



Ralph Coleman, Jr. Oral History Interview, July 8, 2014

Title

“The Early Years of Beaver Baseball”

Date

July 8, 2014

Location

Coleman residence, Portland, Oregon.

Summary

Much of this interview is devoted to Ralph Coleman, Jr.'s memories of his father, Ralph Coleman. Coleman Jr. recounts his understanding of his father's upbringing in Canby and his attending Oregon Agricultural College, with particular focus paid to his pursuits as an athlete, including his standout performances in track and field. Likewise discussed are Coleman's association with the college's Osolito Club, his friendships with Spec Keene and Douglas McKay, and his acquaintance with Linus Pauling, with whom he lived for a period of time.

From there, the session focuses more intently on the early years of Beaver baseball, including Ralph Coleman's development as a coach, the baseball program's material circumstances during its infancy, travel to away games, and the baseball facility. Coleman Jr. also recounts his memories of the 1952 OSC team that appeared in the College World Series and of a handful of notable baseball players that came through the Oregon State program in its first decades. Personalities within the OSC Athletic Department comprise another topic of interest, including Coleman Jr.'s recollections of Slats Gill, Lon Stiner and Paul Valenti. The session's focus on Ralph Coleman concludes with discussion of his affinity for golf, the dedication of Coleman Field in 1981, and Coleman's association with the Portland Mavericks independent professional team.

The remainder of the interview is devoted to Ralph Coleman Jr.'s experiences as a native son of Corvallis and an OSC undergraduate. Attention is paid to memories of growing up in Corvallis during the 1930s and 1940s, the Depression, and World War II, including activities at Camp Adair just north of Corvallis. Coleman Jr. also recounts his memories of playing baseball and working mill jobs during the summertime. He notes his fraternity experience with Delta Upsilon and recalls a housemate's prank wherein a concrete symbol of the University of Oregon was blown up with dynamite. He likewise reflects on social life, his baseball career, his academic progression and campus culture during his undergraduate tenure. The interview concludes with a summary of Coleman Jr.'s continued association with OSU and his thoughts on the successes enjoyed by Oregon State baseball.

Interviewee

Ralph Coleman, Jr.

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: All right Ralph, if you would, please introduce yourself, your name and today's date, and our location.

Ralph Coleman: Okay. Ralph Coleman, also Ralph Coleman, Junior. Today's July 8th, and we're in my long-time residence in Eastmoreland neighborhood in Portland. And we're going to discuss OAC and Oregon State, and so on.

CP: Yes, we'll talk about your father and your association with the university, and Corvallis as well. So, let's start with your dad. Can you give us a little background on his upbringing, where he was born, and where he was raised?

RC: Okay, sure. He was born and raised in Canby, which is a suburb of Portland, south, and basically a farming community. And he had a small family. He had a younger brother, two-year younger brother. His father, P.L. or Philip Coleman, had come west from Ohio in probably just the turn of the century, and was an educator, and was superintendent of the schools there in Canby. That's where my dad grew up, went to Canby High School, and graduated in I think the very first graduating class, 1914, and went to Oregon State, then OAC.

CP: And it's not entirely clear what year he was born?

RC: Well [laughs] it's pretty clear it was 1896. There is an affidavit from his aunt who raised him, stating the birth date, and so on. But back in 1896, there were no birth certificates, so the records were really either kept in the family Bible, or written down someplace. But it turned out on the 1900 census, somehow, as having been born in 1895. So he could use that. If he wanted a year older he could use 1895 date; if he wanted to be a year younger he would use 1896, so. And his mother died when he was about four or five years old. And there were family that my grandfather had married into, so they took the boys on and raised them. And his primary caretaker was his Aunt Ella, in Canby.

CP: Okay. It sounds like athletics were important to him from an early age.

RC: Well, it would seem so. In that era I don't know if they played football or anything like that, but yes, they had a baseball team. There's a picture in these archives with him in his uniform and with his team, and he played baseball for the home team. Hurt his arm, or shoulder, or something and was not expected to ever play baseball again.

CP: So he made the decision to go to Oregon Agricultural College in 1914? Do you know why he made that decision?

RC: I don't. He never talked about it. It was probably closer than the U of O.

CP: Yeah, then the decision to go to college, period?

RC: The decision to go? I don't know. That's interesting. His brother never went, and his dad had been to college, but it wasn't a tradition in the family. None of his extended family in Canby, or any I can think of, ever went to college. So I don't know what made him do this, just because he was a smart, ambitious kid. People liked him, and he took off.

CP: He majored in Dairy Husbandry.

RC: [Laughs] Majored in Dairy Husbandry, yeah. Well, he'd grown up in the farm community and on a farm, so this was a natural thing for him. And there's pictures of him on campus, with his hat, and tie, coat, judging a cow, or something like that. So he came out with a degree in Dairy Husbandry in 1918, and was immediately drafted in the Army, in World War I, and went to Fort Lewis now, Camp Lewis at the time, Fort Lewis—infantry, basic meat grinder route. The war was climaxing in 1918, and big offensives were going on, so they needed a lot of people in that. And he was infantry, basic, applied for OCS, Officers Candidate School, and was accepted into that. And that prolonged his stay just long enough for the war to end, before they left. He was commissioned to Second Lieutenant, in a machine gun battalion or something like that, and managed to avoid the war, a major part.

CP: Did he ever talk about his academic experience as a student?

RC: [0:05:00] Well, I don't remember any great, long comments about that. It was primarily an agricultural school. It had a technical component to it, but agriculture was the main thrust. I don't know. That's a good question. I didn't hear that much about the coursework.

CP: Well, we normally associate him with baseball, but it sounds like perhaps his greater talent was in track and field.

RC: That's true, it was. He would talk about this. He went to Oregon State, he had never run at all, never competed, never been in a race, never did anything. And somehow got acquainted with some people on the track team, the cross country team, and they said, "Come on, run with us." And he ran them into the ground, basically. He just, he was a natural. And so they said, "Okay, come out in track." And had developed into quite a respectable distance man. His best time in the mile was about 4:20. I think my son has looked it up. The world's record at the time was about 4:15 or 4:10, or something like that, so this was a very respectable level of achievement.

And there would have been an Olympics in 1918 that he probably would have tried for the American team, and probably would have had a pretty good shot at it. Of course, the War caused that to be cancelled, so that was the end of that. But no, track was his major athletic activity at Oregon State. He was captain of the track team, competed in the long jump, and all of that sort of thing. So that, yeah, that was his first—that was his first athletic activity.

CP: Did he ever express any regret that he couldn't have tried to be on the Olympic team?

RC: Well, maybe in passing. But you know, that's, that's the way it goes. We all have coulda, shoulda, woulda's, you know?

CP: He only played baseball for one year at Oregon, OAC.

RC: Yes, I think that's correct. He was playing—he told me he was playing intramural baseball, not the varsity, intramural, and his arm felt good. His injured shoulder apparently had healed up in the intermediate years, and coach saw him play, or heard about him and said, you know, "Come on out and pitch." So he pitched some games for them his senior year, and was pretty effective. I don't think they played more than twenty games in regular season. And then later on, he was good enough to play professionally for three or four summers after he got out of college, for the Portland Beavers, which at the time was a triple-A club. He had good success, good enough to be looked at by the majors.

At that time, a team like Portland would own the players outright, and the major leagues would buy the players from the teams they wanted. If they wanted them, they would buy them from the team. That's how the team would make money, was selling their players to the majors. So he was looked at by Detroit, I think, and that would have meant leaving Oregon State. He was on the staff by that time. I think he turned away from that.

CP: A more secure position at OSU than in professional baseball, at the time?

RC: What's that?

CP: The more secure position up here at the college?

RC: More secure position, yeah. Baseball in those days paid nothing. Careers were short; there were no pensions, no nothing. You just played for a while, and then you were gone, that was it. So he figured he was pretty well positioned where he was, and stayed on. He had gotten married by that time, too, and it may have been part of it.

CP: Tell me about the Osolito Club.

