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Interviewee: Meyer Chessin

Interviewer: Annie Pontrelli

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AP: This is Annie Pontrelli interviewing Dr. Meyer Chessin on July 16, 1991. One of the things that we talked about, Meyer, is just having a little bit of a background and some foundational history about how you got here, when you were here at the university, in what capacity, and then we'll just go from there.

MC: Okay. Well, I came to the University in September of '49, and, I had just finished my work for the Ph.D. in plant physiology at the University of California, Berkeley. When I received a letter from the chairman of the department about the position, I thought it was kind of a dream come true to come to a place like this from his description, because he described it as a smaller, liberal arts state university with some professional schools: that it was in a very attractive mountain setting and that one could do a lot of things in the outdoors like fishing and hiking. And those are all part of a boyhood dream for me, having been born and grown up in New York City before my folks moved to California in '37, after I'd finished high school. I went to school—to college—at U.C. in Berkeley. And then there was a five-year period when I was working in shipyards and on a ranch before I was lent to the U.S. Army during the Second World War. [I] served about three and a half years and came out and completed my graduate work at Berkeley and then came directly here. So I've been here since 1949. Although I've been out on various excursions, fellowships and so on, this has been my only teaching position. So I've seen a lot of things happen. I officially retired just three years ago and then I went on a one- third time contract, which is just over, I think, this academic year. So I have no further formal, official ties with the university although I'm hoping I can stay on because I have a bunch of things I'd like to do.

The president of the university at the time I came was James McCain—Jim McCain—and unfortunately, he only stayed, I believe, for one year after I arrived. [laughs.] I say unfortunate because he was the most unusual person at the school. Why, I can still remember him coming out of Main Hall, and he'd stop and chat with the faculty, and almost invariably be carrying a book, or more, under his arm, something that he'd just read. He liked to discuss it with anybody who was interested. That's kind of unusual because the only person at all I've had in upper administration that I can recall since then is Richard Landini, who was also a professor. He was the academic vice president, but he also taught English, and he was the same sort of person. Wanting to visit with you about some academic subject. [He laughs.] Matters of academic interest.

AP: What was it like to be under McCain's administration?

MC: I was only here for one year, but the faculty was much smaller at the time. I think perhaps it was barely a hundred. It may not have been quite a hundred faculty. I knew every one of them by name and sight, which is, of course, quite a rare thing now. Although it's been quadrupled or more, both the faculty and student body, I'm a little older [laughter], but still, that's what I remember most about those early years is the much greater feeling of community. I think I probably recognized every student, not by name, but I think I could probably identify them as a student if I saw them somewhere else.

MC: So it was that kind of spirit at the time. And some of the things that we use to do will fit in with that kind of life because we had weekly assemblies on Friday. Friday morning, we'd have an hour, from 9:30 to 10:30.

AP: The faculty or everybody?

MC: The university. There was a university assembly every Friday morning from 9:30 to 10:30 and the other morning classes were shortened as a result. But that wasn't a serious problem, once a week. We'd frequently have some kind of a program, a musical program for some holiday, like Christmas or some big football game coming up. We'd sing some songs, some University songs, and we had outside speakers talking about topics of interest at the time, And they were quite well attended by both faculty and students, so, even if we had no official formal presentation we'd always have something to say, someone bringing us up to date on some issue, or discussing some issues that were being, uh, discussed at the time on campus.

AP: Now, was that in place of faculty senate or any of the other faculty gatherings?

MC: We still had university meetings, faculty meetings which, of course, were presided over by the president. And the faculty being much smaller, we could meet in the theater up in Main Hall. That took the place of what later became the faculty senate (much later.) I think that was even before we had much of a chapter of the American Association of the University Professors. And then the Teachers Union—well, we always had a small group in the Teachers Union, but that represented a very small percentage of the faculty. The AAUP Chapter became somewhat larger, but that was kind of the ambiance at the time. And then we had some other ways of getting together that we seem to have lost since then, we had an Authors' Club, which was—the chief push behind that was Harold Chatland, who was a professor in mathematics who became dean—and he was the chief architect for that Author's Club. That consisted of having perhaps monthly meetings where anyone who was an author of anything I suppose even a letter [laughs] to the paper, as long as you'd written something, could make a presentation on something you were interested in. So, it covered the whole spectrum of the campus life and disciplines in areas like scientific subjects, the humanities, or any one at all who was an author could talk. And those were quite well attended, too. I believe that...I'm not sure we had the monthly meeting with a dinner. I know we had some that included a dinner in the old Jumbo Hall. Jumbo Hall is, I think, one of a series of big, old housing units from some of the major construction projects that were moved to campus. They were from some dam and from military

