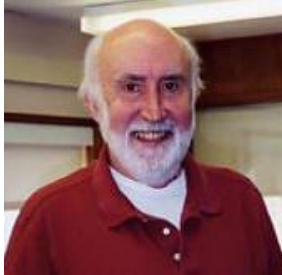




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This interview was conducted with Dr. Jim Talbot, on Wednesday, April 16, 2003, in Wilson Library. The interviewer is Steve Inge.

SI: Today is April 16, 2003 we are talking to Dr. James Talbot, Professor Emeritus of Geology and former Provost and Executive Vice President at Western Washington University. Jim, thank you for taking the time to come in. Maybe if you can begin by just sharing a little bit about your life and where you came from and how events brought you to Western.

JT: I was born in 1932 in England. I went to school in Reading and then went up to Cambridge University where I earned a Bachelors of Arts in Geology. After that I moved around a bit; spent a year in Toronto, two years in Berkeley and ended up in Adelaide University in South Australia.

In fact my life has been largely a series of accidents, influenced by other's suggestions. I had a cousin in Australia who suggested that I should try to come to Australia, so when a position became available, I applied for it and got it. I was appointed as a lecturer in Geology there and at the same time I got my PhD there, so that was a stressful period.

In 1967 we (my wife, Margot, and three children born in Australia, Katrin, Gretchen, and Susan) moved to Canada to what was a new university on the north shore of Lake Superior, Lakehead University. We stayed there for three years and froze our butts off in the winter (laughter) and decided that we were not really made for that, and so I applied for a position of Chair of the Department of Geology at the University of Montana in Missoula. That was successful, so we moved to Missoula.

We had a small adventure on the way. We were outside Livingston on I-90 and we were pulled over by local highway patrol. And as there is no speed limit in that part of Montana at that time I wondered what the problem was. And the guy said, "How'd you like to spend the night in Livingston?" And I thought, "—Olgosh, what have I done (laughter)?" But it turned out that that was a promotion for the Livingston Rodeo, that somebody was given free room and board. We went to the rodeo in a stagecoach, which had been used in a movie. And we enjoyed it. It's the only rodeo I've ever seen in my life (laughter). And that was our adventure on our way to Missoula.

After five years as chair of the department there I came back from a vacation and found a note on my desk to go see the President. He said, "Well, as you probably understand we've had a search for Provost this year and it was unsuccessful." It's what I call the Jesus Christ syndrome. There was one candidate who was so much better than anybody else and who was going to lead us out of the wilderness, but he turned us down. And so nobody was interested in either the second or the third candidates.

So he was looking for an Acting Provost and asked around, and he said that my name kept bobbing up like a cork. So he decided that he would ask me if I was interested. And I said, "Well I'll have to go back and talk to my colleagues," which I then did, and they said fine. I'm not sure whether that's a good thing or not (laughter), but they said fine. And so I took the job for a year.

I'd had no experience of course in administration other than being a chair. And I had no real responsibility as Provost because I couldn't make any decisions that would last beyond the year I was going to be acting as Provost

(laughter). That's a great situation to find yourself in! But I did some interesting things, I thought, there. I first of all conducted a coup; well actually I had done that before I became Provost. The University Curriculum Committee had always been chaired by the Provost. And I conducted a coup in which it became a faculty member's prerogative to have the Chair. And I thought that showed the direction that I was interested in in administration. And the other was, when I was Provost, I persuaded the Dean's that they needed a Dean's Council. Before that time there had been no cooperation between the Deans, and they had no single voice to report to the President. And I thought that was important to establish.

Anyway the next accident that came along was the Provost's position advertised in Bellingham. I would not normally have thought of coming to Bellingham except my former father-in-law had said (even before I went to Australia), "You know there are some interesting places in the United States to get jobs," and he singled out Bellingham. He lived near Chicago; I don't know why but I always thought of Bellingham as a place to settle.

In fact at one point I applied for a job, unsuccessfully, to come here into the Geology Department from Australia; people in the United States simply don't hire without interviews and nobody was going to bring me from Australia (laughter) to interview. So anyway this job came up at Western and I applied for it. A very simple letter, I remember it was only two paragraphs long. I've seen many applications since then which need three ring binders to hold. I had never been to Bellingham by the way, but it had some programs that I knew about. Fairhaven and Huxley were relatively new programs then but they had already a reputation outside of the State of Washington and so that was attractive. The Geology department was particularly strong and was well known to us. I had been the editor of *Northwest Geology* that we started in Missoula. We had invited all programs in the region to tell us where their Masters and PhD students were working and we put them on a map printed on the back cover. I saw that Western had a lot of students doing some interesting work, and the reputation of the faculty was very strong, so this was very attractive. If I was going to come here (I had no thought at all of being an administrator for my entire career), the Geology Department would be a good place to be.

