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Bob Brown: We're interviewing Norris Nichols. Representative Nichols was a member of the House of Representatives, I believe, from 1955 to 1975—

Norris Nichols: Seventy-three.

BB: Seventy-three, and he served as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee several sessions in the 1960s and I believe in the 1970s. He also was involved in politics in his native Ravalli County for a fair number of years even before he entered the legislature. Representative Norris Nichols. Norris what got you interested in politics and about when did that occur?

NN: Well, it really occurred when I was in high school. I took an interest and ran for various class positions, was president of the senior class when I was in high school. Then I got out and married into a family that was real active in politics. My father-in-law served in the legislature in 1923 and 1925. He laid out and then ran again in 1933 and was defeated by Senator Lee Metcalf at the time. Senator Metcalf was a native of Stevensville. He graduated from Stevensville high school and went to the university and became a lawyer.

He graduated in the spring of '33. He moved up to Stevensville and opened up a law practice and ran for the legislature. So my father-in-law was active all the time. My father-in-law had passed away at the time I ran. We never discussed politics to the extent that I might be running someday. Then I was back with the Farmer's State Bank, whose president was H.C Groff, who was a father of the late Senator Bill Groff. One day I walk to the bank, he waved me back to his office. He said, "Did you ever think about getting into politics?"

I said, "Well, Mr. Groff, that's the furthest from my mind, getting into state politics."

He said, "We'd like to have you run for the House of Representatives. Bill is running for the Senate. You know that we are a Democrat bank, but I think I can show you that you can be elected." That's how I entered. Then of course later on, some of the Republicans one who was a grandfather of Fred Thomas who served several sessions up here, his grandfather served over here in the early '40s. He was one of the first ones that introduced and worked on the sales tax. They came to me in May—he and Jim Winters, who was also active in politics. They wanted to know if I was going to file. I told them that I didn't think so. They said, "You should because we're going to have to fight you, and you owe us 15 dollars." I still owe somebody 15 dollars to this day.

BB: That is so interesting because H.C Groff was a Democrat State Senator.

NN: Oh yes. H.C Groff was a very close friend of Mike Mansfield.

BB: And a friend of Mike Mansfield's but when he asked you to run for the state House of Representatives when his son Bill was running for the state Senate, he didn't say, "Nick, we hope you'll run as a Democrat." He just said, "We hope you run." I imagine this assumption was that you would be as a Republican.

NN: Yes, all he said was—he never mentioned that I'd run for Democrat. All he mentioned in that regard was that he said, "You know, we are Democrats. If you file, I'm quite sure we can get you elected."

BB: There was another prominent family, the Groffs of course were prominent Democrats in Ravalli County in the politics there. Both H.C Groff and Bill Groff served in the state Senate from that county. Then there was the Romney family. I know Miles Romney, with whom I served and I know you served too. He was both a state representative and a state senator from Ravalli County as a Democrat. Then I think his father also served in the legislature from Ravalli County. I believe he also ran for governor, or at least ran for the Democratic nomination for governor. Was there a rivalry between the Romneys and the Groffs?

NN: Yes. I don't know that rivalry is a proper word. They never related themselves to each other in the political world. They both had their own ideas. The Groffs were much more conservative. The Romneys were real liberal. Miles Romney Sr. had started a paper in Hamilton called *The Western News*. His son Miles Romney Jr. carried on with the paper until such time as he closed the paper up and passed away.

BB: How would you characterize the differences between them? When we look back at the politics of the 1930s and '40s and '50s, can you think of any issues that might have separated the Groffs' way of looking at things from Romneys' way of looking at things?

NN: Of course, Groff had been in a bank. His perspective was more businesslike and about the needs of business, where Romney, you might say, was maybe ahead of his time to the fact of social and liberal problems and issues that he was bringing forth before there really was a big movement in that field.

BB: Did you ever know Governor Aronson?

NN: Yes. Governor Hugo Aronson was governor when I first came in 1955. I'll tell you something, when I came in 1955, there was Hugo Aronson was governor, he had two people on his staff. Wes Castles was his Chief of Staff. Mrs. Alex Stevenson, whose husband was head of the chief highway patrol, was his secretary. That was the size of the governor's office at that time.

BB: Did you ever meet Governor Aronson personally? Ever have the chance to visit with him?

NN: Oh yes, many times. I visited with him and then one time I think it was Governor Babcock, Governor Tim Babcock was running for the United States Senate. Governor Aronson was campaigning for him and he came into Ravalli County. I took him all through Ravalli County to the mills and what not on behalf of Governor Tim Babcock.

BB: How would you describe Aronson as a person?

NN: He was a very conservative man. He was a senator before he became governor. He picked many of the leading senators and his friends to be chief of staffs and directors of various departments. He left them alone. He was liked by both parties and both political leaders in the Senate and the House. Those days, of course, we didn't have federal government policy and programs that we have today, but he ran a very economic policy and he was a hard worker. He always had a few stories to tell in his broken language. He was from Sweden and he always had a broken expression in some of his stories.

BB: He was known as a friendly storyteller kind of an individual and a big man physically?

NN: Yes, he was a big man, yes. He was a very big man. He was married to a wife, her name was Rose. They had a daughter. I think, as I understand, the daughter still resides at Bigfork, Montana. He always had a story to tell. There were lots of stories of himself. One of the stories he used to tell—he always opened when he was on a campaign with this story. He said the first time he came into Montana, he got off the train at Bozeman and he said he'd lived on ham and eggs for two weeks because those were the only words in English that he knew.

BB: So when he went to a restaurant with somebody—

NN: It was ham and eggs.

BB: They'd bring him something. He got awful tired of ham and eggs.

NN: He was the first governor that lived in the Governor's Mansion.

BB: In the new Governor's Mansion. It's by the capitol building now.

NN: Here is another story he used to tell. Forrest Anderson was Attorney General and Frank Murray was Secretary of State, who made up the—

BB: Board of Examiners.

NN: Right, and of course it was like a lot of government programs where he was having to spending more money for the mansion than we'd allocated. Hugo used to argue with Forrest and he'd say, "Gentlemen, I've lived in a log cabin longer than I'll ever live in this mansion."

BB: The big issues in the legislature in the 1950s, there were probably a number of them. Do any of them pop into your mind? I remember, I think this is in the 1959 session; there was a dispute over the creation of what they called public utility districts?

NN: Yes, that was with Montana Power and the public utility districts. They were trying to form public utility districts and naturally would cut into Montana Power. That was brought about by the Farmer's Union and Jim Murry, who was head of the labor at that time. They were the big pushers of public utilities in the state of Montana. The law never did get—the bill never did get very far.

BB: Do you remember Clyde Jarvis?

NN: Yes.

BB: How was he involved?

NN: Clyde Jarvis was a lobbyist for the Farmers Union and in later years during the session, he worked for the Democrat Party as a lobbyist. Then there was another family that—what they had was the *People's Voice*.

BB: Harry and Gretchen Billings.

NN: Yes, and of course that was a very, very liberal paper. It was probably still active when you came, Bob. They were very active in Democratic politics.

BB: Now the public utility district bill was killed in the legislature?

NN: It was killed in the House, yes.

BB: That was in 1959 when the Democrats had a big majority?

NN: Yes, but they lost a lot of their Democrats on that bill. One of the leaders of that bill was a representative from Kalispell.

BB: There was a fellow named Cy Tonner, who I think—

NN: That's who I'm thinking of, yes. I think he was from that area. I wouldn't say Kalispell. He was from the Flathead area. He was the big pusher. Cy Tonner, I think it was—

BB: Cy Tonnor.

NN: Yes, he was the big pusher for it. At that time, Montana Power tripped the—the REAs was coming into the state about that time and maybe before. They were picking up in the rural areas where Montana Power would not serve because of the costs of building lines for their dollar return that they would get.

