

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 396-046
Interviewee: Ted Schwinden
Interviewer: Bob Brown
Date of Interview: August 18, 2006
Project: Bob Brown Oral History Collection

Bob Brown: Okay, we're now recording. This is Bob Brown and I'm interviewing former Governor Ted Schwinden. Governor Schwinden was governor of Montana from 1981 to 1989. We're conducting this interview by telephone on August, 18, 2006. Governor Schwinden is speaking from his home in Phoenix, Arizona. Good morning Governor Schwinden.

Ted Schwinden: Good morning.

BB: I guess maybe my first question would be...maybe I could just ask you to begin with what got you interested in politics and public affairs that led you ultimately to become our state's governor?

TS: Bob, I'm not entirely sure, although probably my first exposure to political discussions was when I was quite young. I'm talking about when I was seven to 10 years old when my parents, who were both Republicans, used to go to wish (?) parties that were sponsored by the local Republican Party in Wolf Point. I picked up a few comments about politics there. There wasn't that much, although I did have a teacher in high school, a woman who had never married who taught American history. She taught it in a way that challenged some of the long-held myths about America. She didn't talk politics in terms of Democrat and Republican. She taught it in terms of the kinds of issues that this country has faced over the years.

I'm sure that probably initially stimulated my interest that continued on until I got into college. By then, I was interested. You can't really go to the University of Montana without being exposed to political issues and political personnel. I remember very well the appearance of Tom Dewey in 1948, which was the first time that Jean and I voted in a presidential election. Later on, Alben Barkley, Truman's choice for Vice President came and by then I was pretty darn interested. I had not really thought about personal venture into the public office. That didn't happen really until after I had finished the training down at the University of Minnesota in history and economics.

I had come back to Wolf Point and taken over the family farm. One of my good friends was the attorney that handled our legal affairs, my farm, my folks' estate and so forth. On the day before the filing deadline in 1958, I was in meeting him about some issues that dealt with these legal matters of the family. As I was prepared to leave, Baxter [Larson] said, "Ted, I want to ask you if you would consider running for state representative from Roosevelt County." My immediate response was, "There's no way. Jean and I are trying to get our feet on the ground out there on the farm." He said, "You go home and think about it over night. Make a decision after you've talked to Jean."

I don't remember the discussion with Jean, but anyhow I went in the next day. Even though Baxter told me that there was little likelihood that I would win against a very popular Republican incumbent Chris Tange, I decided to run. I think we spent about 45 dollars over the course of the campaign. Surprisingly, at least I think to many people, I won the '58 election and sent me to the legislature.

BB: Wow, what an interesting story.

TS: It was really one person. I never had a crowd clamoring for my—

BB: What was the lawyer's name?

TS: Baxter Larson. He's retired with his wife to Billings and quite frankly Bob, I don't know whether they're still alive or not. [He died in 2002.]

BB: Ted, what was the name of the teacher?

TS: Belle Donehoo- D-O-N-E-H-O-O, I suppose.

BB: If you could think of a person who probably pointed you in the direction of making you think about public issues, it would be her.

TS: For example, I think of a little answer I wrote once that, America, sort of the old thing about "We won every war we were ever involved with." This was before Vietnam of course. Anyhow, after class she said, "Ted I'd like to speak with you a minute, please. It's very hard to call the War of 1812 an American victory. More likely it was an American escape from possible defeat." She challenged her students to think before reading the newspaper and accepting it as gospel or what somebody told you on the street.

BB: You mentioned that your mom and dad were Republicans. Do you suppose that her causing you to think caused you to maybe question somewhat, and depart somewhat, from your roots in your family?

TS: Even though my parents were, what I would call, strong Republicans, they did support B.K. Wheeler. I guess arguably he was a different kind of Democrat. Anyway, I think probably the party switch came after I was married in '46. We were living over at Missoula. My wife's parents were very strong Democrats. Some of that invariably rubbed off on me. My brother had become fairly active in politics. I had some suasions (?) and I think there's some possibility that if I had been in a state in which the Republican Party was more moderate, maybe things would be different. There were just some things happening. As you know, we had that period in the early—of course the [James] Murray campaign had been brutal, the Red Web over Montana.

BB: Yes 1954.

TS: Yes. There was some of that still left, you know, after I got in the legislature. It cemented my emergence as a Democrat albeit what some people call "Hi-line" Democrats, supportive of social issues and generally fiscally cautious. I don't like to spend other peoples' money.

BB: I know that you earned the respect of many Republicans in the legislature when I was a legislator because of your reputation for being a wise steward of the public's money.

TS: Yes. Of course some people even said that I handle my own the same way.

BB: When you first arrived in the legislature in 1959, the Anaconda Company was still an important presence. Do you have any thoughts or impressions of the Anaconda Company during that period of time?

TS: Well, I guess some. Anaconda had two lobbyists, one for Republicans and one for Democrats. So I used to visit with Glen Carney from time to time, who was the Democratic Party lobbyist. He, in my opinion, was a very responsible lobbyist. I remember an encounter with Glen in '61 during the first Nutter session in which dramatic cuts in state government services were happening. I happened to run into Carney early in that session. I said, "Anaconda Company must be clapping their hands in glee over the Nutter proposals."

He said, "Not at all. What the Anaconda Company wants is--they recognize that inevitably the costs of government will rise. They don't like to see dramatic changes in direction. It's very hard for a business to protect its own future if one session dramatically increases taxes and the next one cuts them significantly." So anyway, the Anaconda Company was still there. The infamous room at the Anaconda Company at the old Placer Hotel on the sixth or seventh floor was still in existence.

The ties between the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company were still fairly strong, although from talking to legislators who had been there before, they were saying to me that they saw less of the dual cooperative lobbying than in previous sessions. Of course in '61, just two years later after the '59 session, the pretty clean break-- at least the visible break between Anaconda and Montana Power took place over some issues in which they simply did not agree. I suspect from that time on, the influence of both probably diminished. Certainly the Anaconda Company's influence did after it rid itself of its newspapers. It really proceeded on a different course.