So I applied and I got called to an interview. I don't remember much about the interview. I remember only one question that was asked of me, it was asked by Mary Robinson who at that time was in Student Affairs. She said, "What are the major barriers to employing more women in faculty positions?" And at that time I hadn't given it any thought whatsoever because really all of that came a little bit later. But all I could think of is there aren't many women in PhD programs and that needed to be changed. So anyway, I was successful. The one part of the process which I thought was interesting was that before I was made the offer, I got a call from Alan Ross asking me to set up interviews with various people at the University of Montana so he could come out and meet with them. Obviously one was the President; the others were the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Chair of Philosophy, the President of the Associated Students, and there may have been a couple of others. So he came out and met with them all, and gave Paul Olscamp a call, and I got a call from Paul that same night offering me the job, which I took. So we sold our house in Missoula and headed for Bellingham.

We stayed in Birnam Wood for a month while we looked around for a house, and settled into the University. We bought a house on what became Garden Terrace so I was able to walk to the University everyday; which I had also been able to do in Missoula by the way.

So we settled into the job and the first thing I had to do was to figure out what the job entailed, because after all I had limited administrative experience. But it soon became clear that the big issues in the University had to do with recovery from the Reduction in Force of 1972 (I arrived in 1976), and to try to improve faculty morale. Paul Olscamp had arrived the year before and he was already working with the faculty to get a better governance system. And he had in fact promised the faculty that they would have a separate faculty senate; that wasn't in place when I arrived but it was by the end of the first year. The governance system at that time was a University Senate, which included administrators, staff and faculty, and some students as well. And there was a Faculty Council which was a subset of that, which dealt with those issues that were specifically faculty related. Whoever it was who thought that it wasn't working very well, Paul certainly supported the idea of breaking it up, and by the end of that year there was a Faculty Senate.

As part of that process and increasing the faculty morale, we set about to change the Faculty Handbook. And I recall those harrowing sessions when we did that. I don't know how it's done nowadays; I've been retired too long for

that. But I sat down, just me, with the thirty members of the Faculty Council and we had to decide what the Faculty Handbook would look like. I remember in particular one session; I had decided that the old Faculty Handbook was a mess, and it had to be reorganized into what is essentially the order it is in today. And we sat down and we agreed on most things. The main change, because many things were in transition at the time, was that the qualifications for promotion and tenure were changed from excellence in teaching *or* research to excellence in teaching *and* research.

That was a big change. It was not a change that I initiated. It was already in the minds of the faculty; they knew that they were trying to improve the University. They were anticipating a transition from what was the State College, a general college, into a regional university that happened a year later. And so they wanted to make sure that the qualifications of the faculty were appropriate to a university, because it's a different than a state college. So we were able to do that.

But there were two other items in there that I do take credit for, and that was the change in the sabbatical leave policy and the sick leave policy. Up until that time, if a faculty member went on sabbatical they got paid three-quarters of their salary, one quarter went back to the department. I had come from a tradition where it was regarded as absolutely essential that faculty left their hometown, and that they went to distant corners of the earth. In Australia and Canada, you either have to go Europe or to the United States and that costs money. The idea that you would do that without any help was considered outrageous. You got full salary and some expenses as well. Not much, but I recall it was enough to get me to Europe on a boat, and I took my family along and that was extra. So that was one thing, we changed it so that faculty are now paid their whole salary while on sabbatical.

The other was the sick leave policy. Faculty, I assume other people as well, can sign up for long term disability insurance. This kicks in six months after you get sick. So I supported the idea that the faculty sick leave could be up to six months at full pay. After that they would have to go on their insurance. So if they didn't take out the insurance that was their problem. It was relatively cheap, so I think everybody did. It may be mandatory now, I'm not sure; I don't think it was at the time. So those were the big changes. They don't sound like much, but remember the idea behind this was to improve faculty morale, to make sure that they were taken care of. These were ways in which we could take care of them, there may have been others but I don't recall what they were, but it was a long time ago.

The other thing that we instituted was going around and talking to everybody. I don't know whether past provosts and presidents have done that but Paul and I went around to every department. Obviously it was pretty stilted; particularly as one of us tended to be, shall we say, rather forceful (laughter) in our responses. But you got a lot of information there and you got the feel of the faculty. I remember somebody saying (it could have been Jerry Flora) to me at one point, that one of the most important things you can do is to walk around the campus, and this was part of it.

The change to University status clearly focussed our attention on many changes, including curriculum changes. The university had just created two new colleges in 1975—Fine and Performing Arts, and Business and Economics. I don't really recall what all the changes in curriculum were, but, we had to change the curriculum to increase the importance of majors; whereas before we had been much more of a general studies sort of university.

The year I arrived was the first year that the College of Business and Economics and Fine and Performing Arts came into being. They were led by Rox Collier in CBE and by Bill Gregory in Fine and Performing Arts. I don't know where either of them came from, they were appointed before my time.