reservations, and we had quite a few of those for student and faculty housing at the time. Where the Xs are now we used to have what they called Veteran's Village up there, which were also these shacks. As a matter of fact, when I first came to campus, that's where we lived, where the golf course is now, I guess. It was a rather primitive kind of living arrangement, [laughs], and of course we had a coal/wood stove. Not much protection from the elements at the time. Of course, we had the coldest winters on record, [laughs] for the first couple of years we were here.

So that was all part of the pioneering experience of coming to Montana from California which really didn't bother me. I thought it was all quite a great adventure. Well, coming back to the Authors' Club in Jumbo Hall, we had some really memorable get-togethers, meetings, there. Where, for example, a couple that come to mind. One was when Henry Ephron—who was married to Marguerite Ephron, a long-term humanities professor in the classics and he was an instructor for classics as well—who had deciphered a very important, ancient disc from Greece or Crete, I'm not sure, one of the earliest of printed tablets of that kind of writing. He had deciphered it and gave a story of the background about that discovery. Then he read the message on it, in English, and then he read it in Greek, as he thought the person had done at the time, which was a couple thousand years, 3, 4, 5,000 years ago, would have read it. It sounded really weird, really amazing. And then we had one reading where we were discussing the "two culture" controversy of the time, people like C.P. Snow, a famous British scientist was one that was discussed. [This was] probably back in the 50s, early 60s, possibly (and) about how the sciences and humanities were separated, becoming separate. He thought that was unfortunate, but we had a discussion, based on that idea by a zoologist and by an English professor. During the discussion, Joe Kramer, who was probably a very, very powerful professor at the university. He was a great guy, and he was very well-read, championed C.P. Snow's ideas, being more on the scientific side. It so happened that a young visiting instructor from England was here who championed Professor Leavis from Oxford who was on the other side, sort of anti-scientific. And Joe Kramer made some disparaging remark about Leavis. Joe was already probably in his 60s, late 60s or 70s. And this fellow was quite young. Well this English instructor had some gloves and he slapped [laughs] Joe right in front of everybody in a discussion afterwards. So, that was the kind of environment [he laughs] that we had in those days where people took these kinds of things very, very seriously. It was quite a different atmosphere at the time and, needless to say, that has changed.

One other thing that the Authors' Club used to do was to have annual meetings with the people at the Rocky Mountain Lab. We would alternate where they were held, and that was always quite nice to interact in. Since then, you know, the Authors' Club went out 20, 30 years ago, 25 years ago—and we've had nothing like that since. Our contacts, not only with people in Hamilton, but even with our colleagues here on campus, really have shrunk considerably in terms of any kind of university-wide interactions. That's one of the things that's happened that I decry. Aber Day, of course, was another big thing in the early days.

AP: What used to be some...

MC: Well, it was taken seriously. Aber Day was taken seriously, although a lot of students, especially in the afternoon would take off. But in the mornings, we would have all sorts of clean-up projects. Students seemed to take that pretty seriously. In the afternoon to keep students on campus, which was only partly successful, we would have a big roast, a campus roast, that is where we'd roast people, Anyone or anything was fair game. And the students would poke fun at administrators and teachers. We were supposed to take it in good spirit. Anyway, it was very clever, and occasionally they got really kind of down to earth. It wasn't so nasty, but quite, quite strong. We had a president in those early days, I think he followed McCain and was called [Carl] McFarland. He was kind of a colorful character, too, very, very controversial.

AP: How so?

MC: Well, he wanted to make Missoula the Harvard of the West. He came from the east and he was a very distinguished lawyer. I don't know if he had taught at the Harvard Law School or just been there. And he was a very distinguished government lawyer, and he was also a former graduate at the university. And quite a scholar in his own right. But he had notions about making Missoula a real intellectual center, of the caliber of a place like Harvard, which to many of us seemed a bit unrealistic, but worthwhile in terms of those goals. However, he also thought, in our setting, we should have a big equestrian program, and so we had stables down, I believe, where the field houses are now. That was a very important part of our physical education program, and they used to take the horses up on Mt. Sentinel. Well, those things were sort of superficial and peripheral, but he turned out to be not very good at public relations and that did him in. He also was somewhat authoritarian, vis-a-vis the faculty, so there was a lot of controversy over that which kind of spilled over in—well, the faculty split into factions.