BB: Were there any other interests or organizations—

TS: I can't hear you Bob.

BB: Were there other interests or organizations that might have been competing with or rivaling the big corporations, the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company?

TS: It's really a poor connection right now. I'm having trouble hearing you.

BB: Okay is that better?

TS: Yes that helps.

BB: I'm just curious to know if maybe the Farmers Union or the AFL-CIO or other groups and organizations may have also been effective and influential in the legislature when you were there in 1959 and '61?

TS: Yes, I would say so. Both the Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union had people on site most, if not all, of the time. Labor; AFL-CIO were very active, I suspect, in the sessions before and to the present day. The Montana Stockgrowers Association, because of its long-term alliance with the Anaconda Company, certainly had a presence particularly in '61. One of the things I remember is often when the legislature had adjourned for the day, a group of Stockgrower folks--Clyde Hawks--there'd be about half a dozen cowboys sitting there with their feet up on the desk in a circle. It was one of the high points of the Stockgrowers. They were very active in the sessions I was in.

BB: Was this in the Placer Hotel lobby?

TS: No, this was in the House. Yes, a couple of senators would come over--Bill Mackay, Clyde Hawks and Mark Etchart. God, I don't remember the rest of them. There were about six or seven of them. I thought it was interesting because they did play a significant role in the '61 session, which as you probably have heard from other governors, was very conservative. I guess that's all I'd comment there.

BB: Just a couple of things before we leave that era in your life—

TS: I can't hear. You must be moving away from the mic.

BB: Oh, I'm talking right into it. Is that better?

TS: I'll be darned. No, it's just a poor connection I guess. Okay, speak slowly and as loud as you can.

BB: Okay. What are your impressions of Governor Aronson?

TS: Hugo Aronson was really one of the good guys. I didn't have a long time to get to know him, just in the '59 session. To me, the Galloping Swede really embodied the American promise that any kid can grow up to be president. His history in terms of who he was and what he did is really remarkable. I don't know whether it could happen in other states, but it happened in

Montana. I remember the first meeting I had with Governor Aronson. One of the things my colleague in the Senate from Roosevelt County, Stan Nees, did apparently was to always go up and have a brief visit with the governor before the session.

He asked me if I wanted to come along. I was awed by the governor's office. I sat with Senator Nees. I thought we'd probably be there for five minutes. We expressed our good wishes to him. I think it lasted an hour and a half. We heard everything from his stories of his campaign to the year that he cut winter wheat in a blizzard that was moving in up there on his ranch. When we concluded the meeting, he just said, "Anytime you fellows..." of course he did it with the accent, "If you need a little help, come and see the Swede."

I guess my last memory of Governor Aronson is...I'll tell you the other thing Aronson did. I got appointed by Forrest Anderson as the State Land Commissioner in '69. I guess probably a couple of months later, one day the receptionist out front, very excited and nervous said, "Governor Aronson is here." I said, "Well, have him come in." He came in with Jack Reed, an old friend of his and confidante. We shook hands and he sat down across the desk. He said, "Commissioner, I just want you to know that you are the best appointment that Forrest Anderson has made." He said something like that. It really caught me by surprise. I suppose that's one reason I liked him so well. The last time I saw him Bob, I was over in Billings. I may have been lieutenant governor. I don't remember exactly. I had a speech or something the night before. I stayed in the Northern Hotel. I got up the next morning and went down for breakfast. As I looked around the room, I saw Governor Aronson sitting over at a small table all by himself. I learned later that the Montana Petroleum Association had thrown one of those dinners, "In Honor Of..." type of thing. So I walked over just to say hello and pay my respects. Immediately he said, "You bring your stuff over here and you sit down. We'll have a good visit." He was one of the good people. That's all there is to it.

I say that despite the fact that on the one hand, when we came into session as a heavily Democratic legislature in '59, we faced a deficit that in percentage terms was almost ten percent of the general fund budget. I wanted to make that statement in the light of the kind of governorship the executive branch of Aronson, Nutter, and even Babcock. Those were the days in which the executive branch really exerted minimal power over the budgeting. Hugo used to talk about the 220 boards, bureaus, and commissions who basically acted on their own.

In fairness, what had happened is that Montana had gone into one of its traditional dips, when revenues fall off. Through those three Republican governors, their ability to control the executive branch was certainly limited. I think any assessment of their years as governor has to include that caveat. There were things that they could do using the bully pulpit. There were things that they couldn't do, in many cases, is telling their appointee what they needed to do. The appointee could say, "I don't think so." I think about the Board of Equalization and a whole bunch of those that had authority and minimal loyalty to the governor. In that sense, I can't really evaluate how good a governor Aronson was for that reason because of their limited executive authority.

BB: Now he dealt with a budget deficit problem in 1959 and apparently Nutter must have in 1961 as well. Did you see a difference in the philosophy, leadership, or approach of Nutter from Aronson?

TS: Oh yes. Again, I really did not know Governor Nutter. I probably had met him during the '59 session. I don't know. I don't remember it. I do remember in '61 the same thing happened. Stan Nees came over and said, "Ted do you want to go up and pay the courtesy call to the governor?" I said, "Sure." So we got an appointment. We went upstairs and sat down with him in front of his desk as visitors do. Nutter immediately began to, in a very aggressive way, say, "This is the way it's going to be from now on."

He sort of explained that in very aggressive, and bordering on arrogant, kind of presentation. What I remember about it is that Senator Nees, who was a very mild-mannered and moderate Democrat, I was sitting slightly to his rear. I watched his neck turn red. This had been a colleague in the Senate. Stan had a great deal of respect, as I do, for the office of the governor. He didn't like that kind of lecture. I think had Governor Nutter not been involved in the plane crash a year later, he would have had a lot more problems because of his personal style.