RC: [Laughs] I don't know very much about it, just heard the name. But I think that was a—as close as I can think, it might have been kind of a eating club. They lived there. What do they call them? Co-ops. It might have been a co-op, and sort of a semi-fraternity. And that morphed into the Gamma Tau Beta while, I think, he was still an undergraduate while that came about. Now the Gamma Tau Beta eventually, of course, became Delta Upsilon in 1922. And that was a big part of his association at Oregon State.

CP: Hm. And then through his living situation, he encountered a few pretty extraordinary people that he mentioned. His best friends were Spec Keene and Douglas McKay?

RC: Well, they were close, mm-hm. And Spec was from Salem, and was a good athlete. He was student body president and they became good friends. He was the best man at my dad's wedding [0:10:00], and their family and our family were lifelong friends. We saw a lot of each other. Spec was always around. He became Athletic Director, as you know, at Oregon State. Very close ties. In fact, his daughter lives in Corvallis. She would be a good person to contact sometime, if she would be willing to provide information for you. Doug McKay, I think he might have been a little older than my dad, maybe a year or so. Of course, he went on to become the Governor and Secretary of the Interior under Eisenhower.

CP: So, any other recollections of Spec Keene and Doug McKay? Or stories about your father's association with them?

RC: Well, Spec was just a marvelous person, and loved fishing and hunting, and I mean, was just an all-around good administrator and good guy. And they did a lot of fishing and hunting together. Every summer for a number of years we would all go to Neskowin. Are you familiar with Neskowin? It doesn't look any different today than it did then, for a couple of weeks. And eight or ten families from Oregon State, and from Salem and various places, and that was just our summer outing, was in Neskowin. Some of the houses we stayed in in the mid-thirties are still there. They look just like they did back then. So there was a lot of interaction, a lot of closeness in the time. Maybe people still do that. I don't know.

CP: How did Ralph meet his wife?

RC: I don't know, to tell you the truth. She was a student at Oregon State, a Tri-Delt. She had grown up in Coleburg and went to the University of Oregon for a while, and then transferred to Oregon State. I'm not sure why. She was about three years younger than my dad, and was a very comely young woman. I'll show you some pictures of her after a while as well. And so, I don't know the details. They got married in their, in her parents' house in Eugene, I think it was. Later on, they lived very—of course, they lived with us in Corvallis in the later part of their lives, in a very nice extended family situation.

CP: Did he talk any more about other social opportunities, or more about fraternity life during his school years?

RC: Well, he'd tell the usual hazing stories, and things like that. It didn't sound that much different from my own experience, [laughs] you know, 40 years later. But I think Oregon State was a fun place, and I don't think they took life all that seriously at OAC in those years. It was an Ag school primarily, with a big military component. Engineering was certainly in the picture, but I think it was just mostly local people, local kids went there.

CP: Did he mention his ROTC experience?

RC: Yeah. He thought that was great. He loved ROTC. He was good at it, he had kind of a command presence, and it just resonated with his mentality, I guess. And the ROTC I think was what got him into OCS, you know. It may have saved his buns up there at Fort Lewis, Camp Lewis, whatever it was.

CP: Well, we mentioned that the World War I experience kind of came and went. In 1919, he returned to Corvallis?

RC: Right. Got out of the military that fall. Let's see, the war ended in November, I think he got out probably in the, maybe later on in the year. Anyway, he went to—moved back to Corvallis, and was hired by the Corvallis schools in their intramural, their PE, athletic aspect of it, head coaching, and things like that, with no background whatever in education. And I think he did that for a year, then was hired, put on the staff at Oregon State, in the Physical Education Department, and kind of tasked with developing intramural programs, and expanding that into those facilities and activities available for the whole student body. He did that pretty much the rest of his career. He was head of Men's Intramurals, Men's Physical Education, so he was in the PE Department in 1919, and was there until 1966. So he found a home.

CP: Yeah. [0:14:59] Intramurals are pretty extensive these days at OSU and—

RC: What's that?

CP: Intramurals are very extensive at OSU these days, and apparently we have Ralph Coleman to thank for making that happen.

RC: Well, he got them started. He didn't finish it, but that was what he—that was his original—in fact, here's a little aside for you. You know where the tennis courts are? It would be west of—it would be just north of the football facilities and all of that? That was the original Coleman Field.

CP: Really?

RC: Yeah. It was the intramural field.

CP: [Laughs]

RC: I don't know if it was ever formally, you know, it was just called that. And then when he went into coaching and then he was there forever, then that became Coleman Field, so.

CP: Huh. That's interesting.

RC: A little aside there. That was kind of fun.

CP: He lived at the Gamma Tau Beta house during this time?

RC: Yes, I know little about that. But like I say, during the while, when he came back after the War, he kind of reassociated with the fraternity, in fact lived there, and he didn't—wasn't in college or anything, but he just moved in. And that's when they assigned him this promising but kind of socially [laughs] awkward freshman, Linus Pauling. And my dad wasn't in school, but he was supposed to look out for Linus, and socialize him and, you know, get him going in school. And that's when he reported to the house that he didn't think this guy was going to make it at Oregon State! [Laughs] He never studies; all he does is read pulp westerns, and sleeps a lot.

So he [laughs] totally missed the mark on that one. Linus was so easy for Pauling that, you know, he didn't have to exert himself at all. As you know, he was coaching, or teaching, undergraduate chemistry, I think, by the time he was a sophomore or a junior. And he was a good guy, I guess, a popular guy, and one of the guys. And you don't think of two-time Nobel Prize winners as one of the guys, normally, but I think he always cherished that relationship, because he was shy and sort of a misfit. When you're that smart, and with that level of achievement, you do, I think, find yourself on the outside. So to whatever extent it's true, I think the Gamma Tau Betas socialized him. And would you like me to expand on that a little bit?

CP: Yeah, absolutely.

RC: Okay. I met Linus a few times. We weren't close friends or anything like that, but he never forgot Oregon State. And the Gamma Tau Betas became Delta Upsilon in 1922, a national fraternity. And Linus Pauling, and my dad, and a number of other people were charter members. And there's a picture somewhere of this group, you know. And in 1966, it would have been—that would have been—? No, it was later than that. Well, it's in my documentation there somewhere. They had a reunion, or an anniversary. It might have been the 50th or maybe the 60th, I don't know, anniversary of the founding of the fraternity.

And all of the alums of the Portland area and so on were there, and they rounded up as many of the charter members as they could find. There were about eight or ten of them, something like that. Linus was one, and my dad was one, and each one of them who took their turn at the mike and told stories about their experiences at Oregon State. Linus's was particularly funny, because when they were applying to the national fraternity, they had to list the achievements and the attributes of all the potential members. And they wanted to have some athletic experiences for everybody, played this, or did that. Well, Linus had no athletic background whatever, so my dad was assigned the chore of teaching him to run hurdles, so they could claim he was a track man. [Laughs]

And Linus described this in a very funny way, he and my dad bounding around the track at Corvallis [0:20:00], jumping over hurdles, so he could claim to be a hurdler. So he had a—Linus had a good sense of humor, and he told some

interesting stories. He talked for about 45 minutes, just unscripted, and I'd give anything to have had a recording of that, because he talked about his experiences with passports and visas. He was on his way to Stockholm to get one of his Nobel Prizes, and they landed in Oslo. And nobody met him; nobody from the embassy came to greet the plane, or anything. He was not in good repute at the time, and so he went on the Stockholm on his own. Then he was also given the—what was the prize he got, the award he got from Russia?

CP: The Lenin Peace Prize.

RC: Lenin Peace Prize, okay. And so he had been awarded the Lenin Peace Prize and was requested to go to Russia to receive it. He couldn't get a visa. [Laughs] Just couldn't get permission from Russia to enter Russia. Here he is going to get the Lenin Peace Prize, and they wouldn't let him into the country. So he contacted one of his science colleagues in Russia, and said, "What the hell is going on here? How come I can't come? They won't let me come." So the guy said, "I'll look into it." And he got back to him and he said, "Well, they've got two Linus Pauling files. One is Linus Pauling, peace-loving advocate of world peace, and so on. The other one is Linus Pauling, capitalist running dog." [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

RC: And so they wouldn't—somehow the application got in the capitalist running dog file, so they wouldn't grant it. They got it straightened out, but I thought that was kind of a typical Cold War snafu. [Laughs] They weren't on the same page any more than the rest of us were. So anyway, he got there and got the Lenin Prize. And of course, this was a controversial event. When was that, in the sixties?

