



John Byrne Oral History Interviews, February 4, 2014

Title

“Leading OSU During Difficult Times”

Date

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Location

Center for the Humanities, Oregon State University.

Summary

In interview 4, Byrne continues to relay his memories of his OSU presidency. The session begins with Byrne's recollections of alumnus Doug Engelbart and his thoughts on OSU having raised \$1 billion through its capital campaign. From there he discusses fundraising during his presidency, the expansion of the OSU library, his interactions with Linus Pauling, and the development of other facilities projects during his tenure. Likewise discussed are issues of diversity and racial insensitivity on campus during Byrne's time as President, the state of the athletic department and Byrne's actions in support of improved athletic performance. Byrne also touches upon his relationship with athletic personnel including Ralph Miller and Dale Thomas, and his decision to support baseball and cut track and field during the university's budget crisis of the late 1980s. Byrne also shares his memories of working with the public employees union, revitalizing the University Honors College and internationalizing OSU.

From there the session switches focus to the challenges that Byrne faced, including the massive budget cuts brought about by the passage of Oregon Ballot Measure 5 and the resulting programs that were eliminated, including the Journalism department and the Horner Museum, as well as the threatened elimination of Veterinary Medicine. Byrne discusses the means by which he coped with the strain of the job and his decision to retire from OSU. The interview winds up with Byrne's memories of handing his office over to Paul Risser and adjusting to life in retirement. He concludes with thoughts on the strengths that Paul Risser and Ed Ray brought to the position of OSU President, remarks on changes in Corvallis over time and advice to those becoming a college president for the first time.

Interviewee

John Byrne

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

John Byrne: I'm John Byrne, President Emeritus for Oregon State University. Today is February 4th, 2014.

Chris Petersen: Okay, today I would like to begin with a couple of topics of current interest, and the first one is Doug Engelbart. You went to a memorial for him last week, and he died last year.

JB: Yeah.

CP: He was certainly a renowned alumnus from OSU. Can you share any memories of Doug that you have?

JB: Well Doug, the first memory was, I gave a talk down in San Francisco, and Doug was in the audience; in fact he was in the first row. And his attention to what I was saying was notable. I don't know what I was talking about, but anyway, Doug was in on it. And as we got to know Doug, we gave him an honorary degree. And the thing I remember is we used to do a little reception in the President's House before the commencement, for the people we were honoring, and their local host. And that was the case with Doug.

And it turned out that the host had, for one reason or another, not set up a dinner for Doug and his wife the evening before the commencement. So, you know, I thought, that's not really appropriate. We need to take care of that. I called the restaurant owner at the Gables, and they said, "Oh yeah, we'll take care of you."

So we sat down with Doug and his wife Ballard, and the thing I remember was, in the course of the conversation, Doug said something to the effect that as he was getting older, his memory was getting worse and worse. His wife chimed in. She said, "Doug, you don't remember how bad your memory used to be." [Laughs] But anyway, we got familiar with Doug, and we got to know him pretty well. We got to know the family pretty well.

And if I had to use one word to describe Doug Engelbart, the inventor of the computer mouse, hypertext, a whole bunch of other things, I would say it was humility. You would never know that he had done inventions that had literally changed the world. But that's the way Doug was, just a wonderful person! And his goal, he told me once, it occurred to him when he was—I think he was in the Navy, in the Philippines, was, after the war was over, he wanted to do something that would have a positive effect on mankind. And that was his thread. That was what he wanted to do all the way. After he retired, he never gave up on that.

So, I don't know what more I can tell you about Doug Engelbart. Yes, there was a memorial, a very small, intimate memorial service for him in Portland last week. He had spent most of his career in California, in the Bay area, but these were people who had grown up with him. He grew up in the Johnson Creek area of Portland. And so we learned a lot about Doug Engelbart as a teenager, and so on, at that thing. Of course, we had only known him as an elderly gentleman.

CP: The other bit of news, big news, around here was the announcement last week that the capital campaign here at OSU had passed a billion dollars. That's obviously a huge milestone for OSU.

JB: Yeah.

CP: Can you reflect on that at all?

JB: I think it's marvelous! You know, I think the university forever will have a debt of gratitude to Ed Ray, but also to the folks in the OSU Foundation, Mike Goodwin and his associates, who made it all possible. And when I was president we looked into it, and we were not equipped to do it. Our biggest project was the fundraising for the library. But, no, I think it's a monumental achievement.

CP: Let's talk a little bit about how fundraising evolved while you were president. When you started as president, there was only one endowed chair—

JB: [Laughs]

CP: —university-wide. By the time you finished, there were 21. So obviously there's some advancement made. Can you talk a little about how things changed?

JB: Well, there were a lot of things that happened. The first thing that happened was we went to the deans, the academic deans, and said, "What do you think should be changed?" And they all, I think almost to a person, indicated they wanted to do fundraising for their college. [0:05:02] At the time, it was all done out of the President's Office. And so, we did that. We tried to change that. And the difficulty was that to get a development officer for each college would require a significant amount of money for those development officers. And so we said, "Well, we can do it if you can provide the money for the person who's going to raise money for you. But he won't report to you. He will report, yes, to you, but also to the development office," which operated underneath the president, so. So we kind of struggled along to get it done.

But the big change was—well, there were two big changes with the fundraising. The first was what me might call a collegial approach to it, so that there were fundraisers with responsibilities for different pieces of the university. The other thing that changed was that we got into the business of running businesses through the Foundation. The best two examples was the Harvey Ranch, which was down near, oh, southern Oregon; and the golf course. And these generated income. I think the Foundation folks were a little bit concerned—the board of trustees of the Foundation were concerned that this would damage the tax-free relationship of the Foundation to the Internal Revenue Service. Well, it doesn't. There is a category of unrelated income that you can use, and that's what we did.

The other thing that the board of trustees was concerned about was if we went to collegial fundraising, the money wouldn't be coming in for the operation of the Foundation. And so, we had to have some sort of a system whereby a small amount of each gift would be set aside to operate the Foundation and the development function. And we struggled through that, and finally came to a solution, which is, they're still using the same parameters today, so, I guess we must have done something right.

CP: What was your personal approach to fundraising, especially when it came to asking for major gifts?

JB: Well, you depended pretty much upon the researchers in the development office, who could assess what an individual might be capable of giving. And I depended on that. And I used to enjoy going and visiting with people in their venue, and learning a little bit about the things that interested them. And you can learn a lot simply by sitting in somebody's office and seeing how it's decorated, and so on. One philanthropist was admittedly what would be called a closet jock. He was not athletic at all, but he loved hockey. He loved ice hockey. He loved Wayne—had a statue of Wayne Gretzky in his office, famous hockey player. And so I learned something about that particular person. Another person had something that indicated they were interested in rock climbing. Well, my son was a rock climber. So these kinds of things created a personal contact in the fundraising.

Relying on the research folks to make the gift was occasionally disappointing. I remember going in to see one individual, and we were asking for a significant amount. They said, "Ask him for half a million dollars." And so I went in, and I said, "We'd like you to consider making a gift of \$500,000." He said, "Yeah, that's about what I had in mind." Had we pushed a little bit, we probably could have gotten a lot more. But I enjoyed the fundraising. It brought you closer to a lot of people who had done something significant, and interesting, in their lives, usually. Yeah.

CP: How much of your time did you devote to fundraising? It seems like it increased over the course of your tenure.

JB: That's a hard question to answer, because it has an internal and an external dimension to it. The internal dimension is knowing what we can be using the money for, in terms of buildings, equipment, scholarships, endowed chairs, whatever it might be. The external part of it is the actual cultivation, I guess [0:10:01], is the term that's used—cultivation and gift. So when you ask me what percentage of my time, I suppose it could be has high as 50 percent, but that was both internal and external.

CP: Well, this leads nicely into one of the—you mentioned one of the major fundraising projects of your administration was the expansion of the library. Can you tell us a little bit about how that got going?

JB: Well, that was an interesting—Mel George was the librarian at the time I came in, and he pointed out to me very clearly, and very early in my tenure as president, that we needed to expand the library. And there were several options.

One was to take the existing building, remodel it, make it bigger. The second thing was to consider building a separate library for the western part of campus. He pointed out that we didn't have enough space for books, and that some of the books that were not being used as much as others were actually being archived someplace off-campus. So it was clear that the library was significant in terms of need.