Then there was the famous "Neil Report," which—it all probably happened during the McCarthy era—some disgruntled scion of the lumber company up in Libby, I suppose the Neil family, published a report about what's happening at the university. What was happening was that there was a controversy, in opposition to McFarland. But he pictured it as being just a bunch of subversive professors, in keeping with all the other things that were going on around the country. That was a very, very divisive period in our history.

AP: What was the result of the "Neil Report?"

MC: Well, the result—I think it was part of the result, I guess, as far as McFarland's leaving. I guess the main result was that quite a few of the faculty who had tied their chariot to McFarland's star thinking that we were really going to become a great big research institution, quite a few of them left. So we had a kind of an exodus then. It left some bitterness for those who stayed—it left some bitterness between different elements of that. But that's always been. I take it that's been, sort of, part of our history. You have a somewhat stormy history at the university. The Simmons' controversy. [George F.] Simmons was a previous president, someone

who was here before I came. He was a fairly young zoologist, I guess, and it was reputed that he was put in by some of the large corporations in the state. And he too tried to force the faculty into certain directions, and so there was a lot of controversy around that. It was as a result of that the Teachers Union was formed. Some of the very early, distinguished people on the faculty became part of it. They opposed Simmons at the time. People like [H.G.] Merriam and Edmund Freeman, and I'm not sure how big a role he played, but Mike Mansfield was one. He was, at the time, the secretary. In fact, I have, I guess, the original charter of the union, since I've been involved and for some reason, I ended up—I guess I took it when we moved the Teachers Union office. I still have the account. It shows Mike Mansfield's name as secretary. That was the original, founding charter for the union. Perhaps those were as strong as any controversies that we've had, But it seems to me that we had a tendency to get these kinds of things going between the faculty and administration until the faculty organizations became stronger. First, the Senate, until we got a real senate, where it was clear that the faculty had some role to play in the running of governments at the university. And then when the Teachers Union won the bargaining election, somewhere about ten years ago, which formalized how at least the salary working conditions were to be established [inaudible] specific, collective bargaining agreement, rules and regulations. And I think since then things have become a lot quieter on that front. Maybe it's not as much fun, but I think it's just as well. [laughs]

AP: Now, when did the Faculty Senate start? Was that during McFarland's tenure?

MC: Well, I would say it was after McFarland, it was closer to the Newburn era, Harry Newburn. We had, you know, problems with him too. It was the same kind of thing, where it was a question of faculty desiring some prerogatives, and Newburn not wanting to go along. It was unfortunate that it came about just before he decided to leave, he seemed to come to some sort of modus vivendi with the faculty, and we thought that we were getting along pretty well. So, it was kind of unfortunate that that's just the time that he chose to leave. But that, I think at that time is when the Faculty Senate was established. Maybe that was part of the reason he left, I don't know. Maybe he couldn't live with that kind of agreement. But it seems that we've had our share of stormy periods when, almost every, almost every president has got some situations that developed that created some turmoil. So, with Pantzer, with Robert Pantzer, whom I think was probably the best president that we had since I've been here. He was president at the time of the whole Vietnam "adventure," and that was a very difficult period [inaudible], a lot of turmoil at the time. He was probably a stabilizing influence. And unfortunately, I guess he had his problems with a work study scandal that came out, where some of the people—I think it was the athletic department—were playing rather loose with records. And perhaps he hadn't been forceful enough in keeping tabs on that, so that kind of hurt him. But overall he was the finest long-term president. People like McCain were certainly very well respected and admired, but he was only here a short time. We've covered pretty much the things that I have listed here. I'd like to think that—my attitudes towards what's happened to the university in recent decades is one that other people would share, and it's not just a reflection of a person retired and no longer that active in the university affairs. But I have noticed quite a shift. I see I listed here: [Fourneedy and Barden?] We always, especially in the

sciences, I think there was always an emphasis on scholarly research. When I first came I think I was one of very few people in the Botany Club who wanted to do research. We had a very distinguished research professor, Charles Waters. He was very well-known. But, aside from that, actually, concentrating on research and getting outside federal money, boy, it was a very rare thing. It may be that I had the first such grant, through the federal government. I'm not sure whether Lud Browman who was here before me. I know he got national research grants but I'm not sure what. In any event it was fairly rare for people to really specialize in research. Although a lot of folks did some kinds of creative work and independent work. It wouldn't necessarily involve a lot of outside money to do.