One important aspect of our administration was the introduction of a period of relative stability. When I came for the interview, one of the questions I was asked was how long I would commit to the job? And I made a number up-- five years. I actually I have a philosophy about that. When you're appointed to a position, you're appointed because it seems to the interviewers that you're the best fit between the problems and the solutions that are available to the university, and that you can bring about those solutions with relative ease. So when you arrive the first thing you do is to solve people's problems. There is nothing easier than that (laughter). You just have to be there, and just accept whatever it is the people say, and you know where you're going to go. And I think that takes about three years to do all of that. And I don't think I'm speaking in retrospect here. This is what I really believe. After that period you start introducing items that maybe were never discussed at the interview, or policies that occur to you need to be changed, and maybe other people haven't seen that. That becomes more difficult and you start making enemies at that time

(laughter), and you get cabals. And so after about five years it's time to leave. I did not articulate it that way when I said I would stay five years, but that's what I believe.

Let me say a little bit more about the continuity of the administration because I think that was important at the time I was here. I was Provost from 1976 until I went back to the faculty in 1984. Paul Olscamp was the President, Tom Quinlan was the Vice-President for Student Affairs and Don Cole for Business Affairs. In my office I had two people who had been appointed before I got there: Jim Albers who was responsible for budget and planning; and Bill O'Neil who had been the Registrar but had been promoted or transferred to the provost's office to take care not only of the Registrar and Admissions offices, but also Summer Session and Extended Programs and stuff like that. And so I had these two individuals who were just a fount of knowledge and without them I clearly couldn't have succeeded in the Provost office. But that was essentially all we had. We had a secretary, Ruth Huffine and office manager, Joyce Oiness. And that was it; that was the Provost's Office.

At that time the College of Arts and Sciences Dean was Jim Davis and he was directly across the hall (eventually he was moved over to the Environmental Studies building largely because the other Deans thought that he was too close to the Provost.) And he had one helper too, Brian Copenhaver, who was his Assistant Dean, and a secretary. So we had a relatively small administration then.

The other Deans were: Rox Collier in CBE; Bill Gregory in Fine and Performing Arts; Joe Bettis at Fairhaven; and Ruth Weiner at Huxley. Bettis and Weiner left relatively soon after I arrived. Ruth Weiner essentially was in her final year of being Dean and Joe Bettis left at the end of that first year. Bettis was replaced by Dan Lerner and Ruth Weiner was replaced temporarily by Michael Mischaikow one of the promoters of Huxley College. (He took over for one year until we appointed Dick Mayer.) Arnold Gallegos was the Dean of Education and with the exceptions of Fairhaven and Huxley, all of the deans remained while I was Provost, at least until the last year. The last year I was Provost, Jim Davis stepped down and Pete Elich came in. Bill Gregory left as well, I'm not sure if that was last year or not. But the point is that the administration stayed there for a long time and so we could in fact get our act together and move the University forward through its transition.

Others who I think were very important in the running of the University were: Gene Omev was the Registrar and stayed there for a long time; Dick Riehl was the Admissions Director; Bob Lawyer was the Librarian; Mel Davidson the Computer Center Director; you, Steve in charge of the Alumni Program and Chris Goldsmith in charge of Public Information. And you all stayed there the whole time I was here. I think the importance of this, of stability, can't be over-emphasized. Before I arrived there were I was told (although I'm not quite sure I totally believe this), seven Provosts in five years, including very short term ones. I don't think the Provost had stayed in the office more than two years since the Dean of Faculty position had been formed. That was probably in Jarrett's time, or maybe even a little later then.

SI: Jarrett appointed Harold Chapland if I remember right.

JT: Back to the problems.

The major problem while I was Provost was a second Reduction in Force, which came in 1982, about the time I was thinking of stepping down and going back to Geology or moving on to something else. I really hadn't thought about that very much, but it seemed to me that one of the things you need in a period of stress is a sense of institutional history. And a lot of other people agreed with that. I remember members of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate talking with Paul Olscamp and me about how we would handle the reduction and who was going to be the point man? And they said, —Leave it to Jim (laughter)!”

SI: Leave it to Jim (laughter)!

JT: So Jim was to do this, and that's exactly what I had to do. I had meetings with everybody. I remember a meeting in one of the lecture halls with just anybody who wanted to come. It wasn't just faculty, there were staff and students too. I remember the most persistent question was —Why don't we all take a pay cut?” My answer was that we couldn't do that because you could never restore that cut. If you decided to take a ten or twelve percent reduction

(there was a twelve-percent budget cut that we had to deal with that year) it would stay with you for the rest of your career.

In most cases we were able to deal with this cut by simply not filling positions. We cut back on part-timers almost completely at that time. And there were some actual dismissals, but not on the faculty. So that was apparently a much better situation than the previous RIF.

One of the problems I found when I first came here was that there were some departments where some members were still not speaking to each other because of their actions in the first Reduction in Force. For example, one of the techniques for saving money was to cut back some positions full-time to part-time. Some people volunteered to do this, others did not. And the people who volunteered had a hard time getting back to full positions and they resented the fact that their colleagues were not supporting them. So we certainly knew to avoid that this time.

