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Interviewee: William J. Norman
Interviewer: Bob Brown
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Bob Brown: This is Bob Brown, and I'm interviewing Bill Norman. Bill and I served in the House of Representatives and in the state Senate together. Bill was first elected in the election of 1970 to the House of Representatives and then moved to the Senate in 1974 and served there until 1990. We're conducting this interview at the Center for the Rocky Mountain West on the campus on the University of Montana on May 26, 2006. Bill, welcome.

William Norman: Thank you.

BB: You grew up in Minnesota?

WN: Yes, in Minnesota.

BB: Do you have any early recollections of a political figure?

WN: Yes. My family wasn't officially political. But like all people, or more people in those days, they were much more attuned politically to what was going on. They were all Democrats.

BB: What period would this have been that you're talking about?

WN: The '30s.

BB: Were they Democrats prior to then?

WN: Minnesota is a strange state. You can't sell a sack of potatoes without being Scandinavian in those days. The Scandinavians were about half Democrat, but probably a little light. St. Paul was a curious town. It was run by the Irish. You couldn't be elected mayor unless you had an Irish name. It was a big chunk. Minneapolis was Republican. What they do is they couldn't get elected of course, outside of Ramsey County, which is St. Paul.

BB: Who couldn't get elected?

WN: The Democrats.

BB: Okay.

WN: They'd get some Swede or somebody, [Gov. Harold] Stassen, or somebody like that, and they'd back him. They'd have their votes from St. Paul and the Iron Range up north and Duluth.

BB: Those were the Democrats—

WN: Those were the Democrats. It was a pretty good chunk of votes. There were no Irish, nothing but Scandinavians.

BB: Your background, like mine, is Irish. So what you're saying is that the Irish tended to be Democrats overwhelmingly.

WN: Oh, overwhelmingly.

BB: They would back someone else with their votes if they could to win a statewide election.

WN: Oh yes, if they could bring it off.

BB: I'm still reaching for this. What was the reason that the ethnic Irish—that you can remember or kind of think you understand—why were overwhelmingly Democrat?

WN: I don't know. They were just that way.

BB: That's the case in New York, the Tammany Hall organization. So traditionally I know that Irish immigrants have been Democrats in our country. Do you think there was the feeling that they, as an ethnic group, were discriminated against?

WN: Yes, yes, very definitely. Except, they ran the police and the fire department, and the public works. In those days, there wasn't any civil service or anything like that. They were very careful about how they used that. They'd use it to their advantage.

BB: Was there like a Democratic Party organization in St. Paul?

WN: Oh yes; the precincts. Oh, if you had a parking ticket or anything like that, where's the ward healer? At least the precinct captain or something, and he would go to work on it. And usually he'd get off. Things like that.

BB: I think you and I had a conversation here some months ago. It involved, if my memory serves, a skating rink or something?

WN: Yes, in our neighborhood, there were two large empty lots. They were converted into—just the people themselves [converted the lots], there wasn't any public funds for anything like that—into a skating rink. They used hoses to water it down, which took a lot of water. A lot of water. What they'd do is they'd go up to the fire department, which is about half a mile away or so. They'd talk the fire chief into watering it. Of course, this was just not official in any way.

Then some day, the fire department would turn up and water the rink. I imagine the men that were running the thing in the neighborhood they made recompense in some way.

The fire department never complained. They were willing to do it when they weren't on a fire or something like that. It took a lot of conniving until you got it done, you know. That's what politics was for. That's why people were in politics, to make the damn system—to oil it—to make it work. They had a bunch of kids and adults too. We used to play hockey. Then they'd shut that all down every once in a while. In the winter it was lit with light bulbs and women would go and skate in the evening. Nobody helped out with it. The government didn't officially. And it worked out. It got something for the kids to do and adults to do. That's what they were trying to accomplish. It's what we're trying to accomplish now. We can't bring it off.

BB: So the government of your boyhood in a fairly large city, St. Paul, was basically kind of a quasi-political kind of a thing where people worked together to help each other out. I get the impression that you have a favorable impression of that kind of government.

WN: Well, it's the only thing I knew. There's a problem here. Can it be solved politically? If it can be solved politically, we'll do it.

BB: People just worked together and cut the red tape and took care of the problem. When you think back at your boyhood, do you have an image of Democrats, an image of Republicans?

WN: Yes. Democrats were us. The Republicans were out there. Once in a while, they'd pull something off. That's too bad. They were in the distance. You didn't have anything directly to do with them. If you were a kid, you wouldn't go around saying you were a Republican. They'd beat you up. You were what you were and everybody knew it. Nobody said anything about it and let it go.

BB: So when you say that Democrats were 'us,' that means that the Democrats you identified with were the common people in your neighborhood.

WN: Oh, yes.

BB: The Republicans lived over in Minneapolis, the rural parts of the state?

WN: Yes. They were a force to reckon with. You couldn't ignore them. They didn't have your good in mind.

BB: Was there a prominent Democrat that you kind of associate with your youth? One or two of them that made a particular impression on you?

WN: No. We weren't highly political. We didn't associate with elected politicians or anything. If you were involved in some traffic offense or something, the city cop—

BB: What I'm thinking about is not so much that you maybe knew personally, but maybe like Floyd Olsen?

WN: No.

BB: Or Hubert Humphrey, someone who made a particular impression on you?

WN: Well, at that time, me and my relatives had no contact that would amount to anything with any outstanding politician except the precinct committeeman. They were helpful, very helpful. You'd move in some place. Somebody would rent a room or something. Maybe it was up on the second or third story of the apartment. They'd come knock at the door. Of course the landlady—you didn't know that—had already notified the precinct committeeman. He came by and introduced himself and left his card. I remember one time I had an old fridge and I couldn't get it upstairs. It was kind of a one-room outfit anyway. He wanted to know if there was anything he could do for me. Well, I said, "You see that fridge when you came up here?" Yes. "Well, I want it up here." He said, "Well, we'll take care of that. I can't do that until Saturday."

BB: This is the Democrat precinct committeeman and he's going to help you move the refrigerator to your apartment on Saturday?

WN: Not him.

BB: Oh, he's going to make sure it happens?

WN: Yes. So Saturday I got a knock at the door. Two big gorillas standing there, you know. And they brought it up. I asked them what I owed them for it. "Oh nothing. Nothing at all." They worked for him. They got things done that way.

BB: That's how the system worked. You felt that you benefited by them, and they helped you when they didn't really have to. So when he came around and said, "Bill, we'd sure appreciate it if you'd vote for this list of candidates," you probably did.

