



John Byrne Oral History Interviews, January 28, 2014

Title

“Directing NOAA and Returning to OSU as President”

Date

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Location

Center for the Humanities, Oregon State University.

Summary

Byrne begins interview 3 by recounting his tenure as head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which he led from 1981-1984. In so doing, he reflects upon his confirmation process, his goals as head of the administration as well as allies, accomplishments and lessons learned. From there, Byrne moves on to the beginnings of his OSU presidency, starting with the story of his recruitment for the job and his memories of the man that he replaced, Robert MacVicar. Byrne then discusses his inauguration, establishing a presidential agenda, creating an executive cabinet and operating within the funding model then in place for universities in Oregon. Additional topics explored include the implementation at OSU of Total Quality Management, outreach and engagement, budget reallocations, working with Extension, and creating a strategic plan. The session concludes with Byrne's memories of strengthening the liberal arts at OSU, creating the Center for the Humanities and eliminating a campus tradition wherein seniors were not required to take final exams during their last term of college.

Interviewee

John Byrne

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/byrne/>

Transcript

JB: Okay. I'm John Byrne, President Emeritus of Oregon State University. Today is the 28th of January, 2014.

CP: Okay. So, last time we ended up, you were the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies.

JB: Okay.

CP: And that was your final position at OSU before you returned a little bit later.

JB: Right.

CP: But in that interim, you were head of NOAA. So, how did that all come about?

JB: Oh boy. Well, the first two administrators at NOAA were not oceanographers, and the ocean people in Washington, D.C., mostly in the Congress, wanted an administrator who had an ocean background. The gag used to be that NOAA was like a—the O in NOAA was like a flat tire, and they needed to pump it up. And the thing that happened was that in 1980, the Republicans elected Ronald Reagan, and they also gained a majority in the Senate. The Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, in which NOAA—the Department of Commerce is where NOAA is located—was Bob Packwood. The other Senator from Oregon was in charge of Ways and Means, or something like that, and that was Mark Hatfield.

So there was sort of an alignment of stars, and I had been on a number of ocean committees over the years, and so my name kept coming up as a possible candidate, and so on. And I think with Hatfield and Packwood in the positions they were in, why, it was a political choice. Although I was not a political appointee, I was appointed because I was an oceanographer. And I went back to the interviews, and so on, and was selected.

CP: So you left OSU, and at that point you thought you were done with OSU?

JB: I really did. I thought that, well, I had always aspired to be a university president, I guess. And I thought, "Well, this has taken me in a different direction." And there was no assurance that I might come back to Oregon State, although I did realize that MacVicar would probably retire at some point.

CP: So that was kind of in the back of your mind?

JB: In the back of my mind. But at the time, toward the end of Ronald Reagan's first term, I scouted around in Washington to see whether or not I would be acceptable for the second term. And I remember talking with a person who had been the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, a man named Joe Wright, who was at that time the Deputy in the Office of Management and Budget. And I said, "Joe, scout around and see if I'd be acceptable." Well I was certainly acceptable to the ocean Senators, Weicker, Ted Stevens, and so on. And Joe said, "Yeah, I don't see any reason why you can't continue." And about that time we learned that MacVicar had announced his retirement, and I became sort of an outside-inside candidate for that position. But I was at NOAA for a little over three years. At that time, the average tenure of a political appointee, and it was a political appointment, was 22 months, and so I exceeded that at NOAA.

CP: What do you remember about your confirmation process? Was that your first time before Congress?

JB: Yeah, well, they prep you for it, and so I spent a lot of time doing homework about NOAA, and that sort of thing. Now the Senate committee—Senate committees come in and go. You know, they wander in, and you may be sitting there with two senators and three senators, and then a fourth one will come in, and so on. And, oh gosh, I can't think of his name, from Arizona—terrible. Anyway, the committee came in. I had never met Bob Packwood, who chaired the committee, and so we had a nice exchange, and so on. And then, oh, gosh, very conservative senator from Arizona.

CP: Goldwater?

JB: Goldwater. Barry Goldwater came in, and he said, "Now Doctor, I see by your resume that you did your dissertation on the Gulf of California, and I have some interest in the Gulf of California." So we talked about my dissertation.

[0:04:59] And then he finally said, "Well, it seems to me you're qualified for this position. Welcome to the Land of Oz." Then he got up and walked out.

CP: [Laughs] So this was a conversation that was part of the formal proceedings?

JB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

CP: That's funny. So what were your goals coming into this position?

JB: The morale was pretty low. The president had indicated that—part of the problem with government, with people who work for it, bureaucrats—I didn't find that at all at NOAA. NOAA is a scientific agency; it's a service agency, and the people there were dedicated to doing their job. I think they were pretty good. There may have been some paper-pushing-type bureaucrats that really were not motivated to do an excellent job, but that was not true with most of the people at NOAA. So, my—one of my goals was to see if we couldn't improve the morale a little bit. The second thing was that my predecessor at NOAA had reorganized the agency in a strange way, and so after I got a deputy, why, that was one of our objectives, was to organize NOAA. And as far as I know, it still operates the way we organized it.

CP: It seems, in reading about your time at NOAA, a lot of what you had to deal with was sort of the overwhelming politics of Washington. That seemed to be a main theme of the kind of game of actual policymaking.

JB: Well, I think so. I think that one of the things that characterizes Washington, D.C. is that the people, particularly in different parties, have different agendas. And they do what they can to achieve their agenda, and so there is a lot of push-and-pull. And the President's agenda was to reduce the size of government. There were a number of techniques that were going to be used, at least they thought were going to be used, some successful, some not successful, to reduce the size of government. I don't think it happened. I think we just kept getting larger and larger. But there were—oh, there were suggestions, as much as we can take out of the government and hand off to the private sector, we should do that. That, for any services or products that we produce, we should full-charge for those. And some of these things just simply didn't work, at least not for NOAA. It may work for other agencies; I don't know.

CP: There were times where you had to advocate for positions you didn't necessarily agree with?

JB: I was part of the Reagan Administration, yeah. I think a wonderful example was the Sea Grant college program, which Oregon State was involved with, and so on. In order to reduce budget, why, I can remember sitting there with Joe Wright when he was the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, and he asked me, he said, "Is the Sea Grant a successful program?" He didn't know anything about it. And I said, "Yes it is." And he said, "Has it done its job?" I said, "Yeah, it's doing its job." And he said, "Well, let's eliminate it, then. Let's let the states take over." So it went into the budget zero, or it didn't go in the budget. It was eliminated. Lowell Weicker was an ocean supporter, a Senator from Connecticut at that time. And he said, "John," he says, "We're not going to let Sea Grant go away." And so it didn't, and it still exists. It's still a good program. So.

CP: So you learned pretty quickly about power?

JB: Yeah, well, you learned that the politics was the trump card. Yeah, yeah. And I didn't—I was so naïve, you know, I really didn't realize that that was the case. An interesting experience with Trent Lott, and apparently I had made a statement that the former deputy of NOAA I was going to continue with; he was a guy who knew the job. And he was from Oregon, actually. In any case, I made a statement, yeah, that Bud Walsh would be my deputy. Lott would have none of that. This guy was a Democrat; I mean, Bud Walsh was. Trent Lott indicated he had worked hard to get Ronald Reagan elected, and no Democrat was going to be the deputy of NOAA. He had a candidate, so. [0:10:00]

CP: You had multiple battles with the Office of Management and Budget, too, it sounds like?

JB: I think most people did. And it was a case where, from what we could see, from the substance of what NOAA did, the budget really couldn't be reduced very much. Yet that was the policy, was, let's reduce the budget, and OMB is responsible for that. And so we did have difficulty with OMB on a number of specific issues. Part of the problem also was that a lot of people felt that NOAA should not be in the Department of Commerce, and that it ought to be reviewed by the part of the Office of Management and Budget that reviewed NASA, and the National Science Foundation, and so on.

Well, that was not the case. In fact, the Department of Commerce, a very large segment of it is science-based. NOAA was the largest piece in the Department of Commerce, both in terms of budget and in terms of personnel, but so was the old National Bureau of Standards, which was in the Department of Commerce. And there was reason for this. These were organizations that were designed to support the economy of the United States, to provide a background, as it were. But nevertheless, the people who reviewed our budget were not scientists. So, we did have problems, yeah.

CP: Who emerged as allies for you at this time?

JB: Say again?

CP: Who was an ally for you during your time at NOAA?