When you go out and analyze soil temperatures, for example, like Joe Kramer did. Well, he had a few old-fashioned thermometers that he'd stick in the soil and he'd go out every so often and see what's happened to the soil temperature because this is important in determining plant growth. And he'd get a lot of information. That was more typical of the kind of research that we used to do in those days, we sort of took advantage of the natural environment. We had natural advantages that didn't necessarily require big infusions of outside money. The state always was very limited in its ability to support research especially after we went into Ph.D. program in the early '60s. Once you start the Ph.D. program, then there's quite a shift in emphasis toward the research function in the university because that requires quite a bequest from somewhere, especially in the sciences. It's very, very expensive to do modern scientific research, heavy on the Ph.D. level. So in any event I think a combination of the emphasis on research here (and with that, you need to get outside federal moneys), has resulted in a shift of emphasis in the traditional roles of faculty, I'd say, here on campus. Because when I came and for some years after I thought the emphasis [was] more on teaching, more on public service, and somewhat less on research, although still that was considered important. And I thought we had a fairly good balance in the early years between those various functions. But I think in recent decades, that balance has definitely shifted toward the research side of it-- especially the sciences. And I think this is unfortunate because the time and energy that it takes, not only to do the research but to apply for research grants, is enormous. And we place so much emphasis on our reward structure, really, actual emphasis on research and publication. Now bringing in money, that seems to be the main idea, and on publication, which goes along with it. And I think that the teaching function, and to some extent the public service functions, have suffered. And I think that's unfortunate.

AP: Have you observed changes within the student body over the years?

MC: Oh, well yes, I think so. Of course, students, you know, remain students. [laughs] Through it all there's something in common about your typical student that perhaps doesn't change very much. But very definitely, during the '60s and '70s, a very marked change in student attitudes and interests.

AP: What was that change?

MC: Well, they were much more concerned, you know, they seemed to be less concerned with the typical concerns and less mature students. They had a much more mature attitude toward the world, toward what was important. During the '60s and '70s I think that they were more interested that subjects be relevant to the present-day problems because problems were mostly associated with Vietnam [inaudible]. The students were overwhelmingly opposed to our involvement, and this spilled over into their general attitudes towards the academic. They wanted more courses that were relevant; [and] they wanted courses to be taught in a more relevant fashion. I think perhaps they went too far in some respects to get away from the more traditional, general requirements. They seemed to want more choice in their—

[Break in audio]

MC: —general requirements [inaudible] more freely. But also I think there was a great deal more social concern amongst the students in those days and now it changed. Of course, the Viet Nam War was over, and certainly it was related to that, but it did amaze me how typical students changed their attitudes. Especially the younger students, the new students, as they started to come in the late '70s and '80s, they seemed to be quite, quite different. They turned inward, turned to, concerns to themselves. Much more conservative politically, they were much more grade conscious, and they were much more concerned with the grade itself than the subject matter than they had been during the earlier years. And that lasted quite a while—whether that was related to the Reagan revolution—but certainly it seemed to be compatible with what was happening that way. Since then I think that there's been a swing back away from that extreme to a more—a greater concern with such things as environmental problems, [inaudible]. I think at least a fairly significant minority of students has a very strong concern. So, in that sense, I think it's more typical and hopeful for the students to be concerned, but I did feel slightly discouraged by the student attitudes in the 1980s.

AP: What would you say would be some of your highlights of your time here, or just some of those memories that really stick out in your mind?

MC: Well... [laughs] It's been very exciting, especially during earlier years. Sometimes too exciting. Very stimulating. [laughs.] It wasn't always the best thing for me.

AP: Why do you say it like that?

MC: Well, I mean, overinvolvement. Overinvolvement in one thing or another or worrying about tenure, about promotions, about presidents, about authoritarian presidents, and about threats, or because of our involvement in the Vietnam thing. Well some of the faculty were fairly deeply involved in that as well, we had teach-ins on campus about the Vietnam War and [inaudible]. Occasionally there would be some threats to us. I suppose, after 25 years here, and that was what, '64 or '74? In '74, some of my colleagues sponsored a lecture by a noted environmentalist, Barry Commoner, to honor my 25th year here on campus, and we had a good old celebration speech. That was kind of fun. I haven't really stressed the environmental thing

with you, but that was also a part of what I considered a public service that a scientist should do during the fallout shelter days—the days of atmospheric and nuclear testing.

