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Interviewee: Joe A. Renders
Interviewer: Bob Brown
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Bob Brown: Okay, today we're visiting with Joe Renders, who was a lobbyist, I believe, and a public relations man and a journalist in Montana for much of the period in the 1940s, '50s, '60s, and up into the '70s, and is going to share with us his perspective on Montana politics and journalism, and those kinds of issues during that period of time. Joe, where were you brought up?

Joe Renders: Well, I was born in Gilroy, California. My dad came out to work for the sugar company in Fairview and Sydney and that would have been in 1933 or four.

BB: So you went to school in the Fairview-Sydney area?

JR: Yes. Fairview High School.

BB: Did you know C. R. Thiessen—Cornie Thiessen?

JR: I did, but I don't know in what context.

BB: Well, he was a member of the legislature from that area later, and I thought perhaps you had known him as a young person there.

JR: Well, I knew legislators for years in my work.

BB: Then you went to the University of Montana School of Journalism?

JR: Yes. Then later, Ray Fenton—I don't know whether you've—well, Ray was an instructor.

BB: At the School of Journalism?

JR: Yes. After I graduated, Ray and I got together and put together the Public Relations Associates.

BB: And so your public relations association represented who?

JR: Mainly the agricultural people. They seemed to need it and want it more than anybody else. But we also handled political candidates, and anybody that you can think of that wanted to get their name in the paper would come and see us.

BB: So you did work for the [Montana] Farmers Union?

JR: Yes.

BB: And the Grain Growers Association?

JR: And the Grain Growers.

BB: And some political candidates?

JR: Too many to list.

BB: Did you ever do any work with Lee Metcalf?

JR: Yes.

BB: Did you help him with his campaigns?

JR: Yes.

BB: What do you remember about him?

JR: He was a rugged type of politician. I mean, Mike was smooth—

BB: Mike Mansfield?

JR: Yes. Very smooth. And he could get more things done. But Metcalf was more of the tiger. He sounded off, you know, without really thinking about what he was doing or what he was causing, or anything else. But he was a real nice guy for me.

BB: He would speak his mind on issues, and sometimes forcefully.

JR: Very forcefully, yes.

BB: Did he have a temper?

JR: Oh yes, yes.

BB: I've heard stories about it.

JR: Well, Mansfield was such a gentleman, you know, and the whole works, but Metcalf—he didn't like somebody, he said so. He'd grab the microphone and tell them. I mean he really was.

BB: Do you remember any incident about that, like that—when that happened?

JR: No, none in particular. It was just his style and his personality to—he was a hard charger.

BB: Now Joe, one of his opponents for Congress in 1952 was Wellington Rankin. And my guess is there was probably a real clash there between two forceful personalities.

JR: There was. Metcalf just outdid him.

BB: What do you remember about Rankin?

JR: I just remember that he was a terrible Republican.

BB: [laughs] Now, you regard yourself as a Democrat.

JR: Oh, yes.

BB: And how would you describe your philosophy?

JR: Very liberal.

BB: What do you mean by that? What do you believe in?

JR: Everything that Adlai Stevenson ever thought of.

BB: I see. And so Stevenson was a particular hero to you?

JR: Oh yes, yes.

BB: What was it about Stevenson that attracted you?

JR: I thought for the first time in my adult life that we had a top politician that was so honest and so bright I just went for the man, I really did.

BB: Now did your journalism background affect the way you viewed Stevenson or other politicians? Sometimes journalists come into contact with politicians; they listen to what they say. You mentioned to me that you felt that Stevenson was especially bright and forthcoming and that sort of thing. So, as a journalist, you would have respected him?

JR: Oh gosh, yes.

BB: Now when you were in the journalism school, you mentioned that Carroll O'Connor, who later became a well-known movie actor, was also a classmate of yours?

JR: Yes. He was the editor of the *Kaimin*, the Journalism School— {O'Connor, who later gained fame as Archie Bunker on *All in the Family* was managing editor of the *Montana Kaimin*.]

