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Bob Brown: I'm interviewing former state representative John Cobb at his ranch near Augusta, Montana, on September 29, 2010. This is Bob Brown.

John, you and I served together in the legislature for quite a number of years and before we get into some of the details of that I'd just be interested to know, first of all, when and where you were born.

John Cobb: I was born in Great Falls, Montana, on January 22, 1954. I lived on this ranch. We lived on a ranch approximately 70 miles west from Great Falls. It's about 15 miles from the small town of Augusta, Montana. I've lived here all my life. I went to grade school here. High school, I went to a military school back in Minnesota, Shattuck High School, which is in Faribault, Minnesota, which is about 50 miles south of Minneapolis. I went on to, after I got out of there, I went to Bozeman.

BB: Montana State University?

JC: Montana State University. I did two degrees there, in three years, economics and political science. I first started doing a lot of chemistry, but I had to decide between political science and the chemistry labs. What the heck, you know. After that I wasn't sure so I went to law school at MSU, I mean U of M, for three years. I wasn't a very good student there. I finally—

BB: But you graduated?

JC: I graduated, but the last year I really got into law school. That's because most of the other students were tired. So I really liked my classes: constitutional law, oil and gas, a lot of those classes that were more specific. I graduated, after that I was looking for jobs. Come back to the ranch and Mr. Waltermire offered me a job to be the ethics lawyer. But I looked at the law and that law was so screwed up, so I said this will never work.

BB: Now Jim Waltermire was Montana Secretary of State at the time.

JC: He was Secretary of State. That is correct. After that I worked another job—I worked for the Department of Commerce for the insurance investigator for SEC, not SEC for investment violations, all that. About that time my older brother, Bill, was killed in a car—not a car wreck—a horse wreck on the ranch in 1979, so I just came home. I was here. So I was always interested in politics and I ran in 1981 the first time.

BB: But before we do that, I know that not very many people run for the Legislature. You know you and I are kinda unusual in that regard.

JC: Nobody wants the job.

BB: But I think it takes a certain kind of a person to be interested enough in politics to actually do it. I guess to begin with, what motivated you, what interested you in politics? Do you remember being interested in politics when you were a 10-year-old kid or anything like that?

JC: I think—

BB: When and what got you?

JC: There was no magic moment. It was always interest in politics. I loved history. I loved watching the political science. I love the history of the older ages, how things evolved.

BB: Did you read here on the ranch when you were a kid?

JC: I read a lot. My mom and dad, we have thousands and thousands of books to read. Read, read, read. I was always just interested. My mom also. She was in the Republican Party. Quite a big way, Republican women organizations. But I never went to any of those. I met Ronald Reagan once. Even in high school I campaigned, in Minnesota, for Mr. Nixon against Hubert Humphrey. This is in Minnesota. So—

BB: When you were back there at Shattuck.

JC: So you are calling up people in Minnesota where—

BB: Where Humphrey was from.

JC: His son actually had gone to the same school that we had been in. So it was interesting there. But I was always interested in politics. I thought it was fascinating.

BB: You read about historical political figures.

JC: Figures. Correct. Just history in general, why things happen? You know always have revision history, what people after the fact cite differently. I was interested in, I always hated bad government. I didn't like bad government, government that hurts people, favoritism, cronyism, I didn't like a lot of types of government. I was just always fascinated by it.

BB: Now, your parents were both Republicans or leaned that way?

JC: Correct. They were both Republicans. Dad knew Goldwater.

BB: So being a Republican was sorta how you were brought up. Not necessarily adopted Republican philosophies.

JC: No, I wasn't a born-again Republican.

BB: You grew up with it.

JC: It was there and it was just I grew up that way. Dad wasn't too keen about most politicians, I don't think. He liked some. He liked Goldwater, Reagan. Mom got us to go meet Reagan when he was in Great Falls when we were little kids. That was interesting. Just like he is. But it was just always interested that way.

BB: So you, growing up on the ranch, you worked with livestock and did you take a school bus to school?

JC: No, we went over the hill about two miles to catch the school bus at the neighbor's house. So we were on this Benchmark road. But there was a school bus route. There was always a school bus route on the other side. We went over there to catch the school bus and go to town. And then Dad thought he wanted, Augusta had a good high school.

BB: So you went to grade school and high school in Augusta?

JC: Just grade school and then seventh and eighth grade. And then Dad had met some people, Augusta was a good high school, but he wanted us to get a broader education. He knew these people around here, I think Pat James, no, he was lieutenant governor, Ted James. Excuse me. His son had gone there too. He knew some other people had sent their kids there.

BB: To Shattuck?

JC: To Shattuck Military School. But the problem there at that time was when I went there was right during the Vietnam War when things were falling apart and there was a lot of upheaval too. It was a lot different. And at that time there were also people who were sending their kids there, they sent them there because they were bad kids. Not that we were.

BB: Did you, then did you enter the military after that?

JC: No, I didn't go into the military. My older brother really liked the military. One reason I didn't join fraternities afterwards was because I was around guys for four years. There was a girls' school right next to us, too. But it was military school for four years. It was a really good education. They made you work. It was good for me to go, so—I don't have any regrets about that school.

BB: When you were growing up, I know this ranch is a large and isolated ranch, approximately fifteen miles from Augusta, Montana, and you spent a lot of time I suppose reading maybe more than watching television. I don't know if your Dad—

JC: We had one channel. I can still remember the day when we got two channels. I don't know what day it was, but I just remember, oh gosh, now we have two channels. So my Dad can remember when they brought, when Rural Electric came here. So before they just had the coal and wood stoves. Down at the lower ranch they had windmills for generating electricity for the batteries to run the lights at nighttime. When it came in, it was just a few years after. Compared to other places in eastern Montana, we got it a lot earlier, but it was still—and then also going to town, you didn't go to town in the summertime very much. I still remember, which my wife just finds amazing, they would bring us Spam home on Sundays and we thought that was a great treat. A can of Spam, we thought that was just, you know, this is pretty cool. I didn't know what Spam came from, but it didn't matter.

BB: You mostly ate beef, didn't you?

JC: We ate beef and raised cattle. My dad travelled a lot though. He would go, because my Dad was not, his background was engineering and also the oil industry. So it was all new to him too when he came out here. So he was always trying something different. He was always inventive. Being an engineer, he liked to try things, just tinker. He liked to tinker. That's why we have a feedlot here. He wanted to do different things. So—

BB: Do you remember any kind of an experience, or maybe it was a person, like in your younger life that might have inspired you particularly in terms of politics? It could have been someone you read about, it could have been somebody you knew, or it could have just been an event or something or another that might have helped to shape your political philosophy?

JC: No. I don't remember any. I think you just read so much. You just read so much. Also in politics, I think I got more into it was—is that you saw this place we live in. We are really blessed. So you owe a lot back. I don't look at from the other sense I've seen the people – you gotta protect it and fight everybody off. It's not that. It's just that you are just blessed and you owe a lot back. I think was also beaten, well not beaten into us, but it was really the prayers at dinnertime, strive to help those less fortunate that you are. So that was the only thing. But I don't think that necessarily tied to politics so much. But it was more—

BB: It helped to shape your philosophy.

JC: It was a service you have to do. You owe that. But I think it was just mostly I loved reading history. I loved reading the books that I could get actually get my hands on books. Our folks were very good about books, books, books. I mean, you didn't have TV. Saturday kid cartoons that was about it. Then you had your regular shows sometimes. It was mostly just books. We had a lot of homework in schools.

Go ahead, I'm sorry.

BB: Yeah.

JC: I talk too fast so you have to slow me down or—I mumble. Everybody tells you that so I figured I might as well tell you that now too. People fifty years from now, might want to know, I can't understand him either. They couldn't either back then. I remember Mike Kadas said one time, John, I have to be—

BB: Kadas is a representative from Missoula.

JC: I said Mike—he said John I have to be with you to interpret what you say to these people.

BB: So you first ran for the State House of Representatives in what year?

JC: 1981. Out of the blue.

BB: So the election of 1980.

JC: Yeah, 1980. Out of the blue.

BB: Did somebody encourage you?

JC: No, I just walked right up and just filed. Didn't tell my folks until after—

BB: You just went and filed. You didn't go into town and talk to the county commissioners or sitting state legislators.

JC: No, I had figured out how you file and you go down there and file.

BB: Did your mom and dad know you were going to do this?

JC: Not till afterwards.

BB: Were you married?

JC: No, I was single. I was just going to—I had come back to the ranch. The ranch is fine, I'm working there. But I was interested in politics. And that was the year, 1980, was when—

BB: Reagan was running.

JC: Yeah, and also there was—it comes in cycles, in my own belief. What I'm going to say today is mostly my own opinion, because everybody has their opinion and how they see things differently. So if people disagree, that's fine. But it comes in cycles. That was the year people were pretty mad at incumbents. Especially in Cascade County. People were pretty ticked off. Actually our whole campaign was based on that whole thing. We had the best—not the best campaign in like the Representative Dick Simkins from Great Falls who actually knew everybody's dog and cat names. I saw his file one time and he knew the dogs and cats' names.

BB: Of his—then he would go door to door.

JC: He was a retired insurance, retired military. He never quit campaigning. I was a terrible campaigner. We ran against big government. My friend would dress up as this big government person with a fake cigar and like a gangster hat. We had my other friend dress up as a little old lady and we'd have her in like a beat up old car, big government taking you for a ride, or milking a cow, big government milking you dry.

BB: You'd use photographs.

JC: Photographs. People would just look at those pictures. That's all we did. We did those ads. We did campaign door to door—

BB: It was largely rural, wasn't it?

JC: No, I had west Great Falls.

BB: So the district went clear out into the country, clear out to your ranch, but it also went all the way into Great Falls.

JC: That's what's misleading to a lot of people, they think it's a rural district. You might have—there might be like 50 or 60 ranchers. There might be like 100 to 150 farmers. But you have a lot of people who work in Great Falls. Well, people say you are from rural. No, I might be living rural. I remember one of my opposition, Jesse O'Hara, representative, he used that against me one time in a primary. He had me like 90 miles from Great Falls. But I didn't complain about that. The point was still the point, you don't live here. But I had—actually I was the first Republican to ever win in west Great Falls which is totally Democrat. But at that time you didn't have to say your party. That was a key for me because—

BB: On your campaign information. You are designated by party now.

JC: Like Augusta to Great Falls, which is like 50 miles, I knew about 5 people who said they were Republicans. People would say they were Democrat. You first had to get them to vote Republican. And—

BB: Even farm and ranch people.

JC: Farm and ranch. It was because—

BB: The old Farmers' Union

JC: Farmers' Union. You had the Fairfield Bench. People just voted Democrat.

BB: I see.

JC: So you had to get people to switch. Because there is that—what does Republican stand for. So basically you're out there as a young person out their running. That's when Ted Neuman, he beat, was it Larry Fasbender, he won the primary—no, not Fasbender, a man from Cascade, I'm sorry I can't remember his name right now, who had been in there a long, long time. He beat—

BB: Probably John Staigmilller.

JC: Staigmilller. He was not—it wasn't against any incumbent. He beat him in that election. I don't think it was anything that John did. John was a nice man. Just that he beat him. So we had all these new people running that time. That was the time at which point I say there are cycles that come when new people have a chance to get in because they are upset with the other people, the other party, or just something is going on out there and the voters are upset. If you have a chance, the voters may elect you. Or they vote for you because they don't like the other side, or they just want somebody new. It's different.

BB: You perceive this sort of anti-incumbent going on—

JC: If you are going to run, this is the time to run.

BB: You sense that and so you try to get with that.

JC: If I'm going to run, every session, every year it's different. The voters either make up their minds—my own viewpoint, they make them up real early, they might make them up the last week, sometimes the vast majority make them up at a certain time. So this thing about wait til the last time, it would have to work. You have to get a feeling—

BB: Last minute strategies usually don't work.

JC: You get a feeling what the voters, and then also you have your own issues, but you have to figure out what are the issues this year. You are not trying to manipulate the voters, you are just trying to figure out what are they concerned about. You need to address how you feel about their issues. Because you can talk all you want about taxes or anything else, but that might not be the issue this year. It might be something else. But that was the time you could

feel that there was just people were upset. I mean that were gonna vote. So if you are going to run, and I'm not saying I did this poll, you just get a feeling. I think politicians, you are a politician, get a feeling what the voters are up to and if you are going to go against the voters, you better have a really good reason because I've done that once or twice in the Legislature, you better darn well make sure that's why you want to do it because you know they want you to go another way. And you don't do it too often. You've seen that happen. The fact you do what your party wants and you know darn well the district doesn't want you doing it. I've said that to other people, do what your district wants, don't do what the Republican Party wants. You won't be here next time. Because you are expected to represent that district. Anyway I ran, it was a real close election.

BB: It sounds like you would have had an advantage if you had run as a Democrat.

JC: Well, not against Ted Neuman that time though, because his wife was—

BB: In the primary.

JC: Yeah.

BB: Because you know I think you considered yourself then a Reagan person. You seemed to—

JC: Well, I still do though, that's the problem. I think the party's changed.

BB: You were comfortable with the Republican philosophy as you understood it then. So you were comfortable running as a Republican.

JC: No problem, not running Republican. The first Republican to call me was Bob Marks, I didn't know who he was, but he called me up.

BB: He was Speaker of the House during that period.

JC: But he called me up and said, "Good for you for running." That was all, he said good for running, and that was on that part. So that was the only...and then—

BB: So you lost in '80—to Neuman.

JC: Lost to Neuman. It was a close election, it was a recount, an automatic recount.

BB: Seven votes.

JC: Oh, yeah, but it gets even better. I can tell you this. It's just, this is why you always want to lose big. Because we were at this one town, the county commissioners were going around with him, my friend Ross (unintelligible), were going around because he was our campaign manager.

We were just watching, we had never seen this done before. Not that we didn't trust him, we were just curious how this works because I'm always curious about government. But anyway, what happened was in this one town it was getting close to lunch and they switched the votes between Ted and me, so I got more votes. We said no, no, that's not right because if they had left it that way, we would have won. So we just kept—and then we lost by seven. That's when you have to get the vote out because my two younger brothers didn't vote that day, my sister-in-law didn't vote, and four other people in Augusta didn't vote. But that's just the way it goes. So we lost an election. But the good thing is I met my wife during the election.

BB: During the campaign.

JC: Campaign, on that part. So that was good that way, turned out good that way. So it was a good campaign, no hard feelings. My opponent, nobody, we never said anything bad. It was just, we were just new and we were going to run these things. It was just that way. And I'm also trying to get people to vote Republican for the first time. I think those pictures worked really well. I think also because people knew my folks. That worked well too.

BB: Your name was known in the area.

JC: I know my name, so this thing about I'm never read anything nice about me because I don't believe, I mean there are so many people that helped me before that they are the ones who really ought to get the credit for the things people think I did. I didn't do a lot of things, I just listened to the people. It really helped having the name, I had the time to campaign. It was just a lot of things going that worked. So we lost. So—but we went on

BB: But you ran again in '82?

JC: Against my opponent again, the same person.

BB: Ted Neuman.

JC: Ted Neuman, but there we lost by about 500 votes. Which about 250 could have gone either way. I did a little poll afterwards and we called around. Basically if you don't do anything wrong as an incumbent, you are going to get back in. People weren't upset with him, and he was in. I wasn't going to run again my third time, that was '84 election. Is this boring? I'm sorry.

BB: No, no, no, this is great.

JC: The '84 election. Because you must hear this all the time because as people run. The '84 election I wasn't going to run. That [is] what's going to go through my whole history in politics was it was all basically a fluke for me. Because it's just been pure accident. I mean I'm grateful for the voters, but whether you run or not, a lot of things are out of your control. Ted decided

to run for the Senate. Ted Neuman, so it opens up this seat. So now it's an open seat. I'm running.

BB: But you had been around the track twice before so you were kind of the de facto incumbent.