The other thing that impressed me, and this was something I had on my agenda before I came back as president, was the library was underfunded. There was no question about that. Here we had the most significant research institution in higher education in Oregon, and yet we were not part of an association of research libraries. And it was because we didn't have enough volumes, and so on. So anyway, the library was big. At a meeting in Columbia River Valley, a Foundation meeting, Bob Lundeen, formerly president of Dow Chemical, went for a walk with me one morning, and said, "If you had a lot of money, what would you do with it?" And I said I'd put it in a library. And that was the initiation of the project.

And what we were thinking of at that time was simply a bigger library, more space for books. Well, we had problems getting that started, and in the meantime, hired a woman named Joy Hughes, who would be vice provost for information services, which included the library. And she had a lot of vision, and she understood modern technology, and so on. And in that period of time that was sort of a lapse in our fundraising and organization for this, we changed the concept of the library. When we finally got it going, we put together a committee. We had Linus Pauling as the honorary chair, though he didn't do anything; it was just a name. Bob and Betty Lundeen, Bill and Sarah Kimble, Pat and Keith McKennon were the group, the steering group for the library campaign. We figured that we were looking at something on the order of 40 million dollars.

I think when it was finally done, it was 47 million, to expand the existing library and turn it into a modern information center. And in order to do that, [coughs] excuse me, we needed state support. We were very fortunate that Tony Van Vliet, who was one of our faculty members, actually ran a career center [clears throat], was in the legislature. And he got together with some folks up there, and they figured out a way that we could bond half this, if we could match the state's commitment to bonding. Well, that's what we did. And there were some rough spots in the road. Creating bonds simply means you've got to pay them off sometime in the future, and if the economy is bad at the time you make that commitment, it's a little difficult.

The thing I remember was it came up to the emergency board to—we got our money. We went out and we raised 20 million dollars or more, and when it came to the legislature, there was some pressure not to do it. [0:14:59] And as it was reported to me, a legislator named Kevin Maddox said, "We can't renege on this. These folks have done what they were supposed to do. We have to do what we're supposed to do."

So anyway, we got the money, and it was the day the emergency board met at the same time we were having University Day, with staff and faculty assembled, and so on. And we somehow arranged it so that we would get the word as soon as they passed it—we had people in Salem. As soon as the legislature said, "Yes," they would call somebody here, that somebody here would signal me, we got it, you know, whatever. And so then I could announce it to them, and that's what happened. So during my tenure, it was a fundraising thing, and then subsequently, the library was expanded, and it was state of the art when it was opened. Yeah.

CP: Well, you mentioned Linus Pauling. You were the president who secured his papers after the efforts of many other presidents before you. Do you want to talk about your relationship with Pauling in bringing those papers here?

JB: Well, yeah, I think that it simply happened during my tenure. I think that Linus would have done it probably at any time. He had been asked, I think, by James Jensen, by Robert MacVicar. And I wrote a letter, and the timing was right. And there was competition for it, but this was his alma mater. He had been accepted here as a student before he graduated from high school, had a good feeling about—he met his wife here. He had a good feeling about Oregon State, and had come back a number of times to give presentations and that sort of thing. So I get credit, but it simply happened. I think it would have happened anyway.

But somebody suggested that one of the added attractions to him was that we wanted his wife's papers as well, and she was a big peace activist. And so, yeah, we were very fortunate. The second thing that happened with Pauling—and we kind of got to know him; we entertained him and so on. And at that stage in his life, he appeared to be a very humble

person, but I'm not sure how humble he really was. You know, he was an activist; he was getting things done. He and his wife were a fantastic team in terms of the peace movement, and we got to know him very well.

I remember driving him around, and we wanted to take him to visit with a potential donor, and I couldn't find the donor. I got lost. And I was driving, and I had to apologize to Linus a couple of times. He says, "Oh, this is fun." He was seeing areas he hadn't seen for many, many years, you know. He was a very easy guy to be with. And the other thing that impressed me about Linus was you could tell him something, and he would memorize—he would remember it, and he would internalize it, and maybe a year later, mention what you'd already told him, you know? And of course my background was in geology, and I learned a little bit about crystallography, and so we had an area that we could talk about scientifically as well, so. So that was good.

And Linus was running the—they had an institute of orthomolecular medicine—this had to do with vitamin C and its importance—down in Palo Alto. And about the time of his death, they were going to have to move that institute. And so we suggested to them that they move it to Oregon State. In fact, the first thing I did was I sent a team down there to sit down with their scientists and see if there was a match between the kinds of things we did, and the kinds of things that went on at the Pauling Institute. And there was. They came back and said, "Yes, this is something that we ought to do." And so we pursued it, and fortunately we got them to come here.

And the Pauling Institute is a major success, but it happened basically after my watch. I mean, I may be responsible for getting them to come here, but setting it up and doing all of that, Dick Scanlan was the Dean of Research at the time. [0:19:59] He played a big, big role in it. Then we hired Balz Frei, who just took the thing off, and. And I think that they anticipated we would have the building built for the Pauling Institute sooner than it actually happened, but universities are not always the swiftest to act. So it took a while, but it's there. It's up and running, it's very successful.

CP: It certainly is. Did you ever visit Pauling down at his ranch in Big Sur?

JB: I never met him down there, no. No.

CP: Well, going back to the library real quick, the Valley Foundation was hugely important to it. I wonder if you would talk about your relationship with them, and also the story of the naming of the library, which is pretty funny.

JB: Well, I don't know, did we talk about getting the Valleys back in the fold? We didn't talk about that. I'm not sure we want to go into all of those details, but the Valleys were a major philanthropist for us, and so on, and Wayne and Gladys Valley both spent time here at Oregon State. They had left the fold for a while, but we got them back, and that was fine. And the room we're sitting in now really was a result of Wayne Valley's commitment to coming back and making a major donation to Oregon State.

But the Valley Library was interesting. We had asked the Valley Foundation for five million dollars, and John Evey was the major development officer at that time, and he had the thing pretty well set up. I remember being in a meeting in Portland. We were meeting with architects and perhaps some other folks, and Evey came to the door and motioned to me to come, and I did. And he said, "I've got the Valley Foundation on the line. They would like to talk with you." I knew that we had asked them for five million dollars. I got on the phone, and it was their executive director, a man named Steve Chandler, and Steve said, after the pleasantries were out of the way, "How much would it take to name the new library for the Valleys?" So I asked John Evey, and Evey didn't answer me orally, he simply held up two hands. I knew we'd asked him for five, so that had to be ten million dollars. And so I said, "Ten million dollars, Steve." And he said, "Just a minute." And then there was some discussion on the other end of the line, and he basically said, "Well, you've got it. We'd like it to be named the Valley Library."

And at that time, it was called the Kerr Library. And William Jasper Kerr was a major president here in the early 1900s, and so the Kerr name was moved over to the administration building. So it's the Valley Library, not because it's in Willamette Valley, but because Wayne and Gladys Valley provided a significant amount of the money for it.

CP: There were a couple of other facilities projects that happened on your watch, the Ag and Life Sciences Building.

JB: Yeah.

CP: Is there a story behind that?

JB: Yeah. Neil Goldschmidt was the Governor at the time, and we had at the top of our building list a building for the liberal arts. In any case, the legislature decided there would be no money for buildings, none, for the state system. So we figured, okay. Well, Goldschmidt was down here to give a talk, and I don't remember exactly what it was. He caught me on the steps of the LaSells Stewart Center, and he said, "I think I can get you some money for a new Ag building, a new agricultural building." And of course, Oregon State had a great reputation for agriculture. And Neil's idea was that we could provide some state money if we could get Hatfield, Senator Hatfield, to come up with some federal money, and so on.

So, the Ag and Life Science Building popped to the top of the list. And we did get the money, a combination of state and federal, for that building, and so it was being built. Then the legislature reneged on their earlier statement, and said, "Yeah, we'll put some money into buildings for higher education." And the thing that bothered me a little bit; it shouldn't have bothered me, but I guess it did [0:25:01], was that Eastern Oregon State College built a beautiful liberal arts building, which we might have had here, but we had Ag and Life Science, which was fine.

CP: The electrical engineering building also, was—

JB: Well, that, that happened right at the beginning of my watch. I had really nothing to do with that, except it was built while I was president, and finished, dedicated, when Neil Goldschmidt was Governor. And he was elected Governor in, it had to be 1986, I guess. And I remember the dedication of that very well. It was done in a different way. Instead of cutting a ribbon—there was a ribbon, and Fred Burgess, who was the Dean of Engineering at the time, said, "Well, we have a laser setup, and we're going to burn the ribbon." And I remember the Governor ducking to get out of the way. But they did have a laser, and what they had done, apparently, was in the ribbon they had a little bit of black powder, in a little pot, and so when that laser hit the black powder it "fwwwt," burned it, and that cut the ribbon.