BB: The University newspaper in Missoula, yes. What can you say about Carroll O'Connor? What are your recollections of him?

JR: He was tough. He was always yelling at people. He attacked. He didn't sneak up on anything—stories or anything else. That's the way he started in the J-School. People paid attention to—what was the name of the paper there?

BB: The *Kaimin*.

JR: The *Kaimin*, yes.

BB: Now, I thought Carroll O'Connor was a journalism major and an actor, because that's how we know him.

JR: Yes.

BB: I don't mean a journalism major—I mean a drama major. But he apparently—you say he also edited the *Kaimin*. And he took journalism classes?

JR: Oh yes. Edited the paper and bossed people around. [laughs]. He was quite a guy for getting things done. [O'Connor was a drama major, but took journalism courses and worked at the paper because the editor, Bill Smurr, was his good friend.]

BB: Well, that sounds like it. Sounds like Senator Metcalf might have had a similar personality.

JR: Yes, they would match each other. Strong-willed people, both of them, and they didn't hold back on anything, ever. You'd say what you think and proceed to do what you said you'd do.

BB: Did you know any Republican politicians, like say Governor Aronson? Hugo Aronsen? Hugo the Galloping Swede?

JR: Yes, I remember him, but I didn't know him.

BB: Didn't form much of an impression of him?

JR: Forrest Anderson—was Forrest there?

BB: Yes, Forrest was Attorney General and governor. You knew him?

JR: Yes.

BB: How would you describe his personality?

JR: He was another one that didn't hold back. He wasn't a polished politician and didn't want to be. He just sounded off on subjects as they came along and people as they came along. He didn't stop and hide anything.

BB: Do you ever remember having a conversation with him or anything in particular that he might have said to you?

JR: No, but along with my work and my love of politics, I saw Forrest Anderson quite frequently.

BB: Was he good on the farm issues—the agricultural issues—from your point of view?

JR: Well, Forrest looked down on farmers but he was enough of a politician not to let it show too much. But he didn't kowtow to them at all. A governor usually pays attention to agriculture in Montana. Forest just walked all over it.

BB: So you maybe didn't always have a positive experience with him that way.

JR: No, no. Just with Democratic politics, and even then he was tough for me to get along with. He just attacked everything he could get involved in.

BB: I've heard he was kind of colorful in his speech.

JR: Yes. That was right in his office, too. I mean, you know, with secretaries and people coming in and out and so on, and if he wanted to cuss at you he cussed at you and that was all there was to it. Not too polished, and didn't want to be.

BB: What do you think was the key to his success? How did he succeed in winning several statewide elections, including being elected governor?

JR: Well, he was bright and I think he just also was bright in politics and moved ahead in it. But I don't know anything else to pin it on because he wasn't a personality person at all. He was Forrest Anderson, and he let you know it.

BB: Did you know Roland R. Renne?

JR: Yes.

BB: Now, Roland Renne ran for governor in 1964. What do you remember about him or that campaign?

JR: Well, I supported him and also helped him with a few things, and we just got along wonderful. He's one of my heroes. He was just a great guy. He wouldn't do anything wrong or mean for anything. He was just a pleasant individual and bright, as you would expect.

BB: Now he was president of what was then Montana State College. It became Montana State University. So it's unusual for a college president, perhaps, to run for political office. But he was the president of the University in Bozeman Montana, and he ran for governor in 1964. Were you involved in that campaign?

JR: Not formally, and not a paid PR man or anything like that, but I supported Renne and did some things for him, and he'd call me to ask about this or that that he was going to do.

BB: Now who was his opponent? Was it Tim Babcock?

JR: I think it was Babcock. That would about fit the time. Renne, we were in a meeting one time. I think it was in regard to—I don't know what the main purpose was, but there was about 14 of us sounding off on this, that, and the other, and Renne passed me a note right after I had blasted somebody, and Renne passed a note down to me and said, "Thank God for an honest PR man." [laughs] I had it. I don't know whether I still have it or not, but that was quite a thing for him to do. But Renne was a hero to me.

