

**Oral History Interview of
Jim Brink**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
December 19, 2011
Lubbock, Texas**

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This interview features James E. Brink, his education, service in the Peace Corps, and academic career at Texas Tech University as a professor and administrator.

Length of Interview: 1:53:51

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Family Background	5	0:00:00
Childhood Interests and Family's Military Ties	7	0:04:55
Primary School Education	11	0:15:30
Politics and the Peace Corps	14	0:21:21
Meeting His Wife, Pam, and their Graduate School Education	20	0:32:28
Anti-War Demonstrations (Vietnam)	22	0:37:43
Research Interests in Graduate School	26	0:46:50
After Graduation and Getting the Texas Tech Job	30	0:55:07
Texas Tech History Program in the late 1970s	34	1:05:51
Jayme Sokolow Incident and Aftermath	40	1:19:25
Classroom Anecdotes and Changes to the University	44	1:28:41
Comparing Texas Tech's Chancellors	49	1:41:36
Changes to Tech's Faculty and Student Bodies	51	1:48:36

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David Marshall (DM):

Now we're rolling. Okay the date is December 19, 2011. This is David Marshall interviewing Jim Brink at his office at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas. And let's just begin with your full name.

Jim Brink (JB):

Well my legal name is James Eastgate Brink.

DM:

Okay. And when and where were you born?

JB:

I was born on the twenty-eighth of February, 1945 in Santa Fe.

DM:

In Santa Fe? Really? Okay. I didn't realize that.

JB:

Therein lies a tale.

DM:

Oh yeah? Well please tell it.

JB:

Well there was a special circumstance as a result of my father having been killed in World War II. My mother then sought out her parents as she was quite pregnant, and my grandfather was a West Point graduate and army career officer and had contracted tuberculosis. And they sent him to Santa Fe because of the dry air. So there was no OBGYN facility there, so I was born on a Navajo reservation but didn't spend that much time there.

DM:

Do you mind talking about your father?

JB:

I didn't know him. He was an attorney from North Dakota. Norwegian extraction, quite a good athlete, a very good student, and from all accounts I think a very promising attorney. Had written some textbooks, some legal textbooks and so on. But decided that when the war came that he needed to be part of it. He was thirty years old when he died, so he was probably not going to get drafted right away, but he enlisted. In 1944 he was sent to London and then to what they called a replacement depot, what they called in World War II a "Repo Depot." And as a first lieutenant

he was charged with replacing someone who had been killed; so he was sent over to Belgium, and then he was sent out to replace someone who was killed and he never made it. He was killed on his way to his unit. And as a result it's been quite difficult to find any military records of the actual account of the battle or the incident in which he was killed because his identification marks were not settled yet. He still hadn't been identified as of such-and-such a company. But in any event, he was killed and he was then probably—in the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest. He was then buried, my mother had him buried in the Netherlands at an Allied Cemetery. It's called Margraten, near Maastricht. But they had been married in April of '44 and he was killed in November so they hadn't been married very long. She was the colonel's daughter, and he was the young lieutenant.

DM:

Really? So did you live in Santa Fe for a while or—?

JB:

No just a few months. My grandfather was then transferred to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver. And he was an inpatient there for many years and then an outpatient. My mother lived in Denver, and then remarried when I was two.

DM:

So Denver is maybe your earliest—?

JB:

I don't really have much of a memory of Denver. I do of my grandparent's house, but I think that's probably because we went back there frequently. But we moved, when my mother remarried, we moved to Greeley, Colorado, and I remember Greeley, Colorado pretty much. I was probably three or four. My memories of Greeley—fishing and doing boy stuff, throwing dirt clods and getting in trouble generally.

DM:

(laughs) Well tell me your mother's full name including maiden name, and your stepfather's name.

JB:

My mother's full name was Dorothy Laura McNary Eastgate, and then Brink. So in other words, her maiden name was McNary, M-c-capital N-a-r-y. And my stepfather's name was Carl Edward Brink. He was from Topeka, Kansas.

DM:

So you were too young to go to school at Greeley—

JB:

No I didn't go— we moved to Wichita when I was five and I started schools in Wichita, Kansas.

DM:

Wichita is where you grew up then basically?

JB:

Yeah. And went all the way through grade school and through high school, graduated high school in Wichita.

DM:

Can you identify specific interests in your childhood that carried on into your adulthood?

JB:

Oh I suppose nature has always been a real interest of mine. I've always been fascinated with the natural world. Not probably from a scientific standpoint but more from just an observational standpoint. And I don't know how this occurs necessarily, but I seem to have a certain proclivity to observe things in the natural world. For instance I'm not a very studied birder, but I'm quite astonished sometimes that I can identify birds as quickly and as apparently accurately as I can. I would love to be more of a student of that, but I haven't ever really developed it. But anyway, that was an interest and reading was an interest. And I suspect, as my mother told me later, she read to me a lot when I was real, real young and so I was always fascinated with reading.

DM:

Any particular subject area?

JB:

No. Just, well fiction mostly. But I mean, my profession means that I have to read non-fiction. Although some history is fiction too.

DM:

(laughs) Did you have any special interest in World War II because your father was in it?

JB:

No, not necessarily. I come from a long line of West Point graduates, and so I've always been sensitive to and cognizant of the life in the military. And for instance my maternal grandmother was the daughter of a West Point graduate, a General, and she was very proud of West Point as was my grandfather. And we always talked about that and what life was like at The Point and then what life was like—and I always took it to mean that before World War II especially, officers in the United States Army were about as close as we came to the aristocracy in this

country. They lived well; they considered themselves refined people, well educated people, people with culture, people who staged formal dances with dress uniforms and politeness. And my grandmother taught me lots and lots of manners which she said were important. But I never had any desire to be part of that culture, or at least the military part of it. It seemed to me that everyone who I talked about—or who was described to me in my family died as a result of war wounds or contracted some disease. I had a great-grandfather who was the military surgeon at Fort Leavenworth in the 1880s, and his father was an officer in the Civil War and was a prisoner of war during the Civil War.

DM:

Do you have names attached to these individuals?

JB:

Oh yeah that was Oliver R. McNary, was the man from Canonsburg, Pennsylvania who was an officer in the Civil War, with a very interesting story by the way. But anyway, his son was Oliver Clarkson McNary, and he was posted to Leavenworth in the 1880s. And then my grandfather was born there, Clarkson Dewese McNary. And he went on to West Point and graduated from West Point. And then he and my grandmother had four daughters. My mother was the oldest of four daughters.

DM:

You recently taught an honors course in World War I. How did that interest develop?

JB:

I think I got interested in World War I because of the poetry. I think it was the works of people like E.E. Cummings particularly. That's what initially drew me, but also the works of—oh Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves. Now they didn't write as much poetry. But it was the poets who intrigued me because here were highly educated, principally British people when you think about that part of it, in the trenches for four years—and terribly insightful. And I thought, as a person who was interested in history, it's remarkable that we have such an account of what the conditions were like at literally the lowest levels. And historically we don't generally have those. We have heroic accounts and the officer accounts. And although these guys in many respects were officers, they were experiencing the worst conditions and the worst calamities that has ever, I think, befallen the human race, and that was being on the Western front for those four years.

DM:

Did your course tie in the poetry and the literature?

JB:

Well I used poetry in the course to talk about the evolution of the war, principally from the standpoint of the bands playing and hurrahs at the beginning of the war and then the cynicism and sarcasm and downright opposition that develops as the war drags on and on and on. And the numbers of people—when you consider ten million people died in this war; it was just horrific for most people. So it was a war unlike any other war because of its technology and because of its sheer horror. And it affected the soldiers deeply, but it also affected the civilians. I was reading a thing that the Tech Press published the other day about the Vietnam War called “Fragging.” And you may remember what fragging was—fragmentation grenades that our own troops oftentimes rolled into the billets and the hooches of their officers. And one of the points this fellow made in the book was, that in the Vietnam War, the United States didn’t go to war. The Armed Forces went to war but the United States never went to war. And I thought, Now that’s really interesting. Because certainly World War I and World War II, we went to war. Korea less so, Vietnam no, and frankly I don’t think we’ve gone to war in the Iraq or Afghan war either.

DM:

Interesting, very interesting. Well I verged off a little bit but that’s—

JB:

I can do that very easily.

DM:

—to tie in with your military background, that’s an interesting thing.

JB:

Well the man who was the Civil War prisoner of war kept a diary while he was prisoner of war.

DM:

Oh really?

JB:

And I have it, and it’s a remarkable account. He was wounded—his job was to receive slaves coming through the lines. So they had his name, and as they came through the lines they would ask for Captain McNary, or Lieutenant McNary, then later Captain McNary. Well there was a price put on his head. So at the Battle of New Bern, North Carolina he was wounded and captured. All the prisoners were lined up and people from the town were brought out to identify people, and this one woman was coming down the line and she said she knew him, knew his name. He had taken off all of his insignia and pulled off his epaulets and rank and all that stuff. But she came down the line and she stood right in front of him and looked at him but then she

didn't say anything and she moved on. But he was sent to Macon, Georgia. Enlisted men went to Andersonville, but the officers went to Macon. And he escaped in July of 1864 with three others. And they traveled by night and then laid up in the fields during the day and the slaves brought them food. And they were working their way north and you can imagine from Macon, Georgia they're going to work their way north. But his wound festered and became such that he couldn't really go on very well. So the others went on and he was recaptured, and he was sent to Columbia, South Carolina. And sent to a doctor there, and the doctor turned out to be Mary Todd Lincoln's brother. He was a Confederate doctor. And this was on the grounds of the University of South Carolina, and I was at that university some years later to receive an award ironically. I'm in this building, and they're welcoming us that night and they said, During the Civil War this was the building where Union prisoners were held. And I thought, Wow—this is where my great-great-grandfather was. So anyway, that's kind of an interesting tale. But when he was released, he was paroled, he weighed seventy-four pounds.