I think we made one big mistake when we went through Reduction in Force. The University budgets at that time were arranged in two categories: formula and non-formula categories. And what we did when we went through the Reduction in Force was to make sure that we maintained the formulas. We didn't reduce the percentage of faculty relative to the students. That's essentially what the formula did. And if we were going to make cuts, we would make them in non-formula areas, and Physical Plant was one of those areas.

You didn't get a percentage of your budget to run the Physical Plant. You got the money you needed; you presented your needs to run this Physical Plant. Never of course everything you ask for and so we made some cuts there. Whereas other universities in this state that I'm aware of, Central in particular, decided to cut their faculty and to cut their formula because they thought that the formula would be restored.

They were right, we were wrong. And it's one of the reasons why we have a lower dollar per student ratio than the other regional universities. That was my mistake; formulas were restored, but non-formula areas were not. I was the one who decided to do that (laughter). Too bad!

So we were able to get through some very difficult times because we stuck it out. I remember we put together a planning process which is no longer active. Jim Albers was in charge of the Planning Council (although I think he was always elected to that, I don't think that was an appointed position, but it might have been). And we encouraged the Planning Council to think about what the University would look like over time; which areas needed strengthening and to make recommendations each year on what new appointments should be made if ever we had the money.

Well it would actually have been nice if we'd had some money (laughter). It was largely an exercise that really didn't produce very much. It produced some very nice recommendations, but in fact during my stay as Provost we had no net gains in the University. The student body remained at about ten thousand I believe. And the legislature was not giving us very much money. Faculty salaries did not increase very much.

In fact the largest faculty salary increase took place in my last year. It was when President Ross came on board. The legislature granted us a twelve-percent increase in salaries, not just faculty salaries, but before that time it had been virtually flat. So I think you can see that the salaries people have right now are largely a function of post 1984.

Let's talk about some of the characters, starting off with people who worked for me. Jim Albers was my Assistant—Vice Provost for Instruction and Research. He was a physicist who had come to Huxley because he was interested in environmental matters, and so he mostly lectured on energy issues in Huxley. And he had been appointed Assistant Provost I believe the year before I came, maybe two years. I'm not sure about that. He was the one who provided leadership in budget matters and in certain personnel matters as well. I recall, and this was after I stepped down as Provost, Pete Elich reminiscing about Jim and about how he kept control of the budget and making sure that we were spending money in an appropriate manner. He said, —Anytime I would go in and ask him for some sections, maybe an additional section in chemistry or psychology, it was like going into the Inquisition (laughter). You had to justify these single courses to Jim Albers.” He really kept us solvent.

I recall that we never ran out of money when Jim was in control. Of course there were other people in the budget office and so on whose job it was to make sure we didn't run out of money. But Jim always had some money set aside so that we could meet emergencies. And the way in which we did this was really quite simple, and that is for every hire, we would budget more than it would actually cost. And so there was always money left over, we were never short money from any faculty hiring. And that meant that that money was available to take care of whatever crisis came up. And of course crises come up everyday, we all know that.

So Jim was a steady influence and he made absolutely sure in the Planning Council that the faculty knew exactly what was going on with the budget of the University. And I think that helped us a lot, that kind of openness. I can't emphasize too much how important that is, that everybody knows what the heck you're doing. It really helped us through the Reduction in Force. We had special editions of FAST in which we recorded all of the suggestions anybody had made to get us out of this wretched situation. And we recorded all along the actual actions we were taking.

And I recall at the very first meeting we called, which was a general meeting, there were probably about five hundred people present to figure out what we were going to do, and simply to react. We had to do something. Probably less than six months later, when we had the final open forum, there were no more than a dozen people present, because everybody seemed to know what was going on.

After the RIF was over, Jim conducted a survey on what we could have done differently. And the only item that sticks in my mind is that we could have talked to individuals more. But the process within the University, information going back and forth, nobody had any serious complaints about any of that. But the people who were going to be most affected felt that they needed more stroking, and that's reasonable.

SI: When you're about to lose your job you really want to know why (laughter).

JT: And of course nobody ever wants to do that (laughter). Anyway so Jim was a very important member of the administration.

Bill O'Neil, he was fine. He did his job. He actually didn't like Paul very much. He thought Paul was too intimidating and didn't appreciate what he did, and so he retired early partly as a result of that. But I think he was tired of doing all those things. But he kept his area going. I never had any complaints about how those particular areas were running. In fact I recall meeting with Omev and Riehl after my first year here. Because I would sit down with everybody who reported to me, even those who reported several steps down the organization. And I recall Riehl saying to me, "You know we expected the whole area to be reorganized when you came here." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Well you just look like the person that would do that (laughter)." And I said, "If I wanted to reorganize the Registrar's or Admissions Offices I would have applied for that job." I said, "That's not my job."