JB: Oh, we had a lot of allies. You know, in the Congress, the Republicans were, of course, and particularly those who had an interest in the oceans. And so were the Democrats who had an interest in the oceans. We had good working relationships with the Department of the Interior, two sections: one, the Geological Survey, but also the Fish and Wildlife part of Interior; we worked very handy with them. In fact, some of that created a problem, because salmon, for example, an anadromous fish, spends part of the time in the ocean, part of the time in fresh water. And I think by law, it should be regulated by Fish and Wildlife. But the folks over there said, "Well why don't you folks take care of it?" And so we did, and we had some problems there, but it worked out pretty well.

CP: What sense of OSU's reputation did you get, in terms of the Oceanography department, School of Oceanography, did you get in Washington, D.C.? Did people back east have an understanding of the caliber of work that was being done?

JB: I don't think so. At that time, and this was the early '80s, Oregon State was still a small player in Oceanography. We were doing the right things, and we had been doing the right things, but nowhere near what it is today. I think today, Oregon State Oceanography has to rank third or fourth in the country, behind Scripps and Woods Hole, and maybe Lamont.

CP: One of the key pieces of your time at NOAA was your work in favor of whale protection. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

JB: Well, one of the traditional things was that the administrator of NOAA served as the United States Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission. And so that was natural. We didn't think of any other way of doing it. I think subsequently, they've handed it off to somebody, the National Marine Fishery Service, or something like that. But at that time, yeah, I was the Whaling Commissioner, and I had a special appointment from the President as the Whaling Commissioner, and so on. And it was at a time when, because of the groundwork that had been laid for some time, we were about to pass a moratorium on commercial whaling. And that, in fact, did happen at the first regular Whaling Commission meeting that I was the Commissioner for.

We also felt that—the Whaling Commission—I have a tendency to talk too much about the Whaling Commission. The Whaling Commission has no teeth, as it is. If they pass a quota that a nation doesn't like, they file an objection, and they continue to whale in the way they had previously. [0:15:01] The United States, however, passed a couple of laws that did impact on the ability of nations who were taking fish from American waters. They would lose their right to take those fish if they did not adhere to the quotas that were set up by the Whaling Commission. And that in fact happened to the Japanese. When the Whaling Commission passed a moratorium, the Japanese filed an objection. We told them that they were about to lose their right to fish in Alaskan waters, if they didn't withdraw their objection. And they did; they withdrew the objection. So the United States did have some muscle that other nations did not have.

CP: So Hatfield and Packwood were very important people at this point in time. Did you get to know them pretty well?

JB: Yeah, I think so. And Senator Hatfield—I think he was concerned that, Washington is a rough city, politically, and he was concerned about my well-being. Senator Packwood ran into trouble, which ultimately ended up with his resignation from the Senate. And I would visit with him, and I know he was very appreciative of that. So I did get to know them. I certainly got to know Senator Hatfield, better than I got to know Senator Packwood.

CP: Any particular memories of Hatfield?

JB: Oh, I think the memories that I have of Hatfield really predate my time in Washington. It was when he was Governor, and then when he was Senator and I was still at Oregon State. And I did have a lot of interaction with the Senator at that time.

CP: Any other figures of note that were consequential to you during your time in Washington, or made an impact on you?

JB: Well, certainly the Secretary of Commerce, Malcolm Baldrige. And Mac and I, we got along fine. I got along with him much better than I did with his secretary, who wouldn't let me in to see him, because I was not of pure Republican, Reagan Republican stripe, as it were. But no, Mac—it was difficult to get his attention, but at that time we did have a lot of international trade with fisheries products, and he was very much interested in international trade. We managed to get his attention on the fish issues. But other than that, I don't think he had an awful lot of interest in NOAA.

CP: Did you meet Ronald Reagan?

JB: Say again?

CP: Ronald Reagan?

JB: Only once. It was a President's—had a breakfast for Presidential appointees, and everybody got to have their picture taken with him, and so on. That was about the extent of it. I had more interaction with folks who reported to him in the Personnel Office, and in Public Relations, and so on, yeah.

CP: How was family life for you in Washington, D.C.?

JB: Well, at that time, it was just Shirley and me. The kids were all in college and, or beyond college. And so, it was a different experience from the one we had previously, when I was with the National Science Foundation. At that time, the kids were growing up, and so we had a lot of family activities. But this time we didn't, and so Shirley and I took full advantage of that. We got invited to a lot of embassy parties and those kinds of things. And so it was a good experience. In fact, both of them, both times, the National Science Foundation and the NOAA years were—they were good. Washington's a very expensive city, and we essentially used up our bank account in Washington. Yeah.

CP: What did Shirley do to occupy her time?

JB: She taught music. She taught music at a school where the support for the teacher, for the music teacher, came from the parents. It was not part of the school's budget, but the parents thought that they ought to have a music program. It was in an area of Washington—it was at the Janney School. It was in an area of Washington where there were a lot of State Department personnel. And they wanted certain things for their kids, and one of those was a good music education as well. And so they hired her, and she became more famous with the parents of those kids than I was, you know. [0:20:03] And she did things—they hadn't had a music teacher for seven years, or something like that, and so I think she—one of the things she did was she put on *The Wizard of Oz* as a play, and involved every kid in the school, in one way or another, in this. And that made her a real heroine among the parents of the kids. Yeah.

CP: Well, what would you regard as the highlights, or the points of pride you took away from your time at NOAA?

JB: Oh, boy. I think we did a good job. I think the reorganization was a good thing. It came out the right way. We didn't have any real problems. I think the biggest problem we had was, well, there were two sets of kind of problems. One was trying to implement the policies of the President, which didn't really work. And the second was we lost a weather satellite, and so whereas the United States was operating that time under the surveillance of two satellites, we lost one. And so it meant moving the other one to a position where the coverage was not quite as good. But we managed that.

The biggest problem was budget. Satellites are very expensive, and to ensure that there is continuing satellite coverage? They're big-ticket items, and so they distort the budget, but you have to put them into the budget years before you're going to have them. So that was a problem, also. I think the problems were fairly minor, but I think we did a reasonable job, and NOAA continued to grow, and it still continues to grow. It's a good service agency.

CP: You mentioned that you went into the job fairly naïve. What lessons did you learn from your time as head?

JB: Oh, boy. Well, you know, I remember one, and this was—well, two things. One example was, we were doing a report for the President, and it had to do with the law of the sea. And it was a multi-agency committee. The people who represented it were, "Reagan Republicans." They wrote a report where they left out one very significant option, and I, "I can't do this." And the option was a controversial one, but it should have been in the paper that would go to the President so that he could decide. But the omission of it meant that somebody at a lower level was deciding: let's not use that as an option.

And being new to the system and so on, I was a little bit nervous about going into the meeting, and creating a roadblock, in a sense, and saying, "Hey, this is not adequate." They didn't have to worry about it. A man named Buckley was the chairman of this. He was from the State Department. He looked at the report; he says, "You've left out a very significant option. Go back and re-write it, and we'll meet again when you have that re-written." So that was fine. That was one problem.

I had another one with somebody from the Department of Commerce where we had agreed personally ahead of time how we were going to handle a certain situation. We got into a meeting with a number of people above us, and he took an entirely different position. And I felt like I had been stabbed in the back. It happens. But by and large, I thought the people in Washington, particularly the people in Congress—we criticize them a lot, but they really were working hard. They had their own ideas of which way to go. They were playing by a different set of rules than we were playing with out here. They were concerned about different things. And I think they were very sincere. You know, they had their own agendas, and that was part of the problem.

I do remember, however, one time, that there was an issue, and I remember talking with Senator Hatfield about it. The issue, from his perspective, was one of the balance of power between the Executive and the Congressional branch. And that was not the substance of the issue, but depending on how it came out, it would affect, you know, that's a constitutional issue. [0:24:59] And I remember flying back here to Portland, and seeing the coverage in the *Oregonian*, which didn't mention this balance of power at all. It was focused specifically on the substance of this rather minor issue, but one which could have some lasting impact. So, it was just a different set of rules that they were operating from. Yeah.

CP: Well, OSU has since had another one of its own be the head of NOAA, Jane Lubchenco. Have you been able to chat about her experience?