He promised to reorganize the executive branch and cut the costs, all that sort of thing. In the House you can do things you can't do in the Senate. In the Senate in those days, there was always this group of about seven or eight senators from both parties who sort of calmed the overheating of the house, whether it was Democrat or Republican. I think had Nutter continued to serve, he would have run into more and more problems in that respect.

BB: Now he ran for governor in a—

TS: I can't hear you again Bob.

BB: He ran for governor with Tim Babcock as lieutenant governor. Then Babcock succeeded him. Do you have any impressions of Babcock? Was he more similar to Nutter?

TS: I served with Tim in the '59 session. I guess I make kind of the same excuse other than the bully pulpit type thing. It's still under the Babcock administration. He was very limited in what he could actually do. He could talk to the legislature and probably get some things through. When it came to implementing them in the executive branch, it was tough. I think Tim was more of a political animal than Governor Aronson had been. Nutter was too short of years in office to really get a clear idea of what kind of a governor he may have been.

I guess I think of Tim fondly in the sense that it was his '68 campaign in which he pushed very hard as his campaign agenda the idea of broadly expanding the level of state expenditure to deal with the issues. He proposed to fund it with a sales tax. As Harry

Fritz has pointed out in some of the things he's written that I agree with, which is that it had a major impact on state government because of the sales tax issue. It really led to the control of the Democrats for the next 20 years. I don't think Tim meant it that way. The net effect of that was exactly that.

BB: Now you were out of politics from the early 1960s. You came back in Governor Anderson's administration in 1969 after he defeated Babcock in that 1968 election. How did you know Anderson and how did it happen that you came back?

TS: All right. Well, I had met Forrest Anderson once. I was master of ceremonies of a local Democratic Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner during the '68 election campaign. We met just very briefly that evening. That was the last I saw of them until I met with him in his office shortly after I was appointed in April of 1969. I really didn't know him at all. I knew of him by reference but I had never been up to the attorney general's office. I just had no background of time spent with Governor Anderson.

BB: Were you surprised that he contacted you and asked you to be Commissioner of State Lands?

TS: Absolutely, totally surprised. Gordon Bennett called on behalf of the governor and said that the governor would like me to consider taking the appointment of State Land Commissioner. That kind of surprised me because I thought maybe Gordon had misspoken. I had assumed it would be agriculture, being a farmer. He said, "No, it's Commissioner of State Lands. There are some problems we feel in the oil leasing area and we want you in state lands."

I learned much later, probably after the Anderson years in office, that one of the things Governor Anderson apparently did in that period between his election in '68 and his inauguration in '69 is he contacted a fairly large number of people and asked each of them to make recommendations for the top jobs in state government. I was told later that from that list, I guess what he did in some cases, was the more mention there was of an individual, the more likely that Governor Anderson was going to look at them seriously in terms of cabinet post or that sort of thing.

BB: Who were the people that he asked for advice?

TS: I have no idea. I think it was probably after he left office that I learned about the so-called "list."

BB: What are your impressions of Governor Anderson? Is there an experience or story that might kind of typify his leadership style, his approach to being governor?

TS: I guess a couple of thoughts, Bob. After I got to Helena after I had accepted the appointment and made arrangements for somebody else to take care of the farm, within a

couple of days Gordon Bennett called me and said, "I think it would be appropriate to go up and see the governor and thank him for the appointment." That occurred a day or two later. We walked into the office and sat down. I had just begun. There was a little bit of (unintelligible) kind of stuff. Then I had just begun to say, "Governor Anderson I certainly want to thank..." and I think at about that point he interrupted.

He said, "Schwinden, let me tell you something. You run that department and don't bring your problems up to me unless it's critically necessary. Always remember that I speak for this administration." That was my first introduction, really, to Forrest Anderson. Number one, he basically gave department directors the authority to work. He left us alone. There was no politicization or anything like that. He just said, "You run it." Then the other thing is that he was very anxious to go ahead with some ideas that he had, particularly in terms of the reorganization of state government. As you remember, he ran on, "Twenty is plenty."

BB: That was to get around the problem you mentioned earlier.

TS: It bothered Montanans in statehood. There never was a strong executive. By copying the constitutions of other states, we wound up with their traditions instead of creating our own. As I've thought about it since you sent the original invite, to respond in terms of an interview, I think that some history graduate is going to write a thesis master's or document someday examining the Anderson administration. Then that sort of appraisal that they use on the national level about presidents of the past—I think Forrest Anderson, because of what happened during his administration will certainly be rated in the near-great or great.

During his administration, as you and I both know Bob, you always get blamed for it if it goes wrong. You're entitled to some credit when it goes right. Not only did reorganization of the executive branch take place, so that's sort of the first time there was responsibility there, but the new constitution was called for and passed. Forrest signed it right away. There was a controversy over the number of people who had voted meeting the criteria [for passage]. The other thing that Forrest had pushed during his years as attorney general was the need to centralize the investment authority in state government. State lands used to take its money down to the local bank and deposit it. There was no central authority that could handle state funds. Of course that also took place during his administration.

BB: I think the Board of Investments might have been created during his administration.

TS: Yes, he got it through the legislature. I guess the unfortunate things about Governor Anderson's term is very early on, I believe late in his first year as governor, he went to Seattle and had major surgery. To some extent, he never really recovered [from] that. He always had problems that were persistent and embarrassing. He had what they call "dumping syndrome." I'm convinced that's the reason that he didn't seek a second term. It was just too awkward for him and too debilitating and embarrassing. So it certainly affected him while he was governor.

He was very limited in terms of what he could do in terms of public appearance, in terms of time, because of that.

BB: I didn't know that. I knew he had health problems.

TS: He had a health problem that they attempted to fix in Seattle. I guess they fixed it, but one of the results of that kind of surgery is this thing they call a "dumping syndrome." I guess you and I understand the connotation there. That's what really gave him nightmares all the time he was governor.