JC: I also found out I didn't know any better, most people don't run after the second election you lose. I mean even after the first one, you think about it, most people don't ever run again. But I didn't know any better. I had heard, I think Abe Lincoln had lost a couple of times, so I figured if he could do it, I could do it. I'm not Abe Lincoln, of course, but I'm just saying. Some people, I've seen other people, history tells you if you keep running, you might win sometime. Anyway I ran. My opponent, and that was, we thought, we didn't know election morning, we didn't know if we had won or lost.

BB: Who was your opponent, do you remember?

JC: I'm sorry, he's a nice fellow down by—used to be county commissioner in Great Falls. [Tom Stelling.] I can't remember his name right now. I'm sorry. I didn't do my research. But anyway, we thought we had lost, we just picked close again, we went out picking up signs. Remember, most of my district is a Democrat district and here's what I'm saying why it's Democrat. In the primary, there's 300 Republicans voting in the primary. Two thousand Democrats vote in the primary. So when they all say it's a Republican district, and when I keep saying that—the name, don't put Republican there, it makes a difference. Because when you see 2,000 Democrats, and you see 300 Republicans—that is not a safe Republican district. That's why people always thought it was safe all these years, and I was always knowing this is not a safe district. I always knew candidates that could always beat me, I'm just glad I never went and told them they could beat me. But I always knew the people that could beat me. But I wasn't scared, it was just you know. It was more don't worry it's just a factual thing. These are just the facts. Instead of getting worried about them, they are just facts.

We went around, we thought we had, we didn't know if we had won or lost, we just went on picking up signs, because you don't know. It takes a while. We stopped at this one, this is again... you always want to win big. We won by 25 votes when it was all done. Or something like that. We stopped at this one precinct and it showed on the outside, it shows you the vote tally. It showed we had actually won this precinct. We were pretty happy because it was mostly a Democratic area. We get down to the courthouse in Great Falls, because we have Cascade County and Lewis and Clark County. Everything was the same, except they had switched those two votes, at the bottom, and they gave my opponent those extra votes. We went back to the precinct place, that thing had been torn down by that time. So you are wondering, was this a mistake? It doesn't make any difference, it was like, it was these little things, that's why you don't want to ever get upset about things because you are going, what is going on? But we won anyway because we won it big in Lewis and Clark County. My home town Augusta really helped me big which I've always been grateful.

BB: Do you suspect that there was some hanky panky there?

JC: I don't know. It's like why bother because you don't know. You are never going to know, no one is ever going to tell. It's like, you just wonder, if mistakes happen in your close votes, things happen. So you can always say, its like the public service race too, you can always say you want to lose big, because all the little things can happen. And things just happen. Anyway—

BB: There you are, a brand new member of the House of Representatives in 1984. How exciting. Had you ever been into the House chamber before?

JC: The only time, during when I was in law school, went down there and watched, I think, I was telling, I said I think it was Mike Cooney, Senator Mike Cooney. When he was little, young, not little, but he was always little.

BB: But he was a member of the House of Representatives then.

JC: The House then. I didn't realize at that time, because I remember things, oddball things. He was voting red or green or something. I said, well, I can do that. I can't do any worse than what they were doing down there. So that's the only time I had ever been to the Legislature and also when we graduated from law school we had to go down there and do the—

BB: How did you feel? There you are a member of the State Legislature, the Board of Directors in the State of Montana and you're—

JC: Well, I was thankful for the voters for sending me down there, to give me a chance. I guess that was the first thing. You know, you don't want to let the voters down who voted for you and the ones who voted against you, you don't want to encourage them that they were right all the time. You want to put some doubt in their minds. Anyway, I went down there, and you are all new, and they don't do a bunch of good education at that time about what's going on. In the old system, everybody knows what they're doing. So you show up. Actually the first legislator I met was John Mercer, the Speaker of the House later on. Because he had just won a close election, he didn't know if he was going to win or not because there was going to be a recount.

BB: So you and John Mercer—

JC: Met that first day, right—

BB: Because you were freshmen at the same time.

JC: But we sat there at the same, same seats right next to each other. So I met the great John Mercer then. It was just good. Him and my wife and I got along good for years, used to go watch, he liked to watch movies. We always liked to watch action-packed movies because the

Legislature is so slow. Anyway, we met there. The first thing they said, here's whose, it's already been picked who's going to be elected officers. This is all new to me. So they said, well, Jack Ramirez and Bob Marks, however that works that way. Then they kinda, which committees do you want to be on?

BB: Did the Republicans have the majority, was it tied that session?

JC: I don't know if it was tied or close.

BB: Really close.

JC: You are starting to learn, no one's explaining things to you, but you are watching all this go on because you are not used to the politics about member leadership. You learn years later, their job is to, and I'm going to ask you about this later on, their job is to distinguish the differences between parties. In the committees, you try to figure out how to solve a problem. But—

BB: Caucuses look for issues, committees look for solutions.

JC: You learn also that, but anyway. They explain things, the rules and stuff. But it's all pretty fast. But then you go down and you find these well, let legislative staff do your bills. I don't remember what crazy little bills they probably had. I thought—the Legislature, I love our staff, they are so great. They have such straight faces. I used to call them fantasy people, because they go down, we have these fantasies to solve the problems of the world, and they keep straight faces. They just write it down, and they write the bill up. They, probably in their right mind, know that this is going to die. But it's like Karl Marx fantasy. You just get down there, it's all new. Just like anything else, you are learning the ropes. What was good was you had, they did try to get people, they were all polite to you. You would try and find the committees you want on. I said I want taxation. But you don't realize, because you don't understand how it works the system. You don't get on any committee (you want) when you are a freshman. So they put—. well, you are a lawyer aren't you, well you're going on Judiciary, which was great to go on. I got to go on Fish and Game, which was the worst committee, I think I was the only person in the world after the first session to realize that I'm the only one that's not an expert on Fish and Game. That's just the way it is. Because everybody, people really believe in what they are doing. You are kinda in the middle of all this stuff. Then I was on Natural Resources. And that's where you really—but that was there. I'm glad it all worked out that way, I was in Judiciary. It's like Judiciary—they don't have the tapes. I wish they would have had tapes back then. Kelly Addy, Representative Kelly Addy from Billings.

BB: Democrat from Billings.

JC: Democrat—John Mercer debates. They were some of the best debates you'd ever hear—

BB: On the floor of the House? Or in the committee?

JC: No, in the committee, on legal arguments. They really would get into it. It was just fun—

BB: Two smart young lawyers.

JC: It was just brilliant to watch them go at it on that. Sometimes they would switch your votes, it didn't matter which party you were from. But it was just—in Judiciary that's when we had the tort reform. But that was good. Is this boring that way?

BB: No this is great.

JC: In Fish and Game... I want to explain something on Fish and Game, I don't know if this was the second session. I had Natural Resources—because you had [as] the chairman—remember Dennis Iverson, the representative, and then Dave Brown from Butte. They ran that DNRC committee. You started to understand a little bit of the power politics because it's all about power and how it works.

BB: And those were two guys who had a reputation for being a real wheeler dealer power brokers.

JC: You knew they were good. I remember Bob Marks came down there one time and said what the heck is going on down here. Because he wanted something done this way and they were— Dave Brown and Dennis were doing something different. And Dennis, I never had to worry about them, you know, like getting stabbed in the back. If they are going to do it to you they are going to do it right up front. It was never—you know, I always liked it about it if you are going to do something. It's like everybody wants you to be a follower because they want to lead. Everybody has their agenda and they want you to follow it. If you have your agenda, they don't want that. You have to learn to stand up for your own self after a while because if you don't, the system will destroy you. I mean, you were there, you watched, especially in the House. Anyway, I wanted to explain about, a little bit, on perceptions and why things get out of committee. Is that okay here at this time?

BB: Yes, please.

JC: Am I babbling too much, Bob?

BB: No, you are doing fine, John.

JC: The buffalo bill, I was on the Fish and Game committee, I don't know which session, the first or second session where I think Representative Menahan or Representative Pavlovich brought this buffalo bill, to kill the buffalo, for hunters to kill them. The reason why I bring this up here is just to give an expression of how things get out of committee and everybody had different

perceptions of what happened afterwards and why we were killing buffalo. The bill came in for hunters to kill buffalo, and basically the Fish and Game came in and said, well, we don't want to regulate this bill. It's too hard to regulate. I mean, we had been killing all their bills during the session. Every time they said that, we would just kill them. But they came in at the very end and we were kinda, getting kinda ticked off at this now. This is my opinion only. Then the Park Service had—these buffalo were just starving, they basically came in with this “so what” attitude. I mean it was really—the opinion to our committee, some of the members—was arrogant. Just, we don't care if they starve or not. We were going, you can't let animals starve to death. Because we were a bunch of—rural legislators on there going, you can't kill them.

Then they brought up this brucellosis issue. The issue was, not that we didn't care about the cows. The bill got out of committee on a few votes. There were people—you know everybody has different reasons on committees for why you let bills out, for hunting, whatever. But I still believe that the major reason that final votes pushed it over were, it wasn't brucellosis, we were talking about undulant fever. Because that's what brucellosis—and we thought people were gonna get sick. There is blood going around. We weren't quite sure how this was going to work because you are killing buffalo that are infected and you are going to get sick. We were worried more about the human access. We didn't care about the cows. Nobody talked about the cows. So we were thinking, we are just going to kill this bill.

BB: Just to make sure, some listener in the future won't understand. Brucellosis is a disease that some of the buffalo had, we knew that. There was a concern that it might be transmitted by a buffalo to a cow.

JC: And if it gets there, and because of our rules, then the state is quarantined or that whole area is quarantined. It's hard to sell cattle out of state.

BB: Anywhere out of Montana. It is really a disaster to the—

JC: It's still that way, because we had trouble selling to Mexico last year. The same issue.

BB: The undulant fever is something that a person might get—

JC: —get from brucellosis. So they were trying to explain to us and so—I'm only talking about a few legislators that were thinking about just killing the bill because it's too hard to regulate.

BB: A person kills the buffalo, the buffalo has brucellosis, and it gets into that blood, he might—

JC: Passed on to someone. You got meat all across the state. But then, what turned it around, this is the debate going on, but then the Fish and Game, also at that testimony [said] they had killed 40 buffalo a week or so before and the meat had all rotted. So they were killing the buffalo anyway. It was like it was a combination, I think, that got our committee talking. Some of the members that actually voted—that were going to, including myself—vote against it was

because we were tired of hearing you can't regulate it, you don't care if they starve or not, and you are killing them anyway but the meat is rotting. So if somebody wants to go kill the buffalo and shoot it and take the meat home and the hide, you might as well do it. The bill was out [of committee]. After it got out, we all talked about brucellosis. Not we, but everybody talked about brucellosis and how it affects cattle. Then the next session, after Governor Stephens came back—

BB: Did it pass?

JC: Yeah it passed. It was gone.

BB: Both houses, and Governor Schwinden signed it.

JC: Signed it. Well, whoever signed it.

BB: So it made it possible to have buffalo hunts in Montana.

JC: I'm not sure which session that was in, might have been—but it made it. Then Governor Stephens came back, I think, got rid of it because it was such bad publicity. My argument had always been it had nothing to do with brucellosis, it was just the way the buffalo were being managed.

BB: The problem was there'd be television crews on the perimeter of Yellowstone Park. There'd be guys sitting there with rifles waiting for the buffalo to drift out of the park, and then they'd shoot 'em. People would watch this on national news. Governor Stephens was concerned with, what are the rest of the country going to think about us? I mean if they knew what happened in the slaughterhouse, it wouldn't have shaken them up too much.

JC: But I'm just saying that our committee did something that caused a lot of uproar that probably the bill would've died—except it was the attitude—but it was a lot of things that went on in that committee. I can't speak exactly how everybody voted and why, but I was sitting there going, the ones we talked to afterwards, it was more like we might as well just shoot 'em because they're starving to death. Somebody wants the meat. We might as well do something here and get this thing going. Maybe it's going to cause a wreck or a mess, but we weren't sure. It got pretty big afterwards. They are still fighting this whole thing over. But I just wanted to explain how sometimes bills, we always wonder, are we just followers of history and are we just kind of like pawns going through, or do you actually cause something that makes a difference? Here something, our committee did it, but it wasn't just the members of the committee it was also the people that were participating **doing those things**.

BB: But it's a good story in that it's people's representatives, elected representatives, making up their own mind, being influenced by the facts as they saw them and making a policy decision.

JC: But I think, again, you can say that was wrong to decide just because they are arrogant, so what. But they are starving so the meat gets rotted and ruins and stuff. In that committee, I don't think there was ever a debate on cows and brucellosis and buffalo. It was basically someone could, it was all the other issues. Then it got out. Then it takes on its own (life), other people have other viewpoints on this whole matter. But it was a management of the buffalo issue, not a management of a disease to the cow issue. I imagine it should be an issue that way, but not in that committee at that time. A lot of times you see that sometimes, bills get through on different issues that they take on their own attributes afterwards. Does that make any sense?

BB: Yes, I think it does.

JC: Did you ever see those things in the Senate?

BB: Yeah, I think so. There are unpredictable results sometimes. When you get a group of people together there are dynamics at play that you can't always predict.

JC: I'm just going to talk about that right now, that's when I did my work. It was, a lot of times, you never did it, because I don't think that you ever did. But leadership manipulates, they try to browbeat you. I mean, you were just too nice of a person, I don't think. It was like, I'm going to try and do this on tape, but you watch the leadership and stuff and you see the browbeating or "you must do these things" and what I would do was, there is conflicts in people's minds because you have the party conflict—the best thing I ever did was you make your amendments when leadership is not around. Because if they are smart they kill anything called (unintelligible).

Maybe, that's what I always told them to do. If you are going to stop me, just kill everything. You listen to what people say and they say we have a problem here, like—we just have a problem and we need to do something about it. We'll say, why don't we do this? I'll give you an example, welfare reform. This is why we have good staff. Nobody was working because the federal law said if you work, we take basically 60%. If you earn a \$1, we'll take 60 cents away now when you start working. Once you got on the system, you get so much money a year, a month, but if you start working we are going to take 60 cents for every dollar you make. That's a 60% income tax.

BB: Yeah. How is the money taken?

JC: If you earn a dollar we're going to take 60 cents away from it. Every dollar you earn.

BB: But the income tax rates aren't that high.

JC: No but it's not income tax, but it's the money, because you belong to the welfare system, any dollar you make we're taking 60 cents away. I'm just talking in broad terms. So would you work for—if you had to go down and get a minimum wage job, every dollar you earn we are taking 60 cents away from you.

BB: Who takes it?

JC: The government.

BB: Not income tax?

JC: We reduce your other benefits.

BB: Oh I see.

JC: You have money—

BB: You got other benefits, food stamps—

JC: Not any kind of food stamps, you get a monthly stipend. This is all federal rules. And I'm talking really broad terms, but if you got, let's say you get \$400. Well if you earn \$100, we are taking \$60 from here. So what it is, you slowly have a little bit more money, but it's really a disincentive to work.

BB: Sure, yeah. You are getting some kind of a TANF monetary assistance.

JC: But it's like, a system was built—

BB: So if you earn money on your own, the monetary assistance is reduced.

JC: But when you have 18,000 families, or whatever, don't go look up the research on this, I'm talking broad terms now. But if you have 18,000 families on it, and no one is saying they are working, but you know they are working under the ground, under the table, a lot of them. Why are they doing that? Then they come and say, well, if I earn this and we be honest with you, you're taking this much money away. Once you got into the system, you are on the system. How do you get them off.? You have legislators going, well we don't like the welfare system. Well, if they earn a dollar, they should be reduced at a dollar. But no one's doing that. So in this conflict about, you want people to work, but the system doesn't let them do that. So we found a rule that said for the first three months, you can keep all of the money. We had hundreds of people working right up until that bill passed. That change passed. Hundreds of people were saying they were working just like that. (snaps fingers) Now at the end of three months they are going to get killed. I mean they are going to get that sixty percent. But you had hundreds of people, because the system, some people are getting off and on the system. It's actually a

safety net. Some people always say, well, let's look at the long-termers, they're the bad ones. But you have other ones that are on and off. Actually the system was bad because you have to earn so much to get unemployment, but if you don't earn enough to get unemployment, you use the welfare system. So you had a system that was penalizing because you didn't—So you had these systems. That's why I didn't like our government. Government creates programs—.