CP: Yeah, sixties, early seventies, maybe.

RC: Yeah, Cold War, and that didn't go down well. And of course, he was being criticized for his nuclear test ban proposals, and atmospheric testing, and so on. So he was controversial enough as it was. And I was a student at the U of O as a grad student later, and he came through on some kind of a speaking thing, and it was controversial. This would have been in the sixties, late fifties, or yeah, late fifties.

And in fact he was—a little aside story that's kind of interesting. In my fraternity there was a picture of Linus hanging in the den, with other dignitaries, and this would have been in the early '50s, and his picture was taken down by some of the members and hidden away somewhere. It's disappeared because of his attack from the right. And I don't think it fazed Linus at all. I think he just plowed on through. I don't know. So he knew what he wanted to do, he did, just to his everlasting credit.

CP: And he and your dad maintained a connection over the years?

RC: Pardon?

CP: He and your dad maintained a connection?

RC: A loose, loose connection. I don't think it was ever—there was a history there in the early days, which is, you don't, you remember those things. But I don't think there was much correspondence or much contact, because he was operating in an entirely different level.

CP: Yeah. Well, back to your dad in the early days in Corvallis. He coached freshman track for four years, too.

RC: I think that's right. I don't have all of that in front of me, some of that information I gave you. Yeah, I think that was probably his first coaching job, was track.

CP: Did he maintain an interest in track over the years? He was obviously—

RC: Yes, he did, yeah. He loved—he loved helping with track meets and helping put them on, high school track meets. So that was really his first athletic love, I think.

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: He's also an outstanding golfer.

CP: Mm, yeah. Well, he became the head baseball coach there in the 1920s, but it was a different situation back then than it is now.

RC: How do you mean?

CP: Well, it was essentially a volunteer job, for one.

RC: Oh, right, right, right. I'm not sure it was a paid job. I think he often said that it was not. He was paid to be an administrator, a teacher, in the Physical Education Department; he had an academic appointment there. So baseball was just sort of an aside. It wasn't a very high powered program. [0:25:00] There's photos in this thing that show the baseball field in 1920. There isn't even a backstop! Waldo Hall is there, and you see the Ag Building, and the heating plant with the big chimney and all of that, but nothing else is around there. So it was a very low-key operation.

And he didn't want to be paid for it, largely because he said that then there would be an expectation. He didn't want that. He wanted to be able to do this as a hobby, as a fun thing. And it was, and it got him a lot of notoriety; it made him a lot of friends. It was a lot of fun for him. But he didn't want the—they eventually did start paying him a couple of years later, but it was not a big amount of money. That wasn't his job; that wasn't how he made his living. And I always thought that was kind of shrewd, you know. Coaches get fired because they don't perform, and he didn't want that. If you can find somebody for the price you're getting me for, go for it, you know. [Laughs]

But he didn't coach nonstop from 1922 on. There were several periods there when he had other administrative duties in the thirties. Slats Gill coached, I think, for about six years.

CP: Yeah, that was fascinating, to discover Slats Gill was also a baseball coach.

RC: Yeah, yeah. But it was a very low-key sport. Like I say, twenty games, maybe, if they were lucky. And they'd just play local teams.

CP: Was there any recruiting at all?

RC: Boy, I don't know. Well, my dad recruited. He would recruit locally, scout around high school kids in the summer and that sort of thing, so. Nothing like—nothing like today. It's light years removed from, you know [unclear]—

CP: Were there any scholarships to offer back there?

RC: I think by the time I got there in the fifties, I think there were some. There were some scholarships. They'd have a handful and they would split them up into little pieces. Mostly they were—you had to work for them in those days. If you were getting a stipend, a ride, they called it here, but you had to put in a certain amount of hours cutting grass, or doing something, and we had to do that.

CP: Well, tell me about how his coaching career evolved over time. I mean, baseball became more formal, and he became more established. The program became more established.

RC: Well, it was just an evolution. I don't know if they—there were long-time rivalries. There were some great pictures of—there's a picture in there of Buck Bayley kicking the bucket, and water's spraying out. And so, at Oregon there were lots of good rivalries there. And people liked the game. But it just developed, and got—the Northern Division was there, and then eventually in the fifties, late forties, they formed a—the Southern Division, the California schools, were always there, but we didn't play them. And then in that era they started to play postseason games, and the College World Series came along in 1946 or '47, something like that. George W. Bush was captain of the first Harvard team. I think they won the College World Series. He was the first baseman.

CP: George H.W. Bush, the first Bush?

RC: HW, yeah, not W. HW, right, right. So college baseball got a big shot in the arm when that national competition started. And they had good years and bad, but it was a lot of fun.

CP: At any point did he feel like, that baseball coach was his job, and the other job was less of his job?

RC: I don't think so. You always pay attention to where your—who signs the check. But baseball was what got him his reputation, and it was a social thing. His players loved him, and everybody knew who he was, and he was a very personable guy. And people responded to him and liked him, so that makes life easy.

CP: Yeah. Tell me more about his personality. He was an intense competitor, you said?

RC: Oh, yes, yes, yes. On the bench he was just in constant motion, throwing grass in the air, and stomping up and down, and attacking the umpires, challenging calls. You don't see that anymore at all, but all the coaches used to do it back in the forties and fifties and sixties. But after the game was over, no problem; everything was fine. I think that was—I always thought that was kind of a negative. I mean, your coach is just constantly spinning out of control, practically [0:30:00], and you're supposed to remain calm. [Laughs] No one had control. But his intensity was infectious, no question about it. You wanted to win, too.

CP: Well, obviously, Corvallis is in a rainy place, and baseball is played in the spring when it's often rainy and wet. Do you remember, did he have a facilities component to his job too?

RC: I'm sorry, what? A facilities—?

CP: Taking care of the field. I mean, obviously it was—

RC: Well, yeah. The players did most of that, because they were on a scholarship, or ride, and then we did a lot of that. So you can imagine what kind of shape that baseball field was in. We used the armory for our spring workouts and things. The season didn't start; we didn't play any games until the start of spring quarter. Now, they play like 60 or 70 games a year now?

CP: Yeah.

RC: We were lucky if we played 25 or 30. That was fine with me. It was good to get the season over. I wanted to do other things.

CP: What was travel like back then?

RC: Oh, buses, cars. My senior year, I guess it was, we took our first out-of-state trip. Spring break, it was a week in there, so my dad had scheduled us several games in California. So we got in these cars and took off for California, and played Stanford, Cal, and Sacramento, and Fresno. And we didn't have any budget at all. This was the first out-of-state trip, except for the conference play, the first. They do this routinely, now; they go all over the country and play in tournaments. This was an interesting experience.

I think it would have been 1953 probably, and we'd pull into some town like, oh, Berkeley, and play Cal. And my dad would say, "Okay, the game, be at the field tomorrow at noon." The game was at 2:30 or something. "Be there at noon. See you." We were on our own. [Laughs] We didn't have a hotel; we didn't have anything. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

RC: I think we had some meal money. I think he might have given us some meal money. We were supposed to fend for ourselves. We did by staying at fraternities. You'd get on the phone and call the D-U house, and say, "I'm down here with the Oregon State baseball team. Can we come and camp there for a couple of days?" "Oh, sure." So the guys that weren't in fraternities, we'd just bring them along, and pretend like they were. [Laughs] So that's how we got by. In Fresno, we finally stayed in a hotel, because I think he wanted to know where everybody was when it came time to go home. But other than that, we were just freelancing it. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs] That's funny.

RC: Compare that to today. They have everything but their private jet.

CP: How did the Coleman Field itself—it wasn't called Coleman Field—how did it change over time?