BB: Governor Nutter, what do you remember about him?

NN: I remember Governor Nutter. Governor Nutter was a senator from Sidney. He ran for governor. He was a very strong person who had his own way. He served just in the '61 session. Then he was killed in 1962 in the airplane. A lot of it was said that no one even—we didn't laugh because it was serious, but known for his bullheadedness. In those days, that was what brought about buying a governor's airplane. In those days, they flew in the National Guard plane.

This National Guard plane pilot came down from Great Falls. He told Nutter how bad the wind was blowing. He didn't think he should fly to Cut Bank, I'm not sure. I think that was the name of the town. He (the governor) was taking his Chief of Staff and his Secretary of Agriculture. His Secretary of Agriculture was Edward Wren. I forget the name of the Chief of Staff. He was a prominent Missoula man [Dennis Gordon]. They were killed. At any rate, as I say, he told the pilot, he says, "Who are you to tell me how to fly or where to fly? I flew a bomber in the World War."

Of course, that was the end of that. Tim Babcock, who was the Lieutenant Governor was in town the same time, who was going to Kalispell. Tim is also a pilot. He owns his own plane. The wind was so bad that Tim wouldn't take a plane to Kalispell. He took the train.

BB: Were they going to Cut Bank? In my mind they were flying to Cut Bank?

NN: Yes, it was going to Cut Bank. It went down up here by Hauser Lake. Yes, in the Wolf Creek Canyon. He was very determined and set in his ways. I think that was the only time I ever served in the legislature that we reduced the budget from the previous year. He he always got along with the Democrat leaders. We'd meet after sessions down in the governor's office. The first thing he'd do was hand them all out a cigar. They'd tell a few jokes or one thing or another. He got a very good sense of humor. One thing, there was a person by the name of Dr. [Roland] Renne, who was president of Bozeman at the time.

BB: Montana State University at Bozeman.

NN: Yes, that's correct. They never did get along. I was chairman of the Appropriations. Henry Hibbard, who was a local representative here, was chairman of the University's subcommittees. We got all the committees worked and everything except Dr. Renne's. Dr. Renne would never

give us his budget. One day I was called down to the governor's office. He said, "Nick, how are you getting along with your university budgets?"

I said, "We got them all worked and done, according to Hank Hibbard this morning, except Dr. Renne's."

Dr. Renne was sitting across from the desk from him. He said, "I'm telling you what I'm going to do with you, Dr. Renne. You're going to go back to Bozeman, prepare a budget and bring it back up here in two days."

Dr. Renne reached down in his briefcase and said, "Well, governor, I've got the budget." I was handed the budget to take care of it from there on.

BB: This is the same Dr. Renne that ran for governor.

NN: Later on, Dr. Renne was in with the liberal faction. He worked with the Farmers Union people and those other liberals that we mentioned. Before he ran for governor, I think, he published a magazine or book. Have you seen that, Bob?

BB: There was a controversial book when Renne ran for governor called *Land Economics*.

NN: That's right. That was it. He ran against—

BB: Tim Babcock.

NN: That's right. Tim became governor upon the death of Governor Nutter. He ran against Tim Babcock and was defeated. In later years I think he got a job in Washington, D.C., in the Agriculture Department.

BB: Yes, I think that's right. Now you know, we talked a little bit about Miles Romney, the Romney family and the Groff family. In 1964, you had a tough re-election campaign. That was the election in which Renne ran against Babcock.

NN: That's the same, yes.

BB: You mentioned in our conversation before this interview began that in that 1964 campaign, your opponent was—you had a narrow election window, was recruited by Miles Romney. I found that kind of curious because in our interview, you mentioned that when you first ran for the legislature you were essentially, you were essentially recruited by H.C Groff.

NN: That's correct.

BB: So the Groff Democrats obviously never opposed you, but the Romney Democrats did. Is that accurate?

NN: Yes, that's very accurate. There was feelings over that because Miles was trying to do everything he could to defeat me. It was (unintelligible) and we kept asking Groff why they kept supporting me and leaning toward me.

BB: Why do you suppose that was?

NN: I don't know. Well, I'll be honest with you. It was probably because my family and my wife's family had banked with Groff since he came into Victor. Clay Groff came into Victor as a school teacher in about 1909 or 1908. A group of farmers there opened what they called the Farmer State Bank. At about 1912 he was hired there as a teller. He then worked himself up and practically controlled the bank through the years.

We both banked with him all those years and he always kind of took a liking to me. Every time I go in the bank, he would be sitting back there at his desk and waiting for me to come back. We might talk the price of cattle or—of course sugar beets was a big crop in the Bitterroot those days. We'd talk about how our crops were going. He always helped me in any way he could not only in politics, but in business purchases.

BB: So it was a personal friendship but also apparently there was some similarity of philosophy too, it sounds like.

NN: Clay Groff was a rancher who not only had the bank, but his wife had homesteaded a ranch west of Victor about a mile and a half. They actually lived on that and he added to that ranch. He ran a couple hundred head of cows and he was up around five o'clock in the morning taking care of the water and stock before he ever came to the bank.

BB: So you had in common with him that you both had an agricultural background?

NN: That's correct.

BB: Now we talked too, Nick, about how during the probably 1940s, maybe in the '30s, or '50s up into the '60s, the Farmers Union was an important part of the liberal, I guess, Democrat Party coalition in Montana.

NN: Yes, very much.

BB: So we talked about the fact that you and Mr. Groff had in common that you were both in agriculture, obviously you were never supported by the Farmers Union?

NN: No.

BB: They were agricultural too, but help me understand maybe the division among the agriculturalists or maybe you could describe how you saw the Farmers Union, how you saw their philosophy, and what they were trying to do during that period.

NN: Well Farmers Union was a strong supporter of public utilities or any governmental programs. They supported all governmental programs. They supported all—when I first came in the legislature, there was a tie between the Farmers Union and labor. My first Speaker, P.J. Gilfeather, was the attorney for the Farmers Union. Jim Murry was the head of the labor. They were very—

BB: Are you talking about Jim Umber?

NN: Jim Umber, excuse me, not Jim Murry.

BB: I think Murry came along—

NN: Murry came later.

BB: He was involved in, but I think Umber was—

NN: Umber was, yes.

BB: So you had Jim Umber who was the leader of the AFL-CIO, organized labor and then that might have included—

NN: Gilfeather was an attorney for the Farmers Union and in the 1955 session he was also the Speaker of the House.

BB: So they, how would you describe—I guess you've already done it to some extent. You've said that they favored government programs and government—

NN: They favored the programs—they might have been, I would say they might have been a little bit ahead of their time because I think many of those programs they were supporting has come to pass in later years under Congress. Their philosophy, which was to get altogether different and was what the conservative Republican philosophy was.

BB: Maybe you could just characterize the Republican philosophy during that period?

NN: Well, the Republican Party was very conservative. They believed in all local control. They believed in very small government agencies and believed in local control even down to the school districts. Everything should be at the local control. It was against spending too much

money and expanding our university system at that time for several sessions. That changed in later years.

BB: Now during this same period of time, historians write that the Anaconda Company had a lot of influence in Montana. Where did they fit into that? Where would they have fit into this philosophical dispute between the two parties?

NN: They always were strong supporters of the Republican Party. They were always strong supporters of all Republican candidates running for office from Congress down to the local levels and by local levels, I mean the House of Representatives. They had two or three, full-time representatives who traveled the state practically daily in one part of the state or the other and were active in all parties and political activities that was promoted by the Republican Party. There would be at least one in attendance at that time. The time that I came, there was a person by the name of Wilkinson and—

BB: Al Wilkinson.

NN: Al Wilkinson was a Republican and—

BB: Billy Ray?

NN: Billy Ray was there and who was the Democrat?

BB: Denny Shea?