BB: It's a counter-incentive.

JC: But the question is you have to get a legislator to say, okay, you gotta get people off. But they should be working on their own, they shouldn't be getting. Once they earn a dollar, you ought to cut them a dollar. But it's not working. So they have to work in their mind, are we better off if we keep some? So you are sitting there listening to legislators, and you are going, can we try this? Maybe they don't want to. I mean, they made their point. This is what they want. But other legislators are going to say, you know what, let's see if it works. The same with childcare. I'll give you an example and I'm just using that because this happened. We were debating whether we wanted to do childcare in the welfare program. This is years later. And someone, one woman is saying, well, I want childcare. This is in a different group. Because I don't like the men, we gotta get rid of the men, women ought to be self-sufficient. We don't need these men. The state needs to—it was kind of like anti-men—and there were people, and I'm not being mean about it, that was their viewpoint. Another one said, hey, the reason—because it was a study that said, this other guy was saying—you get someone working again, they are working in a job, they meet someone working too. In Montana, you basically need two incomes to survive. So they get married again. So that's how you do it. Other people had different reasons. But we decided not to listen to our reasons, because if all we knew was—it was a pretty good spectrum on that committee, [it] was from very liberal to very conservative—Tom Keating, Senator Tom Keating.

BB: We are talking about the appropriations committee.

JC: Appropriations committee stuff. And we are talking about Tom Keating, I mean very conservative too. But—

BB: Republican senator from Billings.

JC: You know all these names too. You got the history. You are talking, and the reason I'm getting to the point is, you [legislators] don't listen to people's motives or at least the rationale, what you want to start looking at is the result. That's what I started learning, it is the result you want people to start looking at. Because if you listen, well I don't like that reason because you hate men, and that's being very broad right there, that statement I'm making. But that the impression you get right away. So the issue was, what I want to try to do is that if I want to try and get something done, if I want to go this direction, but if your idea is better and it gets the same result, who cares? My idea is to go in a different way. That's why part of the childcare

came in was basically, hey, people are going to go back to work. You can see it. Again you can see it years later when Chuck Swysgood and Judy Martz had big cuts.

BB: Chuck Swysgood was a senator, representative—

JC: And the Budget Director

BB: From Beaverhead County, Dillon and he might have chaired the Senate Finance Committee.

JC: He was the one that, one time he made us sit. We wouldn't vote, he had to do budget cuts one time and we were supposed to cut something and we wouldn't do it for him. He made us sit, he told us like little kindergarten kids. He made us sit because he went out and had his pipe smoke. 'When I come back in ten minutes I want that thing cut.' He came back and we wouldn't cut it either.

BB: He went on to become the Budget Director.

JC: Budget Director. You know he said no and I always ignored him. The point was, it was like you don't look at so much what people, their rationale, if the result is going to be the same, and maybe everybody will not have to be married again, that's fine if that woman was correct but you know I don't believe that was going to happen. But other people may say I don't believe, she may believe it, or this other person may say childcare does these things. If the result is that people are going to go back to work, then let's get them back to work because the system doesn't work the way it is now. Simply to destroy everything and create a new—you always see that people want to destroy everything. I always say, what brave new world are you going to create because we created this world the way it is now? My point was people are always put in boxes and that's one reason why I ran for the Legislature. The system, whether by laws or rules, they put you in boxes, like the 60 percent income tax, that's my equivalent. They put you in a box, you can't get out. I use the word devolution. I always thought I was a revolutionary because my job is not to defend the status quo. I think the reason being there for twenty-four years, and the same with you, if you live long enough all your people leave and you can write your own history. But I ticked every party off, I ticked everybody off but you know, I've never ticked them off at the same time that's what saved me all of these years.

BB: You know though, you and I were there for about the same amount of time and we overlapped somewhat, but you started out as I remember as a pretty good team player. Then as you got there longer, you developed more of your own ideas and you became more independent. So as you ended up, you had a reputation of being somewhat of a maverick. When I started out, I was more that way. The longer I got there, the more I thought, well you know, there are certain limitations in what you can do and you got to have to recognize these realities and that sort of thing. So my experience was that I kind of became more of a team player, having been a maverick early on and then, interestingly, after I had gotten out of elected

office and I just kind of had an observer's view of the whole thing, now I'm, you know, I don't know if I fit very well in either political party.

JC: You wouldn't now. But you started in the House and you got out fast.

BB: Yes, I did.

JC: That was a big difference. You can see that in the Senate.

BB: The Senate was a lot easier to serve in then. It was more accommodating of people who had different points of view.

JC: That's like Representative Grimes from Helena, he became a Senator. He said that's why you want to go to the Senate, John. People let you do things. There's the party stuff you do, that's the platform – most of the Republicans believe this. That's one thing. But going off and trying something on your own and trying to do something, people let you go with it. You see the example all the time on the floor of the Senate. A bill comes through it's not very well done or something and in the House they would kill it just like that. The Senate says I have problems with this bill, you need to do this in the House. I mean they will let the bill go out for those things.

BB: Well, they'll amend it and send it back over and let them—

JC: Figure it out.

BB: Or maybe send it back to the committee or something. The Senate was more genteel and more . . .

JC: Except when they got mad at people.

BB: Yeah. Well, the Senate could play tough, especially at the end of the session. But it had, it was a more collegial, more—

JC: I have to tell you my theories now, okay. Because we're here. When I was in the Legislature, everybody has the—Cal Winslow who used to sit right next to me, he was a representative, he ran for governor one time. He sat on Human Services, basically once you got onto Human Services you always—

BB: It was a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

JC: Appropriations. But he was sitting there going, I think he or his wife said the House is like a bunch of kindergarten class. It's just that's the way it is. And I use the bull theory. Remember in the House, there's that big walkway in the middle. You've been around cattle. I said that's like a

big fence, okay. And there's bulls from that side and there's bulls on this side. Now watch, now John Vincent used to be the Speaker of the House on time.

BB: Democrat from Bozeman.

JC: If you ever watched him stand up, he'd pace back and forth. He'd put one foot left and one right, like a bull bellowing, getting ready to fight. I was watching that, and when he'd get up the big bulls would get up and fight, like Bob Marks, Jack Ramirez, they'd get up in big fights and everything. I know, let's not do a history, but I was just telling you. I was sitting there watching that going, this is just like a bunch of bulls. They are bellowing. Sometimes it was just the little bulls would be out fighting around bellowing at each other. Then all at once a big bull would kind of sniff and see what's going on to get up and say a few things. Then another big bull would get up and they'd get into it. But the reason, Leo Giacometto a representative from—

BB: Leo Giacometto, Ekalaka. [Alzada].

JC: His freshman year he got up and said that John Vincent was a rooster and crowed a lot. He was a little tiny bull who had just called a name of the big guy and I had never seen such silence on the floor of the House. Because you could just see this pecking order, you just went, wow. Of course, John gets up and starts pacing back and forth. Then beats him up, I mean verbally. Which is another thing, we always talk about fighting or like words in the trenches or killing, we don't do that, and I've never been in the military, but that's the type of terminology because that's how intense things are. People are really, it's not a game. I mean, some people think it's a game or some legislators sometimes think it's a political game. But people are very intense down there. The other thing, how did you comb your hair, left to right or right to left? Years ago.

BB: Same way I do now.

JC: Left to right.

BB: Yeah, you can see. What is that?

JC: Okay, left to right.

BB: Left to right.

JC: I want to tell you something, this is in the House now. This is my own little observation, cuz I listen to people and watch people. I went around one time in the House, everybody, like Jack Ramirez, I don't know how Bob Marks combed his hair, but all the Republicans who combed their hair from right to left, and [Larry] Grinde parted it in the middle, which—he was a representative from Lewistown.

BB: And a majority leader for quite some time.

JC: All those guys, and [Corey] Stapleton—think about that, Jack Ramirez, Mercer, Stapleton, [Scott] Sales, all the people that combed their hair from right to left were in leadership. You could be in leadership if you combed your hair from left to right, you could be like, you have Donaldson and other ones. But if you watch that, it was interesting, just a weird little observation just sitting there watching that, that the ones who combed their hair from right to left were always trying to get into leadership. Trying to set the—you could always be in leadership even if you combed your hair from left to right—

BB: Would you be more apt to do that if you were left handed?

JC: I don't know. No, Mercer and those guys weren't left handed.

BB: Okay. Mercer parted his hair on the right?

JC: Everybody, all those guys.

BB: I'll be darned.

JC: It's just a weird little, I never tried to do—I never tried to figure out why things are that way. I just said this is the way it is. I didn't try to do hypotheticals of why people do it, I just made this observation that if you look at it, you look at Republicans, not the Democrats, but you look at the Republicans you can see that from right to left, those people were always trying for leadership places. You still have people from left to right, I'm not sure how Beck combed his hair, I think it was left to right. Anyway, but the Senate was a different category. Senate didn't like any of my bills, anyway. If the House couldn't kill them the Senate just kinda let you have your bill, be real polite to you and then kill it on the way out.

BB: John, you served with—all kinds of questions are coming to my mind here, I'll just ask you two of them at the same time. You worked with Representative Francis Bardanoue, to begin with. He was a prominent Democrat from up on the Hi-Line and I'm interested in if you have an anecdote about him or an observation about him. And then also about Governor Schwinden.

JC: Okay—

BB: Schwinden was governor when you arrived there.

JC: Yeah, when I arrived there. Representative Bardanoue, I wish I been there a lot younger when he was more in shape with more energy. He was still real sharp.

BB: You got there toward the end of his long career.

JC: But he was really sharp and he had all these stories. Anything we are saying now, the stories he would tell about what happened when he got there were just wild.

BB: He arrived in 1958.

JC: But he said they were wild in the stuff that he had heard. But the things that were going on, I mean this Montana Power wrote the bills, I mean all of these things—

BB: Montana Power Company, right?

JC: Yeah, Montana Power, he said it was good that the wives were coming down now and staying with the families. He said people—I call it March madness in the legislature, when everything dies, most legislators, unless you are into politics, just kinda—it's just a bad time to be in the Legislature, because people are depressed and stuff in the House a lot. It's really large neighborhood. But anyway, Bardanouve was just amazing to work with and he taught me some, everybody taught me something, that's what I'm always saying. And Bardanouve was a great, he wasn't a mentor. My first mentor was Toni Bergene, in a sense, from Great Falls.

BB: Woman, Republican from Great Falls.

JC: She was a liberal one, but she could win that district. That's the difference now that you see is, well you can't be a liberal Republican. Like Bob Marks said, we don't care after the first vote what you do.

BB: As long as you vote Republican to organize the House.

JC: You can do what you, cuz you have to get elected. If you have to be that way and vote that way in your district, vote the way you have to do it. That was a real key thing that I saw Bob Marks—I will get back to this other stuff—Bob Marks, when we had those caucuses, they would ask, they need so many votes, cuz those close election votes, and they would go around—I remember the sales tax. I gotta tell you about the sales tax too.

BB: Yeah, good.

JC: They needed votes. We found out real quick, don't talk policy, talk politics. Because if you say, "I will lose my election in my area if I vote for that bill," fine. You start talk policy they'll just beat you up. They would go around and say, okay you freshman, this is a hard vote, you can't vote for this. If you can't vote, fine—

BB: Who's they, the leadership?

JC: The leadership. They would go around those caucuses and find out who could vote.

BB: Anybody in particular? Grinde?

JC: For voting? Or no, I'm talking about way back, back when Marks and Ramirez were in charge.

BB: Marks and Ramirez. Okay.

JC: Mercer was a different organization, different structure. Different way of doing things. They went around and they'd go, who's the old guys aren't coming back? They would go around find out the votes, they needed the votes—

BB: If it was a tough vote that was liable to get somebody in political trouble—

JC: But they needed the vote because this is what, it's for the party or for the good of the state. Not just for the party, but we need to do this, this is right, its good government. We all know it's good government. But some people . . .

BB: Might not be good politics but its good government.

JC: Because long term it's going to help everybody. But you know it's not good to do it here. And people don't understand. You know. They are not forgiving. So but they were very good about that, I remember the sales tax one. This was when Governor Schwinden, I was a freshman. Jack Ramirez, Fred Thomas, who was a representative and then a Senator from—

BB: Hamilton and Stevensville.

JC: We were all sitting back there.

BB: Republicans.

JC: Republicans. Okay, who's not going to vote for this bill? Just the three of us raised our hands.

BB: You and Fred and somebody else.

JC: John Mercer. We said, well the governor— John Mercer and I were about to say the same thing. But he always speaks better than I can anyway. Governor Schwinden said he's going to veto the bill. Besides our voters don't want it in our district. Fine. Cuz the one thing about Jack Ramirez, they would both try to find the votes on the Democrat side anyway. They'll work. Now you see it more often, well, you can't trust the other side for votes. You just go find the votes. Anyway, Fred Thomas started talking about policy or something and he just the head kicked out of him. That was a rude awakening, a good awakening, saying, hey your vote, you represent your district, don't be talking to us about policy, about whether sales tax is good or not.

Because we think it's good, but don't argue with us. I mean, if you can't vote for it, just say you can't vote for it because of your district, but don't be arguing policy. That was the interesting policy tact there, but they were good about that. Now Governor Schwinden, and all these governors you ask about later on here, I never met the man. I only heard one quote from him, once, and I stole it. I don't even know if it was his quote. He said Republicans like the power of running government, and Democrats like to run government. I said yeah, and my point was and the Democrats can't run it very well. Republicans who really could run government, refused to do so. I mean, they don't, they have a Republican platform about individuals and opportunity, and we never do that with government employees. We never, we cut across the board, we do all those weird little things and we never treat them the same.

BB: Make budget cuts across the board.

JC: Budget cuts. What I tried to do in the end was, you tried to find out who the good managers were, just fund them. Let them do what they want, they usually don't want more money, they want more flexibility. Something goes wrong, don't yell at them. They'll fix it. If they find money and they save it, they want to keep it; a part of it. That's what I found in the end. That's what you do. But that took a long time to do that. You find a lot of good managers, but the good managers come from, if you have the governor appointing good cabinet people. And that was the key. Now in my first couple of years, cuz you are in the Judiciary, you do mostly, you aren't dealing with the cabinet members too much. Fish and Game you are, and then DNRC you are too, but then you had Dennis Iverson and Dave Brown doing whatever they are doing half the time, so you weren't quite sure what was going on. Then you are always so naïve, and remember you are only serving ninety days. That's not even that because you have forty-five days on one side and you think about it, twenty-two years, what's that about, ten or eight years full-time work .

BB: Yeah, about.

JC: Most people never get going, they say you need like ten thousand hours before you even get any good at anything. You think about that, that's what, we really have to work. But anyway, that was, I didn't know much about Governor Schwinden, the only thing was, it was interesting watching the politics of the gas tax. Governor Schwinden wanted the gas tax, and you always see this, you have a bigger picture in the Senate.

BB: Increasing the gas tax in order to have more money to match with federal dollars in order for highway construction.

JC: I wasn't in favor of that and then I can't remember who, he served other places, he was—all these people have been serving in government for a long time. I can't remember his name right now. They were always nice people. He just came around a pencil—

BB: He was director of the Highway Department?

JC: I'm not sure that or worked for the governor's office. But he had a pencil and a paper, and who voted for what. He just came around and asked you how you were going to vote. It wasn't like, call you into the governor's office and do these other things. It was just a matter of fact, how are you going to vote. It wasn't like, trying to—

BB: Weren't trying to talk you into anything.

JC: They had to go back and find the list and find out who they can talk to because even Dorothy Bradley told me that once. The governor calls you down there, and asks you for something, it's really hard to say no. I mean, when they really want you on the spot, it's really hard to say no to your own governor. Or any governor. Then they come down—

BB: Schwinden was more engaged with the Legislature like that than any other governor I can remember.

