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Interviewees: John Campbell and Louise Campbell

Interviewer: Annie Pontrelli

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Annie Pontrelli: This is Annie Pontrelli interviewing John and Louise Campbell on September third, or actually I guess it's the fourth, 1991. John, why don't you start out by telling me the years you were at the university and just your affiliation with the university and we'll go from there.

John Campbell: Well, I was a student at the university in the period from 1935 through the spring of 1940. I was a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity and I got a degree in journalism.

AP: So you graduated in 1940?

JC: In the spring of 1940, yes.

AP: What lead you to the University of Montana?

JC: I lived on University and Gerald Avenue and I was close to the campus many years before I went to school in '35. I knew the campus, I knew the buildings, I knew many of the people there and so it was just like going next door to see a neighbor. I had an advantage over a lot of students that came from out of town.

Louise Campbell: His father lived on the corner of Gerald and University. It's a fraternity house now. It's right across from the SAE's. So, he knew all of the people, you know, all of the sororities and the frats. When you're living right in the middle of it and you're just there to meet and know people for, oh, years. You wouldn't expect him to (unintelligible). That's quite an advantage to live on a corner of a University Avenue that was full of the frats, well all of the frats whether they be men or women. He has a great memory. I wish I did; he's my memory bank.

AP: This is a question that both of you may be interested in answering, but what were some of your observations about Missoula and the university in the earlier years?

JC: Of course, the first thing that I think about when remembering the university in my days, was the enrollment, which was so much smaller than today. Today, we're what, pushing close to 10,000? In our day, I'd say we were around 1,700. One of the things about the campus which doesn't prevail today is the string of five wooden buildings; structures that were behind Main Hall in a row. They were finished buildings from World War One. It was the women's gym, the shed-like building called the student building [bookstore], the Simpkins music hall, the journalism building which was called "the shack" and then Cook Hall [which was] the ROTC headquarters.

Before the war, I think Missoula's population was about 18,000. The school then had an oval for motor traffic. Cars could go around the oval in front of Main Hall and come back and go down University Avenue. That oval doesn't apply today.

[Phone rings]

AP: Did you have any observations about the students themselves, John?

JC: Yes, the students in our day Annie, I thought the sororities and the fraternities played a far bigger part in governing student affairs than they do today. The so-called Greeks had far more impact on the campus. They were on very important committees, some of which were connected with the Main Hall administration. I thought we had outstanding academic students in the late '30s. I was very impressed with them. They took care of traditions, they took care of different committee work. The fraternities and sororities, like I say, were very prevalent in their activity.

AP: What were some of the traditions that you remember?

JC: There were a few of them that I remember that were very strong. One of them was Singing on the Steps which was done on Homecoming at the end of the year. It was a very sentimental scene, particularly when the students sang "College Chums." Then we had the lighting of the M on Mount Sentinel. We used to have snake dances and noise rallies down the street and we had the tradition of staying off the grass when you were walking through the campus. The M Club was organized then, that was the sports lettermen, and they carried paddles. Anybody caught walking across the grass got a pretty good swat. (laughs) Then there were the Bearpaws for the men—the honorary sophomore organization. The girls were Tanan of Spur. Each sorority was allowed only three girls to become a Spur. They were a very active group. So, those are some of the traditions that I recall.

AP: What were some of the organizations or clubs that were on campus that you remember? They may or may not be in existence today.

JC: I think, Annie, most of the schools, like the journalism school and the pharmacy school, they had their own group within the school. Sigma Delta Chi was the organization in the journalism school. I think there were similar things in the law school, the business ad school, the religion school, the forestry school—they were called, I think, the Druids. Those things were all part of the yearbook that they put out at the end of the school year.

AP: The Sentinel?

LC: Did you want to look at one?

AP: Oh, I have access to them at the library. Do you have any other observations of traditions and organizations?

LC: Well, because we were smaller, more students participated. The Singing on the Steps or lighting the M or anything like that, more students did participate; it wasn't something that you just looked at and somebody else did it. We all did it. That was nice to know that we could all participate, I thought. I liked it smaller because we knew each other better.

Another thing that I associate with the university is going home between the quarters. We were on the quarter system and I was from Big Timber and we went home. We didn't fly home, we went on the NP [Northern Pacific]. Everybody did, you know, depending on whether you were traveling on the Milwaukee which went through central Montana. It came out of here and went to central Montana and wound up in Miles City too, didn't it, John? At any rate, that was its territory, but it was never as popular as the Northern Pacific. They didn't even have standing room, you almost had to hang out of the window to get from here to there. (laughs) It was lively. We had a close relationship with everybody. Those who didn't normally just were people who didn't like to get involved and they were there for a different reason. We were there for the same reason, but not with the same dedication, I think. (laughs) We all wanted to graduate, but we also wanted to have fun.