CP: Well, we've been talking a little bit about the legislature. Cliff Trow is another person with whom you worked a lot. I wonder if you can share memories of just working with the legislature in general?

JB: Well, and Cliff's problem in the legislature was he was a Democrat when the Republicans controlled the legislature. And Cliff was a very wise person, and the combination of him in the Senate, and Tony Van Vliet in the House of Representatives, was great. I mean, we were connected to the state government in an intimate way. I don't think they did anything that we would be embarrassed by, or they would be embarrassed by, but having both of them up there was very helpful. Cliff was on the education committee, and if nothing else, it kept us attuned as to what was going on in the legislature before it really surfaced, and that was very useful.

CP: I was surprised to read about how close the university system came from going from quarters to semesters.

JB: Well, that was very interesting. A proposition came up to convert to semesters. I think probably most universities in the United States operate on a semester system. They operate on what is now called an early semester, which ends before Christmas. When I was in college, the semester didn't end until after Christmas. But anyway, the idea was, let's convert to semesters. You can go into topics in a semester course in much greater detail than you can in a quarter course. Well, we were on a quarter system, and the advantage of the quarter system was you had more flexibility, you could take more courses, and so on.

The semester generally didn't start—well it started, early semesters would start in August, and quarter system didn't start until the end of September. And so there were some people in the legislature that thought, "Well, students can be working on harvest in September, but if you're on a semester system, you won't be able to do that." So, in any case, of the state system, Oregon State was opposed to going on the semester system. We were happy with the quarter system. So when it came to discussion about it, we said, "No, we won't do that." Well, the decision was made: we're going to go to the semester system.

At that same time, we wanted to look at, if we were going to change the academic structure of the university, we want to look at it and see that we're teaching the right things, that we have the right courses, and so on. So, it's going to be an intensive look at our academic spectrum, and we weren't sure there was enough time to do it, to do it in a proper way.

But we got out in front of it, and I like to brag about it a little bit, that we led the whole system of higher education in converting to the semester system.

Well, there was a legislator from Linn County, Liz VanLeeuwen, who was really opposed to this. [0:30:03] And Liz wanted us to stick on the quarter system so the students would be available to work on the farms in August and September. And okay, "Well, Liz, we're going this way." And so, we had a board meeting, and all the presidents were there, and it was up at Portland State. And the evening before the meeting, the president sat down and drafted a statement of support for the conversion to semesters. This could be used as a press release, or whatever. And so we thought, well, we're going to semesters. We put a lot of work into it.

And at breakfast, Dick Hensley, who is the chairman of the board, motioned to me to come out, and so I did. And he said, "We're not going to go to semesters. The political payment on this is just too great. We can't do it. So we're not going to do it." Well, that was the 11th hour and 59th minute. And so folks who had worked so hard on it, you know, it was a blow. You know, they were really disappointed it wasn't going to happen. Bruce Shepard, who's now president up at Western Washington, led the charge on the whole thing.

And so Graham Spanier, who was our provost, called Bruce and told him what had happened, and we arranged, Graham and I arranged, to go down and talk to Bruce that afternoon. It was Friday afternoon. And so we had set up a meeting with him at 4 o'clock, at which time we'd be back from the board meeting, and so on. Well, Bruce told us that when he heard this, he hit the ceiling, closed his office, and went for a walk around campus, and then came back to the office, and started the procedure for going back and holding onto the quarter system, which is what we did.

And the reaction was the same. Initial reaction was, oh, no way! Okay, we've got a job to do; let's do it, which is sort of the Oregon State way of doing things, you know.

CP: Well, one of your goals coming into office is one that the university—it's always been a little tricky for OSU to improve diversity of the faculty, the staff and the students. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your plan for trying to improve diversity on campus?

JB: Well, we had affirmative action under MacVicar, and we had a very tough affirmative action officer that really made you hold the line. And we did that; we went through all of the hoops and so on, and there really wasn't much change. At least, that was my opinion. And so shortly after I'd come on as president, I arranged to sit down with Pearl Spears Gray, who was our African American woman who was over the top of the whole thing, and I said, "Pearl, we've got to find a different way of doing this."

Well, she came up with a scheme. She said, "Well, why don't we get together with the leaders of the different minority groups, and we'll set up meetings close to the Portland airport, and we'll do a lunch with one group, a dinner with another group, and so on, breakfast and another lunch, and sit down and get their advice, and see what we can do to improve things?" Which is what we did. And each group was different, but we did sit down with them. And as a result of that, we created a board of visitors for minority affairs. The board of visitors met, and they recommended that we establish an office for minority affairs, which we did.

Phyllis Lee was selected as the person to lead that office; we had done a national search and Phyllis was the one we wanted. And so she did it, and so the credit, if there's any credit to be given, it has to go to Phyllis, and for that board of visitors. And we met with the board of visitors. We challenged each of the academic deans to come up with a plan for improving diversity, and so on, and I think it probably did make a difference. It still exists. It was the right thing to do. [0:35:00] And at that particular time, we were out ahead of most of the other universities in doing something like this. But again, if you're going to give any credit to anybody, you have to give it to Pearl. Well, she went on someplace else, and Phyllis took over and made a big difference.

CP: Well, another topic that was certainly difficult when you took over was athletics. You inherited a mess.

JB: [Laughs]

CP: How would you characterize the state of the department?

JB: Yeah, when I came in. I came onto campus on a Saturday; it was the Saturday of the University of Oregon game, and Joe Avezzano was the coach, and he had a miserable record as coach. And so I saw Joe after the game, and said—his contract, this was the last year of his contract—and I said, "Okay, Joe. We need to get together." Well, I think it was set up for Tuesday, which was my second day in office, really. And we worked our way—I spent a lot of time with Joe, learning about what was going on in intercollegiate athletics, and so on, and as a result of that, we did not renew his contract. We didn't fire him. We ran the contract down; took care of his assistant coaches.

But Joe and I left on good terms. And of course, he went on to great success with the Dallas Cowboys, and it was the best thing that happened to Joe, was to leave Oregon State. But we began to look at some other things in athletics. Athletics had been balancing their budgets on subsequent years' ticket sales, you know? As soon as you stopped the clock, we discovered that, hey, we're operating in the red. And so they had to change that. An arrangement had been made with Dee Andros for him to retire. He was the athletic director, a wonderful, warm person, just totally dedicated to Oregon State, and a retirement arrangement had been made with him. We decided, well, maybe it's time to move it up a little bit. Dee was successful at fundraising, and so we said, "Dee, what you're going to do from now on is raise money for intercollegiate athletics." And then we went on a search for another athletic director.

So there were some changes that took place in athletics. There were some things that—there was apparently, before I became president, a board of intercollegiate athletics that in a de facto way, made most of the decisions. Well, that was not the way I wanted to do it. And so, in the search for that first football coach to succeed Joe Avezzano, I played a major role. Normally, it would be the athletic director who did it, but for a number of reasons we wanted to change that. I wanted to see things improve. We'd had a losing football record here for 20 years, or something like that; I don't know.

And there was a lot of concern it was taking us too long to find a coach. That was because we had an offer out to Sam Boghosian, and Sam was an assistant coach with the Oakland Raiders at that time. And Sam took his time. I think he was seriously interested. He had been a coach here, an assistant coach here. And that's what delayed the process. Well, I don't think too many people knew that. The other problem we had was that the board of higher education said, "You can't use any state dollars, zero, to support intercollegiate athletics." And this rule applied to Oregon State, the University of Oregon, and Portland State. And it meant we were paying coaches terrible salaries, you know? And until that was changed, and that wasn't changed until, gosh, 1991 or '92, that we could begin to, in a sense, provide some state money for intercollegiate athletics.

It wasn't until that change that we began to see, yeah, now we can compete. But what we paid football coaches in those days was a joke. So you had to get somebody who was in the beginning of their career, and hope that it was going to work out. Well, in a number of cases, it hadn't worked out. And it took a while, and it didn't happen on my watch, unfortunately. [0:40:01]

CP: A lot of Beaver fans would be interested to know that Dennis Erickson was in the running for that first position after Avezzano left.

JB: Say that again?

CP: Dennis Erickson?