JC: Did he happen to be a legislator?

BB: He had been a legislator at one time. But he kinda knew how to think like us.

JC: I think the other ones have been basically, oh my gosh, we have to put up with the legislators? Not Governor Stephens. But—

BB: But Schwinden worked more with the Legislature, in my recollection, than Stephens did, even though they both had been legislators.

JC: But in my little world, again, in the party world, and I'm not an insider, I never was an insider in the party politics or the leadership, so you were always on the periphery seeing what was going on. You just discount most of the rumors. You discount everything. Basically, unless the top people say, this is the way it's going to be or something.

But anyway, back to Bardanoue, I'm sorry, I left Bardanoue out there. Bardanoue, I got on appropriations because of Bardanoue.

BB: Really?

JC: Because Rehberg had ticked off the party, the Democrats.

BB: Denny Rehberg, congressman, then was a state representative.

JC: Well, what happened was—

BB: He had been on the Appropriations Committee.

JC: Before that. The session before that, I got up and tried to cut \$100 million out of the budget.

BB: When you were a freshman?

JC: Sophomore. I don't know, whenever the year before I became an appropriation member. See I don't remember all this stuff. I got up during the budget, I went down and had all my amendments made. It was equivalent—

BB: Even though you weren't a member of the Appropriations Committee.

JC: I was going to cut \$100 million. That would be equivalent to like \$500 million now probably. It was, I going after it.

BB: Nuclear.

JC: I think I got Chuck Swysgood elected forever because I made a quip about Dillon because everybody talked about it. You know everybody talks the talk. You have to get rid of a university unit, so let's put the amendment on. But I told Swysgood where to get the information to kick my head in. So I always kidded him afterward that's why he got re-elected. But it wasn't set up—

BB: Chuck Swysgood represented the Dillon area, where Western Montana College was located.

JC: He was really sweating it, but my point was everybody talks the talk and that's like different from Congress. People, in the Legislature, let's find out where the votes are. That's why I always found out the Legislature works the best when you make them vote. Because when people just talk the talk or they are like bullfighting, they just bellow a lot. I'm sorry, am I going too fast.

BB: No, you are going good.

JC: But when they bellow a lot, they just like to bellow. You want to put them on a vote. That's why I did lots of amendments, hundreds and hundreds of amendments. I believe they were amendments, they weren't cheap shots stuff. I'm trying to go this direction or whatever I'm trying to do and I'm just looking for votes. I didn't have the charisma you have. I didn't have, the like, get the votes, the coalitions, it took me years to figure out how to build coalitions up. I was always slow on these things. I was always slow. But it took me a long time to figure these things out.

Bardanoue what he did...Anyways Gary Spaeth knows more of the story—

BB: Representative from down in the Yellowstone area, a Democrat.

JC: Yeah, he knew more of the story 'cause he—there's different versions because I only hear different versions why Rehberg got kicked off, but I know he really ticked off the Democrats.

BB: He got kicked the Appropriations Committee...

JC: And I got put on.

BB: Bardanouve was really sick of him, so when they had the majority they just bumped him off.

JC: It ended up Bardanouve was sick of him or Spaeth or somebody. I use the word they, whoever they were, that had the power—

BB: They had the opening and they thought, "Well this Cobb guy's kind of..."

JC: Bardanouve called me up. He said, "You're gonna be on Human Services. Your job is just to control the spending growth," because that was the key. If spending gets out of control, it destroys all the other budget. In Legislature, the main issues are K-12, university funding, and tax cuts, and if you can swipe—I always say there's no honor among thieves—you find all this money and if they just take it away from you all the time and do it for their own projects or their own priorities—there's no incentive to do that, and you just try to figure out how to keep it in your own place or you figure out how to get rid of bad programs and build up new programs or fund things that really work. You build up a coalition of groups. Plus legislators say, "You can't cut it now 'cause Cobb took this one program that was twenty million and he divided it into fifteen different areas that are gonna make a difference." Now it's harder to go in and tick everybody off. That's what we figured out pretty quick, but other legislators helped me find that too. You can't manipulate them; they know the programs don't work but they're under the same place too.

Chris Christiaens got in trouble on that one time, which is a senator—

BB: From Great Falls, Democrat.

JC: We were eliminating a program, but I had this extra money. He said, "I need some extra money for foster-care clothes."

I said, "How much?" He did it right in front of the committee when we were doing this action. The people watching it—I asked them afterward—they weren't upset. I just said, "I've got five million dollars here; we need to divide it up. It's staying in the committee." We gave the other fifteen million to the budget cuts and I've got five million here. "What do we do with it?" I'm not trying to buy votes because we already wiped the program out. But I said, "We're already keeping five because we already made our quota." What I tried to do instead of underfunding, cutting across the board, you fund what you think's working. He said, "I really, really need this." But leadership on our side got really ticked off; he kicked off next year. I don't think there was

any problem. He wasn't buying a vote, but they just were mad that he did it in front because everybody likes to do stuff in the back. I always wanted to do things in committee that people know about.

Bardanoue also said—one time I found some money to fund a program. He said, "If you can find this four million, we'll fund all these waiting lists." Well, I found it, but then he took it away from me. He said, "That's fine. You found it, and I'm gonna use it somewhere else because it's one-time money. You can never ever use one-time money for ongoing program." I think that's where it got Governor Stephens in trouble before, and the next (unintelligible) budget cycle because we spent all that one-time money the session before. You can see it going on right now; we're taking all that federal money. Governor Schweitzer is hoping he gets it out of here before—I don't know if he's hoping, but we're using all this one-time money [and] hope the economy picks up one of these days—

BB: The roof's gonna fall in about the time that he leaves office.

JC: But it's always been the one-time money built up to a certain level, and that's what gets you in trouble.

Bardanoue was always good about that. He was good to talk to, and also you had the committees. You had these older members too. You had Chuck Swysgood again. Bob Thoft, representative from...Where was he from?

BB: Stevensville.

JC: Stevensville. You had a lot of older legislators that had been around. So they knew what was going on. You never knew what they were doing; they were making their own little deals between themselves. Not deals. They were saying, "You're a freshman; you don't get invited to things." My part was, "I'm never gonna get invited, so if I'm not getting invited, I might as well go do my own thing." I wasn't feeling bad that I wasn't getting invited. I don't want anybody fifty years from now thinking, "He felt bad." No, I'm just saying, "Here's the facts." I can just go along and be told what to do all the time, or I can say, "I'm going this way." I knew once I got into Human Services that I was going to go do some things.

The good thing about Human Services was there were plenty of people in the groups there and the people there told me where I was full of it. When I was doing something wrong or something—I remember being talked to afterwards. I got a note and it was from a state employee, and she thought she was getting fired after she gave it to me. I went over there, and she bawled. I said, "No, no, I'm not going to fire you. I didn't think I said those things, but you think I said them? I'm sorry." But it was basically people were willing to tell you, "Here's how you fix things." I always found out after a while, I don't have to have a solution. So in all these things people [would say,] "Oh, you did these things or Cobb did some things." No, no.

Somebody out there told me how to fix it because somebody normal said, "Here's how you fix the problem. That problem's been there for years. Here some ways of doing it."

You'd have the Cabinet members; you'd have the director, people underneath there. You'd call them in at the end (unintelligible), and say, "Here's what we're doing." Even though they'd say, "We're doing the governor's bill. We're for all of the governor's stuff." They were always loyal to the governor, all the directors all the way through. But if you're gonna do it this way, this program needs more money than that one because you guys don't know—. So we would bring them in, which is like, I don't think they'd ever go tell their governor that and I'm not sure if they ever did, but it was like, you say after a while the committee started figuring out that we have to stick together—the Appropriations Committee—because they would just pick us to pieces. And I've always said for years that Appropriations Committee ought to be abolished because what happens is we do all that work and then basically leadership, you guys, go in the back room, the governor puts everything the way he wants and we all go home. I remember going home lots of sessions, nothing got done. Nothing got done.

BB: But the sub-committees, you felt, should be a band of brothers?

JC: You had to at the end because you used to get in those fights. Also, it evolved that way because before I used fight. We had these huge fights. One time, Betty Lou Kasten, representative from eastern Montana—I was chairman—

BB: Republican, very conservative.

JC: I was chairman; Dorothy Bradley was my chairman—

BB: Of the subcommittee—

JC: Of the subcommittee, the first time, and Larry Grinde was on there from Lewistown, and we would do things—we'd find things—but we sort of learned how to do it, work together. But we also—she has her own, everybody has their own viewpoints. When I got to be chairman, I did the committee a lot differently. You know how you watch all the chairmen, how they work, and find out the good things they do and the bad things and hope you don't screw up so bad? I said, "We're doing welfare reform, we're doing a bunch of other things." We just spent our time on certain issues, and also by that time [I was] staring to figure out who the good managers are. Like Mike Hanshew, who was a state employee, you didn't worry about Mike Hanshew [an administrator in the Department of Health and Human Services]. He kept within the budget; people didn't die; people were taken care of. This is all the money you're getting. And the argument always was, "Everybody can always argue for one more dollar. You get one more person to get on board. Someone has to say no sometimes." You know how, in the Legislature, any best idea is the worst idea. If you'll excuse me, the best new idea never gets funded because everybody else has all the money. That's how government kind of grows sometimes, and that's what a big part of government was.

Anyway, back to Bardanoue. Bardanoue just said, "Control the budgets." He was always good; he had great stories to tell about things. Great gentleman, just a lot of respect. My wife, Cheryl, her grandparents were neighbors to Bardanoue. They helped him run for election I think. Very, very smart man.

BB: Was there a prominent Republican on the Appropriations Committee early on in your service that stands out in your memory?

JC: I guess they all do if you go back. I shouldn't be saying that because—

BB: But anybody that would approach the stature of Bardanoue?

JC: He was just in a league of his own. The point was, [he was in] a league of his own. Toward the last couple sessions he was there, you'd hear all these rumors about, "Oh, he's discounted everything." He was there; he's there. I know one time he got real mad because we did something on a different bill, and when he gets mad on the floor, boy, he really got mad. I made this change on a bill, and he just blew up.

Anyway, just a great man on that part. League of his own. But also, you had Swysgood, Quilici, all those people. Representative [Joe] Quilici—

BB: Representative from, a Democrat from—[Butte]

JC: I'm not gonna do that or I'll forget all these names, but they were all there and they'd all been around. That's the difference, they'd all been around. But anyway, they'd all been around so that was important to know that, and they'd seen something. They'd seen all this stuff before, and they're different. They also knew how to work the Senate, but you're dealing with the senators too.

BB: Did you remember Matt Himsl?

JC: No, I knew who he was, but Matt was also, wasn't he the chairman of the Audit Committee?

BB: Yes.

JC: This is what really made a difference my first year. This really made a difference for me on government. I like limited government. What really helped me was usually on those interim committees, like the finance, which is always political except the one time I was chairman of the committee. I said, "We're not gonna be political. We've got to get things done," which ticked off the governor, which is fine. The issue was, that was the session where they'd cut the

Audit Committee, cut the staff. We were trying to find a new [auditor.] The old auditor resigned, quitting.

BB: Morris Brusett.

JC: Then we picked Scott Seacat.

BB: Scott Seacat. He was there for many years.

JC: There was Jim Pellegrini, and there was Jim Gillett and all the staff there. The issue was that was the best thing for me to be on because you got to review every state agency, and that was when we had Judy Jacobson was the chairman, senator from Butte. You had a bunch of other members that had been there before. Not Matt Himsl, but what Matt had done, this is what's great about the senators. They'd beaten into the committee—and I wasn't there—no politics in that committee. No politics. I'll give an example on that real quick. That's when [Jim] Waltermire—they wanted to check the phone records of Waltermire—

BB: He was Secretary of State, Republican Secretary of State, and considered to be a real political ambitious—

JC:—running for governor, so they wanted to check the—they came down to the Audit Committee and wanted us to review the (unintelligible). This was—one, is to review all of Jim Waltermire's phone records and stuff—

BB: Who wanted you to do this?

JC: Oh, Democrats. Anyway, they were complaining. I won't use his name, and you could tell—my viewpoint, this is only my viewpoint—that they were going after, maybe there's something there. Judy Jacobson was the chairman, and she turns around and said, "Well let's just check everybody's phone records." That was the end of it.

BB: All the state-elected officials, governor, attorney general—

JC: "We'll just check everybody. Let's just get 'em all. We're not gonna fool around here." That was the end of it. It wasn't the end of it, they found there were some problems and stuff. We said, "We're not gonna get caught in this thing." Bill Mathers—were you there when Bill Mathers was there?

BB: Yes, I was.

JC: He later became the chairman of the Board of Regents.

BB: He was the Senate President; he was very distinguished rancher from over in Miles City.

JC: What he did—I'm giving examples about all these people that made me who I am, better. I mean I'm ten times better than before I came to the Legislature, but just the awe you have on these people. One person can make a difference, like Judy Jacobson, that never would have happened. The Finance Committee would have [said], "Let's go check out." That's my viewpoint, the Finance Committee. The Audit Committee, "We're just not gonna get involved in this thing. We're gonna just check everybody. Our job is to have good government. Accountability." That was also when Judy Jacobson and some of the Republicans said, "You guys can't keep saying you'll have [an] audit. When you had an audit problem and didn't fix it, don't come back to us next time with that."

That's when Bill Mathers, who used to be on the Board—he used to be on the Audit Committee, I guess. There was a problem with the University—MSU, their audits—and it really blew up. Then Bill Mathers called in the auditors, not the committee members, but he said, "You guys come down here and tell me what the problem is." After that, we had no more problems with the university system ever, maybe even today. Because he set up a program that said, "If you agree to fix it, you will fix it, and you will say who fixes it, and you will say when you fix it." Accountability. That was Bill Mathers, plus the other Board of Regent members. I don't know all the other people there, but just bringing in and saying the Legislature—'cause he was there before...

BB: The Legislature discovered the problem and Bill—

JC: He had been a legislator before. I think that helped.

BB:—knew exactly what happened and what was going on. Then as a member of the Board of Regents, he made sure that the—

JC: That was the end of that. There's a whole bunch of other things behind it, but the point was Bill Mathers had been there before, had the clout to—. On the Board of Regents, but he called in [people from the university system and asked], "What is going on here?" [He] wasn't just like, "I'm going to take sides here first." He made a big difference on audits. He'd set the standard for a lot of the other agencies that you hold the university. They can fix it, when they got things, they gotta fix something, they fix it. And if they disagree, they disagree. But they're not gonna be sitting there going, "We'll get to it some year."

BB: Did you form an impression of Governor Stephens?

JC: I didn't really know him very well. (unintelligible)

BB: He came over from the Senate when you were in the House.

JC: Right. I think you give a better idea—

BB: What was your impression of his administration, I mean, the people you worked with in his administration?

JC: I was on Appropriations by that time, so the director—she was from Wyoming—she was good. We'd get in big fights, but she was good. She would change things.

BB: Director of what?

JC: Human Services. That was why—

BB: State Department of Health and Human Services.

JC: So mostly it was not...Governor Stephens...I've never had a governor call me up and say, "Gee, John, what do you want to think about this? Gee, John wants to do this and by god..." Most people—I've heard it from the side—that when people talk about me they roll their eyes. That's what I heard more than anything else.

BB: (laughs) When you were on the Appropriations Committee, you were always on the Human Services subcommittee or almost always?

JC: I was always on that.

BB: For many, many years. So the bureaucrat that you worked most closely with would be your counterpart on the administrative side.

JC: Or the people underneath. After a while you just go over and start asking questions.

BB: You'd get to know division administrators and bureau chiefs, so in the Department of Health and Social Services—

JC: There was one person over there. I said, "Everybody should go meet this person." He wasn't the deputy director, but he worked in there. He was the perfect bureaucrat because he would never answer your question unless it was specific answers. One of those ones you always see on TV or you want to hear about. You always think, "This is the person you ought to hate." I said, "No, you ought to watch him because he is so good. Unless you ask the right question—" That's where Beverly Barnhart, representative from Bozeman, a Democrat, she taught me how to ask the third and fourth questions.