JB: Only what Jane says publicly, really. [Clears throat] Excuse me. And she had the same problems: lack of understanding. I think she likes to tell the story about a Congressman who said, "What do you need weather satellites for? I just turn on the television and find out what the weather is." Well, you hope that Congress is better educated than that, but those things happen, so. No, and I think, and of course on her watch, she had a much more significant problem with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. And so she was headlined. I guess the attention that happened when I was there was when we started to eliminate parts, tried to eliminate, or pass off, parts of the Weather Service to the private sector. And the cartoonists had a wonderful time with this. You know, how much are you going to charge for a hurricane forecast? That sort of thing.

CP: Well, we've mentioned you thought you might be sticking around for a second term at NOAA, but the OSU job began to present itself. How did you first learn that you were a possibility for the position of President of OSU?

JB: I got a letter from Milosh Popovic; we used to call him Poppy. He had previously been the Vice President for Finance and Administration at Oregon State, was retired, and I think he was chairing the search committee. He wrote and said, "Would you be interested?" And I said, "Sure." It was a way to come back to Oregon State, if I were selected. And so I submitted an application, and they went about and did their thing, and I became one of the finalists. I considered myself sort of an inside-outside candidate. I knew where a lot of the skeletons were at Oregon State, but I wasn't there. I was somewhere else, and doing some other things, and learning some other things. Yeah, so I ended up as a finalist. I think there were five or six semi-finalists. A number of them dropped out. We all came back and did our interviews, gave our public addresses, and so on. I was selected.

CP: And this was something that you and Shirley had talked about, and you were on the same page, as far as the position?

JB: Oh, I think we were on the same page, everything we did. Going back to Washington, to NOAA, she certainly agreed to that. Coming back home to—you know, Corvallis was home. We had lived here 21 years, and so it was a community we were familiar with. If I were selected as president, yeah, that's great. I had a lot of things that—I decided that, when I would come back for my interview, that I would make my interview an event. I wouldn't hold back. I would tell them what I thought had to happen at Oregon State to move it ahead, whether I got the job or not. I mean, we would take that interview as the opportunity to tell people what I thought should happen.

And so I did that. I think it went across fairly well with most people. I think the students were a little concerned when I emphasized that we needed to increase the rigor of the educational offerings, and so on. The *Barometer* picked up on that, and it's okay. I had had the same problem when I was in Oceanography. We had an opportunity to make things tougher on the graduate students in Oceanography, and of course, they objected because they didn't know what was coming. But we did, and improved the program. Yeah.

CP: So, how were you received once it was official, and you came back? [0:29:59]

JB: Oh, I was received very well. I think I was relatively popular here before I left, and I think the new President is generally well-received. I remember when Paul Risser came in, he was well-received. Ed Ray was well-received. I think that the students—in a sense, it's when you have a new President of the United States. There's a level of enthusiasm that doesn't exist any other time, and I think that's true about being president of the university as well. And you know, everybody's waiting to see what you're going to do, and I think until you do that, you still have positive vibrations. When you start to do it, you may lose some of those positive vibrations.

CP: Do you feel like there were a set of skills you developed at NOAA that you hadn't had before, that you brought in to the position of President? You were in charge of a very large bureaucracy, and a large budget.

JB: Yeah, you know, yes. It was an eye-opener, as to the way they were operating. Just an example of how naïve I was: when they would share with me the speeches that my predecessor had given, I thought, "Good Lord, when does he have time to write all of those speeches?" So I had never operated with a speechwriter before. Back to NOAA, the mail system—the last guy to see the mail is the administrator of the agency. And so, other people at a lower level are making all sorts of decisions as to how you're going to be perceived. So that was all over. Well, I didn't know anything about that. And certainly, Oregon State was a much smaller agency than NOAA was, but you began to realize the responsibilities that people had.

I learned things. Malcolm Baldrige insisted that we manage NOAA with a system called Management by Objectives. And so that meant you said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do." And you were monitored, then, on a regular basis, to see whether or not you were achieving that. I think that some of the things we did at Oregon State, we might not have done had I not had that experience at NOAA. The strategic planning—we changed the budget. Instead of doing—you get some money. Instead of spreading it out over the whole institution, that's not the way we're going to do it.

And I can remember, now Tom Parsons was the Vice President for Finance, on one occasion early on, and we got some extra money, and he said, "Well, I guess I should send a memo out to everybody." I said, "No, we're not going to do it that way. We're going to put the money into areas that we want to develop, or where there's a greater need." I don't think I would have done that.

I think that I learned a lot about budgeting in a reducing climate at NOAA. And one of the things that I had not known ahead of time is you say, "Okay, these are the things we are going to cut. If we had extra money, these are the things we are going to add to." And you end up with a mix of both. You cut some stuff, and you add things that you couldn't do at any other time. So, yeah, I learned a lot at NOAA.

CP: Well, the fellow that you replaced was Robert MacVicar. You knew him well. What are some of your memories of Mac?

JB: Mac was great, yeah. I think that, if you ask the people who knew Mac, you realize that they would say, "Well, he knew how to pinch a penny pretty well, and if you managed to hit the wrong button, he would escalate instantly, on the spot." One of the best examples I heard was that—we had a meeting with Mac, and this was a President's Council, and, oh

boy, I can't remember his name. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies—Stu Knapp; that's it. Stu made a statement that Mac disagreed with, and we all began to realize—the first thing that happened was the back of his neck would get red, and then he would lean forward, put both hands on the table, and state his opinion.

And so Stu made this statement, and Mac behaved the way we thought he would, and then Stu said something else in rebuttal to this, which made it even worse. [0:34:59] And finally Stu saved the day. He said, "I would like to retract those last two statements I made," which we all—it broke us all up, including Mac. So anyway, the things that—and the things that I remember, I don't know what other people did—that if you were doing something that was somewhat esoteric in your field, Mac would listen to it, and then my observation was the first chance he got, he would repeat it to somebody else, and by him saying what you had just told him, he was sort of internalizing it. He was improving his memory of it, and so on.

So, yeah, he was—I think he was the right guy at the right time. He did things that I didn't want to do. I think we talked about the out-of-state travel authorizations. If we haven't, we will. But he liked to sign out-of-state travel authorizations. Well, that takes up every Sunday afternoon, particularly for Oceanography, and Oceanography ended up sending guys all over the world all the time. But Mac, he had experienced where each person was going, and he acted as his own provost. We didn't have a provost, and so I saw that there were other things that could be done.

But no, Mac was great. I think we went on a trip to Washington, D.C., on one occasion. It was several of us, and Mac would say, "Well, we can share a room. That way we reduce costs, and so on." Well, he's looking for somebody to share a room with. Well, I volunteered to share a room. And that was an interesting experience.

CP: You had an inauguration?

JB: Say it again?

CP: You had an inauguration?

JB: We did. And I had been to a number of presidential inaugurations, even here in the state system. But we decided that, okay, let's have an inauguration, but let's make it a celebration of Oregon State University. Let's use it as an example, to show people what a great university this is. And I think part of the problem with Oregon State, over the years, is it has a—it's not an inferiority complex; it's a conservative approach of not blowing its own horn very well. And I always had the impression the University of Oregon did not have that problem, and that the substance at Oregon State was better than its image. And I wasn't sure that the substance at the University of Oregon was better than its image, but that's not for me to say.

For me to say was, I didn't think we could do an adequate job—we were doing an adequate job in telling people how good this place is. And so this was a chance, the inauguration, which lasted about a week. It was a series of seminars, panels, speeches, but we brought in people. And I'll give you one example. We decided, let's bring in a panel of journalists, and let's do some background homework about that by contacting the editors of newspapers, small newspapers, throughout the state. And there was one editor from one of the southern newspapers that said, in response to, "What are your reactions when we say Oregon State University?" And he said, "Oh, Oregon State University, great agricultural school, excellent in engineering, and I think Eugene is a pretty good place to live."

Wait a minute! Well, there's something wrong there, and so we wanted to straighten that out. And to the extent we could, why, that's how we used the week. I think the *Gazette-Times* picked up on that, and they—I think one of the headlines in their editorial was, "It's not about the president, it's about the university," or to that effect, anyway. And so that's what we tried to do. And then we had the usual inauguration on a Sunday afternoon, with the Governor and the Chancellor of the state system, and charged to me, and I make my speech, and so on. [0:40:01] I'm glad we did it. And I discovered later on that I'm the only president that's ever been inaugurated. The archives don't indicate any other inauguration, past or present.

CP: What was the shift into the role of first lady like for Shirley?

