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This interview was conducted with Warren Beecroft at his home in Sumner, Washington on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The interviewer is Tamara Belts. His wife, Juanita Beecroft is also present and makes some comments.

**TB:** My name is Tamara Belts and I'm down in Sumner with Warren Beecroft and we are about to do an oral history. He did sign the Informed Consent Agreement. We are about to proceed. How did you choose to attend Western?

**WB:** Nobody in our family tree had ever gone to college. I'm talking about grandparents and all that kind of stuff. Somehow I decided that I was going to be the first one. At that time I lived up in Canada, in Burnaby. My mother remarried and now I'm living in Blaine. Now it becomes more possible because in Canada I couldn't figure out how I would ever get to a college or university because you had to be on a higher economic level. But when I'm in Blaine and they tell me things about the great American system, I believed I could go to a university or college. It's up to me to figure out how to do it.

At that time (I graduated [from high school] in 1939) I hadn't firmed things up yet, I just [took the] general course. Now I'm out and the doors close behind me, in a sense, and I don't have anything, I can't do anything. I talked to a few people and they said, "*Why don't you go back to school and take commercial [education]?*" If you think about Blaine, there's no Boeing, no Weyerhaeuser, [so] I went back to Blaine High School for a year and I took shorthand, typing and bookkeeping.

People knew me I guess as a good, hard-working kid because I worked in the only drug store in Blaine for years. Then I worked in the only theater in Blaine, and I worked out at Birch Bay in the summers. When it came to delivering papers out at Birch Bay, the paper companies came to me. People kept saying, "*How come you have all these jobs and nobody else does?*" I didn't do anything except do what I was told to do and do it well, I guess.

By now I'm sure that I have to get out of Blaine. The only way out of Blaine is I have to have a college degree or something. Technical school and all that stuff is beyond me because I guess I'm just not mechanically geared. Anyway, I'm working at the drugstore, in Blaine, and the druggist gets sick and a relief druggist comes [in]. We get talking and jokingly I say to him – now this is why you should always take advantage of an opening in a conversation to plant your seed – "*You get around Bellingham a lot. Any druggists down there need a boy to clean up a drugstore for board and room or something like that?*" He said, "*I don't know, I'll find out.*" Months go by and one day – and we don't even have a phone in our house, this is 1940 – the neighbor comes over and says, "*Warren there's a man on the phone who would like to talk to you.*" I go over and here's this druggist and he says, "*Hey Warren, I found a druggist who needs somebody to clean out his drugstore.*" Okay, fine. To make a long story short, I end up going down there to Owens Drug in Bellingham.

That summer (1940) I'm working out at Birch Bay at the resort, the big old resort that used to be there. I don't know if you remember that skating rink, Shore Acres was the name of it. Part of my work was the

same thing, board and room. One day at breakfast to the cook I said, "*Where can I find a place to live cheaply in Bellingham?*" She said, "*What do you mean?*" Well I wanted to go to Western but I don't have any place to live. She said, "*Well, my boy is going to Washington State this fall; if you want, you can have his room.*" But she said, "*I can't do any cooking. You'd have a place to sleep, period. You have to do your own laundry and everything else.*" Holy smokes! Great!

That's where I lived [in 1940]. My job in the drugstore is at 701 West Holly, (Owen's Drug) right up from the old railroad depot. I sleep at the cook's apartment up in the middle of town. That darned college is a mile up on the hill yet! I didn't have any transportation and not enough money or connections to [take the] bus. I must have walked 2,000 miles over that crazy city for all those different things! Finally, I ran out of gas. The end of the first quarter was coming; here I am just a dumb country kid, a freshman, overwhelmed by this campus. All the stuff that's going on, all of it's over my head. The whole social pattern, the instructor would be a doctor. The only doctors I ever knew pulled teeth or put arms together or something. And now I got a doctor who talks to me. Well, he doesn't talk to me, he talks at me. All this big world, it hit me. I finally decided well, at least I tried. I go down to work [at] the drugstore. Mr. Owens, the druggist, is a real nice guy. I say, "*Mr. Owens, I have to quit.*" He says, "*What's wrong? Is something wrong with the job?*" "*No, I just can't go from sleep, to the school to where I work and back to where I sleep. I don't have any time to study or do anything.*" He said, "*You promise me something: You stay here until I get back from dinner.*" Okay, fine. He goes away at his regular time, six o'clock to eat. He comes back about seven and he says, "*Warren, I want to talk to you.*" He said, "*You have a place to live.*" I said, "*Who with?*" He said, "*Me.*" I was so flabbergasted. To make a long story short, that's what I did. I moved in with Mr. and Mrs. Owens. Now remember, I started work there at two bits an hour. That would have gotten me through Western as long as I kept my job in the summer at Shore Acres. I think my enrollment fee the first quarter was sixteen bucks.

Weeks pass and Mr. Owens says, "*Warren, when are you going to turn your time in?*" I said, "*I thought you said I'm working for my board and room.*" He said, "*Yeah, but you've got to have some spending money. Didn't I tell you, it's board and room and twenty five cents an hour.*" So now I'm the richest kid in town! That's how I got to Western.

I didn't intend to be a teacher. Not because there's anything wrong with being a teacher. But teachers were smart people, and I never made an honor roll in Blaine! I think there are only fifty, sixty kids in the senior class. I found out later it's because I didn't try. School didn't mean much to me. I was an old farm kid or outdoor kid; plants and animals and those kinds of things.

Also knowing me as a human being, I'm not sure yet if I'm any good. I don't mean it quite that way -- good enough or something. At that time you could sign up to be a degree student or a non-degree student. A non-degree student could take anything they wanted and at the end of four years, maybe you had nothing. Or you could come together and become a lawyer or something like that. That's why I chose education, because then somebody told me this is what you will take. I'm on my way, and now I fit into the pattern. I needed an English credit for some reason. Somebody said, "*Why don't you take journalism, that's an easy one.*" I do, and I like it. I got the cub reporter award. Up until then, I had never done anything in school. I had turned out for track and football, but nothing in this other world. All of a sudden, people are saying, "*Gee, you write some good stuff.*" So I sign up now for journalism.

But now (1941) the war has come along and another world starts. I've thought about this thousands of times. We don't realize what tremendous pressure is put on us all the time by others and the system by what is happening. Anyway, the war hits. The thing to do [is to] defend your country. And good guys do this. A lot of the kids, the very first thing, they dropped their school, no matter where they were, and off they go. Others were more cautious. They finished the quarter and then they went. Everybody went through a system of signing up for something. Well they had the draft just before that. I sign up like people do and I get my card back and it's marked 4C. I knew what a 4F was, that had been a joke, "*Be glad you're 4F.*" [But I would have to say], "*I'm a 4C.*" They would say, "*What is that?*" I'd say, "*I don't know.*" Finally, after a couple of weeks of this, I went down to the draft board and I said, "*I got this card, it just says 4C. What's that?*" He said, "*Oh, you're a friendly alien.*"

**TB:** Oh, because you're Canadian!

**WB:** I was born in Canada, see, and hadn't become a citizen yet. I said the same thing. "*What do you mean an alien?*" I'd heard they were things that were up in the air. I said, "*What happens?*" He said, "*Nothing. Unless we get in a goddamn mess, they'll never need you.*"

Okay. Well, that's embarrassing, but at least I know where I am. But now the pressure of others starts on you. I'm out at Shore Acres and hundreds of people come by and say, "*Hey Beecroft! How come you're not in the service?*" or "*When are you going into the service?*" Either way I have to explain this damn 4C thing. Everybody would laugh and say, "*Beecroft! You're a friendly alien!*" Finally, after about a year of this, I'm a 4C – a friendly alien! I go back down to the draft board and tell them I'm going back to Canada. This is something so dumb now, but that's the way it was. They said, "*You can't. If you go back to Canada, you can't ever come back to the United States.*" I said, "*Why not?*" They said, "*Because you avoided the draft.*" I said, "*Well, you're not going to take me! How can I avoid it?*" He said, "*That's the way the law is. Do you want to go?*" I said, "*No, I don't want to go, but I don't want to be like this.*" He said, "*We'll change it.*" That's fall quarter of 1941. Shoot, I'm in Fort Lewis in the first week in January in 1942! They changed my classification to 1A!

