from the Elder Hostel experience, be delighted by it, who are priced out by that particular price. So we try to raise funds on the side that we can use as what we call hostelships, and this is to aid people. Well, this is tough money to give away. [laughs] We find that from this age we cannot get people to ask for this assistance. Very difficult to do. As a consequence, we almost have to seek them out, and when we find people who need assistance in order to go on the campus—people who want to go but are blocked by their finances—we usually say to them, “We have money available. Simply ask for what you need in order to go. Just whatever you can put in to go, then ask for the difference. If you can’t put anything in, then ask for the full amount.” We not infrequently have people ask us for ten dollars. “We could manage 50 dollars,” or 15 dollars or 20 dollars. They literally do ten to ask for what they need, in a very specific way, to supplement whatever effort they can [unintelligible].

However, this doesn't begin to touch the problem, because the people that I think that Elder Hostel was particularly designed for in the beginning—we had in mind keeping this a very low cost experience that would indeed give people a chance to see themselves in a new positive light. We wanted this particularly for low-income elders. Now, when you talk about low-income elders, you're not talking about the things that you're talking about with the rest of the population. Of the 22 million Americans who are 65 years of age or older, approximately 11 million of them are at or below the poverty line. That's a pretty shameful and sordid statistic to begin with. But there's a lot of added poignancy when you think that of that 11 million, who are at or below the poverty line, approximately half—roughly five and a half million—are poor for the very first time in their lives. They've never experienced this before. These are people who have had white-collar jobs or blue-collar jobs or whatever, who have worked all of their lives, who may not have a very large in [unintelligible], but who have had incomes that allow them to get by adequately. These are people who have always been able to use their incomes flexibly. They have been able for a large expenditure to go out and borrow money and pay it back over time. They have been able to work a little overtime to generate some extra money, or perhaps, even temporarily, to take a second job or a weekend job to add flexibility to the income they've had. Now, suddenly they're age 65. They are barred from any of these flexibilities, and at the same time their income is reduced sharply—frequently sharply—down to a fixed level. They cannot get jobs, they cannot get overtime obviously, and they can't borrow money. These are people who are stuck in an absolutely inflexible position, and because they've never had to adapt to this kind of inflexibility before it's a very, very frightening thing. It's a very tough situation that most of us, or any of the people who are younger in particular, find it hard to imagine this degree of inflexibility, this degree of being stuck within the boundaries of an inadequate income. The only adjustment these people can make to this—for most of them, anyway—the only adjustment they can make is to stop doing things to immobilize themselves until they come into a precarious balance with this new income level. They see it as precarious, and it's realistic. It is precarious, and it's frightening. If I go to such a person and say, “I've got the money for you to come to Elder Hostel. Would you like to do it? Won't cost you a thing.”

Now, I might be talking to an ex-schoolteacher, who's been, whose whole life is vested with concern for education and care for education.

This person would draw back and say, "No, no." Activity is frightening. Activity means you may upset the delicate balance, regardless of whether somebody's going to pay for this activity or not. The very fact of activity may upset this balance. So very frequently, we have people who would desperately love to go to Elder Hostel who say, "No. I can't take the money. I can't go." At that point, it becomes a really kinds of counseling job to convince them that indeed going to our hostel is not a threatening thing, that it will not in and of itself cause them to go into a state of imbalance and crash. That their Elder Hostel experience, instead, will literally bring them into an awareness of the fact that there are many kinds of activity in which they can engage effectively and very happily and positively without destroying the balance of this income balance that they have.

It's a tough job. We don't do it very well yet, but we're learning and we know that in time Elder Hostel is not going to be able to continue to get grants to cover this. We'll have to charge Elder Hostel as a true cost, and at that point, it become even more important because even more people will be priced out and even more important for us to be able to effectively extend assistance to those who need assistance [unintelligible].

US: You say "we". It sounds like you've got a very large national organization. Is that true?

MK: Absolutely not. I'm the national organization. [laughs] My desk, I guess, is the national office, and I'm housed at the New England regional office headquarters at the New England Center for Continuing Education at the University of New Hampshire. But I don't have any staff. When I say "we", I'm really talking about the people who work in the New England office. Again, it's already a terribly understaffed operation so that the amount of time we can devote to these things, I'm afraid, is very, very limited indeed. We're trying our best to, not only extend ourselves in a personal way, but to find the assistance from various places that will enable us to extend our reach effectively.