In fact I think it's very important that people understand that they're there to do their job and you're not there to do their job. I think that's a lesson that is lost on a lot of people. It's not just a question of delegating. It's a question of trust. These people have a job to do, and unless you hear otherwise, they're doing fine. Just let them be. If they've got problems, they're going to bring them to you. You don't have to meddle in their day to day operations.

I think that applies to all the administrative functions of the university, also to the colleges. I think there's far too much meddling in the affairs of the Colleges. And I mean this as a general criticism, not just a criticism of this institution. But people can't let well alone. Anyway, so Bill was doing his job.

After Bill left I appointed Mary Robinson to fill that position. And she has a long and interesting history that I'm not totally familiar with. I think she had been Dean of Students at the American University in Lebanon. She said it was a glorious place and it was so sad to see how it had been destroyed in the war with Israel. Anyway she had come here; I don't know what her position was in the Student Affairs Office. But she had impressed me. When I conducted an internal search, there were really only two candidates for the position. She was one and the other one was Joe Correa, Director of the Center for Continuing Education. And I thought that she had better and broader qualifications than he had. And so I brought her in to the Administration, and worked very well with her. She would get frustrated with me from time to time because she would bring me all kinds of problems for me to solve, but that

at the end of the meeting she would say, –You just want me to solve my own problems don't you? And I said, –Well, yes (laughter)!

SI: As a matter of fact!

JT: (Laughter) That's what you're here for and so on.

And another member of the administration who is now dead was Don Cole. He was the Vice President for Business and we had very good relations with Don, at least I had very good relations with Don. I don't recall others people's of course. I used to go down to the Physical Plant once a year as part of this going around to people. And I remember being impressed by the way in which he articulated his job and the job of his area. Not just Physical Plant, of course he had Financial Affairs as well. He said we are here to serve and to make sure this University runs properly, and everybody has to understand that. And I think he embodied that himself. He never argued with you about any particular academic need or said we can't do that. And I think his tenure was one again of great stability. He was criticized by some of the people that worked for him as not being a strong enough advocate, but he said that that was essentially because they were in a service role and you couldn't really criticize him for that. I got along very well socially with Don Cole as well. We would go out to his shack on the south end of Lake Whatcom, Blue Canyon. So I liked Don Cole and his loss in the plane crash with President Ross was the real loss to the university

SI: It's been said that, among people in his profession, he saw himself perhaps more as an educator than he did really perhaps in the business, financial. His function was in education.

JT: Yes.

SI: And that was his mission there and as he said, as a service person, quite unusual.

JT: Well I think so yes. Of course I haven't had much experience with other people like that. I certainly didn't think the administrators in Montana had that idea. He certainly saw that his role was part of an educational system and it was an essential part of that system. And also he made us understand that as well. It was as essential in running the institution as having a good library. Things worked and if they didn't, then by golly they needed to be fixed. There's no argument about it. And of course he had to do that under very limited budgets.

SI: Tom Quinlan?

JT: Tom Quinlan exhausted me (laughter). He ran the Student Affairs area I think roughly the way we tried to run the academic area. He set up an administration. No more people than there were before, but he reorganized the administration and essentially delegated to carry out their jobs. And he was, I think, very effective at that.

When I said he exhausted me, you always had to be on your toes with Tom. Not in how he ran the his part of the University, but just in life (laughter)! I mean, he would talk at such a different level than most people that you really did have to pay attention and follow along and respond, do all of those kinds of things. With a lot of people you can just hang out, and things will blow over you. But not Tom, he engaged people a lot, and I appreciated that even though it left me exhausted.

I got a divorce while I was Provost, and I remember Tom being really the first person to respond to me and to support me and try to help me through the problems that were going on at the time. So I regarded him as a good friend. Paul did as well, but Paul's different.

SI: When you came to interview and you met Paul, and he talked about what he wanted you to do, did you feel that there was a chemistry between you in terms of the joint vision of where the then college should be going and, how would you describe Paul, I guess?

JT: Oh, yes. At the interview we got on like a house on fire. And in fact I was told by the person who was squiring me around-- afterwards, not at the time, –When you first set foot on the campus, things changed. There was

absolutely no doubt in people's mind you would get this job if you wanted it." So the chemistry with Paul was very good.

Some people didn't like Paul. He was a very intimidating individual. But he also was the last academic president we had. There is nobody who's been president after Paul who has the same academic view of the institution as Paul did. The faculty are the most important part of the institution, both of us agreed with that. I mean, everybody mouths that, but if you can't build up a strong faculty and encourage those faculty to do their job, then the university doesn't work.

You can have paint peeling off the walls, the sewers can sometimes stink, buildings catch on fire (laughter), none of those are important if you don't have a strong faculty. And that was obviously the area where I think we actually made a difference, the two of us. I remember him saying, —You know, if we did nothing else, we have improved the status and the quality of the faculty while we were here."