BB: Now you mention that heroes to you were Adlai Stevenson and Roland Renne. You seem particularly high on them. Were they similar in any respect? Both intellectuals?

JR: Yes. I was about to say that. I just thought the world of both of them because they seemed like, to me, they were always on the right track.

BB: And how would you define their liberalism?

JR: Not hidden, but they didn't throw it in people's face or use rough language towards their party. He was smooth.

BB: I see. Now during that period of time, in the '40s and '50s and '60s, when Adlai Stevenson and Lee Metcalf and Roland Renne were involved in politics in Montana, there was a political coalition between the Farmers Union and organized labor. Were you involved in that?

JR: No, because I wasn't with the Farmers Union that long. I think I worked for them for a year and I just don't recall.

BB: Well, organized labor and the Farmers Union would have both supported Adlai Stevenson and they would have probably supported Roland Renne and probably both of them would have supported Lee Metcalf.

JR: Yes.

BB: What was it that would bring labor and the Farmers Union together in a political alliance? What did they have in common? What were they for?

JR: Liberalism. And labor wasn't as liberal as the Farmers Union was, but labor knew that it was liberals that would make them go.

BB: What would be a liberal issue that would be important to organized labor?

JR: Well, anything that would provide jobs is the best way to put it. So they worked for big things to happen that would employ a lot of people.

BB: Public projects?

JR: Yes, public projects and private projects.

BB: So wouldn't that put them at odds with environmentalists?

JR: Yes. I think there was some sparks there.

BB: Of course, the environmental issue didn't become an important one until maybe some years after that too, possibly.

JR: Yes, but labor was narrow-minded and the liberals and labor didn't get along that well. But when it came voting time they usually went the same way.

BB: Would they have been in opposition to the Anaconda Company in Montana?

JR: Oh God, yes.

BB: What do you remember about the Anaconda Company?

JR: It was evil.

BB: Why?

JR: That's what everybody said, that's why.

BB: Well, why did you think it was evil?

JR: Because they didn't do anything for the public. Everything was for them, to make money for the Anaconda Company, and that was it. They weren't leaders. They weren't participants with the people that they lived with. They were awful people to deal with.

BB: Did you have any dealings with the Anaconda Company officials or lobbyists or anything?

JR: Oh, I'm sure I did with lobbyists, because they lobbied all the time.

BB: Do you remember a guy named Al Wilkinson?

JR: No.

BB: Do you remember a guy named Lloyd Crippen?

JR: The name is...

BB: Denny Shea?

JR: Denny Shea—I think I remember, but I'm not sure.

BB: Big lobbyist for the Anaconda Company. Guy named Billy Ray?

JR: No, not really.

BB: What do you remember about John Lahr?

JR: John Lahr? I don't know but—

BB: He was a lobbyist for Montana Power.

JR: Yes. It's a real negative feeling I have when you mention John Lahr, but he was on the other side.

BB: Yes, he lobbied for Montana Power Company in the '60s and '70s. But he was regarded as a Democrat.

JR: [laughs] He was fooling somebody, but it wasn't me.

BB: The Anaconda Company, I think, had a fair amount of influence in the legislature. Did you see that when you were up here during legislative sessions? Did you sense that the Anaconda Company had influence?

JR: Oh gosh, yes.

BB: Was it with both Democrats and Republicans?

JR: A few Democrats, and all the Republicans. So they had quite a thing going for them.

BB: Were the Democrats—would there be a particular kind of Democrat who might be closer to the Anaconda Company? Would they come from a particular place?

JR: Yes, they'd come from a particular place, and the Anaconda Company was so big that they paid attention because of jobs and work and so on.

BB: So would rural Democrats be more likely to support the Anaconda Company or...?

JR: No, I don't think so. I think it might have gone about 50-50, but most of the rural people didn't go for the bulldog type like the Anaconda Company always seemed to be.

BB: Did the Anaconda Company have particular influence with the Butte delegation?