**TB:** So you actually had to sign up for the draft even before the Japanese [attack] because that isn't until 1941, right? Because of the war in Europe, they knew it was coming.

**WB:** Yes. In the old Bellingham Herald, it's still there I guess. They published the first ten names drawn in Whatcom County for the draft. It's on the front page somewhere -- ten from the city, ten from the county. Guess who's in [the] ten from the county? Me. So everybody saw this. Anybody who knew me knew that I was one of the first draftees. Then they see me six months or a year later, so now I'm either 4F (something's wrong with me) – nobody dreamed of the friendly alien stuff – or I'm a draft dodger of some sort, some religious [objection] or something. That was the end of my career at Western for quite a long time. Uncle Sam first, Western second!

Now I'm in the service (December 1941). I came in [on] the draft. It's out of my control. [I] have no choice of what I want to be in. Fort Lewis is full, so they send me, of all places, to Atlantic City. I think, "*Is this the way the army works? I live in Blaine, I report to an army base 60 miles away, and they ship me 2,000 miles away to learn my left foot from my right foot!*"

Any way I'm back there and because of my work with the *Klipsun* and the *Collegian* I thought, the Army does this kind of stuff. I found out that Signal Corps does that. I went through the channels to see if I could be transferred to the Signal Corps and if [I] did what division of the Signal Corps. No thought, no nothing, just glamour -- aerial photography. You get to go up and fly around airplanes and take pictures. It's kind of neat. You don't have to crawl in mud. It's kind of dingbat thinking. [But] I do, I get transferred to aviation photography and I'm going to go to Denver but there's a long waiting line. Ok, Atlantic City still -- wait, wait, wait.

The army came in and took the hotels and everything. The stores all closed; the army had everything. What the army wanted was an island, strictly military. They could house troops, feed troupes, and march them on the sand. The army said that storekeepers could come back and civilians could come onto the island on Saturdays and Sunday.

Spring 1942, sure enough, here one Sunday I'm walking down the old boardwalk. I haven't even talked to a girl now for six or eight months or something. Here's a girl, leaning on the rail looking out at the ocean. I just wanted to talk to her. I go up and she talked to me and that kind of stuff, but it's late in the day and civilians have to be off by five o'clock or four o'clock or some dumb thing, so we make a date for next Saturday. Here comes next Saturday and who gets KP (kitchen police)? Me. The only way I can get off is sick call, that's one way, or take the aviation cadet exam. I decided a sick call won't work because I'm not sick. The sick call is usually first thing in the morning and now it's 8 o'clock or something so I missed sick

call, that's out. The cadet exam is mental. The first is mental. That only takes a couple of hours. This is how the simplest dumb thing can change your life. All I wanted to do was talk to a girl. So I decided to take the cadet exam. Whether I passed it or not didn't matter. I just wanted out of this thing. So I take it, but then the pride comes. If they give you ten questions, you try to answer ten of them any way you can. But this is page after page after page. I decided by golly, I'm going to answer every one of these the best way I could. So I did. Handed the thing in, and went on the little date.

In the middle of the week on the bulletin board, I come in and people are saying, "*Hey, Beecroft! Congratulations!*" I said, "*What happened?*" They said, "*You passed that exam!*" "*Holy cats!*" I didn't think about that. Now what happens? Now you have to take the physical. I thought, "*Oh, I'll get washed out on that because all these aviators are super people in the movies and stuff.*" I go take the physical. They should have movies of these things, how it really was. Here we're in a hotel, strictly military, there must be a hundred guys standing there stark naked in a line, waiting for their color blind check. That was their first check. (I still want to go back to that old hotel and sit in that lobby and say, "*Wow, I was here with that whole row for a quarter of a mile, of guys standing there naked.*")

So we go all through that stuff. Same thing, they post the ones who pass, and it's me. I wanted to pass, but I didn't want to fly. Here I am, I've passed everything and I'm a cadet. They ship me off from Atlantic City to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. The train is full of these nuts that want to fly airplanes. All they do is talk about airplanes and I don't know the front end from the back end.

A group of cadets went to Butler University in 1942. And my wife Juanita and I went back to Butler in the [1980's]. Of course, when I was there it had to be '42 or '43. It was just a pretty, old college in the trees. When we went back, the campus was ten times bigger I guess. I had to go into the office and tell them who I was. Not that it made any difference but I just had to come back. They asked me a thousand questions about where I'd gone from here. It was kind of nice.

**TB:** At Butler, part of that was your air training?

**WB:** Yes. The reason to go to Butler or any of those types of universities was to brush up on condensed courses in math, astronomy, psychology, and military discipline.

**TB:** So like ROTC?

**WB:** Yes, it probably would be a lot like that. The only thing they added was ten hours of flight training in a two-winged trainer plane. I had never even been near an airplane in my life. I knew I was going to fly and that was kind of exciting. I'd seen them up in the sky.

Come my day out there, I'm petrified. Not terrified, just petrified because I have no idea what's going to happen. All you do is follow instructions and the instructor said, "*Cadet Beecroft! Pick up parachute and go to hardstand #8. Go to the left, and it's plane number six. Stand there. Wait for your instructions. If you have time, inspect the plane.*"

How can you inspect an airplane!?! You don't know what to look for! This parachute, I didn't know they looked like that. I'd never seen one. It's got one of these harness things. It did say, "Fold your parachute at your feet." It's like you do anything with a bunch of string. I kept working on trying to fold in and hide the strings. I'm standing there and here comes my instructor. Everything you do with cadets is stiff attention. When he comes close I have to "pop to" and make my heels click and stand at attention. He walks up to me. "*Are you Cadet Beecroft?*" "*Yes sir.*" "*Have you inspected the airplane?*" I haven't but I'm supposed to have, so I say, "*Yes, sir.*" "*Is it ready to fly?*" (I don't know) "*Yes, sir.*" "*Get aboard.*" "*How many hours have you had?*" "*None.*" He said, "*None? What the hell are you doing in the God damn Air Force?*" I don't know what I'm doing here!

I get in the plane and up we go. I never knew a plane made that much noise; I didn't know they shook. It's an old two-wing thing, two seats. We're going down the runway and I'd never gone that fast in my life!