There were many people around the country who were concerned about what this radioactive fallout was doing. But it was in the atmosphere, in the food supply and in waters. We were quite concerned with that, and also, I continued testing my lead to a national nuclear exchange. So we formed a small committee here in Missoula with others around the country to educate ourselves, and then to educate the public, about the biological degradation (?) basically. And so we had a lot of exciting experiences, searching for that. This finally culminated with the signing of the Limited Testing Treaty. Atmosphere tests were banned, and we were told by government scientists that such committees, as we have here, play a very instrumental part in preparing the public for this kind of legislation, and this kind of treaty. So that was very satisfying. Then, of course, others of us, after that emphasized and, got involved in other environmental problems. The air pollution, [inaudible] and we get a lot of air pollution problems here [inaudible] and problems with water pollution recently. I suppose the other highlight is not directly related to my being here on campus, but it happened while I was teaching here: which was that we had a third party for the '68 campaign. It was we thought that it was going to be an alternative to Lyndon Johnson in the form of Eugene McCarthy. So we formed a new reform party here with mostly people that just wanted Democrats. We did that, and we hoped that he would run on the national ticket, and we would have other candidates as well. But at almost the last moment, he pulled out, but we retained, the machinery to have a campaign here in the state, we had a gubernatorial candidate at that time, named [Wayne] Montgomery, the Democratic candidate was Forrest Anderson, and the Republican was Tim Babcock. I thought it was a very worthwhile thing to do. And we did get ten thousand votes in the state of Montana. But what made it difficult was that Babcock had come out with a sales tax, of course Anderson had not, so a lot of people didn't want to skip the vote. Well, in any event I was doing that. I was the chairman of that party, while a full-time professor here [laughs]. So it was a pretty exciting time. It was an overinvolvement. That's what happened that was an over-involvement. It was kind of a highlight.

AP: What was your philosophy or your approach to teaching when you first started, and did that change over the years?

MC: Well, you know, when you're teaching science, you have a certain subject matter—and especially some of the courses in the quarter system—we had a lot of subject matter to pack in, in one quarter. Depended on the course. For example, some of the courses were required for foresters, a more professional course than plant physiology, where you're learning about plant and tree functions. Well, my idea is that you try to present the material as clearly as possible and as completely as possible and do it in such a way that you challenge student interest. And there were a variety of things that were associated with that. I soon found that the way to make such matter interesting is to relate it to the student's concerns. Whether it's something personal or whether it had to do with your-going-out-to-become- foresters-out-in-the-field, try to relate it to what they might run into there. There wasn't that much leeway, I think, for

philosophy beyond working out the teaching methods to be as effective as possible as a teacher.

On the other hand, for some years I was involved in what they called the "bug science" course. It was an introduction to biological science, a full year, for non- science majors. That was a horse of a different color. You had no labs there. With the lab, you can always interest the students in the subject matter and show them how it actually works in practice. But without a lab for biology, then it really challenges you to bring the subject matter home to the student. I suppose that the main concern is first of all to make sure the subject matter is covered thoroughly, in as clear a manner, an organized manner, as possible. Secondly, to try to relate it to student [inaudible] nothing more complicated than that. And that's challenge enough [laughs].

AP: I bet. Now, did you do research, in addition to teaching, with your particular projects?

MC: Yes, from the beginning, coming from a place like Berkeley, you're really caught up in the research effort because you know the research there gets into the realm of Nobel Prizes, and that was the atmosphere at a place like Berkeley. So, I couldn't see not doing research when I came here. I was encouraged to do it, though, perhaps I didn't know when I would get in the extra time to do it as people are now. Well, since it was my first job and my first time that I was applying for a research grant on my own, and I did apply for small research grants to continue some of the work that I'd done previously, work on tobacco plants and a virus in tobacco plants. What I needed mostly were some earthenware crocks to grow these plants in nutrients since I was controlling the nutrition of the plants. So I sat down and wrote a grant to the Public Health Service and figured out I'd need about \$1,000—more than I would need—for this particular project. Well, shortly after I submitted the application, I had a visit from a couple of people from down there at the Rocky Mountain Lab, who were asked by the headquarters back east to come sort of check into the situation here because they couldn't see why anyone would be applying for so little money. So they were actually concerned about my not applying for enough [laughs]. It shows how new I was.