WN: Oh, yes. I went over to the school on Election Day. Here he is with several men I didn't know. He said hello and we just exchanged pleasantries. He said, "This will help you here." He handed me this little card. He said, "If you just vote for these people, you'll be all right." I didn't know who the hell they are. So I took it in the voting booth and guess what? They won. I think most of them did. I don't know.

BB: So that was your boyhood and your background. You were a Democrat, I guess kind of born one from the sound of things. That was the culture that you lived in. You went to World War II, I think you were in Europe, right?

WN: In the Pacific, yes.

BB: Oh, okay. After you returned home from World War II you went to medical school.

WN: Yes, I went back to college.

BB: And ultimately became a medical doctor.

WN: Yes.

BB: What special area was it?

WN: Neurology.

BB: You ended up here in Montana as a practicing physician. Ultimately you came here to Missoula.

WN: Yes.

BB: When was that, in the 1950s?

WN: Well I moved here in 1963.

BB: So Missoula, politically—how would you describe it when you arrived here—it was greatly different than St. Paul?

WN: Oh, yes.

BB: A different culture.

WN: Yes. I moved here because this was a place that seemed to me to go to make a living and to practice what I'd learned. Not that there weren't other cities, but I was the second neurologist in the state of Montana. There was one in Great Falls. I didn't want to go there. They couldn't support two in those days. Billings, I think, they had a neurosurgeon. I didn't go there. I went to Missoula.

BB: Did you become involved in politics after you got here?

WN: Well yes, through Gene McCarthy.

BB: Gene McCarthy of course was a Minnesotan U.S. Senator.

WN: Yes.

BB: Had you ever met him?

WN: Oh, I knew him. I could recognize him. I didn't know him personally. He taught labor courses at a college where I attended school; where I attended pre-med.

BB: Where was that?

WN: St. Thomas College in St. Paul. He was in the fourth district. He ran there and he was elected as a congressman. It was no big surprise.

BB: That was the old St. Paul area. He's an Irish Catholic Democrat, so a perfect candidate for there.

WN: Not from St. Paul, up around St. Cloud, the center of the state kind of.

BB: Oh, so he wasn't elected from St. Paul?

WN: As a professor.

BB: Oh, okay.

WN: He got a job at St. Thomas and he taught labor courses and things like that.

BB: Did you take a course from him?

WN: No, I was taking pre-med. I would see him on rare occasions walking around the campus or something. I would say, "Who's that?" They'd say, "That's Gene McCarthy." "Oh, who is he?" I kind of thought I knew him. He was elected and he went to Congress. And I went to the war. Then there was a Swede that was a senator from Minnesota. He decided to run against him. That was poorly advised because his base was St. Paul. He could probably get Duluth and the Iron Range. But that's not enough votes to get him elected. But he did anyway. He got elected. That was way before Vietnam.

Then when he decided to run, he and his travels, there was a French element in St. Paul too. They go way back. There was a guy named Roulet (?). He was his campaign manager. He came to the house and said Gene was coming to Missoula campaigning. I said, "Well fine." And I'd back him and so on. In the meantime, they just started a McCarthy Club. I was in that. I was the president of it.

BB: This would have been when, in the fifties?

WN: No, no this was in '68.

BB: Oh I see. So this was after you had moved to Montana.

WN: Oh yes.

BB: He was flirting with the idea of running for president.

WN: He was running full blast.

BB: So you were the president of the McCarthy Club here in Montana.

WN: He didn't know anybody in Montana. Jerry—his daughter [Shannon] was a big basketball star—

BB: Jerome Cate, C-A-T-E.

WN: He was prominent in supporting McCarthy in Montana. He was over in Billings. But there weren't many other people. Then they grew, rapidly. They attempted to take over the [inaudible], which ended up in Chicago.

BB: So Hubert Humphrey was also from Minnesota. He was the vice president. And McCarthy challenged him for the Democratic nomination in 1968.

WN: Yes. They were good friends. I think that didn't ever sit well. Humphrey was a Democrat. How times were changing. He was elected mayor of Minneapolis. He was from South Dakota originally, a pharmacist or something.

BB: Did you go as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention?

WN: No, we lost by two or three votes. There were 26 delegates and we lost by two or three votes. I remember they had the convention up in Helena at the Civic Center. Great Falls supported McCarthy. Butte did not. Missoula supported McCarthy, a large share of it.

BB: The issue was really the Vietnam War in 1968.

WN: Yes, yes, yes.

BB: So you were probably in the liberal faction. Humphrey would have been more in the traditional Democratic faction in 1968. You were born in the liberal camp.

WN: Oh yes.

BB: So were you opposed to the Vietnam War?

WN: Oh yes.

BB: What do you remember about that, your feelings about the Vietnam War?

WN: I couldn't figure out what we were doing in that war. It just kept going on and on and on and on. Johnson kept making all these statements. I never trusted him. I never liked him. It didn't make any difference, but I never liked him.

BB: Did you like Kennedy?

WN: Yes. I liked Bobby Kennedy better than Jack. Though I worked hard for Jack. It just didn't work out.

BB: Your interest in politics was awakened as much as anything it sounds like primarily, when Eugene McCarthy ran for president in 1968. Then you yourself ran for the legislature in 1970.

WN: Yes.

BB: Was it the interest in McCarthy that kind of re-interested you in politics and influenced you to run for the legislature?

WN: Oh, yes. See, all those people here in Missoula that were McCarthy boosters, they kept coming around. I was a doctor. I was doing my business. They kept coming around and saying, "You've got to run."

I said, "I don't want to run for the legislature." I put it off, you know. Then [Jack] Pinsoneault—a guy named Pinsoneault, who used to be the county attorney here—he was not a McCarthy fan by any means. He was really a backer of Johnson. The night before the deadline or whatever it is in the elections, he came around.

He said, "We've got to fill this ticket."

I said, "Well, what do I care?"

He says, "Well, you're involved now."

I said, "I'm not involved. I didn't file for anything."

He said, "Yes you did." He had this—from the Secretary of State's office—some form that I had to sign. He took it up to Helena.

BB: So you did sign it. This is Jack Pinsoneault, who was the Democrat county attorney at the time. That was when legislators ran at large. There weren't single-member districts. The Democrats needed to fill their slate and they had probably six or seven candidates.

WN: They had seven spots. The Republicans usually had five. We ended up with two.

BB: So you filed as one of the seven Democrats running for the legislature in 1970. You were elected.

WN: No. No, I came in eighth. Then in 1972 I won.

BB: I was thinking that you came in 1970. [Norman first ran in 1968 and lost; he was first elected in 1970.]

WN: The first time I ran, I wasn't elected. I was just out of it. Tom Haines, Bud Ainsworth, people like that, Lefty Campbell—

BB: You and Bob Watt were the two Democrats.