RC: Well, I think it just fell into the usage, you know, before it was dedicated, formally dedicated, yeah.

CP: Did he have to raise some funds, do you recall, to have improvements made?

RC: I don't recall anything like that. I think it was just based on what the Athletic Department would provide.

CP: Eventually they put a backstop up.

RC: They put a backstop up, yeah. We had seats, bleachers, and all that kind of thing, but it was pretty primitive. There was no fence out in the outfield.

CP: Oh, really?

RC: No, and the ground was hard, and if the ball got past the outfielders, it was a home run. But you couldn't hit one out of the park. They were all inside.

CP: Inside-the-park home run?

RC: Yeah, so that made an interesting addition to the challenges. [Laughs] So you wanted fast outfielders.

CP: Yeah. You mentioned that training was pretty casual.

RC: Yeah, yeah, there really wasn't any. We'd start, we'd work out in the armory, and my dad stressed running, especially for pitchers, because that was good for them. But no, half the team probably smoked, including my dad, and that was just—they would take smoke breaks during the game, under the stands, on the buses, and things like that. So [laughs] a little more casual.

CP: Yeah. And this was both teams would join for the smoke break, right?

RC: Well, yeah, I guess. I hadn't thought of that, but we were on the first base side in those days. Now they're on the third base side. [0:35:00] And down at the south end of the field, they had those old wooden football stands that went around there? I don't know if you made any mention of that.

CP: Bell Field, yeah.

RC: Yeah, Bell Field. We'd go down under there, in the stands, to be out of sight.

CP: Was this scheduled before the game, or was there some signal went out that it was time for a smoke break?

RC: [Laughs] Just go in between innings, you know.

CP: Well, his most successful team was probably 1952, the team that won the PCC Championship, NCAA Western Regional, and went to the College World Series in Omaha. You were a member of the squad, anyway.

RC: Right, I was a member of the squad. Actually, I was JV'ing it that year, and didn't play. I played against the varsity with them in practice, in practice and things like that. But no, I didn't actually play with the team. And the numbers that they took back to Omaha I think were restricted, so again, it was a fairly small squad of players that played a large part of the season that didn't come out. They got hammered. They lost the first two games. It was hot, and so on. But they got there; that was the main thing. They didn't make it back for another, what, 30 years, or 35 years, or something like that.

CP: Well, do you remember much about that season? I mean, it sounds like it was sort of a magical season.

RC: Well, things came together, and had some really good athletes. In those days, it was very common for guys to play more than one sport, and let me see, our catcher was a starting end in the football team. The first baseman was a starting forward. The second baseman was a starting guard, basketball team. Third baseman was a linebacker, football linebacker. Left fielder was another tight end. So I think if you took away the pitchers, there were three starters on that team that didn't start for some other team. So without those guys, we'd be helpless. So yeah, you could play, and they loved it. They loved baseball because it got them out of spring football and that sort of thing, so they all wanted to play baseball. It was a fun sport.

CP: What do you remember hearing about the Omaha trip? Obviously, it didn't go well on the field.

RC: I think they went by train, a long train. It was very hot while they were there. Omaha in that time of year it could get pretty bad. And I don't think their accommodations were very good. I think it was only about maybe the fifth or sixth year of the College World Series, so I don't think they had really gotten their rhythm down yet. And I remember them talking about the heat, they couldn't sleep. They had these heavy wool uniforms, just one uniform. You wanted something warm if you played out here, but back there it just was totally inappropriate. I think that hurt them.

CP: Do you remember it being a big deal that they had made the World Series, on campus?

RC: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we played USC, Southern Cal. They were the perennial champions. We played them in Corvallis. We played them in Los Angeles the year before, and they had beaten us down there. We got them again in Corvallis in '52, and I think they had 5,000 people there. They put stands up in, dragged them in from all over, and we had a huge crowd. It was a big deal.

CP: Yeah, that must have been something else.

RC: It was. It was great fun.

CP: A couple of notable early players that I came across, maybe you can comment on. Do you know much about Wes Schulmerick?

RC: Yeah, I knew Wes. He lived over in the coast, I think over on the Nestucca. He was a fishing guide, and an outdoor type of guy. And he'd come to all of the games, big, burly, boisterous guy, and was also a great football player. I don't know if he played in the pros or not, but he did play pro baseball, he did play major league baseball.

CP: For the Phillies, yeah.

RC: Mm-hm.

CP: Another name I came across was Ed Coleman.

RC: Ed Coleman, right, yeah. [Laughs] His half-brother. He was several years younger, and played for Oregon State, and had a really good career in the majors. He played for about five or six years, and then he played for the Portland Beavers after that. He had a good career. He was in the record books for a while. He was a great pinch-hitter, held the American League pinch-hit season, single-season pinch-hit record for about 30 years or something [0:40:01], so he had good success.

CP: Athletic family.

RC: Yeah, yeah.

CP: Did your dad have a particular style as a coach, any sort of philosophy of baseball? I mean, Pat Casey is famous for a small ball approach. Was there anything like that with him?

RC: Just, beat the other guys up. That '52 team was a good example, because the guys were huge. You know, the starting forward was 6'5" and football players were 6'3". 6'4". For the days, these guys were huge. They had some big pitchers and everything, physically. And we would make sure that when we'd take batting practice before the game, that was always a

pre-game ritual, is each team would take batting practice, and we'd watch the other team hit. And we'd make sure that the bigger the guys were, the earlier they got out, hit, so we'd drop these great big guys out. [Laughs] And they'd be hitting the ball all over the place. It was intimidating. So yeah, he liked that kind of a team. So we didn't play much small ball. I think the idea was just to overpower them.

CP: Yeah. Who were some of your dad's best friends in Corvallis?

RC: Well—

CP: He was there for a very long time, and as you said, he was a popular guy. Who did he—?

RC: Well, he belonged to all of the clubs. He belonged to the Elks Club and the Rotary Club, and if there was a club, he would join it. And most of the close friends we had, there were a lot of them from the department, the Langtons, the Dicksons, other coaches, Slats Gill, Lonnie Stiner. They were all close friends, the coaches. And he had close friends just among the townspeople. He was a small-town boy, and liked small-town associations.

CP: What was your impression of Slats Gill?

RC: Terrific guy; I liked Slats a lot. I used to caddy for him, and he used to give me two bucks. I think that was—[laughs] So, and he had two kids who were a little younger than me, but of course, I knew them and everything. Slats was a really good guy. He just found his niche and stayed in it, and just did great. They'd be standard participants in the annual beach trips, and the parties, the hunting and the fishing. You know, they did all of this stuff. All of the coaches and people did all of these things together.

No, Slats was really a good guy. I'm trying to think. There was something I was going to say about him, but I can't remember what it was. Oh, maybe a little anecdote you may not know. UCLA was looking for a basketball coach, and they ended up hiring John Wooden. But Slats turned it down. [Laughs]

CP: Hm.

RC: His teams had beaten them, UCLA, two years in a row for the championship, and so he decided to stay in Corvallis. I don't think they could offer him any kind of money, but he just decided to stay on. He grew up in Salem, so he was, you know, very much a local boy. So Wooden went on to become a legend, and but Slats preferred the smaller arena.

CP: How about Lon Stiner? Did you know him at all?

RC: Oh, yeah, yeah. Lonnie was just a really nice guy. He was lots of fun, and we'd go hunting and fishing, my dad and Lonnie. He liked—when you're a kid, you know when there's people, grownups, that like you, and others that are just kind of going through the motions. And Lonnie really liked people, liked kids; just a terrific guy.

CP: Well, it sounds like the outdoors were important to this group of men. Were there other hangouts that they frequented, besides the lodges?

RC: Well, Elks Club, primarily. That was the place where everybody would gather. It was right in the center of town at the time. I don't know if the building is still there, but it was right on 3rd Street, or 4th Street, so this was just a focus for all social activities in town. They had the Moose and others, but the Elks Club was the one that most people frequented.

CP: My sense of the Athletic Department during your dad's time is of a pretty tight-knit group. Is that accurate, do you think?