JR: Oh yes, that was widely known.

BB: How did they do it?

JR: Well, mainly I think because they owned half of Butte. They were the big employer and everything else, so they bought it, in other words, I think.

BB: Are there any legislators that stand out in your mind? Members of the State Senate or State House of Representatives that you could think of that you were especially impressed with?

JR: I know that there's dozens of them but I can't think right now.

BB: Let me give you a few names: John McDonald.

JR: So-so.

BB: Tom Towe.

JR: Great.

BB: What do you remember about Tom Towe?

JR: He was liberal and he stayed liberal. I mean, he was liberal on every issue that came along. He was very bright and he had the guts to speak up and do what he could. And he was outnumbered a lot of times, but Tom never ran away from a political issue.

BB: And issues that he might have been involved in might have been like, the coal tax issue?

JR: He was interested in everything, everything. Tom's a wide-thinking man, he really is.

BB: There was an important issue in the legislature during the period when he was there, and before the time he was there, called territorial integrity. It was a dispute between the rural electric coops and the Montana Power Company. Do you remember much about that?

JR: No. Well, that was a running thing. As far as I know, probably still is. I don't know. Are you speaking in terms of Towe?

BB: Yes, I just know that Towe had some involvement in that issue, and I know Gordon McOmber did, and I know Jack Anderson did.

JR: Yes, well it was a Democratic issue. I mean, you know, Democrats didn't go for the Anaconda Company.

BB: Of course that would have involved the Montana Power Company more than the Anaconda Company. Did you see them as similar?

JR: No, I misspoke. I meant Montana Power Company. But the Anaconda is, you know, same difference.

BB: You identify them together. You see them as usually cooperating with each other.

JR: Yes.

BB: There were journalists in Montana who operated independently of the Anaconda Company, which owned most of the daily newspapers in the state. The Anaconda Company owned the dailies except for the *Great Falls Tribune*, and you worked for the *Great Falls Tribune*. What do you remember about that?

JR: What part of it?

BB: The independence of the *Great Falls Tribune* as opposed to the Anaconda Company papers? Were those of you who worked for the *Tribune* proud of the fact that you were independent?

JR: Darn right. Yes, the *Great Falls Tribune* was for anybody who had wide-thinking—the *Trib* had no trouble whatsoever getting employees. A lot of it was—and they weren't raucous Democrats either, but they certainly would take after Anaconda Company, and others that most of the Montana papers were scared to death of.

BB: The Anaconda Company bought the newspapers. They just bought them, so, they purchased them, but did they have a controlling influence beyond the papers that they owned? Were there other newspapers that they influenced?

JR: Oh sure, I think so, because small papers didn't want to get a big paper mad at them. So, you know, the *Billings Gazette* and—what was the Butte paper?

BB: *Butte [Montana] Standard*.

JR: Ones like that, why, there was just too much difference between them. But the small papers, you always find some that are playing that they're part of the big stuff and of course they're not, but the editor or the publisher probably, or the owner of the paper is Republican, and he thinks that way with his paper.

BB: Now, do you remember a fellow by the name of Harry Billings? Harry and Gretchen Billings?

JR: Oh yes, Gretchen.

BB: They ran an independent newspaper, I think, called *The People's Voice*.

JR: *The People's Voice*.

BB: Any thoughts or recollections about that?

JR: Oh yes. Read every word they ever put in. I admired them because they were the absolute opposite of the Anaconda Company, you know. They were as outspoken as they could be, far more so than the other big newspapers.

BB: How were they different from the *Great Falls Tribune*?

JR: More brazen about their thoughts and bad thoughts for the Anaconda Company and the good thoughts for what they were doing and so on. And they were good journalists.

BB: Do you remember Miles Romney? The *Western News* in Hamilton?

JR: In Hamilton...yes, I remember him in time with Hamilton.

BB: He had a newspaper somewhat similar to the Billings newspaper, to *The People's Voice*, Harry and Gretchen Billings' paper. Now you say you worked at the Glendive newspaper for a while too.