DM:

Oh my. Is the diary fairly complete?

JB:

It's mostly just "Did this today." It's on foolscap, in pencil. It's kind of hard to read, but I've transcribed it. And it's mostly just diurnal things. It's not really reminiscences or insightful things. It's mostly, "Did this, did that."

DM:

Did he ever write a reminiscence afterwards?

JB:

He became the Union Historian for the Ex-Prisoners of War.

DM:

Oh really?

JB:

And his job was to receive affidavits from other Union ex-prisoners as they sought pensions from the US government. Which, by the way, they got the year after he died. But anyway, he had all these affidavits, and I have them. There are some fascinating accounts. One fellow's account of how he survived at Andersonville—he was down below and his job was to be up on this little knob at Andersonville where the infirmary was, but he slept in a tent down below. Well, his tent mate died so he assumed the identity of his tent mate and so when the food wagon came around in the morning and they all stood out in front of the tent and they called his tent mate's name out, he stood up and they gave him a ration. So he ate that on the fly as he worked his way up to this

little knob and he's up there now at the infirmary, and the food wagon works its way up there and they call out his name and he steps out again. And that's how he got a double ration and survived.

DM:

Golly, great story.

JB:

You do what you can do.

DM:

(laughs) That's right. Well let's go back to your education in Wichita.

JB:

(laughs) Was there any? No, that's not nice.

DM:

(laughs) Well was it?

JB:

No it was pretty good. I went to a good high school. I think that's where I—I had some good experiences in junior high, but principally it was high school. I was in an honors program and took honors courses, and I was an officer and an athlete—big high school, seven thousand kids. So I was fortunate that I was able to be in some of these programs that gave us some privileges and so on. And the honors program there was pretty good and had an excellent English teacher, good math teacher, good science teachers.

DM:

Do you remember their names by the way?

JB:

Um, Kate Millett was the English teacher. I remember her very, very well. I frankly don't remember the math teacher. I can see her, but I can't remember her name. God, that was a long time ago, David. And unfortunately, I've lost my high school annuals which is really bad for ever going back to reunions.

DM:

Aw, how terrible.

JB:

But anyway, it prepared me pretty well to go on to college and went on to University of Kansas. And I did pretty well as a student.

DM:

Had you developed a specific interest in history in high school?

JB:

No, although I was good at it. I liked it; I could do it so to speak. I understood it a lot more than I understood math. I was good at math too. I could work all the problems, but I never understood math. Not until I had to teach my daughter math years and years later did I understand it. No, it's kind of an interesting story in itself. I was in France living abroad for a year and had befriended a German student, and we'd gone to Czechoslovakia together. And we always spoke French together when we—anyway we always spoke French together. And on the way back from Czechoslovakia he said, "Well come and visit me in my home in Frankfurt and visit my family," so I did. And his mother spoke French, and so we always spoke French together. But his father who was a judge only spoke German, no English, no French. And one day, Claus [Claus Peter Bach, M.D.] and his mother had to go out somewhere so I'm stuck with the father. So I noticed all these history books, even though they were in German, I could tell they were all these history books, and we had one of those very, very basic conversations you have when you have no common language. And I said, essentially, "You like history?" "Yes." I said, "But you're a judge." "Well, yes." I said, "Well this is what I'm going to do." My father had been an attorney; so I thought I would be an attorney. I said, "I'm going to be an attorney, but I really love history." And he wagged his finger at me and said, "No, no, no. Do what you like." And I thought, you know that makes a lot of sense. So I went back for my senior year and did some serious history at that point and really did like it. I was able to do an independent study. Again, I was in this honors program. We didn't take any classes at all, as a matter of fact my senior year.

DM:

Had you gone over just to study the French language then?

JB:

Yeah, well I had gone over first of all between my freshman and sophomore years on a study abroad program at KU to quote unquote learn the language, which I quickly learned I was not going to do as long as I was with other American students especially from my university. So I went back my junior year to Grenoble, and I pretended that I didn't speak English. I think that was pretty silly, but I made it a point to really not hang out with Americans and to speak French as much as I could. And I became quite comfortable with the language and had a great year. So anyway, I got very interested in the literature and the culture, and I've kept it up.

DM:

Okay. This isn't when you were at Carcassonne, I guess. You went back later?

JB:

No that's much later. I've been back many, many times since then. And as a matter of fact was back there about a year ago right now.

DM:

Is that right?

JB:

And would have loved it if we could have held this interview in Paris, David, over a nice glass of wine or something.

DM:

(laughs) That's right. Well about a year ago I was in Paris; so we could have done that. (laughs)

JB:

Oh, well we may have bumped in to one another.

DM:

(laughs) Okay so this is still undergraduate that we're talking about.

JB:

Still undergraduate years. I came back for my senior year and I really thought about going to law school but really wasn't ready to go to law school. What to do? Well, I was getting more and more political at that point, and although I really wasn't threatened—this was 1967—I wasn't really threatened with the draft because I was the sole surviving son of a deceased veteran. My draft classification, if you remember those, you had 1A and 4F, mine was 4A. And 4A was sole surviving son of a deceased veteran, and you wouldn't be called up unless there was total war. And I thought Well hell, these days total war, that's only going to last half an hour, they won't ever find me. But anyway, I was not interested in going to the war, and I was not interested quite yet in going to law school. And I hadn't thought about graduate school in history. I was still sort of thinking that I was going to do law. But I decided to go to the Peace Corps, so I went into the Peace Corps.

DM:

Tell me about your politics at this time.

JB:

Well, I was involved in some anti-war stuff, and I had moved from thinking I was a very conservative young man. Growing up in Kansas, that's kind of a natural, and my parents were not particularly political. But I got more and more liberal, shall we say, as I read more and more and started to think. And I think thinking does that to a lot of people.

DM:

(laughs) So were you active in any campaigns?

JB:

Not in my undergraduate years. I was very much as a graduate student. When I came back from the Peace Corps and went to graduate school I was involved in the American Friends Service Committee's anti-war demonstrations a lot.

DM:

Okay. Well let's come back to that then. I want to hear about the Peace Corps.

JB:

Well I went to—outside of Seattle for training. This was 1967 now and we were—I thought I was going to go to Africa because of my French and they said, Well, how about South America? How about Chile? Well, what the hell let's go to Chile. So I arrived at this place, and we took a language aptitude test and my French was so good—and there were about three or four of us, a couple of us, had pretty good Spanish already and a couple had good French, so they put us in a special group of very intensive—immersion type group. And we did nothing but speak Spanish every day from the time we woke up till we went to bed so we really got a pretty good dose. And we were a forestry group, although I was not a forester. I learned a lot about forestation and about oh, tree planting and so on. The idea was that there was a lot of erosion in Chile because the folks, especially the more humble folks, were growing wheat on the same ground year after year after year, and it was eroding.

DM:

Were they slashing and burning down there?

JB:

No, they had already slashed; they didn't need to do that anymore. But it was that they were trying to eek out a living on like eight hectares for a family of four. And the Peace Corps had this idea that because the growing season is so phenomenal there for trees, that we could convince them to, on that very marginal land, grow Douglas Fir, and that would create a pulp crop within eight years and a timber crop within twenty years. Well, it turns out once I got down there and started working on that, that was a pretty silly thing to try to convince these folks of. Trying to

feed a family of four on eight hectares, and you're going to devote four of those hectares to a program that's not going to give them any income for eight years at least. They just look at you like you're crazy than a loon.

DM:

Was that part of your responsibility, to encourage these people to adopt this program? It wasn't just that you were going in to plan trees, you were—?

JB:

No we had to get permission to do that of course. We just couldn't go plant trees. And the idea was to educate them to think that this was a good idea. Well we had a lot of cooperation from the indigenous agricultural groups to give us seedlings and nurseries and so on. And so our biggest success was really with larger landowners who were quite happy to receive these free trees and all this labor. But I lived in a pretty remote place. I had to have a horse, and I had to travel by horseback most of the places I went. And—the nicest people, all my memories are very, very good of that. That was a good time. I don't know that we accomplished very much, but I learned a lot.

DM:

Can you give me the specifics on the location?

JB:

Well, it was South of Concepcion, in a little village called Colemu, c-o-l-e-m-u. Colemu, a little village.

DM:

You stayed in this village?

JB:

Yeah I stayed in an *hotel comercio*, kind of a drover's hotel. As much as you might have found on the American frontier in the 1880s or so. Pretty—I mean they had electricity, I don't want to give the impression that Chile is backward, it really isn't backward, it's just that this was not very well developed.

DM:

Kind of a new experience for you right there.

JB:

Yeah. I didn't mind that. One of the things back then—I don't think they do it at all anymore—they gave every volunteer a book locker. And the book locker was this great big huge box full of

paperback books. There must have been two hundred paperback books. And they did it strategically so that the person who was the closest one to you in another village had a different book locker than you did so when you read certain things then you could trade books with them so we read a lot of books.

DM:

Hmm. Was the Peace Corps a pretty well developed organization at that time, or were they working out kinks?

JB:

They were going through an interesting transition. They still used a lot of what I was, that is generalists. They would take people with, like for instance a degree in French and History like I had and teach you something. And set you out in what they called rural community development and just expect you to do something. It might be to set up cooperatives, it might be to set up a health clinic, da da da da. But anyway, you had no particular expertise. You just had, you know, Yankee energy.

DM:

Did you use your own imagination to come up with some of these projects in that area?

JB:

Well, initially you had kind of an identity, but then you were free to do pretty much anything you wanted to as long as it was legal and you could do it. But what happened about that same time was that the countries were becoming more used to having Peace Corps volunteers. Remember they had to invite the Peace Corps in. And the Peace Corps was becoming more popular around the world, but the countries were becoming more sophisticated and more savvy. So instead of saying, Well yeah we'll take fifty Peace Corps volunteers, they said, Well we'll take fifty Peace Corps volunteers but we want ten entomologists, five agronomists, and so half of our people wore white shirts and ties and worked in cities in government offices. And I was just fortunate that I didn't have any expertise and I was out in the campo, and I liked that a lot. That was a lot more interesting to me.