RC: Yeah, I think so, yeah. Paul Valenti, of course, he came in in the late thirties, played basketball in the Navy, and then came back and never left. [0:45:00] He's still there, I think, isn't he?

CP: Yeah.

RC: Isn't Paul still alive, still around?

CP: Mm-hm. Yeah. He was the JV baseball coach, was he not?

RC: He was. He was the freshman—he was the only assistant my dad had, and I don't think he got paid, either. But he was the tennis coach, assistant basketball coach, and assistant baseball coach.

CP: So he was your coach as a JV?

RC: Right, right.

CP: What was he like as a coach?

RC: Good guy. Baseball hadn't been his game, but it didn't matter; he could manage it. I remember we played a game against the—as a freshman, they had freshman teams in those days. You'd only play three years on the varsity, so you played your first year as a freshman. We went over and played the penitentiary [laughs], in Salem. They played a home—the saying was that they played a strictly home schedule.

CP: [Laughs]

RC: So we were in there, and it was fun. They'd let us in. I'd never been in the penitentiary, and the field was out in the corner. It was this huge wall. And the umpire was—I was pitching the game, actually, and the umpire a convict, and so on. And they were just on each other totally. They didn't bother us, but they were just razzing each other, and everybody had a nickname [laughs], and so it was a fun experience.

CP: Wow.

RC: I don't know if the baseball—I don't know if—the Prison Greys. I don't know if they still have the baseball team or not.

CP: Your dad was also an official. He officiated football and basketball.

RC: Yes. Yeah, and that was his—that was a hobby, and he made money at it, and yeah, had quite a good reputation. He was a football official at several Rose Bowls, and yes, that's what he—he finally got out of that in the late thirties. I think it was too physically demanding, you know, the football and the basketball. No, he did a lot of them, and then he was kind of a commissioner for referees for a while, for the conference. He would evaluate officials, and rate them, and this sort of thing, sort of their overseer.

CP: Hm. Well, he retired in 1966, and you mentioned he was a good golfer. He seems to have turned his attention to golf at that point.

RC: Well, he always played golf. I take that back. I don't know when he started playing golf, but he helped lay out the Corvallis Country Club.

CP: Oh, really?

RC: And was really good, and coached, or taught golf. He never coached golf, but he taught golf for years in the Physical Education Department at Oregon State, and played a lot, and was good. Anything like that came easy to him. You know, when you're athletic it tends to generalize into all areas. Do you play golf?

CP: A little bit, yeah.

RC: Do you know what a shank is?

CP: Yeah.

RC: Hm?

CP: Yeah.

RC: Well, he developed the shanks, a terminal case of the shanks. And he didn't play for about fifteen years; just walked away from the game totally. He was a regular golfer, a couple of times a week kind of thing. And took lessons, and tried everything, and just couldn't get over it. And then when we retired—he had kind of gotten back into golf a little bit. When he retired they left Corvallis, my mother and—sold their house and moved to Woodburn Senior Estates. And he was hired there as the golf—to take over the golf program. So yeah, that was his retirement venue.

CP: Hm.

RC: Yeah, golf was important to him. He liked that game. But again, he was so competitive that it kind of—you know, you can't be overly—you can't try too hard in golf. It's a game you have to play below your maximum effort.

CP: Yeah.

RC: So I think that that was a kind of a—made it harder.

CP: Do you know anything more about the laying-out of the country club? I'm interested in that story.

RC: Only that they planted all of those—they planted fir trees, laid out the course. I don't know who it was. But then the members volunteered, and they planted all of those fir trees in the rough. And it was only nine holes to begin with, and very hilly, and clay, and it was just like concrete to play it. So, no, that was laid out in the, probably the mid-twenties.

CP: Huh. So he was a charter member, then?

RC: I think he probably was. Yeah, probably pretty close.

CP: Well, Coleman Field was dedicated as such in April 1981. I'm sure that meant something to him. Do you have memories of that particular moment, that event? [0:50:02]

RC: Yeah, my older son and I went down, and were there. There's pictures and documentation in the material that's there. And Robert MacVicar was the president, and Jack Riley was the coach, and it was during—I think it was secondary to a game. I can't remember exactly; I think it was. Very nice event. My dad gave a speech. He was a very good presenter, and could tell jokes. I don't think there's any record of what he said at that event, but there's some other, in the information, there's some—he would write it out ahead of time, so there's some things in there that he said, but. He was good, good on his feet.

CP: Do you think it meant a lot to him, that the field had been named after him officially?

RC: Oh, I think so, yeah. Who wouldn't?

CP: Yeah.

RC: No, that was a source of pride, I'm sure. Nice honor for him.

CP: And after that it sounds like he got another job in baseball, with the Portland Mavericks. Is that correct?

RC: [Laughs] Oh, yeah! Are familiar with the history of the Portland Mavericks?

CP: No.

RC: Okay. Well, Bing Russell, who is an actor, western actor, the Portland Beaver franchise had been kind of left vacant, and he picked this up for practically nothing. I think it was partly to provide a venue for Kurt, his son Kurt Russell, to play.

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: Who was quite an active baseball player. And the Mavericks were an independently owned team. They weren't owned by any other major league team, or anything like that. And these were just free agents, some pro, some amateurs,

and Bing Russell hired somebody to manage the team, and he rounded these players up. And they played in the—it wasn't Triple-A, it was probably Double-A level, down at Multnomah Stadium. And I think there's a movie being made about them now.

CP: Hm.

RC: There have been books written, and things like that. And they were a very flamboyant bunch. And when, at one point, Frank Peters—does that name mean anything to you? Okay, he was an Oregon State baseball player, basketball player; played on that Final Four basketball team, and had played professional baseball. He was hired as the manager. And he hired my dad to be his third base coach, [laughs] because he played for my dad. There's a Mavericks hat around the house somewhere. So he spent two or three seasons, you know, helping manage the Portland Mavericks.

CP: Huh. That was later on, pretty late in his life?

RC: Right, yeah.

CP: Okay, so let's turn the attention to you, now. You were born and raised in Corvallis, and I am interested in knowing the Corvallis that you knew growing up as a boy.

RC: Small town, all the way. Everything just revolved around the campus. Summer time, everything just quit. Everybody just tended their yards, and laid around, and they didn't have much in the way of summer school. Although they did have a summer school, and one of my dad's assignments was to work with the summer students in setting up field trips. They'd go to Bonneville Dam, and Timberline Lodge, Multnomah Coast. And he'd organize these. He just loved this kind of thing, you know.

But it was a nice place to be in the summer. Very little was going on and the Corvallis calendar was Oregon State's calendar. You know, New Year's Day was when school started in the fall. [Laughs] It wasn't in January. Because everything just focused on the activities on campus, and most everybody, worked for college, directly or indirectly. There wasn't any excuse for Corvallis even being there if it hadn't been for Oregon State, so. And it was a very nice place to grow up. Campus was our playground, the kids. We just knew how to get into every building, and everything you needed to get into, and our parents didn't know what we were doing. I don't think they wanted to know what we were doing. So it was a—it was a playground.

CP: As you got a little bit older, into, say, high school age, where were the places that the kids congregated?

RC: You mean in Corvallis?

CP: Yeah.

RC: Well, there were some drive-ins. [0:54:59] And there was a drive-in theatre in between Albany and Corvallis that was a fun place to be. There were places downtown, restaurants. I don't remember us having any particular—it was kind of like *American Graffiti*. Did you ever see?

CP: Yeah.

RC: Remember *American Graffiti*?

CP: Yeah.

RC: And it was a lot like, Corvallis was a lot like the *American Graffiti* ambiance. Very nice place to grow up, and everybody kind of had their activities. Everybody gardened. The mothers all collected antiques, played bridge, and most of the mothers didn't work, faculty wives. There weren't jobs, first of all. But I don't think it was considered quite socially acceptable for mothers to be working. It was kind of an admission that you needed the money. Do you know what I mean?