Fifty miles an hour was about the best I ever got. Now I'm going faster (I don't know how fast, but sure as heck fast). The ground was going by [very fast]. The wings, it's like a bird. The wings are flapping! Not really, but they are vibrating. I think, "*This is my Air Force!*"

Anyway, we go up and he has things he has to do. "*Ok, we're going to make a left turn.*" So we turn. "*Did you feel it?*" "*Yes, sir.*" "*We're going to make a right turn.*" "*Feel it?*" "*Yes, sir.*" "*We're going to climb.*" "*Feel it?*" "*Yes, sir.*" "*We're going to dive.*" "*Feel it?*" "*Yes, sir.*" Then he says, "*Put your left foot on the left peddle. Put your right foot on the right peddle.*" I'm going to learn to fly now. "*Put your left hand on the lower part of the handle, the leather handle. Put your right hand on top. Got it?*" "*Yes, sir.*" "*Ok, it's all yours, you're flying it.*" Holy cats! I don't know what to do. I'm just doing this. It's ok the way it was. He says finally, "*Ok, great. Do something.*" Of course, I'd read books on how you do this kind of stuff, but I'd never done it. I go (motions) and plane goes (noise). He says, "*Brilliant, brilliant. Do something else.*" I go (noise) and it does the same thing. He says, "*Haven't you flown before?*" "*No, sir.*" This is what I've used in teaching, to teach teachers or beginning teachers. You don't humiliate or degrade the learner. He said, "*Jesus Christ! I get all the God damn hayseeds! When you fly an airplane, it's like this!*" Holy cats! He put that thing up until it stalled and it fell down, and he turned it and rolled it over. I decided then, that's it. This is not what I'm going to do. I don't know what else I'm doing to do. I thought, how many times has a teacher said something to a student that cut them off and didn't know it and wonder why this kid quit, bailed out, and went to remedial school and all of the things they do. Anyway to make a long story short, that's it. Then I went through the training system, took all the tests.

**TB:** So you did stay in the Air Force?

**WB:** Yes, I stayed in.

**TB:** How did you get from the Army to the Air Force?

**WB:** Now I'm in Texas and I go through this final advanced testing, all kinds of stuff. Then I have to record from one to ten what I want to be: pilot, navigator, bombardier. I thought navigator would be ok, but I'm not sure I know enough about maps and all that stuff. But I saw a movie on a Norden bombsite, and the guy was carrying something in a sack and two guards were escorting him. I put pilot at four and navigator maybe five and bombardier ten! That's how I ended up going through bombardier training in B-17s and over to England.

**TB:** So were you actually in the Air Force or were you in the flying wing of the Army?

**WB:** When I first went in, that's where it changed. It was the Army Air Force. But while I was in it, it became just the Air Force.

Then the war's over (Summer 1945) and I come back and of course by now I know I'm going back to Western. I get back in what did you say it was? October? In the middle of a quarter. So I have to wait until the end of the next quarter. Some of the credits I took at Butler and some of them in the service, they took the place of some of the required courses. I remember old Dr. Ross talking to me and saying, "*Warren, you took a short cut through Western!*" I said, "*What do you mean?*" He said, "*Shoot, we can give you credit for this, and this, and this and you can get out of here in a little over a year -- if you stay in education.*" I thought, "*Well, I still don't know anything about teaching but I want a job and that's good enough for me. People teach, so I can teach.*"

By now, I know that I can do anything. It might take me a little longer, but I'm not afraid to try anything. I'll try this teaching stuff. I do this and Dr. Ross called me in after a couple of quarters, up to the last quarter. He said, "*Warren, we've got a problem. You're short a three hour course and it's not taught until the quarter after this. We can't substitute, it's the state law.*" He said, "*What do you think you are going to do?*" I said, "*I don't know. I might go to California because that's where my folks are.*" I'm trying to get a job. Where are the jobs? The big market is California, but I don't want to go there. He said, "*Well you know, we got a new doctor, he came from Stanford and he's a real nice young guy and he's in that*

department. *Why don't you go talk to him and see if somehow you guys can't work out a conference course. I can't do anything about it. It will have to be you two.*" So I did go and see this guy. I told him the problem and he said, "Where do you eat your lunch?" I said, "Well, I'm a brown bagger." He said, "So am I. Why don't you bring your brown bag up here on like Monday, Wednesday and Friday and we'll have lunch together and we'll have Ed. 306 (or something)." I'm flabbergasted. So I do that and get through the course. He says, "Now what are you going to do?" He had come from Stanford.

I said, "Well you know, my folks live down in San Jose. I haven't seen them in two year. How about getting me into Stanford?" I just said this, see. He said, "You want to go?" I was kind of amazed and I said, "Yes, yes I sure do." He said, "Well, I don't promise you anything but I'll see what can happen."

Ten days later (Fall quarter 1947) I get a thing from Stanford. I end up filling the thing out and I end up in Stanford graduate school in education. The only thing I made a mistake there was I went two quarters and school was easier for me at Stanford than it was at Western! I don't know if that was where I got super motivated or whatever. I mean, it wasn't "ha-ha" easy. I've been told all kinds of things about Stanford. I had my thesis ok-ed. Then I got thinking, here I am, the only teaching I've done is student teaching one quarter and I'm supposed to get it. If I take this third quarter and finish my thesis, I got my masters in education and I've never taught. And yet the papers going to say I'm an expert. I decided, like a dumbbell, to go back to Washington. I didn't want to teach in California. I could have taught in Palo Alto but it just wasn't my place. I'd find out I guess first if I could teach or even wanted to.

The only thing that happened is that after about ten or fifteen years, I think it was Dr. Walker in Sedro Woolley, he said, "Warren, if you're going to go anywhere in education, you better get that master's degree." I didn't intend to go anywhere but he's the boss, so I went up to Western and transferred what credits they would give me from Stanford to Western.

**TB:** Oh, you didn't complete your degree at Stanford?

**WB:** No. That's bothered me at times, to be that naïve or whatever the word would be.

**TB:** You took a bunch of classes there but you didn't complete your degree.

**WB:** Yes; [I went spring and summer quarter, 1947]. And the hard thing was, there were three guys from Washington, both later went on, one became an assistant superintendent in Tacoma, Joel Lasoy (with their master's degree out of Stanford) and the other was at Washington State. Shoot, both of them are dead, too. That's what happens when you get to be superintendent I guess. If I had a degree in administration from Stanford, I should be pretty good in the field.

I came back to Washington, taught elementary, became a principal and about ten years later started my MA program over again. I went up to see old Dr. Ross again. I told him my woes. "No problem. We'll see what we can transfer." Of course I had to go summers. That was it as far as [my] Western story.

The only other thing I did (this was while I was a student, during World War II), I became the yearbook sports editor of *Klipsun*, Western's yearbook or annual. At the very end, co-editor of *The Collegian*, but that's a dirty trick because two of us signed up to co-edit the thing and in the sequence of going there, I transferred to Stanford in the middle of the year and left old Monty Jones; he had to finish the year as editor.

**TB:** I wanted to know a bit more about that. Tell me about Ruth Burnet.

**WB:** Old Ruth, who was at that time the advisor of *The Collegian*. She was a real nice lady. Did you ever see her? Oh, you weren't there.

**TB:** I'm meeting her daughter on Friday.

**WB:** She's a tall, (this is man talk, I guess) boney woman. But at the same time, she was nice looking. She's not a beautiful woman, but nice looking. When she talked to you, she'd always end up way (*illustrates*: left arm crossed to right elbow and right hand on chin). It wouldn't matter if it was on the table or she was standing up, it would be this way.