BB: So he wasn't able to run again primarily for reasons—

TS: I don't know why he decided not to run again. I really don't. The other side of Forrest is Forrest always knew the worm (?) is individual in the world. He had a pretty good temper. One of the things, after I had been there about a year or so, occasionally he would call down from his office—at that time state lands was in the capitol. He'd call down and come through the receptionist, who was always excited about it. He'd get me on the phone and say, "Ted, are you busy?" I said, "Yes," How do you answer that to your boss? What I would do then is go upstairs and sit down in his office. It'd usually be in the mid- to late-afternoon.

Forrest would say, "Ted, I've got a problem." It could be a personal problem. It could have been something in the administration or whatever. He said, "I guess I need to have your views." Before I could even open my mouth in many cases, he would talk the problem through. I think he was using that as a way of arriving at a decision. He talked it out with someone he knew who would be discreet. Occasionally I would get to chip something in, "Yes, that's good. I wouldn't worry about this," that sort of thing.

I maintained my contacts with Governor Anderson after he left office. His mindset was still really conditioned by his health issue. I think it may have ultimately led to the decision that he took at the end. I think he was disappointed that he wasn't able to run a second time and continue the kind of reforms that he wanted to see in the executive branch. It just wasn't meant to be.

BB: So he was succeeded by his lieutenant governor, Tom Judge. You continued to be Commissioner of State Lands in the Judge administration.

TS: Yes, I did. Judge kept most of the Forrest Anderson department directors under the "Twenty is Plenty," the new executive branch as it was reorganized. For better or worse, he kept most of the appointees in place.

BB: He was the first governor under the new constitution and completely reorganized the executive branch of government. Did he allow the same latitude from your point of view to the administrators that Anderson did?

TS: That's a tough question. There was no point that we ever had a discussion as I had with Forrest in which he said, "It's your department. Run it." As far as I was personally concerned, Governor Judge—on the State Land Board and later as his lieutenant governor—was willing to give me substantial authority, everything from the designation of wilderness areas. I headed up the committee in state government which made the recommendations for Congress. I dealt with pretty much all the natural resource issues. When I was lieutenant governor and later when I was commissioner, I don't recall an instance in which the governor interfered with the recommendations of the commissioner on issues of leasing or easement granting and so forth.

BB: Did he have a leadership style that you could kind of describe or that you have an impression of?

TS: I have to think about that, Bob. Each governor has their own style. As I said, Aronson's style was one of being a good guy, maybe even a good old boy. I think almost universally he was liked as an individual. Nutter, as I've indicated, could be pretty abrasive. I think Tim was more of the Aronson style than the Nutter style. I think he made a good number of relationships that had no relationship to running government. It was personal relationships. As I pointed out before, the Babcock administration was quite partisan.

I had in my files in the Land Department a letter from Mary Cheney I think it was, that said all hiring needed to be cleared through her. That's the first I'd heard of that in state government. Anyhow, I don't know about the leadership style. Tom's leadership style— he's more than directing directors. He spent a lot of time directing the public. He really used the bully pulpit in terms—because, as I'll point out in a minute, there were some major changes taking place during his administration. His job as governor, which he did well, was to communicate the need for those changes. I don't know if that's leadership style or not.

BB: Now you became lieutenant governor. You ran for lieutenant governor with him. He obviously knew you and worked with you. So is there a story? How did that come about?

TS: I don't really know how it came about. I honestly don't know. Those kinds of decisions are always made in total privacy at a meeting of which a number of us once met at the mansion in the office there. Tom was talking about getting a lieutenant governor. He mentioned that a couple of his potential choices were in the room. He didn't name the people, but apparently he was going over the same kind of—he was the first governor that had to do that. So there was no formula that you used. I don't know. You'd have to ask Governor Judge why he chose me. I don't know that.

BB: Did he contact you and ask you to run with him?

TS: Yes, he did.

BB: So then you were lieutenant governor under Judge. Then you had to make what had to be a kind of gut-wrenching decision to challenge him in the Democratic primary. Is there a story about that?

TS: Before we do that, I think it's important—the other governors you've asked me more than the leadership style. Tom Judge was the first governor, not only who really presided, under a new constitution and the executive reorganization, the full term. He was playing in a different league now. This is the big leagues. As governor, Tom presided over some of the most significant changes in the quality of life issues that had emerged. My own theory is that one of the things that happened after World War II is that those thousands of young men who went all around the world, into Asia, Europe, as combat participants came back with a different perspective about Montana.

I think it's an overstatement to say that probably before the war, a lot of parents told their kids to get an education and get out, leave Montana. I think Montana began to look much better to returning veterans. It was this new urge to ensure that Montana quality of life would be preserved that not only put it into the Montana constitution but put it into a whole series of major legislation that ranged from the Montana Environmental Policy Act to the Major Facilities Siting Act. There were some really important quality of life pieces of legislation that were a part of the Judge administration, or a result of the Judge administration. To some extent, Governor Judge suffered from, I guess is the word, the allegations regarding the 84,000 dollars in the '72 campaign.

BB: Yes, in the '72 campaign apparently there were some unrecorded contributions to his campaign.

TS: That troubled him all the way through the clear end of his re-election campaign in 1976. To some extent it was a handicap. The other thing that Tom did was that he instituted these governor sessions around the state. He and most of the directors would fly up to Glasgow. It was a different format that I later used. What he would do was conduct a public forum with all the directors sitting up there with him. Then he would invite questions from the audience. He was encouraging public participation and decision-making. That's another—

BB: That was his innovation.

TS: Yes. All governors travel around the state, you know. Tom did it as an initiative.

BB: Other governors have continued that.

TS: Yes, to some extent. I probably had the most comprehensive one. We visited every county except a couple of the big urban ones where those sorts of program didn't work very well—in places like Billings. It was much more adapted to a range of county populations between Carter and probably Hill. You had a better chance to meet the people then. To me, those are the

legacies of the Judge administration. What was the question you asked me right at the end there?

BB: What motivated you to challenge him in the Democratic primary for governor?