WN: Bob Watt, he used to be school superintendent of the county.

BB: So, there you are, you were a duly elected member of the House of Representatives. What was your impression when you got to the Montana legislature?

WN: Well, it was a whole new ball game. I never imagined what it was like. I sat down next to Watt.

BB: You and Bob Watt were seatmates.

WN: Yes, and did pretty much what he said.

BB: He'd been there before.

WN: Yes. He had two or three terms in. It worked out.

BB: When you think about it, is there a particular legislator that stands out in your mind, or maybe two or three?

WN: Oh, the Majority Leaders and Minority Leaders. Bill Christiansen was a very—

BB: He was the Minority Leader from Hardin, Democrat leader from Hardin.

WN: Yes. I think he had the Ford agency or something over there. I used to listen to him a lot whether he knew it or not. I thought he was a real good guy. Most of the Democrats did.

BB: He later went on to become a lieutenant governor.

WN: Yes.

BB: What do you remember about John Hall?

WN: Well he was—

BB: He was also the Democratic leader.

WN: Yes. He and Larry Fasbender. John Hall knew what he was doing. He knew what he was doing. He never married. He never would go to parties or anything like that. I think he committed suicide eventually. I thought he was a pretty good man.

BB: Real smart, but a little strange, I think. We kind of thought that about him.

WN: He was very strange. His father was a judge up on the Hi-Line or something. He would always win in Great Falls. I can never understand why, he didn't have any following and such. He must have had a big following we didn't know about.

BB: Somehow he managed to win elections, that's for sure. Now do you remember that there was a big debate in the House of Representatives over coal development? The two major gladiators were Jim Lucas and John Hall. Do you remember that?

WN: Yes, yes I do. Big Jim. Well, that was my bill. There was a guy named [Miles] Romney from Hamilton, an old fellow. I don't know why, but the Democrats used to think well of him around the state. He put in a coal tax bill. He wanted a nickel a ton. It went down in flames. And I thought, "Well, that's a good idea. I'm going to do that." I called him up. He said, "Don't ever compromise. Ask for more than a nickel." Well, that bill didn't amount to anything at all. Nobody paid any attention to it until it began to work along in the legislative process. Then Bill Christiansen called me aside. Of course, that's his district, see.

BB: The coal was being mined over in his part of the state.

WN: Yes. He was very much involved in that sort of a thing. He said, "You know, you ought to rewrite that bill."

I said, "What for, Bill. What should I do that for?"

He said, "You haven't got a tax rate. It's going to be real hard for me to support it. I'm not going to support it the way it is. The Republicans will be all over it."

I said, "Well what's the matter with that?"

He said, "Nowadays, there's a way that you can make it a percentage of the coal. The farther you go south into Wyoming and the farther you go up north into the Knife River and Savage, and up in there, using them as markers, the coal is bituminous and lignite and sub-bituminous, depending on how much calories are in the coal."

BB: BTUs.

WN: Yes. He said, "That's what you should tax it on. Coal here around Hardin and around Colstrip, it's sub-bituminous. It won't change. The tax won't be much north up in the state. But there will be some. Let it go. Don't worry about it. Get that sub-bituminous." So I changed it. And he signed it. Then it got over in the Senate. Of course the senators didn't want to have anything to do with it. Luke McKeon was a guy that I eventually convinced. He was on taxation.

BB: A Democrat from Anaconda. You persuaded him to help you with the bill over in the Senate.

WN: Yes. He and Bill Christiansen did.

BB: Bill was still in the House. He came over to the Senate and helped you with that.

WN: Oh yes. He had his hook in there. So Luke kept working and working on it. I don't know what was going on with Luke. He was running for governor or was going to run for governor. He didn't want to touch the thing. It was a hell of a bill. It was going to ruin a big resource here in Montana by taxing it.

BB: That was the argument against it.

WN: Yes, and it was just getting started.

BB: They were going to kill it in the cradle by overtaxing it too soon.

WN: Yes, that's right. It didn't go anywhere in the Senate. I eventually got it passed in the House with the help of Bill Christiansen. The Democrats were voting for it. Then it went over to the Senate. It didn't cause any trouble over there. But eventually it worked this way through the process and here it is before the Judiciary Committee in the Senate. I had to go over and present it. Bill Groff was on the Judiciary Committee, or the taxation.

BB: Yes. Bill Groff was a member of the state Senate from Ravalli County.

WN: Yes. Luke McKeon and others, but mostly Luke, convinced the taxation committee to vote for it. The Republicans just about—almost, except for a couple of votes, and of course the Senate was Democrat then—voted to kill it. The Republicans could have gotten the job done I think, almost. It was a real tight vote. But it passed.

BB: The governor signed it.

WN: Yes.

BB: So that was the initial coal tax.

WN: That was the initial coal tax.

BB: There were big debates in the House of Representatives, one in particular between John Hall and Jim Lucas.

WN: Oh, yes, they were both good speakers. They both knew what they were doing. They both gave a good speech, for and against.

BB: A couple of more legislators over in the House of Representatives—did you have a recollection of Dorothy Bradley?

WN: Oh yes.

BB: She was involved in that coal business.

WN: Yes. She liked the bill, I guess. She did some lobbying for it. Tom Towe, I couldn't keep him out of that damn bill. Of course, Tom's got to have his way one way or another. He got all over the bill. He was for it. It was hard to keep him restrained.

BB: That was a big area of legislation that was, as I remember, there was Land Reclamation Act and the Plant Siting Act and some related kinds of legislation that were going through the process that Dorothy Bradley, you, and Towe were involved with.

WN: Yes. Dorothy had some bills in. They didn't directly deal with the coal tax as such. They were environmental bills. When the legislature is in session, they have all the lights on in the capitol, the outside lights. She got them all turned off. They were going to save energy.

BB: The ones around the capitol building focused up on the dome.

WN: Yes. They were all turned off.

BB: She was regarded then as maybe the leading figure in the environmental movement just as it was getting started in Montana.

WN: Yes, she and others.

BB: What do you remember about Harrison Fagg?

WN: Harrison G. Fagg? Harrison Grant Fagg, well his father was postmaster over at one time in Billings. Fagg and I got along pretty well. Fagg was sort of a liberal.

BB: Liberal Republican.

WN: Yes, if that isn't a contradiction. He and I knew each other very well. It went on and on and on with that sales tax. We eventually decided that this had to come to an end. If it's a vote of the people you want, why we'll get a referendum.

BB: So there was an impasse in the legislature in 1971 over the sales tax.

WN: Yes.

BB: The Republicans had a narrow majority in the House, managed to get it out of the House. But they couldn't get it through the Senate because the Democrats had the majority.

WN: Yes, that's right.