JB: Well, Dennis was a candidate. Dennis Erickson, Dennis Rates and a guy named Gene Murphy were the finalists; there were three of them. We had a search committee with seven people, and I had appointed the search committee—had some academic types, had some athletic types on it, and I figured, well, the worst thing that can happen is we get a 4 to 3 vote on who they want. The final vote came to 3, 3, 1. And as it stretched out, both the Dennis's who wanted the job, it was cutting into their recruiting time. And so they both withdrew. And that was when we got Sam Boghosian on the hook, and then that didn't work.

And so I went back to Dee and said, "Dee, Sam said no. Let's get the stack out again." And we hired Dave Kragthorpe. And Dave had the same problems that the previous coaches had had. He did well the first few years. Dave's first big achievement the first year was a major upset of the University of Washington, but it didn't work out for him either. And Dennis Erickson didn't make it in the pros, and my understanding is, called down here and said, "I'm interested in your job," a couple of coaches later. And he got the job, and he turned it around. People started wearing orange again.

CP: Well, there were some facilities improvements to the football complex during your time. The press box, and the sky box, I think was the first.

JB: Well, yeah. And I have to give credit to Ed Coates on that. Ed had an idea for the stadium. The press box and the sky—it wasn't a sky box; we didn't have a sky box. There was a room at the press box level that you could pass out a box lunch, and that's what happened. And then you went down and you sat at the last two rows of the stadium, under the press box, and then you at least were not going to be rained on. But it was pretty—I mean, there were high schools all over the state that had better facilities than we did. So Ed Coates said, "No, we've got to have a press box and a sky box." And so we did that. And I don't recall how many years it took to get it, but we finally got the sky boxes set up, nothing like what it is today, but the sky box was built. It's still there. Some people prefer it to the new ones. So that part worked well.

The other thing that happened was we had Gladys Valley here on a visit, and she met Jerry Pettibone, who had succeeded Dave Kragthorpe as football coach. And casually, she said, "Well, is there anything—?" you know, talking. And I have to tell you that the Valleys were enmeshed in professional football. Wayne Valley was one of the original owners of the Oakland Raiders. And so football was part of their culture. So anyway, Gladys met with Jerry Pettibone just casually, and said, "Is there anything you need?" And he would like this facility. And so that led to the first step.

It was a little too small, and so later on, fundraising, and we do now have the Valley Football Center, which is the end zone complex, with weight rooms, and so on and so forth, offices full of football coaches. And so, yeah, it was no surprise. But we had a rule that you were not supposed to talk to, or ask, certain donors. These were reserved for the president; some things didn't change. But Gladys was very gratuitous, and that led to the Valley Football Center. Yeah.

CP: The gymnastic center is also named after the Valleys.

JB: Yeah. We have the Valley name all over the place now. You know, we have the Valley Gymnastic Center. That was where Horner Museum had been, and so on. And the fire marshal came in, and it was the Mitchell Playhouse is what it really was used for. [0:45:01] And the fire marshal came in and said, "You know, if you ever have a fire in the basement of that place, you'll never get the audience out alive." And so we shut it down that morning, and moved the Mitchell Playhouse to another facility on campus. And gymnastics was doing well. We said, "Well, we can turn that into a gymnastics practice area," which is what it is now. But it's the Valley Gymnastics Center too.

CP: The main athletic director during your time was Dutch Baughman, is that correct.

JB: Dutch. Yeah, Dutch succeeded, oh, boy—

CP: Lynn Snyder?

JB: Yeah, Lynn. And then Dutch was succeeded—well, Dutch was the athletic director and had straightened out a lot of things in intercollegiate athletics. And he was the athletic director at the end of my career as president, yeah.

CP: So he did a lot to improve the budget situation?

JB: Well, the big thing that changed was the board reneged on their original mandate, and that happened on—Barbara Roberts was Governor at the time. All three of the universities that had had that mandate were operating in the red. And somehow we had to fix this if we were going to have intercollegiate athletics at all. And so Herb Ashkenazy, who was on the board of education, was the president of Oregon Freeze Dry; he was a businessman.

And Herb was put in charge of this, and had a committee that consisted of representatives from the major universities, and I think there were even some from the smaller colleges, to address this issue. And Herb addressed it as a business issue, and it was changed. And it meant that we could provide state support. We could use our regular physical plant to take care of the facilities, which was not the case prior to the change, which happened in '92, I think '92, that it actually changed.

CP: I want to ask you about some of the icons of athletics during your time, and there's probably none bigger than Ralph Miller.

JB: Well, Ralph was never a problem. I mean, Ralph was a winning coach. We were fortunate that Ralph stayed here as long—you know, he retired here. And he was a winner from day one. He was a winner in high school, and on his watch, Gary Payton was recruited, and then Ralph retired and Gary Payton played under Jimmy Anderson, who had been an assistant coach under Slat Gill, and under Ralph Miller, and Jimmy then became the head coach. Basketball was a success in those days. You know? And we were a ranked team almost every year under Ralph Miller. And I used to figure that if the game was close at half time, we'd win, because we've got Ralph Miller on the bench there. And second half, the adjustments were made, we did better, so.

CP: Did you get to know him at all?

JB: Ralph? Yeah. Ralph was a speech major in college. The story is that he became a speech major because he was enamored with this coed, who he subsequently married, Jean, subsequently married. And she was a speech major, so Ralph became a speech major. And he was articulate, there's no question about it. Shirley would get a little bit upset with Ralph because he would take too long. Things would be going the wrong way, and she'd say, "Take time out. Take time out." And Ralph said, "You know, when I take my direction from the wife of the president, I'm in real trouble." But, no, Ralph was a good guy. Yeah.

CP: Another person that you, I think, developed a relationship with was Dale Thomas, the wrestling coach.

JB: Well, that goes way back. I guess my relationship with some of the coaches started when I was in Oceanography. Certainly with Dale Thomas, and he lived fairly close to where we lived, so we got to know him a little bit. Also, Jimmy Anderson and Paul Valenti, and they were out recruiting for basketball players. Dale Thomas was out recruiting for wrestlers. Anyway, it was a good relationship, and it carried over to when I was president. [0:50:03]

And it wasn't just them; it was with Jack Riley, who was the baseball coach. We got to know him fairly well. And for everything but football, those were pretty good days, really. We had a ranked wrestling team. A lot of things changed. You know, Title IX came into effect. That changed the mix of sports that we could participate in. But for everything but football, it was pretty good. But the amount of money we could pay football coaches was part of the problem. Anyway, that all changed.

CP: Football's sort of the revenue-maker, for the most part.

JB: There were two: football and men's basketball are the two revenue sports, yeah.

CP: You've always had a soft spot for baseball.

JB: I've always enjoyed baseball. When I was in high school, I was the manager for the baseball team. You know, I learned how to keep score and all of that kind of stuff. But under the mandate from the board, we knew we were operating in the red, and we had to operate—we were a Division 1 school, which meant we had to have so many sports. Title IX meant we had to have a balance between women and men's sports. The PAC 10, I think it was PAC 10 in those days, required so many sports, and so on. And yet we had this deficit that we had to address, and we had to address it from within intercollegiate athletics.

And this was not unique. The University of Oregon had the same problem. The University of Oregon had eliminated their baseball program a few years earlier. And Lynn Snyder came in, and he said, "Well, the amount of money we've got to save is about the same as the amount we're putting into baseball, and into track and field, and we're going to have to eliminate one. Your choice, Mister President." And what Lynn had suggested was we eliminate one of them to create the balance. If it were track, we'd have to create another women's sport, because women participated in track too. So I added a women's soccer program.

Well anyway, because the University of Oregon had already eliminated baseball, if we eliminated it, there's no Division 1 baseball in the state of Oregon. I thought that would be too bad. So I eliminated, or my decision, we eliminated track and field, and I heard about that later on. But we kept baseball, and to our credit—I had nothing to do with it, but we hired Pat Casey my last year as president, and Pat Casey took us to Omaha, and to two national championships in baseball. I wish I could claim it, but I can't. It just happened on my watch, like a lot of things did.

Track and field I heard about, and I had this one alumnus in a public meeting, stood up and told me that I had done more to damage Oregon State than any president this century. And I asked, "Well, how is that?" And he said, "You eliminated track and field." And I said, "Yes, I did. Let me tell you why." And so I went through the whole thing, what all the rules were, and why I made that decision. And I said, "You know, you have to recognize that sometimes presidents have to make unpopular decisions." He looked at me, he says, "Thank you," sat down.