TS: Well, I guess the motivation primarily—as you know I was lieutenant governor under Tom’s direction, I handled a lot of the resource issues which began under Anderson’s administration. All of the controversy of the coal reclamation, all those things that I mentioned, came out of those years that Tom was governor. Probably it may have started in the ’79 session. I was lieutenant governor and I didn’t have a steady parade. I had a number of visits, which interestingly were from both the very conservative Democratic part of the legislature but also from the more liberal.

I was getting all kinds of people coming in on the one hand saying how important it would be to the continued support and development of the issues that both Forrest and Tom had initiated, to have a Democratic governor elected in 1980. They said, in effect, they didn’t think that Tom could win a general election. They flattered me by saying they thought I could. Early on, Bob, I knew it happened to Ted James when he challenged a sitting governor. The challenge is just awesome.

BB: Ted James was lieutenant governor under Babcock. He challenged Babcock.

TS: Yes.

BB: Babcock won.

TS: Ted James was one of the more responsible people that I’ve met in my lifetime. It’s tough to beat an incumbent. Although as Joe Lieberman has found, it does happen once in a while. Anyway, I was getting encouragement. I suppose there was some ambition on my part. There always is. You don’t run for those kinds of offices unless you think you can do a good job or a better one than someone else’s.

So during the summer of 1979, the talk became more serious. There were some people in the administration who met with me privately. They urged me to run in ’80. We ran one small little poll that indicated that in a face-to-face race, I’d get my butt whipped. It did indicate some vulnerabilities of Governor Judge in the public’s perception. At least some of the people talking to me felt that those would be the critical math in being able to win the primary.

Whatever happened, nobody was able to totally believe that, Bob. On the day before the election, most of the papers ran an analysis of the Democratic primary in ’80. Not a single one of them predicted anything other than a relatively easy Judge victory. The kindest remark was [Great Falls Tribune Capitol Bureau Chief] Chuck Johnson wrote in the *Tribune*, “No one expects

Schwinden to win. There are some who feel that it might be relatively close.” That was the most positive. There’s a whole bunch of things. I talked it over with the family.

I went through the regular routine of trying to touch all the bases. I talked to people outside of state government after these initial visits, people out in the public sector, businesspeople, and others. I generally found a very positive response to running. So it’s a combination of all those things, input from important legislators, the public, encouragement from some members of the Judge administration, and then my own ambition and enough ego that says, “Hey, I can do a better job.”

BB: There are some people who think that Mount St. Helen’s eruption might have been mishandled a little bit by Governor Judge, that he might have overreacted a little bit. It occurred just days before the primary election. That might have been at least a small factor in your victory over him. Have you ever heard that speculation?

TS: Yes. A lot of people talk about a number of small issues that, taken together, suddenly become the characteristics of a candidate. It wasn’t only Mount St. Helen’s because Tom was in Canada at that time. Jim Flynn was trying to handle the governor’s office response to the Mount St. Helens.

BB: Jim Flynn was the Chief of Staff?

TS: Yes. There had been other instances before. One of the most infamous was the carpet in the entry room in the governor’s office. Have you forgotten about that?

BB: I think he—

TS: Yes, they bought some carpet.

BB: Very expensive.

TS: Several hundred dollars a yard. Ultimately the Montana Wool Growers paid the state back for it. Dave Lewis had responsibility for the purchase. Tom went through a break-up with his wife during the primary. One of the other characteristics of Governor Judge is that he disliked confrontation in terms of issues like that. What was the sign that Harry Truman had on his desk?

BB: “The buck stops here.”

TS: Yes. I think that sign probably wasn’t appropriate for Tom’s desk. Some of those things that I’m talking about—it’s always a number of small factors unless you do something like John Bonner, which is wind up in a jail in New Orleans. That alone was a classic event. Have you ever

heard the story, Bob? A little off base here, but Bonner was governor elected in 1948. From all indications I've had, he was a very popular governor.

John was a very smart guy before he went down there. During the '47 legislative session, apparently the Republicans did not feel they could mount a significant challenge to Bonner. I'm told by reliable sources that Hugo Aaronson and Fred Robinson from Phillips County, who is a very prestigious guy, flipped a coin. The loser had to run against Bonner. I think that's a true story. I obviously wasn't there. I really heard it on good authority. Of course the Swede ran and Bonner went to jail. The Swede got elected.

BB: Wow. What a story. So you won the Democratic primary in 1980. It was a remarkable news story. Then you went into the general election. Your opponent was Jack Ramirez. Do you remember much about that campaign, the issues that were involved or your strategy, anything about it?

TS: Well, I guess when I announced for governor, some of the press kidded me about it, I said, "I believe I can bring a management style to state government that it badly needs. The first thing that I'm going to have to do is begin to restore the confidence of the Montana public in government, state government in particular, and in the governor's office also." That's basically what I tried to sell. I know some of the media people who are very good questioned whether you can run on management.

Of course it was more than that. It was also reputation. Because of the environmental controversy in the early '70s, particularly in the coal mining area, after the talk about a multiple number of power plants fueled by Montana coal, I certainly had a name identification that was a heck of a lot better in 1980 than it was in 1969 when I got the Land Commissioner's job.

I had built up—I'm not saying a reputation, but at least a feasibility and name recognition that was certainly important, which you have to have. You either have to use money to buy it or else you have to serve in some kind of capacity that gets you a fair amount of publicity. We made a determination then that we would run as positive of a campaign as possible. I don't know. Jack took a couple of shots in the famous "Road to nowhere." I don't know that it had much affect. It certainly solidified my support in Scobey, Montana. I guess what I remember is that more than any other race, I'm sure in Montana history to this date, I believe we either had 26 or 28 debates.

Everywhere from the Northern Hotel in Billings before an assemblage of about 300 people to Jordan, Montana, we just had debate after debate after debate. I don't know who won the debates. I do know that throughout the entire series of debates, Jack was always a gentleman. We never got into name-calling. We tried to point out our differences. Actually, on a personal basis, we were reasonably good friends. I didn't know Jack that well before he ran. I think it would be safe to say that we didn't do too much to damage that relationship in the course of the campaign itself.