BB: To extend on the first question.

JC: Just listen to what they have to say then just start [asking more questions.] Because she had worked on a lot of these programs before, or knew about them, so she knew what was going on

or heard stuff or, “This is good—” She taught me, you don’t ever ask the one or two questions. They’re just gonna blow you off because they’re not there to help you. It’s a gigantic. They’re there to do their job, and there’s never a problem.

Again, on Stan Stephens, the issue is—I got to speed up here. I’m sorry.

BB: We’ve got about twenty minutes left.

JC: Stan Stephens. This is all—no good telling anybody else down the street. I was wondering when he came into the Legislature, he went right to leadership. He was never in the committees. I think that was a failing, never being in the committees, never understanding how government and all these other programs and how people work and decide things. If you’re in leadership, that’s a different world up there, and they have to look at things differently. My point was when he got to be governor, he had no idea how this government works.

BB: Stan sparkled beautifully on the surface. Perfect speaking voice, and he owned a radio station and he’d delivered these commentaries on the radio. So he could stand up on the floor of the Senate and just sparkle. He was a smart guy so he used words like bullets. He didn’t waste any of them; he’d talk for three, four, five minutes and he could encapsulate a lot of thought into a brief statement. That was his great strength. He was usually, for that reason because he could do that so well. He was usually...He was a really good guy to have as Floor Leader. He was real sure-footed and real careful. He said the right thing in the right way at the right time. He did an excellent job at that, but I’ve heard him criticized too just you’d just mentioned, John, for having never been in the trenches—

JC: I want to tell you something about him. Even though I didn’t get along with him and, you know, with all respect for what he thought, I carried his bills. This is how mean the Democrats are. We talk about Republicans being mean down there now, the Democrats want to get mean and they were really mean to Governor Stephens. They were vicious, especially from the Senate, even the House. But I want to give this one little story here about good government, about the majority better just do their job and play games. I carried the Governor Stephens pay bill that year. I was carrying Governor Stephens education bill, which is very little. So I walked into committee with the education bill, and I just said—and I was always polite to people. I said to Ted Schye, “Here’s the money.”

BB: Ted Schye, representative from Glasgow, Democrat.

JC: Very good, but he used to be—anyway, he was minority leader at one time or something, majority leader. Anyway, I walked in for the education bill and I said, “This is Governor Stephens bill and it’s not very good. We wish we could give more money but this is it. Can I go now?” so I left. He said, “Go.” I wasn’t gonna sit around and get beat up. This is all we got, you can read it,

you can beat it up because the whole crowd was gonna beat it up. I said, "I don't have time for this."

Then I went and gave Governor Stephens, I think it was twenty-five cents an hour raise, and we were pretty broke. Everybody was mad, and this is probably one of the better stories. The Senate never knew about it. There was the Governor's twenty-five cent one, there was the compromise which was like forty-five cents floating around, and there was the buck and hour. Remember the buck.

BB: Yeah, "We're worth a buck." Those guys had pins on.

JC: Then they told us that they're gonna take action on the bill, and they said, "You know what we're gonna do? We're gonna bring Governor Stephen's bill on the floor of the House first." That was my bill, and I always thought that ought to be a rule that you can't blast a bill out unless the sponsor wants it out. But, "We're gonna bring the bill out." Well, I guess they voted out. "We're gonna bring the Governor's bill out first," because the votes were there to kill it, "Then we're gonna bring the buck an hour out." They figured that a few Republicans would have to vote for it because they're from Helena and such, but everybody else—and they'd get a few Democrats to vote against it. That's what the plan looked like was. Then they'd bring the forty-five cent one out so they can give all those—'cause remember, they were at the rallies and—well, Mercer was there and said, "Let's vote for the buck and hour."

BB: 'Cause the Democrats, they were counting on the Republicans to argue (unintelligible) but they wanted the bill killed too.

JC: It's called the night—

BB: Why did they want the bill killed?

JC: They didn't have a buck either.

BB: They had other priorities.

JC: They had the forty...They knew we could pay the forty-five cents; they were just trying to embarrass the governor. You don't embarrass...That's what really gets mad at me about Legislature or I mean politics. People might hate certain governors, they might hate certain people, you don't embarrass people, just because. It's fun because it's a quick "I gotcha." But it's not fun, it's wrong.

BB: Maybe they were thinking...Well go ahead.

JC: What they did was, they brought the twenty-five cents out. Bam, they beat it up. There was a big crowd up there in the top—

BB: The Democrats all voted against it, "This is outrageous."

JC: And most of the Republicans. Then they bring a buck an hour out, and the crowd's up there [in the gallery.]. Then I think it was disservice to the—I think what happened was, remember things taking on a picture bigger than it is. So you have a lot of people thinking, "We're gonna get a buck an hour," because they're being told this. The unions are telling their own people that. So the bill's on its own momentum and it builds. It passes.

BB: And so Mercer, the Republican leader thought, "What the heck, we'll just—"

JC: No, but here's the—I'm gonna—basically, his plan was, "We don't have the money. You guys aren't, you shouldn't be doing this. You're the majority; you rule. If you don't have the money, you gotta stand up and be mature like adults and say, 'We don't have the money because there is no buck and hour. There's not the money to pay for this thing.'" There's no way, nobody's gonna raise taxes. The Democrats aren't raising taxes. Nobody's gonna raise taxes to pay that kind of money, and we're short—

BB: So it passed by a huge majority.

JC: Well, no. The Democrats—you can see how the votes are on that—

BB: —electronic voting board, you see a whole bunch of Republicans going up green.

JC: Because Mercer went around and said, "These Republicans are going to vote for it." (unintelligible) Remember, always do the right thing. Like Rick Jore, the Constitutionalist.

BB: Republican Constitutionalist from Ronan.

JC: He always knew he was gonna do just what he thought was right. Never had to worry about politics with him, he was just gonna do what was right. But other ones, Republicans, they weren't gonna vote for the buck an hour. But he had to go basically arm-twist the Republicans to go vote for this thing. Then once it started passing, all the Democrats, some of the ones who were gonna vote against it, they voted for it. So the bill passes. The crowd goes wild. They thought they got the buck and hour, which is a disservice to them. But then I remember a few Republicans—some Democrat senators came over, are mad as heck. They were furious because, "What the heck are you guys doing, cause there's no money?" Everybody knew there was no money. But they'd built up this thing about, "Let's get Stephens. Let's build this up."

BB: If they'd sent it up to Stephens, Stan would have had to veto it. Maybe they would have embarrassed him that way.

JC: They were just trying to embarrass—that's my viewpoint, only they're embarrassing someone and they were the majority. You rule as the majority. You do your job. And that was bad government to me, and what this taught [me] real quick was—I call it the nice-guy theory—I think you've heard of it. Be nice, but when somebody does something nasty to you, you turn the other cheek you do it right back to them. What that teaches people is that you're gonna mess around, you roll over the guy the first time—that person—just do what you gotta do. You want to get in a fight, he'll fight you. It went over to the Senate, that bill, and I think it just got real quiet and went forty-five cents, and that was it, that all that was done.

But that was a good awakening that, "Hey, you're here to do your job. Don't be playing games to embarrass people." Both years, both parties try to get someone to sell their principles out, and I've never seen anybody vote against their principles in the Legislature. Remember the coal tax and those things? I've never seen people just—maybe you have in the Senate, where people vote against their principles, but they always think someone's gonna do it. I've never seen it happen down there, but they always think—the most vicious people down there are probably the people that work for the parties. Because they look at it from a party thing, the political parties, us against them, and the rest of us don't.

BB: When you think politically, you want to come up with an issue that'll work for you politically.

JC: How did you do that because you—? See, you have to do the compromise but you also have to distinguish your party. How did you do that? You're in leadership. I never was in those places, "Well, this is what we're gonna do."

BB: When I was in a leadership job, I was kind of disgusted by the political maneuvering and that sort of thing because I'd been there long enough then, that I just thought, "This is serious business. We've got so many dollars here. We've got so many needs to meet." You had to look at the CPI. You knew that increasing taxes was something that nobody was gonna do; that wasn't an option. It wasn't gonna pass. So somehow or other you had to make it work, and that's really more how I thought about things.

But you had to indulge a certain amount of it in the caucus or would always be somebody standing up with a bright idea about how, "Boy, we'll get 'em on this, and then—" But generally those things would sink. Generally those things would sink.

JC: But you'd been there long enough that if you let them pass a day or two, they're gonna disappear.

BB: Usually.

JC: But in the House, you knew—

BB: The House is more fractious and harder to control and that sort of thing. Then the thing about too, in my case, was I knew a lot of them personally real well because I'd been there for a long time. I knew the ones that, Democrats included. I'd just sit down with 'em. We'd just kind of talk these things through, and I'd say, "You can't really then be serious then about honestly doing this. You know—"

JC: That's why I hated the Senate, because in the House, we'll die for anything. You always find someone to die for something, and the Senate—I one time said to—we were talking to Edith Clark who was representative, famous lady, I really liked her up at Shelby—

BB: Republican from up in Shelby.

JC: Just the greatest person, but she was—we were talking about old gunslingers and we're talking: "We're gonna get shot up tomorrow on our budgets. But we don't really care because we know what we gotta do. We're just gonna go have our dinner now, but we know we got this big fight. We'll take you on; we don't really care." But we're not playing politics. Everything we do, we're gonna do what we think's right—

[End of first part of interview]

[OH396-71b, part 2 of interview]

Bob Brown: Okay, we're running again.

John Cobb: Okay, I just wanted to say something about the Legislature, just some things. Every time a House member became a senator, it took one day or two weeks to become a senator, just the way that they transformed, the way they looked at things. They looked at things in a more worldly, or bigger picture. Every House member that became a senator actually became a better legislator. I'm not saying House members weren't good where they were, but they always became good. The senators that were basically the most fairest I thought were the ones—we always came over from the House to the Senate, we had an edge 'cause we were in the House. We just had a different way of looking at things, more like—

BB: House members were more edgy with each other.

JC: We had an edge. I'm not sure I can explain it, but it was like, we're not as polite and we're more forceful. The ones that were never House members—now you were only there three times, that made a difference—but the ones that had been there a long time, but the ones that were senators and [had] never been to the House, they acted different. They just had different attitude about things, and the ones that had represented both the rural and urban district, they

had a lot tougher choices 'cause they had to really make people work together on that. What I did see was—

BB: Just so we make sure people who are listening to this understand. Someone who had never served in the House would never have had to be in that bare knuckles jungle, so they tended to be just fundamentally kinder and more polite and that sort of thing.

JC: But the Senate, they were the meanest though, the toughest. When they decided they were gonna do something, it was like, "We might be polite—." Sometimes, the lobbyists from out of state would come here, we'd all—we were always polite to them, and they'd think we were inferior. Actually no, we're just polite people, but don't mess around with us. But it's like the Senate. The Senate would talk polite, but they were mean. Not mean, but when they decided they were gonna do something it wasn't like, "Oh." You want proper British soldiers in the Revolutionary War in that sense, you decide if you're gonna get in a fight and you're gonna decide something, it's gonna get decided. That's the way it is on that part. And that was the way it is. But at least you were in that—my wife one time, someone was saying, "John—"—not to me, but wife said, "John has to be careful because he's gonna ruin his political career," then she started laughing. There is no political career, everything's been basically in my—this year or next year, maybe you're in, maybe you're not; it's up to the voters. I just kept ending up being there.

What she pointed out to them, and what I said before was, "In the Legislature, let's get real here. This is America. This legislature—" I still believe that a citizen legislature is probably the best legislature you can ever have. I think it's the best chance of helping because you have a forum for helping people who do not have a right, who have a hard time petitioning government, and we allow that. We need to do more of that, but we at least allow that. What I saw was the Legislature—if you think of history, anywhere else, what do we do here? If you're on the losing side, you don't kill the winners; if you're on the winning side, you don't kill the losers. You're not raping, pillaging, plundering out there. We've learned this for years because some days it goes on, but it's frowned upon. But everywhere else where these people stand up and fight the fight, and then it's like—I watched that one time in the Legislature: "We better not do this because we'll get beat up." No, no, this is irrelevant. If you get the broad picture, do whatever you want done, do what you think's right. I remember telling some legislators before, because it's the party's—"Well, we shouldn't bring this bill out because it's gonna embarrass the party." Sometimes they'd ask me what I thought that legislator would say, "In twenty years from now what would you have done if you looked back? And what do you want to do that's right?" It's not gonna pass but it's like that *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

BB: Yes, great movie.

JC: The ending was all wrong because the good guy would never have won because people don't go, "Gee, I'm wrong. I'm sorry I ruined your life and everything else, and I'm a crook." But

the one part that he said about his father was, "If you're not willing to fight for a lost cause what are you willing to fight for?" I saw that all the time in the Legislature; you gotta let the people fight for what they believe in. It's not gonna pass, but if you—I saw the system just beat you down. Senate didn't let you get beat. You could always do things and they were always polite.

Jerry O'Neil, good example, representative from—

BB: Libertarian Republican from up at Columbia Falls.

JC: But he was so polite to people, people didn't hate him. I would watch him, he ended up losing most of his bills. I also watched him in a committee one time where he kept saying, "This bill is wrong, you gotta change it." The Democrats were in power, and they were gonna pass this thing. He kept working on them; they changed it for him because he was right. He kept saying—

BB: He was earnest.

JC: He was earnest, and he said—I watched people, and I watched Senator [Mignon] Waterman do the same thing. Even though you're in the minority, you're the down last person—when we were superpowers, she couldn't—"Oh, Democrats can't get anything." I said, "Watch, Senator Waterman." She was passing stuff.

BB: Democrat from Helena, and she was on the Social, Human Services Committee with you.

JC: We had huge fights before. We used to have big battles, Betty Lou Kasten, Rita—big fights—Waterman, all of us got into big fights down there. One time someone walked in Human Services—Pearl was yelling; people were really mad—and walked back out and said, "Never seen that in the Legislature." People were really upset with each other. Waterman one time caught me near the elevator, shoved me against the wall—you know how tiny she is—pointed up and said, "You do that, and I'll make sure you never have any kids." Wasn't even fooling around. I had kids afterwards (laughs). But it was like people fight for these things but we've overlooked all the politics going on, people really trying to do what they want to do down there. I have a better appreciation of the Legislature, and also—

What I'm worried about and I just want to point this out, we need to do better information for the public. We have internet access, but we need to have the public forums opened up more and more. The Legislature actually learned that just because the House, we always have an immediate response, the Senate always has that way to look back because you're elected every four years instead of two, you have a broader perspective to say, "Okay the motions are here." I always thought the House was a collected wisdom, a collective thought that emotions were immediate. The Senate goes, "No we've got the wisdom and let's look at this. It might be a good idea but let's not rush all the time." But we really need to work on getting the people in

there. I'm really worried about the Legislature because government's so big, we're not doing very good at accountability, either party. Basically you've got governor gets in, "We don't want to question our own government now." You see that; you saw that all the time. You just shake your head going, "The Legislature—this governor's beating it down. The next governor is gonna do the same thing based on what this governor does because it's just increasing." That's where I think the problem is. The one thing I see wrong with term limits was—and I'm not trying to change it here—you need some older people saying, "Take a hike. We're the Legislature. You work for us. The governors come and go, and you're supposed to run your thing. If someone will leave you, ask you a question."

I think the Legislature solves most of the problems. Can you tell me what the governors have ever solved, major? Any major problem? It was the Legislature, whether it was work comp [worker's compensation] or stream access or tort reform or anything. They come in afterwards with administration, but it takes two to three years for their agencies now. We have 1940s style government for a 21st century government. If you pass something it takes two or three years. But what have they done? Maybe I'm just biased.