BB: You had an interest in taxation. You were on the Taxation Committee. So did Fagg. So how were you involved?

WN: During World War II, there was a great shortage of things. The federal government had taken fridges, and shoes, and common items of consumption and classified them in essence. They were deciding how many you could make, how many goes to the people, how many goes to the army. He got that list from World War II.

BB: Fagg did?

WN: Yes. So we decided what we'll do is introduce a bill. We won't introduce a sales tax, a general sales. We'll take individual items on some logical basis and use that list to have a sales tax. But we won't call it a sales tax. The Republicans got their sales tax. We didn't vote for the sales tax.

BB: What would you call it? What did you call your tax?

WN: Darned if I know. It was a consumption tax or something like that. So we worked and worked on that. It never came to fruit.

BB: You were trying to accomplish somewhat the same thing by a little bit different way.

WN: Yes. And Fagg, on the opposite side, was going to get it done over there. We worked together on that. But it didn't go anywhere.

BB: Was your interest in that to raise money for the university system coming here from Missoula? Was that the idea?

WN: I hate to say it, but my idea was to get the hell out of there and go home.

BB: I see. It was a way of breaking the impasse.

WN: Yes.

BB: What ultimately happened was a sales tax, called a sales tax, went on the ballot in 1972 and the voters overwhelmingly defeated it.

WN: That's right.

BB: Joe Quilici, representative from Butte?

WN: Yes. What about him? Giuseppe Quilici.

BB: Any thoughts or impressions?

WN: He was typically Italian. How old was Joe, 35, 40?

BB: Then? Yes, probably.

WN: I used to hang out with him once in a while and the Butte bunch. I lived down at the Montana Club and it was a beaten up old room. There was a bathroom down the hall type of thing. [Jack] Healey and [J.D.] Lynch and Quilici and all those guys had a room down there. They wanted me to come down. I didn't want to come down there because they had the Rathskeller downstairs in the basement.

BB: That was a bar.

WN: Yes, a bar. They never used it as a bar except for a conference or something. So they used to go down there and play poker at night. They'd start at about one or two o'clock and Jesus Christ, sometimes they'd run upstairs and shave and go to the legislature. I didn't like that. We all went down there.

BB: Who were they playing poker with, lobbyists?

WN: Lobbyists, the other Butte bunch, [Allen] Kolstad—

BB: Who later became lieutenant governor, a Republican legislator.

WN: Yes. There were some Republicans that would drop in. The doors were all locked and everything. It was all right, but it wasn't a habit you had.

BB: That was a part of that Butte legislative culture wasn't it?

WN: Yes.

BB: They were poker players and that sort of thing.

WN: Yes. I fit right in with them. If you had to pick one, I suppose it was kind of the background I had.

BB: I'll tell you a quick story. I remember you were there when this happened because you and I were in the House at the same time. We were on third reading in the House of Representatives. That's the third and final vote. Just as we were beginning third reading, it runs in my mind [Jim] Lucas was the Speaker. He got us into third reading. Just as he was announcing that, the door opened in a committee room that was in the front of the House Chamber on the—

WN: Agriculture Committee.

BB: The old Ag Committee. The door opened and there's smoke coming out of there. Guys were in there smoking cigarettes. Several legislators came out. Most of the Butte delegation came out. It runs in my mind that Bob Ellerd and Gary Giesick were a couple of the Republicans. I don't remember. There were half a dozen of them. They came out and most of them, the Butte guys, sat down in the front row. Lucas started going through the third reading votes. "House Bill Number 313, having been read three several times, the question is, shall the vote pass the House? All those in favor indicate by voting aye and those opposed same sign," and so on. He's doing that and so these guys sat down. Somehow or another, one of the first ones that was taken didn't go as expected. It was an important vote to organized labor. It lost maybe by a single vote.

So then consternation broke loose up on the front row on the Democrat side where the Butte legislators were seated. When they realized what they'd done, they'd voted against this bill that they'd intended to be for, and that organized labor wanted. It was a pretty important bill. I don't remember the bill. So after third reading, and I think there was probably some discussion about whether to try and get it reconsidered or whatever. My seatmate, Representative Con Lundgren, went up to those guys to figure out what happened. He was kind of amused by the

whole thing. He asked Jerry Lombardi what had happened. Well, Jack Healey was pretty conscientious. He was a Butte representative. He sat maybe on the end of the row. Generally, they took guidance from him when they didn't know for sure what to do. You remember that.

WN: Oh yes.

BB: And so anyway, somehow or another, Lucas was going kind of fast that day. Jack got mixed up. He got one bill ahead or one bill behind. Jerry told Lundgren—Lundgren said, "What happened?"

Jerry said, "That goddamn Healey gave us the wrong signal." They blamed Healey, you know. He was just one bill ahead or one bill behind.

WN: Congressman Healey.

BB: So that's what happened in that particular case. They were poker players and interested in that sort of thing.

WN: It cost them.

BB: It cost them on that particular case. Do you remember Harold Gerke?

WN: Oh, yes.

BB: Any thoughts or recollections about Harold? He was Speaker of the House from Billings.

WN: No. I know Gerke, but I don't remember when he was Speaker of the House.

BB: He might have been Speaker after we left, when we were over in the Senate I think.

WN: That may have been.

BB: Okay. Then any lobbyists?

WN: Oh, yes.

BB: Do you remember John Lahr?

WN: Oh, I know Johnny Lahr very well.

BB: Lobbyist for Montana Power Company. Was he an effective lobbyist?

WN: Yes.

BB: Why?

WN: He spent a lot of money. If it was time to go to lunch and Lynch was always involved—

BB: J.D. Lynch from Butte.

WN: Yes. You can't go to lunch without a sponsor. We gotta have to have a sponsor. Where's Johnny Lahr? Well they'd go and get Johnny Lahr and we'd go and eat. Johnny would always pay for it.

BB: That was the Montana Power Company.

WN: Oh, it didn't cost Johnny anything. People like that. There was an old fellow that used to work for the telephone company.

BB: Al Regal?

WN: Yes. He died fishing or something. I knew him. Everybody said, "That's too bad. Maybe he went peacefully and so on."

BB: He's a lobbyist. He would frequently sponsor luncheons and that sort of thing.

WN: Yes, yes. They had what was called the Irish mafia then. They would take the whole damn legislature, if it wanted to come, to lunch. They'd go out—Lynch virtually picked the place. They'd go to different restaurants in town. Then the lobbyists would have to pay for this.

BB: What do you think that got the lobbyists? Obviously, Al Regal is there to represent the interest of the telephone company. He's going to be a nice guy and buy lunch and that sort of thing. Then if a bill comes up that's important to the telephone company or an amendment or something, he knows these people pretty well because he's had friendly luncheons with them and that sort of thing. So it's kind of an ice breaker for him to go and ask them if they can see if they will help him with the vote or an amendment or something. Is that how it worked?