JR: Very short time, six months. But it was my first out of journalism school.

BB: Was it owned by the Anaconda Company?

[The Glendive Ranger was owned by George Hoole, a high school principal, from 1924-1949. He sold it to Kenneth Crabb, who in turn sold it to Kenneth Byerly, who converted it to a daily in 1954.]

JR: No, it was owned by—I had it on the tip of my tongue—but a family from Iowa. The son was the editor and publisher, and it was a good experience for me because he just turned over the editorial side of the paper. Just stayed home.

BB: So you pretty much got to run the paper?

JR: Yes, except for the advertising. I just went at it.

BB: It was a great experience for you then, it sounds like.

JR: Yes, it was.

BB: Did you write any bold editorials?

JR: No, he wrote the editorials but his editorial writing was just advertising for the papers and assorted stuff. But he never came down. He had me over to his house when he wanted to talk to me and that type of stuff, but he—

BB: So you pretty much ran the newspaper?

JR: Yes. He walked out and left it. A fellow, Frank Winkler, was head of the backshop [The backshop is the name for the area where newspaper printers set type.] and he spotted me right away as, what do you call a green...

BB: A greenhorn?

JR: A greenhorn. He just gave me all kinds of fits because he enjoyed it. He liked me but he could pull things on me. Later he went to the University Press and I was there too in journalism school while he was working in the backshop.

BB: And at the *Great Falls Tribune*, you were there for? What? Six years?

JR: Five and a half or six.

BB: And that was before the Second World War?

JR: Well, I left—

BB: Was it after you got out of the Navy?

JR: No, no, no—before. I graduated from high school when I was 15 or 16 in April, and I went to the University for that quarter, the last quarter, and I thought I could get [inaudible] in the Navy, you know? I didn't think there would be any stalling around with that and I signed up for the Navy and it was—

BB: When did you graduate from high school, what year?

JR: In '44. Well, in '44...No, I'm getting mixed up. Yes, I was born in '28 so I was 16. Yes.

BB: So you worked for the Anaconda Company—I don't mean the Anaconda Company—you worked for the *Great Falls Tribune* probably in the late '40s, early '50s?

JR: Yes.

BB: Scotty James was the publisher?

JR: No, Scotty then was the boss of the local side of the paper. He was—

BB: There was a guy named Warden?

JR: Yes, Bob Warden. Dummy.

BB: Bob Warden was the publisher then?

JR: Yes.

BB: And what about Bob Warden?

JR: He was a dummy. Alex was the brain.

BB: Who's Alex?

JR: Alex Warden. He owned the place and he put that brother of his where he couldn't hurt anybody.

BB: So Alex and Bob owned the paper together?

JR: No, I don't—I'm not sure that Bob had much to say, but everybody knew that he was one of the owners. But it was Alex that—

BB: That was the real brains of the operation?

JR: Oh yes, and he could care less about the news part of it.

BB: He was just concerned that it made money?

JR: Yep. He had his office downstairs with the advertising people and everything else. In a way, I'm glad he did it because we could put out a decent newspaper with him downstairs.

BB: And Bob Warden didn't try to influence you much either?

JR: Oh, once in a while he'd come up with some idea and as soon as he got out of the room we'd talk it over. How are we going to get out of this one, you know? Somebody would come up with—Do you know Ray Fenton?

BB: I heard you mention him earlier.

JR: He worked on the *Leader*. They owned both the—

BB: The morning paper and the afternoon paper.

JR: Yes. And what was I going to tell you about Fenton...?

BB: He was independent of Bob Warden? Let you work around Bob Warden when you needed to?

JR: Oh yes. He worked on the desk. I was the swing editor. Whenever the sports editor had his day off, I was sports editor. When the state guy was on his days off, I was state editor. But my deal worked out real nice because I put out the Sunday and Monday paper, so as of Sunday night, about midnight, when you get the paper put together for Monday, I'm gone. And then I didn't go back to work until I filled in for the sports editor on Thursday at five o'clock.