BB: I'd have to give some thought to that because at the beginning of each legislative session, the governor gives the State of the State message, and the State of the State message usually contains some suggestions for things he hopes pass. We'd probably have to go back and look at those and see—

JC: I know they pass some stuff; but in the end, if there's a real mess, the Legislature has to step in whether it's corrections, or you got—

BB: Computer problems—

JC: We have to go step in and fix the thing. Whether it's money or it's not just money, what are the problems here? I'm just saying it seems to me that the Legislature really doesn't understand the ultimate(?) history. They really do solve problems, big problems when they're asked to solve problems. The party stuff is a small part, but you remember solving problems; whether it's tax problems or budget problems, the Legislature has to do it.

BB: Yeah, (pauses) but kind of related to your question—each legislative session's dealt a hand of cards. We've got a budget from the previous biennium that was X number of dollars and we know how the money was allocated. There may be is a problem or two that pops up that's not budget-related that has to do with buffalo or stream access or—

JC: It's always those other side issues that actually show up; they call 'em the fad of the year, but—

BB: They're a fad of the year; they're kind of fad issues and they creep into the picture. But you, I think you could elect at least a moderately liberal Democrat or a moderately conservative

Republican or maybe even an extremely liberal Democrat or an extremely liberal Republican, and their—

JC: Hands are tied.

BB: Their hands are tied.

JC: I know—

BB: They can't do a hell of a lot. What you'd find if the other guy won the election that the outcome of that legislative session where he or she started out as governor wouldn't be a heck of a lot different one way or another.

JC: In Human Services that was the best sessions we had, the committee, because you had older members on it and they had agendas.

BB: What was the best sessions you had?

JC: When you had a new governor because they're not sure of themselves, new directors. If you're gonna make the move, that's when you make your move. I don't care who the chairman was, Dorothy Bradley, myself, Betty Lou Kasten, whatever it was; you were aware that this is the change that can make this.

BB: You guys had more institutional memory than these new people coming in.

JC: You took the years to get beaten if you got a bill to coalition, and sometimes you can't build bills coalition. I remember they used to put Chuck Swysgood, the senator, Dave Lewis, he was put on there, "Watch Cobb." So what do we do? We get him to do—they're watching him, but they're making him help...He gets into this solving a problem; we get him right into it because he knows he has to solve a problem. He used to be the Director of Human Services.

BB: Dave Lewis.

JC: Dave Lewis, and so you'd get him into these things and we've got to fix these problems. A lot of times...

BB: Dave knows it's a problem too.

JC: You can just rubberstamp the budget and be done in two minutes. Basically the governor and your leadership, you go back there and you change things basically back. You're doing what you have to do to get us out of there. Everybody has their job, but the Legislature, I have my job to do, and I wish—I know all my failings and things I should have done differently, and you look back at what you could have done differently. But that's the problem is you can't go back. What

is good about it is you learn that you got to stand up for yourself, you gotta know where you're going. Every session I went up there and had a list of things I wanted to get done, a list of what I don't want to happen, and you keep working on it even to the very end. Even when it's all done and we can't do anything else, Ernest Bergsagel from—

BB: Republican from Malta.

JC: We used to go walk around agencies and we'd go to the committee hearings, Beverly Barnhart and myself. When the directors were having meetings or the managers, we'd go listen to the meetings just to see what's going on because they're all public meetings.

BB: Just go drop in.

JC: We used that public meeting thing a lot.

BB: Let me understand, the director of the department of Health and Human Services would just be having a staff meeting.

JC: We'd ask ahead of time if it was okay. Even lieutenant governor when he'd have his little monthly, but they always don't say everything when you're down there anyway. But the governor or lieutenant governor would have a little, at the end, the chief of staff would be having some meetings, you'd go ask to go into 'em. We'd always ask ahead of time; no one ever said no to us but we thought, "We're not gonna just break in." One time Ernest and I went over to Human Services on I think a Thursday or Friday afternoon, like noon or one o'clock, and nobody was in. The entire place had two Vista volunteers, and they knew we went over there. But they all had reasons why they were gone or something, but I thought, "Who's running government today?"

We got into that, but you have to get someone to go with you. But we never quit 'til the very end, and that was what was frustrating is you never quit to the end and the Legislature was really stressful on me. It wasn't like—I'm not sure how it was on you, but it got more, every session was stressful because you're trying to do these things. You know how serious people are; it's not a game and you're fighting the status quo. I'm fighting the status quo because I don't want the status quo the way it is. I want a revolution, I want major change, and it's not gonna happen but I can't quit.

BB: I had somewhat the same experience too, that you did. I think legislators who are there longer find it becomes increasingly serious business and less a big fun game. So you know what needs to be done, and you know that there are people who may not share your commitment to try to bring about good government solutions to problems or at least keeping things from getting worse. They either don't care or they're trying to find a political issue or something like that, so that becomes a frustration, as you know more and you become more serious about why you're there. I think that's one. Then I think the other thing is in the year in which we live, politics has become increasingly a blood sport. When I started in the Legislature back in 1971, it

wasn't nearly as contentious as it is now. It seems to me that it's kind of evolved more in that direction.

JC: But you get these, I usually call these, cycles and such too. When I first started, the Democrats, from my viewpoint, were out of ideas, they just represent special interest groups, the big ones, the unions, whatever they're representing. They didn't have the ideas; the Republicans started thinking up a new ideas, action plans—

BB: The Democrats were still in the era of the New Deal.

JC: They're the status quo.

BB: Status quo.

JC: But everything's changing around them.

BB: They were a political progressive party; they were a status quo party, and the world was changing around them. The Republicans were the new idea people. That's what was going on when you were came in 1980.

JC: When I was coming in, it was like, "We're gonna change the world." Then you're still caught into the system, people, politics. Everybody looks at things differently; you're trying to make a difference. Then the Republicans, you wonder, "Are they lost? Where are their ideas? What are they gonna change?" I don't think this governor, I don't think he's a Republican or Democrat; I think he's the Schweitzer party.

BB: The current governor?

JC: Yeah, I don't think it's a party thing. The question is—

BB: Why do you say that? How—?

JC: I don't think he's a Republican or a Democrat. I think he belongs to Schweitzer.

BB: He runs as a Democrat but you feel that his motivation is to serve himself.

JC: Yeah, we all do it. That's not a criticism; I'm just saying when I go down there, you look at, here's what's going on. The Legislature now, the Human Services, the other governors, depending on who the directors are and who they hire, their managers, how much flexibility, new ideas. Do you see any new ideas coming out? Do you see anything different? Because it's a top-down government. As long as you understand how that works that way, you gotta know how the system works. You go down there every time. I might look in Human Services and go, "Who's in charge? Who's the chairman? Who's got the party and what can I get done?" I may

have wanted it to go this way in this program and this program here, but that's not their interest. They want to change something over here.

BB: You were still in the Senate weren't you when Schweitzer was governor?

JC: Right, but I'd never met the [man] except, "Hi, how are you? Fine." I'm just dealing with— but that's when Joan Miles was there, the director [of the Department of Public Health and Human Services], and then she was canned.

BB: Why?

JC: I don't know. No one ever told me. She just got told to leave one morning, and she was gone. But the question is—

BB: How was she?

JC: She was good. I remember in the Legislature I served for a very, very liberal, good manager, stood with the governor's budget. But this is what we're gonna do, something different. Well, if you do it that way, do it this way then. But they had good staff people down there, and you could disagree with them. I don't care if they liked you or not, but you'd try to get them to say what's going on. Start saying, "There's always problems—." Remember on the floor of the House, nobody wants to know if there's a problem in Human Services. There's always a problem. Our committee kills people; we let people die. We know what we're doing down there. You don't want to hear all that stuff all the time, make people feel bad. You know how it is; the budget's the budget; it's all we got. Our committee would fight between themselves to the very end, and some sessions it was really, really bad. Everybody hated those floor fights, whether it's Democrats or Republicans because—

But then I thought, if I went back to the House now, you remember you talking about the fighting? I'm too crabby. I wouldn't put up with it. It's like you just don't put up. I started in that last session, the very end of the last session. I was kind of embarrassed what I did there, but I was just so mad at some of the Republicans about, we're gonna get out but we're gonna [adjourn] sine die anyway, but we're just gonna drag it out and just try to embarrass the governor or the Democrats. I'm going, "Just sine die; just go home." Because they were gonna leave the budget and embarrass the governor. They didn't sine die, pretending we're negotiating when you're just doing it for a game. I didn't have time for that; you don't put up with that. If you're just gonna make your point because the average person in the street is not watching what I do on the street. What's your point? Make your point, and that's what you do. I just could not put up with that anymore. I think if we went back, I think there'd be a lot less nonsense because you just don't put up with it.

BB: As I say, I think as we get older in the process, we don't enjoy the nonsense. When we're younger, we may not even understand it all.

JC: You don't understand it and you're not even part of the process and you're trying to learn it. That's the trouble. You're trying to think about what was it back then when I did these things? I remember making those amendments; I hated making amendments. I cannot talk very well; I get scared on the floor.

I'll give you one last example. I wasn't scared there, but I get nervous. I do all these things I would think they're right. You try to do the best thing you can, and you know they're going down. But you gotta go, "You gotta do what you gotta do." I don't really care. I care what other people think but I just gotta—

I'll give you one last example. Who's the budget director now?

BB: Dave Ewer.

JC: Dave Ewer. We were doing—this is something I want to explain too. I want this on tape. This is important; this is on the deregulation bill. Mercer let me on that committee on the deregulation bill.

BB: This was to deregulate electric power.

JC: Electric power. This is the big fight.

BB: Biggest issue for the last ten years—

JC: I watched it evolve and I sat...Ernest Bergsagel was involved in it too, a good friend of mine that was a legislator. I watched how it evolved, and how the politics, how everything got out of hand. That bill would have died, the deregulation bill. It just probably [was] gonna be a study bill, but when the co-op said, "Hey—"

BB: Electric co-ops.

JC: All the co-ops were a lot of Republicans, and a lot of rural legislatures, mostly Republicans, said, "Hey, we're for it if we don't have to be part of it." When MDU [Montana-Dakota Utilities]—

BB: So it doesn't apply to co-ops, so they didn't care (unintelligible)...

JC: It had to be MDU and Basin said the same thing.

BB: Basin Electric and Montana-Dakota Utilities.

JC: Said, "Hey—" because they have other areas too—"You can have it if we don't have to be part of it." All those legislators are going, "Fine, if you guys want this, because we're gonna kill

this.” It would have died if [we] just tried to deregulate it. “If you want it [fine], but we don’t have to be part of it,” because you see a lot of times in the Legislature in Helena, “You can have it as long as you leave us out of it.” You see that. So that bill went out—

BB: Did it just apply to Montana Power Company?

JC: Yes, and Flathead had decided to get into it, volunteered to get in. But it was like, “You guys want it, fine. We don’t have to be part of it.” That was a big issue, and that came up because that bill—I don’t think people understand that. They go, “Republicans voted for it.” So did the Democrats. The issue was out of the House once everybody said we don’t have to be part of it, at least not everybody. Well then, it doesn’t affect us. That happens a lot of times in Helena was: “Hey, if you’ve got the bill written in a way that doesn’t affect my area, fine, do whatever you want. It’s your area. We think it’s a dumb idea, but if you want to do it, fine.” It got out.

I remember John Mercer was very clear that first meeting. He said to all the Republicans there, “You do not let the consumer get hurt. You do not. Make sure.” He was adamant. It wasn’t like he was bought off something or the politics. Mercer was adamant, and Mercer never lied or tried to do anything wrong in a subcommittee. I’m not saying he lied anywhere else, but I’m just saying. But you were in those meetings when he was, “This is the rules. You can agree to disagree.” He was adamant over and over again, “Do not hurt the consumer.” But in the end some things got out of hand, and whatever. No one knew what Montana Power was gonna do.

BB: I take it there were some unforeseen consequences there too. I’m not sure that any legislator could have known. Some people believe there was a conspiracy on the part of the Montana Power Company. They knew they were going to sell out all the time.

JC: I know, but the reason I want to tell you this was that the leadership of the Republican party in the House was very adamant, “You do not hurt the consumer.” Secondly, it got out because everybody else got off. I remember David. I was on the committee, and David Ewer—I think we made two-hundred fifty—this is also respective to the Senate. Senator Thomas was the chair of the committee, and the senators were there. We made, I think someone said we made two-hundred fifty amendments. David Ewer. He wasn’t on the committee but he was sitting next to me. We made two-hundred fifty amendments in like three hours and killed every one of them. But the decency of the Senate, and also the members of the committee, allowed us to make the amendments. We were polite, make ‘em, they’d say, here’s why they didn’t like ‘em, we’d make our arguments and say why we like ‘em, vote ‘em down. But that was really polite. It showed that even though we’re gonna roll over and do this, get this bill out of here. (phone rings) You’re okay.

BB: Well, no, we’re not done yet. What’s that?

JC: The phone.

BB: The telephone? Well, answer it quick because I got a couple more questions I want to ask you.

JC: (Answers the phone.) Can I call you right back? Yes. Yeah. Okay, I gotta get off the phone right now. Goodbye.

BB: (laughs) You mentioned that when you came to the Legislature in the 1980s you were comfortable with the Republican party of Ronald Reagan. Then as you stayed there longer, you became more of a maverick, and so my question is: Was that because you became frustrated with the political shenanigans that you didn't recognize as such, maybe so much, when you first arrived there, or do you think your personal philosophy evolved somewhat, or do you think the Republican party changed somewhat?

JC: I know the party changed. It moved more—. The perfect example was [something] a representative told me. She was arguing about helping the poor. The poor are poor because they don't love God, that's what one representative [said.] I mean that's a small—but that's a heck of a good argument because once you believe that—

BB: An actual member of the Legislature?

JC: —told me that, and I said, "That's fine because I don't have to argue with you because you've already made up your mind, and it doesn't matter, anything I say. But that's a heck of an argument." I'm not saying she was the representative of all those other Republicans.

BB: Yeah, that God was punishing people that didn't love him.

JC: But also by being on Human Services—Cal Winslow, it doesn't matter—said it (unintelligible) really conservative, if you're on there, they all think you're liberal after a while because you're faced with solving real problems. It's not like it's funding the university system or K-12. You actually get to fund actual things. You're actually dealing with—it's more of you're hands on there. The thing was, I do not like bad government. I do not want people staying poor if they don't have to; I want to provide opportunity. I see a government that puts people in boxes, whether it's crony capitalism on the national level or whatever it is. I see you're putting a box. How do you provide? You treat people more as individuals like we're supposed to be, not as all people are bad if they're on these programs. Oh, if you're disabled that's your problem, or you're mentally ill or whatever those things are. Also, you work with people who know how to fix these things. Welfare reform came from a very liberal Democrat lady, Judy Smith. (pauses) Senator [Dave] Wanzenried from Missoula, he knew this person and said, "Here's how you start fixing the system." You don't have—

BB: Who was Judy Smith?

JC: She works over in Missoula for these programs, but she could get people jobs. She would get people, that are on welfare, jobs.

BB: And she talked to Senator Dave Wanzenried from Missoula?

JC: I was on the committee. I was the chairman. I wanted to do something with welfare reform, got too many people on it, how do we get rid of 'em?

BB: How do we get 'em off the welfare system?

JC: How do we do something different? You've got people like Tom Gomez, a staff member, said, here's how you do a bunch of things he'd seen in other states. Judy Smith, he found her or somebody found her, I think it was him. Here's what you need. You need to get these waivers and here's what they do. But the goal was these people are coming off where you give opportunities, but you build these systems. I'm saying government always has a tendency to build structures to keep people—. And the parties do [things] the same way. You see that in political parties. The party says one thing, "This is the system we're into, but things have changed and the status quo—." So I guess my point is, I think I changed because I listened to people. I think I changed in a way that you have more empathy. Is that the word you use? You understand what they're coming from. You don't have to agree with 'em. People might call me a moderate or something, and I don't think you have to be a moderate. I don't know what they call me.

BB: I think you're an Independent.

A moderate sounds like you compromise [on] everything, and I think you don't.

JC: I know, but a moderate, I always said that was a bad thing because moderate means—. We raise cattle. Some people raise really tiny little cattle and some of these **raise really big moderate** ones. Just because you're raised moderate doesn't mean that you're wishy-washy but you have strong beliefs but you don't necessarily—what you're saying is, "I don't have those extreme beliefs that people really have."