**TB:** Oh, she would always put her hand on her chin.

**WB:** And this would be going (motions). And the faster this went, the more trouble you were in! That was the worst signal. Anyway, I took the beginning news writing thing and I did what she told me to. She's the one that said, "*You know Warren, you got a natural talent to write this kind of stuff.*" And she told me about different things. Of course, that was a lot of encouragement. I worked (they call it "work") hard at it, because I enjoyed it, I guess. Then they had the *Collegian* banquet. I don't know if they still do, but they did. Every year that was a big thing. And they gave out awards. I'm there as a cub, and Mrs. Burnett says, "*And the cub reporter award [goes to] Warren Beecroft.*" Holy cats, I about had a fit! I had never had such a high rank in my life. After that she was my favorite person I guess.

[In 1942] I got her in trouble a couple of times. Once as the sports editor when a famous Western athlete, a basketball player came up; I was typing one night up in the old *Collegian* room. In comes this guy and he says, "*Warren, I've got to tell you something and you can put it in your paper, people ought to know this.*" [He tells me the story about] another athlete -- a spoiled-brat kind of athlete. They have to carry ten members on the team but he never makes the ten. But he gets to all the games in his own car. He has a sports car. This kid goes to Mr. Lappenbusch, he was the basketball coach then -- and says to him, "*Lappy, I go to all these games on my own and you've let me play a couple of minutes every once in a while. I think I should be able to earn a letter or something.*" And of course this star basketball player on the sweeping beat is furious because you don't do it that way. I said to him, "*I can't write that. You saw it. If you want to put it in the paper, you write it, you mark it ,Letting off Steam.*" *You mark it 12Ms, that's a single column.*" The sports column was 22 Ms. I said, "*It doesn't mean it will be printed because the ,Letting Off Steam" column is the cushion, ok.*" (If you are trying to fill the paper, there's always the "Letting Off Steam" column you can put in). [Then] I had to leave for some reason.

That means that was a Thursday night. I'm sports editor now. There's lots of work that goes on to put on the page but I don't do that dirty work anymore. I got cub reporters working for me and all this kind of stuff. It sounds dumb to explain it. All I worry about is getting that God damned paper out and "*do this, do this, do this.*" I have to get to class and I'm pressing all the time to get this done. Out comes the first paper off the press, I grab it, fold it up, run and catch the bus.

I must have had to go somewhere else -- whatever I did. I don't know what it was but there was a space of time (maybe I had to go to the dentist). [Finally] I take the bus up to the college and start to walk on to the campus and two or three people say to me "*Hey Beecroft! A lot of fire on that sports page! Looks good!*" "*Oh, thanks.*" Somebody else says it. "*Oh, thanks.*"

I go to class, go down to the *Collegian* office to see what's happening. Here on the bulletin board in great big letters: "***Beecroft – call Ma immediately.***" That's what everybody called her, Ma Burnett. I thought, "*That's funny.*" I dial away. "*Mrs. Burnett, this is Warren Beecroft.*" "*Warren! What in the world did you do?*" (I haven't done anything.) I said, "*What did I do?*" She said, "*Your paper! That article in your column! Dr. Haggard has called, Mr. Lappenbusch has called. Lappenbusch wants you kicked out of school! Don't you have a copy?*" I said, "*Yes.*" "*Haven't you read it?*" I said, "*I haven't had time.*" She says, "*Read your column.*"

I know I didn't do anything in my column that would do this. I open the page, 22M. My column's name is "*On the Sideline.*" Halfway down that column is a sub-heading, "*Letting Off Steam.*" There is that letter! I thought, "*Holy crap!*" It says all the things that guy had told me, this kid went to "Lappy" and whined and cried and "Lappy" was going to give in and the writer thought that this was a cowardly type of behavior for a coach -- terrible letter. I said, "*Mrs. Burnett, I didn't write that.*" She said, "*Who did?*" I said, "*It's in the*

file.” I don’t know what I want to do with it. Maybe I want to get it out of the file. At least it’s in the file. It’s safe. She said, “Well, ok. That’s ok. I’ll read it.” That’s the way that part ends.

But ten minutes later, in comes the editor of the paper, Eric Phillips. He says, “*Jesus Christ, Beecroft! What in hell did you do?*” He goes through the whole thing again. I said, “*I didn’t do it!*” I told him who did it and how it was done. He said, “*Lappenbusch is a raving maniac. We have to go over and explain it to him.*” I said, “*Yes, but the problem is, it says in the rules and regulations of The Collegian that a person can write a „Letting Off Steam” letter and the writer will never be exposed.*” And here it’s his star basketball player who wrote this! So anyway, of course I tell Phillips and he says, “*Yes, that’s going to be a problem. That’s what we have to go by. How we get by it is going to be the problem. I’ll go with you.*” So we go over to the gym and at that time Lappy’s class was above the old swimming pool. (I haven’t been in that building, I don’t know if it’s still there). That was his room. We’re sitting down in the boys’ dressing room on a bench and in come these kids going from his class going to the can, see. Every one of them says, “*Holy cats, that Lappenbusch, [he keeps saying], “I’ll get that Beecroft!”* Holy cats! Class is over. All these guys go by, and they all give me the signal. Sure enough, here comes Lappy. We’ve told somebody that we’re waiting down there, so he knows we’re there. He’s a big man anyway, he’s a football player – had been. I’m the sports editor! I’ve talked to him every week for a year or two. Here old Phillips and I are standing side-by-side. “*Which one of you guys is Phillips?*” To me he says, “*Hello. Who is this God damned Beecroft?*” “*I’m Beecroft.*” “*You?*” I tell him I didn’t write it. Then he said, “*Then I want the name of the guy who wrote it.*” I said “*Lappy, I can’t do that. The policy of the paper is that a person can write a letter to the editor but the writer does not have to be disclosed.*” And then Phillips says that. Lappy says (looking right down my nose), “*All right I’m going to tell you something. Every word that goes in your page comes to my office first.*” I said, “*Every article?*” “*Yes. Every article on that sports page comes to me first and I’ll check it ok, and then you can put it in your God damned paper.*”

Ok. I go back to the journalism class -- beginning journalism. I said, “*You all need writing experience. I want every tiddlywinks score, any game that has a score. I want the name of the participants, the score and something about the game. It doesn’t have to be any more than 25 or 50 words. It can be as long as you want. I want them in for the paper.*” Sure enough, in comes page after page of every baseball, every intramural, every inter-house game, any game that has a score to it. I tell the editor what I’m going to do. He said, “*Are you looking for trouble?*” I said, “*No, I’m doing what he told me to do. It’s so ridiculous.*” So in it goes and here comes the paper. Oh, then I made the cub reporters write headlines for them, too. I wanted lively headlines. “*Cats skin the Squirrels*” or something. They do it. That goes on for a couple of weeks. Finally I get a notice on the journalism bulletin board again: “*Beecroft, go see Lappy.*” I said, “*Uh-oh. Here it is. It’s all or nothing.*” I go in there. He says, “*Beecroft, sit down.*” He said, “*I think you’ve had time to learn your lesson, right?*” “*Yes.*” “*Ok. I don’t want to see anymore of these.*” So that’s how it ended.