BB: So you had the first part of the week off?

JR: Yes.

BB: But you were always busy on the weekends?

JR: Oh yes, busy on the weekends.

BB: When I think of the *Great Falls Tribune*, I think of Scotty James.

JR: Yes.

BB: Why? Didn't Scotty James—wasn't he the editorialist and the news editor of the paper, or did that happen later?

JR: It must have. I'm trying to think of what Scotty was doing, but he was working days, see, so I wasn't that—but it seemed like to me he was attached more to the *Leader*, the afternoon newspaper. And they were across the street in a little place.

BB: Did you ever have any association with Pat Gilfeather?

JR: Yes.

BB: Who was he? Lawyer and legislator from Great Falls?

JR: Yes, and very influential in liberal Democratic things.

BB: How about Leo Graybill?

JR: Leo Graybill? Oh, gosh. I knew him too. He's kind of the type that—he's a Graybill, you know? That's a different breed, or a better breed or something.

BB: Aristocratic?

JR: Yes. I just didn't have that much to do with him and I was glad I didn't. He had a lot of influence, the family did.

BB: Any overall thoughts in perspective as you look back on your career? You mentioned your public relations firm helped a number of political candidates and their political campaigns, and that you were involved to some extent with Senator Metcalf's campaign?

JR: Yes, with Metcalf, Mansfield. They were both clients. We did a lot of city, county, and state work.

BB: Arnold Olson?

JR: Arnold Olson—I don't remember that we handled anything for Arnold, but we might have.

BB: John Melcher?

JR: Yes, John Melcher.

BB: Did you ever meet John Melcher personally?

JR: Oh yes. I have this little story about John Melcher [inaudible]. What the devil was I doing? But I was down there someplace doing something, and the planes land there, and so I just walked over to him in the airport to watch the plane come in. Off comes Melcher and he said, "Jesus Christ, you go everywhere." [laughs] He comes down off the—what do you call the thing?

BB: The ramp?

JR: The ramp. And he was just amazed to see me in Forsyth.

BB: And that was when you had your public relations job?

JR: Yes.

BB: Did you have a working association with Clyde Jarvis?

JR: Oh yes, all the time. I worked in Farmers Union when Clyde was there and then—what in the devil did...? Well, I wrote all of his stuff for his—

BB: "Featuring the Facts?"

JR: "Featuring the Facts," yes.

BB: So he gave the radio broadcast but you wrote most of that, huh?

JR: Oh, I wrote it all.

BB: Is that right?

JR: Yes.

BB: Once, when I was a young legislator, when I first started out in the State House of Representatives, there were several votes where I was out of line with the rest of my party. One of them—a couple of votes, I think, in fact—on territorial integrity, and there may have been a vote or two on the coal tax. Once I voted contrary to most of the members of my party on a crop hail insurance bill. So when Clyde Jarvis would give his radio reports, sometimes he would identify the legislators and how they voted. These could have been your words, Joe, because I think on a couple of different broadcasts he'd say, "And then the only Republican to help out on this piece of legislation was poor old lonesome Bob Brown."

I thought at the time, "Well, I don't know how he intends this but that probably wasn't helping me, you know?" He may not have intentionally meant it to hurt me—or you may not have, I don't know if you wrote the words, but it—

JR: Oh, I wrote every single one of his scripts.

BB: Well then that “lonesome Bob Brown” was probably yours.

JR: Well, Clyde never held back on telling me what he wanted to put in there, you know, but I wrote them all.

BB: So Clyde Jarvis was the—he later served as a member of the Public Service Commission, but when you worked with him he was the lobbyist and the spokesperson in Montana for the Farmers Union and he had a radio broadcast that occurred, I think a couple of times a week or something, called “Featuring the Facts,” and you wrote those “Featuring the Facts” broadcasts for him.

JR: And I forget what Republican it was—a big time Republican—that called it “Fracturing the Facts.”