And interestingly, a couple of years later, this guy comes up to me and he said, "Do you remember me?" And I looked at him; I thought, "Are you the guy who asked me about track and field?" And he nodded that he had. And then he understood, you know. We parted as friends. But it was a terrible thing to have to do. But there were other things that you had to do. I haven't gotten to the part where we eliminate vet medicine, but I'm sure we will. Yeah.

CP: Well before we get to the challenges we'll talk about a few more achievements.

JB: [Laughs]

CP: Very interesting to read about your connection with the public employee union, especially when they were on strike. That's an interesting story.

JB: Well. Yeah, the thing you begin to realize is that when you look at the people who work for the university [0:55:01], the staff don't get the credit they really need, because they are so dedicated. They are here to keep the place running, and a number of them became members of the Oregon Public Employees Union, which is statewide for all Oregon public employees who wish to be unionized. And I don't remember what the percentage was, but it was something like 60 percent of our staff were members of OPEU, as it was called. The rest of them were not.

They worked together; they worked next to each other. They had the same salary structure. The unions would lobby for better arrangements, higher pay, better retirement, and that sort of thing, and that benefited the people who were not part of the union, as well. But in any case, the decision was made that public employees would go on strike, and this was statewide. And so our public employees, or our staff who were members of the union, had to go on strike. They were not, according to union rules, allowed to work while a strike was on.

And so I could look out my window, and I could see that the group on the picket lines, and so it's not a terribly comfortable thing. I didn't know how it was going to work out. I had to do down and talk with those folks, and so I did. And there were nice conversations, and so on. And so I started to walk the picket line. Well, there were people right outside the administration building. There were people in the engineering complex. There were people up where Oceanography is, and all the way around the campus. If nothing else, you begin to realize how big a campus it is when you have to walk all the way around it.

But anyway, did that, and I decided, well, I should do this. The weather—fortunately the first day, the weather was not bad. And I don't recall whether it rained or not, but I did it, and I think out of the five days in the week, I did it four days. And the fifth day, I decided, you know, I've really got to visit with the folks who are not on the picket line. And I did that, too. And it's interesting how rumors get started, but on I think the second day, I went by, and there was a place on Monroe Street where you could have coffee. So I went in, and I had a cup of coffee on my way around, and they said, "Hey, why don't you take these donuts out and share them with the strikers?" And so I did that. And so the word is out: the president is providing the strikers with coffee and donuts. Not quite true, but anyway, that got the rumor in, and the story gets out, you know.

So, as I did it, it changed my personal relationship with the staff, and they appreciated it. And I think it probably did more for my relationship with both the strikers and the non-strikers, who I tried to see as well, but it was harder there, because they're scattered all throughout the university. But it did more for my relationship with staff than anything else I did as president.

CP: That small gesture made a big impact.

JB: Absolutely.

CP: Another achievement was revitalizing the University Honors College.

JB: When Ballot Measure 5 came along, we had an honors program, and it had a variety of colloquia, and so on. It wasn't a lot of money, but when Ballot Measure 5 hit, we were looking for everything. And so, we closed the honors program. And as things began to ease up a few years later, we decided, well, let's have an honors program. And the faculty in the meantime had said, "Let's go beyond that idea." It was the faculty's idea. "Let's have an honors college." Well, we knew that was going to cost more money, but we said okay. And so we did; we created an honors college.

Joe Hendricks was selected, he was the Chairman of the Sociology Department, and was selected to be the Dean of the honors college, and so the honors college took off. You could get an honors degree. The idea with the honors college was: let's create the equivalent of a small liberal arts college on campus. And so that's what we did. And of course, it was a matter of how do we do this financially, in a tough time? How do we get whatever gifts we can get, to provide release time for faculty so they can teach a course in the honors college? And the release time, the money goes to the deans from the schools from which those faculty have come, so they can replace the faculty for those particular courses, using adjuncts or whatever.

And so, it worked. And I think if you're going to give credit, it's to the folks who ran the honors college, and to the faculty who volunteered to teach in the honors college. And it did; it worked. They tried to provide social events for the honors students, and so on. [1:00:57] And it turned out that the honors college became, if you want, a gem in Oregon State's crown that attracted some of the better and the brightest students from high schools in the state. So all in all, it was a major success for Oregon State, and still is.

CP: Another focus for you during your time as president was internationalizing the university. You promoted exchange and internship programs, and the creation of an international degree during that time.

JB: Yeah, again, we were fortunate. I thought international was important. I thought, a modern university has got to be preparing graduates for a life in the world—not just in Oregon, not just in the United States, but anywhere. So that's something that we really ought to emphasize. Well, I was fortunate. We had two fantastic leaders, Jack van de Water ran the educational program, and Ed Price ran the program starting off in agriculture, but it got far beyond that. At one point, we had more money from the United States Agency for International Development than any other university in the United States. That's incredible! And what it was were projects that we were managing, many of which didn't have Oregon State faculty involved, just the managers.

And Jack really pushed on the international exchange programs, where we could send—the first one was what we call a direct exchange, where we would identify universities overseas, and a particularly successful one was in southwest Germany, and exchange students. Students would pay their home tuition, and one for one, we would swap them. German students would come here; American students would go to Baden-Württemberg in southern Germany. And then we would add other programs to that, and so that became very successful. But the success is always due to the staff and the leadership. And we had two fantastic guys. Jack van de Water went on to become the leader of international education for the whole state system, was part-time, still did the job here. Ed Price left us and I think went down to Texas A&M, where he continued to do the same thing. But you have to give them the credit for it.

But they did have a president who said, "Yeah. This is important to us. We're going to do this." And that carries some weight with faculty who might be on the margin, I suppose. And Jack came up with a number of things. He came up with the international intern program, where students who would spend time overseas would then get a job, or intern with a company in that country. And then the international degree, and there, again, faculty—Dianne Hart—played a big role in this. But with Jack's leadership, we ended up with an international degree, and it was significant. You have things you had to do to get this thing. It was a double degree. You'd get the degree in political science, for example, and also the international degree if you had the language skills, the overseas experience, and so on and so forth. Yeah.

CP: You also did some traveling to the Middle East, Africa and East Asia. I'm wondering what the outcomes for the university tended to be for those.

JB: Well, I don't know that—it was waving the flag as much as anything else. [1:05:02] And I think it was important probably more for the alumni in those areas, and for the faculty who were over there working on international projects, and so on. So it was a morale booster. And the thing that was significant to me was to visit with alumni in Thailand, you name it, wherever they might be, and they would tell you that the best years of their life were the years they spent

at Oregon State University and lived in Corvallis, almost with tears in their eyes. And that tells you—that tells you something.

And I suspect that Oregon State is not unique, that if you were to talk to the overseas alums, if you would, from the University of Oregon, from Iowa State, from Texas A&M, the University of California, they would tell you the same thing, that life in the United States was the acme, the epitome of their life to that point. And I always felt that the United States did not take full advantage of those people who were the true ambassadors of what things were like. The other thing that was interesting was that people would get a degree here and then go back to their home country and just move right through the system if they wanted to. We went to Thailand, and there were people who were on the president's cabinet there, and so on, who were Oregon State graduates, Beavers, bled orange, that sort of thing.

CP: I was fascinated to discover the pretty close connection between Thailand and OSU. Behind Canada, the second most international students total have been from Thailand.

JB: Well, yeah. That was pretty much due to personal communication. Yeah, we had faculty who were involved down there, but I think it was more students going back and saying, "You ought to go to Oregon State."

CP: We'll switch gears a little bit and talk about some challenges, and none bigger than Ballot Measure 5. It's come up many times over the course of our conversations. We mentioned that it resulted in a 20 percent cut for the university's budget. We talked a little bit about the two percent cut that Goldschmidt had mandated a few years before, and you mentioned that that sort of gave OSU a practice run for what was going to come. But I'm interested in knowing how you developed a plan for how to respond to this massive cut that resulted from Ballot Measure 5?

JB: Well, I think I mentioned that when we talked about the two percent reduction. We had the parameters; we knew the things to look at. You know, are the courses, are the programs, central to the university's mission? Are they successful? Do you have a number of students who are taking advantage of them? And if they're not, you make the reductions there. And the first year, the full 20 percent was difficult in that we took as much as we could, or at least as we thought we could, out of administration. We did that first. The reason we exist is for the academic programs, not for the President's Office. And so that was the first cut. Then the next thing you look at is, are there related departments that might benefit by merger? Are there programs that we don't have too many, too much invested in, that we can cut back on?