JB: Well, she had experienced, I guess, three? Four. Four previous first ladies: Molly Strand, Chris Jensen, Marilyn Young, and Clarissa MacVicar. And they were each different. I think Shirley, in many ways, was most similar to Chris Jensen. We liked athletics. We liked the kinds of things that happened at Oregon State. The Jensens had a holiday party.

We decided that's a good way to recognize faculty and staff, and so that was something we can do for them. But Shirley wanted to teach piano, and so she, I think was the first presidential lady to have an assistant in the President's House, who would take care of the social stuff.

And one of the things that we did the first year was we visited the other institutions in the Pac-10, in those days, to see how they entertained football games, and so on. And we learned a lot from—Chuck Young was the chancellor at UCLA. We learned a lot from his wife. And I think the fact that she had an assistant, and the way she handled things, Shirley picked up on it. And so we did add an assistant in the President's House. And you're always compared with your predecessors, to some extent, and Mrs. MacVicar used to make her own hors d'oeuvres, you know. Shirley wasn't going to do that.

So we changed a lot of things. We catered. At that time—and this is not Shirley, but it's a social thing—at that time Oregon State was a totally dry university. No alcohol was served, unless done surreptitiously by some dean or some department chair, something like that. And so there was no alcohol on campus. Well, we changed that. And we changed it under very tight control, and so on, but it was a type of change that we were emerging as a university similar to other universities throughout the United States. We did that, both administratively and socially, I think.

CP: How would you characterize OSU at the time you took over? What was the state of the university at that point?

JB: It was pretty good. It was conservative. Mac acted as his own provost. We had no vice presidents other than the vice president of finance and administration, and then I was the vice president when I left. I think those were done for personal reasons. Mac saw that that was a way of recognizing somebody, I shouldn't say it, but possibly without increasing their salaries, you know. But that was Mac, and I loved him. And so it was a very conservative place, and I wanted to change that. I began to view my role as bringing us up to speed, up to code, in the late 20th century. We changed the administrator structure. We started strategic planning. We changed the way we budgeted. We did that kind of stuff.

CP: When did it first sink in that you were in charge?

JB: When did what?

CP: When did it first sink in that you were in charge?

JB: When we created the vice presidents. And that change in structure was not totally accepted. Under Mac, when people would go to, say, the dean of research, or anywhere else where there might be some resources, and they were turned down, then they would go to the president. [0:44:58] And in too many cases, the president would say, "Oh, yeah, we can take care of that." So they got the answer they wanted. Well, when we created the vice presidents, what we were saying was we're going to delegate authority and responsibility to those five people, and we had five vice presidents. And I told people, "What we're really delegating is the right for them to make their own mistakes, and the president keeps his hands off things unless they're so bad they're going to destroy the university, or something like that."

Well, the deans, particularly, they didn't think that was going to work at all. And they didn't realize that when they came to see me, I said, "No, no. You need to talk to Graham Spanier, or George Keller, or somebody, because they're going to make the decision that you're looking for." And in a couple of months they began to realize that, yeah, he means it. It's happening. And it did; it worked. I also had some rules. You get the right to make your own mistake, but as soon as you recognize it was a mistake, then it's your responsibility to change it. And we don't let mistakes serve as precedent for future actions. They picked up on that pretty quick.

CP: How did you go about establishing your agenda for what you wanted to do as president?

JB: Well, first thing we wanted to do—I don't know; in a sense it was personal, and it was from what I had learned from other places. The first thing we wanted to do was to change the administrator structure. We did that. Second thing we wanted to do was to change the way we budgeted things. And early on, I think the first year, I sent a memo out to all of the deans saying we were going to tax them a certain percentage from their budget, and pull it into the president, and then we were going to put it into three things. We were going to put it into the Educational Opportunities Program, which is for disadvantaged students. We were going to put it into the library, and we were going to put it into computing.

I had been impressed for some time that the library was underfunded. We were not a member of some organization of research libraries, although there was more research going on here than at any other university in the state. And so we were looking for a way where we could, over a period of time, build the budget up for the library so that it was comparable to what it should be, or what was being done at other places. So that was a second thing that we did. Administrator structure, budget, it was our own reallocation of the budget. It was the last time that we got to do that, but that's another story. So that was high on the agenda.

I thought we ought to have a plan. We ought to know where we were going, and we ought to have a long-range plan that we would put in place, and then we would use the budget to achieve that plan, and then, so that they were constantly out of sync. Well, we tried that, and we got some success out of that, and then Ballot Measure 5 hit and changed things a little bit. But those were the kinds of things we wanted to do. And we were really focused on management rather than the academics. Well, academics are fundamental to the institution, and so the faculty were right with me. The faculty said, "We need to take a look at our core structure." And they did, and that was good.

So I really had no apprehension about doing these things. I think about it every so often. People will say, "Did you have any fear or any doubt?" And I never did. I don't know; maybe I should have, you know? But no, I could see things we wanted to do, and we did them. And we had problems along the way, but they were not necessarily of our making. Some of them were; we made mistakes. But, we made some personnel hires that didn't work out, and I was responsible for that. When Ballot Measure 5 came along and we had to eliminate some things, we eliminated some of the wrong things. [0:49:59] And I take blame for that. That's what happens when you're president.

CP: So were a lot of these ideas, ideas that you were generating during your first time at OSU, when you were in the upper administration?

JB: I think so. But then it got fine-tuned when I spent time at NOAA. It perhaps became more realistic; I became more realistic. But I did have the sense that if you really wanted to do something, no matter how tough, you could do it. I'm probably leading into a discussion that you may not want to get me to, but one of the things that had always been a problem was funding intercollegiate athletics, and particularly when you have a football program, a revenue producer, supposedly, that's not doing it, and the team loses year, after year, after year, alumni don't like it, supporters of Oregon State don't like it, and so on.

But the reason for it was the state board of higher education told us you cannot use any, any, underlined, boldface, you cannot use any resources from the state! And there's no way we could win that way. We couldn't subsidize things. We had to have two physical plants, a regular physical plant, and the athletic department had their own physical plant. That eventually got changed, and so it's a matter of you just keep pressure on. But I just have the sense that we can do anything we really need to do. I still have that sense.

CP: Did you have a person that you bounced ideas off of, that was important to you?

JB: Well, I did that with the vice presidents. Every Monday morning we would start, basically start the morning with a meeting at 9 o'clock, with the vice presidents, and on a regular basis, but perhaps not every week, we would bring in the affirmative action officer, or the athletic director, somebody like that, who was not part of the president's cabinet. We had a secretary for the president's cabinet, and we would go—after they had all come with the things they wanted to talk about, after we got those out of the way, we'd hit the big issues. And I would always ask the secretary, "You have a chance now to make comments that represent the staff of the university."

That was another thing we did early on. We changed Faculty Day to University Day. And I'd done this in Oceanography. Everybody in that department cares about the department. And in fact, I think some of the staff care more than some of the faculty. And I think the same thing is true in the university. The faculty have two allegiances. They have an allegiance to the institution, but they also have an allegiance to their profession. If you're a biochemist, you have an allegiance to Biochemistry. You go to biochemical meetings, and so on. But the people who work, the staff in Biochemistry, they don't go anywhere else. They live in Corvallis forever, so they really care about the place. That's how we made it university: let's get everybody involved.

That was another thing that I wanted to change. I wanted to make this a full-scale university where everybody was involved. We haven't talked about Extension yet, but I'm sure we will. And I thought that Extension should draw on all of the resources of the university, not just agriculture, and home economics, and so on. So that was another part of the agenda. That's me. That was me, anyway. And that's what I wanted to do.

You know, I'm digressing, but there was a lot of concern among the academics, about peer-reviewed papers. The only ones that count are peer-reviewed papers. And so the rest of it, which we refer to as the grey literature, is sort of looked at as second-class. And in those days, I would say to them, "Yeah, but you have a piece of grey literature just behind your desk that you use every day. It's called a telephone directory." And that's what I wanted. I wanted stuff that was useful, you know? [0:55:00] And so, I guess I understood what a Land Grant university was about, even though I may not have realized I understood what it was about.