The party has changed too, and I think—but remember, the parties are reflections of the people out there. Sometimes they go—I used to watch and go over to the House when I was a senator to get a better idea of what the people are thinking after an election 'cause if you haven't been in an election you don't—you're kind of there but you're not there. You go watch them fight over there or what they're arguing about, and you get a better idea of what kind of mood the House is.

BB: In your own words describe the Republican party as you understood it in the 1980s when you arrived in the Legislature and then describe the Republican party as you left office in 2008.

What are the differences?

JC: Now I haven't thought this through so everything I say is probably wrong, okay. But the point when I first came it was the idealism that we can make a—individualism. Change things, don't like the status quo.

BB: But how change things? You used the term individual.

JC: Whatever we gotta do to make government representative of all the people. You have these broad ideas and you have to figure out how to do it.

BB: But they were individual oriented, they were what? Free-market oriented?

JC: Free-market. But then you also start—but as you watch the system you also wonder how parties are not—we say one thing but we also have to live in a real world. You're representing sometimes—we represent this big business or this big group. Should we be doing these things? But they're all free enterprise. Are we really actually changing any government? I asked for one time—I like to get the nuts and bolts and good government's hard work. That was what I really liked getting to like, "Let's get rid of ten percent of the rules." I remember doing that. That was something you would have thought, "Let's get rid of ten percent of the rules."

BB: Administrative rules.

JC: Yeah, we don't need all these. Go back and revise 'em because you're supposed to look at them every year but no one ever comes back and gets rid of 'em. They got rid of ten to twenty percent of the rules. Those are the type of things—

BB: Wow, you instigated that?

JC: And Governor Stephens took all the credit. But that's fine, I'm glad he did because I'm glad everybody takes credit for these things. But it's like you go, "Why can't you do these things?" Or it's like, how do you get a program to work better? Those are the nuts and bolts; it's that you get right in there, which is supposed to be the administration. They didn't like it 'cause you get right into their business saying, "Why does it take six months or a year to get something done when you can do it quicker?"

BB: So the Republicans sensed that the Democrats were getting stale?

JC: They represented—I don't know if we got in because they liked—people like us—but they saw that Democrats were real stale, representing groups that if you're not part of that group—because they really represent certain economic groups. It was like, "We don't like—"

BB: But they think in terms, or at least we as Republicans have always thought they thought in groups of like, "We're gonna do this for the veterans. We're gonna do this for the Native

Americans. We're gonna do this for the union members. We're gonna do this for the teachers." They thought in terms of voting blocs. This is how we saw them.

JC: You've seen this better because you were at a different level than I was, okay. I was just down there going, "This is not right and people have to get off." Not just welfare, but any bill that came before you, "How is this gonna benefit someone? Who's it benefitting?" I think the worst committee I sat on was, my last session, was the Human Services Committee—regular bill committee, not the Appropriations. You had turf fights between hospitals and doctors and everything else. I hated that committee because other members—I'm just glad they were there, like John Esp from Big Timber and such.

BB: Republican.

JC: Jerry O'Neil was there and Senator [Lynda] Moss from Billings. They got into this stuff, but it was hard when you're making a vote about turf fights. It just drives me nuts. Why do we even have these things? That was a bad committee to be on, but I just had to be on a committee. But—

BB: But Republicans, to get back to the 1980 thing—

JC: I thought they wanted to do stuff. I came on—

BB: But we were thinking, we at least [were] looking at, as we saw (unintelligible)

JC: You were there. I was in the bottom, but what were you thinking?

BB: No, but—I'd been there for a few years when you got there, but I think we thought that we were the good guys that were gonna shake things up. Government had stagnated, it had become wasteful, and that programs had remained in place for a long time just because they had. The Democratic Party philosophy had grown into one that maybe had started out with the best intentions in the world—no doubt it did when the Great Depression forced some change and forced some new ideas, so we had programs that were created—but it seemed to have kind of evolved into a system where they were placating special interest groups and helping different groups that were part of—

JC: They're trying to bring you into their group; they're trying also to bring you in to their group form to be part of them and then you're hooked onto that government program.

BB: So those people remain always hooked on the government program and always dependent on the Democrats' government. That's how we looked at them. What we were trying to do was get them free of government. We wanted them to paddle their own canoes, to do their own thing—

JC: How do you do that?

BB: And how do you do that? But we were full of enthusiasm and we were full of—

JC: Yeah, you could do all kinds of things. It was like—

BB: The spirit was with us during the 1980s, the momentum, and into the 1990s, and I think the people sensed that. These are the guys that are trying to make something happen. And—

JC: Go ahead.

BB: So where I want to go with this, John: What's happened since then? You and I are both disillusioned with the Republican party, and I don't mean to put words in your mouth, but I think we've had this conversation before. Why are we disillusioned now? What's happened here?

JC: What do they stand for? Why do people vote Republican? I mean, because they hate Democrats? Why do you vote Republican? I'm not—this is a general term because a lot of Republicans, you know, fine. But what do they stand for? Are we just against Obama? I don't like getting—send some money to us because we're against the president, we're against these things. What do you stand for? That's what I don't understand. Good example was when they did the Contract for Montana, whatever that was, they spent months trying to figure it out. How it works—the Republican party.

BB: The Republican party. Was that our action plan?

JC: Action plan.

BB: John Mercer put it together.

JC: It took months. It took months and months to figure it out. They didn't go and just do it. The last time I saw someone do it, "Well, you got an hour? Let's put it together." You're going, "That's not what you do."

BB: Just to make sure here, back in about, what was it, 1992? John Mercer, the bright, young Speaker of the House of Representatives, Republican—in the spirit of what we're talking about here, where the Republicans are the problem solvers and new idea people—he put together study groups and that sort of thing and traveled around the state and had people working with each other. What he came up with was called the Republican Action Plan, and the Action Plan was just a series of priorities that we had and we went to the people and we said, "We're gonna accomplish these things if you elect us to the Legislature." We did, for the most part.

JC: Then remember the caucuses—

BB: Then later on, some of us thought that that might even have been the example that triggered Speaker Newt Gingrich, who later became (unintelligible)

JC: Oh, because you were in that different—

BB: Well, in 1994, couple of years after Mercer did this in Montana, Newt Gingrich came out with the Contract with America or for America [Contract with America]—I've forgotten which—which was the same concept exactly.

JC: I remember in those caucuses—

BB: Only he didn't deliver on his as well as we delivered on ours.

JC: No, because in the caucuses we'd have meetings, "This bill is part of the Action Plan." It was not like, okay, remember how caucuses were? Talk, talk, and nothing goes on and you're going, "What are we even here for?" But it was like—because the other side has a caucus. But it was like, "Here's the bills that are part of the platform, of that action plan. We need to pass these bills."

BB: So we have an obligation to do what we promised the people we said—

JC: There were some times that people didn't like those bills. Big fights in those caucuses about, "Well, what do we do to change it? This is part of what we signed on to."

But what's changed is—I just figured a roll back. The Tea Party's forcing—what I mean is, where's their forum? They need a forum so they can complain. When people [are] complaining, you don't bad mouth 'em like ex-President Clinton was doing. You don't bad mouth people who are complaining. There's a reason they're complaining, maybe they can't articulate as well, but they're upset. You'd better fix their, find out what their problems are. It doesn't mean you have to do everything they want, but they need a forum, and the Legislature allows that, or somebody needs to do it. But the Republicans, why aren't they on top of this thing? Why are they being forced to react to the Tea Party ideas and stuff, or why are they being forced to do—

BB: The Tea Party people seem to be really concerned about this huge federal budget deficit. I think we're all concerned about that, and they think, well, when the Republicans were there and they had the presidency and control of both chambers of government and the federal budget deficit just kept getting bigger. And when the Democrats got in with both houses and the President, they just kind of poured gasoline on the fire worse than ever. So they think neither political party's doing a good job. We're really concerned about the effect of this deficit on our kids and we wish somebody'd do something different. But I don't see any new ideas coming out of them either, do you?

JC: No, but when you're mad, what I'm saying—

BB: They're not mad, they're frustrated.

JC: People want to know that, but you're taking the Republican Party and taking advantage of that to get elected, but what are you going to do when you get in?

BB: I don't know. I think that's what—because it looks like the Republicans had a big victory riding on the back of the Tea Party, but then you're right, "What do we do after we're there?"

JC: Majority parties don't last because you hate the other side. Majority parties [last] because they lead, and you can't lead by hatred. What I found in the Legislature at the very end was—a lot of the disappointments was—I could not get accountability into government that we're gonna go back and review what we did in the Legislature. We passed bills; what did they do? You go back the next session of the first week, you go back in, every agency, you have, they have performance measures. They reveal. When you do the budget [and] they didn't get the performance measures, you wipe 'em out. You have accountability in government. We're talking about the phones. People have to answer the phones. What I see is government's going off—what worries me is I think we ought to have limited government, but when government comes over here and creates its own barriers to get to them then people don't like that. It's like, why even bother with you people and why do you hate government? I'm saying I don't want people to hate government.

BB: People feel as though they're not getting their money's worth from government.

JC: But they should.

BB: They feel that government's become arrogant.

JC: And the people that work there aren't trying to be. But you've created these systems. It's the status quo. I hate status quo, my job is to destroy the foundation. Ernest Bergsagel had the best plan. He said, "Just move the money every four years." I remember one time he got upset and said, "Why don't we just give the money to the Department of Livestock? They don't know how to run this program and education, but they'll go find someone who does." (laughs) Because they're just nice, good little cowboys and they'll go out there and they'll go, "We don't know how to fix this. Who does?" Because he just got exasperated going, "You're the experts. You need to fix these problems if we just move the money over here." But it's that revolution I think you need to do is that, if you tear something down, new ideas show up. I've seen that in the government when programs will change or the agencies will change, new ideas come up. But when you try to make it all the same and just rigid, nothing changes. The world's changing around you.

But the Republicans need to have, “What do we stand for?” That we’re not Democrat? I mean the Democrats do the same thing, “We’re not Republican.” You’re going—

BB: That’s this negativity that controls the politics now.

JC: But it works.

BB: It works, yeah, that’s right.

JC: But it works for now because people are really upset.

BB: Well, but I think they’re increasingly upset with both of us, and I think as you say until you actually step forward with a plan and you explain to the people, “This is how we’re gonna reduce the federal budget deficit, this is how we’re gonna make government more responsive and more accountable,” with some specific ideas, they might vote for ‘em. But the problem is they’re, right now, the specific ideas are probably gonna be somewhat painful. So the best thing to do is to just criticize the other guys. You don’t have any (unintelligible) after you win.

JC: Remember the minimum wage fights we used to have in the Legislature? But I just want to bring this last thing up. Ken Toole came to me, very liberal senator, now Public Service Commission. But he said, “John,” he had a minimum wage bill or something, and he said, “Hey, you know who’s really our minimum wage? People who work for government. All these non-profits, because we just contract out all of these services and make them as cheap as possible and we don’t want to pay any healthcare, we don’t have to pay any benefits. Don’t wanna pay nothing.” Basically the people working for government are the ones who are on minimum wage. Private sector doesn’t have very many. It was awakening for him, but that’s when we did the buck an hour for a lot of people, for home healthcare work. But remember getting letters back from people after that saying, people saying what they did with the money. It was like, “Oh, we’re gonna go buy drugs or something.” They went and got—like one lady said, “My child was in—I had to pay daycare—was in a bad neighborhood. I got her into a good neighborhood.” All the money went to get her into a good neighborhood and get her better education. Story after story about people trying to get them out of the system: they gotta get education, gotta get another job. Some people were using it for education. But it was like—you could say, “We’re against giving any more money to government.” On the other hand, those people were taking it, and there were less food stamps, less other things. But they were making their own individual opportunity decisions. But that’s the things that we have to do. What do we stand for that we’re gonna do these things? I just question [why] are people just so mad.

One person one time said to me, “You’ve got to get people hope, and you gotta follow up on it.” You can’t say, “Tomorrow I think it’s getting better.” Say, “Today, this month, we’re doing this, or this year, we’re doing this.” It’s gonna take time to get out, but you can’t just say, “We did things and everything’s—.” I want to know, how are we gonna get out of this wreck we’re in

right now with the economy? Remember Ronald Reagan, he had hope. You don't have to like him, but he came out with this bright smile for—

BB: Morning in America.

JC: Morning America up on that hillside, up on the top. I can't remember his speech now.

BB: City on the Hill.

JC: City on the Hill. You don't hear that. You just kind, things are gonna be—

BB: But Obama was somewhat that way. He was offering hope, and I think the people are disappointed. They think, "This grand old party of Ronald Reagan, we felt hopeful and optimistic at the time, but it didn't really seem to." Now we got this new guy and we voted for him and it doesn't seem to work out very well.

JC: I don't know. You see a bigger picture than I do, okay. So do other people who are going to be writing years from now. What kind of trend—are we in this cycle that we're just pawns in the history, some historical cycle, or are we really making a difference? In the Legislature I always saw people make differences on little tiny things, things that made a difference on. We got to save on hedge funds. The administration wanted to do hedge funds, and one senator said, "This is wrong." He killed it. We never got into hedge funds; we never had that wreck [that] a bunch of states had on the hedge funds.

BB: Hedge fund states were bad.

JC: Just one person just adamantly said, "We're not gonna do it." He had such credibility. He was a Democrat from Whitefish, and he just said—

BB: Ben Cohen?

JC: No, this is the senator who's retired.

BB: Oh, Dan Weinberg.

JC: Weinberg. But when Weinberg [was] just adamant, and he did something else too. He wiped—some other programs, he didn't want to do certain programs [and] he would just tell you. The only problem was he was a psychiatrist and when people would come to a committee, he'd let 'em all talk forever. Which is good, but I'm just saying we had to get done some days and he was really good about letting them all talk.

BB: You made the comment here a few minutes ago about this legislator who said the reason people are poor because God isn't taking care of them.

JC: No, you don't love God well enough.

BB: They don't love God well enough. I guess I've noticed too—I'm not sure how important it is in understanding the difference between the Republican Party of the '80s and maybe before then and the Republican Party of the last ten years or so, but it seems to me that there's more, for lack of a better term, religiosity in the Republican Party than there used to be.

JC: I don't know if that might be it too. I just don't know because I'm in a smaller world than you are. You saw a bigger picture than I do, and I'm just in my own little world when I was in the Legislature. But you saw—both parties talk about helping people, but remember K-12, first universities, and people, we only spend so much money we have and that's it. I used to call 'em on it and say, "If this is what you believe, let's do this." They'd go, "Oh no, we don't want to do that then." Not to embarrass them, but I'm just saying, "If you're saying that then you gotta do these things." As to helping more people, I don't know if it's just that the whole country is falling apart. You don't know, but what's scary is then you get these, what I call, the demi-gods. I don't know if President Obama would be considered that, but they offer all these things and then they don't come through. But you get people that are scary in the Legislature, we're gonna do all these tremendous things, and they don't, it doesn't happen. I don't know, I wish I did more work in the thirties, what happened in the thirties in the United States and also the Progressive Party when they and the farmers all got upset about the banks and foreclosures—

BB: They got some things done.

JC: They got things because they got mad and people took over their ideas, so you wonder. The parties have to figure out that we're more than just against [things]. When I see what happened to Montana right now because this governor, he's not a Bob Brown governor. (laughs) You're not the governor, Bob Brown...

BB: The current Governor Schweitzer.

JC: But this governor, Governor Schweitzer, he's the governor and no one will stand up to him. You watch that and wonder. Whether you want to or not, the next governor might be Republican, they'll remember all this stuff. How tough is the Legislature? How can you get anything done or change anything if you just [are] basically hoping he'll leave in two years? Is that a fear factor? Is that making sense to you? I never cared who the governor was. You say, "Here's what he does. When he said that's what he wants to do, that's what he wants to do." You never go, "Oh, no, he's just kidding." I always believed every governor always said what he wanted to do. I just figured a way around it. You try to figure a way around it. You can't go over the top of the cliff, you go around. Just figure a way around it. You're going [to do] your own thing. He's having his. They're not going to worry about what I'm gonna do for awhile.