So we did those things. And we had started to do them with the two percent business. The other thing is, you have to recognize that the whole state system is faced with the same problem. So, from the chancellor's office, they're looking at: what are your most expensive programs? Well, one of them, just part of this, was vet medicine. We get to that in a minute. Another one was we were making some changes in education to begin with, and what we were trying to do with education was to say, "Hey, if you're going to be a science teacher in a high school or something, your first degree ought to be in that science, or mathematics, or whatever it may be. And then you get a second degree, if you will, in education."

And so we were making that change, where if you wanted to be a teacher [1:10:01], you specialized in the subject, and then you took a subsidiary degree in the educational stuff that you needed to be an effective teacher. So that was going on at the same time. We decided, okay, as long as we're going to do this, and all of these things are happening simultaneously, we take education, and we turn it into a school, and we put it in the College of Home Economics, because that's where child development lies. And so that looked like an easy merger.

None of the mergers are easy. And so we had champions for each of those. In the case, well, one department we eliminated was Religious Studies. And we said, well, the thing you're concerned about is, when you eliminate a program, you can get rid of tenured faculty. I mean, that's the only way you can do it. And we didn't want to do that. The folks who are tenured are tenured by the university, so we want to keep them. But some of them are not tenured yet, and so that's unfortunate. We'll help you find another job. Well, Religious Studies we fused into Philosophy. Geography we put with Geology and turned it into Earth Science. Vet medicine was a different thing.

We get this direction from the chancellor's office to propose elimination of the most expensive program on campus. For us, for Oregon State, it's the College of Vet Medicine. And the College of Vet Medicine is significant. At that time, it was a joint college—in a sense, it was joint with Washington State University, where students would start here, and then take at least one year at Washington State, and vice versa. So there were two institutions involved. But clearly, Veterinary

Medicine was expensive. And so, by the chancellor's rule, we eliminated, "eliminated," vet medicine. Well, what that meant was that we went to the College of Vet Medicine and explained to them what the mandate was, then we gave everybody a pink slip, as they're called, a letter of timely notice, which says that effective June 30, you're out of a job, and explained to them, "We don't want to do this." It didn't make sense.

And in fact at one of the board meetings, one of the board of higher education, Mark Dodson, wanted us to explain what we are doing, he says, "Is this a good decision?" And I said, "From the perspective of the system of higher education, yes, it's the right decision, because we have the rules. This is what we're supposed to do. From the perspective of the people of Oregon, it's a terrible decision. It means we no longer prepare veterinarians for life in a state which has got animals all over the place." So, they understood that; Mark Dodson said he understood that. And then we said, "Okay," to the leadership of Veterinary Medicine, "Now, let's rally the troops. We don't want this to happen, and let's get every animal lover in the state to descend on the legislature."

And we used that. We used that. They talked about bringing llamas up on the steps of the state capital, and the next year when it happened it was pygmy goats in the legislative chambers, and so on. It didn't happen. Veterinary medicine, in the first year, came out better than the rest of the university. But in the meantime, every faculty member knew that if it didn't work, they didn't have a job, at least not at Oregon State. I think we lost one faculty member, probably would have lost him anyway; got an offer someplace else and went someplace else.

But yeah, that was the Ballot Measure 5 thing. And it lasted over three biennia. It wasn't 20 percent every time, but it was significant. The trouble with it was, as viewed from outside, it created an appearance of instability in higher education. [1:15:01] And what we saw? We saw enrollment drop. We saw the kids who might have come here went to community college; the community colleges were bursting at the seams. And some students obviously left the state and went to some other college. It wasn't just us. The whole system looked like it was unstable, and that was the first problem.

The second problem is, as you're focused on reduction, you may miss some opportunities outside the university, spending too much time on trying to save money rather than trying to enhance it. Well, President, you can't do that. So at the same time, we're trying to improve what we're getting in terms of private gifts, and so on. So all of this is going on at the same time. But Ballot Measure 5—somebody asked me the other day, "What was the biggest challenge you had as president?" There was no question. Ballot Measure 5 was the biggest challenge.

CP: One program that you have mentioned regretting having gotten rid of is Journalism.

JB: Yeah. [Laughs] We had a program of technical journalism. That went by the wayside. We had a TV station. That went by the wayside. All due to Ballot Measure 5. We got suggestions from the various deans, and they all handled it differently. A suggestion that came out of liberal arts was eliminate Technical Journalism. So I did. It was a big mistake. I saw that it was a big mistake. But we were so desperate to find places to cut and find money, that we did. And we had an outstanding journalism professor who ended up at the University of Oregon, because they didn't eliminate journalism. It's a school down there. But we only had in technical journalism, I think, one faculty member who had been instrumental there. I think he probably hoped I would die on the spot, or something; I don't know.

But anyway, it was a mistake. It was a mistake because we were contributing to the press, to the media. We were producing students who in their careers would end up from Oregon State. One of the big complaints about the *Oregonian*, you know, the statewide newspaper, was that it was run by University of Oregon graduates, and they always got more bylines than we did. I don't know whether that's true or not, but that was a feeling that was prevalent here, and we had eliminated this program that was our nose, or the camel's nose in the tent, as far as journalism was concerned. That was a big mistake.

CP: Was there any directive from the state to eliminate programs that were redundant from campus to campus? In other words, did you look at their journalism—?

JB: I don't think there was any mandate on that. I think they wanted to look at that. One of the things that—it just triggered another memory. One of the proposals we had was that we eliminate the agricultural program we had at Eastern Oregon State College. And we did. We had some faculty over there who were teaching something in range management, or some something. The suggestions from Agriculture were to eliminate that. That was such a significant program at

Eastern that had we eliminated it, there's a question as to whether the institution would have survived. So I said, "No, we're not going to do that. We're not going to do that to another institution in the state system. So you find another way of reducing your budget." And they did. And that continued. Well, that enhanced our relationship with Eastern Oregon State College, certainly.

CP: Ballot Measure 5 also resulted in the closure of the Horner Museum.

JB: Yeah. We did a series of minor things. That's a minor thing; I say minor in terms of the finances. We didn't save a lot of money from that, but we did save something. We eliminated the marching band. I figured, well, this will get people's attention. They didn't even notice it. But anyway, yes we did eliminate Horner Museum. We had a woman named Lucy Skjelstad who ran it. It was popular with certain people. [1:19:57] When we did that, we said, "Well, we need to know what's there." Well, we didn't have an inventory of what was in the Horner Museum. So Lucy and her assistant—we closed the museum to the public, and Lucy and her assistant spent all of their time inventorying things, and making a record of what was in the Horner Museum.

And subsequently, I don't recall, I think it started on my watch but I don't think we finished on my watch, that collection was handed off to the Benton County Museum. And in handling it off, there were certain things that were Native American, and the tribes said, "We want those back." I don't know how that all worked out, but it was subsequent to when I was president. But yeah, again, I would say we were—I don't like the word desperate, but that's the word that comes to mind. We were looking for every nickel we could find.

CP: Well, a challenge of a different sort arose through student misconduct, and I believe one or two racial incidents. I'm wondering how you responded to that?

JB: Yeah. Well, it's unfortunate that it only takes one or two individuals to spoil the whole system. And that had happened previously. Had the Freddy Milton affair with Dee Andros and so on, fairly well known, I guess. It happened while I was president, and it happened off campus. I don't recall all of the details of it, but an African American, a black, was at least verbally abused, called a nigger, and made an issue out of it. And the black student union, I think there was reaction there. They may have closed their doors to anybody who was not African American, that sort of thing.

The way it was handled was, "Okay, let's listen to them." And we set up this meeting in the Memorial Union lounge. And the meeting was set up with two microphones and two aisles—the microphones were in one—and it became a campus-wide event. The place was standing room only. I don't remember how many students were there. As we're walking up the hill, and I was walking up there with a couple of my associates, the provost and somebody else, I said to him, "Well this will be a chance for them to yell at the president." And that's exactly what it was. And the thing that was fortunate, was fortuitous, was that we had two microphones. And so it was like one of these things where this person would talk, then this person, then this person, and so on. So there was some order to it.

The meeting was scheduled to run from noon to one o'clock. My, my memory tells me that it didn't end 'til close to two o'clock. And we listened to all of these complaints, and it was all recorded; it was videoed. And the thing that I remember was that most of it was fairly simple. I listened, and so on. This one student accused me of being smug, and so on, and I didn't tolerate that. I reacted to that. The black leadership wanted a commitment from Oregon State. Now, my philosophy has always been you commit, not by words, but by action. And I think a lot of people don't understand that. They want the words, too. And so I remember saying to them, "You judge me not by my words, but by what we do."