CP: Well, as we get further into some of the successes of your presidency, a lot of what happened during your time was hamstrung, I guess would be the word, by funding issues. So I wonder if you could describe the funding model that OSU was operating under, and then give us a brief primer—

JB: Well, I think that when I came in, the idea was to spread it across the board, if you take a reduction. And everybody takes a reduction. If you get some extra money, everybody gets some extra money. It didn't take long for me to realize that if the legislature was going to shave your budget, you had to decide whether that was long-term or short-term. If it were short-term, you could recover, at least that was the idea: you could recover. And so then you might do that; you might shave things across the board. If on the other hand, you concluded it was going to be long-term, then the best thing you could do was to take some stuff you were doing, and say, "We aren't going to do that anymore, because we've got to take care of these other things."

And I think that's what Ballot Measure 5 did to us. It made us recognize that this is not business as usual. This is something where we have to seriously look at where the university's going. And that was partly why we had the strategic plan. We wanted to know where we were going. We wanted to be able to put resources, when they became available, into areas that needed development, or needed to be saved. So the general tendency had been everything across the board; treat everybody equally, and that sort of thing. And it didn't work. And so we had to change that, and we did. That first self-reallocation, where we put the money in the library, computing, and EOP, was a signal that that's the direction we were going to go.

In 1986, I guess, 1986, which was the first election I was back here for—1986, Neil Goldsmith was elected Governor. Well, Neil, as Governor, recognized, I think very soon, that part of the problem with the state of Oregon, without its sales tax, was that it tried to do too much with the resources that were available to it. You couldn't do it, so everybody suffered. And so he came in, and he said, "I'll tell you what we're going to do. You guys are all—you guys being every department in the state—is expected to eliminate 2 percent of its programs. Eliminate the program. And then, when you've demonstrated you've done that, we'll give you the money back to put in what remains." That's a forced reallocation.

We did that, and we were fortunate in that Roy Arnold, who had been here as dean of agriculture, had come from the University of Nebraska, where they had already faced something like this. And so they, working with Roy, worked out a scheme: okay, these are the parameters by which you decide what goes and what stays. What is essential to the core of the university? What is getting a lot of mileage because people are interested in it? What programs are sort of withering on the vine? Let's get rid of those. And so those kinds of standards were established, and we used those to make the 2 percent reduction, the 2 percent elimination. And I can remember we had a session after we'd made these decisions, which were hard. In fact, we thought they were terrible.

And we had a state-wide meeting. We used the Extension offices and we beamed it by television from LaSells Stewart Center, and told people what we were going to do. And it was one of those—it was hard. It was tough, emotionally as well as intellectually. It was just practice for what was coming. And what was coming was Ballot Measure 5. [1:00:01] And Ballot Measure 5, we did what we could to tell people what would happen if this were passed. I was accused of whining because I had made some statement in front of Rotary, or whatever. I was accused by somebody of whining. It exactly happened, exactly what I said was going to happen.

And so then we were faced with some significant cuts from the legislature; I think it was of the order of 20 percent the first year, first biennium. And so we were back in front of the television cameras again, for state-wide statements, and we made a lot of adjustments. We eliminated some departments; we combined things, and we did what we had to do. We took as much cut as we could out of administration. You get through it, survive, and the reason you survive is you have good people. Yeah.

CP: Well, some of those people, you mentioned you had established sort of the first set of vice presidents OSU had ever had, and that your first cabinet was, consisted of JoAnne Trow, George Keller, Tom Parsons, Bill Wilkins and Rob Phillips. Is that correct?

JB: Yeah. Yeah, that was as soon as we made the decision that we were going to do it. We brought in three consultants, and these were nationally known people, to give us ideas. And that's what we wanted. We would take whatever ideas they had, and we would decide how it was going to go. So I did that, and we made those decisions, and as soon as we made those decisions, we already had George in the research office. JoAnne was already handling student affairs. Tom Parsons was the Vice President for Finance and Administration, left over from MacVicar. And we didn't have a provost. We did have a dean of undergraduate studies. We did have a dean of faculty. But we created the five vice—we didn't have a vice president for university relations. Previously, the alumni office reported to Mac, the Foundation reported to Mac, and so on. The news department reported to Mac, and so everybody reported to Mac.

So we changed that. I thought that what we needed to fill these slots on an interim basis, while we did a national search for the vacant positions. Tom Parsons indicated he wanted to retire, and so that opened up the finance and administration as well. And we took our time. We did the usual national searches, and so on. Ed Koch came in for finance and administration. Well, I'm getting ahead of the story. I pulled Bill Wilkins in as Interim Provost, and he was the Dean of Liberal Arts at the time. Rob Phillips had had some previous experience. Rob was in journalism and so on. I used him for university relations while we did our searches. And subsequently, we hired some people. They didn't all work out, but we did the national searches, and Ed Koch came in, Grant Spanier came in as provost, Bill Slater came in as Vice President for University Relations, and so on. And we had our "permanent administrative structure" at that point. Then it took a couple of years to get this done.

CP: How'd that group work together?

JB: I think they worked well together. Certainly Graham and Ed Koch work well together, and the provost and the vice president for finance and administration have to work closely together if you are going to be successful. And they did. And because these were new people, I still kept my hand into things for a while. And then as they became used to the traditions, principles, the way Oregon State operated, and we wanted to continue to operate, in terms of our philosophies and so on, then I began to let go a little bit and spent more time off-campus raising money, and that sort of thing.

CP: What about JoAnne Trow?

JB: JoAnne was an excellent administrator. In a sense, one of the tough parts of a university [1:05:01], being in a university, is you have a community, and the community is largely students, and faculty, and so on and so forth. But the students are at a period in their lives where they are evolving, either for better or for worse. And problems that are created by a few who are evolving in the wrong direction affects the whole mass. And most of those involve students, and so JoAnne had to handle those. And she did very well. I don't know what else to tell you about that, but she was a good administrator. I never saw her lose her cool. She always handled things in an even-handed way, and we've been fortunate over the years, I think, in that. And certainly I was fortunate as the president to have her in that position. She was succeeded by Larry Roper, and Larry was one of the last hires that I made. And from all reports, Larry worked out extremely well, just as JoAnne did.

CP: She's a real path-breaking figure, and sort of an icon for women in this community.

JB: I think so. Yeah, and of course she's married to Cliff, who was a state senator, and so they were very supportive of the whole community, Oregon State community as well as Corvallis community, and the state for that matter, yeah.

CP: Well another hallmark from the administrative side was the implementation of Total Quality Management.

JB: Yeah, that's Ed Koch. What we did, that was interesting. W. Edwards Demming was one of the proponents of Total Quality Management, often given credit for the Japanese success with their auto industry, and so on. And he was a statistician by training and background. And at a point in there, one of the things we began to do, which we hadn't done for a long time, was to give honorary degrees. We gave special service awards, but we didn't give honorary doctorates, and so on. Well, one year, and I don't recall what year it was, we gave an honorary degree to Edwards Demming, and I liked what he was doing. Basically what Total Quality Management does is it looks at the systems that you're operating under, and it says, "Let's look at those and let's improve the system."

What you find is that frequently people are doing excellent jobs under the system, but the system is what's weighing them down, and is prohibiting the kind of success that you're looking for. So after the commencement, I'm walking across campus with Ed Koch, and I said, "You know, it would be great if we could Demming-ize this institution, this campus." Well, Ed picked up on that. And at that time, a lot of the major companies in the United States were developing their own system of quality improvement. And Hewlett Packard was right across town; they were doing the same thing. So, Ed contacted the folks who were involved with the Hewlett Packard program, and they had a lunch for us. And so we all went over and told them what we would like to see happen, and we wanted to learn about their system, and so on. Well, the folks who were doing it for Hewlett Packard said, "On the side, we will put together a course for educators on quality improvement."

Well, it turned out to be Total Quality Management. And so we took that, and it was one night a week. There were some community college folks there. There were some folks from the school of business, Ed Koch, myself. I don't remember who else was in it. But it was one of these courses where, as part of the course you do this. You don't just learn about it; you learn by doing, which is always pretty effective, and so we did. And what we did was—and Ed is the champion of this. What we did was we went to the deans, and we said, "We're going to do this. We're going to focus in the non-academic side of the house, which is the support." And so they targeted the physical plant. "What is it that bothers you?" [1:09:58]

Well, the thing that bothered them was the length of time it took from when they submitted a request to the physical plant, and when the job was finished. And so in the Demming scheme of things, what you do is you look at the whole process in minute detail. You look at the smallest examples. And so the top of the list, as far as the deans were concerned, was that—that length of time. So I said, "Okay, let's do that." Well, it turned out that the average length of time was 270 days for any small project. Well, that turned out to be 9 months, which is a normal gestation period they were familiar with. In any case, then what you do is, you say, "Okay, let's follow that now from the time Dean X submits that paper, and we count every day, and look at every step."