But, you know, that's a commentary on how things have changed. Nowadays people apply for a lot of money, and they'll just cut you down. In fact, they may have actually raised my grant a few hundred dollars [laughs]. Ever since then I've always felt the need to get involved in some work like that, but it's been tough because, especially in the early years, we were expected to carry a full, pretty heavy teaching load. But I've never given up; I've always maintained an interest in research. Even now, in retirement, I have a col la bora ti ve project going with a couple of colleagues on the other side of campus. I've been trying for many, many years to interest people in the working of animal or human viruses to do some joint work with me because I work with plant viruses. And finally, I got some of the newer people there to become interested in using some plant materials. I raise the plants and maybe do a preliminary isolational extraction of the plant material. Then I give it to them, and they test it against human viruses. And we've really had some rather interesting results so far. I'd like to be able to

continue that, and I hope to present a paper in the conference in India this summer on this subject. So, I still keep at it, and I find that I have more time now to do writing, so I just published a little book on my Eastern European memoirs, I guess I didn't mention that.

Over the years, starting in '71, I've been able to go on scientific exchange visits to Eastern Europe. And, since it's spanned almost a 20-year period, [inaudible] I thought it might be fun to sit down and put together some experiences. Some of them were pretty fun. Pretty exciting [laughter]. Oh, well, the title of my little book that was just published is called *Passing in Constanza*. It has to do with an experience that I had when I went to see some friends that we had met the previous year, this was on the Black Sea in Romania, and I was trying to pass as a Romanian. When I got over there, I found that didn't work [laughs].

AP: Why were you trying to pass as a Romanian?

MC: Well, well, just trying, I didn't want to be taken for a foreigner so I had a nice Romanian sweater, it was [inaudible] and a Romanian packsack. That didn't work. I was told that there would be people there who would have rooms for tourists. I thought that a fella that I met at the train station looked very, very Slav-ie. A lot of people in eastern Romania came from the Ukraine and Russia, and he didn't look like the typical Romanian. The typical Romanian, usually, fairly dark, with black hair as well, and he was quite blond and looked just like a Russian to me. And so after walking awhile I asked him, "Are you Russian?"

He said "No, no, no, I'm Romanian." So we were both trying to pass! [laughs]. Anyway, well, we had all kinds of experiences, including getting stuck in elevators, which is not that unusual, and a lot of experiences that I recorded have to do with having difficulties of one sort or another and how the people live and respond to it.

AP: Now these were teaching exchanges?

MC: Well, no. Well, one was a teaching exchange. It was a Fulbright to Baku, in Azerbaijan by the Caspian Sea. So we were there for three months, more as a teaching experience, not [inaudible]. All of the others were supposedly research visits but they didn't always pan out so well because of all kinds of problems that you have over there to try to get some research done. The people themselves aren't a problem, but equipment, facilities, money, and so on. Then if you're a visitor on top of that, there are problems with the concern for secrecy, how much they should let you know about certain products and so on and so forth. Bureaucracy is quite a problem all over as you should probably know.

AP: And that just came out?

MC: Yes, it's called *Passing in Constanza*. Then I'm supposed to be working on another book that has to do with plant virus and this work that I have discussed, this research that I have worked on with many colleagues here. It's related to that [inaudible] pretty busy. I hope to be

able to keep my little lab here. There's some talk about them needing this space and converting it to a museum as they move people out of the Health-Science—see, now we're a biological science division and we used to be separate departments. Some of the people over there would like to expand into the space where they keep their bird and animal exhibits. And it makes some sense to convert this whole complex here into some kind of natural history museum, which we don't really have on campus. So, that's what's facing us. We did have a rather sad experience with the loss of a lot of faculty members to attrition in the botany department. We had ten or eleven in the faculty, a decade or so ago, now we're down to three and a half. So for a variety of reasons, people are just not being replaced when they retire. We really have lost out. That's a little sad. But I try not to let it get me down. There's still plenty to do, and it's a great place here on campus it's—if you don't live far from campus, it's sort of a second home. [laughs]

AP: Who were some of the characters, or the personalities that you remember the best?