WN: Well a good lobbyist is never going to approach a legislature and say, "Will you vote for this bill?" I think what they're looking for is they want ready access to this guy should the occasion arise. People like Johnny Lahr knew all the legislators and they all would go and talk to Johnny. He'd try and persuade them different things. He'd never ask for a vote or something like that. But it would amount to the same thing. He readily has access to those guys. That's what he likes. He doesn't expect to convince them always for other reasons that he knows not of, they can or cannot vote for the bill. They do. He wouldn't talk about what's bothering them the most. He wants to be able to pick up the phone or walk in, or whatever it is, and talk to that legislator and feel comfortable doing that.

BB: And he was particularly good at that.

WN: Yes.

BB: Jim Murry, lobbyist for the AFL-CIO

WN: Jim Murry. About half way through my experience in the legislature, Jim Murry left. He went to Ohio and took some job with labor. I don't know why he did that. He's living back up in Lewis and Clark County now. I knew him very well. He was one of the most effective legislators up there.

BB: Effective lobbyists.

WN: Yes, yes. It's hard to say effective because a lot of them are attached to the union in some way or another. He'd just tell them how to vote. They better not vote against him.

BB: So he didn't operate by the same strategy as John Lahr?

WN: Oh, no, they were two different lobbyists all together. The environmental thing, labor as it involved the counties was known as environmentalism. Labor opposed. They were dead-set against it.

BB: Against environmentalists?

WN: Yes. I talked to Jim. He took me out to dinner. We went over to Jorgenson's. He spent the whole lunch period talking about it. I told him, "Jim, you're crazy. You shouldn't fight those people." I was one of them. "Some of them are for the labor." And I was one of them. "Why do you fight them? Go along with them when you can. They'll do the same for you." Most environmentalists were labor people, or sympathetic kind of to labor. We talked and talked about that. Well the next session, labor was tending to vote for the environmental bills that had nothing to do with labor. Labor was kind of, in my mind, now tied in with the environmentalists. That's what's going to cause, among other problems, their demise. Because the environmental movement is being taken over by crazies, by PETA and being kind of animals and such—not that I think you should be unkind to animals. But it's gone crazy. It's against anything that you're for.

BB: I have a kind of vague recollection of this. Because you were a Democrat, you probably saw into this better than I did. I remember there was a labor leader named Joe Crosswhite, who I think tended to be pretty much against the environmentalists. I remember Murry as more the guy that became more friendly to the environmentalists like you're just explaining.

WN: He eventually saw that.

BB: Then your opinion is that you favored labor and environmentalists working together.

WN: When they could.

BB: Yes. That was your feeling at the time?

WN: Yes. And I kept—

BB: Now your feeling is that perhaps the environmentalists have become too extreme for labor causes?

WN: Yes. They've lost it. The ones that are making the most noise have lost it. I don't mean the environmental movement has gone to hell. It's here to stay. They've got too much in it that has nothing to do with the environment. What's PETA got to do with the environment?

BB: So you feel the environmental movement has become a little too radical?

WN: Yes. At least its spokesmen have. They're getting all the press. They're beginning to fade.

BB: Now Bill, you became increasingly disillusioned with the Democratic Party.

WN: Yes.

BB: Was it the extreme environmentalism that was part of your disillusionment?

WN: Yes, a small part. I'd still be a Democrat if that's all that bothered me.

BB: Why are you no longer a Democrat?

WN: Because they take just such extreme positions. They've got so many elements that support them that are in opposition. They take extreme positions for the whole damn party. And I'm stuck with that. You ask them and say, "Well, what are you doing that for?"

"Well, we don't really want to do that, but they support us."

"Well, that's no reason why the whole damn Democratic Party should look like a fool." You can't defend it. It's crazy things. Of course, it centers around abortion, stem cell research, partial birth abortion—on and on and on—euthanasia.

BB: If you take a pro-life position, the Democratic Party is not tolerant of that, is that correct?

WN: Oh yes. You've got to be for abortion if you're going to go anywhere in the Democratic Party. You notice even some stout anti-abortionists decide to run for something and they switch.

BB: They run as a Republican.

WN: Yes.

BB: Oh, oh, if a Democrat is opposed to abortion, he changes his position on that if he wants to run for a higher office?

WN: Yes. Well, they don't even run, but, even be prominent, in the Democratic Party. Jesse Jackson used to be, oh he was just death on abortion: "It's the way to get rid of black people." He made all kinds of statements. Then he was quiet about it. Now he's all for abortion. Many people have been that way.

BB: So Jesse Jackson was a leading black politician in the Democratic Party and opposed abortion because he felt black people could be especially victimized?

WN: When women are getting abortions, well what is it, [age] 16 to 38 or something? Many of them, a disproportionately large number of them, are black. You're killing black babies.

BB: He changed his opinion?

WN: Oh, yes.

BB: Because he felt he couldn't get any place in the Democratic Party.

WN: He couldn't get anywhere.

BB: If he held to that opinion.

WN: Yes. Not that he tried, but he figured it out. He was going nowhere.

BB: Now Bill, I've always known you to be a man of principle. I know that your principles have made it impossible for you to favor abortion. Why? What is it?

WN: I'm killing somebody. I'm aiding and abetting—I don't do abortions, but aiding and abetting somebody to have an abortion.

BB: Your conviction is that an abortion kills a human being?

WN: Kills a human being. It spreads. We're doing partial birth abortions now, where the baby is already born and they kill. Stem cell research, euthanasia—

BB: Explain how you see stem cell research.

WN: Well, I don't understand that except for the money that comes from copyrights. What the hell is the difference? Why don't you use umbilical cord blood to get stem cells?

BB: Because the stem cells come from an aborted baby. That's the concern you have?

WN: Yes.

BB: Democrats tend to be pretty tolerant of that kind of thing. Republicans are perhaps less so.

WN: Republicans, about half of them are not so. From what I see—

BB: It must have been really difficult for you, as we've discussed in this interview, with your roots as deeply as they've been established in the Democratic Party, to finally decide that you have more in common with the Republicans than the Democrats.

WN: Oh, my god.

BB: That's got to have been difficult for you to do.

WN: My parents would be turning in their grave.

BB: Do you think they would agree with you for the reasons?

WN: They'd understand why I did it.

BB: Do you think they would have done it for the same reasons?

WN: Yes. They probably would. That was interesting. It's inevitable.

BB: You were a McCarthy backer. You were a liberal Democrat in the Legislature. You were the Minority Leader and the president of the Senate.