US: Why are you in Missoula, Marty?

MK: Well, I'm delighted not to get back to that point, because that's really the most important point of all. I'm here in Missoula because the University of Montana has decided that they want to have an Elder Hostel, and they want to operate this summer. They have gone ahead and set up their plans, have set up their courses, selected their professors who are going to teach in them, chosen the dormitory in which the elders are going to live—Main Hall—and the myriad arrangements that are going to have to be made here on the campus, and have set the dates of June 19 through July 1 as the two weeks in which the hostel will be operating.

Did I say those dates right, Tim?

Tim Welsh: That's correct.

MK: Okay. I've just spoken to Tim Welsh, who is the going to be the University's director of this program, and who, in addition to doing that, is taking over responsibility for extending the program to some additional colleges next year.

TW: I'd just like to say that my interest in Elder Hostel came from having worked for [unintelligible] the last several years, and I had heard of Marty Knowlton for a while and then saw him briefly in the University of New Hampshire—drove past me about 100 miles an hour. [laughs] My interest came also from working in a grassroots college and having some exposure to the difficulties that the elderly are facing. I remember on the floor of the Vermont legislature, a very lovely woman in her late 60s was protesting a bill, which was calling for the abolition of her college. I, of course, was supporting her because it was the abolition of my job. But she, very much like Woody Allen in *The Front*, got up from her chair and went to the legislators and said, "Gentlemen, if you abolish this college and therefore take away from me my opportunities for education and training, I have to assume you are prepared to lower my taxes because I won't be able to get a better job." [laughs] I always took that, and certainly as a dose of inspiration and certainly some of the things that Marty have shared today as a source to try to start the program here.

We will be advertising, inviting, rather elders from Western Montana and states of Oregon and Washington to participate in UM's Elder Hostel, which is, as Marty said, is the first one in the Northwest, and at this point the western-most Elder Hostel. An attractive feature of it for me is that by participating in Elder Hostel, the elders of this area and of the Pacific Northwest have an opportunity to tap into the network of 63 colleges and can combine vacation with study opportunities in future years, very much like the youth hostel program. We have a vast array of courses. They include Montana history and oral history, roadside geology, astronomy, and a host of field trips, which are associated both with those courses and during the weekend between the two weeks of classes of Elder Hostel. The price for participants here is 65 dollars a week, which includes lodging and food and tuition and transportation for students from the immediate Missoula area who need it. I'm sorry to say I don't think we can afford to truck in people from Seattle, but we would surely try to give a hand if we could. That works out to a fairly reasonable rate. In a recent presentation to a senior citizens group. several people came up afterwards, and they said, "Well, we live in Missoula and we were thinking about commuting, but it's 65 dollars a week, we can't afford to stay home." [laughs]

MK: This is a [unintelligible] thought. I may have caused some confusion a moment ago when I spoke of the rate nationally as being 60 dollars a week. I think I should point out that that the University of Montana is going to bring some shame to the faces of other colleges because they are working without any grant whatsoever. That 65 dollars actually includes the cost of the course—producing the courses and teaching. So the University of Montana is taking this, or at least the Center for Continuing Education, is taking this on itself very, very generously. I don't mind saying that I intended to go around and bully some of the other colleges about the

beautiful things that the University of Montana is doing. Without any funding at all, they're able to do the program for 65 dollars; whereas, the true cost most everywhere else in the country is somewhere there 100 dollars a week even though we are [unintelligible] to them so that we only charge 60.

TW: Marty had a story a little while ago about the benefits for the instructors in Elder Hostel program and sort of revitalization of liberal arts teaching that can happen with an audience that has 70-plus years of life experience. I remember, working in a residential program at another college, we had some elders come in and we, in circulating through the faculty to get people to teach a particular course in the economics of the 20th century, it was a rather dry fellow in the economics department who said, "Well, I'm not going to participate in it, but I'll send you my graduate students." So he sent over some graduate students, and one by one the graduate students were eaten alive by a very active audience. Just had quite a bit of experience. The point was that the professor really hadn't seen a connection here between why he should be involved in this program. Just didn't make that connection for himself so when he found out that his teaching assistants were having so much difficulty with this very forthright and no holds barred audience, he decided to give the class a try and now refuses to let anybody else teach it and continues in the summer months in that particular program. I think those are similar benefits for Elder Hostel faculty as well.