NN: Denny Shea, no Denny came later. He moved to Great Falls and died. Anyway, they were there my first session and then about the second session I was here, the company sent Wilkenson to Washington D.C and his son-in-law, Lloyd Crippen, became lobbyist for the Anaconda Company.

BB: I think you mentioned it, when there were public meetings around the state, if I understood you correctly, there was frequently someone associated with the Anaconda Company in the communities and the public meetings and that sort of thing?

NN: Yes. They were real active in the Republican Party.

BB: They also had an involvement, apparently, with the Democratic Party.

NN: They were involved—they had their own Democratic candidate.

BB: So they would recruit candidates if they could?

NN: Yes. They would recruit candidates. Depending on whether it was a Democrat or a Republican, all they wanted was that person to pledge support. It didn't make any difference to them.

BB: Do you think people actually pledged support?

NN: No, I don't think so.

BB: Maybe what they did was look for someone who they thought might be—

NN: Sympathetic to their needs.

BB: And cultivated that afterwards?

NN: Yes, and that always ran a big—had a big lobby. In later years, I think about when you came, Bob, the Montana Power and the Anaconda Company consolidated their lobbying team.

BB: They worked pretty much together.

NN: Yes, they worked pretty much together and the team was headed by Bob Corette, who was a brother of Jack Corette, who was President of the Montana Power Company.

BB: Now tell me a little bit about the—there were hospitality rooms during this period of time. I don't think the Anaconda Company had the only one, but they had a pretty prominent one. They passed from the scene when I got here. I arrived as a young state legislator in 1971 and I believe the watering holes, as they were called, pretty much were closed in '67 and '69. Do you remember much about those?

NN: Oh, yes. The first watering hole that I remember, and I think it was long before I came because when I came here, where we are sitting today, Bob, had not been settled yet to much extent. There was a motel here, but there was no restaurant or anything. Everything practically took place down at the Placer Hotel in Helena, which was the main hotel. If you weren't down there or around the Placer in the evenings, you wouldn't know the moves that might be taking place the next morning. They were always down there in the watering holes. The Anaconda was up on the fourth floor.

BB: Was it the sixth floor?

NN: Yes, the sixth floor. The fourth floor was by a good friend of mine and I think a good friend of yours, Ty Robinson. He was lobbying for the railroad company. He was on the fourth. They were there several years. Then they moved out here to the hotel and on the north side of Jorgenson's here, the old hotel, they had their watering hole moved out there. Then they were

expanded. There was the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power, which were together, and the Green Stamps, which was a popular stamp given away by grocery people.

They were there. The Montana Petroleum had a watering hole. I believe it was three or four. I know it was three or four. Montana Power and ACM's big store was there. They had a big roast followed by a 30-pound roast. If you didn't want to go out to eat, you'd get a meal right there in Montana Power's lobbying offices. That was meat and dishes of various kinds.

BB: You could have a beer?

NN: Oh, yes, you could get drunk there if you wanted.

BB: So guys would go down there at the end of the day sometimes and just kind of mix and mingle?

NN: Oh sure. You might have been arguing all day long, but you'd get along there. That seems, from what I understand, that's not the truth today. The association between the two parties—

BB: I've heard people say that the watering holes may have served a useful purpose in the—

NN: Bringing those people together.

BB: Bringing people together. You might find people with very different political philosophies and have a cocktail. So might there be political liberals at these watering holes as well as political conservatives?

NN: Oh yes, plenty. I think the Butte delegation was the first one there.

BB: Would you find Farmers Union kind of Democrats at the Anaconda watering hole or the railroad watering hole or—

NN: Not as much.

BB: How about the Green Stamps?

NN: Yes. The real liberals, no. More conservative Democrats and the Republicans, you'd see them together. You'd see their families together at the Montana Club in the evenings. One thing is that they might have argued up here all day on a deal, but when they left the Capitol, why that stayed in the Capitol. They didn't carry it any farther into the evenings.

BB: Let's visit briefly. I'm interested in the controversy over the Green Stamps and why the trading stamp people felt the need to have a hospitality room of their own. Before we go there, just mention to me, if you can, some legislators that maybe were especially prominent, that

stand out in your memory through 1955 and '57, '59, '61, your early years in office. You mentioned Gilfeather, were there some others that stand out in your memory?

NN: Gene Mahoney from—

BB: Thompson Falls?

NN: From Thompson Falls, was a Minority Leader. Johnny McDonald from Jordan was—that session that I was there, and my first session on the appropriations—was a Chairman of Appropriations and was—

BB: McDonald was Chairman of Appropriations?

NN: Yes, and he later became Speaker.

BB: Why does he stand out in your mind?

NN: He was very outspoken. He was quite a bit like [John] Mercer, only in a different way, I guess you'd put it. He had control. He had pretty good control over the House. I think that the strict Speaker I ever served under and enforced all of his policies was Leo Graybill. Leo Graybill was here and he was very strict on dressing. He had a dress code. You wear a tie and a coat when you entered the chamber and that was it. He had several he sent home. He sent home a legislator from Butte who was a Democrat.

BB: Mervin Dempsey?

NN: Yes, that's right. He sent home a legislator from Livingston who was a Republican. At that time when there were only 35 of us, so we didn't care if he never came back or not, which he never did.

BB: He was sent home because he refused to wear a necktie?

NN: No, he was sent home because he dressed in western clothes. There were many, practically all ranchers wore cowboy boots in those days, especially in the Senate, which was not unknown then. They at least wore ties and jackets and cowboy up. But he wore Levis with his boots and loud colored shirts.

BB: The Speaker didn't like that and either told him to dress appropriately or don't come back? So he literally didn't come back?

NN: No, he wouldn't come back. We didn't try to get him to come back either.

BB: Do you remember who that was?

NN: I'll look it up.

BB: Arch Allen? There was a fellow named Arch Allen from down in that area during that time that I think was away for a long time. I remember—

NN: I think that's right. Here's all my books. I think that's right. Now these books, if you want to discuss that?

BB: Okay sure, we can talk about that too.

NN: These books, the later book was called *The Montana Copper Books*. When I first came here, the books, which gave you a little history about your life and which house you belonged to and all the elected officials of the states. The books were put out by the *Independent Record*. They did that in 1955 and 1957, and 1959. Then they wouldn't do it in 1961. So if you go through a history of these books, you'll find the 1961 legislature is missing. Then in 1963, the Anaconda Company picked it up and called the book *The Copper Book*. I don't know whether it's still going on today or not.

BB: I think the Mining Association is still publishing the book. The Mining Association—

NN: Picked it up in later years—

BB: I'm not even sure if they're in existence anymore.

NN: I don't know.

BB: They went on hard times too.

NN: Who was their lobbyist in later years?

BB: Oh, I don't even remember for sure. They've had some tough times. Now tell me about the Green Stamp controversy. Obviously they had a major lobbying presence here.

NN: I think in those years, I kind of forget about them, they were a national outfit I think in every state. I think they were given—I don't know how you received them. Bob, honestly I don't know much about them. I do know that one of the legislators that I served with later became the lobbyist for the Green Stamp company and had a watering hole.

BB: That was Jerome Anderson?

NN: Yes.

BB: Apparently the grocery stores, when people would purchase groceries, grocery stores would give you—

NN: Give you a Green Stamp.

BB: Give you stamps and I remember when I was a little boy, my mom was sticking the stamps in the books and then when she would go back to the grocery store every few weeks, she would give them a half a dozen books and they'd give her a discount for her groceries. I guess that was the idea.

NN: You remember more about it than I do.

BB: I wonder why that was controversial.

NN: The grocery man was against it at that time. We had a person here who was a good friend of mine by the name of Tom Haines, who was the head of the retail of groceries. Of course he naturally was very against that, the Green Stamp bill. Another thing about groceries, these grocery stores were never open, nothing was open on a Sunday. Maybe a drug store was open around noon on Sunday to take care of any prescriptions.