MC: Well, yeah, Joe Kramer, certainly, a very colorful botany professor from the old country. He had a very colorful style of teaching, and of course, with his accent, it made him even more exciting.

AP: How would you characterize his style of teaching?

MC: Well, he tried to relate his material in frequently a humorous way, and he had quite a sense of humor. And you never were sure whether he was kidding or not, when he told you some of his funny stories. For example, he would be teaching the foresters about the vegetation of Montana and talk about the state tree, which is the Ponderosa, the name of the tree, and he was saying what a beautiful tree it was and what a beautiful name, and he'd roll it, "Ponder-r-r-o-s-a." He said, "If I had a daughter," which he didn't, he said, "I would name her Ponder- r-r-o-s-a." [laughs] The students got a big bang out of that. He died in '71, and I got together with a former student whom I had befriended and who was one of the admirers of Joe Kramer, working for the Forest Service. We were able to get the Forest Service to set aside a grove of trees left of Painted Rocks Reservoir on the West Fork of the Bitterroot River as Kramer Pines, beautiful, old growth yellow pines.

Let's see...People who were formative in my years here, oh, people like W. P. Clark! He had faculty members who would—we always had our share of people who would get up at a faculty meeting and really would speak up in a very open way, and when necessary, chastise the president or the administrator, whichever was necessary. W. P. Clark comes to mind. R.H. Jesse is another one who later became an administrator, too. Jeremy Slutton is another, I remember, Some of them I don't remember, [inaudible], And you know, many of my colleagues here were very broadly trained people, had a real liberal outlook—broad picture. And there some pleasure to work with people like that and broadened my own perspective. Like Sherman Preece, for example, I really appreciated him when he was chairman. I could always go in and ask him about a plant [inaudible] something we've lost—we don't have that. We don't have anybody

here on campus [inaudible]. So, that's, that's pretty well the picture.

AP: If you were to do it over, or to go back in time, are there certain memories you'd relive, or do things differently?

MC: [laughs] Well, I think that being here I felt that I was just following my natural inclination. If I had a different institution with different emphasis, who knows? I could see myself going to a small liberal arts school. I've always had interest in that kind of life—social, political [inaudible]—with science, science in society. I can see this small liberal arts school where I might have gone more into the integrated, interdisciplinary teaching. There was some emphasis on it here, while we established the environmental studies program; I did a bit of teaching there. But still, I didn't feel that I could divorce myself completely, [inaudible], but if I'd been at a small liberal arts school, the research [inaudible]. I could see myself being more deeply involved because I could just work it in. On the other hand, if I'd ended up at a strictly research institution, you know, I had enough drive, I guess, and enough interest, that I could have thrown myself into that—almost in a few years. So the nice thing is that, more or less, it's possible to create a balance between those. So, being here, I don't think I could have done things much differently. It made it possible to kind of satisfy all those interests. That was the nice thing about it...the channels, leeway.

AP: Any other observations, insights, memories, anything you want to share?

MC: Well, I'll probably think of some things, you know—

AP: Oh, you can certainly, certainly feel free to call too, and we'll get back together.

MC: Right at the moment, that sort of wrings me out. [laughs] I hope it doesn't sound like sour grapes or anything like that, but oh, the question of teacher evaluations became a big thing. There may have been a few people who were taking advantage of the situation and not leading their classes or not being prepared, and so on and so forth, and needed some machinery to take care of that. My feeling has always been, that a proper chairman and a dean should be on top of things like that. There, that's where the evaluation...well, you could have students evaluate the professor. Certainly you could ask a student's opinions and have a form and use it for himself, maybe give it to his chairman, and so on. But not to make it a big public thing as we did once.

For a few years we were printing the book. We started placing so much emphasis on it where, in order to get a certain raise, you had that 60 percent, 70 percent of excellency, 75 of this, and so on. I thought it tended to become quite a popularity contest. Then when a colleague of mine experimented one year and gave out all good grades his evaluations shot up. [laughs] I know another colleague who was teaching the general biology and he didn't stay very long. Since I was giving some of the special sections I attended his lectures and I thought they were, possibly, the best lectures in that course that I've ever heard. The students just panned him

unmercifully. I think he was just too much of a scholar. I mean he just stuck too closely to a good, continuing evaluation, or presentation, and I don't think he was acrobatic, or tended to be particularly amusing, but the solid material that your serious student, I think, would really appreciate, was presented in a very scholarly, up-to-date way. He was canned, and he left after three years.