BB: “Fracturing the Facts.” [laughs] Well, that sounds like it could have been Bill Mather from Billings. He had that kind of a sense of humor.

JR: I don’t know who it was.

BB: Jim Lucas?

JR: No, Lucas was a big buddy of mine.

BB: You know Jim Lucas?

JR: Yes, we went to college at the same time.

BB: Oh good. I’m going to interview him. I haven’t done so yet, but I’m going to interview him.

JR: Tell him “hi.”

BB: I will. What questions should I ask him?

JR: Haven’t seen him for years. When I was working for, I think, the Grain Growers—of course when I was in Miles City, too, on the *Star* for six months—

BB: You worked for the *Miles City Star* also?

JR: Yes. And I saw Jim all the time. Yes, he’s a great guy and one of the brightest people. Stuck it out in Miles City. I don’t know why, but...

BB: Well he was a pretty prominent state legislator for a while, Speaker of the House.

JR: Yes.

BB: Why was he never governor?

JR: Did he ever run?

BB: No, he didn't run, but I know he was interested in running.

JR: Well, he probably didn't get the backing that he wanted so he didn't announce.

BB: Do you remember the sales tax issue?

JR: Yes.

BB: Do you remember that at all in association with Lucas?

JR: No. Was he pro-sales tax?

BB: Yes.

JR: Yes, that would hurt politically.

BB: Yes, that would hurt politically. Did you ever know Jim Murry, the labor leader?

JR: Oh, yes.

BB: How did you know him?

JR: Probably politically, to begin with, but we were good friends, Jim and me. We got along real good. And then he left. Is he still the head of the...?

BB: No, he's retired now.

JR: He was a guy that I liked because he said what he wanted to say.

BB: You admire outspokenness, obviously.

JR: Yes. He was good at it.

BB: Are there any other people that you could think of—legislators or lobbyists or so on—that were outspoken in that same way, and that you admired? Pat Williams?

JR: Oh yes. Yes, Pat Williams was—how many times was he re-elected?

BB: He served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 18 years. A long time.

JR: I just thought he was perfect, and I still do hear from Pat once in a while. He's my kind of guy, he really is. Doesn't he run the Metcalf—I mean Mansfield—museum or something in Missoula now?

BB: Well, I see him fairly frequently. He and I both are with the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West at the University of Montana. So he has a job similar to mine.

JR: Oh, and it's full time?

BB: Yes.

JR: Well, I think he's still attached—maybe he does it on the side or something—with the Mansfield—

BB: Oh, the Mansfield Center for Pacific Studies?

JR: I think so, something like that.

BB: He could be on the board. That's very possible.

JR: I think he helped us establish it.

BB: Well our conversation, the one we're having now, will be in the Mansfield Library archives, and that's in the same building. Well, Joe, as you look back over your experiences in politics in Montana, what would you change about Montana if you could? Maybe I should ask you the question this way: what are good things we did? What was an especially good public policy decision we made or an especially bad one we made?

JR: The state?

BB: Yes.

JR: Well, I'm glad they kept it agricultural, and that goes for an awful lot of people in Montana. I didn't want to be swamped by cities. No, I can't really answer you.

BB: What advice would you give liberal Democrats as we look into the future?

JR: [laughs] Keep trying!

BB: Would you ask them to emphasize anything in particular, or de-emphasize anything in particular? What should they stand strong for? What kinds of things?

JR: Well, they're strong in agriculture, you know, through the Farmers Union, but it's a split audience. I don't know. I would just—I've been a liberal all my life and Montana's politics are the opposite of that, to me—

BB: Although that wasn't always the case, was it? Montana's politics were more similar to yours 30 years ago than they are now, would you say that?

JR: I think so. I think it's going the wrong way anyway.

BB: Anything else in conclusion?

JR: Yes: "Conclusion."

BB: [laughs]. Okay, all right. Sure appreciate it, Joe. Thank you so much.

JR: I'm afraid to look—what time is it?

BB: Our interview lasted about 50 minutes.

[End of Interview]