AP: Who are some of the people that you remember, whether they were teachers or significant administrators or fellow students? Who were some of the people who made an impact?

JC: One of the most prominent figures on the campus when I was in school was our president, Dr. George Finlay Simmons. He was tall, he was intelligent, and he was very distinguished looking. He would stand out in a crowd if he was wearing fishing clothes. I thought so much of him that I thought that the whole school was so fortunate to have such a brilliant man. He was internationally known as a zoologist and had done research all around the world. He was young, he was vigorous, he had foresight, and he was trying to save the school money. In his tenure, I am proud to say, there were new buildings that sprung up on the campus principally through the efforts of my father, Senator John L. Campbell of Missoula County, who was active with the powerful Finance and Claims Committee of the state legislature. He was able to get the student union building, the journalism building, the chemistry/pharmacy building, the new grandstand on the east side of the Dornblaser football field, the addition to the wildlife-natural science building, the lights for the football field. He was sort of a patron saint. All of this happened under the administration of George Simmons. I thought he was an absolutely marvelous man.

I liked Dr. Joe Severy and Dr. Gordon Castle of the biology department, who gave lectures in Main Hall. I loved Arthur L. Stone, the dean of the journalism school, a very kind-hearted person, and the jovial Andy Cogswell, assistant professor of journalism. Those are some of the people that were outstanding to me. A very fine lecturer was Mike Mansfield who would talk at the assemblies at Main Hall. He was in the social science. Those are some of the ones that remain vivid with me, Annie.

AP: How about you, Louise?

LC: He said it all. I was so glad that I was able to come here in the first place, you know, to come to college, because we were in the Depression era. My dad died before I was born, but my grandfather started a little fund for me, so that's how I got here. But gee, I thought this was heaven on earth, to come from Big Timber and all that wind. (laughs) Anyway, I just thought it was just an absolutely wonderful place and it offered opportunities for me that I would never have enjoyed otherwise. I was an Alpha Phi and I represented the sorority twice at conventions. One was at Berkeley and one was at Pasadena, so that was nice. That broadens your scope a lot. Those campuses were so huge and gorgeous. Ours was a gorgeous campus, but we were just a

little spot compared to what they were. I wouldn't have dared ventured very far by myself. (laughs) I guess you enlarge your associations because if you are at a convention and you are there five days, you are bound meet people that you like and associate with them...

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JC: Annie, I think perhaps one of the most significant events in the entire history of the university took place in 1936 with the arrival of the first bona fide Student Union building. Never before had the students had a real mecca for their activities and committees, and a place to have a Coke or a coffee between classes. The Student Union building, we thought when it emerged in '36, was a sumptuous tower. It was beautiful. It had everything you could want. It had a comfortable little coffee shop and across the hall was the bookstore and sporting goods run by the very popular Morris McCullum. Upstairs there were offices, there were committee rooms, conference rooms, and beyond that there were three dance halls: the Copper, Silver, and Gold rooms. We also had a theater that sat about 1,500 students and nationally famous artists would perform there. Those were the days of the traveling big bands and we had people like Jack Teagarten and Jan Garber and Phil Harris. Their orchestras played in the Gold Room. It was a very active place. It also had a big student lounge and the kids could go there and study or just sit and meditate. It was a marvelous building and it certainly replaced the little wooden building behind Main Hall which was supposed to be the Student Union building for many years. How that house of cards stood up and buffeted one of the Hellgate blizzards, I'll never know.

LC: I was just saying we don't see them, the blizzards, much anymore because it's so populated. Oh, they were vicious! You'd hold your coat, you'd hold your hair, you'd hold everything you could get at to get there. There weren't as many homes or other buildings like Main Hall that were obstructions to the wind. It just came full force out of that canyon!

AP: Did they ever close the school because of the weather?

LC: Yes, they did close the school, didn't they, because of the weather, John?

JC: Yes.

LC: During a blizzard, didn't they close?

JC: Oh they did, yes.