There was nothing going on Sunday. Our constitution, before the new constitution, said that you'd meet for 60 consecutive days, continuous days, I forget the proper word, but we did. There was always an agreement between the leaders of both houses and both parties, we'd all go to church on Sunday morning, meet on Sunday afternoon, but we would not discuss any controversial issues that might create an argument.

BB: Let me mention the names of a few lobbyists, and just get your impressions. You've mentioned Al Wilkinson. Do you remember ever meeting him?

NN: No, no. He was in and out of here, but I never met him. I was pretty low on the totem pole my freshman year. I didn't have any position in leadership.

BB: Bill Kirkpatrick?

NN: Oh, yes. He lobbied for the company. He was a good lobbyist. He liked both sides pretty well.

BB: What was his approach?

NN: Well he just, I really can't tell you.

BB: He was low-key.

NN: He was low-key. He never tried to twist your arm. He would rather come back and talk to you two or three times. If you didn't agree, he would say, "Well think it over and I'll be back to visit with you later." That was usually his way he left you.

BB: Do you remember Boo McGillivray?

NN: No, not too much. Boo was kind of, he worked for the company and was the lobbyist—

BB: For Montana Power Company.

NN: He worked under Jack Corette, or Bob Corette, who was the lobbyist. Boo wasn't one of the very forceful lobbyists. Some of them were such as, oh he lives in Butte now.

BB: Lloyd Crippen?

NN: Lloyd Crippen, he lobbied when I first came for the sheep growers.

BB: John Lahr? Everett Shuey?

NN: Everetttt, yes. McGillivray was not as strong in lobbying as Shuey was in working. He was very persuasive.

BB: His name pops up, though, as it has in other interviews. Why would people remember McGillivray?

NN: I don't know. He wasn't—

BB: Apparently he was a great storyteller—

NN: He might have been that. McGillivray, did he live by Polson?

BB: Yes.

NN: And raise horses?

BB: Yes.

NN: He was a great friend then. He would be a great friend of Bob Corette because they were both in that small pony, or little pony—whatever you call it—business. I think McGillivray served in the legislature one time.

BB: He did, yes. Jerome Anderson?

NN: Jerry Anderson came on the session the same as I did in 1955. He was majority floor leader in 1961, which was his last session. He became a lobbyist and he has to be up in his '80s. He's still lobbying. I'm not that close with Jerry. I don't really know who he is working for now.

BB: He still remains a lobbyist?

NN: He still remains a lobbyist. I was told the other day by Pat Keim, who was the railroad lobbyist, that Jerry said this was his last session. I never talked to Jerry out at our party. I don't know whether this is his last session or not.

BB: It might be and I'm going to conduct an interview with him sooner than this next week. John Willard? Do you remember John Willard? He was a lobbyist for railroads I think in the '50s and '60s.

NN: Now was John ahead of Ty Robinson?

BB: I think at the same time.

NN: No, I don't remember him much because Ty was—Ty and I were real close friends.

BB: Tell me about Ty.

NN: Ty was one of the better and more highly respected lobbyists. He was a very high key lobbyist in the session. His brother, who was also a lobbyist for the Pacific Light—

BB: Pacific Power and Light.

NN: The company from Kalispell, was his brother. They were both attorneys. Ty Robinson was one of the better lobbyists. He was fair and never got mad or anything because you didn't support him for his beliefs and everything. Of course I was close to Ty and I wouldn't say he helped me, but he would come up and visit with me and how the election was going, one thing or another in the following year. Those days, talking about people visiting, the Anaconda Company, as I mentioned earlier, made trips around the state all the time. Lloyd Crippen always made a trip and always planned so he would be at my house at lunch time because he liked to lunch with my wife.

BB: So you saw him both during legislative sessions and between legislative sessions?

NN: Oh, yes. Well he came some too. He lobbied for the telephone company before he went to work for the banks.

BB: Al Riegel?

NN: Al Riegel, yes. Al traveled the state quite a bit. He lobbied for the telephone companies. I don't recall the telephone companies having many bills in. I might be wrong, but I don't recall that. Jerry Anderson, he remained a lobbyist and lived several years in Billings. Then he later moved to Helena.

BB: Al Dougherty?

NN: Now who did Al Dougherty lobby for?

BB: He was—I'll tell you a story about him. When I was first elected to the legislature in 1971, I received a telephone call from Con Lundgren, who was one of my—

NN: Yes, I remember Con.

BB: He said, "Matt Himsl and Jim Murphy and I have agreed to have dinner with this fellow and we'd like to have you join us. He's from Helena and he's just here." It was right before the legislative session right after the 1970 election. So I met them at the dining room of the Outlaw Inn. The four of us, Republican state representatives from Flathead County and this fellow that I'd never met before. So as I approached the table, he stood up and he extended his hands and he said, "Bob, Al Dougherty. Beer, milk, cable TV, and chiropractors."

I didn't have any idea what he was talking about. I didn't know who he was. He was a lobbyist who then represented beer, milk, cable TV, and chiropractors. So I stood there kind of stupefied in amazement. What in the heck did that mean? I sat down at the table and later on, he visited with us a little bit. I don't recall that we talked about those things. Anyway, I found him to be a colorful character. He was very outspoken, most lobbyists I think—

NN: A Democrat.

BB: Was he a Democrat? Most lobbyists I found to be very accommodating, they'll bend over backwards to be charming and agreeable. They will try in any way to be helpful. And Al was kind of brusque, kind of forward, kind of pushy.

NN: He was pushy.

BB: I think that if he felt a legislator maybe misused him or something like that, he'd tell him off.

NN: I remember that now. That begins to ring a bell. I don't know whether there was this big milk fight over years.

BB: Paul Boylan from—

NN: Yes, Paul Boylan.

BB: From Bozeman was probably involved in it?

NN: Yeah, and Al, I think Al was lobbying for the farmers. I forget what, as I understand that milk deal, and I don't know how it is today, but you sold so much of your milk, a percent of your milk is Grade A, which went into the drinking milk and that. Then the lower milk, then what they didn't need, they bought it at a lower price.

That was always the big argument that these companies were cheating how much milk they were putting into Grade A and wasn't paying you enough. Al lobbied and who was the lobbyist for the other side? That time, there was a creamery owned by the Madison family in Missoula. What was the name of that creamery? (unintelligible) lobbied over here quite a bit as an owner operator of a creamery in Missoula. I kind of forget the character. Then there was another lobbyist. You haven't mentioned him yet.

BB: Socs Vratiss?

NN: Yes, Socs Vratiss. Socs Vratiss and Al Dougherty were real close if you recall that. They went, and I don't know, they always seemed to have control of the bank in Lincoln. They made an investment in the bank in Lincoln. They were real, real close. And this Socs Vratiss, I don't know, you heard him tell the story. They always told the story that he came from Texas. He was one of the ones that started LBJ on his way.

LBJ was a schoolteacher and a group of them got him to run for the House of Representatives. Now whether that was true or not, because the story comes from Texas, a long ways from home. That's what he always told. Do you remember he always sat in that corner place where you turn around the corner up to the court—?

BB: I remember distinctly that in the hallway between the Senate and House, there's a lobby and that's where the lobbyists hung out and sort of—there's an elbow or a turn in the hallway. There were these leather upholstered chairs along the hallway at the end of it. Socs sat right at the end of it in the same place all the time. There's a funny story too, I think, about some young fellow who arrived there as a lobbyist not knowing that. One morning he went in and sat down and was looking at his brief case and that sort of thing when Socs Vratiss showed up. There was almost an altercation.

NN: I wouldn't doubt that. I hadn't heard that but I wouldn't doubt it. He thought that was his seat. He sat there.