BB: The 1980 election campaign was a pretty good year for Republicans. Ronald Reagan carried overwhelmingly. So you had to run in the face of that against a pretty-well financed and a fairly well known Republican opponent. Do you think people were ripe for a change? If you had to try and describe why you think you won in 1980, are there any impressions you have about that?

TS: I don't know. You never really know what makes up people's minds, particularly in Montana where there are some pretty fierce independent thinking out among the public. Clearly with the popularity of Reagan, I was running against the stream. On the other hand, I think the time that I had spent over the years meeting with the Montana public, listening to individuals about their problems, I think the openness—I've always felt that one of the important things that I did was to open the governor's office to almost 100 percent visibility.

You ought to remember that every meeting in my office was listed out on the front desk. Every meeting was open to the public, including the press. The only ones that were exempt from that policy were those who exercised their right to privacy in the constitution. They wanted to talk about a personal issue or something like that. In my mind, people learned to trust government when they can see inside government. I remember one instance, Bob. Paul Schmechel, who was then the president or whatever of Montana Power Company, called one day from Butte and asked if he could see me the next day. He said he'd be happy to stop [at] the mansion around noon.

I said, "Well Paul, how about we meet down at the Windbag?" [A restaurant/saloon on Last Chance Gulch.] We met the next day and came up to the mansion. We rode down to the Windbag together and sat down together at the table. I will never forget the sidelong glances that were made that day. I guess I used it as an illustration. If Paul Schmechel had met with me in the mansion privately, but someone had seen him going in, then suspicions would have started to rise: "What's Schwinden doing with the power company?" By being down there, they assumed that, "If they're eating here, there can't be much in the way of wheeling and dealing going on." I think there was a fair perception among the public that I was accessible and open. I believe it had a positive impact on the reputation of the administration and my role in it.

BB: When you got that job, what a big job and a big responsibility and an enormous honor. Do you have any recollections of your impressions of the job when you first entered it? Some of your early impressions of what it was like to be governor?

TS: When I went in to see Forrest Anderson just before the election in 1972, when Tom ran the first time, I went in and I asked Forrest what kind of a governor Tom Judge would be. He said that "It's a total mistake to make an evaluation of what somebody will do when they come in here and sit in this chair in the same way that any lawyer who gets elected to the district court. You never know what kind of a judge he's going to be until he puts his robe on." I think that's true. Even though I had multiple accesses under both the Judge and the Anderson

administration, you never know what it's really like until you know that, instead of providing advice, you've got to provide a decision.

I think for some people, that's the hardest thing to do. For better or worse, I really like to make decisions. I think what helped me, Bob, is I always understood that I was going to make some bad ones. Nobody makes good decisions 100 percent of the time. You do your best. Actually I found that the job as governor over eight years, totally rewarding, totally exciting, fulfilling. There were a few bad days, but by and large, I think being the governor of a small-population state like Montana or Wyoming, Vermont, you just have a different governorship than if you're Jerry Brown in California or Mario Cuomo in New York. Those people are just like presidents.

BB: You're more directly in contact with the people who are affected by your decisions.

TS: I've said sometimes that I think by the time I had finished my term in office that I probably had met by eye contact or physical contact, a majority of Montana voters, their wife or husband, that sort of thing. I met an awful lot of people who had a chance to evaluate me as a person upfront and close.

BB: You've kind of done it already Ted, but how would you describe the job of governor, the office of governor? Is there anything you'd add to what you've told me?

TS: I don't know. You know you're always going to get second-guessed. You're going to have disappointments. You're going to work your hind-end off. In a state as large as Montana, even with a state plane, I spent about 250 hours a year on that [Beechcraft] Duke, which became almost like an office in the air. That gives you an idea. Even in the state plane, state travel is still exhausting. It was a lot of getting up early and getting back late at night. I liked to be home with Jean any day that I possibly could. So it's physically demanding. It's mentally demanding. I guess that's what a good job is all about, Bob.

I didn't want the job as a cake-walk. I always think about Stan Stephens and the problems he had in the office. I think part of the reason that he had problems is—I believe sincerely that Stan believed the governor's office was a lot like the legislature. He underestimated, I believe, the kinds of pressure that exist there. It was a different reason for Judy Martz, who was a really warm and decent person. I think Judy was just inexperienced. Without exposure to the nitty-gritty of politics and legislative folks, all that sort of thing, it's difficult if you come in there as a stranger. I think it's pretty remarkable that Schweitzer has been able to build up the level of public support that he has with really none of that experience, never served in the legislature or public office. His experience basically is campaigning.

BB: He's connected well with the people, no question about that.

TS: He's connected well with the public. There's no question. He worked his butt off doing it.

BB: You were governor during some tough economic times. When you were governor was a tougher economic time than the Judge years, just to compare.

TS: I would agree with that. I think throughout Tom's administration, he had surplus revenues. The state was growing rapidly and tax collections were good. Tom left me a 60 million-dollar general fund rainy-day surplus. Despite the hard economic times, I left the same amount when I left in 1989. I can remember the day that Dave Hunter, who was the budget director, came to my office. He said, "Governor, we've got a problem." I said, "We've got a lot of problems." He said, "This one is pretty serious."

It looks now, based on Terry Johnson's estimates, that we're going to have a significant drop in revenue." I don't remember the numbers now. He said, "We're going to have to do something about it." As a result of that, what I did is utilize that authority that was— that was legislative, not constitutional—to make executive cuts in budgets. I did that. I think I cut them either 10 percent or 15 percent. I don't remember anymore. I did that almost immediately because Dave and Terry Johnson's prognostication was that it was not going to get better. It was going to get worse.