WN: Two terms.

BB: I guess there have been a couple of people who have been president of the Senate for two terms, but not very many. You and McOmber I think. So you were a prominent leader in your party. Then you decided that the Democratic Party had strayed away from your principles. You actually declared yourself a Republican a few years ago. That had to have been difficult to do.

WN: Yes. People say, "Gee, Bill, I'm so glad that you're now a Republican. You've seen the light"—the Republicans. Well, I'm not.

BB: You're not completely comfortable.

WN: No. I like the Democrats. I like them.

BB: It sounds like in your heart you're still a Democrat, but in your mind you've kind of become a Republican.

WN: Yes. I can't support Democrats, most Democrats. It's going to be interesting in Pennsylvania this next election.

BB: Bob Casey is a pro-life Democrat running for the U.S. Senate.

WN: Yes. His father was governor. [Rick] Santorum, of course, is a big pro-life man.

BB: So they're both pro-life.

WN: Yes.

BB: That's unusual.

WN: It should be resolved here pretty soon.

BB: I want to ask you a few questions about the governors that you and I both served with and some of the other leading politicians and that sort of thing. Do you have a recollection or an impression, a story or anything to tell about Forrest Anderson?

WN: Forest Anderson, he's from Deer Lodge originally. You've got to get in context.

BB: He was the first governor we served with.

WN: There were still remnants of the old payola. That was accepted, or at least there wasn't a big outcry against it. I wanted to get a kid a job for the Highway Department in the summer. Did I tell you this?

BB: No.

WN: And of course Healey—

BB: While you were a legislator?

WN: Yes, in the House. Healey of course, that's his specialty. He had been doing that for years.

BB: Giving people jobs.

WN: Yes. That's what Healey is for. So I thought, god damn, isn't there some way that I can get at least one kid a summer job? What the hell am I elected for? So I thought and thought. And Watt told me to go and see Healey. I said, "Healey? He's not even from Missoula. What are you talking about?"

"Just go and see him."

So I went and saw him. Healey, sure enough, had a guy he was trying to get a job for on the Highway Department. Oh, a survey or something. He said, "I'll tell you. In a couple of days, let's go down and see Forrest." So I didn't do any more about it except stew to myself about it. Finally, Healey came back and said, "Let's go down and see the governor."

I said, "Okay, let's make an appointment."

He said, "I made one. We're all right." So we marched down and we ended up in Forrest Anderson's office.

Healey went through his rigamarole and Forrest said, "Well, I think we could probably find him a job somewhere." He took the kid's name and he said, "What are you doing in here?" To me.

Healey said, "Well," and he starts to treat me like a Butte delegate. He said, "Well, he's one of the House members. He wants to get a kid a job too."

Forrest said, "You do? What's the kid's name?"

I told him and he said I don't remember anymore—but is so-and-so's his father?

I said, "I don't know. He probably is."

He opened the side door on his desk. He looks in there and he's got like a Rolex [Rolodex.] He said, "Is his father a Democrat?"

I said, "Well, he probably is. I don't know. He must have voted for me."

He looked through these Rolexes. "He's a Democrat."

BB: Because he gave him money apparently?

WN: Yes, during the campaign. I said, "Well I want to get him a job, if I can, working on Evaro Hill." That's where they were going then. He says, "Well, I think we can work something out."

BB: If he hadn't found his name on that Rolodex contributor's list, he might not have gotten a job?

WN: I don't know what would have happened. It expedited the whole god damned thing. I remember when the Democrat caucus first met over at Jorgenson's, and Forrest Anderson, as arranged, came in. I remember I thought about that. Here I had been battling to get elected. Undoubtedly Forrest Anderson had too. He walks in and he says, "Well, he says, you guys have got to figure something out. I'm just passing through here. I won't be here very long. I'm just passing through." Then he went on and said some other stuff. I thought, God, is that the governor's thinking of that? He's just passing through.

BB: Not really a strong leader.

WN: Yes. You think of him forever being governor.

BB: Well he was only governor for one term and he had health problems. Maybe he recognized that.

WN: Yes, he committed suicide.

BB: Yes, ultimately.

WN: It wasn't as crazy, or like you'd think it was. He had intestinal cancer. He took a gun and he shot himself right in the belly.

BB: He shot the tumor. That's the story I heard too.

WN: Yes.

BB: That must have been a pretty grim death.

WN: I wouldn't want to do that.

BB: That's for sure. Tom Judge, Governor Tom Judge, any recollections of him?

WN: Yes. Tom was an opportunist. Whatever would sell, he'd buy. Oh, we used to go over to the Governor's Mansion and see him on occasion and have breakfast over there. I can't remember her name, she was a middle-aged woman. She handled all food in the governor's office. [Elsie Jones.]

BB: I think I know who you're talking about. She was there for several governors. In fact, I think she's still living. Her name is escaping me now too. Go ahead.

WN: She ran the god damned governor's house. Nobody would admit it, of course. And she wouldn't. She was a nice lady. We used to go over and see him. He always had problems.

BB: How do you mean?

WN: Well, domestic problems with his family. They wouldn't come out unless he knew you. It would have to be some occasion to bring it out. The way he got elected kind of made those problems. See, he went to—is Forrest Anderson going to run again or not?

BB: Tom was his lieutenant governor.

WN: Yes. Of course Tom was very ambitious and very aggressive. He wanted to announce that he was going to run. He didn't want to run against the governor. He went over to see Tom's brother, who was a cardiologist over in Spokane.

BB: Who went to see Tom's brother?

WN: Forrest Anderson did. That was a mistake because from then on, it was said that the brother had told Forrest Anderson, you're going to die. That's because of his brother.

BB: Oh.

WN: Then Forrest one day said that he's not going to run again. Then Tom filed for governor. I doubt that the brother said that at all, but people said that he said that. That he encouraged Forrest Anderson not to run again. Tom denied that very much, I think correctly so. I can't imagine a doctor telling a guy he was going to die just for his brother.

BB: Do you remember that there was a 94,000-dollar scandal in the Judge administration that involved a guy named [Kent] Kleinkopf?

WN: Yes.

BB: What do you remember about that?

WN: Virtually nothing.

BB: It was something about how they raised this sizable amount of money for Judge's election campaign. Then they either didn't or couldn't record the names, divulge the names, of the people who contributed the money so there was a feeling that if you couldn't list the contributors and say how much they contributed, then what was the difference between

contributing a campaign and just giving a bribe? How do you know how the money was ever used?

WN: Yes.

BB: There was a mystery about that. That's how I remember it anyway. That tended to cloud Tom Judge's reputation while he was governor.

WN: Yes, and it wasn't hard to cloud Tom's reputation. You'd spend time trying to talk him out of things. Remember he got picked up for shoplifting at Safeway?