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: So, there everybody had lots of time, and there wasn't much—there weren't very many organized activities. We kids, we just did what we wanted to do, and they would say, "Well, be home for dinner," and that was it. So.

CP: What sort of an impact do you remember the Depression having on the town? It sounds like the faculty were fairly insulated from the economic impact, but.

RC: Well, that was my impression. I wasn't even hardly aware of the Depression. It was just the way things were. I was born in 1931, and of course that was right when it was in its worst. And it didn't affect the university college that much. I don't think they had much in the way of cutbacks. I think, though I couldn't document it, that there were times when they did not get paid at all by the state. They were given IOUs, and I think they were honored later on. But it got pretty thin. And of course, there were migrants in Corvallis, and they would show up at our back door and want food, and that sort of thing, so. It was there. And of course, World War II came along and ended that in a hurry.

CP: Well, that's my next question, is, how did the town respond to World War II? What was it like during that period of time?

RC: Well, of course, there were no men around. They had a ASTP program around. Does that mean anything to you? It was an Army-sponsored program for soldiers to go to college, then I think they became officers at the end of it. So there's an ASTP program, but these are soldiers, essentially, assigned to that role. And as far as the men went on campus, that was about it. The women lived in the fraternity houses, and the school kept going, but you know, the war was having a big impact on it.

CP: Was Adair in the midst of its growth at that point?

RC: Yes it was. Camp Adair had a huge impact on Corvallis and Albany. And it was a basic—you know about Camp Adair. It was for basic infantry, infantry basic. I think they put four divisions, infantry divisions, through there in the three or four years that it was running, and that's a lot of soldiers. And we had one living in our house; we always had one living in our house with us. No, I take that back, excuse me. We didn't have a soldier living there, we had his wife.

CP: Oh.

RC: Living there in our spare bedroom. And this was pretty typical. The wives would follow the soldiers out to be around during their basic training. And these guys would get released from Camp Adair for the weekend or something, and we'd hear them clomp up the stairs at night, [laughs] with their GI boots, and down the next morning, so. That was pretty standard, too. The city was supporting that effort.

My mother was a Grey Lady. That's kind of a nurses' auxiliary volunteer. They had a hospital at Camp Adair, and they had uniforms. They weren't in the military or anything, but they would write letters for soldiers, and keep them company in the hospital, and all of this. So she did that during the whole war, just a volunteer.

CP: Were you able to go out to Adair at all, or was it off-limits?

RC: I don't remember going on the base during the war. Afterwards, we did, once the war was over. I'll take that back; we did go out there, because we were in the gym doing something. Oh, I know. [1:00:00] Yeah, my dad had—during the construction of it, they had a baseball league, or softball, one of the two, and my dad coached one of those teams, one of the construction teams. And so I was on Camp Adair a couple of times. And one time we were in the gym, I guess it would be, and there was a whole slug of POWs in there. We were storing POWs at Camp Adair during the war. And these were Africa Corps guys, Germans.

CP: Hm.

RC: And boy, they were a tough-looking bunch! [Laughs] And then there were also Italians around, and they weren't so—they were more open and friendly, and stuff. So they were being housed there, and I don't know if any of them ever escaped or not, but it didn't look like the security was very tight. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

RC: They had it pretty good as it was, I think.

CP: That's interesting. I hadn't known about that. The expanse of Adair is amazing when you see it now.

RC: Pardon?

CP: The expanse of Adair, it was amazing. When you see it now it's quite—I mean, there's not a whole lot there, but it used to be the second-biggest one in Oregon.

RC: Oh, it was huge, yeah. It covered an immense amount. They had an artillery range at Camp Adair. You need a lot of acreage for an artillery range.

CP: Yeah.

RC: And we could hear them booming away over there during the war.

CP: You mentioned in your memoir that the family travelled to San Francisco for the World's Fair in 1939.

RC: Oh, yeah!

CP: Do you remember that at all?

RC: Oh, yeah. That was a great outing. We stayed with my great-aunt, who lived in San Francisco. And yeah, that was a nice event.

CP: Did you take the train—?

RC: I used to have a lot of artifacts from that.

CP: Oh, yeah? Well, tell me about high school, Corvallis High School. You were the senior class president.

RC: I was indeed, yeah, and had a lot of fun in high school. A lot of people don't have good experiences in high school, but I had good experiences. Everything wasn't 100 percent, but I was on the baseball team and the golf team, and you know, had good friends and had a nice time. We won the state high school basketball championship when I was a junior. I wasn't on the team, but it doesn't get any better than that when you're in high school, to win the state basketball championship.

CP: Yeah. Well, you made the decision to go to Oregon State College. It sounds like there wasn't much of a decision to be made. It was an expectation.

RC: No, that was kind of it. I can't think of anybody in my class, high school graduating class, that did go anywhere else, you know, initially.

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: And there were a lot of faculty kids in Corvallis, obviously, so they were going to go to college, but that was the closest one and the most affordable, so that's kind of where we all ended up.

CP: Yeah. What was it like playing in your dad's baseball program?

RC: Fine. I had a good time; I had a great time. And it was a little stress, but everybody accepted it, and had a good time.

CP: That seems to be a theme.

RC: It was a real honor for me.

CP: Uh-huh. Yeah. You played summer baseball?

RC: Yeah, that's what everybody did in those days that was on the baseball team, because my dad would want—we'd want to be playing and he'd want his players to be playing, too. And we'd be hired—we'd be sent out to these small towns. Every town had a baseball team, a semi-pro baseball team, which semi-pro means professionals, ex-professionals, could play on the team. Back in those days that was a no-no, in terms of amateur status. You weren't supposed to play with pros, but they made an exception for baseball, so. These town teams would have some ex-pros, some college guys, and some locals, and [laughs] it was a big deal for the town.

And they'd give us jobs working in the woods, or pulling on the green chain, or something like that, and that was about what was out there. And the mill pond job—that was not a—I was living in Corvallis that summer. I don't know if that was the summer we went to Air Force basic or not? Anyway, that was a mill south of Monroe. Do you know where Monroe is?

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: And had a big mill pond, and, yeah, that was a dangerous job, and a tough one.

CP: Well, tell us more about what that job entailed. [1:05:00]

RC: Well, every saw mill had a mill pond where they would store logs, and then the logs would be brought up to where there was a conveyor belt, then they would be then lifted and conveyed into the sawmill, and cut into boards. And the people that moved the logs around were called pond monkeys. And you were out there in your cork boots, and your big pole, and all of this, and trying to corral these logs, and push them across the pond, and get them over to where they would be picked up.

And there were about five of us, I think, pond monkeys, and none of us knew what we were doing. And they dumped the logs at one end of the pond, off log trucks, and then we'd gather up five or six of these, or eight of them, in a raft, and propel them across the pond, and then have them lift it up. There were a couple of professional pond monkeys there. They would just float around and fly across the logs, and we were in the water half the time. [Laughs] So, interesting experience. It was terrible water. Like I said, my mother wouldn't even let me in the house, I'd come home and it would smell so bad.

CP: Yeah.

RC: So that's what we did. Those were the jobs that were available. Minimum wage, no unions, you know.

CP: Uh-huh.

RC: So you were just totally at the mercy of the owner. But there were guys—that was a career for a lot of people.

CP: Uh-huh.

RC: For us at least it was just a summer experience. And so it was a great incentive to, believe me, to stay in college and find something better. Because that's where a lot of these guys were going to spend their lives, pulling on the green chain, and this sort of thing.

CP: Probably met some interesting characters, I'm sure.

RC: Yeah. Yeah, spent summers in Coquille and Brookings doing that, those sorts of jobs, playing for their town team.

CP: Uh-huh. Some rough-and-tumble towns.

RC: They were. They were, indeed. [Laughs] Cowboys and Indians, and fishermen and loggers.

CP: You spent a summer in Prineville too, is that right?

RC: Right, Prineville, yeah. Coquille, Brookings and Prineville. Those were my three stops, yeah.

CP: Well, you lived at Delta Upsilon, too?