The guy that wrote the letter became the superintendent of Mukilteo. He’s dead now. Ernie Ludwig. I saw him years later and told him. He said, “*Did I write that letter?*” I said, “*Yes, boy, you were mad!*” He said, “*I remember the thing, but I wasn’t a very good writer.*” I said, “*Well, you did enough that day!*”

Anyway, the only other thing, in the old *Klipsun*, whatever year ... You always see these football pages that have little squares and the players in all of them. I thought there must be another way. I came up with the idea of a checkerboard. He’s in Bellingham still -- Moose Zurline. Moose at that time was a quarterback. I took a picture of him just sitting like this with his hands out. Then I put the ball players like he was the master player. It was a big sensation.

**TB:** That is pretty cool.

**WB:** Anyway, that’s my contribution to yellow journalism.

**TB:** You wrote another story about the library -- getting the lights in the library.

**WB:** Oh, that was before the war, yes.



### ***End Tape One Side Two -- Start of Tape Two Side One***

**WB:** I don't know how the "lights in the library" started. I didn't start with the idea of tearing the world apart or anything like that. I started with the idea of doing what I thought I had learned in journalism, and that is that if you have any criticism of a governmental function of some sort, get your data straight. I went back to the *Collegian* files and spent hours filing through [those]. The only guideline was when the Western Board [of trustees] met. [I had the dates of their meetings]. I didn't look at any other stuff. Of course they didn't do anything except [shuffle paper]. Years before, somebody had decided that they needed better lights in the library. So the Board [took] action. Six months or a year later, the Board considers the lights in the library again. "*We're going to do this! We're going to do this!*" I had all that down; the Board meeting, the date and what they said. What I've got then is a history that they've said and voted on doing things but it never got done or what they started to do never got finished. I got all my data, wrote my evaluation of the situation. A good piece of journalism should have a picture. Now I'm trying to think, "*How the hell do you take a picture of a library?*" I can't go in there and take a picture of the lights! Then I remembered a *Klipsun* that had a picture of the lights showing out. I remember that, see, and I went to Ma - Mrs. Burnet - and I said, "*Where would that plate be?*" She said, "*All the plates go to the Bellingham Herald.*" She said, "*That was several years ago, it's probably gone by now.*" I said, "*Is it all right if I go look for it?*" She said, "*Good luck if you can find it.*" So I did, but I didn't tell her what I wanted it for I don't think. I didn't mean *not* to - [just] my young mind, I guess. I was so involved with the job I was going to do. Somebody said, "*You can get kicked out of school.*" At that moment, I said, "*I don't care this is what I'm doing.*"

Anyway, I go down to the *Herald* and go to the person in charge of that department and tell him [what I need]. He said, "*Sure, you're welcome to it Warren. But I don't know if [you'll find it] it's a mess. I'll show you where it is.*" He goes down somewhere with me and takes me to a door and opens it. Holy crap! Here's like a big ten by twelve [foot] room with plates just thrown in there, piled six or eight feet high. He said, "*It's there, and if you can find it, you can have.*" I'm shocked! There are thousands of plates! Then again, I've got a job to do. At least I'm going to look for it. I did and after an hour or two, I found it. And I showed it to him, and he said, "*Yes, take it, you're lucky.*"

Now I take it down to Cox Brothers, who at that time printed the *Collegian*. They said, "*Yeah, sure, we can run that.*" Old man Cox, of course, he'd read the print, he said, "*You sure you want to run it this way? You could get kicked out of school.*" I said, "*I didn't do anything. All I did was put on one piece of paper all the things the board has done up until today; and then I've said they haven't done it. [I'm just trying] to make them come to attention [on] this thing.*"

So it's the front page editorial, and there's this big, ugly black picture. He ran it. Holy cats; same thing -- "***Beecroft! Call Ma!***"

She said, "*Warren, for heaven's sake. What did you do? Dr. Haggard called and he's so upset. He's been called by four board members already.*" I told her, "*I haven't done anything wrong. All I did was put the minutes that have been printed every time on one piece of paper at one time.*" The only thing that was wrong was it showed the library as it was at night. I remember the word "looms" was in there somewhere -- "*Library still looms*" or something. [Shortly after they put some lights in]. Whatever the first bunch of lights they put in, they were terrible. They were bright enough, it improved the light, but they didn't match. They were ugly to me. It was an antique building and it had twentieth century light fixtures hanging in the main [room]. Anyway, it wasn't that important. That's my library experience.

**TB:** Do you have any specific memories about the Campus School when you did your student teaching?

**WB's wife:** Yes, he got the measles and everything else that was there!

**WB:** Yes, all those "diseased kids." That's the other thing. I'm still trying to decide if I want to teach or not (it's a little too late) - but my first experiences as a student teacher I catch the measles from one of these

“dirty little kids!” (Laughs). I remember the old doc says, “*Haven't you ever had the measles?*” I said, “*I don't know. Nobody ever told me.*” But the one that got me most, Miss?? -- an old lady, white hair -- and you called her “Miss,” boy! She was cranky with adults. With kids, it was almost like you pushed a button; with kids, she just flowed. With adults, if she had the authority, you knew it. Now I'm going to do my first day of student teaching in the Campus School in her room. Everybody laughs because I get stuck with her.

**TB:** What grade were you student teaching?

**WB:** It was a primary one. Two things happened in there that got me. This is the very first day. I'd been in the service and I'd worn dull clothing all that life. This sounds crazy, but I bet if you could have asked any man what color tie are you going to buy when you get out, it would be red. We were just so tired of these darned brownish green things if you are in the service. Sure enough, I start to buy my civilian clothes. I have to have a bright tie. I don't care -- it just has to be bright -- I'm a civilian, see my tie! I know its reddish, I don't know the design or anything, but it's bright. I go in on my day to teach. I've done all the preliminary stuff as a student. I'm wearing a suit! I'm doing what I'm doing and the first words she said to me after my first teaching is -- “*Warren, if you're going to be a teacher, you never wear a red tie!*” I was so flabbergasted -- “*That's the only tie I got!*” She said, “*That's too distracting to children!*” That was the end of my red tie. That was my [first] Campus School experience.

The other one was Thanksgiving Day. Come to think of it, it wasn't her. It was an older teacher. But it was Thanksgiving time, and the kids are drawing Thanksgiving pictures. One kid puts his hand up and says, “*Mr. Beecroft! Weren't you in the Army? How do you hold a gun?*” I had been doing it for three years and never thought anything about it. I got the yardstick and I said, “*Pretend this is the gun. What are you trying to do?*” He said, “*I want my pilgrim to shoot a turkey in a tree. Will you stand there so I can see how he would be?*” I thought, “*There's nothing wrong with that.*” So I had this yardstick and I said, “*Like this.*” The teacher came up to me and said, “*Warren, you can't do that! You can't show a child how to use a gun!*”

I still became a teacher after two introductory things like that!