BB: That was after he was governor.

WN: Yes. He had all that trouble with his wife. I knew his wife. She used to work for the clinic here in Missoula. She was a nice lady. So it goes. Kleinkopf moved over here to Missoula and he works as an investor or something like that. Oh, I used to hate that guy, I used to hate that guy.

BB: Why was that?

WN: Well, he was always on the wrong side of everything, I suppose if you can say that. I didn't hate him personally. I hated the positions he'd take. It influenced Judge, of course. He was the right-hand-man of Judge's.

BB: It was his body guard wasn't he? That's what I remember. He was the Commissioner of Business Regulation or something, but he also accompanied the governor and I think we used to think that part of his responsibility was protecting the governor and that sort of thing. There was always this impression that this guy was kind of on the fringe of honesty and respectability in most everything he did. That was your impression too?

WN: Yes. The Democrats didn't generally like Kleinkopf at all. That was Tom's problem because he frequently would come into disrepute by supporting a position that was popular but wasn't really approved by the Democrats. He didn't pay any attention to his core of support. A politician that lasts for very long has got to pay attention no matter what, to the true blue supporter.

BB: And your feeling was that Judge was more interested in what was popular than any core principle?

WN: Yes. Judge was a showman, among other things.

BB: Tom Judge was lieutenant governor under Forrest Anderson. Then Forrest didn't run for re-election, I think in part for reasons of health. Maybe that was entirely the reason. Then Tom Judge succeeded him.

WN: Tom Judge now had an opportunity to run.

BB: So he ended up being governor for two terms following Governor Anderson. During Judge's second term—his first term as governor, his lieutenant governor was Bill Christiansen, we talked about him before. Then Bill was kind of maneuvered off the ticket, wasn't he?

WN: Kind of what?

BB: He was maneuvered off of Tom Judge's ticket?

WN: He wasn't feeling well. Yes, he was.

BB: So he was replaced by Ted Schwinden. Ted served as lieutenant governor for Judge in the second term. Then Ted ended up challenging Tom Judge for the Democratic nomination in 1980. What do you remember about that?

WN: Oh, I knew Schwinden real well. It happened to Judge, just what he was trying to avoid himself. He was trying to avoid challenging Forrest Anderson, who was governor. And he ended up getting challenged by Ted Schwinden, who was lieutenant governor.

BB: Why did that happen?

WN: Ted was an old politician. He'd been in the legislature in the House, one term, I think. He was very, very liberal. He had toned all that off.

BB: He was a Farmers' Union, prairie-populist radical from up in the northeastern part of the state when he was a young legislator in the late '50s and early '60s.

WN: That's right.

BB: Then he re-emerged in politics as the Commissioner of Lands or something under Anderson's administration.

WN: Yes.

BB: He was a pretty competent administrator as I remember.

WN: Yes.

BB: So he remained there in that administrative position and then he ended up as lieutenant governor. Judge wasn't radical enough or liberal enough to suit him? Was it a philosophical thing?

WN: Judge was an opportunist. He [Schwinden] didn't think he ought to run politics like that.

BB: I see.

WN: You ought to pick some principles and stick to them, at least appear to stick to them.

BB: He felt strongly enough about that, that he decided to take on his own party's governor in the primary.

WN: Well and he thought Judge was weak enough. And he was. It was a big surprise that Judge didn't win.

BB: I remember thinking that there was somewhat of an upset there too. One of the stories about that, Bill, was that Governor Judge took a trip to the Orient. Maybe to Taiwan and Japan and the Philippines and so on. He was gone for three or four weeks. While he was gone, it was at a fairly critical time politically. Ted Schwinden, the lieutenant governor, did some important circulating and made some important contacts testing the water to see whether they could pull this thing off. He decided he could. It was an example of while the cat was away—

WN: The mice will play.

BB: Yes. Do you remember that?

WN: Yes.

BB: He decided to make the race. When Judge got home, he had a major rebellion on his hands that he didn't realize was brewing when he was gone.

WN: When Schwinden decided to run, some of the Democrats thought, good. We're going to get rid of Judge. But most of them thought, What the hell is he doing?

BB: Where did you fit in?

WN: Oh, I was trying to figure out what the hell he was doing. I didn't know him.

BB: You didn't know Schwinden that well?

WN: No.

BB: You got to know him better, though.

WN: Oh, I got to know him. Probably, he was the governor I knew best all the time I was in the legislature.

BB: Do you remember whether you supported him or not when he ran for governor against Judge?

WN: Yes, I did. He convinced me. It didn't take much convincing that Tom should be beaten. Do you remember when Tom got in trouble with the rugs?

BB: Yes. He acquired at least one, or maybe two extremely expensive rugs made out of alpaca fur or something from South America. They were supposed to last forever. They could last for centuries. He had them in the governor's reception area or his office, something or other. He paid some exorbitant amount of money for them. So that became a scandal that Ted Schwinden was able to kind of focus on.

WN: Yes. It's things like that, see. We used to go—and you did—to different states and stuff on different meetings. I was on the Legislative Finance Committee, which met every other month, illegally. We used to go down to Texas. This rug thing was going on. I remember talking to a Texas legislator that was at this meeting. I said, "The governor just bought a rug. It got to be a big thing."

He said, "Oh, that's common. The same thing happened in Texas, only they had chandeliers." They put chandeliers in the governor's office. He said they had to take them out of there.

BB: Because they were purchased by a lobbyist?

WN: Well, something like that.

BB: I think that was the story with the rugs too. I think that was part of the problem was that they were super expensive. It was that they were contributed by someone.

WN: Yes. Who knows who paid what for them?

BB: I wonder what ever became of them. Because I remember they disappeared somehow.

WN: Oh yes. You had to get rid of them.

BB: Do you have any experience or anything that kind of helps to cement your impression of Governor Schwinden? You served with him. You were Minority Leader and president of the Senate both while he was governor. So you worked closely with him. What do you remember?

WN: Well, he was a pretty straight-level kind of guy. He'd do some unexpected things. I remember one time he and I had a big argument about—he wanted to decrease the coal tax. I told him, "What the hell is the state of Montana want to give those bastards more money for?"

BB: The coal companies.

WN: Yes. He said, "Well, it's good for business."

I said, "That isn't going to make any difference. Those coal companies are going to pass that on. They're going to get money in some way. If they have to pay the state of Montana a little more money, it isn't going to hurt them." I was the only, I think, senator that voted against the bill.

BB: It was his "window of opportunity" idea.

WN: Yes. You couldn't compete with Wyoming. They had that bituminous coal. It was far enough south around Gillette.