And so, we followed up. And of course, this was at the same time we were creating the office of minority affairs, and so on and so forth. So I think there were a lot of subsequent activities that I wasn't necessarily involved with that addressed this issue. But the racial thing, it's a problem whenever it occurs. And I can remember back in the early '60s, it was the same issue. [1:25:00] I read somewhere that when Paul Risser was President, in his first year there was another racial issue. And as I say, it only takes one or two individuals, and it's so unfortunate. You're working so hard to get that under control, to change people's attitudes, to enhance diversity, to get people comfortable with people of different ethnic backgrounds, and so on. And it just blows up on you. You use those as learning moments, and try to build on them.

CP: What did you do personally to cope with the strain of the job, especially during these tough times?

JB: Well, people tell me there were strains, but I didn't—somebody asked me that once: what do you do to handle the strains, or the stress and the strain? I said, "I don't know." The thing about being president is the job is so diverse, that where, if you were to focus on this one issue all the time, yeah, that would be a lot of pressure. But you focus on it, then you go off to do something else. And so, I think that's the biggest relief of strain, is the diversity of the job. Shirley and I used to figure that the only time we truly had to ourselves was Sunday morning, that the job is itself, as they say, 24/7.

You have associates who handle a lot of the problems. If there were student problems, the vice president for student affairs is on the spot. If it's facility problems, the vice president for finance and administration is on the spot. And so that takes a lot of the pressure out of the job. We used to occasionally take what we called a mini-vacation, and a mini-vacation was going to a movie. And that was about it, you know, but there was a lot of social element to it, which is relaxing. The job itself has got built-in feedback loops for relieving pressure.

I don't think I've ever admitted this, but I used to say to Irene Sears, who was my assistant outside—she was the palace guard. I'd say, "Irene, I'm going to close the door for 20 minutes," and I'd go in and I'd take a nap. Yeah. The other thing I did was I've always liked art, and so I would keep a deck of postcards of well-known paintings in my office, in my desk. And if I needed just a few minutes just to relax, I would just pull those out and start looking at them, if I didn't have time to go to Fairbanks, to the gallery, or whatever. And that was, again, and that was a relief on strain, I suppose, yeah.

CP: So I sort of get a sense of this, but I mean, you are almost a celebrity in a town like this.

JB: Yeah.

CP: You pretty much always have to be on when you're out and about, at the grocery store or a restaurant.

JB: Well, I think that it shows up mostly now with people who say, "Hi, John," and I don't have a clue who they are, you know.

CP: How did you make the decision to start winding down and retiring?

JB: Well, my original intent was 10 years, and that was ballpark-ish. And I remember being interviewed by a student over in Clodfelter's, and I guess we had gotten television back, and I'd gotten to know him a little bit. He was an announcer, maybe a sports announcer or whatever, but there was an interview session. It was one night over in Clodfelter's. And he said, "John, why are you staying? You don't have to stay. You've done your job," and so on, and so forth. I said, "We still haven't resolved Ballot Measure 5." And that was probably the beginning of the 11th year. And that's why I stayed.

And then when I could see that financially, we did have it under control, both with state dollars and with private dollars, then I said, "Yeah, now is the time. Now is the time to retire." And that's when I made the announcement. The other thing I had done—the chancellor, Tom Bartlett, was about to retire. [1:29:59] And I said to Tom, I said, "Look, we're both about to retire. Why don't you appoint me as interim chancellor, and then we get an interim president while you do the national search for Oregon State? There's a search going on for the chancellor's position, and so we'd have the whole thing handled that way." Well, that didn't happen.

The chairman of the board at that time—I wish I could think of her name—had decided that Joe Cox, the President of Southern would be the next chancellor, and Joe wanted the job. I didn't really want the job; I just thought it was a way of easing into retirement, as it were. And so Joe Cox became the next Chancellor, and I had announced my retirement, and the usual mechanism started to look for my successor, and that happened. But that 11th year was caused by Ballot Measure 5.

CP: What was the process of handing the reins over to Paul Risser? What was that like, the transition period?

JB: Well, there really wasn't any transition. Paul decided that he could come on the first of January of 1996, which meant that I would be president until the 31st of December, 1995. And I remember meeting Paul. One of the parts of the interview was to have him, and to have all of the candidates, visit the president's house, visit the president's spouse, and so on and so forth. Paul was selected; I don't know what month, but I'm going to guess it was somewhere around September, somewhere in there, and then I remember congratulating him in the MU when he was selected.

And we arranged to have dinner with Paul and Les Risser, and Les had not been his wife at the time he was interviewed. She became his wife subsequently, or subsequent to his selection. But anyway, so they were selected. Shirley and I had dinner with them on New Year's Eve. And we went through a lot of the nuts and bolts and so on, and pointed out to them we really wanted them to be successful, you know. We committed our lives to Oregon State. So it wasn't any transition, really. January 1st, he was President, and I was President Emeritus.

CP: Exactly. Well, you still lived in Corvallis. A lot of the presidents have not, for whatever reasons. They left Corvallis.

JB: Well, you know, it's all in the visual. Jim Jensen left and went to Thailand, I think. MacVicars stayed in Corvallis. Roy Young had left, and came back to Corvallis. And we decided, well, our kids had grown up here. We had lived here from, basically from 1960 to 1995, 35 years. This was our home. And so when we knew we were retiring, Shirley started looking for a house, and we were very fortunate in finding one just outside of Corvallis, actually in Benton County, and there wasn't any question about staying here. Yeah.

CP: Was it an easy adjustment for you to make from President to President Emeritus?

JB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. In fact, there were a number of things that happened that kept me busy. After I had retired, announced my retirement, the opportunities began to come. One of the first was a call from Phil Keisling, who was the Secretary of State of Oregon at that time, and he wanted me to chair a committee to look at voting by mail. I said, "Phil, I'm going to say no to being chairman. I'll serve on a committee like that, but I'm not ready to take on another leadership role." And so I did serve on that committee.

Again, prior to the time I left, prior to the time I retired, I got a call from the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges [1:35:01], which was the association we were involved with, asking me if I would serve as the executive director of a thing called the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Land Grant Universities. And I said, "Well, let me think about it." And I called him back and I said, "I'll do it if I can do it from Corvallis." And that worked. And their headquarters are in Washington, D.C. So they hired a person, retired military, to serve as the staff manager for this particular commission, and with a computer and a telephone, and an occasional meeting in Washington, D.C., it was easy to do from Corvallis. So I did that, and I did that for five or six years, and it was, it was roughly a half-time job.

So a lot of opportunities like that came. I spent a lot of time travelling, became a million-miler for United Airlines, mostly shuttling back and forth to Washington, D.C. So the transition was not hard at all. It wasn't as if all of the sudden I'm outside and don't have anything else to do. Then there were a lot of committees on campus. The oceanographers, at that time I guess it was the College of Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, wanted an outside advisory board. They asked me if I would chair that. I said sure. The Oregon Department of Forestry wanted someone to chair a committee on small woodland forestry, and would I do that? Yeah, I did that. So a lot of things like that. And so it keeps you busy; it keeps you involved in academic matters, which is why we all got into this in the first place. So, not a problem at all.

CP: How about for leisure pursuits?

JB: Well at the time, at the time I quit, we could go to a movie frequently. It didn't have to be a mini-vacation. And we had Sundays off. You know, I could have a second cup of coffee at breakfast. I could do a crossword puzzle at breakfast. Little things. I didn't have to wear a necktie every day. All sorts of changes, but they're minor changes. I always had enough to do, and I think that possibly, problems that people may have in going into retirement is there isn't enough to do. There isn't enough that really occupies them. I always wanted to paint, and so I took a workshop, and hadn't had that much fun in years, you know. So, there were a lot of things like that. I didn't have a problem at all. I still don't.

CP: Were there further connections or communications with Paul Risser, or was he pretty much running his own shop?

JB: Pretty much ran his own shop. There were some changes, some differences. People would ask me to do things on behalf of the, for the university, and I'd say, "Well, let me check with Paul first. I don't want to get in his way. I don't want to be too visible." And I think that's an advantage of moving away, is that you're not visible. And so I tried not to be visible. Now to my benefit, I was provided with this office by Peter Copek, and the desk, a variety of equipment, dictionaries, a computer—all that kind of stuff was provided for me. There were things I didn't get that I subsequently received. I got a ticket for parking one night, and Lee Schroeder was my vice president for finance and administration,

and I said, "Lee, I got this ticket." But so did everybody else. Once they saw my car parked in the spot, they parked there too, and they all got tickets. Well, Lee gave me a little sticker. He says, just throw this on your dashboard. So, I got a free parking thing, which I still get.