MK: We've had many marvelous experiences for that [unintelligible]. I know that it doesn't show on the radio, but I have white hair and a white beard. I greeted the incoming hostellers last summer, who were coming into Franklin Pierce College, where one of the featured courses was of course on Robert Frost—poetry of Robert Frost. And as I greeted this one lady—I had read her application and I knew that she was in the high 80s of age—a very, very small but brisk lady, as she came up to me, I greeted her and said how happy I was that she had decided to come hosteling with the. She said to me, I was hosteling before you were born, Sonny." [laughs] [unintelligible] a little later, she was introduced to the man who was going to teach the course on the poetry of Robert Frost. She said to him, she said, "Well, one of the things I've come for is to find out what you people are seeing in Bobby Frost's poetry." In fact, he'd been an old friend of hers back in childhood. So that's how you run into some very unexpected, rather exciting things that that can happen in the classroom. This professor never got over the fact that he was teaching a lady who not only had the Bob Frost—Robert Frost—personally, but had known him at a time when people could get away with calling him Bobby [unintelligible] before it had ever occurred to him to write a poem. So this aspect of things is one facet of the kind of depth that can be generated for a professor who may know his subject very well on one end, but he can expect that he's going to get some very interesting, different questions coming from an Elder Hostel classroom.

TW: It sure was an eye opener for me in talking with one of the prospective students for Montana's Elder Hostel. She was a woman in her early 90s, and I was describing the courses to her. I don't have white hair or white beard and am very new at this business. One of the courses that we have is a course on Western film, and there's some great films in it like *Oxbow Incident*

and *Shane* and *High Noon* and a number of other—*Darling Clementine* is another one. She asked me to describe the courses, and I went down. She said, “Well, what's that one about Western film?” I ran off the list of courses as I just did. She said, “Well, I don't mind seeing *High Noon* for the fifth time, so I guess I'd be delighted to come in and talk with you about it.” [laughs] New experience in recruiting students.

MW: Well, we run into a lot of questions that repeat themselves. Here in Missoula, I've had several questions that are absolutely expected questions now because I've run into them all across the country from people who are thinking about going to Elder Hostel. One of the things that worries many people is that they've never been to college, and they're rather fearful about whether or not they can make it in this...whether it's just going to be too much for them. I'd like to point out that every year we've gotten a greater and greater percentage of people into Elder Hostel who have not previously been to college. In our very first year we had two or three people who had only had a partial grammar school education. This one lady from New Hampshire's told us, she said, “I only went to the third grade and they weren't very good grades at that.” She had grown up on a hard scrabble New Hampshire farm, in which they needed her labor too badly to let her go to school. After three grades, she was pulled away. She once told us that that she could never remember a time of her childhood when she wasn't required to get up at 5:00 in the morning then, and she could never remember a time of her childhood when she was allowed to go to bed before 9:00. This was because they just needed every hand working all the time in order to survive.

I became very interested in her. I asked the professor who taught her in one of the classes—at the end of the week—I said, “I don't know want to name any names to you,” I said, “but did it cause any difficulty in your class that you had a retired college professor in the class along with someone who had only a third-grade education.”

He said, “My goodness, which was which?” [laughs] He literally had not been able to tell the difference. The professor that he had was a stranger to the particular subject matter, and the questions...Oh yes, he knew that there were questions that sometimes some people use a slightly different grammar than other people and some people spoke as though they were slightly better educated, but the level of the questions are definite...the questions are the kind of intellectualality that came out [unintelligible, he literally couldn't tell the difference. And we find this to be true almost invariably that 70 years of life experience very effectively masks up 10, 12, 14 years of educational difference. That's probably not reassuring to people who are struggling to get a Ph.D. One of these days [unintelligible], it just isn't going to have that much effect.