DM:

How many of you were out there?

JB:

Oh there were thirty-four of us in our group but we were scattered all over the southern half of the country. Since we were a forestry group, we were in the southern half because that's where the trees are. In the northern half there aren't any trees.

DM:

(laughs) Is that why you were in the Seattle area, were you being taught forestation there?

JB:

Yeah. The climate was similar, the species were similar. Doug Fir is a big forest product up in the Northwest.

DM:

How long was that training program before you went?

JB:

It was a long time; it was three months. And that was a long time. They don't do that much anymore. They take you right to the country and train you in country. But when we got down there, there had been a demonstration, an anti-war demonstration that had been focused on a Peace Corps volunteer who had gone on national television and denounced the war, and he was fired within hours of saying this. And this caused some student riots and there was disruptions. So rather than send us to our sites—we got down there thinking we were going to our sites, they said, Oh we're going to have some more training. And we went out to this kind of remote area, and we sat on our thumbs for another month or so until things calmed down because to send Peace Corps volunteers out into new areas just when all this unrest was taking place would have been not probably a good idea.

DM:

How did the Peace Corps respond to that? Did they tell you to try to stay out of the media?

JB:

They didn't say try to stay out of the media, they said, You are employees of the US State Department, you do not identify yourself as a Peace Corps volunteer speaking for the United States, and you don't issue politically charged statements especially to media. So yeah, we got a very good dose of reality. And we had a lot of guys in our group who were there primarily because of the deferment from the draft because you could still get a deferment at that time. I was not one of them but there were a lot of guys there for that and boy they sure didn't want to go to Vietnam. And so they were good.

DM:

(laughs) Do you recall any anecdotes from your Peace Corps days down there off the top of your head?

JB:

None that are legal.

(both laugh)

DM:

Okay. We'll talk about those later.

JB:

Beautiful country, beautiful people, lovely food, yeah. Oh and they were changing over from growing—from making wine in the Spanish fashion to making wine in the French fashion.

DM:

Well I hope you had some input there. (laughs)

JB:

Well I got some input that's for sure. That is I put a lot of that new wine in my being.

DM:

You took it upon yourself to make the comparisons.

JB:

Make a judgment, and my judgment is they succeeded.

DM:

(laughs) How did they do this?

JB:

How did they do what?

DM:

The transfer from—

JB:

Well it's a difference in the way the wine is treated and what it's kept in and the type of grapes that they're growing. And so they were moving from those kinds of sweet Spanish wines to drier French wines: Malbec becomes a wine from that are that's quite famous today. Then they have some Cabernets and some Merlots.

DM:

Okay. They weren't trying new varieties, or were they?

JB:

Yeah, they were introducing these Cabernet grapes.

DM:

I see. But everything was changing—the containers—

JB:

The fashion of making it. The actual what they call vinification?

DM:

Okay. The market was such that they—

JB:

They realized that they could probably—and they wanted to get quote, unquote more sophisticated. And Spanish wines have the reputation of sort of being not sophisticated, sort of sweet and uncool.

DM:

Right. How long were you down there?

JB:

Uh, I quit early partly because of my disillusionment over what I was doing. So I don't know. Let's see—about a year.

DM:

Were you there for the whole year or back and forth?

JB:

No I was there for the time. And then I came back to—partly I had fallen in love, and I didn't realize it. I was maintaining this heady correspondence and realized that I really was in love with this woman and I wanted to come home. And I said we could be—I didn't—she reminds me of this today, since it's the woman I'm still married to—that I didn't actually propose, I just announced that we would be married. (DM laughs) I said, I will come home, and we will be married.

DM:

Well why don't you go ahead and just tell me how you met Pam and when you got married.

JB:

Oh goodness David, we're going to have to have hours and hours of time. (DM laughs) I had come back from France, and I was broke and I needed money so I went to the French department and said that I would tutor students who needed help. And Pam, she doesn't like this story told very much, but anyway, Pam needed help. She was in a French class, and she was supposedly in the last semester of her French class and the professor asked her a question in French, and she said, "Repeate porfavor." And he allowed as how maybe that was not enough French to really qualify for a French class, and she needed help. So she came to the first card in the box, and that was Brink, and she hired me. And we would have a session twice a week or so, and we would go to a café and I would buy coffee and maybe a sandwich for both of us, and I realized that I was losing money on this deal. But anyway, one night she got stood up for a date, and she called me and said would I mind taking her to this party. Nah. And after that we weren't just business partners anymore.

DM:

Was she from Wichita?

JB:

She was from Coldwater, Kansas. Her father was a state senator, prominent attorney from that area. And she had gone to Stephens College, a two year women's school in Columbia, Missouri, kind of a finishing school really at that time, and then had transferred to Kansas as a junior.

DM:

What's her maiden name?

JB:

Herd, h-e-r-d. Herald S. Herd was her father, and he was from a farming family in Coldwater and her mother was from a family of attorneys in Coldwater who had been there since the 1880s.

DM:

So back from the Peace Corps, did you get married pretty quickly after?

JB:

We got married in June of '68, and she had finished her master's degree at Kansas in English at that point. And I had applied for and been accepted to graduate school at the University of Washington. Partly because when I was out there in Peace Corps training we spent some time at the university, and I thought it was really pretty, and I went to the history department just to see what was going on and met some people and thought that might be kind of interesting. Turns out they were quite prominent people; I didn't know that at the time. And so I started graduate work in the fall of '68.

DM:

This was on your master's right?

JB:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you do your doctorate there as well?

JB:

Did my doctorate there as well. Finished my master's in '70 and the doctorate in '74. And we were the night managers of a funeral home. (laughs)

DM:

Oh you were? You and Pam?

JB:

Yeah. That was a great thing. We were a block from campus and had a nine room apartment, back in days when the proprietors lived above their establishment, they had quite opulent gigs and they were no longer living there obviously, and so the night manager lived in this rather fancy apartment. I mean we had more space than any two graduate students on the campus.

DM:

(laughs) Was this something you had to get used to? Was it a little bit spooky to you at first?

JB:

No, it never spooked me very much. I'd read Jessica Mitford, *American Way of Death*, so I was pretty cynical about the American Funeral Society. And I just saw it as an opportunity to have a nice place to live and have a little bit of money. So it was pretty good. We both had fellowships. Pam was doing her doctorate in English. I was doing my master's in history so we both had fellowships and then we had this income from the funeral home. It was a pretty good deal.

DM:

Oh you bet. Well can you tell me a bit about the program and some of the faculty that you worked with?

JB:

Well it was a very good program, but you were able to specialize probably far too much too quickly. But I worked with Gordon Griffiths who was a prominent early modern historian, David Pinkney who later became president of the American Historical Association who was a French

historian of the nineteenth century. Scott Liddell who was a French Revolutionary historian. And so we—it was interesting, Griffiths was a product of the University of California, Berkeley back in the twenties, but he had spent some time at Oxford. He was very, very well educated. And I remember going to him at one point and saying, You know, I just want to know how many languages I need to learn. And he says, As many as you need. (both laugh) So it was sort of a laid back time and graduate school—there were still deferments again, so we had lots of students. And it was a pretty good time. We had really bright people, really good exchanges. As I said earlier, it got more and more politically charged as we went along. But we enjoyed our graduate years I think a lot.

DM:

Were you involved in politics pretty much at this time?

JB:

Yeah we were. We were involved in anti-war demonstrations in particular. Actually organizing them and getting some of them off the ground.

DM:

When you say we, are you talking about you and Pam, or a group?

JB:

Well kind of a group of us students. Pam was not so much at that time. She's much more involved in politics today than I am. But at that time not quite as much but I was involved in organizing a couple of—especially after the invasion of Cambodia we had a big anti-war demonstration. About twenty thousand people and that took some interesting organization.

DM:

How did these demonstrations go?

JB:

Well, they were supposed to be peaceful. And we'd had one earlier one that turned into rock throwing and window breaking and stuff like that, and we didn't want that anymore. And that's why the American Friends Services Committee got into that because as Quakers they sort of exuded peacefulness and so we thought that was a pretty good affiliation to have. But by that time, anti-war groups and pro-peace groups had become kind of sophisticated, and so they—for instance Group A wouldn't walk behind Group B. They didn't like Group B's agenda; so we had to placate all these different—and we had to finally say in exasperation, You know we're here to demonstrate against the war in Vietnam, we're not here to have our own agendas put forth. But anyway, there had become that sort of specialization.

DM:

Can you recall some of the groups that were involved?

JB:

No, not specifically. If I said something I'd probably just make it up at this point. I can't remember exactly.

DM:

(laughs) Did the police show up?

JB:

Oh yeah, big time. But that march was fairly peaceful. We marched from the campus all the way to downtown Seattle which is a pretty good walk. And as I said there were twenty thousand people in it, so, that was May of 1970.

DM:

Was there any interaction between demonstrators and police?

JB:

No, it was a pretty good one. I think people were—there were some people who were interested in causing problems but the crowd just sort of surged around them and calmed them down.

DM:

(laughs) So that's how that works?

JB:

Yeah. I think that's the best way.

DM:

How many of these demonstrations were you involved in?