What they discovered, among other things, was that there was a clerk in the physical plant department, that when the work order would come in, she'd stamp the date on it and put it in a file, and 10 days later, pull it out of the file and move it on to the next step in the process. They discovered that, and they said—I don't remember the exact numbers, but they said to her, "Why did you do this?" You know, questioning her. She says, "When I came to work here, I was told to do that." How long ago was that? "And I've been doing it ever since." How long ago was that? It was 10 years ago. There's 10 days right there! So, bingo, we're down to 260 days, you see.

Anyway, it was the system. Now, this clerk had been doing that part of her job perfectly, see. And so you couldn't blame her; you had to blame the system. Once you begin to realize, there's all sorts of things you can do to improve the system, and that's what we did. And Ed set it up, and he had some support staff, and they developed—Ed Koch became a champion in Total Quality Management for academic institutions, and so did the people he hired to work with him. They were consulting all over the country, and this sort of thing. And that's what we tried to do.

And then we tried to apply it to the intellectual side, to the academic side. And that met with less success. "Nobody's going to tell me how to manage my course," and that sort of thing. Well, there are some champions. There were some people. There was a person in Forestry who said, "I'd be walking down the street, and the students would see me and they would cross the street so they didn't have to encounter me. And so we started to improve our courses using student teams to improve the courses." He says, "Now, they see me on the other side of the street and they cross the street to encounter me." Well, you didn't have to convince him there was some value to Total Quality Management. So we gained a little attention with that. But it was, again, it was our effort to do what we could to improve how the university functioned.

CP: So, Ed took this and basically started assessing, with his team, started assessing a whole bunch of processes, university-wide?

JB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember going in to see the registrar's office, and during the period where applications for students are being received, I said to Ed as we came out of it, I said, "Ed, we're killing these people." They were putting in so much overtime to do it, and it was the system that was so wrong. And so that was another area of focus. But I remember that. They were heroes for the wrong reason. The system was lousy! And so then there was the whole movement toward, "How do we improve the system? How do we get it on computers, etcetera, etcetera?" Yeah. But Ed—Ed was the champion of that. He has to take credit for that.

CP: You mentioned the budget reallocation in 1985–1986, you asked for a 10 percent cut to all of the schools—?

JB: Yeah, I have to go back and look at that 10—I thought it was 10 percent; it may have been less than that. But when we told them where we were going to put it, nobody could complain. It's apple pie and motherhood, you know? Nobody could complain that you were putting more money into the library, and computers were just beginning to really take off. We knew we had to have more computers. [1:15:00] The computing center was always a problem. From the day I was in Oceanography, all computing had to go through the computing center. Then the Navy gave us a computer that was comparable to the one in the computing center. And so all of the sudden, we're seeing a breakaway, and we're seeing computers that—gee, we don't need a room this size for a computer, we can do it with the size of your desk! And they're getting smaller, and smaller, and smaller.

So we knew we had to—money was a problem, so we charged the students, in addition to doing this reallocation. We charged the students a computer fee. And I can remember the first computer lab we set up, I think there were 101 computers in it. Maybe that's not right, but. There was one computer that was set up to monitor the use of the other computers. And we discovered that the students had found a way to hack into that computer so they could use that one, too. And we knew we had to have computing, so nobody could complain about those things.

And that was part of our problem all the way. When we'll get to raising private dollars, the deans wanted to be able to raise money for their own college, their own school. Prior to that, all fundraising was done out of the President's Office, unless you could find a surreptitious way of doing it, which we did in Oceanography. [Laughs] But in any case, they all wanted to have their own development officers. And so we began to do it, but we couldn't afford it. So the colleges that had their own development officers had to pay for development officers that reported to the development office. And so the budget was always a struggle. And you could say, "Well, if you're going to do new things, and be innovative, budget will always be a problem." Your ideas exceed your resources.

CP: One thing that stands out as far as the administrative piece is you did a lot to engage people in different ways. One of the things you did was the quarterly university cabinet meetings, with student leaders.

JB: Yeah, well Mac did that. That was not mine. And we'd meet, I think, about once a quarter with the student leaders, the MU president and vice president, the student body president, and so on. And they would meet with the vice presidents and me, and we would do that at lunch time, over lunch. And for the most part, it worked fine. Had two occasions. There was one occasion where students wanted to be in a decision-making mode. Well the problem with this—two problems. One is the students, the undergraduates, are here for four to six years. And so if they're going to make involvement with a decision that exceed six years, that's not exactly right. Another thing we found was that when you put students on a committee that was going to make decisions, they frequently didn't show up.

And so anyway, the students were upset. They wanted in on this one. I guess I was under pressure somewhat. I did a MacVicar. I slapped the table, and so on. They were very upset, and it shuts the conversation off immediately, and it was too bad. It was another Byrne mistake. And, oh God, they wrote to the chancellor and said I should be removed, and so on. Well, we got over that. That was fine.

Another thing that was interesting was when Ballot Measure 5 was proposed, the students were upset. They knew what was going to happen. We were going to have to cut back. We're going to have to eliminate programs, eliminate classes, and this kind of stuff. And I said, "What you need to do," and I remember way back in the '60s there was a state legislator named John Mosser, and Mosser was concerned about undergraduate teaching. And so he wanted to create a series of

awards for students. So I knew about John Mosser. Well, Mosser, when he was running for office, would do something that was newsworthy. [1:19:59] And so he would get the attention of the media, and they would be doing his political campaign for him.

So I thought about that, and I thought, "Well, the students need to do something that will be attention-grabbing, that will be newsworthy." And so I mentioned that to them. And at the meeting, students said, "Well, what? What can we do that will be newsworthy?" So I just thought for a minute, and I said, "You know, if the students on every state campus, all eight institutions, occupied the president's office simultaneously, that's newsworthy." "Great! We'll do it!" Well, the only place they did it was Oregon State University. So, the students did occupy the President's Office. But, you know, Oregon State's a different institution. If students are going to demonstrate, they usually ask for permission to demonstrate. And they did; they occupied my office.

CP: It didn't have any effect, to my understanding?

JB: It did not have any effect on Ballot Measure 5, unfortunately. They had a little attention, getting the attention—a little problem getting the attention of the media that night. But they did stay all night in the office, in a very orderly way.

CP: They watched a movie?

JB: They watched *The Little Mermaid*, or whatever the Disney show was. Yeah. They ate pizza. [Laughs]

CP: Another bit of engagement was the faculty breakfasts.

JB: Yeah. Those were fun. When Goldschmidt decided he was going to eliminate 2 percent of the programs, they knew I was meeting—and Goldschmidt also indicated he wanted to meet one-on-one with the university presidents. And so I did that, and in order to tell people what had happened, we started a series of very informal breakfasts with faculty. And I think we started first with department chairs, quasi-randomly selected from across campus. And one of the things you'll discover is that these people didn't know each other. Departments in agriculture didn't know the guys in science, or in liberal arts, whatever. So anyway, that was very useful that way.

And so we would start with a department chair, and then we would go to faculty. And we had these, I don't know how often, but depending on my schedule, we'd set them up so they'd be every week, every two weeks, every month, whatever it was. Had them in the MU, had them in the—I don't know what the board room is with the pictures of all of the presidents on the wall. And it was a continental breakfast. And I remember the first one, [laughs] a faculty member came up to me, he said, "Where are the ham and eggs?" Well, there weren't any ham and eggs; it was just continental breakfast.

But they were scheduled to start at 8 o'clock and to be over by 9. I think that was right. Maybe we started by 7 and they were over by 8:30. I guess that was it. And they would start out slow, and then we had trouble shutting them off. And I enjoyed them immensely. I enjoyed the give-and-take with the faculty. But we would go around the table, have everybody introduce themselves. I'd say, "You can say a few things, not too many semicolons," and so on. And then we would get to what was on their mind. And I would always have a few things that I wanted to say, but we'd start with them, with the faculty. And what I discovered was I was getting different messages from the faculty than I was getting from the academic deans. They were filtering—the deans were filtering things. The faculty, once you opened them up, they didn't hold back at all. And I found them very useful, and very entertaining for me.

CP: How about some of the statewide outreach? You did a lot of traveling around the state.