We improved the selection process. It was sort of random at the time. But we insisted that it be well-documented and that you actually use some criteria for hiring faculty, not just hire somebody you knew. And we certainly improved the tenure and promotion process. In my first year here, I turned down half of all applications that had come to me on the recommendations of the Deans. And I thought that was terrible. Terrible! You should never have to turn down a recommendation of a dean.

SI: They should never have made it that far.

JT: They should never have made it that far. People simply didn't understand what the criteria were. They had ignored the criteria that were clearly stated and so we had to do something about that. After that, things improved dramatically. And I think in part, people actually changed their behavior, not just changed their applications. Their research became more important to everybody. And actually demonstrating that you were a good teacher, I don't know how it was done before! It said excellence in teaching or research, but evaluating teaching is always very hard.

SI: This was the beginning of the actual evaluation process by students and faculty, originally optional?

JT: Yes, oh yes. But we insisted that you have a certain number, I forget what it was.

SI: Or like when your promotion came around, the data had to be there to show ...

JT: The data had to be there. Certainly something more than half of all the classes you taught had to be evaluated. It's not necessarily a good system to do it that way, but how else are you going to do it then? Nobody wants to take the time to go and observe and be a mentor, that kind of stuff. Even though we say we do that, we don't really. We do the minimum to get the job done.

But the student evaluations at least point out some of the problems. You can tell the difference between somebody who gets—say when most of the students think you're doing okay, not necessarily excellent, but that's okay. Then you get some faculty where you get bipolar results. They either think this person is terrible, or he's the greatest invention since sliced bread (laughter)! Those sorts of things should be an indicator to the chairs that things need to be worked on. And generally speaking there's a simple solution to a lot of those things. There are a lot of curmudgeons for which there will never be any change of course. I happen to know quite a few (laughter)!

Anyway, where were we? Oh we were talking about Paul, yes. To my dying day, I will appreciate what Paul did for me. I don't remember much about the interview, in fact I think the only thing I can recall after 27 years is that he liked my coat! I'm sure there must have been other things; but that sticks because I'm not a person who cares very much about how I dress. Maybe he was just looking for something to say. But once I'd been appointed, he essentially said okay, you can run the University. Your job is to run the University. My job is to take care of the outside. Of course —I want to be told all the time," he would say.

And in the time that I was his provost, there were only two or three times when he came storming down to my office and saying, —You just made a shitty decision." (laughter)! But the point about it was he never overturned it. I never

once had a decision that I made overturned by Paul. When people went around me on appeal for whatever it was, whether it was tenure and promotion or some kind of budget problem, if I'd said no, the answer was no. I didn't realize it at the time, but I think that's the way to run a university. And the same thing I tried to do with the Deans—after the initial problem with tenure and promotion decisions.

I mean it didn't work that way in the beginning, but if they said no to somebody, I didn't want to have to turn around and say yes. They had to have their reasons stated; similarly for when they said yes. I didn't want to say no when they'd said yes to something like promotion or tenure. And so that changed quite a bit. I think that's probably persisted, I don't know. Once you change a culture like that, things tend not to change back to chaos, which is what I think it pretty well was before.

So Paul was very good in that way. Paul stated very clearly what everybody had to do, and then left you to do it. If you made mistakes, he might get ticked off at you, but that was the end of it. When he left, we had just as good a relationship as the day I stepped on board. I'm pretty sure of that; maybe you should ask him that. I thought we got along like a house on fire. But all good things come to an end.

Paul left. I was appointed Acting President, without, by the way, anybody asking me whether I wanted to do the job (laughter). I mean this was simply announced in the news conference, announcing that Paul was leaving, going to Bowling Green; and that I was going to be Acting President, and that I had agreed not to apply for the permanent position. Really? I didn't know I agreed to either of those things (laughter)! That was Curt Dalrymple for you. I mean, I didn't care, but that's all right. So anyway, I became Acting President for just six months while they looked for a new president, and of course they appointed Bob Ross.

Now Bob Ross was the biggest disaster I think this University has had in a long time. He simply ignored faculty governance. One of his first questions to me when he came on board was, "Do I have to go to the Faculty Senate?" He had absolutely no interest in faculty governance. He sort of destroyed it. I remember one of the psychology faculty saying to me later on, after I'd stepped down, that the faculty are like rats in a psychology experiment where you shock them enough if they do the wrong thing; after a while they just go sit in the corner and cower. And that's essentially what the faculty did under Ross. There was absolutely nothing that you could negotiate with Ross. He simply decided what it was he was going to do.

He captured all of the money we used to have in the Provost Office for crises and handed it out himself. He didn't need a provost; he needed a "gfer", somebody that would simply do things for him. This is a small thing, but at the end of each year, if there was any money left over in the Physical Plant, the library would buy books with it. They had all the orders right there, ready to go, and so many thousand dollars would come in if it had been a mild winter or something like that, and we would buy books. He took all that money back. He essentially ran this institution like a fiefdom. But, that's one person's point of view.