BB: That was his seat, I think.

NN: Socs Vratiss, yes. He lobbied for some retail association. He wasn't in groceries, was it?

BB: I think they were—

NN: For JC Penney and bigger stores.

BB: Yes bigger mercantile kind of stores.

NN: Socs Vratiss, yes.

BB: Now Jean Turnage introduced a bill when he was a member of the state House or the state Senate on that milk issue that you mentioned having to do with the different grades and all that sort of thing. He's mentioned that to me and hopefully I'll be able to interview him too. During that period of time, I think Governor Babcock vetoed the bill, whatever it was.

NN: Gosh, I don't remember.

BB: That would have been probably in—

NN: I imagine he was representing, just knowing Jean, he was probably representing the farmers.

BB: The farmers and the dairymen.

NN: That's right, the dairymen. He was representing the dairymen.

BB: So the dispute, I think, was between them and the dairies, the dairy producers, the milk producers and the dairy. Tim Babcock, you served both in the legislature with him and you served in the legislature while he was governor. What are your recollections of him?

NN: Tim came into the legislature in 1953 as a representative of Miles City. He had a trucking business named Babcock and Lee. He moved the business to Billings. So he did not run in 1955. Then he came in 1957 and '59, I served with him from Billings. Then Nutter talked him into going as lieutenant governor with Nutter as governor. Then he later became governor. Tim was governor then until Forrest Anderson defeated him over the sales tax in 1968, I think it was. He was elected once, and as we mentioned earlier, he ran against Dr. Renne, who was president of the state college at Bozeman.

BB: Now Nick, I remember, I think, that Tim Babcock and Ted Schwinden were both members of the House of Representatives in the 1959 session?

NN: Let's see, yes, that's correct.

BB: So you would have served in the same session with two fellows who later became governor?

NN: Let's talk about that a little bit, Bob. Who I served with someone who became not only governor, but who went on to Congress. My only sessions that I served with Jim Battin, who sat right behind me and never said a word as an attorney. Most, as you know, attorneys like to express themselves, do talk, whether they've got something to say or not. Jim never got hardly up off the seat—

BB: A member of the state House of Representatives, Jim Battin rarely spoke in the Legislature?

NN: That's correct. He knew where he was going, but nobody else did. He later served in the United States Congress and then became a federal judge. We became good friends because he sat right behind me. Then I served with Pat Williams, a couple of sessions, who later went on to become a U.S. congressman.

BB: You described Jim Battin as very silent.

NN: Yes, very, very silent when he was in the House.

BB: How did he have influence?

NN: He didn't have much influence. He just sat in that chair.

BB: How did he get the Republican nomination then to run for Congress?

NN: I can't answer that. I don't know.

BB: He must have had some backing.

NN: Of course, you have to realize Bob that in those days, and maybe still, eastern Montana was your Republican stronghold. The rest of them I'm going to mention were all Democrats. I served with—

BB: Before we go on, Pat Williams, what were your impressions of Pat? How would you compare Pat to Jim Battin?

NN: Oh, they are altogether different. Pat was always on his feet. Jim never was. There wasn't an issue that Pat didn't know something about. I think he still has everything. Pat served two terms and went on the House. I served with John Melcher, who later became a congressman.

BB: Describe Melcher.

NN: Well, he was just one of us. He wasn't really a radical Democrat. He voted pretty conservative all the time. Then he had quite a history. He was the only one that I ever knew—

well I guess we're doing it now because of term limits, but he was the only one that I ever knew that got defeated for the state Senate and in the next session ran for the House and came back to the House. I served with Max Baucus, who was another one, quite a bit like Battin. He never said very much. He served one session. Maybe he was there—

BB: I was there when—

NN: You know about him then. If anybody told us where he'd ever be where he is today, we'd have laughed at them.

BB: Well, you know what? I think you mentioned Battin knew where he was going. I think Max did too.

NN: Yes, there's no doubt that Max did.

BB: I think that when Max was there, he was there just to establish a credential.

NN: Establish a name.

BB: Give himself a credential to run for higher office. I don't think he ever intended to make a career of the Legislature as Battin did.

NN: Oh, no, he never intended to make a career as an attorney.

BB: Either one, I guess. He was looking as a way to keep out of trouble and learning as much as he could so that he could go on to Congress.

NN: Then I never served with him, but he was already in the Senate the same time I was in the House, and then went on to the United States Senate. His name was Anderson and he was John Lahr's—

BB: LeRoy Anderson.

NN: Leroy Anderson, who was John Lahr's father-in-law. I never served actually—he was in the Senate the same time I was in the House.

BB: Tom Judge?

NN: Tom Judge was in the House several sessions.

BB: With you?

NN: With me and he was just one of the ordinary. He talked on certain deals. One of his pet bills was over cats. I forget what the hell it was about cats, taking care of cats.

BB: Would you have thought that Judge would have been governor?

NN: No. Maybe it was our side that didn't have—I forget who ran against him.

BB: He didn't make much of an impression on you?

NN: No, but he did go onto the Senate.

BB: Would you have thought that Tim Babcock would have become governor or that Ted Schwinden would have become governor?

NN: I would have thought Ted Schwinden would become governor. Ted had quite a bit to say. Ted was on his feet and made sense even though he was liberal and was a member of the Farmers Union faction and one of the speakers for the Farmers Union bills. Now of course, I never served with him, but he was in the Senate in those years. Nutter, now Nutter you could have figured would be governor because he was just that way. He was just up on everything and very outspoken and very determined. This was the one thing that would be right.

BB: You would characterize Schwinden as maybe a similar personality type to Nutter?

NN: Yes.

BB: Forceful.

NN: Forceful. Of course, I never served with Forrest Anderson, but Forrest Anderson was Attorney General for years while I was there. Forrest, you never got to see Forrest much. He was a real likeable person and went back to teach at the university. He taught law school. He ran that office.

BB: Oh, I think I know who you're talking about.

NN: Oh you can't help but know who I'm talking about.

BB: Cromwell? Gardner Cromwell? No—

NN: I can't think of it, but anyway, you never got to talk to Forrest.

BB: His top deputy attorney general or at one point—

NN: Yes, and he talked about—you go down there and talk budget, you talk to this—he did all the bills. Then Forrest became governor.

BB: Did you ever meet Forrest?

NN: Oh, lots of times because I was chairman in both sessions that he was. I was chairman of appropriations both sessions he was governor. I was down there quite a bit.

BB: So he'd ask you down to the office?

NN: Oh, yes, he called me down. We'd talk about different things. One time I went down late in the session and I'm not going to say because—no he wasn't there when Forrest was there. Oh yes he was.

BB: It was my first session in the house was his—

NN: He couldn't say a word without swearing. Anyway, I went down his last session. He said, "Well you SOB's go home." He used the proper terms. "You guys go home I'm going to turn this office over to Ron Richards. I'm going out to"—

BB: He had a place on the river up at Craig.

NN: —"Craig. I'm going out to Craig."

BB: And that's what he did.

NN: That's what he did. I don't know how much you should mention names here. I was over there one time and I was up there. Frank Murray, who was Secretary of State, I don't know if you did or not. He always kept a sheet of the people filed as you went in the door on your left-hand side, you'd look and I was going into his office. I don't know why it was, but Forrest was walking up the stairs. He said, "I want to see you."

I said, "Okay, but I'm going in here to see if anybody's filed against me."

So I went on down and I can't think, of course, his secretary of the time, she says, "Go on in and he's waiting for you." So I went in and he didn't say sit down or anything.

He said, "You SOB's have really tied my hands."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I can't fire that goddamn Dunkle." [Frank] Dunkle was the chairman of Fish and Game. He was after him.

I said, "Forrest, that's been on the statutes for years." In those days, the Fish and Game Board and the Highway Board hired their supervisors, not the governor.