RC: I was. Yeah, I was a legacy, and looked at other houses, but they had a nice combination, I thought, of athletes and scholars and wastrels, you know. [Laughs] Didn't take themselves too seriously, but were a good bunch of guys, and so I never had any regrets about that. That worked out pretty well. Nice group.

CP: You mentioned a particular fraternity. I don't know if prank is the right word for it, but there's a story involving Skinner's Butte in Oregon.

RC: Yeah.

CP: University of Oregon.

RC: No, we had a genius for coming up with stuff like that. No, that's a true story, and when I was a freshman, my freshman class, I didn't happen to go on that, but they went down and blew a piece of it off. They didn't get the whole thing. But they did dynamite some of it off, you know, Skinner's Butte. Never got caught, made it back, and two years later went back and really got the whole thing this time, and it was—they also got away with that. The FBI was interviewing everybody on campus, trying to get a handle on who—because dynamite was considered a dangerous substance. And they'd steal it from the stump blasting class at Oregon State. You know, the Ag School had a stump blasting class. So these guys would steal dynamite, the caps. Nutty, just nutty! But they never found out who did it.

CP: And this was the big O. It was the big O on campus?

RC: Big concrete O, yeah. And then the guys that did it went back later, and they'd gather up pieces, chunks of it, and everybody in the house, had a chunk of this O on their desk. [Laughs] The paint on it was about that thick, and they painted—back in the [unclear] days, Oregon State would go down and paint it orange, and then Oregon would get up the next day and paint it yellow. So that happened a lot. But I think that was the last time it ever got—it ever got blown up.

CP: [Laughs]

RC: [Laughs]

CP: The last time.

RC: Yeah. I don't know, but here's a little interesting side story. I was down at a game at Autzen one time years and years later [1:10:00], and I was relating this story about my fraternity being the—having dynamited the O off of Skinner Butte. The guy behind me came around, and he says, "Is that a true story? Were you the guys that did that?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "I wrote my master's thesis on that." [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

RC: "On the dynamite of the O."

CP: Wow.

RC: So, it was a story that had legs, at least.

CP: Uh-huh. Well, what was social life like for you in school?

RC: Rich. No, very good. Oregon State was a nice, friendly place, and there were too many men and not enough women. The student body was mostly Ag School, Engineering School, and all of that. So men outnumbered the women, but it was good. We had a lot of fun. If you lived on campus, which most of us did—we lived in our fraternities—you were in like a different universe. You know, your parents were glad to have you out of the house, and you were glad to be out of the house, and you might as well have been in Chicago for the amount of interaction that took place. There just wasn't any.

CP: Yeah. What sorts of events were important on the social calendar?

RC: Oh, house dances. You'd always have one major—every house would have one major house dance every quarter. And those were big events, and if you were dating somebody, you'd get invited to her house dance and you'd invite her to yours, and so on. So there was a lot of that. And a lot of beer drinking out at Murphy's Beach. Do you know where Murphy's Beach is?

CP: No.

RC: You know, south of town there's a tavern right about two or three miles out of town, on the right-hand side?

CP: Called Murphy's.

RC: Yeah, it's called Murphy's. Okay. Well, just past that half a mile, there's a road that goes off to the east, off of the highway, down to the river. And I think there's—I don't know what's down there now, but back then it was a gravel operation. And this is where all of the partying took place. It's called Murph's Beach. It had nothing to do with the tavern, but that was where everybody gathered.

CP: Huh, that's a new one to me.

RC: Hm?

CP: That's a new one for me.

RC: Oh, really? Oh yeah, that was the place. And if anybody wanted to arrest us or hassle us or anything, everybody knew where we were. It wasn't just my fraternity; everybody was out there. The football team, the basketball team, everybody, you know. So there was a lot of partying going on. I don't think anything—nothing's changed, I don't think.

CP: Yeah. You played baseball in the springs and the summers. Did you do anything in the fall or winter to get ready for the season, or is it just being a college student?

RC: I think once the season was over, we were done. I don't remember any particular—each season, each football season, basketball season, baseball season, they had a start and a stop time. And we had guys that played three sports at Oregon State, three major sports, and started on every team. So you could do that then, and I don't think that's—can they do that now? I don't think so, can they?

CP: I think very few do, if they could.

RC: Yeah.

CP: How about school? What was your academic experience like?

RC: I was a moderate success, modest success. I was in Business Administration, and that wasn't a very stimulating major for me. But I made my grades, and I was only on probation once, so that's not too bad for four and a half years. So but I graduated. Could have been worse.

CP: Any teachers of note that made an impact on you?

RC: Pardon?

CP: Any teachers?

RC: You know, Gordon Gilkey. Do you know Gordon Gilkey?

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: He was a good teacher. This was a long time ago.

CP: Can you tell me more about him? I'm interested in Gilkey.

RC: Well, Gordon had been in Europe during the Second World War, and was one of those people that participated in saving, uncovering, the German stashes of art, and so on, and really made a major contribution there. Then he was also a woodblock print collector, had a huge Japanese woodblock print collection, and taught a course called Survey of Visual Arts, or something. Anyway, it was a review of art, and history, and so on. It was a fascinating course. He taught that every year. And then later on he became dean, I think, of Liberal Arts, didn't he?

CP: I think so.

RC: Yeah, and he lived right around the corner after he retired from Oregon State. [1:15:01] But he was a good guy. His son was there. His son was a photographer.

CP: Yeah, yeah.

RC: I'm trying to think of his name now.

CP: I want to ask you a little bit about the climate on campus during the time that you were there. You were there towards the end, I think, of a large influx of GI Bill students. You mentioned in your memoir they were somewhat aloof?

RC: Oh, yeah.

CP: And I'm guessing you have a sense of why, from your own military experience. But can you tell me, can you talk a little bit about the GI influence on campus while you were there?

RC: Well, it was huge. First there was a huge number of them, and a lot of them were married; they were older. These guys, they weren't interested in wearing rook lids, or any of that stuff. That just went by the boards. They weren't having any of it. They just wanted to get in there, and get their education, and get on with their lives. And so that changed the whole campus tenor, totally. And then along came my group, wimpy little high school graduates that had never been anywhere or done anything.

And all of the upper two classes in the fraternity house were all World War II guys. They ran these fraternities like boot camps. The guy down the hall from me, one of the seniors—I think he was a senior by that time—Bob Kyle, he'd been wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. [Laughs] You didn't mess around with those guys, you know. And they didn't take any—they were very serious and very businesslike. They were good role models. We learned from those guys.

So, yeah, they changed the whole campus philosophy, just turned it upside down. And then they were—I started in 1949, so they were at kind of the tail end of it, and the ones that came along after me, none of us had ever been in the military, so. Some, occasionally, were. The Korean War came along and that changed a lot of things. We had a lot of Korean War veterans around.

CP: Mm-hm. So did the rook lids tradition die out at that point? I mean, it was very strong before then.

RC: What's that?

CP: The rook lids, and things like that—did they just cease to exist?

RC: Yeah, that just sort of—I think people tried to get it back in place, but I don't think it ever really—it wasn't the same as it had been. Times were changing, anyway.

CP: Yeah.

RC: It wasn't just the World War II vets. The whole world had changed. The Second World War just changed everything. Old majors didn't matter anymore, and new technology was coming along, so it was a very revolutionary—in retrospect, a very revolutionary period.

CP: Yeah. Well, and you mentioned some—I'm trying to ask about the subject of race, and especially the example of Dave Mann, who you write about in your book. It was not a revolution on campus by any stretch, but it's an inkling of very gradual change that was going to come later, in terms of the topic of race at OSU.

RC: Well, Oregon State was a pretty one-race institution at the time. We had black students from Africa, exchange students, and Asians, of course, been around for a long time. So it wasn't totally white, but it was predominantly. And there were no black athletes. Oregon had had black athletes in the thirties, football players. Jackie Robinson's older brother Mack was a track man at Oregon.

CP: Mm-hm.

RC: And so Oregon State was late to the game. And Dave Mann was recruited out of California to come and be Oregon State's first black athlete, which he was. And it was very successful. And I didn't know him very well personally, but he was—he stood out, no question about it. And he was not a—what would you call it? He was not a self-effacing person. Is that a good way to put it?