Paul Ford became his Provost. He had been Acting Provost in the six months that I had remained as the Executive Vice President after Ross came here. I had appointed Paul Ford as Acting Provost while I was President, and he remained as Acting Provost in those six months, and he applied for the position after I announced I would be stepping down. And I asked him, "Why did you apply?" because he was always complaining about Ross! Ross was making Ford ill. I said, "You come to me and you complain about this man, and then you apply for the position!" I told him three times about this at various stages in the application process. He said in the end, "Well, it's the best job in the institution." I said, "No it's not! Not under those circumstances." But he applied for it, got the job, and I think suffered for it. I don't know this first hand, but people tell me that he really did suffer under Ross, as I think anybody would have.

You had to have particular kind of personality to have flourished under him. Anyway, I'm not sure what else I can say about him. In the time that I remained as Executive Vice President and Provost (it was eighteen months that I suffered under that), I recall having the weekly meetings with the other Vice Presidents and occasionally at the President's House. We really didn't discuss anything. He would simply tell us what he had done, not what he was about to do, what he had done, if he thought it was worth commenting on.

He would give us a quiz every time we went in there. He would take USA Today, which has lots of what I believe are called “factoids” in it, and he would ask us one of these things, and of course none of us would ever know because we didn’t read USA Today. But that was the level of his intellectual achievements I guess.

SI: It was my observation that you could never tell him “no” without being punished.

JT: That’s probably true.

SI: He could not accept “no.” I mean, that was personal disloyalty and it shifted you in his world. There were those he had confidence in, he trusted, and those who he did not. And my observation was that those weren’t in good, who got into the outer darkness were those that had disagreed with him and perhaps not on anything of any particular importance.

JT: Yes. Well I simply found I couldn’t work with him because he wouldn’t let you make any decisions.

SI: But he liked to hold people responsible for his decisions.

JT: Yes, right. He hung me out to dry two or three times, and after a couple of times I knew, this wasn’t going to work. I remember one of those times, we were changing the Reduction in Force regulations, and he had directed me to work with the Attorney General’s Office to see how we could get more flexibility in getting rid of faculty if we needed to under Reduction in Force. And so I did this and presented it to the Senate. It was a terrible document, I admit that right away. It gave the administration essentially *carte blanche* for what they felt needed to be done. But I did it anyway, I’m a loyal subject! Of course there was a lot of flack from the Senate, and I took that flack, and I was still taking that flack when suddenly he said, “Well, seems like we’ve got a little bit of a controversy here, so we’ll do something a little bit different.” And he came up with something, I can’t recall what it was, but that was what he did. And I thought, “Okay, if that’s the way you want to do it, then you go right ahead.”

I remember Pete Elich telling me that he had been essentially directed by Ross to present to the board the closing down of the nursing program, and so he did that and the board objected to that, and he changed his mind! Just like, just right there. Well, you know, that’s fair enough, but you don’t tell people to do something and then turn around and leave them hanging out like that.

SI: It’s just soft, right?

JT: It’s doesn’t work, right. It doesn’t work that way, and he did that kind of thing a lot. And on the other hand, if you got in to see him, whoever you were, with a proposal, and if he liked that proposal, then hey, he would use that money that we used to use for emergency sections and so on and fund your proposal. I don’t think that’s how a university should be run. Maybe that was the way it was run in the 1930s, but I don’t think that’s the way it should be run in the 1980s.

Okay, universities have changed a lot in the last century. Whoa, we’re going way back now, aren’t we?

In the early 1900s, approximately one percent of the eighteen-year-old population went to university. That was about half of all high school graduates. In the 1950s, that suddenly went up. It still remained about half of the high school graduates who went to college, but the numbers increased dramatically until right now I think about a third of the eighteen-year-olds go on to college at one time or another. What has changed of course is the number of high school graduates. In the early 1900s, there were relatively few high school graduates. If you graduated, then your chances were pretty good of going to college.

Now, if you graduate, your chances are still pretty good of going to college. Nothing has changed except the number of people who actually graduate from high school. So there’s been a huge change in universities, particularly since the Second World War; the G.I. Bill here, the same sort of thing happened in England. There’s been an enormous increase in the number of people who could come to university.

But there was a lot of discrimination that went on. I mean my first job, for example, in Adelaide; I got that by the “old boy” network. I didn’t seek it, I got it that way. I was working in the Northwest Territories in Canada, working for Shell Oil Company on a summer job. I got a letter from my mentor at the University of California, where I was at the time, completing a Master’s degree. He said, “I’ve had a letter from my old friend Arthur Alderman, who is the Professor of Geology in the University of Adelaide, asking me if I would recommend a person to fill a petrology position, and I thought of you. Are you interested in that job?” And I wrote back to him and said, “Well yes, I am.” I didn’t tell him I’ve got a cousin in Australia and I’ve always wanted to go there. But I said well that sounds like a good idea. The next thing I knew is I got an air mail letter, hand-written letter, from one Arthur Alderman, while I was still in the Northwest Territories of Canada, offering me the job. I mean, that’s laughable! That’s how the universities were run in those days. There was a network, and of course they were old boy networks.