He said, "I know. Sit down. Let's talk."

We sat down, and we had a friendly visit with him. Another thing about Forrest, he was going to fire Keith Colbo, Keith Colbo came as a budget director, as executive budget director in 1963. We passed that budget act under Hugo. Hugo's last session, he had a budget director there. I forget who Nutter's was, who Nutter had there. But anyway, Keith came. He was budget director. Everybody liked him. Forrest was going to get rid of him and some of the Senate Democrats went down and told him, "You better keep him." So Keith stayed on.

BB: Nick, you know, Governor Nutter had a reputation for using colorful language too.

NN: He did?

BB: You don't remember that?

NN: No, I sure don't. Maybe, he did tell a lot of dirty stories, not in his conversation. He went down (?). Nutter wasn't like Forrest Anderson. Anderson did tell a lot of stories.

BB: That came up in another interview. Someone mentioned it that he had a pretty colorful vocabulary.

NN: He might have. Now Nutter was a very strong—getting back to lobbyists. The ACM lobbyists went in when Nutter was elected and said, "We think you need to set up an advisory council."

Nutter says, "Listen, Don Nutter will stand and fall on his own decisions. Don Nutter doesn't need an advisory council."

BB: Is that right? They went in and suggested that? Any more about the governors that you served with? We talked a little bit about Aronson. We talked a little bit about Nutter. We talked a little bit about Babcock.

NN: I didn't talk much about Judge.

BB: You didn't serve in the legislature...Well, you served in the legislature with Judge, but then you weren't in the legislature very long when Judge was governor.

NN: Well, I served in the '73 session and Judge was governor. We changed the constitution. We had a new constitution in '72. Before that, we had a Board of Equalization, which was made up

of three persons appointed by the governor. Whichever party the governor was that had two men and the minority party had one. Then the constitution changed that and brought about the director of the Department of Revenue.

That created the Department of Revenue. Forrest put Keith Colbo in that day to establish and set up the Department of Revenue. In the 1973 session, I made the remark to Keith that I didn't think I was going to run for my seat. He said, "Good."

I said, "What do you mean? Do you want to get rid of me?"

He said, "I want you to come over here and go to work for me."

I said, "Tom Judge won't let you hire me."

He said, "I've already talked to Judge about you and you can hire your own people."

I said, "What do you want me to do?"

He said, "I want you to go in there in the Property Tax Division."

In the meantime, after that and after I went home, I was supposed to come back over here the first of July. I went home and I got a call one night from Keith that the Administrator of the Motor Fuels Tax Division had resigned and wanted to know if I would take that and come over. So I went to work in the Motor Fuels Tax Division on the ninth day of June.

BB: I remember that you were the director of the Motor Fuels—

NN: Yes, yes.

BB: And Groff was the director of the Department of Revenue.

NN: He was director under Keith, deputy director under Keith under Judge. Judge pulled Keith over to the governor's office to be his Chief of Staff. Groff was made director.

BB: So you and Bill Groff then continued your working relationship both in the Department of Revenue after you had both been legislators?

NN: Yes until—then Groff went, well I shouldn't say, but I'll tell you afterwards. Then Groff left in '70...I forget when Groff left. He went back to the bank.

BB: Probably the late '70s sometime.

NN: Yes, and I was trying to think whether Groff worked for Schwinden or not. See Schwinden brought in [John] LaFavor. He also brought in the guy that's the director now, Dan Bucks.

BB: That's right, yes.

NN: Yes.

BB: They both came in under Schwinden.

NN: I can tell you some stories about it. I never served with Stan Stephens, he was in the Senate for a session or two while I was in the House. I was getting ready to retire and Stan talked me into staying on for his four years up here. I retired after the session of 1991.

BB: So you knew Stan Stephens also?

NN: Oh yeah. I never met Racicot, and I never met the lady.

BB: Governor Judy Martz.

NN: Judy Martz.

BB: Were you still in the Department of Revenue when Schwinden was governor?

NN: Yes.

BB: How do you remember Schwinden's leadership style as governor when you—

NN: His leadership—I don't know how to describe it. He just dressed as a farmer most, if you remember. He took the master bedroom in the governor's mansion and made it into his office. For the most part, when the legislature was out of town, he spent more time in his office at his house than he did in the governor's mansion. He treated me fair and everything.

BB: Did he ever ask you to help him as a liaison with the Republican legislators?

NN: No. I was never asked by anybody.

BB: You just strictly were in the Motor Fuels Division in the Department of Revenue?

NN: Yes. If we had trouble with anybody, he always upheld my decisions. Mona Jamison was his—

BB: She was his legal counsel.

NN: Yes.

BB: She's a lobbyist here in Helena now.

NN: I think she is.

BB: Dave Wanzenreid also was—

NN: Yes, but I never had any problems with Wanzenreid. I was all over town. When I first came, I was in the Mitchell Building. They needed that space so they moved me downtown. Then when they built the liquor warehouse, they moved me out there. I ran into Schwinden one time in the grocery store on Sunday—him and his wife and my wife—and he said, "I never see you or anything anymore."

I said, "Well you've got me stuck down there in the brush."

He said, "I've got you stuck down there for a reason."

I said, "What?"

He said, "You don't cause me any trouble."

BB: Schwinden would have worked then also with Groff? I guess I don't remember exactly when Groff left.

NN: I don't remember when Groff just left. Let's see, let me think. Judge was governor—

BB: From '72 to '80.

NN: No, Groff had left long before that. Groff left in the late '70s. Schwinden's first term, I guess, was '81, '83. Yes.

BB: Now you thought twice about telling me a story about Groff. I thought that related to Schwinden? You said you'd tell me after I turned the tape recorder off.

NN: Oh no, it didn't relate to Schwinden. Is it off now?

BB: No it's on. Is it anything you can say?

NN: Well, I guess I can say it. Groff is dead. He was having problems with his bank. There had been some bad notes made. The bank examiners were on him. He went home.

BB: He went home to go run the bank?

NN: Yes.

BB: Okay, okay, well sure, that's understandable. The bank is very successful now, too.

NN: He was very successful back then. You could call that, the bank's in every place in western Montana south of Missoula.

BB: Let's visit if we can for a few more minutes about Miles Romney and the Miles City...not the Miles City, was it the *Ravalli Republic*?

NN: No, Miles Romney had the *Western News*.

BB: Oh the *Western News*, okay. So those two papers were rival papers, the Republican—

NN: This one here was my picture, yes, they were rivals.

BB: So when you won that election probably—

NN: I'll tell you who ran my campaign, was one of the fellows that worked for there and he later went to Great Falls, maybe his name is under the article. Oh god, I can't think of any names, Bob, I'm sorry. Up here is where it starts. Up here is where, oh, Gilluly.

BB: Oh, Bob Gilluly.

NN: Bob Gilluly was my campaign manager.

BB: He was your campaign manager.

NN: Yes, he was working in the—

BB: You know that's really interesting Nick because I'm going to interview Bob Gilluly also.

NN: Oh, ask him about this. Ask him about running my campaign.

BB: I'll ask him about it.

NN: Oh yes, he wrote my speeches. I ran everything by Bob Gilluly. I don't know if Bob was sent by the paper or what they called me, one of the elections.

BB: Bob Gilluly worked for the *Ravalli Republic*.

NN: Yes that's right.

BB: As a reporter. He was a personal friend of yours?

NN: Yes.

BB: He helped advise you in the particular campaign?

NN: Yes, and helped me with my speeches. He later went on to the *Great Falls Tribune*.

BB: Where was Romney coming from? How would you describe his philosophy?

NN: Very, very liberal.

BB: Okay.

NN: Liberal. Miles Romney was really ahead of his times. This was back, well I don't know, of course Kennedy was elected at that time. So maybe he wasn't ahead of his time. Miles Romney had no use for any Republican.