JB: Well, one thing that we did which was a carryover from the MacVicar years was the summer picnics. And we visited all the experiment stations and the Extension offices, to the extent we could. And there was always a picnic, and there was always the subsidiary visits. It went well. And those were very useful. Mac, when he did it, he used to cook the hamburgers, and I never did that. [1:25:03] I always stood at the head of the food line, and so I would visit with everybody that came through. You did pick up interesting things. I remember a young lady from veterinary medicine who was there—maybe it was out in Pendleton or some place—and she said, "Well, I need to take business courses." And I said, "Why is that?" She said, "I know how to cure a cow or a horse, but I don't know what to charge for it." Which is a very practical sort of thing.

So we did learn things like that. We learned what their perceptions from distance, what their perceptions of Oregon State were. Some were good; some were bad. And I used to do a little state of the union, university sort of thing. And then occasionally we would take somebody from intercollegiate athletics with us, and people always want to talk to the coaches. So they were very successful. The other thing that I always found very useful was that when we would travel, we would try to stop at the local newspaper, and visit with the editors of the local newspapers. The thing that was interesting to me was, although we only had technical journalism here, that University of Oregon never did this, and they had the school of journalism, you know? So for us, there was a lot of connection with the president.

Anyway, the visits were very good. We'd visit with local legislators, and so on. Oregon State was the people's university. And then Extension offices are just marvelous. They have all these programs with all the volunteers, and those people are supporting what Oregon State University does for the state of Oregon. The interweaving is incredible.

CP: Tell me more about how your relationship with Extension evolved over your presidency.

JB: That's a hard question for me to answer, because I always had the Extension attitude, you know, we're here to help people. I remember Bill Wick. Bill Wick was the director of our Sea Grant program. Bill Wick had been the Extension agent in Tillamook County, and Bill would say, "What Extension is about is people helping people." And that's what it is. I talked with the Extension director, and he pointed out to me that, in the '30s, Extension really helped farmers improve their productivity. As it moved on through the '40s, '50s, and '60s, and so on, Extension got more into the marketing: we're helping farmers sell the stuff that they had produced. And then in the '70s—'80s and '80s, the economy really began to take a nosedive. I remember visiting Baker County, and somebody told me every ranch in Baker County is for sale. And farm families are fracturing; they're coming apart because people are struggling so much with the economy. Now we're asking our Extension agents to be social scientists. That struck me.

The other thing that struck me, and I don't know whether we talked about this in the Oceanography stuff and so on, I hired two Extension agents, two guys to be Extension agents in Oceanography. This was before the Sea Grant program, and so on. One of them was a retired naval officer who identified with the naval industry in Portland, and he had known about the background of the Extension, the ag and the engineering, and so on. And he went and talked to anybody on campus to help solve some guy's problem in Portland. And I think, "Yeah, that's what we want to be doing with the whole university!" If we have need for social science in Pendleton, La Grande, wherever, we should be able to use our social scientist to help those people solve their problems.

Anyway, that was the idea with Extension, and so I just loved Extension. [1:30:00] I think that the Extension is what makes a Land Grant university a Land Grant university, philosophy. So I'm very supportive of Extension. I still am; I think it's great. So, along the line, we got into some other management things. I wanted Extension in a position where it could service and serve; the whole university could serve Extension. And so, we haven't talked about the Peat Marwick study at this point, but as a result of that, they were saying, "Well, you ought to put Extension in with research." And so at that point, I decided, well I need help. I need somebody. Emery Castle had come back to Oregon State. Emery Castle was just a wonderful person, and I said, "Emery, this is what I want to do, and I need help. Can you take a look at this for me?"

And he did. And he went into it the way I thought he would, talked to, I think 90 or 100 people. I don't know how many. Came in with a report that kind of blew me away. I wasn't quite ready for it. But he said, "Extension, and extended education, education off campus ought to be part of Extension and vice versa." We had had extended education courses, and this sort of thing, but Emery proposed doing this, and essentially he proposed every Extension agent, county Extension agents as well as the Extension specialists, would be associated with some academic unit. Well, it just threw fear into everybody. [Laughs]

County Extension agents would tell me a million reasons this would never work. And they were concerned about promotion and tenure, that if I'm going to be evaluated by a bunch of academics, I don't stand a chance. Their standards are different. I said, "All right. We can do it. We can change the standards." And fortunately we had a guy named Weiser, Bud Weiser, who was the Chairman of Horticulture, who got serious about it and said, "Yeah, we can do it." And they changed the promotion and tenure guidelines. And then we decided, "Okay, you need protection at the committee level, at the provost level, where the decisions are being made." And so we put the Director of Extension on that committee.

So we did it, and I remember—I'm not sure that every Extension agent really understood what it was I was trying to accomplish. The academics were concerned. They thought it was going to dilute the academic standards of their department. Didn't have to. But anyway, we did it, and people who report to me say it's worked. They may be telling other people other things, but we thought it worked. It was pioneering, nationwide. How did you ever do that? How can the president mandate this? Well, the president didn't mandate it. It took a lot of time, talking to a lot of people. Had somebody who had had the respect of everybody to come up with this proposal, Emery Castle. And we did it. We moved Lyle Holmgren, who at that time was the Director of Extension, into the president's—the provost's committee, that made the decisions.

Extension was treated well, and it made a lot of people on campus realize that there was an Extension Service, that there was this outreach network into the whole state. And there were people, and I think particularly in liberal arts, that didn't understand this. They drove down the freeway from Portland to Corvallis, and that was Oregon to them. It's not a criticism; that's just the way it was. So, yeah. To me, Extension makes the Land Grant concept work.

CP: And that's the model that was adopted by other Land Grant universities?

JB: I don't know how many have adopted it, but others have, yeah. Yeah. And we got a lot of attention for it.

CP: Well, another thing you did, and this is hard for me to fathom, but you presided over the first strategic plan that was written for OSU in 1987. [1:35:01]

JB: Well, I guess that's partly true. I think the Goals Commission was a piece of a strategic plan without the actual implementation structure, and so on. So yeah, maybe it was the first, and I don't know, there might be hidden in the archives someplace a plan that, who knows, George Peavy did, or somebody else, when they were president. I don't know. But yeah, but we did it.

CP: Was the Goals Commission something from MacVicar, or?

JB: Well, yeah, the Goals Commission was set up by Jim Jensen, and they finished their report when MacVicar was president and handed it to him. I still have my copy. And that was what led to Oceanography becoming a separate school. But there were probably other things in there, but at the time I didn't pay much attention to them. I paid attention to the Oceanography part.

But no, we did put together a plan. We put together two plans, actually. One was "Preparing for the Future," and the second one, I think, which built on that, was called "Creating the Future." And the second one was interesting because it was about to come out at the time we were to go through our 10-year accreditation as a university. And we said to the people who were doing this, "Can we use planning as part of our documents?" And they said, "Yeah, that's an interesting idea. Let's do that. And we'll send a planning person on the team that comes to evaluate you." And I think that was successful. I think the Northwest Accrediting Association appreciated the chance to do something a little different. And so we did that. The idea was every two years, you revisit the plan.

And so, [laughs] so the next time around was at the time of Ballot Measure 5, and the committee said, "There's no way we can plan under these circumstances, where the place looks like it's coming apart." And so I said, "Well, let's have a vision statement then." And that was fun. And so they put together a vision statement, and it was simple enough that—I won't say everyone who read it had an opinion about it, but all of a sudden it got the faculty's attention. And Mike Martin, who is now the Chancellor of the Colorado State University system, he chaired the thing. And [laughs] it was an eye-opener for him as well as for the rest of us, because everybody had an opinion. And so it was back to the drawing board with all of those opinions, and redo the vision statement. But the idea there was that no matter what happens to the institution from the outside, we know where we want to go. And that's a little different from a plan, a strategic plan, which has the steps along the way.

CP: What was the process that was used to develop these documents?

JB: Well, there was a committee put together. I guess the first one was called the Planning Commission, and they created a whole series of sub-units that looked at different aspects of it. It was clearly a year-long or two-year-long effort. You learn a lot about planning when you do one of these things, and you learn a lot of quotations. I had a colleague, Dave

Zopf, who we talked about with regard to the Marine Science Center. Dave said, "A long-range, or a strategic plan, is the last resort of the failed opportunist." Well that was typical Dave Zopf.