JB:

Well at least two that I can remember that required a little bit of effort, and then a number of campus—we called them back then “teach-ins.” We had a lot of teach-ins. I didn't do any of them, but I was the president of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate at that point which meant that I was the president of seven thousand graduate and medical, dental, nursing students and so on, because the health sciences center was contiguous with the campus—upper campus. So I was on the board of regents as a result, and I had access. I had kind of a bully pulpit if you will. I realized something that was one of those life lessons. I had, when I first went on the board of regents, I was a graduate student obviously. I had kind of a bushy afro and a beard and the

graduate school student uniform of the flannel shirt and the jeans and the hiking boots, and showed up at the regent's meeting with all these high dollar regents, and realized they weren't paying any attention to me whatsoever. And I wanted them to pay attention to me so I cut my hair a little bit, not too dramatically, but I cleaned up. And I put on a shirt and tie and jacket and showed up at the next meeting and they paid a lot more attention. And I thought you know, This may be superficial but I need them to listen to me. So if I can get to the point where they can listen and not be put off by my appearance, then I'm going to do that.

DM:

Right. Can you define a teach-in?

JB:

A teach-in was usually someone or some group who would come and talk about a particular aspect of the war. Maybe they would talk about their experiences, maybe they were a veteran. Maybe they would talk about what is going on in San Francisco, or what's going on in La Jolla or da da da da. Somebody maybe would come and talk about the Berrigan brothers and what they were doing with the draft records. It generally had a theme to it, but mainly it was an excuse for lots of people to get together and yell and shout.

DM:

Right. So these were staged as separate from campus activities?

JB:

Yeah we invited these people there. This was what we would call I guess today, a student demonstration. We had a student demonstration, I remember, after one of these teach-ins. We were going to go over to the career placement center and march over there because the CIA was on campus and they were recruiting. Ironically a lot of graduate students went to join the CIA as a matter of fact. But anyway, on our way over there we were crossing this little street at the University of Washington and a pickup truck is coming by and the crowd, about five thousand students trying to get across the street and this pickup truck is trying to get through. And all of a sudden this pickup truck comes to an abrupt halt and thousands—tens of thousands of bees erupt from the back of this truck, and they start stinging all the crowd. And the crowd is running and screaming and all these bees are going nuts. And of course all the students thought this was a conspiracy. Well it turned out, after the whole thing was all over with, some poor guy, beekeeper from Yakima, Washington had some—his bees were sick and he had brought them to the university to have this entomologist in the forestry school look at his bees and he got in the middle of this demonstration and he slammed on his brakes and the hives tipped over and all the bees got out and they were pissed off. And it showed me that sort of accidental thing that happens sometimes in history. You think that something has been totally orchestrated and

manipulated and it really wasn't. It was just this poor shmuck who was bringing his sick bees to campus.

DM:

(laughs) That's a great story.

JB:

Lots of people wore their heart on their sleeve at that time and they were just convinced that somebody had manipulated this environment so that this guy would show up with all these hives and purposefully knock them over and sting everybody.

DM:

(laughs) Were most of these teach-ins held out in the open? Did people come through who circulated from campus to campus?

JB:

Oh yeah, there were circuit teaching people.

DM:

Do you remember any big names from that?

JB:

No. I do remember Fred Harris came through. Fred Harris was [a] senator from Oklahoma at the time and he came through, not so much in a teach-in thing but he was telling us about why he was against the war and why he had decided not to run for senate anymore. And again, because of this position of mine I got to spend some time with him, and again it was one of those revelatory moments. I said, I would think being a US senator would be the best job in the world. And he said, Well the problem with being a US senator is you spend all morning trying to get on the evening news and all afternoon trying to get in the morning papers. And he said, I can do more—he was a Populist guy—he said, I can do more outside the senate I think than I can do inside the senate. I don't know if that's actually true but in his case, I know he tried to afterwards. But there were people of that repute and, then there were people who were not necessarily teach-in type people but who—Buckminster Fuller and some other people who came through that I got a chance to meet. So I was fortunate that I was in the position I was because I got a chance to be available to meet these people.

DM:

Um-hm. Were you involved in any congressional or presidential campaigns?

JB:

No. We voted, but I wasn't involved in some of the presidential campaigns that a lot of my friends were. A lot of them went to work for [Eugene] McCarthy, and they went down to Oregon to work for McCarthy, and they worked for McCarthy in Washington state. And some of them were going to work for Bobby Kennedy when he was going to run, but he was killed in '68. So it was before I got to graduate school. But they had been in those campaigns.

DM:

Okay. Well let's talk about your research interests at the University of Washington. I'm interested to see how you were directed toward Provence, I believe?

JB:

Languedoc actually. But anyway, it was again one of those kind of strange, quirky things. I had, when I came back from France as an undergraduate, I talked to the French historian at Kansas, a guy named Ambrose Saricks about my interests and my abilities and could I do a project? And he put me onto a pamphlet collection from the French Revolution. So I was reading these pamphlets and became let's say at ease in the French Revolution—knew my stuff. So when I started my master's work, I worked with a man named Scott Lytle who is the French Revolutionary guy, and I said I was interested in—I had come across what I thought was an anomaly, that there were two decrees of emancipation, or suffrage for Jews in the French Revolution. And I wanted to find out more about that. Well, Scott was a good guy; we became good friends. He got a lot of the primary materials for me, and what I discovered was that there were two major—I was you know, Episcopalian kid from the Midwest, what did I know from Jewish stuff? But there were Ashkenazic Jews who were resident in Eastern France in Metz and Tulle, and Verdun and Nancy and places like that. And then there were Sephardic Jews who would come up from Spain who were more resident in the Avignon and Marseilles area. Sephardic Jews had assimilated a lot more into French culture. Ashkenazic Jews tended to still identify as a community, and they still spoke Yiddish in lots of cases, and they were quite distinctive in their dress, and they had dietary observations that distinguished them. So when the French Revolution began to recognize people and emancipate them and enfranchise them, they enfranchised the Sephardic Jews about a year and so many months earlier than they did Ashkenazic. And part of the problem was the Ashkenazic Jews had borrowed money as a community, so they owed money as a community and the idea was that if you emancipated them, the community went away, and therefore the debt was not going to be observed. Anyway, I wrote a master's thesis on that.

But during that time I became quite interested in political theory and political—the whole question about what constitutes suffrage and enfranchisement and sovereignty and the whole thing. I went further back in French history and that put me back with Gordon Griffiths who worked with representative assemblies. I had worked with the representative assemblies in those pamphlets during the French Revolution, but their origin of course is back in the fourteenth and

fifteenth century. So that's what I became more interested in and he said, Well let's find an area of France that's interesting and then we'll find the topic. (both laugh) He said, Languedoc is a very nice place. And we had some opportunities to find and do some good work there in that area.

DM:

Were you overseas researching for quite some time?

JB:

Yeah, for a year. Lived there for another year in Montpellier and then went back a couple of times to Toulouse and then that's where I ended up in Carcassonne for a while because a friend of mine was an archivist who lived there.

DM:

Were you working with original documents or?

JB:

Yeah. That was the hardest thing to do and it was one of those epiphanies, was getting used to that handwriting. It's very, very difficult, and I was very discouraged when I first got over there. And Pam remembers that I would come home from the archives, and we were living in Paris at the time, and I was trying to get through these documents. And I just could not make sense of them, couldn't figure it out and I was very discouraged. And then one day it just all happened, and she remembers I just came home ecstatic that I could see it. It was like the scales were lifted from my eyes or something, I don't know. So when I got down to Montpellier I was feeling pretty confident and in the scribal hand, that is the official hand where a lot of these records were kept, I was pretty proficient.

DM:

So it was the script that was the problem? It wasn't archaic spellings or things like that?

JB:

You could get used to that pretty quickly, but I learned how to read the handwriting and that was really the challenge and dealing with the French bureaucracy, that's always a challenge.

DM:

So your dissertation came out of that work?

JB:

Yeah. The States of Languedoc in the Sixteenth Century. And I got a couple of articles out of that in some pretty good journals, and I got a lot of recognition from the guy who was doing the

big work in that, doing the big work for the whole national picture. And he so quoted my dissertation in his book that I had no chance to ever publish the dissertation. He quoted that so extensively, everyone in the country who was in French history knew what I had done. And I guess I should have thanked him but at the same time I could never publish the dissertation.

DM:

That's interesting. During this time I know that you were very busy but did you have any continuing interests in the natural world? Here you were up in Washington—

JB:

Well I still hunted, and we would always go back to Kansas at Thanksgiving and Christmas, mostly at Christmas because it was quite a drive. I still hunted back in Kansas, and I still fished. We hiked a lot in the northwest. I got Pam involved. She tells it now I had to lie to her because if I told her the truth about how rough these hikes are she never would have gone. (DM laughs) But we did a lot of backpacking, you know four and five and six day backpacks up into the Cascades and over the Olympic Peninsula.

DM:

How wonderful.

JB:

It was back in the day when it was still relatively new to do that, and you didn't see that many people, and it was delightful and beautiful up in those reaches. And as I said we took some kind of rigorous and lengthy trips.

DM:

That is lengthy, a several day backpacking trip—in rugged country too.

JB:

Well and freeze-dried food had just sort of come out at that time for us; so that was, it made it a little easier.

DM:

Oh yeah. Now when you're talking about hunting you're talking about bird hunting aren't you?

JB:

Primarily, although I did some deer hunting as well in Washington. And then Kansas didn't have many deer at that time. Now we're overrun, and I hunt deer all the time in Kansas now.

DM:

Is it mule deer?

JB:

No, whitetail. And I hunt deer here in Texas too.

DM:

And bird hunting from the beginning has been what, quail, dove?

JB:

Quail and pheasant and dove a little bit but that's mostly a social thing, but quail and pheasant primarily. That's been really nice. I'm the only one in Pam's family who hunts; so I essentially have the whole—all of our acreage in Kansas to myself.

DM:

Oh that's great.

JB:

I don't have any competition there.

DM:

Did you tell me that you venture over into the Spanish Peaks area of Colorado?

JB:

I haven't been to the Spanish Peaks area. I've been—I guess I've spent some time in Twin Lakes. You know where that is? At the foot of Mount Elbert?