I got some pretty severe reaction particularly from the university system over that. I think the other thing that it did, while it was painful, it was also educational in the sense that all of the institutions, maybe even the universities, started looking again at what you have to do in terms of budget making. You've got to establish priorities. Where are you going to spend the first dollar? Where are you going to spend the last one? As a result of that, we kept expenditures basically under control. As I said, I left government in 1989 to the legislature of that year with the same level of modest surplus that Tom had left for me.

BB: You had to do some cutting.

TS: Yes I had to do some cutting.

BB: To make that possible. You were pretty adverse to tax increases as I recall too.

TS: Yes. I talked earlier in this interview about the Hi-Line Democrats who shared this sort of strong support of social issues, like taking care of the needy in the institutions and that sort of thing. It was always balanced by this strong desire of those people to keep the cost down. In fact, I signed a tax bill in 1959 with Pat Gilfeather that raised taxes to pay for the 10 or 12 million dollar deficit that we had at that time. So there are times that taxes are necessary. Obviously they're necessary to support government every year. I don't think I raised taxes unless it's required by genuine need. I guess that's instinctive in somebody who's fiscally conservative.

BB: I think that's your reputation as someone who is a fiscal conservative.

TS: I lost you completely.

BB: I think you're thought of as a fiscal conservative.

TS: Yes I think that's true.

BB: You'd accept that?

TS: Yes.

BB: How would you summarize your terms as governor?

TS: They were wonderful. It's got to be the best political job in the world. I'd far rather be governor of Montana than president of the United States. As a history and political science person I'm very much conscious that public service is an honorable profession that draws all kinds of good people. I would mention some of them if it's all right. When I first got there in '59, I made the acquaintance of people like Jim Wood and Francis Bardanoue, of course, Virgil Hanks on the Democratic side.

On the Republican side, Charlie Mahoney, who was gracious enough a day or two after I sat down in my chair to come over and say, "Do you got a minute?" I said, "Sure." I didn't know what he wanted. Then he said, "I've been in this legislature for quite a few years. I am a Republican but I want you to know that any time you have a question on procedure, process, or anything else that is relevant to your responsibilities, I'm happy to provide any kind of assistance that I can straight up and face to face." I wish the U.S. Congress had that kind of relationship.

BB: Maybe it did back in that period.

TS: It probably did. I remember old Jack Brenner, who was probably about as conservative rancher as you could get. He called me over one time and the fact was, what we talked about was, he laid it right straight on the line. It was totally honest. He needed a little bit of help and he explained why. I tried to give him a little help.

BB: That's when you were a legislator?

TS: That's when I was in the legislature. I think we're headed toward real trouble at the national level with the kind of hard-line partisanship that's there now created by some things you and I can talk about here in a minute when you get into the, "Where have we been in this century and where are we going?"

BB: Are there individuals you can think of that are especially prominent in your memory from when you were governor, maybe legislators or other public officials perhaps that stand out in your memory?

TS: As any governor probably says, I felt I had some really good members of my cabinet. We never had a scandal in eight years, which is pretty unusual considering the number of state employees. One of the things that I always did as governor was that I had a few people who I will not name who were private individuals both Democrat and Republican. Some people were there who really didn't much care about politics that I would call from time to time or they would call me. If they called me on something they felt was wrong, they'd say, "Ted you're dead wrong on this one."

I had good advice from outside the government circle. I had some legislators who, you know I was very close to, like Francis Bardanoue. We came in the same year and met that first night and remained good friends until he died here years ago. There have been some people over the years that I really think are remarkable that served in the legislature on both sides of the aisle. I've mentioned a short list from way back in the early days. People like Matt Himsl and Bill Mathers from Miles City were a pleasure to work with, even though we often disagreed.

BB: When you look back, is there a particular accomplishment or something that you're especially proud of in your administration as governor?

TS: I guess in some ways, one of the things that I not only provided the idea [for], but got it into the legislature and passed and eventually made it part of the constitution, is the Resource Indemnity Trust. When I was in the State Land Department, I would often think that instead of animosity toward Anaconda and what it might or might not [have] done in the past, what really irked me is that while on the one hand natural resource extraction companies, whether oil, coal, copper, take a resource which we will never have again. While it paid some taxes, I didn't think we ever really got back a substitute for the resources lost. That's what John Henson came up with the word. I said, "We need a name for this." He said, "Indemnify."

That is a repayment for a loss. We were providing jobs and all the good things, but we were also losing the resources. It was gone forever. It was gravel that went in underneath the road bed or it was oil that went into somebody's automobile back in New York. It was gone, and the same with copper. So prior to being governor, I feel very good about that. In governor, I think probably the things that I feel most proud of, if that's the right way to express it is, I did increase the trust level of Montanans in their state government. I think I accomplished that or at least made some progress in it. I think by opening up to the media on a full-time basis had a significant impact on trust. I managed it well. Like you said, I had one heck of a whack about '84 I guess when the Montana economy went whapple(?). We dealt with it.

We did it without raising taxes. We forced all the agencies to relook at their need level. I certainly never had the feeling that it did any significant damage to any of the agencies or

institutions. I think they found ways to deal with that through all of the things you can do when you're in the state agency or university system.

BB: It had to be a big leadership and management challenge for sure.

TS: Yes, that's what the job is about. The governor in Montana now, or since Tim Babcock, who was the last old style governor if I can call him that, is basically the boss. You can't tell a legislature what to do. You can certainly tell the executive branch the direction you want to go.

BB: Ted, as you look back over a half a century of Montana history, what are the most significant changes that have taken place during that period of time?

TS: Well, I think I've already mentioned one, is that World War II brought two things: one is a new awareness of just how nice a place Montana is in which to live and the kinds of steps that are necessary to ensure that it stays that way. I guess the second thing is that the G.I Bill brought universal education. If you were in Missoula in 1947 or '48, you appreciated how many people were there and how many were veterans. When I first got involved in politics in Roosevelt County, there was almost a dividing line. Most farmers were Democrats and most businessmen were Republican.