CP: Mm.

RC: But not a bad person. I mean, he didn't cause any problems or anything. This was a new thing for Oregon State and Corvallis.

CP: Yeah. A confident guy.

RC: Yeah, very confident, and a good athlete. Didn't take any stuff, you know. [Laughs]

CP: He won a campus boxing tournament. It was fascinating to hear there was a campus boxing tournament.

RC: Yeah, intramural.

CP: Yeah.

RC: Intramural. Well, yeah, it was intramural, and yeah, just three-round bouts. And yeah, he won that.

CP: Was this a period of time where there were many Quonset huts on campus? [1:20:00]

RC: Still were, mm-hm.

CP: And what was that like? Did you have classes in them?

RC: You know, I don't remember having—I think they were mostly used for office space, meeting rooms, and things like that. They weren't big enough really for a classroom.

CP: So just reflective of a period of expansion on campus?

RC: Right, yeah.

CP: An influx of new students?

RC: Yeah.

CP: I want to ask you about a couple of things that happened at OSC during your time. In 1950, Gill Coliseum opened.

RC: Mm-hm.

CP: Do you remember that?

RC: Well, I don't remember having any major event. But it had been coming for a long time; it just didn't magically appear. Everybody knew it was coming. Yeah, it was a big event. It was state-of-the-art at the time.

CP: Uh-huh.

RC: You know, Oregon State's athletic facilities were first class. Parker Field was new. Oregon had rickety wooden stands, still. And California schools had big stadiums, but Oregon State's facilities were pretty good. Spec Keene was responsible for most of that.

CP: Really? Do you have recollections of attending basketball games in the old Men's Gym?

RC: Yes, I do. I saw Slats Gill's teams knock over UCLA twice in a row, and yeah, it held 2,000 people. There was a balcony that ran all around the Men's Gym.

CP: Yeah.

RC: So, yeah, yeah. I started going there when I was probably, what, four or five years old.

CP: It must have been quite an environment.

RC: It was. It was. Just athletics, all day.

CP: How about football at Bell Field?

RC: Well, it was a mud bowl, is what it was. And you were close to the field.

CP: [Laughs]

RC: But the student section was on the west—east side. And in those days, if you can believe it, co-eds all wore heels, and stockings, and hats, dressed up for the game. Can you imagine that?

CP: Yeah, it's amazing. Well, as we sort of wind up here a little bit, I'm interested in knowing about your continued association with OSU after you graduated. You obviously went and you had a career in military, and you went on to other things, graduate studies and a career.

RC: Yeah. Well, I left Oregon State in 1954, spring of 1954, and came back in '66 or '67, something like that. And I had lived in Chicago, in Evanston, and Lincoln, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania, other places, you know, the kind of stops you make, and then was hired by Oregon Health Sciences University, recruited by them to fill a certain role that they were looking for, and came back. And my dad had just retired from Oregon State, so there wasn't any of that overlap anymore. But he was, of course, very closely involved. And he had season tickets, so I just picked up going to the football games, and all of that sort of thing. But I wasn't associated with Oregon State in any direct professional capacity, but it was still part of our lives. And then I was a lifetime member, life member, of the alumni association. The Varsity O was kind of kicking in a little bit; they were kind of getting things going. And then the baseball field project came along. Pat Casey put that together, and asked me if I would be on their committee, and did, was, the fundraising committee. And we were successful largely because of the one million dollar grant from Goss, John Goss, who had sold a piece of property and was going to pay a huge tax bill, so he decided he would [laughs] do something with it! And that got Pat started. And he's probably been there. This wasn't a—I don't know how many years he'd been coaching, but I'll bet it was close to ten by the time the stadium project came along.

So you think of the baseball project, and I think of the whole program as a project, it was so different from what it was back in the day, as Pat, being an overnight success, just came in and waved the magic wand, and everything happened. But that's not the case at all. He started right from ground zero. And they didn't even charge for baseball games when Jack Riley was there, and even in Pat's early days you could just walk in anytime, free. But he is, I think, a remarkable person, a remarkable developer. [1:25:00] I think he would have done well at whatever he was—it was lucky for Oregon State that he chose baseball, but he was a talented person. You know, not your normal, just your regular, everyday coach. And he spearheaded this, and we'd meet up here in Portland, and we'd tap people we knew, and there were some major donors who stepped up, and got it built.

CP: Yeah.

RC: So that was a real sea change for the baseball program, to have that facility. It was interesting because prior to that time, Jack Riley and Ted Sully, and others might have done something similar, but until—I can't remember which one of the presidents it was. It was after MacVicar.

CP: Probably Byrne.

RC: Could have been. No, no it wasn't. It was after him, even.

CP: Risser? Paul Risser?

RC: I think it was Paul Risser, right, said it would be okay to build a permanent facility on that location. The university's policy prior to that time had always been that this was too valuable a piece of property. You know, it is right, not in the center of campus, but it's right on campus. And they wanted to put dorms there, and things like that. So they wouldn't permit any kind of improvement in the facilities, nothing, until Risser said, "Okay, do this." And that opened the door for Pat to go out and begin to—and then John Goss coming along, but those two things came together and made it possible to put a permanent facility on that site.

CP: Now it's the oldest baseball field in college baseball.

RC: Well, it is either the oldest or second oldest. I think there might be some dispute about that, but it's one of the two. And somebody wandered out there in 1907 and drove a stake into the ground, and [laughs] "This will be home plate." It's never moved, so.

CP: Yeah.

RC: No, it's been a big success. I think that was good for Pat, good for the program. I think it made it possible to recruit, and that's everything in baseball. And Pat, now, with his reputation, he just recruits nationally. He doesn't recruit; he just answers phone calls, basically.

CP: [Laughs]

RC: Astounding success. Somebody said after they went to their, won their first College World Series, and they said, "What would your dad feel about that? Yeah, I bet he'd be proud." And I said, "He'd be dumbfounded, is what he would have been." [Laughs] Because considering the facilities, and the attitudes, and so on. So he's done a remarkable, remarkable job.

CP: Yeah. Well the last thing I want to ask you about is just your thoughts on the current direction of the university. Things have changed mightily in the last few years, and there's a lot of momentum heading in different directions. What do you think of all of this?

RC: Well, I think Oregon State's got a real lot to be proud of. I think the current administration has really been in place long enough, and I think it's been—there's continuity there. Most of the presidents didn't stay more than four or five years, if that. They would move on to other things. So I think that continuity has been important, and I think they play the funding game very well, the technology grants and all of this sort of thing. I don't follow it with a microscope, but I don't think they have the reputation that they deserve. I think it's not really their fault. Every institution has areas of excellence, and Oregon State is certainly no exception, but it's not the kind of thing that gets headlines. So, but no, I think it's a really fine institution. I have no—my older son went there, and had a great time, so. Haven't they just completed a big fundraising campaign?

CP: Yeah, just about. A billion dollars.

RC: Billion, was that it? Yeah. One of the better campaigns around the country, I guess, wasn't it?

CP: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

RC: Yeah, so they do a good job, I think. I think Oregon State—I think Oregon can be proud of Oregon State, and I think it's possible to get a good education there. I think one of the things that was kind of a negative—when I was there, they had virtually nothing in the way of Liberal Arts, and you could only take two years. They only offered Liberal Arts on the undergrad, or the lower division level. And that closed out a lot of—that's an age when you really ought to be looking around at other things, and the opportunities weren't there. [1:30:00] You had to channel yourself into one of these technical-oriented majors, and that wasn't always a good fit for everybody. So I think the fact that they expanded that option is—I think it adds a lot to it. I think they really made the—that really turned the corner for them, as far as I was concerned, when they developed the Liberal Arts College, and major, and so on.

CP: Yeah. Well, Ralph, I want to thank you for this. It's been very interesting and fun and enlightening for me.

RC: Well, it's been a real pleasure.

CP: Terrific. Thank you very much. [1:30:27]