BB: He was very partisan?

NN: Yes very, very partisan. You don't hardly find that in a small area, you know.

BB: Was he an environmentalist?

NN: Environmentalist, I would say he would have been. That wasn't a big issue back in the late '50s and '60s like it is today.

BB: So Miles Romney would have seen the world as sort of a division between poor people and wealthy people?

NN: Yes, very much so.

BB: So he was class conscious?

NN: Yes.

BB: So he was very much on the side of how he perceived, where he perceived...

NN: That might have been his trouble with Groff. Groff was in the money business as a banker. Miles, yes. Miles would fit in pretty good today with this last session.

BB: Yes, with this most recent legislative session. Jim Lucas?

NN: Jim Lucas came from Miles City as an attorney. He was our Speaker in 1969 and 1971. Jim's biggest aim was to be governor of the state of Montana. His downfall was spreading and, not only supporting, but trying to push everybody into supporting a sales tax.

BB: What are your thoughts on the sales tax?

NN: Well, I've got mixed emotions. I don't know about a sales tax. If you have a sales tax and start exempting everything, are you going to get any money? If I was a state candidate in this state, I would be against a sales tax. What was your position?

BB: Well, I supported it.

NN: As running for governor, do you think it hurt you?

BB: Yes, I think it did. It didn't make a centerpiece of—

NN: I've been gone three months, Bob.

BB: I voted for it when I was a legislator a couple of different times.

NN: I voted and I'll tell you the first meeting we ever had on a sales tax was in the basement of the governor's mansion when Tim Babcock was governor. It goes back that far. Jim Felt, who was—I don't know if you ever met Jim Felt.

BB: He was a Republican Speaker of the House.

NN: Yes, 1967. He was, I forget who all was at the meeting. Jim was there. I was there. We told Tim that we thought he was making a mistake. Well, Tim didn't think so.

BB: Tim had been persuaded by Jim Felt that it was good public policy and he was going to go ahead with it. The idea, I suppose, was what? Reduce property taxes?

NN: Yes, it was to reduce.

BB: I was going to ask you, I don't know about what all happened. Did we have some sales tax bills in?

NN: No, I don't think one came up.

BB: When I ran for governor, I didn't deny that I had supported the sales tax in the past and that it seemed to me that you could put together a sales tax that could be a good thing.

NN: I supported it in Montana.

BB: It could be a good thing, but politically the people have never been for it. I think that's (unintelligible).

NN: When you was running I wondered if it had hurt you, I don't know.

BB: It might have.

NN: Now I know it hurt Babcock. One of the reasons it hurt Babcock—

BB: He was specifically identified with it I guess.

NN: Yes, in fact, I think Forrest Anderson had one of the best few-word slogans of anything: "Pay more, what for?" I think it paid off for Forrest anyway.

BB: That was the slogan that Babcock was associated with the sales tax. Babcock would have probably argued, "Well, we're going to take the money from the sales tax and use it to reduce property and income tax."

NN: Yes, that was it.

BB: Many Republicans supported that idea, some of them with some misgivings. The Democrats would have looked at the sales tax and thought, "Well, but common people, from their point of view, without the ability to pay necessarily, would pay a sales tax. Everyone would pay every time they bought anything. If you're using the sales tax money to reduce property and income taxes, you're using the sales tax money to reduce property taxes for people who own a lot of property. They're using it to reduce income taxes for people who pay high income taxes."

NN: That's right.

BB: From their philosophical point of view, you're taking from the poor and giving to the rich. So they argued that. Then Forrest Anderson, I think in his campaign against Babcock thought, "Rather than overcomplicate here, we know that a lot of people don't like taxes. So I'm just going to say, 'The sales tax is a new tax. Pay more, what for?'" He just cut right to the chase. Of course, it was probably the key issue that defeated Babcock in 1968.

NN: You've got a good description of the sales tax. I don't know. It was an interesting experience. Then, of course, after I got—that's what those pictures are—after I got to be administrator of Motor Fuels and then I was elected national president. That's the picture there. There was a woman from North Dakota handing me—

BB: National president of the Motor Fuels Administrators, people from the United States?

NN: Yes, The North American Gasoline Tax Conference, which included Canada. This meeting was in Las Vegas. You was only elected for one year and the year I was elected, the meeting was in Ottawa, Canada.

BB: That's great. We need to talk about a few Republican legislators and I'd mentioned Jim Lucas. Who might stand out in your mind? Frank Hazelbaker?

NN: Frank Hazelbaker was a good legislator. He had a lot of experience. I'm not certain, but I think his dad served in the legislature. Frank had an insurance business and Frank had served many years ago. He had an insurance business in Missoula and served from Missoula County before he moved back to Dillon, which was his home. He served and was Speaker in 1963. He was just a moderate Republican as I remember him. After he became Speaker, then he didn't run anymore.

BB: Who was it? It was right on the tip of my brain here.

NN: Clyde Hawks was there.

BB: Yes '61.

NN: Yes, '61. Clyde Hawks was a nice person. He had a nice personality. But he couldn't get along with Harriet Miller. They got in cross-fires there right at the start. Harriet Miller was superintendent of the schools in those days. He got in trouble with the teachers and one thing or another. He ran and was Speaker in '61. Then in '63, he ran for the Senate. I think it was '63. He ran for the Senate and was defeated by Carroll Graham.

BB: Okay, I hadn't known that.

NN: Yes, and he had Harriet Miller down on him, who was one of the few Republicans that had been elected superintendent of the schools in the state of Montana.

BB: Yes, and then she later switched parties.

NN: Yes, and she switched parties because of Nutter.

BB: Yes, that might have been related to (unintelligible) at the same time.

NN: Yes, it was the same time.

BB: Yes, that's right. Do you have any recollection at all, Nick, of Governor Bonner?

NN: No. Let's see, Governor Bonner was ahead of Hugo [Aronson.] Of course he got in that scandal, whether it was true or not. I don't know. Those days, I was raising the kids. As I said, I wasn't even thinking about politics.

BB: Now I'm going to take you way back because you mentioned that your father-in-law, whose name was—

NN: Gib Strange.

BB: Gib Strange served in the House of Representatives in the early '20s.

NN: Twenty-three and '25, when Joe Dixon was governor. He was a great, great friend of Joe Dixon's. Joe Dixon would come up to the ranch and have Sunday dinners with the Stranges. That wasn't when he was governor, but before he was governor.

BB: Do you remember anything about that? Were you in the picture at all then? Did you ever meet Joe Dixon?

NN: No, no. I never got in the picture until 1931. Joe Dixon was out of it.

BB: You remember Gib Strange speaking highly of Joe Dixon?

NN: Yes, oh yes. Joe Dixon was the one that brought in the first taxes on the Anaconda Company. Did you know that?

BB: Yes, I did know that.

NN: Gib was a strong supporter of that. "Those sons of bitches should pay just like the rest of us."

BB: Then interestingly, because Dixon was very independent—

NN: I guess he was.

BB: Apparently Gib Strange was too.

NN: Oh, he was, I know that.

BB: Then Gib was defeated by Lee Metcalf.

NN: Yes. He ran in '23 and then he laid out a while. Then he ran again in 1933.

BB: That was the race against Metcalf?

NN: Yes, and Lee Metcalf had finished and Lee did the same thing as Max Baucus. Lee moved to Stevensville and opened up a law office during the summer. Then when he was campaigning and beat Gib Strange by eight votes. We all know Lee's—the story beyond that.

BB: Did you ever meet Lee Metcalf?

NN: Oh yes, many times, yes. I was a freshman when Lee Metcalf was a senior in high school.

BB: Oh, so you even knew him as a kid?

NN: Yes.

BB: What do you remember about him in high school?