That began to change after World War II. You find Republican businessmen and professional people running on the Democratic ticket, just like you find more and more farmers and ranchers voting on the Republican ticket. It's been a change. Part of that has to stem from a better-educated public. Certainly what we talked about before, the modernization of the executive branch and the new constitution, to the extent we see in the future, has changed that future for good. I don't ever see us going back to that old system.

The one man, one vote, certainly has had an impact on Montana. I think most of it has been positive, but I'm beginning to have some concerns about the long-term effect of the whole process of electing people in legislatures and at the federal level. The issue in Texas over the delay mid-term realignment, the nasty issue in the last two in Montana in terms of—

BB: Reapportionment.

TS: Yes and gerrymandering and so forth. When I read that as few as 15 to 20 of the 435 members of the U.S House are really susceptible to challenge, I'm really saddened because that's not the original concept of the framers. What they wanted is a Senate for stability and equity among the states. They want it in the House, the ability of the public to change directions rapidly. That really is to the point that I'm not sure it's going to exist at all.

BB: I wonder if there's some way the Supreme Court could examine that again.

TS: They just did. They only threw out one district in Kansas. I can see and I'm sure you do too that if Montana were to change the control of the—let's back up—just the control of the legislature in this next election to the Republican Party, I think they would vote for a realignment.

BB: Yes.

TS: That could happen every session.

BB: Yes, that's just crazy. I agree with you.

TS: That just creates chaos. You're not talking about improving the ability of the citizen to change the direction. What you're doing is freezing the ability to change it in a short period of time.

BB: As long as gerrymandering is totally acceptable, and apparently it is, the courts have decided it is, just like you say instead of the House of Representatives being the representative body and the Senate being the stable body, the House of Representatives with 20 to 30 competitive seats left is just freezing the status quo.

TS: I agree. I think that's—I use the word frightening. I think it's frightening.

BB: It's not the way the system is supposed to work.

TS: I see a picture of the country. I don't know the answer, Bob. I've thought quite a bit about it because I see this thing unfold now in particular with what they did in Texas just shortly after they took power, not at the 10-year census. The only thing I can see, and I think you touched on it, what we're going to have to have is a gerrymandering of districts on the one-man, one-vote, but assuring that one party or the other has no more than a three or a five percent margin. Let's not build sinecures out there and allow representatives to serve until they die.

So that's a major problem nationally and it could be a problem in Montana too to a lesser degree. The other thing that I see that worries me a great deal in the future is the growing importance of dollars, money, and political campaigns. More and more it looks like if you undertake major races, either you have to be individually wealthy or you have to be totally supported by a special interest of some kind who are willing to finance your campaign. That eventually builds the relationships that may or may not be good for the state or for the country.

The other thing that's happened that probably isn't as dramatic as it was 30 or 40 years ago, the emergence of the Fourth Estate in accepting its responsibility to monitor the politics and the actions of government was dramatically changed after the Anaconda sold their chain of papers and we suddenly had a crop of people like Dan Foley, Jerry Holloron, Chuck Johnson, Shawn Higgins, Dale Burk.

BB: Newspaper reporters?

TS: Yes. They began to get aggressive. When I was in that commissioner's job and the Reclamation Act was passed, those guys would be down there every week finding out who I'd fine. I don't think there was any question that it was Dan Foley's story series on the sales tax issue, when he dug out the sponsors of what was a S.O.S—save our state [campaign]? I think Montana has generally opposed a sales tax anyhow, but if there was any question, that solidified it. That I think is another major change.

BB: A more open press, a free press?

TS: A free press is basically free. I mean the problem is that we didn't have aggressive reporting on what was going on inside closed doors.

BB: So that's been an important—

TS: That again relates to this whole issue of press that I still believe is one of the most necessary requirements of a successful Democracy. People have to trust that their local, state, and federal government really is listening, that it really is responsive, that it really is concerned about what is happening in our country.

BB: Any other thoughts or observations as you look into Montana's future?

TS: You know, at least when I went to school after World War II, Bob, they didn't have a course in prophecy. I might have taken it if they did. I don't know what's going to happen in the future. Certainly if anybody would have prophesized just 20 or 30 years ago that computers would be in literally in the majority of homes, that we would have jet travel and all those kinds of things, that we would have a president resign, that sort of thing—there are so many things that have happened that no one could foresee. I just don't want to get into the prophecy thing.

I tried to lay out some of what I considered some major problems of the keeping, if not only a free press, but a press that allows its reporters to aggressively seek information from the people in the public office. Bardanouve and I once said that; this is after we both retired. I think we were just discussing the fact that remarkably, we presided over the greatest change in Montana government, certainly in its prior history. The breakup of the old combine of Anaconda and the power company happened shortly after we went into the legislature. We had that whole reorganization of state government, a new constitution. We went through that whole quality of life thing in the '70s. Montana is really changed not only during my lifetime, but in my public service lifetime. Who knows but what it might not do the same thing, I don't know.

BB: That's right. Anything else you'd like to say?

TS: I guess not. I think I'm about talked out. We are on the 90 minutes plus; a few partly due to some slowness on my part of responding. I know it's happened in the past and in my lifetime, I don't know what's going to happen in the future. I've tried to identify those things that really worry me about the future. I don't know anything else. I think Montana by and large has been fortunate with its top-elected officials over the years. I've certainly disagreed with some, sometimes sharply. I think they've been reasonably well served. I think that the warmth and the good people aspect of Governor Aronson all the way through the present time to Governor Schweitzer—

I used to teach both at Carroll and the University of Montana [about] politics. One of the things that in my research I found consistently throughout Montana history about every 16 or 20 years, the people put a new governor in charge—a different political party. It's happened again. Republicans have had control for 16 years before Forrest was elected. We held it for 20 years. Now the Republicans held it for 16 years. I think that's a sign that if Montana is a patient, its temperature is still normal. I like that idea of the independence in Montana people to change direction. I hope we can find ways to continue to protect that, if anything, lean a little bit Democrat.

BB: Thank you for your years of service, Governor Schwinden and thank you for this interview.

TS: Sure, thank you.