[speaking at the same time]

JB:

Between Leadville and Buena Vista. My uncle had a cabin at Twin Lakes.

DM:

Okay. I don't know where I got this Southern Colorado idea.

JB:

Well I've been to La Cuchara.

DM:

But not to hunt?

JB:

No. Just as a tourist.

DM:

So you graduated from the University of Washington in '74 did you say?

JB:

Right. And there were no jobs, none. So the University of Washington, again, thanks to that political job I'd known a lot of people in administration, they hired me to teach a course, and they hired me to do a couple of stupid things, but they paid the freight. And I applied for jobs and continued to publish stuff that I could publish.

DM:

Why were there no jobs? Was it the glut from Vietnam?

JB:

Yeah. There were just lots and lots of PhDs at that point and not so much growth in universities. But I got a job notice for a job at Texas Tech University. Never heard of it.

DM:

When was this?

JB:

Seventy-five. And I applied, and I went to a Western Society for French History meeting in Denver and interviewed with some people there from Texas Tech who had come to interview, because they were interested in hiring a French historian, and [I] didn't think much about it. It seemed to go okay, it was nice, da da da da. Otto Nelson was chairman of the committee and Idris Traylor was on the committee. Harry Jepsen was on the committee. Anyway, got back home, and they invited me to campus. So I came to campus, I think it was December now, of '75. And the school was out, but they had me sort of talk to some graduate students. I remember Don Abbe was in the audience. Anyway, I got home and a few days later they called and said they had a job for me. I said, Sure, so I took the job, didn't think much about it. Didn't negotiate much about salary, was happy to have a job. And here's the irony of this. We came in '76, and we started in the fall of '76. And Pam went to work for Jimmy Allen who was Dean of Students at the time. She worked in his office.

DM:

Did they try to get faculty—jobs for wives of faculty?

JB:

No. Later on she became a—she hadn't finished her dissertation, she was still working on it. Later on she became an instructor in the English department, but she worked for Jimmy Allen to begin with. In other words just money. And about two years after this, I can't remember exactly when it was, I was at one of those obligatory meetings of early modern historians and French historians, and I had the badge on, you know "James Brink, Texas Tech University." And somebody came up and pointed at the badge and said, Oh you're the guy that got the job. And I said, You mean the one at Texas Tech? He says, No, *the* job. In 1976 there was one job.

DM:

What?

JB:

One job in early modern European history, and I got that job. And I never knew that, I never thought about that. And I don't know that it's actually true, but he certainly was convinced of it.

DM:

Do you have any idea how many candidates there were for the position?

JB:

I have no idea, but I can tell you that I became a lot more humble after that. Thinking, Wow, I know I'm not that great so this was just really lucky. (laughs) But that's how funny life works out sometimes.

DM:

Well this had to be an incredible transition, and maybe not a good transition. You were up in Washington—

JB:

Well it was kind of funny, we didn't mind it. And Pam had grown up in a small town in Central Kansas and one of the things I had learned from her was, and this was remarkable, we noticed it when we were living in Seattle—we had a lot of friends in Seattle who were very cliquish. I mean they just had a narrow group of people with whom they identified, and we had a whole wide range. And Pam is, she's a terribly insightful person and she said one time, You know the thing is, in the Midwest, people are your recreation whereas in Seattle you've got mountains and in half an hour you can be doing something unbelievably nifty. You don't have to have people necessarily. She said, When I was growing up I knew everybody in town, and I had to get along with lots of different types of people. So when we contemplated, I mean when we accepted this position, we didn't think about it. We didn't say, Oh we're going out to the hinterland or da da da da. We just—I remember going down to the Recreation Equipment Incorporated, I was down

there for some other reason, and the Landsat Atlas had just come out with Landsat Photography, so I turned to the Puget Sound area, and of course here's this incredible photograph of Puget Sound area with all, you know from sea level up to Mount Rainier—lots and lots of busyness. So I thought, Well I want to see what Lubbock is like. So I turned to West Texas and it was just whoom, one color. (laughs) And it said if you look closely you'd see tiny gray dots. These were former buffalo wallows. (DM laughs) And I thought the definition of the land and the flat Llano Estacado was where some buffalo rolled around, turns out there were playa lakes. But anyway, I had always thought of Kansas as extremely flat and uninteresting and after about a year here we went back to Kansas and I thought, Wow Kansas is really interesting. (DM laughs) And so that developed my credo that Lubbock causes you to appreciate anywhere else you'd ever go and that Lubbock was about 350 miles from anywhere you'd want to be, since Santa Fe and Dallas and El Paso and Coldwater, Kansas were all about 350 miles. And that the quality of life in Lubbock was directly proportional to how often you left. And so, one of the things that this job afforded me was an opportunity to travel. So I went to France a lot and I went to a lot of meetings, and I thought that was very important for the development of the faculty.

DM:

Were the people here—did they take you in? Did you make friends quickly?

JB:

Yeah. There were four of us who came in the same year and that helped. So we were kind of a group to begin with.

DM:

Who were they? Do you remember?

JB:

Jayme Sokolow was one, a guy named Thomas Francis Xavier Noble was another, Chuck Wood was the third one, and I was the fourth one. And we all became pretty good friends, although Jayme was a little different, and of course later on Jayme was accused of plagiarism and caused quite a stir with the American Historical Association because of his behavior. Tom Noble later went to Virginia and then to Notre Dame. And Chuck died in 1981 from a terrible cancer and that was a real blow to me. I had become really good friends with Chuck and with his family and we'd actually, we were both from Kansas, he had done all of his work at the University of Kansas. He lived in Topeka. We were good pals, and his death really bothered me a lot. As a result—we had collaborated on an article, interestingly enough, about Alexander Mackay who was a Scotsman who was involved with a ranch out here in the nineteenth century. And I was really, really glad after that, that we had collaborated on that. It was kind of fun. I mean that was a far cry from sixteenth century France, but it was fun anyway. But no, I would say we were very well accepted. And there wasn't much of a, You're the assistant professor shut up and don't do

anything. We were all—we all came from pretty strong backgrounds and we were all, I think we were good citizens and good scholars and we were embraced. There was some quirkiness. There was the old guard around the—David Vigness and Paul Wood—and some of the other people who had been there for a long long time. But I never felt any animosity or haughtiness or arrogance whatsoever. It was a pretty good time. We had a softball game every Sunday; we all played softball together.

DM:

In the history department?

JB:

Yeah, graduate students and faculty and some undergraduates occasionally, and we played every Sunday and we always had a good time. And Pam still says to this day she likes partying with the history people. They know how to party—Alwyn Barr and that group, and Bryan Blakeley—

DM:

Blakeley had his wine and cheese tastings.

JB:

Jack Collins. Of course, Otto Nelson with whom we are still in contact, and Jim Harper at the time and Harry Jepson and that group of people, pretty good group of people.

DM:

Did you hook up with any of these University of Kansas biology people? I think Tech had—

[speaking at same time]

JB:

Knox Jones I knew, I didn't know him through Kansas but I came to know him because he was the graduate dean and when he knew that I was from Kansas that helped create some friendliness I think, and he was very helpful to me. Got me some support. He was vice president for research and graduate dean at the same time.

DM:

When you mentioned that you grew up with this interest in the natural world as a child, it struck me that I've interviewed at least a few and maybe several other people from Kansas, western Kansas who went into biology because they had a childhood interest.

JB:

It wouldn't surprise me at all.

DM:

And the University of Kansas has a real strong biology program.

JB:

It did, and Knox was a good example of that.

DM:

Did you ever hear the story of how he was drawn to Texas Tech?

JB:

No.

DM:

Oh okay, I just wanted to know if you had an insight on that.

JB:

It would have been well before my time so I don't know what brought him down here. He was a bat guy I know, and there might have been something around with bats here. I know that's how Robert Baker ended up here because of Knox Jones. But Baker came from Arkansas I think.

DM:

Right, that's right. Well tell me a little bit more about the history department at this time. The faculty numbered about how many? What was some of the stronger programs?

JB:

Well we had about twenty-five faculty I guess. I don't know exactly what the numbers were. We had a pretty strong contingent in Latin America because Alan Kuethe and Bob Hayes and David Vigness represented that sort of group. We had a strong group in Europe. [Tom] Noble was the medievalist and I was the Renaissance guy. And well a few years later we brought in [David] Troyansky and so we had a pretty good French group. American historians and the European historians got a little bit more polarized because they saw us as becoming kind of strong. Who's the guy—who's name, gosh I hadn't thought about this David. Who's the guy who wrote *Lord of the Plains*?

DM:

Ernest Wallace.

JB:

Wallace. Wallace was an interesting character. He was in his kind of dotage at the time that I came here. And I began to collect stories about faculty at Texas Tech, partly because of Ernest

because he was such a character. But I learned quickly—we moved in 1977 into Holden Hall from where the math department is now.

DM:

Really? The history department was in the math building?

JB:

Right.

DM:

Huh. I didn't know that.

JB:

The Southwest Collection was over there, and we were at the end of the hall. And anyway I learned very quickly—Ernest's office was between my office and the bathroom—that if I went down and said good morning to Ernest on my way to the bathroom I was going to seriously jeopardize my kidneys. Because it wouldn't matter what was going on, Ernest had a story. So I learned to go all the way around to go to the bathroom and then come by and say good morning to Ernest. But Ernest was an interesting character. David Vigness felt it an obligation to have a party every fall for the faculty, and he would reluctantly bring out alcohol. And I remember at one of these parties, we'd had a couple of drinks and I went into the kitchen to get another drink and no more alcohol, all the bottles are gone. And Ellen Wallace came in, Ernest's wife, and she—there were no flies on her—and I said, I guess they put away all the alcohol? She says, Oh hell I know where they keep it. (both laugh) And she opened the cupboards and found the alcohol and dragged it all back out again. David thought that he should control the drinking interests of his faculty. And Winifred was right there with him I can tell you. The two of them together were sort of a moral force.