The other quotation that was interesting was one by Dwight Eisenhower. And apparently this was a statement made when he was Commander in Chief of the Asian forces and so on, and he says, "Once you're into the action, plans are nothing, but planning is everything." And so the process itself has value, because it gets people to focus on the things that they're here for in the first place. And we did that, and the first one had an awful lot of people involved. And I think it was good for the faculty. It was good for the faculty to see, you know, we do have a hand in saying where this university is going. And they did.

And at that first University Day, after we had the plan—I'd been reading a lot of stuff about how you recognize people. [1:40:03] We created a faculty champion award. And this was a surprise award given to somebody, or several people, part of the president's address. This was the champion award. It had a little brass plaque on it, said who it was for, and so on. It's a beaver in its environment, doing whatever it does. And the champion award the first year went to the Planning Commission, the five people that had put this thing together, that had provided the leadership for it.

CP: Well, you mentioned that one of your goals was to modernize the curriculum and increase academic rigor, and sort of one of the sub-foci of that was to bolster the liberal arts. I assume that you had recognized that liberal arts was perhaps, quite obviously it was a newer aspect of the university, but it perhaps had been underperforming?

JB: Well, yeah. President Ray says the same thing, he says, "No great university is ever great without strong science and liberal arts." I'm biased; I came from a liberal arts college. I was a science major in a liberal arts college. I remember giving a talk early on when I came in, and I said, "You know, a university is responsible for three things." I hope I can remember the three now. One is the development of the individual professionally. And one of them is the development socially. It's a period of maturation. It's a period in which students are maturing, you know? And yeah, there's a certain amount of it, a freshman comes in as a freshman, and they're not equipped to do much, really. When they graduate, they're engineers, they're pharmacists, they're agriculturalists, they're business people. That evolution professionally is incredible.

But so is that social evolution, where they have learned how to get along with people, how to get jobs done. And this frequently is neglected. Or, not neglected—it's not recognized as a strong element of why activity on campus is important. Students participate in student government, in committees in one form or another, maybe something they're interested in, that doesn't affect other students. But they still have to get along with each other; they have to learn to work together, and that's part of the social structure. It seems to me the liberal arts provides the background, the basis for that. And to me, that's why it's important. And every student should be exposed to some of that fundamental base that's going to lead to their social and practical evolution, as human beings, as citizens.

CP: One of the tangible outgrowths of this focus was this building that we're in right now, the Center for Humanities. Can you tell me how that came about?

JB: The one we're sitting in right now?

CP: Well, the idea, perhaps, first.

JB: Well that preceded me. After the LaSells Stewart Center, the funds were raised for that, and it was opened in 1981. The next step for MacVicar and company in raising money was to go to the faculty and to say, "Okay, let's have your ideas." And they did. And they came up with a thing that they called Project Foursight, F-O-U-R-sight. Four areas, and I don't remember them all right now, but one of them involved: what can we do for the folks in the humanities, liberal arts, social sciences, and so on, to give them some of the benefits that they would have if they had graduate programs?

We won't go through the whole history of the evolution of liberal arts at Oregon State, but over the years, there was resistance to creating liberal arts at Oregon State, and so they never did get the graduate programs. Finally they did. [1:44:59] So the idea was, let's create a program where faculty in liberal arts eventually will be able to have post-docs. They will be able to do scholarly research; they'll be able to do these kinds of things. And so we created this particular program. It was housed at the time up in Moreland Hall, in the English Department. Peter Copek was the director if it.

And the idea was let's identify a dozen "fellows" who can get some release time from teaching, do research, associate with other scholars doing creative work, and we needed a place for it.

Well, at the time, this had been a sorority apparently, and I don't remember which one. The Foundation had bought it. The university was paying rent for it, and we used it as the center for climate research. That program subsided, and here the building was empty, and we're still paying rent on it. Let's use it for the Center for the Humanities. Great! It's got a lot of rooms that were the coed rooms, which are rooms for the fellows. It's got a couple of big rooms that can be used for receptions, for lectures, and so on and so forth. Let's do it. And so it bothered me that we were still paying rent to the Foundation for it. They were willing to sell it to the university for \$200,000.

Well, we didn't have \$200,000, so we went to the Autzen Foundation, and Tommy Autzen and his sister really constituted that foundation. The Autzen name was well-known at the University of Oregon, and their football stadium is named Autzen Stadium. So I went up and visited with Tommy Autzen. I don't know how old he was at the time; he was in his 80s, I suppose. And we hit it off. And I became sort of a sounding board for him. He could complain about the University of Oregon to me, whereas he couldn't do it down there. So anyway, we asked them for 200,000 dollars to buy this thing from the OSU Foundation. He says, "No. We'll give you 50,000, and you use it any way you want." Well, we did this four years in a row and we never used the 50,000. And so we saved it, and bought the house from the OSU Foundation.

And then I said to him, "You guys really provided all of the money. We would really like to name it the Autzen House." And it was a little jealous. I wanted some visibility, particularly as you entered the campus. Autzen was here, too. Well it turns out that Tommy Autzen's grandfather, I think it was his grandfather, graduated from the Oregon Agricultural College in Forest Science and was among the first companies—his company was among the first companies to produce plywood commercially. And so there were a number of gifts that had been made by the Autzen Foundation to Oregon State University over the years, but none with the name Autzen on them. So, that's how Autzen House and the Center for Humanities were housed—a house for the Center for Humanities became the Autzen House.

CP: One of the folks who was involved, I believe early on, in the Center for Humanities was an iconic figure here, the historian William Appleman Williams. Had you any occasion to interact with him?

JB: Well, I got to know Bill Williams fairly well. I first met him back, I think, somewhere around 1964 or '65. Bill and I got along very well, and except for one incident, and that was the hiring of Sandra Spanier in order to get Graham here as provost. And at that time, we created, we provided funds for another position for Sandra. And we didn't know whether it would be in the English Department, or in Journalism—she was a writer. And it ended up in the English Department. Well, Williams thought you should be doing a national search. But that wasn't the idea at all. The idea was, we're trying to get Graham; we've got to find a spot for his wife.

And so, this led to a little friction between me and Williams, or I guess more on his side than on mine. [1:50:02] As I understood what we were doing, and what he said was, that's doesn't meet academic standards, you know? Okay Bill, it doesn't. So be it. It's the Oregon State way of doing things; we're going to get it done, you know? Anyway, so he objected to that. And apparently, and I didn't know this until I got into the archives, apparently he had written me a letter about something like this, and never gotten an answer. The reason he never got an answer? I can't remember the letter. We can't find it in the archives, but apparently he thought he had written a letter, and damn it!

And so I remember writing, or getting back to him. I think I wrote back to him, and I said, "Bill, you know, we go back too far. If you're upset with the president, you should pick up the phone and say, 'Jeez Byrne, what the hell's going on? Aren't you guys doing anything up there?' You don't have to rely on the communication network. You can call me. You're my old friend." He never did. But I'd still see him occasionally, and he would lean on me every so often.

CP: I imagine so.

JB: Yeah. But he was good. He added prestige to Oregon State, whether you agreed with his brand of history or not. He was recognized as a scholar.

CP: Well, the last thing I'll ask you about for today, and this is again under the heading of increasing academic rigor. Do I understand correctly that seniors were not required to take finals, once upon a time?

JB: Yeah. Seniors never took finals.

CP: Was that for the whole year?

JB: No, just for that last quarter. And commencement was always the Sunday before finals week. Well, several things happened there. The faculty senate says, "There's no reason seniors shouldn't take finals." So the faculty really were what changed it. It changed commencement significantly. Having all of the other undergraduates around led to a party atmosphere. We had a real alcohol problem with seniors graduating, some of them getting—getting sick, you know, falling down. And it was just unfortunate. And once we got the seniors then, would take their—commencement would be at the end of exam week, then there wasn't anybody else around except the seniors and the graduate students. And it cleaned up commencement amazingly. So that was a serendipitous effect that we hadn't anticipated.

But the seniors who were being caught for the first time and had to take exams were very upset. I remember the student body president said, "You know, in the past they never took—and none of the wheels fell of the place at that time." Well, that's true. But ever since, and I remember a long time ago, seniors would take final exams. And it creates a little bit of problems in the registrar's office in getting everybody ready, and maintaining that tradition where every, all thousand students, or however many graduates there are, get their own diploma. I mean, that's amazing.

CP: Yeah, the logistics of that still boggle my mind.

JB: They really do. It's incredible. They still do it.

CP: All right John, thanks very much. We'll continue with your presidency next time.

JB: Okay. [1:54:07]