Things have changed dramatically, and they were actually changing dramatically while I was Provost. Affirmative Action was a program that was instituted during my time. Not because of me; I mean, I thought that it’s a good idea, but whether I thought it was a good idea or not is not the point. It just happened to be the time that I was here. And we dramatically increased the percentage of women hires, though it didn’t make much difference to the actual numbers because we weren’t hiring very much. But we dramatically increased the number of women in the new hires. And that of course has continued, and that’s not a thing that we alone do, it’s a thing that everybody does. So that has been a big change.

The other change that coincided with my tenure as Provost was the response to sexual harassment. We didn’t really know what sexual harassment was. People were complaining about faculty members and staff making comments or propositioning women students, or men students for that matter. But we didn’t really do anything about that until the sexual harassment laws came into place. But then we did. We moved into it.

I remember some rather sticky conversations we had with the Faculty Senate, about changing the system is what it boiled down to, by changing some procedures. I remember some faculty members wondering whether some of their comments would be regarded as sexual harassment. It was a time of great uncertainty. I think some of those comments were frivolous, others comments were serious. People simply didn’t know how to respond to this. But we did make the changes, and it has provided for a healthier environment in the institution. I feel privileged to have been part of defining those systems.

One specific example—a senior member of our Accounting Department actually said to his class at one stage “Women shouldn’t be in accounting because all the accounting firms, big accounting firms, are run by men, and they’re not going to let women become partners. And so any of the women in this class should consider dropping out because you have no future in this.” I mean this was after affirmative action was fully underway. So, you know, it takes a while before these things sink in.

SI: The outside culture has to do some catching up as well!

JT: Yes, it does. Anyway, that was an example I was going to give about that. I wanted to give a personal example of that.

JT: Okay, back to Bob Ross and to Tom Quinlan. Tom Quinlan left because of Bob Ross, I resigned because of Bob Ross, and unfortunately Don Cole was killed because of Bob Ross. But I recall a meeting in November of the year before he was hired, he came in January. I had called together the other Vice Presidents and myself of course as Acting President, and we met with him. We outlined what we were doing and we wanted to make sure that we were doing things that he thought were OK, because after all he was eventually going to take responsibility for everything. And after we had been doing this for about fifteen minutes he said, “How long do you think it will take it would take for my furniture to come from Little Rock?” Oh, well, we understood at that time that he really wasn’t interested in our ideas.

SI: Yes.

JT: And so we quickly drew the meeting to a close. And I remember talking to Tom Quinlan at that time, he said, “I don’t think this is a person I want to work for.”

Now I was a little slower on the uptake (laughter). I was willing to give it a try. I thought well maybe the guy's under some stress or something like that and he really doesn't want to be involved in all of these kinds of things and he'll pick them up when he gets there. But Tom saw immediately that this was not a person that he wanted to work for; and in fact he was gone within six months. He went down to Florida. He just decided right then and there to leave and that was it.

It took me a little bit longer. I got hung out to dry as I said two or three times before I decided that, "Really this isn't going to work." So I went in one day and simply said to him, "This isn't working out, and I've got my colored parachute here. Would you agree to these conditions?" And he did.

I realized at that time that if I was going to back, I needed to get back into Geology. So I needed a sabbatical to go back and learn what had happened in the ten years since I'd been a Geologist. And I did. I went to Imperial College London, where they have a very strong program in my particular field of Geology, for a year and got back into it.

And of course I don't regret that now. I mean I was over fifteen years as a faculty member here after that. And I think I contributed to the Department. I became Chair of the Department on four separate occasions (laughter). The last time was my final year. They had been having trouble finding a new Chair, because they're all internal at this stage. And I made the mistake of saying to Ned Brown who was in charge of it, "Well you know if all else fails I'll do it for a year." And that afternoon I was appointed Chair. It was as simple as that, nobody wanted to do it.

But I enjoyed being Chair. I enjoyed working with Pete Elich. I thought Elich was a splendid Dean of Arts and Sciences; not an intellectual, not a scholar, he just knew what Arts and Sciences should be about. He ran the College in a very democratic way. I had the opportunity on those four separate occasions to be in the Dean's Advisory Council--that's all the Chairs. We would meet with him once every two weeks, maybe once a week, I'm not sure. And he was always very open, would listen well and would tell you why we couldn't do things or why we could, or why we shouldn't. And he had tremendous support, I thought from the Chairs. And it was sad when people started to attack him, he didn't deserve that. No.

I think I'm kind of running out of things to say right now. I certainly appreciated this opportunity of saying a few things. Presumably, if I want to add something to the transcript I can do that.

SI: Certainly can; thank you.