One of the questions that frequently arises, and it's not unusual for us to have Elder Hostellers who have dietary problems. They're concerned. “I don't know if I can eat the kind of food that you get at a college dining room.” Now, they've probably been listening to their grandchildren who universally—even if they don't go to college—get sick of the food that they get. The fact is that college food is very, very varied and extremely well served, and we've never had an elder

hosteled who complained about the food. And the variety of food that's available at the college now is such that you can usually pick and choose for yourself a sufficient variety to meet whatever dietary needs and restrictions that you may have. So this has not been a problem for us at all. It's been easy. Others are afraid that if they go on the campus that the students will look on them as someone funny or strange, and they'll be isolated. They're a little concerned about how they're going to be greeted. The fact is that the students are a little bit timid about approaching these elder hostellers at first, but after a couple of days the students begin to find them extremely interesting and begin to come to them. By the time a week is over on the campus, quite a considerable amount of integration has been achieved. You find the students could be over and joining elder hostellers at their tables day the dining room and so on. Some students will come and sit in in Elder Hostel classrooms because these are excellent classes, and even though they're not for credit, the subject matter is so interesting that some students join in with them on this basis.

Others are worried that...they're worried about questions about tests and homework, and the fact is, there is there are no tests in Elder Hostel courses. There is no homework per se in an Elder Hostel course. There's no demands that are put upon the student in at that particular way because after all they are here to learn. That's the big important point. They're not here to absorb a particular body of facts that the professor is going to insist that they give back to him at some point. So that the usual paraphernalia in the classroom courses just isn't there. It's a pure learning experience and a very, very happy one so that no elder feel threatened by the courses that are going to be given. They will enjoy these courses, and they will find they don't have any problem with the understanding of the course. They will find that they do get involved and excited, and they will find that their professor responds to them in a way he rarely responds to his ordinary students. So that's another level of question that comes.

Tim, you had said that you were going to ask.

TW: Just curious. I know your experience in two years of Elder Hostel programs, what the...excuse me, how many Elder Hostel students use the program as a stepping stone for joining regular sessions, going back to school on a regular basis.

MK: Well, I can't give you anything exact on this in the way of figures because it's not something that we have pursued and tried to find out in a qualitative way. We know it happens a lot. I think that everyone who is involved in education is aware of the fact that there is very, very little involvement of older adults in ongoing regular college courses. Even programs that are designed to invite older students onto to the campus to go in regular courses usually are not successful because...Well, there are many reasons for this. But the Elder Hostel program is one that is a short, complete experience, and it's non-threatening. When the elder has this, the sheer excitement of it and the power of this experience to make them feel better is such that often they do go and seek out other educational opportunities and get into regular courses and that sort of thing. Some of them do it and decide that they'll go in and take these courses for credit. Others prefer always to take the courses without credit being involved. We've had a

number of people that we know of, who have gone on and gotten a degree of courses, including several...I mentioned I think to someone here recently that the oldest person in the program the first year was a 94-year-old man. He has not come back to Elder Hostel because he's so busily involved in a master's degree program at Northeastern University in Boston. We have others who have gotten involved in other kinds of degree programs. Some have been to college before and some haven't.

We know that this has a big effect on the appetite for education. It also has a big effect in other ways. It increases activity level. It changes the character of activities that these people engage in. One of our participants last summer, a lady about...I believe she's 84 years of age, had been a schoolteacher all of her life at of all things a manual training high school in Manhattan. I didn't know that manual training teachers in Manhattan ever got to be 84 years of age, but there she was. Since her retirement, her primary activity had been at a senior center, and she had frankly found it pretty boring. When she heard about Elder Hostel, she decided to try it, and she came up last year and stayed two weeks in Elder Hostel. Was immensely enthusiastic about it. Went to the University of New Hampshire, went to Franconia College. Was just tremendously enthusiastic about her experience and left telling us that she was going to start saving her money and she was coming back next year to have as much Elder Hostel as she could have. Well, we had her application for a week in June, and it was for only one week. I worried a little bit. I wondered if maybe she was feeling poorly or something. I picked up the telephone call and called her down in New York and asked about it. She said, "Well," she said, "I'm sorry. I really want to go to Elder Hostel," but she said, "To tell you the truth I have to get back into New York and get ready. I'm going to Cuba." [laughs]

So elder hostellers do some very interesting things. We had one elder hosteler, by the way, who was also going to China instead of going to Elder Hostel. She's back this summer and is signed up for three weeks in Elder Hostel. I'm very eager to find out what her experiences were in China.