DM:

How old was he at this time?

JB:

Well, gosh it's hard to say, he must have been in his late fifties. He was getting near retirement—

DM:

That sounds terribly young. (laughs)

JB:

He would retire probably in '82 or three. And Alwyn Barr became chair then Blakeley. Maybe I have that backwards. I think that's right.

DM:

When you arrived here and started teaching, what was your load like? What were some of your courses?

JB:

Well it was very, very tough. I had three classes. That doesn't seem like a lot but when you haven't taught any classes along those lines—I mean I had taught some classes at the University of Washington, but I was teaching senior level classes there. Ironically graduate students are better prepared to teach senior level classes than they are surveys. So I was—uncharacteristic of me David, you would appreciate this, I was staying up till three and four in the morning every night getting ready for class. So the first couple of years it was a real task because there were a lot of preparations and there was a lot of brand new material. And I was very conscientious. I wanted to make sure that I was doing a good job.

DM:

Right. Did you teach graduate seminars early on? Or was it a few years before...

JB:

It was a few years later. I taught mostly Western Civ classes and Renaissance and Reformation classes, and then ended up teaching a course on the history of women and enjoyed that quite a bit. I had to teach American History—you'll like this—I had to teach it at least twice. Hated it. Really didn't like it. It wasn't comfortable. I was about a half hour ahead of my students. I hadn't done any work in graduate school in American history and very little in undergraduate work. So anyway, they said, Oh it's a service course, everybody's got to teach it, da da da da. So sure enough I could fool the students, but I was not fooling myself I can tell you. But I remember one first day of class I thought, well, we'll see how we're going to proceed this semester. I said take out a blank piece of paper and draw an outline map of the United States and put in all the states. What a joke! They did a pretty good outline of the United States and they got a good outline, they got Florida, and Texas down there. And they drew in Texas, but after that it was just—forget the East Coast, but even the West Coast was pretty bad. And one student had Denmark over there on the East Coast and one student had a pretty good outline of Oklahoma but she had it up on the Canadian border. And I said, How come you have Oklahoma up there? She said, Well I know it's to the north I just don't know where it is. (both laugh) I said, Well it's only 250 miles from here.

DM:

It's an unfair question if you've never been out of Texas.

JB:

Well you know I started thinking about that, and that's a very insightful point. These students just had no sense of geography, and I couldn't figure it out. And one day I'm in an airport and here are all these college students getting ready to go somewhere and I thought, Here's the problem. They don't get out the map and go, Can I go through this mountain chain, over this river, da da da da da. They fly everywhere so they just don't know their geography. They start in Lubbock and they end up in Seattle, so how did they get there? They don't know. There's a place called Seattle and that's where the plane went.

DM:

So I wonder about the TomTom effect now for the same reason.

JB:

Well that's probably a good point. And again, see that doesn't give you global, that just tells you—makes you into automatons.

DM:

Turn right, take a left, take another left.

JB:

Yeah. Or, Oh, you screwed up, reconfiguring. (DM laughs) But anyway I didn't teach American history much beyond that. And I taught graduate courses of course, and I taught you I think at one time.

DM:

Um-hm. Undergrad. And grad. You taught Western Civilization surveys I believe.

JB:

Right. And I enjoyed those and I still do. I'm still teaching Western Civ. Honor's sections now. But I enjoyed teaching Reformation classes in particular. I think you took a Reformation class. And I think, I don't know if this was in your class or not, but it happened frequently that I would get up there and we'd start out and I'd tell them all about the Catholic Church and da da da. And then we'd start in on some of the challenges to the Catholic Church, and I'd tell them all about that. Then we'd start in on Luther and I'd tell them all about that. Then I'd start in on Anabaptists and Calvinists and invariably I'd get a question from a student about that time, "Dr. Brink we can't figure out what you are."

DM:

(laughs) That's a compliment.

JB:

“When you’re talking about Catholics you sound like a Catholic. Or when you talk about Lutherans you sound like a Lutheran.” I thought, I’m doing my job. (laughs)

DM:

Absolutely. Did you ever have any students that came in and had their own opinion already carved in stone? —

JB:

Oh absolutely.

DM:

—And it was maybe a fundamentalist perspective or something like that, and challenged you?

JB:

Yeah but you know, I don’t know what it is, I’ve never had that be—I’ve had that case to be sure—but I’ve never had that be confrontational or aggressive. And I’ve had students obviously whose political viewpoints are quite different from my own, and I’ve never been challenged about that. I don’t know why it is, maybe it’s my size or my bluff or whatever it is. And I know it happens in other classes. I’m mentoring a graduate student in the TEACH program right now who tells me that one of her problems is that she hasn’t gotten any control in her class. That students bully her essentially. And I said, that’s just beyond my ken I can’t imagine, that would never have crossed my mind that that could happen to me. But I had students who had those sorts of views. And I think partly the reason that it wasn’t a problem is that students, especially then, and even to a large extent now at Texas Tech, are pretty compliant. This is not the era that I was talking about earlier where students would stand up in classrooms and yell at professors about relevance. Students here are pretty compliant. They will “swallow,” in the kind of West Texas vernacular, anything that comes out as long as they can get a degree out of it or a grade. So they are willing to—at the same time they practice what I got from Doonesbury [comic strip] one time—projectile honesty.

DM:

I don’t know about that one.

JB:

It’s the Jefferson thing.

DM:

Oh yes, yes that’s it. I need a copy of that.

JB:

He makes a statement, scribble scribble, then he makes it even more crazy, and they scribble scribble.

DM:

Black is white, scribble scribble scribble. And one of them turns to the other and says, "I didn't know half this stuff." (both laugh)

JB:

Yeah it's a great comment. But students at Tech are kind of into this projectile honesty. They will tell you exactly what they think, but they won't do it in an aggressive way necessarily. At least I've never found that to be the case.

DM:

But I think you do have a point that it depends on the personality, because I've not seen that in your class but I have seen it in another history class, and I'll tell you who that was later on.

JB:

Well I wouldn't mind it; I think I can hold my own. But I've just never had to worry about it very much. And I'm sure I've had graduate students who thought I was nuttier than a fruitcake about some of my views. That's okay. I didn't enjoy teaching graduate classes as much you know. I guess because I never found—I really expected graduate students to seize on this stuff a lot more and to be much more involved. And I guess that's always why I've gravitated to the honor's college, and before that the honor's program. Because I started teaching that clear back in the seventies. Because there at least students were encouraged to express themselves and even though their attitudes oftentimes were not my attitudes, it was never done in a confrontational way or aggressive way. And I always, and still obviously enjoy teaching honor's students. I can assume a lot more and start at a little bit higher level. I don't think I work them any harder than I would work regular students. The difference is they do the work. They are much more—now they are just as quote unquote intellectually lazy many times as my other students. That is, they're only going to do what they need to do in order to get what they need to get. But they'll do it with a little bit more refinement. And then occasionally you'll have some absolutely brilliant ones who just knock your socks off. So it's always been a pleasure to teach them.

DM:

I think in the term that you've been here the entrance requirements have changed at least a few times as I recall.

JB:

Yeah and I was involved with some of that during my administrative days and pretty proud of what we tried to do. I think they're going the other direction right now.

DM:

Trying to lower standards to get the numbers?

JB:

Not trying to.

DM:

Doing it.

JB:

They are. And that's to get to this mythical forty thousand which is—you know I understand it from a budgetary standpoint but I don't understand it from a higher education standpoint.

DM:

Yeah, and we're going to come back to that issue.

JB:

I hope so. (laughs)

DM:

Maybe not today. (laughs) Well let's talk about other happenings in the history department. Are you comfortable talking about the [Jayme] Sokolow situation?

JB:

Sure, happy to. I was very intrigued I guess. We came up early [for tenure], Jayme and I did. We came up—you know you have a six-year probation. We both came up in our fifth year.

DM:

For tenure?

JB:

Yeah. And I didn't have any problem, and I didn't feel threatened or—I just thought, Well hell I'm doing pretty well. I had some teaching awards, I had some recognition. I'd been elected president of a national society and some other stuff. It made me think, Hey I'm doing the right things, so why not? And the other three—the three of us out of the four who was not Jayme. The three of us were always intrigued by Jayme. He was just publishing stuff right and left. An article

here on this, and then another article on Ben Franklin, and another article on Tolstoy. Where was this stuff coming from?

DM:

When does the guy sleep?

JB:

Yeah exactly. We just couldn't believe it. So here comes—and Tom Mallon has written about this by the way. I don't know if you've read Tom Mallon's account of this?

DM:

Unh-uh.

JB:

It's called *All Quiet Flows the Dawn*. But the Book is called *Stolen Words*, and it's a whole book devoted to plagiarism. But Jayme Sokolow was one chapter. And he came here and did the research for it, and it's a solid piece of work let me tell you. So if you want the story on Sokolow, that's where it is. In any event, he came up for tenure, and Jack Collins smelled a rat. And Jack was very circumspect, he couldn't imagine that some of this stuff was really original and started teasing it out as only a historian could do and going for the sources and then just uncovered this whole stinking pile. And I mean within a very short time this whole thing was revealed.

DM:

And this was more than one publication?

JB:

Oh yes. It went all the way back to the dissertation. It was everything that he did. It was just rife. And the university did not want to fire him. Larry Graves didn't have the guts, and it was a real disappointment to us who felt very much betrayed by Jayme—that he had betrayed us not only as his quote unquote friends but he had betrayed the department, the profession, etcetera.

DM:

Where did he get his dissertation, his PhD?

JB:

NYU. The irony here is that he left, he didn't get tenure obviously. He left, and he went to the National Endowment for the Humanities. And he was the grant guy. He was the one who decided who got grants. That's when Tom Mallon got involved with this. And the story got bigger because there was a guy at the University of Massachusetts who accused Jayme of—Jayme was

doing this work on Sylvester Graham and this guy had already published this stuff and he said, This is my stuff.