LC: I know we were the last ones on Gerald and I wasn't really anxious to hike out to Main Hall or any other building when we had weather like that. There are so many houses now, you don't get the Hellgate wind and the blizzards like they used to. Even out here, we were on the lone prairie by ourselves out here. There was one little school and a big barn and all that down there. There just weren't many houses out here were there, John? There was no way to stop the wind when it was blowing, there weren't enough houses to stop it.

JC: When we came out here there was nothing but cattle and barbed wire.

AP: Is that right?

LC: We came out here. It was so beautiful. There were just a few people out here, do you know John Lester or have you ever heard of him?

AP: Yes, I interviewed him.

LC: He was over here. He was there before we were here. Then the Staningers were there in the little red school house that they added to and added to. There were very few houses, it was [rural]. Mrs. Pike had thoroughbred horses over in that hollow. Well, it ran clear up here and these are houses now. But, those horses, when they would be romping and everything like that, they were beautiful. It was a nice place to live with our Great Dane and the horses.

AP: What were some of the rules, regulations, and social standards while you were there and how have they changed?

JC: I think Louise could answer that question better than I can because she lived in a sorority house and I didn't live in a fraternity house, so there were some there that wouldn't be applicable.

AP: Do you recall some of those?

LC: Oh, we had a housemother from the East. Yes, we lived by some very strict standards, and it was wonderful. I was born in a Norwegian community and I wasn't a total dud, but I had a lot to learn in the social areas. We had a housemother that took a liking to me and I think she gave me a fine education and one that I didn't pay for. (laughs) Well, yes, I did of course, because I lived there, but it was part of the university experience. It was fun though. The old locomotives in the winter, they'd get warmed up very slowly and then when they finally got started up they went up the Hellgate canyon. It was just a real competition between the Milwaukee and the Northern Pacific, and they'd just about blow that old Hellgate out of the gate. (laughs) All the way along then students were dropping off. We didn't pick up anybody because they were all here. It was just a lot of fun. When we went, it was usually at a holiday time. Most people just loved it up here and didn't want to go home, except when the quarter was over and we had to get our cards and show the parents. Whatever we did, it was fun. Even if you had to wash your own clothes it was fun. We were not used to having a lot of things. A few, mostly fraternity men, who had cars were sought after by every co-ed. Right John? Was Daly going to school here then, John—Marcus?

JC: I think he went, but very briefly. [1939-1940]

LC: Jockey Miller, a Phi Delt, he had his own car. There were a number, SAE's had some people with cars. But not everybody had cars, few people had that type of capital. Nobody minded because there wasn't enough to think that you were a dud because you didn't have a car. So the train was the main mode of transportation. When representatives from the sorority houses would come all the way by train. It doesn't seem possible. So, it was all an experience right in that era and it's hard to convey the feeling, but everybody was happy. You didn't have much money but you were happy. I think that it would be hard to go to school if everyone had a whole bunch

more than you do. If you are all about the same level, it's just delightful.

AP: Well, what did you like best about the university in your years there?

JC: I liked the fact that you knew so many students. Like I said, the enrollment was small and no matter where you went, the ball games or to the student union building, you always knew somebody. They might be from another fraternity or another sorority, but you knew them and it made a warm companionship in the whole campus. Even in class, you could know better than half of the students in the class and I think that was a wonderful atmosphere on the campus in the old days. For many old-timers, Annie, like Robert Henry "Ty" Robinson had said, "We went to school in the good ol' days," and you got to kind of go along with that. That is one of the elements that I certainly remember.

You could [also] get on very close relationship with the professor because he had more time to devote to the individual student's desires and questions. It wasn't just an assembly line in the classroom, it was individuality. Those are things that I remember.

LC: In regard to that, I think the students, generally speaking, were almost a hundred percent behind Dr. George Finlay Simmons, our president, who later had to be moved on. (laughs) Moved at request. The majority of the students really admired him. It wasn't just his looks, it was his presentation. He not only was president, he also did lecture, wasn't it in a science field John?

JC: Yes.

LC: He'd take on some lectures in that way and that's how some of us would become better acquainted with him in the classroom. You had to take part in it. It was good for us. I went to school in Big Timber, I didn't know anything about science, that was an awakening! (laughs) That was more of an elective.