US: You said something earlier about people going to one program and traveling and going to another. Does that occur quite often?

MK: Yes, it does, and we find that people will very timidly try on week of Elder Hostel, and then by midweek begin trying to find out, "Is there someplace I can go next week?" But most of our people still really find that one week...well, as I say, most of them. Roughly half of them find that one week's probably all they can afford to do in Elder Hostel. Then if they've been able to put aside enough money to take a second week, they will frequently do that. We have had people who have gone five, six, seven weeks in the summer in Elder Hostel. But in New England, we've restricted them now to three weeks within the system. If they want to go further weeks of Elder Hostel, they better go to the Elder Hostels in New York or the one in North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, or Montana, and do that.

US: How come you had to restrict them, to say, three weeks?

MK: Because we were so overwhelmed by people wanting to participate. We had to turn away so many people that we felt that that it was unfair to let some people who were lucky enough to apply very, very early use up six weeks of accommodation when we had to turn other people away. We know one woman we had to turn away because we no longer had room. So we've restricted it to three weeks. It is important to allow people if they will to have this experience. Elder Hostel experience is so intense that we are anxious for people to realize what happens to them as a result of this is not associated with one specific locale. If they go to two or three different Elder Hostels and they find the same thing happening to them each place, we rather feel that they'll come to realize that this is something that's really coming from inside of themselves. So we don't want ever restrict people to a point where they can't have this kind of discovery.

Tim, do you think there's any, will there be any problem with people being able to register here? There are going to be too many people signed up or anything like that?

TW: Marty tells me that we have interested couple from Rhode Island. We've had some inquiry from Arizona and California at this point. We still have a lot of room. I think that as we expand the invitation to Oregon and Washington that we will begin drawing people.

MK: I think you will. I think we find many people in Idaho and Oregon and Washington who are interested in this sort of thing, who will find this is not a difficult trip to consider making. You don't have to...the people from California from Arizona from Rhode Island are obviously going to have to fly to reach [unintelligible]. But these other people can probably travel by other forms of transportation, and it still would not be particularly onerous trip. Part of the fun of Elder Hostel is literally going somewhere different. We find that New Hampshire, where the program started, the New Hampshire people who are now involved in Elder Hostel almost invariable choose to go to Maine or Vermont or Massachusetts. Crossing that state line is an important point. They like that aspect of it. The same is true elsewhere in New England. The people would like...their first choice of hostel is always a hostel outside of their own state.

I think the same thing you'll find developing out here. We're hopeful that many people from the Missoula area of Montana will probably participate, but I think that you'll find that quite a number of the participants will be people who are from away. This is excellent because it means that you've got each person comes on the campus is meeting a whole new group of people. This very extension of themselves into these new groups who—new acquaintances—is part of the marvelous effect of Elder Hostel.

US: That's part of a marvelous effect of the University, period, when you have a diverse population coming to one place that we can sit around and talk with each other.

TW: Just going to say that our first registrant, in fact, was from Polson some 60 miles up the road. She was so excited by the very...just the idea of Elder Hostel. She read about it in a very

short description in a newspaper up there, which didn't even list any of the courses, and she wrote and she said, "I'm interested in yoga and I'm interested in poetry and I'm interested in literature and film," and turns out that we've got all those courses. She was very adamant in her letter. She said, "If this letter has not gone to the correct department, please forward it immediately. I intend to register. I'm coming." Very nice, just that [unintelligible] right away.