**TB:** How long did you teach and where did you teach? Was that your whole career?

**WB:** Yes.

**TB:** You taught at Sedro-Woolley; where else did you teach?

**WB:** I did write that down so I would remember.

**TB:** Marblemount Grade School, Valley Forge.

**WB:** The big thing there was...

**TB:** You took scouts to Valley Forge.

**WB:** At the time I went to Stanford graduate school, the theme of their school of education was -- *the school at the community center*; and the doctor who was head of that and known nation wide was my advisor. So this is my first job and I was trying to think, “*How can I make this school, the community center? How do you do it?*” It wasn't anything I planned to do. But out comes the scoutmaster and I'm the teacher/principal of this school in the upper Skagit valley. He says, “*Warren, we're trying to get a scout troop up here. How about being the scoutmaster?*” Oh, cripe! “*Ok.*” That was the year that the National Jamboree would be at Valley Forge.

As things went on, I thought it would be kind of neat to have one of these kids be able to go to Valley Forge, if I could only figure out how to get some money. At that time there were two stores and two taverns in Marblemount. I think that was the city (and the post office). And ninety kids at school. It was the

beginning of school and the businessmen in Concrete would have a luncheon for new men teachers. So I went; got through the program and everything and the chairman says, "Announcement time." Some guy stands up and says his church is going to do this, and somebody else [makes another announcement]. I thought, "Those are kind of dumb things; I want to send a kid to Valley Forge!" (Nobody knows this yet.) Finally I put my hand up, stand up and I say, "I'm Warren Beecroft and I'm the new principal up there at Marblemount and scoutmaster. We're going to try and send a scout to the Valley Forge National Jamboree and we'd sure appreciate your help. If some kid comes around knocks on the door selling something, like a movie ticket or something, [please support them]. Thank you."

Somebody says, "What is this thing in Valley Forge?" I said, "It's a national scout jamboree. They'll be there for a week and it costs \$250 per kid." This was 1947 or 1948. The president says, "Let's pass the hat." I'm flabbergasted. They plunk it in front of me. (It wasn't a hat. I forget what it was, some kind of container.) There are dollars and five dollars and everything in there. I say, "Thank you, I really appreciate it." Some guy puts his hand up and says, "Hey, Mr. Beecroft! How much does one of those god damn tickets cost?" I'm thinking movie tickets or the [raffle] ticket the kid will [be selling]. "We haven't decided yet. It will probably be twenty five cents." (That's quite a lot, you know.) He said, "No. I mean one of those tickets to how you get there." I said those are \$250. He said, "I'll buy one."

I'm stunned! I hadn't even started the [fundraising] and I've already got one kid and some money left over. Again, because school is the community center, it fitted everything. And it worked. Nita, my wife, took care of the female part of it, like luncheons and dinners; when you have people to your house for a cause and they put a dollar in the pot or whatever you want. It got around the community, all over the place up there that this was happening. Everybody wanted to get into the thing somehow. The phone rings one day at school. A male voice says, "Beecroft, this is ("Joe Blow") of the logging company. One of my god damned drivers dumped a load of logs – cedar – on the way into Marblemount. If you can pick them up, you can have them." I'm flabbergasted. A load of cedar logs! That's hundreds of dollars! We had a friend, a man who owned the shake mill. I went to see him and said, "How would I get those logs out? He gave them to me, but what do I do?" He said, "That's ok. I've got a friend, an assistant. What we'll have to do is cut them in eight foot sections and take them out." They did that. Cut the things out, and gave the scout troop the money. At the end of that thing, I had five kids paid for. The only other place that did that in the state of Washington was Seattle; one troop had five people.

When it came to who goes, when it first started, before anything happened, I already had chosen the kid I would like to send. That was Schubert Hunter. He was an Indian kid. His family tree was from the old Indian tribe that used to be up there where the Skagit and the Cascade came together. It was a little Indian community, not a tribe. It disintegrated when civilization came. But old Grandpa Hunter stayed on that piece of land, and this is his grandson. My goal was to get Schubert [to go there]; because I thought, what a neat thing for an Indian kid to add to his memories and stuff to go from way out here in Washington all the way back to Valley Forge. Then it kind of grew from there. Anyway, that was that story.

**TB:** Just a quick couple more things that I'd like. Who were some of your favorite teachers? You put on here (referring to his questionnaire) Dr. Bond. Can you expand a little bit there?

**WB:** I guess I always had a feeling that he knew everything. He had written quite a few books, too. He could explain math in a way that it didn't matter what you asked him. It seemed that he could explain it to you. There was somehow he did things [that made you understand].

The thing that I did with Dr. Bond, now [go back], I'm in charge of the *Collegian* banquet that they have once a year where they have the queens and all that stuff. We had to do something where you had to know measurement of some sort, of an odd shape. Nobody knew how to figure it out. I said I would ask Dr. Bond, but I felt this was kind of below his dignity. I mean, he writes books and to figure something for that gym over there! I went to him and told him and he knew what it was. I said this is what we need to know and we don't know how to do it. He laughed like mad. He said something like, "I'll tell you the answer if I can get invited to the dance." I said, "That's a deal!" (He didn't mean it.) But he came over and measured

everything that we needed to know. He enjoyed it. It was the first time I had ever seen him out of a classroom with people, and he was really a friendly guy. But he was strict. And he did have...

**TB:** A globe? There's also a big globe. It's a chalkboard on the globe that the math department has, and we're not sure how that got used. It seems like it would be used to teach astronomy. It's fine if you don't remember.

**WB:** Nobody has said that for forty years and my mind is going a hundred miles an hour. He would bring things to class and they would be such odd-looking things if you didn't know what they were. Until when he explained it, what you were trying to do and did, and then it made sense -- because you could do it. Instead of saying, "*Just memorize two and two is four -- that's all the hell you have to do.*" That's what you do with Kindergarten kids. But he would make you put two and two together, until you got four, then you feel four, touch four. That's the way he would teach very abstract thoughts. You'd see kids in his class, the point would come to them and here kids are looking at each other and saying, "Holy cats!" That's the kind of person he was.

**TB:** What about Kangley? You mentioned Lucy Kangley on here.

**WB:** Oh yes. She was a cold, old gal. But she was a good [teacher]. I think she could read books backwards. She's the one that, again, this is after the service when I had a disagreement with her about the *Scarlet Letter*. I had just got back from the service and all moral structure was not the best, either here or in Europe. We have to read this book, it's a dull story anyway, it's a love story but it's another time. It's happening every day in Bellingham, what the guy's writing about. I read it. I read it mostly because I am mad. I'm going to try and find some sense out of this thing. Now we take the test, a written exam. There were two questions; the first question on the test: What is the significance of the [design] on Reverend so-and-so's bed?"

I thought, "*I'll be damned. I read that book, it's a dumb story, my grade depends on two chances to answer, and I wasted a whole quarter.*" I'm so ticked off I write...I don't remember the exact wording but the idea was, to me, this is a stupid question. There's a lot more meat in this book than that question brings out. I forget how I did that. The idea was it's a lousy question and this is my reaction to it, which is nothing. I said that to get excited over this kind of behavior, meaning playing around with this other person's wife and stuff, was not that important to being touted as the masterpiece of a [literature] class.

I get the things back, no grade, but "immediate conference". She was a big woman. I come in and she says, "*Warren, you were kind of upset the other day, weren't you?*" I said, "*Yes. I just can't believe that type of thing is that important to the world.*" She said, "*Well you know, your answer was better than the question.*" She said, "*Forget it.*"

She would march up and down the class, talking all the time and never looking at you. But when she did, you felt yourself freeze almost! You felt guilty that you did something. You'd look for buttons undone or something. She'd be walking around and talking and then she'd just [stare]. That was old Doc Kangley.