JC: Annie, could I relate a little bit about the tragic end of Dr. Simmons career here at the university? I do think it was one of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of the school. It was the darkest hour for sure, because Dr. Simmons, as Louise pointed out, was so popular with the students and yet a conspiracy of faculty members who showed the element of jealousy: the old guard of the faculty didn't want any changes made. Dr. Simmons told a bunch of us students at the Journalism building that he was going to cut out these positions and salaries of some of the professors who were too old and inept to be teaching. Those salaries, he thought, were just a waste of money. Dr. Simmons was the victim of the cartel of the faculty. They put him on trial; it was a hearing and it lasted for 11 days and there were 75 witnesses. The governor and the Board of Regents sat there in complete bewilderment. They didn't seem to know what was going on. I attended those at the recommendation of Mike Mansfield. I admired Dr. Simmons who sat there erect and proud, in spite of the fusillade of innuendos and false accusations. He was gallant. He was courageous. It was a sad, sad day for the university when he left. Dr. Simmons went back to Chicago and shortly afterwards he died. His admirers always said he died of a broken heart.

AP: Okay, next question. Who were some of your favorite teachers and what made them your favorite?

JC: Do you want to go ahead with that babe? Your favorite teachers?

AP: Actually why don't you go ahead and answer that one, John.

JC: All right. I would single out as favorite teachers, Dean Stone and Andy Cogswell and Ed Dugan, all of the Journalism school of course, so I got to know them better. As I said before, I liked very much Dr. Joe Severy and Dr. Gordon...

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

JC: ...Charles Hertler, and he was the head of the physical education department for a long, long time. Little Charlie came from Indiana and oh, he did so many things to put some life into the department; then he also was the director of the state high school track and field meet for years. Everybody liked Charlie Hertler and I did too. There was a political science teacher by the name of Guy Fox, who was very personable and he was quite a tennis player. Those are the ones, Annie, that I remember most.

AP: Louise, how about you? Who were some of your favorite teachers?

LC: Oh good heavens! I had no favorites really. No.

AP: No one stands out in your mind?

LC: I can think of a few that upset me when they had that hearing for Dr. Simmons. (laughs) Almost all of the students were very much in favor of him, before and after even, the terrible hearing. No, we all were very prejudiced in his favor before any of that came about. We just thought he was marvelous. He was erect, he was a good speaker, he knew his subject, and it was easy to enjoy his lectures. He was on the schedule even though he was the president, every once in a while he was on the schedule and lectured in science, his field, whatever one it was. He just had such a nice personality that everybody was behind him whenever what did happen happened. John knows it better because his dad was very much involved with university politics. He was an objective man, so whatever John said about him, I think he had thought about it and his dad had thought about him. I wish I could have known him as well as I knew the profs (some of them).

The most strenuous part of the education I got out there was when I had to do my practice teaching at Willard School. Do you know where Willard School is? Well, it's way out in the boonies on South Sixth. You had to be in the classroom [at Main Hall] seven minutes after three, you couldn't be any later than that. Here I was, clear at the other end of town, and boy, I was in shape! (laughs) I think I could have gone out for track. I always made it, but the only problem was that you had to hike up that Main Hall stairway after I got through just knocking myself to get to even the door, then I had to climb those old wooden stairs. Well, I made it [to class] and that was what counted.

What I liked about the university then, because I came from a small town, the school was overwhelming to me at first, but I'm glad it wasn't any larger. I was a delegate to a convention down at Berkeley and that just overwhelmed me. It was a beautiful campus and everything you know, but just a mass of people! Everything was beautiful except how in the world did they get from one place to another on time? Because that was as big as Missoula, the campus. Every association I had with any out of state friends or sorority, (as I said I went down to Pasadena once too and that was a real fun trip. Three of us added on to it, you know, and we went to Catalina and I don't even remember where all we went. There were lots of things to see down there. Of course, we were in awe of every building because it was bigger than anything we had around here on the lone prairie. Everything was so new, and I enjoyed every minute of it that I went to

school here, and for many reasons. It opened up other vistas for me. Big Timber wasn't very big, and I didn't know very much when I got up here. (laughs) They worked on me.

Do you enjoy it? Do you enjoy working out there?

AP: I do.

LC: Did you go to school here too?

AP: For a couple of years.

LC: What was your major going to be?

AP: Well, I actually ended up with a journalism degree.

LC: Oh, you did? Well, you better get back with John. You two have a common language.

AP: Well thank you for joining us.

LC: I enjoyed it.

AP: John, what do you feel some of your greatest accomplishments were during your years at the university, besides graduating? (laughs)

JC: Outside of graduating, yes. (laughs) Well, I may sound a little narrow-minded on this answer Annie, but I was a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity. In those days, they had an intermural program in which they played baseball. Now that's hard ball, it's not soft ball like they play now. I pitched for the Phi Delt team and we had to win [the league] three years to capture permanent possession of the three-foot trophy. I pitched those three years and we won it! I thought well, in a small way, I followed the footsteps of my father who pitched in the city league. He pitched in Minnesota and he taught me a few things about it. But, oh, I think belonging to the fraternity, I enjoyed that and while it may not be an accomplishment, I felt it was something I did, because I got to know so many wonderful fraternity brothers.