NN: Well, I remember he was valedictorian in the 1928 class. I remember that. He was a good student. I didn't know it at the time. I don't think anybody knew at the time. It was just like we were talking earlier. He knew where he was going and how he was going to get there.

BB: Was he a popular student, a leader among the kids?

NN: Oh, yes, he was very popular.

BB: He wasn't just a bookish student?

NN: Oh no, he participated in all the athletics and was active. His dad was in the bank there at Stevensville. His dad and his uncles on his dad's side were all Republicans. On his mother's side, he was a Republican. His mother was about...Her maiden name was Woods. Gib Strange's mother's maiden name was Woods. Gib and her were about third cousins, I guess, or second cousins.

BB: Oh, is that right?

NN: Yes.

BB: So there was a shirttail.

NN: Yes, a shirttail, yes. He was a real shirttail.

BB: (unintelligible) Strange and met him.

NN: Yes, yes, between this one family. Lee's dad's name was Harold. He worked in the bank there and then later moved to California. Then he had two brothers that were real active in

farming. They were both Republicans. Well, the Metcalfs were Republican. He had—Lee's cousin was a veterinarian. He was one of the ones that started an animal clinic in Missoula. Fred Metcalf, did you ever hear that?

BB: Yes, I have heard of Fred Metcalf.

NN: Okay, he was Lee's cousin. He was very radical. He was against Lee all the way.

BB: So Lee would have been unusual in his family because it sounds as though his family was mostly Republican?

NN: Yes, very much so.

BB: What do you suppose? Did you ever have a chance to visit with Lee at all?

NN: No, I never talked to Lee one on one at all. I never did.

BB: So you wouldn't have an insight why his philosophy was as it was?

NN: Let's see, that would have been in 1933 while Roosevelt was president. Some of these changes were coming about, being talked about, like social security and taking care of the poor and all that was being talked about. He just served the one session in the legislature. I think he only served one. Then he ran for Supreme Court.

BB: Yes, that's right.

NN: Wasn't he in the House before he went to the senate?

BB: Yes, yes.

NN: So he's been all the way.

BB: He was all the way up the rungs, that's for sure. Well, Nick, we've just got a few minutes left on the tape so we'd probably better kind of summarize here as we conclude our interview. We talked, I guess, a little bit at the outset about the influence, real or imagined, that the Anaconda Company in Montana. Some historians write that the Anaconda Company had a controlling influence in Montana politics, that very few things happened in the Montana legislature, say in the '20s and '30s and '40s and '50s and '60s that the Anaconda Company didn't have a lot of influence over.

NN: Oh, I think both them and Montana Power.

BB: They worked together.

NN: Oh, yes.

BB: Would agree with that?

NN: Yes, I would very much agree with that. On the other hand, when I look back 30 or 40 years ago, I think we were in better shape maybe when they was running the state because we're all taking home and take over the state as a farmer. We had a sugar factory in Missoula. We had a sugar factory up in Hardin. We had a sugar factory at Chinook. The farmers were doing good and everything. In the Bitterroot, that's all developed and going into homes. At the time, I disagreed with some of their policies and the tax policies. Of course, Anaconda was always looking for a break. They were trying kill the deal that Joe Dixon had gotten in, not necessarily to kill it, but reduce the rates.

BB: How would you look at their philosophy? They generally favored low taxes?

NN: Yes.

BB: For everybody it sounds like.

NN: Yes and they favored little government and local government. They didn't favor these policies coming down from the feds at all.

BB: So a person with a conservative political philosophy could agree with them without necessarily feeling controlled by them?

NN: Oh yes, yes, because you were thinking the same way. It was going down the same road.

BB: So is it possible, I had another person in another conversation say this, I don't have him on tape yet, but it was Everett Shuey. He was a lobbyist for Montana Power Company. He said, "Bob, you know, the Montana Power Company had the reputation for having all this power and influence in the Legislature. But he said, honestly, a lot of people in the Legislature favored minimal government. They favored low taxes. That generally worked for us. So he said we didn't necessarily control them or influence them. They were already pretty much on board with their philosophy."

NN: Yes, especially the Senate in those days. You got, like Charlie Scofield and Junior Spear and Walter Sales, Jack Brenner from Dillon, and those guys. They were all that way before. The company didn't have any influence on them. They had their own minds made up. That was their philosophy, as you mentioned, yes.

BB: The company might have had maybe a more of a controlling influence over the Butte delegation, did you say?

NN: Well, they had full control over the Butte delegation.

BB: Of course the Butte delegation were Democrats.

NN: Yes, they were all Democrats. I'll tell you a little story about it. Years ago, I forget who was in there for the Democrats. Anyway, they had a labor bill up. They were defending this labor bill. I forget what it was. I went out to the coffee counter. The Democrat lobbyist for the Anaconda Company was there having a cup of coffee. I said, "Aren't you hearing this up here?"

He said, "I don't pay any attention. When I need the Butte delegation, their vote's right here in my vest pocket."

BB: How do you suppose that was the case? How did he have their votes in his vest pocket?

NN: I imagine he helped them get elected and everything, the company did. They knew who was being sent over here.

BB: Did he take pretty good care of those guys when they were here in the legislature?

NN: Yes, very much so.

BB: In terms of—

NN: Oh well, taking them out to dinner and all that. You know J.D. Lynch's story. His first duty was to come over here from Butte was to get somebody to take the Butte delegation. He was trying to get a lobbyist to take the Butte delegation out to eat.

BB: Because that's part of the Montana political legend is the Butte delegation was pretty close to the Anaconda Company?

NN: Oh sure.

BB: They were most all Democrats.

NN: Yes, most of them had relatives in the mines. About the only one that was far away from the mines, and I don't know how far away, was—he was a mortician. Ray Wayrynen, yes.

BB: Before we conclude, any thoughts or recollections on big Ed Smith?

NN: Big Ed Smith was a man of his own. He came down here on his own. His thoughts were his own. There were no lobbyists, I don't think, to my knowledge, that ever twisted Ed Smith's arm to any extent. He ran for governor against—

BB: Tom Judge.

NN: Tom Judge, yes in 1972. Then he went on to the Senate. You served with him.

BB: You remember him as very independent- minded?

NN: Yes. That's the way he always was. He brought in the Territorial Integrity bill. He had something to do with that Integrity bill.

BB: Yes, there was a big fight when I first came to the legislature.

NN: Yes, maybe that's when it was.

BB: Yes, and he worked out a compromise that I think helped the co-ops more than the investor-owned utility companies that finally settled the battle, I think, pretty much between two interest groups.

NN: He was quite a man in his own right. Ed, now when I first came, there were no Republicans coming out of eastern Montana. There were no Democrats coming out Billings. The Billings delegation, in those years, called themselves "The Straight Eight."

BB: Ed Smith was instrumental in getting a lot of Republicans elected.

NN: Yes, he was, after he got in.

BB: Now there are Democrats from Billings.

NN: Oh, yes and my last Speaker, you served with him, he was a former mayor of Billings.

BB: Harold Gerke.

NN: Yes. Harold Gerke.

BB: Well Nick, we're out of time unless you've got a concluding comment. I don't know if it's still recording or not. Anything you'd like to say in conclusion?

NN: I've had a good life mainly because of my marriage. I was accused of marrying a ranch instead of the girl at the time. I came on and was president of the National Beetgrowers Association while we were growing the beets. Then I came over here and got involved with the fuel tax business and one thing and another. I've met many people and one thing about serving the legislature, you might have your battles up here, but any way you go, you're welcome in their town whether they're a Democrat or a Republican at the time.

BB: You were highly respected for all your years that you were in the legislature. I remember that. You made an important contribution.

NN: I've worked with Bob Brown, who should be our governor today, but he isn't. But that's the way politics are played.

BB: I think we're out of time. Thank you, my friend.

[End of Interview]