Now, the one thing that bothered me a little bit, and it still does, is there is no policy for what the university will provide to the president emeritus. In a lot of places, there is. [1:39:57] At Oregon State, or in the state system, there is not. So you're pretty dependent on, let me call it the friendship of the people who are still on the staff, still on the faculty after you retire, to take care of you. Lee Schroeder's little sticker, for example, was an example of that. I can park anywhere on campus now that's legal—I wouldn't park in an illegal spot—and not worry about putting money in the meter and that sort of thing, because Lee Schroeder gave me that thing. The office that you see here, you don't see the dictionaries that I was provided with, and the files, and all that sort of thing, that Sue Bowman, who had been my secretary at the time I retired provided. Or George Keller, the vice president for finance, or for research, had provided. And you know, I think there should be that kind of a policy, and I think it should happen before the president announces his or her retirement. It should be standard. But it's not, and so you survive, you manage.

CP: What sorts of strengths did you see both Paul Risser and Ed Ray bringing to the position?

JB: Change. I think it's more obvious to me with Ed than it is with Paul, but both coming from positions of significant administrative experience. Paul was an existing president at the time, of a smaller institution. He had a science background, and so he fit right here. He was a grassland ecologist, and I used to kid him about that, you know. But Paul had his own style, and so on. The thing that Ed brought was he brought a lot of Ohio State. I always regarded Ohio State as an excellent major university. It's a land grant university; it's very big, and it's the only big one like that in Ohio. But anyway, Paul was provost at the Ohio State University, and so a lot of the things that he came in are what you would do at a big university.

And we see it here. We see it in the billion dollar campaign, which has just been achieved. For Ohio State, that would not be a problem. Gordon Gee would have run that thing off. One billion? No, no, no, we'll settle for three billion, or whatever. But anyway, that's something that you would do, experience at a big university, that you might not experience here. So I think Ed has brought a lot of good things to Oregon State from the Ohio State, from his experience as Provost at Ohio State. And of course, he developed contacts there. One of the first things they did after they came was they invited John Glenn, Senator from Ohio, former astronaut, to come out and be the commencement speaker, and so on. Well, that's a connection that you would have if you were at Ohio State.

So, yeah, I think it's great. I think that the thing that happens when you bring somebody in from the outside: there's a whole new set of ideas for your institution. They may be old hat from where they came from, but it broadens the spectrum of things that a university can do.

CP: We see it, too, in the aspiration to become a top-ten land grant university.

JB: This is some place where Ed and I may have different ideas about that. I don't think size is the determining factor. I think uniqueness is the determining factor. I could claim that in many areas, Oregon State is not a top-ten, it's a top-two, or a top-one. I don't think there's another land grant university in the country that compares with Oregon State in terms of oceanography, atmospheric science, earth science, and so on. So if that's the case, in that area, we're number one right now for land grant universities. And so I think that you begin to look at the character, the character of the institution.

Now, yeah, you get more attention if you're bigger. [1:44:58] You get more attention if you've got a winning football team, a winning basketball team, and so on and so forth. And all of those things contribute to that being in the top ten. So you'd have to ask Ed. You know, "Ed, define top ten. What's it really mean?" Well, to me it means that you have unique capabilities that people, if they need advice, you're the institution they'll come to. And I think in many ways we have that right now.

CP: What's your perspective, essentially, on the dissolution of the state higher education board, and the institution of independent governing boards for most of the remaining universities in the state?

JB: Well, I think there are advantages, but the concern I would have is that people look back at history, and I'm not sure that they have. In the 1920s, each institution had its own board. There was a curriculum coordinating committee that took care of making sure there wasn't too much duplication, and so on. 1929 brought the legislature, because they were being pounded by each institution competing with the others to get money from the legislature. They decided, we're going to bring in some consultants, and they did that, and the consultants I guess recommended a board. I don't remember the exact sequencing here, but there was no board, and then finally around 1930 and 1931, '32, created a board of higher education.

And the legislature may have done that first, create the board, and then bring in the consultants and say, "What do you do to put higher education in a mode that is compatible with the size of resources that are within the state?" And that led to differences in the institutions, and avoiding duplication of effort, and those kinds of things. And I would have some concern that people are aware of what the dangers of having separate boards are, as well as the advantages. I'm not sure we're there yet, and so you have to watch it and see how it works out. The pressure will be on the legislature and the governor's office as the central points where people are going to come together for competition. We'll see.

CP: In a different area, I'm interested in your perspective of how Corvallis has changed over the long time that you've lived here.

JB: Well, Corvallis has gotten a lot bigger. You know, when we first came, I think, other than a few supermarkets, there were no national chains here. And I remember when we went to Washington, DC in '66 and '67, coming back and noticing that there were a number of chains represented. I think McDonalds was one of the first to move in, and you begin to see, okay, now we have reached a point where the market is big enough for national chains to pay attention to us. And we've seen that. We've seen the big-box stores, the Home Depots, and places like that moving in. So I think that's perhaps the most profound change.

Corvallis is—I wouldn't say it's unique, but it's certainly different in many ways in terms of citizen involvement. It still operates pretty much as a small town, and that's good. But at the same time, it's getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and we see it right now with all of the growth of the university, the forecasting of the size of the university, and the building of apartments, low-income apartments, but don't see very many low-income houses. And that has been a problem for Corvallis, the fact that young families can't afford to live here. They don't want to live in an apartment; they want to live in a house, and there aren't that many. And so that means the population for the elementary schools is not growing to the same extent the overall population of the town is. And that puts pressure on the school systems.

So there are a lot of things like that. [1:49:58] The traffic flow in and out of Corvallis on a daily basis is a significant problem for the city. How do we handle a town which really has a residential population of 55,000 but a working population maybe of 70,000? How do you handle that? With all of those cars coming in, parking becomes a problem. There are all sorts of imbalances, as it were, that have happened to Corvallis, and will continue to happen until some fundamental changes are made. And I don't see it changing. I think that's going to be a continuing problem. But hopefully, Corvallis will keep its small-town character.

CP: Well, the last couple of questions I have for you, the first is your fondest memory of your presidency?

JB: Oh, people. People you associate with. You know, I don't think the people of Oregon appreciate what they have in their universities, in terms of quality of the people who are attracted to the state because of the university. They don't think of the staff, the faculty, students. I don't know what the out-of-state population of Oregon State University is right now. When I was president, we used to figure 75 percent from Oregon, 15 percent from the rest of the United States, and ten percent from the rest of the world. A lot of those people want to stay in Corvallis. They graduate, and look for a job in Corvallis. That enhances Corvallis. They want to stay in Oregon. It's to Oregon's advantage to hang onto some of these folks. I hope it can happen. But it means growth. It's a balancing thing.

But it's the people, it's the staff, it's the faculty. When you have tough times, all you want are good team players with you. And we have them. We have them. We've had them for such a long time. It isn't just on my watch, or MacVicar's, or Strand's, but it goes way, way back. It has constantly—the university has constantly increased in dimension the kinds of things it does, the quality of the things it does. It's been a good land grant university for a long, long time.

CP: My last question is what advice would you give to somebody who's becoming a college president for the first time?

JB: For the first time? It depends on whether they're coming from inside or whether they're coming from outside. If they're coming from inside, they have an advantage. They know the traditions, the principles, the people. They know where the problems are, and so on and so on. I had that advantage. If you're coming from outside, develop credibility before you try to do too much. And I've seen a number of examples where presidents came in, had a lot of great ideas, but they didn't give it time for them to develop their own personal credibility. And trying to push too hard on a faculty and a staff that don't know you can be a career shortener.

And the other thing is, the job of being president is different from any other job in the university. And again, the problem that I see with some is, if they come in from a provost position, they continue to be provost. I saw that problem at the University of Washington. I saw that problem, I think it was Yale or Harvard. You know, to Ed's credit, he didn't continue to be provost. He became president right away, and fortunately was set up with a structure which allowed that.

And I think that's—to look at what's your major achievement at Oregon State? Well, there were two. One was getting us through Ballot Measure 5, and the other was creating a system whereby you could do these kinds of things. I don't think when Mac was president we could do much more under the structure that we had. So we changed the structure, and hopefully that's of lasting value.

CP: Well, I want to thank you for your generosity throughout this process, your memories, and the time you shared with us.

JB: Well, it's been interesting. Yeah.

CP: Thanks, John. [1:55:02]