MK: We had a retired social worker from New York City, who lives way up...well, she lives in a little tiny town in New Hampshire that can't be reached from anywhere else in New Hampshire, you have to go into Maine. The only road in come from Maine. It's one place in New Hampshire you can't get there from here. It's a really tiny, little isolated place. She wrote us this letter in which she said that that she wanted to come down to Elder Hostel and she really didn't...it wasn't all that important what she took. But if it made any difference to us, she was interested in course in Volkswagen mechanics, Italian Renaissance poetry, and fly fishing. We figured within that range we've got to have something that's going to appeal to this lady. It's marvelous to find the variety of interests that exist there.

I'll tell you one thing that...I think I was caught up heavily in the mythology of aging, and I was very reluctant to consider myself as an elder. But I must say that I'm now delighted with it. It was partly, almost entirely, meeting all of these elder hostelers. They've been a true source of excitement to me, and the...I find that retirement really can be—if you give it a chance to be and you work at it—really retirement can really be a chance to extend yourself in dozens directions that you've never reached before.

US: Could you tell us a little bit about your own background, Marty? Personally, I'm just kind of curious about how you got involved with this idea.

MK: I've had a very varied background in and out of the academic world, but I've always been associated in one way or another, literally taking of courses is a hobby of mine that has been a lifelong kind of hobby. I've been a teacher at various times at various colleges and universities and in high schools as well. But I quit everything in 1970 and retired and went to Europe. I spent four years walking around Europe with a pack on my back and sleeping in a tent. Most of that time rarely sleeping indoors. Just found the truest delight that I've ever run into in my life, I think, in being totally free of time and totally free of demand that other people were making on me. When I ran out of money or needed money, I worked as a pick and shovel laborer on archaeological site. Whereas it was a lovely way to live, and it still is—I'm still not entirely returned from that experience—I think that it also gave me time to see with clearer eyes than I'd ever seen before, I literally could look at the places that I went to without having the effect of any sense of personal and direct responsibility. I could look with—not dispassion because that's not in my character—but I can look with fairly free from bias. I gained a feeling that elder people in many European countries really had begun to do things that I was not aware of in the United States. I met several of these groups of elders, participated with them.

When I returned the United States, I returned just by chance to the University of New Hampshire where, as a sort of a reintegrative activity, I ran a youth hostel for the first summer that I was back. While I was at this hostel, along with the Director of Residential Life, I developed this concept of Elder Hostel. It really literally only after my return to the United States where I saw that it was indeed true. That there were things going on in the United States that I thought were as significant as some in Europe, that I really became interested in the elderly. Almost immediately after that particular interest developed, I came to the idea of Elder Hostel, and I've been deeply involved ever since.

US: Did they have an elder hostel program in Europe?

MK: No, they don't. But the hosteling system in Europe is so developed that you meet many retired people who use the youth hostels, okay, and literally who do hosteling in that sense, which is just a form of travelling and seeing things for themselves. Then some of the youth hostels over there have become specialized so that for a part of the vacation period, they will run special schools in connection with the hostel. You almost invariably find some older people signed up for those. The Danish folk school system, for instance, always has a higher percentage of retired people in the school than there are in the population in general. So yes, this kind of thing goes on there in various places in Europe to an extent which it had not been going on in the United States until now.

US: I'm curious. There are a lot of course has been offered Montana Elder Hostel. Can a person sign up for all these courses, or what's the general procedure?

TW: It's my suggestion...We've got an array of course, but we suggest that people really hold themselves to one or two. They don't have to sign up for all of them. The courses start about 8:30 in the morning. There's one section of courses runs 8:30 into mid-morning and then a break man. Then latter half of the morning is sort of filled with different kinds of workshops and film series and so forth before luncheon. After lunch, another set of classes starts, and then that's followed by field trips, afternoon activities, dinner, and then a series of evening events throughout the week. Summer theatre, drama presentations, and the events of the regular summer school session are open to all the elder hostelers, including use of the pool. The intent is to make it a relaxed opportunity really so that people can figure out how much they want to take on—one or two courses. There will be a number of other activities on campus that they can just sit in on. But nobody's going to be chained to the chair from 8:00 to 3:00 in the afternoon and expected to turn out three term papers and wash up on the weekend as an exhausted soul.

MK: This is plenty. There are more than enough courses to keep people engaged as fully as they're willing to be engaged, but there're no requirement. They schedule themselves. Nobody does the scheduling for them. They schedule themselves as to what courses they want to sign up for, how much of their time and energy they want to commit.