DM:

Yeah. That's how you think it would be discovered.

JB:

It's amazing how he got away with this as long as he did. But as I say, once it began to unravel it was serious.

DM:

Did he leave here? He wasn't fired here, he left here because he felt the pressure or?

JB:

Yeah he didn't get tenure so he left here because of that.

DM:

I got you, okay.

JB:

I've got to go to the bathroom, or I'm going to start really lying.

DM:

Okay let's just stop this. [pause in tape] Okay we're back on.

JB:

In the Sokolow case, I remember that there was a lot of, as I said, timidity on the part of the university to publicly expose this and to fire him. And of course he had an attorney. He was going to fight this presumably, maintaining his innocence all the way, which he did by the way for a long time until it was finally so obvious to everyone except Jayme that he was guilty. In any case, I remember Jack Collins saying in some exasperation, and it may be in Mallon's chapter that the old medieval expression that you chase a thief to the edge of a village and you're rid of a thief, and that's essentially what we did. We chased Jayme to the edge of the campus and we left him to the world. So when we went to—I think he went to Washington right from here or within a short time he got that job at NEH, and continued to plagiarize, I felt as though we had betrayed the profession again because we hadn't exposed him.

DM:

How did he pull that off? The job with NEH?

JB:

I have no idea. I think he knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody. I don't know. But I always thought it was ironic that you know, we wouldn't have stood a chance getting an NEH fellowship out of Washington as long as he was there. (laughs)

DM:

That's true.

JB:

But anyway, that was a purgation. And I think that it changed a little bit of the tenor of the department. I think a lot of people lost some respect for certain people because they hadn't gone the distance. We were acquiring new folks all along then and some of the new folks were a little more precious we thought. They weren't in that humble mode that I mentioned earlier about grateful to have a job. They kind of thought that maybe they should be more taken care of, and some of us were a little impatient with that. The sort of—getting on to be older in the department and longer in tooth and less tolerant to the youngsters who were kicking up the dust. But we had some great hires over the years. And then it really did fall apart after a time.

DM:

The hires? The quality of hires?

JB:

Well no, the quality did pretty well but then when things didn't happen—promotions, stroking—in retrospect probably some of these folks did need to be stroked a little bit more. Mills Kelly—great guy, Patricia Lorcín, great guy. There were some terrific people in that group.

DM:

Are you saying that Tech lost them because—did they go elsewhere because they didn't get a promotion or?

JB:

Yeah. They weren't getting quite the strokes. And here's Lorcín, for instance, who was an established scholar and book and all sorts of stuff—wanted to come up a year early and they told her no. Well it was just stupid. Just shortsighted. And I always used to joke around that it got to the point where if you won a Nobel Prize and you went in to talk to the chairman at the time about the fact that you just won a Nobel Prize, he'd say, Well I sure hope you can raise the money to get to Stockholm because it sure wasn't going to come from him. So anyway, it got a little bit more, I don't know. Don Haragan talks about atomism on the campus, you know, that people get into their silos and that started to happen even within the history department a little bit.

DM:

Okay. Were you around for the Hinckley Junior...

JB:

Yeah I was here at the time. I didn't know him. Otto [Nelson] of course did, and Otto handled all that pretty well with his typical aplomb. But the FBI was snooping around, I think it was the FBI maybe it was Secret Service. I don't know who it was. But they were all over this place and of course once they had learned that this guy had taken a course on German history and done a book review on *Mein Kampf*—I guess Hinckley got out the other day or something. Didn't he?

DM:

Oh did he? I hadn't heard.

JB:

I think he did. Or at least they're giving him more rope. God, the guy's forty-five years old or something now. No I remember it well. And of course [Lowell] Blaisdell had just started a course then called The History of Assassinations and we were all saying, God I hope he didn't take that course. Well, it turns out he hadn't. He'd taken Nelson's course on the Nazi era or something like that. But not too many people could remember him around here. And I guess that's oftentimes the case with these types, they're just not very—they don't stand out much. And they are disturbed as a result.

DM:

Can you think of any classroom anecdotes that you can share?

JB:

Well you know as I said I collected stories in my own mind about various people across campus and I don't know, maybe you've heard of some of them. One of them was a historian by the name of Oscar Kitchen. Kitchen of course was reputedly very absent-minded. And I don't know this story firsthand, I had heard both of these, but I had heard this first one so many times it must be true. He was at a meeting in Amarillo and somebody offered him a ride back to Lubbock and he took the ride only to realize that he'd driven to Amarillo (both laugh), and then he bought a roundtrip ticket to go get his car. But the other story, I think that—oh who might have told me this? I don't know. It might have been Knox Jones, but anyway, Oscar was supposed to be presiding over a defense of a master's thesis. It was summertime. And the time came and the student was there and the graduate school people were there but Kitchen wasn't there. Someone said, He probably forgot and the student said, Well he just lives across the street over here on Main Street, I'll go over and get him. So he ran across the street and Kitchen lived in kind of a shotgun shack sort of thing where in the warm days he kept the front door open and the backdoor open for breeze and he could see all the way through and he could see Kitchen buck naked asleep

on his bed. So he pounds on the door and Kitchen wakes up and puts on this ratty old robe and comes to the door. "Dr. Kitchen you're supposed to preside over my master's thesis defense." "I'll be there." So the kid goes back and about five minutes later Kitchen shows up in the ratty old robe. He didn't put on any clothes at all. (both laugh) But you know, those days are kind of gone and those people would be arrested these days.

There's a famous story of Bull Durham in animal science. Bull used to lecture at like 8:30 in the morning or something like that and he would come in before the students got there and he'd put his Western hat down by the lectern. He'd go down the hall for coffee and the students would file in. And I know this—I've had students who were in this class when this happened. I know this was true. Marvin Cepica [later Dean of Agriculture at Tech] was one of them. He was in the class. Anyway, one day, he gets delayed. A phone call or somebody waylays him or something but he's about ten minutes late, about ten minutes into the hour. And he comes in and the students are kind of restless and one of them said, Prof., we didn't know if you were here or not. And he pointed to his hat and he said, Look, my hat's here. I'm here. So he comes in the next class and there's a hat on every desk but no students. (DM laughs) I always thought that was a pretty good one. But anyway, these stories about these people are very amusing and heart-warming and these were harmless people. But as I say, these days, the characters just aren't there anymore. Everybody is so damn serious and so mindful of what the consequences are. I can be sued or I can sue you or watch out. It's not as much fun you know. We used to have a lot of fun. We used to laugh a lot. We used to not be very pretentious and used to—and Pam accuses me of living in the past too much but we did have a lot more fun. We don't have as much fun these days.

DM:

What are the main reasons for that change in the atmosphere on campus?

JB:

I don't know. I noticed a change—you know I'd like to say that the change in American politics occurred when Wilbur Mills fell into the reflecting pool and the press reported on it. Because prior to that they didn't report on politicians and their foibles but somebody reported on Wilbur doing that. And I think what happened here was [John] Montford showed up and he changed the tenor of the place. Suddenly we were slick and political and those people—he had a lot of parties and a lot of breakfasts and da da da da. But he changed the tenor of the Board of Regents. The Regents had, prior to that time been more local folks and they were interested in the faculty and we rubbed elbows with the regents and we had opportunities to get to know them and Montford had moved us, for good or for ill, into a much higher echelon when he got the much more high profile national figures—CEOs and so on who in some cases couldn't be bothered to be here. But they certainly weren't interested in hobnobbing with the faculty and that changed the nature of things. And we got a lot more serious.

DM:

There was a disconnect there between the academic and the political aspects?

JB:

Yeah, and I think we became aware that there was a Board of Regents and that they were important people and they were doing something important. And Montford was not an academic, but he was just a savvy guy. Lots of things I think he did well for us but lots of things I think changed the nature and the climate on the campus.

DM:

Well let's just delve on into this a little bit if we can. You were here for this time period in which we went into the chancellor system. Montford was the first of that bunch. At that point politics, it seems, began to filter down a little bit more into what was more of an academic realm. I don't know—I'm probably not putting that very well.

JB:

I think what happened was that he was—this was a move on the part of the regents to step us up and they appointed him. He didn't have anything to do at the time. I think he was a railroad commissioner or something at the time but anyway. And his primary responsibility was to preside over the quote unquote the system and to raise money. Well, he brought with him a retinue of folks who were not from around here as we like to say. And they didn't have a whole lot to do because there really wasn't a system. There had been the president of the two institutions and now we had two presidents and then we had a chancellor so we had that part, but there really wasn't a system to justify all of these people that he had. So they got more and more involved in the day to day matters of the campus.

DM:

These are the vice chancellors and assistant vice chancellors and the—

[speaking at the same time]

JB:

The Jim Crowson types, yeah.

DM:

How many of those were there at one time?

JB:

Oh probably half a dozen or so.

DM:

Well there were a lot because E.J. Holub was an assistant vice chancellor for—or something like that.

JB:

He wasn't involved in the day-to-day affairs of the university though, but some of them were. And the point was that they were seen as outsiders, carpetbaggers almost. And people whose interests were not the same as the interests of the faculty and the students, whose interests as you say were primarily political, and yet they were sticking their thumb into the academic pie. And they were changing the culture and making people look over their shoulders a lot and making people more sensitive to, I don't know, issues and concerns that had never really bothered people prior to that time. People became much more cognizant of the fact that we had somebody looking at us all the time—assessing us. We didn't use that word yet, but anyway we were being examined, that we were being watched. Not in a friendly way, not in a supportive way but in a way to get you. And I think it created in a lot of people a sort of siege mentality, and you can acknowledge this or not, but I think it persists to this day that people are very reluctant to speak their mind, raise their heads for fear that there will be some sort of reprisal. And not a reprisal for a good reason. A reprisal for a political reason, for the fact that you believe in climate change and we don't believe in climate change or some things like this. But you take a timid student body and a timid faculty, and you put this fear factor into it, and what results is that people are unwilling to help people anymore. They're not going to take an intellectual or personal chance to call up somebody and say, Hey you better take a look at such and such or, Have you heard about this? Or should we collaborate on that? Unless it's a quote unquote sure fire politically safe deal, they're not going to take many chances. And I think that's kind of the climate we have.