Other than that, the accomplishment I had in school would be being associated with the Grizzly sports teams and writing about the athletes for *The Kaimin*, the student paper. Those are the things that I recall that made me feel kind of rewarded.

AP: How long were you with *The Kaimin*?

JC: Oh, for about two years Annie.

AP: Were you the editor?

JC: No, I was the sports editor and the fellows that were with me in school all went on to pretty high positions in newspapers and periodicals and government assistants and they pretty much

followed the journalism line.

AP: What was *The Kaimin* like when you were...?

JC: Well, that's a good question, Annie. When I was there, it was a bi-weekly. It came out on Tuesday and Friday. It was not a tabloid size, it was the full-scale, eight column newspaper, four pages. It was the old letterpress type of paper, and that was the hot lead and the way they printed a paper 50 years ago. The paper was covering the campus news like they do today, but thought all of the editors, reporters, and feature writers we had were all proud of the school and their work. Two of them (when I was a member of the paper) that were working there at the time were from Missoula, Bill Forbus and Phil Payne. They worked for *Time* and *Life* magazine for 25 years. They were very accomplished students at the time. *The Kaimin* was an impact paper. It was clean, it didn't have derogatory remarks, and it stood up for the school. So, I enjoyed that very much.

AP: It sounds like it. What were some of your challenges during your years there?

JC: Oh, the challenges? Getting to class on time I guess would be one of them! (laughs) The challenges I had were the physical science department. Boy, I just couldn't put that chemistry and molecules through my head. I was kind of bored by humanities; it seemed so drawn out. Those were hurdles because I just wasn't enamored by either one of them. Some of the real obstacles I had was hearing the professors in the Main Hall lecture room. I just couldn't pick up all of the messages and that made it a little difficult on me.

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?

JC: If I had to do it again Annie, I doubt I would join a fraternity for one thing, as much as I enjoyed the fellas when I was there, because I lived in Missoula. I lived at home and I had wonderful parents, two fine younger brothers. I thought my fraternity is right there. I would have gotten along without the fraternity, but I would have gone with the journalism. There wouldn't have been a change there because I knew I wasn't going to be a biologist or a forester or a lawyer or anything like that. The only other thing I could have followed was being with the athletic department—that was it. Other than that, I wouldn't have made any change.

AP: Okay, what period of time was your most favorite or your most memorable?

JC: The most memorable time, oh, that is hard to say because it seemed something cropped up every year. In 1936 when I became active at the fraternity, that was fun. I was assistant manager of the football team in '37. Like I said, I was with *The Kaimin* newspaper in '38 and '39. Memorable experiences? Well, I would have to include the graduation diploma. I think memorable experiences, Annie, could be summed up with the friendships that I got to know, the people, and still know so many today. So, that was a great reminder of the old days.

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

JC: To university students today? Well, first of all, have pride in your school. It's always been strong academically, and I think that the school, as small as it may seem today in comparison with others, does have quality teaching. The facilities are good for the students. They should enjoy every year, every month of their college career, whether they belong to a fraternity or sorority or not makes no difference. I think that knowing your professor is a lot to do with how good you get along in your course. Those are the things that I would tell them.

AP: Any other observations, insights, memories, or stories that you'd like to share?

JC: No, I haven't Annie, no. Well, there is one. In 1940 I started to work—no, it was in '41, excuse me—on the sports publicity, hired by the university. My office was in the basement of the journalism building. I got to know all of the football and basketball players, the track men and so forth. There was one football player from Chicago who was very popular. His name was John Reagan, a big, strapping 200-pounder, with lots of ability. He came down to see me in the office and we laughed and I said, "Well, let's go over to the student union and have a Coke."

He said, "Oh, no, I can't go in there."

I said, "You're going in there with me." and I persuaded him to go and we sat at the counter. That was the first time John Reagan, a black, went into the student union. I was just as proud of him as I would be any other student.

AP: That's great. Anything else John?

JC: Gee, Annie, that right now is all I can come up with.

AP: Well thank you very much.

JC: Well, it's my pleasure Annie and it shows a lot of patience to listen to all of that...

[End of Interview]