So that sort of thing, I didn't care for. It sort of took some of the fun out of teaching. It took a lot of the fun out of teaching. I don't know how it's handled now that I'm pretty much out of the teaching. Well, that sort of took—takes some of the joy out of teaching.

In many respects I don't envy the new young people who come here, especially in the sciences, because they are really expected to produce and to bring [inaudible]. So, I don't envy them, even though they're given extra time, that sort of pressure. As I've mentioned earlier, I don't care for what this has done to the emphasis on teaching, or the de-emphasis on teaching. are some of the things that I'd probably try to change. So, those I'm glad to see that there was some concern about this nationwide now. The business school had been under pressure, I think, partly for reasons like this...hadn't been doing enough research, enough publications, and so on, out of the Business School. It seems to me that their accrediting agency, now is taking a more reasonable approach. So, maybe, maybe it can come out although I don't know what we can do.

[Break in audio]

MC: —vote by the WPA, there was a—an agency similar to the CCC, a Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression, they used for doing do all sorts of projects. The CCC worked mostly in the field, to build campgrounds, and so on. I don't think they were involved here. It was probably quite a similar, urban arm that did all kinds of public works projects. And so that was in the early '30s. I don't think the main building but this annex—the whole annex, including the greenhouse and this lab-- was built by those federal moneys. And that was a long, long time ago. Since then we've been desperately trying to get some funds to update and to renovate—it's been very, very difficult. For example, our greenhouse is hopelessly inadequate, especially when people want to do research. You need better facilities for that. But it's the same greenhouse that they built in the early '30s, [inaudible],

AP: Will the fact that Missoula has been designated as the state arboretum change things?

MC: Gee, I don't know whether there's anything in that or if there's any money associated with that. It can't do any harm. The state seems to be so strapped for extra funds. As long as we have the big budget deficit, we can't seem to...the peace dividends seem to, at least temporarily, have been thrown out the window. Under the federal moneys available, I don't know, It's kind of discouraging for over the years, when we've trying to update and renovate the facilities it's still the same old arboretum.

AP: Anything else?

MC: Well, I can't think of anything, Annie. I think I've covered most of the things that—

AP: Well, actually, maybe just a couple of the questions that I see here are—and you may have already covered this, but—what you liked best about the university and what you liked least about the university?

MC: Well, I think a university is several things: it's the setting, for example, the compactness; the possibility of interacting with people and disagreements, and encouragement; and then there's just a very attractive place to teach, to spend a good a part of my life. [inaudible] there were many times when I would just have liked to get away from some of the pressures here on campus, but [inaudible]. I mean that's fairly obvious, but I think it very, very important, my remaining here, I had a chance to go to the Boston campus at the University of Massachusetts some time ago. Maybe if it had been a different place, but I'm thinking about leaving here, and I know that, through my experiences abroad when, I'd have to spend a lengthy period overseas, usually it was in a big city, which is exciting, but after awhile it got very wearing. [inaudible]. So, you know, you get to meet some great people through the students and faculty. I regret that the students who used to come around and visit more, you know, former students, they haven't been doing that much and I was wondering what? why? Are the people in general just getting so busy? I know I am.

They used to come around more often to visit, [inaudible sentences]. I guess, as far as what's happened at the university, the demise or the near demise of the Botany Department as addressed here is the most unpleasant experience. Then the question of what's happened to the typical teaching function here—it's been unfortunate. Aside from that I really don't have very many unpleasant memories here. Most of them are pretty pleasant.

MC: Some of my most pleasant experiences always were for the students that always showed a certain interest in the subject matter and seemed to me, especially liked the way I approached the subject and let me know it. So that, that certainly has be my favorite...some of my most pleasant experiences. In fact, I think one of the students that was in a biology class, Stephanie Gray, you may know her.?

AP: Yes.

MC: She was an advocate. She'd always seemed to enjoy my lectures in the biology class that I taught most recently. It's that kind of interaction, feedback, that you get that's really essential for a teacher. I feel sorry for those people who don't have that. Others, of course, get a vote of approbation from their students, the really top-notch lecturers, and that sort of thing. And sitting over and meeting a student or a faculty member in the commons just chatting. campus issues, what's happening in the world, and so on. It's kind of hard to lose those things. So, I hope I can keep at it for awhile. [laughs]

AP: I hope so, too.

MC: That's about it—

[End of Interview]