DM:

(whispers) Someone's knocking on the door. I think so. Do you want me to?

JB:

Let's see what's going on. I didn't hear a knock but maybe that's what happened. Nope.

DM:

Sorry about that. It's still rolling here.

JB:

In any event I think that's kind of my take on it. It was sort of exciting to begin with, the Montford era, because as I say it was so flush with all this social stuff and I had just gone into the provost's office so it was really heady. And we thought, man this was really working, look at all these millions of dollars he keeps talking about but it just didn't ever transpire. Some of this was—

DM:

What was that money?

JB:

Well these were insurance policies, and the idea was that you would say, Well I'll take out a million dollar insurance policy and my obligation is to pay the premium on it and then you can have it when I'm dead. Well some of these people are thirty years old and they're taking out insurance policies so they get all this hoopla about how you're just a million dollar donor, and he gave you a pair of spurs and everybody would sing and dance around the maypole. And I don't know if anyone has done this or not but I'm sure it would be worthwhile to take a look at and very revelatory to find out how many of those pledges have actually disappeared because people stopped paying the premiums.

DM:

Stopped paying or changed their beneficiary or—

JB:

Yeah.

DM:

And there's probably no way to check because this is personal information. Very interesting.

JB:

Right. So a lot of the people who actually gave money, I mean cash money up front, became resentful that they were being lumped with the people who were paying far, far less but getting credit for having pledged the same amount.

DM:

Right. What percentage do you think is just pledged?

JB:

I don't know. I probably knew at one time but I have no idea, but sizeable enough that people became kind of cynical about the whole thing. And I don't know about this 768 million dollars or whatever we're supposed to have right now or eight hundred and some million dollars, how much of that is still part of that.

DM:

So you think that strategy is still being used?

JB:

No I think it's not being used. I think if somebody wants to do it, that's fine but it's not the thing that—they're going out and trying to get the money up front.

DM:

Right, I see. How did the Montford administration differ from the David Smith?

JB:

Well Smith was much more an intellectual and much more aware of the faculty and much more aware of the fact that Montford had alienated a lot of people because he had begun to micromanage when we thought that he should have nothing to do with the daily running of the university. He was very much involved with it. And when somebody somewhat—with some trepidation I guess, suggested that he move over to the plaza building on the corner of 19th and University to set the administration apart for the system and he snapped back and said he was here on the campus and he would run the campus. And the fact that he took over the president's office and he had these people—I remember one day in the provost's office Krausen comes in and he starts measuring. You know that's a pretty scary thing when a guy comes in with a tape measure and starts measuring your office and you think, Whoa, what is going on here?

DM:

(laughs) What was going on with that?

JB:

They were thinking about moving. He didn't like the size of his office and he wanted a bigger spot. It didn't happen. Thank goodness.

DM:

Well let's throw Kent Hance into the mix as well and maybe you can make comparisons among the three.

JB:

Well David was an intellectual who got, obviously he got crosswise with the regents because he was probably too intellectual and not much of a back-slapper, and his wife was very involved with things and not a dutiful, obedient lady.

DM:

Was Bobby Knight in this?

JB:

And then when Bobby Knight could exploit that situation and did quite nicely. But then Hance comes along. I mean they got rid of Smith as fast as they could. And then Hance comes along and he's even worse than Montford in terms of his—Montford was very political obviously and smart, and Hance is pretty smart too. But Hance is mean as a snake. You cross Hance, and someday there will be some comeuppance. And so this climate that I was talking about earlier that probably began under Montford, at least I think it did, has just been enhanced, so to speak. (both laugh) Sorry, bad pun.

DM:

And this idea about the intrusion of politics into academics—has it come down farther into the system under Hance?

JB:

Well I think people are made aware of the fact that their duties are to promote the university, and what that means essentially is, get us to these goals that Hance has established for us. I don't know that a Tier One status or that forty thousand students or some of these other things are actually going to improve the quality of what we do around here. I'm a great believer in that old West Texas adage that you dance with the one that brought ya. And the one that brought Texas Tech to the position it is now is hiring good faculty and expecting them to teach good undergraduate and graduate courses and to do research. That the priorities have now switched, and if you're not even in a discipline that produces revenue for the university you're not smiled upon. And woe unto the teacher versus the researcher, so the teacher goes down even further into the caste system. And I think it's for the wrong reasons. I don't know that, for instance all this fundraising that's been going on, and I can't remember the dollar amount now but they're close to their billion dollar mark. I haven't seen anything tangible from that. I haven't heard about—and I'm in a position I think—in the honor's college to hear about increased numbers of scholarships which is what we have to thrive on here. I mean we absolutely need them. I haven't heard about any of that. I think they're not—they're plowing all their interest earnings back into their principle, and I don't think they're spending any of the stuff, these millions and millions of dollars.

DM:

So the goal itself of the billion is what's taking precedent over using that money for any valuable—?

JB:

Well it was supposed to be for student scholarships and faculty. Now they do have these strategic hires that they've been involved with, and maybe that's where some of that revenue is, but I don't know that the student's quality of life has increased necessarily as a result of that. It may

have increased because students are paying a lot more for some of the amenities, the leisure pool or some of these other things. But I don't think that the quality of our scholarship programs has increased. As a matter of fact in the honor's college we're sensitive to the fact that at one time under President Haragan we had very—and Bob Lawless—we had very good scholarship support. And those scholarships have remained static and the costs obviously have gone up for tuition and fees, and so we can't compete as well. So I don't think that we've noticed any great improvements. And certainly we haven't had any legislative help over those years, and no raises in three years and some other things like that so. It's not—I think morale is at a low ebb, but it's interesting that morale is at a very low ebb here but nobody is saying anything because they're all afraid they're going to get fired. And I'm always reminded of the *Salon de Refusés* you know that group of French artists whose works weren't accepted in the annual, or biennial exposition of artwork in Paris so they end up in this sort of salon of the refused and of course that's where all the Monets and the Manets and all of that were. And I thought we ought to have sort of a *salon refusés* of all of the people who have been fired and demoted around here. It would be quite a group of people, and it's largely people who said the emperor had no clothes or who were somewhat critical of what's going on.

DM:

If you had to venture a guess how many people might have been directly affected that way?

JB:

Oh, upwards of forty or so. I had a list at one time, over thirty.

DM:

What is this doing to the faculty body at Tech, and in general how has the faculty body changed over the time that you've been here?

JB:

Well that's hard because I don't know. And partly that's my own desire, I mean my own attitude. I don't care much anymore. I've gotten tired of it. But I used to know a lot of young faculty. And I used to, partly through my work in the provost's office but also just because I was just interested. And we had a faculty club that was active, and we met a lot of people through that, and we met people through a variety of other ways on campus. And even talking occasionally with young faculty now, I find they don't know many young faculty across campus. So there aren't many opportunities for young faculty to get to know one another. And it's sort of this attitude that, Alright now we've recruited you and we've hired you and you're here. Put your nose down we don't want to see you for seven years. Prove yourself. Well what happens is they don't bond with the place, they don't create any loyalties either to students or to the institution. They don't really enjoy life that much it seems to me, within the institution. And so when an opportunity comes along to leave, they're going to leave in the drop of a hat. There's no, Gee

I'm torn because I really like this place or da da da da. And so it's a factory and not so much an intellectual enterprise that we're engaged in. It's, What have you done for me lately?

DM:

So is turnover a pretty major issue right now?

JB:

No, I don't think it is, mainly because there isn't any place to go. So that creates another sort of siege mentality; in other words I'm not going to say anything because if I lose this job there's no place I can go. But when opportunities do present themselves people tend to leave. But it's not a very good job climate out there.

DM:

How has the student body changed over the time that you've been here?

JB:

I think they've gotten a lot more sophisticated in terms of the sorts of things that students are sophisticated about these days: music and clothing and technology and travel and things like that. And as a result a lot of their regionalisms have disappeared. I think there's a lot more homogenization that struck the West Texas area now. We still get occasionally a student from some small town or even village in West Texas who is pretty much parochial, but not very much anymore. And I don't think it's my ear but I kind of think that speech patterns have changed a lot. You don't get the strong—you still have a West Texas drawl to you or a Texas drawl, and you don't find it as much with the young people. I think there's a lot more of that homogenization. I remember a mistake I made, you'll appreciate this David. When I first got down here, for this interview I came in December of '75. And Otto Nelson took me out to dinner and Mary Jo. Otto, of course, was raised in Oregon and Minnesota and so his speech pattern was Midwest. But here was Mary Jo with this very distinctive Texas twang. And I said, Oh are you from around here? And she looked at me and she said, No, I'm from East Texas. (both laugh) And I—whoa I got a lesson there. There's East Texas and then there's West! But those regionalisms were much more pronounced thirty years ago than they are today.

DM:

Has the work ethic changed at all?

JB:

Oh, not necessarily. I think Tech students still work pretty hard, not at school work necessarily. They work—they're pretty good students if given a task to do. It's kind of like honors students, you know, I sometimes say ruefully, you could tell them to walk off a cliff because that will give them five extra credit points, and they would do that. And they're hard workers but you've got to

assign it. But I think our students are sort of reputedly pretty hard working students. I think that's one of the things employers tend to like. They like the fact that a lot of them work hard.

DM:

I think I'm going to stop this now unless you want to add any additional information to any subjects we've been talking about.

JB:

Unh-uh, that's good.

End of Interview



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