But the question is—and it's not a criticism of the governor—it's just the question is, if everybody's just not doing anything for the next two years then what are you standing for? Oh, we're just gonna beat up each other or whatever. So I'm waiting to see if the Legislature has a rebirth and actually takes the—. Which is interesting, this lawsuit he has, what are they gonna try to do because the governor isn't gonna back down.

BB: Yeah that's right, and of course that's an unprecedented thing too, the lawsuit is.

JC: But the lawsuit also goes to basically, "I can do whatever I want with the money." It's the same thing as before, the accountability. So this is a big issue, this has changed the Legislature. Again, the party has to figure out. I don't know what the Republican Party's running on for now. Have you been paying much attention?

BB: Yeah, I think so. There seems to be an emphasis on some of these moral issues. The problem with the Medicaid, Medicare and the federal budget deficit is that the solutions to those problems are recognizing that people are having fewer children, they're living longer and so we're gonna have to change the formula. It means we're gonna get less. Nobody wants to tell 'em the truth. I think the people would accept the truth pretty well if they were told the truth. So we come up with issues that maybe aren't directly relevant to the future of the country.

JC: I got considered a liberal in the Legislature, and my goal was just to keep the budget and Medicaid, the whole Human Services budget twenty-four percent of the budget. That was it. Bardanouve told me that years ago. That allows money for everybody else. Just twenty-four. Everybody's trying to reduce or increase it, and going—. One thing I did once, and I can't find the draft, I went back and I took the private sector growth, of mean personal income, and I don't— if these are the right numbers—and I took the state income expenses. I did the ratio on it—and I can't remember—back to the seventies, which [was when] they added the school foundation money. What you saw was when the Democrats were in control when everybody got mad at 'em, there was a long-term ratio between private sector growth—this is the private that creates the jobs and left the non-profits out in the state government—you had this long-term. It was interesting just looking at the graph, long-term, how it grows. It's about the same state all the time. But when the Democrats were in power for a long time, we got way above the ratio. Not way above, but the private sector growth, I mean the ratio result, a lot more government growth, more income. The ratio, let's say it was seventy percent—and these numbers aren't right—but seventy percent private sector. I mean private sector to state expenses, well it got down to sixty percent or fifty percent. You could see more and more money was to be going into government. Then you saw this huge change in the '90s, flipped way over, because things Republicans did or whatever happened, the economy, or whatever Democrats did too. But you had this huge change where the ratio, more private sector income versus state government growth. Does that make any sense?

BB: Yes, I think so.

JC: But then when Judy Martz wanted to cut some more—that's why I did the graph, she was gonna cut way below anything we'd ever done historically. It was gonna be—I'm just saying, that was one of the things—

BB: She was somewhat more of an ideologue, I think, than probably Governor Racicot.

JC: But she said no to people, that's what got her in trouble. She would actually say no. Governor Racicot would say, "I'll work with you and I'll try to do something, give me a little—" She'd just say no and then people'd go, "What?" (laughs)

BB: As we conclude this interview, John, I was kind of heading in that direction because I know again you haven't always known these people personally but have to have formed some important impressions of the governors that you've served under, based on who they had in the human services area. So I'd just be curious to know what were your impressions of Racicot and his administration? You served eight years with him, a third of the time you were in the Legislature.

JC: The big fight was Mercer and Racicot were at each other.

BB: That's right.

JC: Mercer didn't want us talking to the governor, period.

BB: Really? Did he tell the caucus that?

JC: Basically he'd go, 'everything goes through him through to the governor.' You'd watch the fights between Racicot the governor and the caucuses, and go "Wow."

BB: Did Racicot come to the House?

JC: Once or twice.

BB: I know there was real friction there.

JC: (unintelligible) and Racicot. You know how he got going in politics? I had a bill that was gonna fund Supreme Court judges, and an old lobbyist said, "Go down and talk to the governor. He knows about it." The governor got started because there was like nine thousand bucks in a sign-off, check-off years ago that was still sitting around for Supreme Court races. He took it and ran on it. That's how he got his name known in that part. But it was interesting—

BB: Just to make sure people listening to this would understand. For a while in Montana we experimented with public financing of political campaigns, and it was a voluntary thing. I think the focus to begin with—and I'm not sure where it went from there—was that Supreme Court races that were statewide could be expensive and were non-partisan. The idea was that you really compromised these people you expect to sit in judgment of other people, gonna be on the Supreme Court, by making 'em go out and ask for money.

JC: You do it much better than I could.

BB: That was the honey pot of money, so Racicot is a young attorney in the attorney general's office in the Department of Justice and he thinks, "Wow, I wouldn't mind being a Supreme Court justice." He files against Chief Justice Frank Haswell, which was a big hill to climb. Haswell was a pretty well-thought-of guy, but Marc thinks, "What the heck, I've got nine thousand bucks here, enough to raise a penny. Maybe I can get my name known."

JC: Went around the state, and that's how he got going.

BB: He got around the state a little bit, and he made a good impression, and one thing led to another.

JC: My impression on Racicot was good people, but he's always right. If you knew as much as he did, you'd understand.

BB: A little arrogant?

JC: That's just the way he was. His son told me he was the same way at home. One of his sons told me, "Yeah, you just know the governor's right and you're wrong." But he never took it personally. The governor never took—I was never around him, I mean his department heads would just roll their eyes around me, but that was normal. I was just like a nut to a lot of them. But the issue was, you could talk to his staff, you didn't have to worry about he's gonna get mad at his staff talking to anybody or anything like that. With that respect, I was always with good people around him, at least what I worked with. They'd get you answers back, you didn't have to deal with those things.

Who did Chuck Swysgood work for? (pauses) Racicot?

BB: Yeah. No, no, no, Judy Martz.

JC: Judy Martz. But anyway, that's my impression of Racicot, but remember I never really dealt with these people. "Hi, how are you?" The problem was Mercer made it very clear it was between him and the governor. Big fights between those two about where it's going on, which— that's a power fight and I don't have time. Those things are going on, they're just facts

or my opinions but they really don't bear in what I'm doing. You're aware of them, but it's not really—I don't sit around figuring out how to manipulate stuff. I'm not one of those insiders so it's not really—it's just there.

Judy Martz, you want to know about her?

BB: Yes, please.

JC: Judy. I did not like some of her political staff. They were very bullish, bullies, not all of them but some of them were just bullies. Basically, people may think you're stupid, but you don't have to talk stupid to me all the time or try to just to manipulate you. You're going, "You know, I don't need to do this." Judy was very—she knew what she wanted to do. I was just never around her very much, and I think we got into a few arguments with her. I did not like what they were doing and what they were going to do to Human Services, and I said so. I just put my foot down going, "You guys have just crossed the line here. This is just—"

BB: You're going too far.

JC: You're doing stuff you have no business doing. The only reason those things saved it was that huge cuts that I did not think should be there, and also we're creating a world that was never existed in the '50s and people don't live [like they did—one house, one income families. They're trying to create something that wasn't there. Maybe that's what they wanted to do, but that's why we looked at, where are you going to go if you do all these cuts? Also, (unintelligible) anyway so my point was, "What are you doing any different here?" I had enough of that, but what saved it was Edith Clark, the representative in Shelby, and then Tom Beck, the president.

BB: The Republican Senate president.

JC: He just said, "Enough's enough," and so did Edith Clark. They said, "We're done." Those are the two people. I had nothing to do with it. I can always say what I said, but it was two people saying, "You've cut enough." Edith is really conservative, and she said, "That's enough." Then Tom Beck said, "That's enough." That was the difference. Wasn't anything I ever did. That's why I'm always saying I never did things in the Legislature. Other people who stood up and said it, who had the power to say 'enough's enough.' I had no power. That's why I'm always embarrassed about people saying—some people will say, "Oh, he did a good job," or something. I hear that, but I never read what you wrote because I was too embarrassed because I'm going, "These are the people that make the difference, that did things, that changed things, or either solved problems or say, we're done." But when Tom Beck—you would have been the same way. I never had to worry about Tom Beck when he says he's gonna do something, he would do it.

BB: Yeah, he was a man of courage and integrity.

JC: You never had to worry about anything. Because he said, "I'm not gonna do it," but when he says he's gonna help you or he's gonna try—try means try—that's good enough for me.

Judy Martz and Governor Schweitzer, again, I sued him twice now.

BB: Sued who?

JC: Governor Schweitzer, over the integrity of the budget process. Basically it's like, "I'm the governor and..." I always think of him as Lyndon Baines Johnson. Very powerful, but Mr. Johnson, President Johnson, he wanted to be loved too and respected. Racicot didn't care if you loved him or respected him.

BB: Racicot?

JC: I mean he didn't care if you really liked him or not, he was just going to do his job. Like someone said Governor Racicot could have been a better, would have been a great Supreme Court judge because he listened to the best legal argument.

BB: That's right.

JC: That's what some of the people said, and someone who knew him really well said he really didn't have a lot of strong principles. Someone was saying—they wrote a book on that about our generation, Clinton, maybe Racicot, they came up very smart people but they weren't really like the Roosevelts or Teddy Roosevelt. The principles weren't built into them. They were talking about a generational thing about that generation, they don't really have—

BB: Racicot was very lawyerly, very legalistic.

JC: He looked at things that way in that part. But you were around him, I never was around him.

BB: Yeah, that's how he was.

But anyway, you were gonna talk just to kind of conclude about Governor Schweitzer.

JC: But Governor Schweitzer was just (pauses). When he says something it's very top down; he runs everything; you get fired. You can't get a job down there, any hire job without their approval. You can't—

BB: State employees.

JC: State employees. He runs that thing, he beats the Legislature down, he beats our staff down. Nobody—you just watch him beating them down, and he gets away with it. You can't—

do you blame him or do you blame the Legislature? You can't blame someone for being who he is.

BB: I think term limits have something to do with it.

JC: I know, but still at some point somebody has to say something. I remember saying stuff when I was a freshman or sophomore. If I can say those things and I'm not that bright and I'm not that smart, maybe I just didn't know any better; but if I can say things like that and I see other people get up and say things when I was there, maybe it's because of term limits. I'm just saying, when are they gonna say something about, "Hey, enough's enough. Get out of here." But when you get beat down—and that's my concern is that's who he is. It's just the way he is. As long as you understand it—remember again, he can't take you out and shoot you.

BB: So what are they afraid of?

JC: You've seen that Legislature. You've known people in the Legislature; if this was a dictatorship or something, a lot of us would be dead because you all know people who would have done it. It would have been like—I know a lot of people would have been Taliban or Khmer Rouge. I've seen those people go in; they're in power. That's why our country—in the Federalist papers someone said—you read it; I never saw it. No one says anything good about leadership in the Federalist papers. They just complain about the checks and balances. There's nothing good about—

BB: Because they're concerned about reining in—

JC: —people. The governor got it because of who he is. The question is the Legislature is gonna get beaten down and the next governor and the next governor; when are we gonna stand? I don't want to go back [to] when they were beating up Governor Stephens, and you wonder if the term limits did it. You wonder when we're—as long as we don't get a political staff, we're okay now; but if we ever get a political legislative council, we're in trouble.

BB: Oh I see, a legislative council that's not very non-partisan. (unintelligible) was non-partisan and professional.

JC: If we lose that, we're done. Also, the question is, we really have to figure out a way to have a forum, accountability. This is government. What are we there for? Ninety days? The government gets bigger all the time. Even if you shrink it, you still want accountability; I don't care if it's small or not.

That's my concern that Governor Schweitzer's just who he is, but I'm not sure if you blame—I'm not blaming him for who he is, that's just who he is and that's a fact. But also you don't get a lot of changes done in government because who's gonna do anything initiative-wise when your head is on the—

BB: When you're afraid (unintelligible)

JC: You don't see a lot of new initiative processes.

Anyway, I just think if you just watch the Legislature, (unintelligible) be gone in two years. Or I heard, "He'll be gone in four years." That's what I heard two years ago. I'm going, "He's the governor. Your job is to do your job." When Mercer was there, you did what you want. Except Mercer. When Mercer said, he'd always tell you, "I want you to work *with* me," he meant, "I want you to work *for* me." As long as you understood that. (laughs) John thought he meant *with*, but I actually figured out years later you work *for* me. As long as you understood that, that was okay. Years ago I couldn't go that route where I'm just gonna be a follower and do things. It's like that, "Do a little bad because some day you can do good." You know how that's kind of taught to all of us in the Legislature and throughout life. Just vote for this little bad bill because we'll get in power or we'll have more power, we can do something really good over here. I'm not sure if you ever saw it in the Senate, but you get what I'm saying?

BB: Yeah, I understand that kind of thinking anyway.

JC: You're going, "I don't want to do any bad. I'm just gonna do what I think's right."

BB: Be consistent.

JC: We all have inconsistencies in our minds when we do stuff, but you can't get in trouble if you think you're doing what's right, or you just do what you have to do. If you gotta—if I start going down with, just do this here because you don't want to get in a big fight. I saw that the last session is that you gotta go get in bigger fights. You know the fights are there, you know better, you gotta—it's the stress on you because you know what's gotta happen about the fights and what you want to do.

I will shut up now, and you've gotta go home.

BB: You done?

JC: You gotta go. I'm always done.

BB: Anything you want to say in conclusion?

JC: No, but thanks for doing this. I think, again, I think you're the one who needs to be interviewed.

BB: (laughs) Well, we kind of did that today, didn't we?

JC: No, but you need to have someone really interview you, and do it right because you have the history. You saw both sides and you saw a lot more. You were with the governors, which I was never with, and you were in leadership position, which I was never in leadership position. You saw things differently, and you can see the conflicts that go on between Legislature, within Legislature. You were in a bigger position, I call it the tree position, the Christmas tree, you're up on a higher ladder. What you can do is you can see things differently than I can, and you had more information coming in so you have a better view of what was going on and how things are done and how people make decisions and how you influence those decisions. Because you can see the conflicts that people have and you can see how do you get things done. You're at that level that have to get things done. I could never get things done because I'd have to get somebody to vote with me. (laughs) I couldn't say, "This is the way it's gonna be," and they'd go, "Oh okay." You could do that sometime.

BB: You were the master of the appropriations process though, and your period after Bardanouve left, I'm not the only person who thinks that.

JC: But that was because we had good staff, good committee members, and you also had people going, "We can get something done." I was only chairman one time in Appropriations. I was never chairman of the Appropriations staff, I was never vice-chairman of the Appropriations period, ever.

BB: Yeah, but you were subcommittee chairman weren't you?

JC: Just once, one time. I'm saying of all those years, I was subcommittee chairman once, and that was it. All the other time I was just a member.

BB: Well, you sure had a big impact.

JC: I just did what I—you only have six people too [on the subcommittee]. It's like the Senate, you only have six. I kept saying the Appropriations Committee actually needed more people on Human Services, you needed like eight or ten because when you get in floor fights, you only have three people in that committee on the floor. The members of the Legislature, they're trying to rely on this stuff.

BB: Other people are gonna keep out of that usually too.

JC: Remember, people want to serve on the committees they want to serve on. Everybody has different interests.

But anyway, you need to really get interviewed, and you need to do it more than ninety minutes because you need to have [Lee Capitol Bureau chief] Chuck Johnson, like you were saying, or somebody ask you these questions. It would be more fun. I did my stuff, but I'd like to ask you all these questions because you could see things a lot differently and how did people

resolve these issues. You could see the actual cases where things got done, and how they got done. I don't know how these things got done sometimes. I have no idea why things went the way they went, and you read the paper but you know that's not necessarily true because people spin or they go, "Oh, we already knew that. We were going to do that." You're going, "How did they know that? And did you know at that one moment this is gonna go the way you want it to go or was gonna go against? How did you know, or did you know?"

BB: Sometime you don't, you can't choreograph everything.

JC: I know, but you're there at that time, you're kind of going back, "How did this happen?" Shut it off. I'm done.

[End of Interview]