Then there was Mr. Hunt. He was the geography guy. He was just a mister. This would be a long time ago. He's the one that said, "*You mark my words: Highway 99 is going to have solid stores from the Blaine border to Portland.*" I've told her (referring to his wife) many times -- "*He's pretty close.*" At least from Seattle north; you could almost do it from Seattle to Bellingham except for that mountain range in there. At that time you [were] thinking, "*That crazy guy!*" He would make you think. [He would say] I wonder what would happen in...he'd pick something, Spokane, or somewhere around here, [and ask] what would you do or how would you do [something]; that kind of stuff. Of course, his courses didn't count. I think most of them were electives. Everybody tried to take one of his classes. If you had a spare, you'd try to take his class.

Now the science teacher, I didn't put that name down, it's a terrible thing, I can think of things we did but I can't think of his name. He was bald-headed, I remember. One of these guys that their hairline ended right here kind of a thing; he was old then.

**TB:** I can't think of it either then. There were a lot of women, Leona Sundquist and Miss Platt.

### *End of Tape Two Side One – Start of Tape Two Side Two*

**WB:** I suppose the one in Campus School that I admired that affected me the most was [Dr. Hawk]. When I first went to teach up on Marblemount, I am shook up because I graduated from Western and I took this job and nobody told me that you [might] teach in split rooms like this. On paper it says grades 4, 5 and 6, but that didn't bother me. I don't know how to say it. [But] I wasn't ready for it. So it happened and I'm up there. One of my guiding themes in life was written by some Greek philosopher years ago. I read that in the old library up at Western, and when I did, everything made sense to me. It was: "From a petal of a rose, I can teach about the world." I've told hundreds and hundreds of people that. The idea is, don't use this *thing*, if you're a good teacher, you don't need anything. You just need the learners need to learn. And he'll bring that to you. That old thought, stuck with me for all of my life.

But Hawk comes to Marblemount and my class faces the road and I know his car. In those days it was, "*Here comes Mary Jo*" or "*Here comes William*" because that's his car. Nowadays they change cars every year so forget about that. Anyway, in comes Dr. Hawk. I'm in my grades 4, 5 and 6 and I'm going to tell him off, not bad, but I'm going to give him a hard time. He gets out of the car, "*Hi Warren! How are things going?*" I said, "*Terrible! I sure wasted my time at Western.*" He said, "*What are you talking about?*" I said, "*You didn't tell me there are places like this. I got thirty kids in there, 10 in grade 6 and 12 in grade four... (whatever the numbers are). I got three arithmetic classes and three of this... but I still only have six hours. Nobody told me how you do this.*" I'll never forget what he said. He said, "*Warren, they're not grades, they're children.*" And then it was ok.

Then when we had math, I think I used the middle grade sequence and I could always enrich it or reinforce it. I used that schedule if I was teaching division or whatever. The only trouble I got into was history because every grade had a different area. That's when I used my petal of the rose thing and decided that we would build a relief map somehow of the upper Skagit, from Concrete up. In there, I'd have measuring, and there would be names of places, and we'd try to figure out where did they come from and that would be a whole writing thing. I had no money, but they were building the new dams upriver and a couple of the dads worked up there and I asked them if there was any chance of getting any of that plywood. They said, "*Sure, we'll bring you some.*" Holy cats! Every Friday a pickup or two would come down loaded with old plywood chunks. So now the grades 4, 5 and 6 built a relief map of the upper Skagit. It was big. A piece of plywood is four by ... I don't think it was eight but it wasn't square. So we had to study contour and figure that out and measure all of that stuff. The kids did it. When you are through with everything, you could work on the map. That was the motivator. They had it for years. They used to have it at the conference and all kinds of stuff. I was amazed.

The only thing that was, not wrong, but you might have trouble with it today was that I used quarter inch plywood for the contour and a piece of plywood was 500 feet of elevation. As you did this you traced it onto wood and cut it. Then of course when you look at it, you have steps. If you're building a mountain, you have these quarter inch steps going up. How do you fill them? So I went to the hardware store and I told them the problem. You have to remember when this was, back in 1947. They have a lot more synthetic fillers now. [But we used] shredded asbestos and mixed it with paste. Of course it gave a texture to it, too. But then of course you're not supposed to handle that kind of stuff!

**TB:** We didn't know that until the Seventies!

**WB:** So that's what we did, we covered all the steps in with that stuff. It really looked nice. Then we had an open house. Some of the people who lived up there had lived there a long time or their relatives had. We

had discovered names of creeks or lakes but nobody knew how come, like Bacon Creek. Where did that come from? In the hallway of the school, we had butcher paper and at the top of it we had years. We had kids standing by each piece of paper and they would ask the parents, "*Can you think of something that happened here this year? Or do you know the name of this lake?*" We got all kinds of information. And for a lot of people, it was the first time they had heard of things too. That was our "petal of the rose" thing.

**TB:** The whole community got involved in that!

**WB:** Yes. It was quite a thing. Oh and then we found two graves from that chart. Something that said there are two graves over on Jones' farm, over twenty feet west of the creek that comes down. Sure enough, some kids, on their own, went over there and they found them. The only trouble was they didn't know who they were. They were old. I can't tell you how they got there, Lord only knows. It's pretty tough going to go from there up the Skagit into the Cascades into Canada. You can do it. The other one is over the Cascades, there's no pass. Whatever they did, they walked. And of course that was something trying to find out who they were. They're still up there. It was kind of neat. It went way beyond what I ever thought it would. After that kind of experience, I went up to see Dr. Hawk and I said, "*You taught me a lesson. Just teach them as kids.*" We had a good time.

**TB:** Is there anything else you would like to get on the tape?

**WB:** I often think of the good kids at Western, good in the sense that they are part of the student body and part of the campus at the time, and they went off to war and never came back. What a sad loss that was, what they had to offer and nobody knew it.

There's a picture somewhere, I don't know if it's in the yearbook or not. I don't know what the theme was, but you had to wear a beard, you couldn't shave for two months or something. And if you did, they had a stockade. Of course, I worked in a drugstore, I couldn't wear a beard. And this other guy, Jim [Junkin]. He was older than us in this class. He was starting to get bald. If I was 22, he was probably 28 or 30; a real nice guy and real serious about getting through school and all that stuff. He had a job somewhere and had to shave. One day, we happened to get off [the bus] in the morning, come up to school and the stockades were there. Several kids had been in there as a big joke. They would put them in there; lock them up for an hour or two. Here he and I come on the campus, no beard, and some guy says, "*Hey, there's two! Let's get them!*" They grabbed us and put us both in the old stockades. He's one of those that got killed in Iwa Jima as a Marine.

I just thought that was a sad, sad thing. There were a lot of good kids up there; [many that didn't come back because of] that dumb, wasted war. I benefited from it. I became a better person. I don't know about a better person, but a more learned person about people and things. And to know what it's like to have a feeling of eminent death and what you think of; you wonder when will I know I'm dead? That type of thing; you're not afraid. And I guess I say that because I was a bombardier and sat in the nose of a B17. You fly for eight hours and you bomb for 45 seconds or something, you have a lot of time to think. (You have other work to do, too). But I used to relive my life at Western a thousand times. I'd think how did I get here and is it worth it? What difference does it make? All those kinds of things.