BB: Do you remember, how would you describe Schwinden's leadership style? Was he hands-on? Did he understand the details of his job?

WN: Oh, yes. He understood what was going on. If he didn't, he'd call in the head of the agency and find out just what the hell was going on. He was very attentive to getting people's opinion. He used to ask the legislators who would come over there. He'd ask them what they thought of this and that. He might take a critique of what they said and hear what they got in rebuttal but he would never say which way he was supporting the bill or anything like that until he actually did.

BB: Now he was considered quite a radical left-winger as a young legislator. I don't remember him as having that public image as governor. Do you?

WN: Oh, no.

BB: He was a man of principle, you said. He stood for things and so on. Maybe you could enlarge on that a little bit. He wasn't a showman like you characterized Tom Judge.

WN: No, no.

BB: He wasn't really an ideologue either.

WN: No. He, in my opinion, and of course that's just my opinion, didn't have core principles.

BB: Judge didn't?

WN: Schwinden.

BB: Oh, Schwinden didn't. Okay.

WN: He'd believe that there ought to be a bridge over the river. He'd never go down deeper. Why do you want a bridge there? Do you know what I mean? Most times people just think on whether they want that bridge there and how they're going to build a bridge. But, why do we want a bridge? He never got that far. He was a farmer.

BB: Schwinden was a farmer?

WN: Yes, and his son and so on. He was a good governor. He used to have problems come up that had nothing to do with the legislature. He'd sometimes ask legislators while they were having coffee over there, or something like that, "What do you think of this or that?" I remember that god damned hill between Helena and Boulder. He said—I don't know how many millions of dollars a mile—he said, "It cost more than any other mile in the state of Montana." It had nothing to do with us. He was very worried about that.

BB: So he was a practical man?

WN: Yes. That's going to take out of the highway funds, of course, and it means that Missoula isn't going to get a highway or whatever we were going to do, or have to wait.

BB: Now Bill, we served also for a number of years with Stan Stephens in the state Senate. Then Stan of course went on to become governor.

WN: Yes.

BB: You served in the legislature while he was governor as well as in the state Senate with him. Any overriding impressions of Stan Stephens?

WN: The Republicans had the majority at the time.

BB: In fact, Stan was probably president of the Senate when you were Minority Leader. You worked with him quite closely.

WN: Yes. He used to sit right next to me because he would sit on the Democratic side, of course.

BB: The president of the Senate traditionally sits on the other party side.

WN: Yes. I always sat in the back row. I was the second seat in the back row. He was the first seat. He and I, during the boring hours of debate that would go on, we'd say something to each

other. Stan was a man of principle. He really believed what he said he believed. He was a good speaker. Once in a while, he'd get a bill that he was particularly interested in. He'd really research it. He'd look through all that bill and look through the reasons for and against it. He was a very gentlemanly sort of a guy. He was a Canadian, really.

BB: Born and raised in Canada.

WN: Yes. He was an American citizen. He'd been in the Korean War. I think he was a PR guy in the Korean War.

BB: A journalist in Korea, I think.

WN: Yes. He could play trumpet.

BB: A trumpet or a coronet. It was a bugle kind of a thing.

WN: Oh. He was rather accomplished. He owned that cable TV. He said that was the only American TV that got its feed out of Canada out there at Havre. He was a real nice guy. He felt very definitely about some of the things he supported. He really believed in them. I could never figure out why, but the Republicans never had any trouble [choosing leaders in the legislature]. They used to just know—it was [Bill] Mathers and then [Jean] Turnage and then the third guy would be Stephens. They would never fight about it at all.

BB: The Republicans had a fairly orderly succession.

WN: Yes.

BB: I think that's generally been the case.

WN: Yes. The Democrats were just root hog to die.

BB: Did you have to fight for the leadership job?

WN: Yes.

BB: Who opposed you for leadership?

WN: Blaylock, Chet Blaylock. He ran for governor.

BB: He was Minority Leader three sessions. Then you and he locked horns for president of the Senate.

WN: Yes. He was way more experienced than I did. He was a teacher. In my opinion, and it didn't hurt my feelings any, but the teachers treated him really badly [when he ran for governor]. There wasn't a bill that the teachers wanted that he didn't support or oppose according to their desires. When he ran for governor, hell, they announced that they were supporting [Marc] Racicot before they even announced that they weren't supporting Blaylock. The poor man died.

BB: He died of a heart attack during that campaign.

WN: That probably brought it on.

BB: Bill, we're coming near the end of the tape here. I'm just curious to know, as you look into the future of Montana, do you have any thoughts? What do you see? You've got a wonderful perspective looking back over a couple of decades of involvement in the legislature. You've been an astute observer of our state. You were before and since. Any thoughts or impressions as you look into the future?

WN: Well you can't look at Montana's future without looking far wider than that. Because other than coal and a few things here and there—tourism—Montana is nothing. It doesn't have the great resources that other states do. It's going to be influenced by the other states and by the world in general. Currently, it's just chaos what's going on. It's just a disaster. Montana is sharing in that and will share in that.

BB: Sharing in what?

WN: In this cultural upheaval that all of us are so aware of. All the things the federal government is doing, that they're doing in China, that god knows where all—much of it is opposed by people who live in Montana or real Montana-type people. Montana can't do anything about it. Not that they shouldn't try. But they're going to be influenced by what happens in the world and more particularly what happens in the United States. That's the future Montana has. In Delaware, they do something and you don't pay much attention to it. It's going to have a huge affect on Montana in about two years or something like this.

BB: So you see, as you look into the future, an unsettled world situation?

WN: Yes. There's a situation going on here where all the values, or a significant number of values, are dropped by the wayside. When I was a kid, why, nobody would even talk about some of the things that we're talking about, or so heavily influenced by. It's just getting worse and worse and worse. It's going to come to a head. There's going to be some big disaster. It might be a natural disaster. Montana is going to share in that. So this will go on and on and come to a head, not in my lifetime, probably. We'll turn one way or another, as far as which turn we take with the culture.

There's no escaping that. I think in the end, you'll probably end up with far fewer true believers or whatever you want to call them. They'll be marginalized. They'll be isolated. They'll be present. They'll count for something. Then they'll either go into a bigger majority or they'll just disappear. And so it goes. I see the middle-class—I worry so much about the middle-class. I think they're dropping out. They're disappearing. We're becoming a nation of aristocrats. How many studies do you want to have? If you get a college degree, you're going to make more money. And if you are a high school dropout, you're not going to make more money. You're going to be one of the slaves, the serfs or whatever you want to call it. And your children probably will. If you've gone the other way, you'll be wealthier or more privileged.

BB: Thank you, Bill, for the interview. Thank you very much.

WN: You bet.

[End of Interview]