US: Could they, say, sign up for two or three the first week, and then come back next week and take two or three different ones?

TW: Absolutely.

MK: Yes.

TW: There are a couple of courses in the bunch that run for both weeks, but are modularized so that you can take one half of it on week and take another course the next week or vice versa. But it's designed to be as flexible as we can.

MK: The people can go either the first week or the second week, or they can come both. Some of the courses are such that if you take the first week, the second week seems to be a continuation. Whereas, for people who only come in the second week, it's a brand new course for them, and it's a whole course just [unintelligible] even though they didn't get it in on the first week of it. I think it's beautifully worked out program. I'm delighted with the kind of innovative approach that Tim and the Center for Continuing Education have taken to it.

TW: In the weekend between the two weeks, two class sessions of Elder Hostel, there'll be some field trips to the National Bison Range at St. Ignatius and to the ghost towns of Garnet and Granite. More than just tours of those towns. We're interested in taking along faculty who know quite a bit about those areas so that as people see that territory and develop an interest in it and have got questions on everything from the history of mining in Montana to range management and where the buffalo herds began and what happened to them and so forth, and we'll have some talented people and imaginative people right there with them—

MK: Guide lecturers.

TW: Yes, to be answering questions and toss in a barbecue on each of those trips as well to make it comfortable.

US: You're providing a bus for transportation needs?

TW: Yeah, we'll have a bus up there, and I think it should be a lot of fun.

MK: I'm going to try and get back out the weekend when those things are concentrated in so I can go on these field trips.

US: That sounds good. We're about out of tape. Could you just briefly run us down what is going to be offered and the dates and all the other specifics that might be connected with Elder Hostel?

TW: Sure. If anyone needs to find out about it, they can call me at the Center for Continuing Education, and the address is Main Hall at the University and the phone number is 243-2900. Then the dates again of the Elder Hostel program here are June 19. Sunday is a registration day. Classes begin June 20. The last day of classes, rather, will be July 1, which is a Friday before the long weekend.

Some of the courses, just very quickly, which meet from...in that two-week time—June 20 through July 1—include “Law for the Layperson,” that “Description of Western Film” course, which I mentioned earlier, a course on some remarkable lives of British and American literature people, “Introductory Auto Mechanics,” which we're doing in conjunction with the Vocational Center here—that's open to anybody—oral history, yoga, poetry workshop, Montana history, and a “Fitness and Body Dynamics” course, which includes a whole bunch of different uses of the pool and so forth.

Then in the first week—June 20 through the 24 only—there'll be “Alternatives for Home Energy,” which will include some field trips to solar heated homes and wood heated homes and should be of interest to anybody who feels they're paying more than they should in utilities, which means that all of Missoula might sign up. A course on medicinal plants and herbs, and creative movement, and then a film series, which I hope to have time to host, and “The World Problems of Food and Energy.” These are several very nice films from University California-Berkeley. Then that week of June 27 to July 1—again, the second week of Elder Hostel—the courses will be...that are offered just that week include astronomy, genealogy, roadside geology, assertiveness training, course on communication skills, a two-day workshop on learning the metric system, and a couple of workshops on CPR and first aid. Those metric workshops and first aid workshops are shorter; the others are full courses. Again, the price is 65 dollars for a week of those courses, and we do have a separate registration for anyone in the Missoula area who may be interested, for example, in signing up just for the Elder Hostel weekend and participating just in those field trips. We welcome that, and as Marty has said, we expect that commuting students may find themselves staying on campus for the duration of Elder Hostel once they get the swing of what's happening here.

US: Marty, is there anything that you would like to leave with our listeners about the hostel?

MK: Well, I never get talked out as far as Elder Hostel is concerned, but I do sometimes get concerned that people who listen to me begin to wonder if I'm ever going to stop. I think I'll just stop.

US: Well, thank you both very much for being with us today.

MK: Good, thanks very much.

TW: Thank you.

US: That's it for this evening. Tune in Thursday, Dr. Toole [K. Ross Toole] will be back with us in a continuation of his lectures on Montana and the West. Have a pleasant evening.

[End of Interview]