Later when I started to teach, I had this thread of some sort that said a lot of guys died hoping to make this place better somehow, not knowing how, either. Maybe that's what I owed. I lived through it, so maybe there's some way I can help someone make this a better place. It's kind of corny, but it's still there. Little things with kids like honesty and truthfulness. You don't have to lie to get somewhere. There are other things besides reading, writing and arithmetic.

Later I was one of the first principals of a non-graded primary school. Again because there must be a better way. I tried it for two years and I decided the country wasn't ready for it. I spent more time arguing with parents over "*What grade is my kid in?*" It didn't matter. It just wasn't worth the time. The best way to teach people is not to upset them. If you are trying to teach you two (referring to the interviewer and his wife) something, it's my job as a teacher to find out what you enjoy doing or feel best at and her too, and

they'll be different. My job is to moderate whatever we are trying to learn here to your way and to her way. That's the petal and rose. I don't need a book! The book doesn't do that.

I [have] got grandkids that went to college. The running joke in our family is me saying, *"I'm going to tell you how you read a textbook and you listen to your old grandpa! If a teacher gives you a history book and says, 'read chapter three,' Where do you start? And of course the kids say, 'Start on chapter three.' 'Wrong!' I said, 'You start at the back.'* It works this way, if you read the back of the chapter first, you know what you're reading for, [because the questions are all laid out]. I said, *"So if you read that first, and then thumb your way through the pictures, now you read it. That's because you'll adjust to the way you want to learn out of that system -- this is what I have to learn -- now I'll learn it my way!"* Remember, those textbooks were written by teachers and a lot of times kids don't think like teachers. So there's better ways to do things.

One of the methods I learned was when I used to work with remedial reading things. It suddenly dawned on me that if you could speak English, you could read it; how come you don't?

One day with a kid (this is up at Sedro Woolley High School); he came over to the grade school. I said, *"I saw you playing basketball. You did a good job."* The coach had called me and said, *"Hey, can you do this? The kid is going to be ineligible and I've got to have him."* I said, *"Why don't you write it? Tell me about it in writing."* He said, *"I can't write. I can't spell."* I said, *"You don't have to spell. You can write without spelling. Just write it the way you want too."* *"Well Ok."* It was an -- I don't have to write because I can't spell -- type of thing. This guy says, *"Ok."* So he writes this thing, and is going to come back tomorrow or the day after or something. I take it to the secretary and I say, *"I want you to type this. Don't change any structure. Just correct the spelling."* (I don't know what's going to happen.) She does this. I said, *"Tim, do you remember that story you wrote the other day?"* *"Yes."* I had Mrs. McClure type it. It's a good story. Read it to me. He said, *"I can't read."* I said, *"Try it."* He did. He picked it up. He started out like *"The...ball...game...Fri-day...was exciting."* He kept getting faster and faster and he read it. He looked up at me and said, *"How come I can read?"* I said, *"That's all reading is. It's decoding marks."* All his brain needed was the signals -- like ,exciting." He couldn't spell ,exciting." But it was here (points to his head). All he needed to have was an ,e-x-i" maybe.

Then I got a call from the coach and he said, *"What in the hell did you do to that kid? He's different. He's happy."* I said, *"I didn't do anything, I just told him he could read."* Then his mother called me. She said, *"Mr. Beecroft, is there something you do different than other people?"* I told her, *"No, just that a learner has to believe in himself, too. He went on to finish high school, everything was just fine."*

I go to schools and see things happening that still aren't right. But I don't say anything. Everybody is working hard. So many places are so busy. Now I have a granddaughter teaching. They are working her hard, doing a good job, that kind of stuff. But the job she's given to do is wasting a lot of her time and a lot of the learner's time. There's a better way to do it, but the system won't let it happen. I guess as long as you keep looking for answers, you'll be all right.

Anyway, then I retired. I retired early. I guess I forgot to say that when I retired from school work, I did it early because I was like many people [looking for] another way to make a buck, [which] in education was to be a consultant. I was a consultant for Oxford University Press material. I was an educated salesman, you know what I mean? I knew what you did with the product. A couple years of that was enough.

My old boss that I had in Sedro Woolley, Dr. Walker, had come up to Pierce County as a county superintendent. I had written in my date book, I had seen in the paper like five months ago that he had been hired and was coming work on a certain day. I wrote that in my book, ,Walker came to work today." One day I turn [the page] and it says ,Walker came to work today." I thought, *"I'll give him a call."* So I call the county office and they give me the number of the superintendent there. Of course he said, *"Hey great! Warren, glad to hear from you! I'm sure glad there's somebody I know up here!"* And joking I said, *"Well, I can beat you at a game of golf, are you in shape to do that kind of stuff?"* *"Oh that's great, sure, sure."* So we set a date and we met out here at Linden. We shook hands and drank a cup of coffee and started

playing; just playing an old friendly game, “Dollar a hole?” “Yes, that’s fine.” After three or four holes I’m beating him. Bet’s on the side, see. I get ready to tee off on this hole and he says just out of nowhere, “Warren, I want you to come work for me.” I’m getting ready to hit the ball and I say, “What did you say?” “I need you as an assistant.” I said, “You’d do anything to win a god damned golf game! How am I supposed to hit this ball now?” So I went to work for him then for their Title 1 program in the county.

Then of course he left and a new one came. And then they merged the two county systems, King County and Pierce County. I skipped something. The new superintendent they hired after Walker, I didn’t get along with him at all, but I got along with the King County one just as a friend. They had a vacancy in reading curriculum, Title 1. It comes through and I resigned from Pierce County and went to work up there. The next year, they merged the two sections! The board had to choose one of the two superintendents, and so they chose [the King County superintendent] and he was my friend, so that happened to work out fine. I did that for a couple years.

This is how it happens. I had never thought up until now, it just happened a second time. I’m up at the ESD working. Everything is fine; bright sunny day. All of a sudden I get the funniest feeling like I’m going to be sick to my stomach for no reason. No aches, no pain. It’s the old grade school up by Highline is where at that time the county office was. It’s typical of old grade schools, the cans are in one wing, I’m in the other. So I’m walking down the hall a hundred miles an hour and she goes, “Hey Beecroft, can I see you a minute?” “No.” [Laughs] I get there, toss my cookies. I think, what the heck is going on? I clean up, come out, and here’s my boss’ secretary. I say something smart, “Good morning” or something like that. She says, “What’s wrong with you?” Nothing. She said, “You look awful pale. You sure you’re all right?” “Oh yes.” She says, “I think you better come in here and sit down.” The sick room was right there.

So I sat on the bed, and the next thing I know, it’s how many hours later (referring to his wife)? Four or five? That’s the next instant I know. This became the joke of the area, but it could only happen to me. My boss’s secretary is a nice, older lady, always kept herself neat and all that stuff, straight as an arrow – straight laced. Anyway, my mentality records that I met her in the hall. I don’t know that it’s five hours later and I’m in a hospital in Seattle, that doesn’t fit anywhere. I open my eyes and here she is, standing on one side of the bed, and [my wife] is on the other. The joke was I turned that way (that’s where my boss’ secretary was) and my profound words that went all through the county, “What motel are we in?” And of course, she about had a heart attack, too!

**TB:** Thank you very much. This has been great.

**WB:** I’m sure I talked too much.

**TB:** No, no. That’s great. Thank you.