

## Russell Bennett

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**Interview with Russell Bennett**

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on October 4, 1995**

Russell Bennett               - RB  
Clarke A. Chambers         - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers. It is October 4. This morning, I am interviewing Russell Bennett, a longtime colleague, and partner, and supporter of the university, an undergraduate student in the Law School, and most notably so active and focused in the Minnesota Campaign and the Minnesota Foundation.

Mr. Bennett, could we start with a little background that you think is relevant to describing how you came to such an important interest and support of the university, kind of a social, cultural autobiography?

RB: Certainly. I'm one of six kids and grew up here in Minneapolis. My mother went to the university and all my uncles. My grandmother was the first female to attend the Minnesota Law School about 1890. She didn't graduate.

CAC: Good heavens!

RB: My roots go back at least three generations. My daughter, who is recently graduated from the university, is the fourth generation graduate. That's kind of a long history of how we started.

CAC: That's a long connection.

RB: Yes.

CAC: So it was natural, as a Minneapolis kid, that you would go to the university? That was assumed that that would happen?

RB: Very much so. My family believed in public education, as do I. I went to West High School, not Blake, and I went to the University of Minnesota. My father went to Yale but he

felt that public institutions had an awful lot to offer. I've never regretted it. I think particularly practicing law in Minnesota, I'm very glad that I took my law training at the university. Not only is it a fine Law School but so many of my colleagues even today that I remember from Law School, you know which ones you can trust with a handshake and which ones you have to put everything in writing and they still won't pay any attention to it.

CAC: [laughter] You were an undergraduate before that. What major were you?

RB: I majored in History.

CAC: Ahhh.

RB: I enjoyed English Constitutional History particularly.

CAC: What years were you in History?

RB: I started out in 1946, graduated from West High School and came over to the university in 1946.

CAC: You came from the GI [Government Issue] Bill? Were you in the service?

RB: I was just a little too young for World War II.

CAC: I see.

RB: I was only sixteen years old when I started at the university.

CAC: You were precocious as well.

RB: I don't know how that happened. I started first grade when I was five because they didn't have Kindergarten back in those days. I enjoyed the History and the Humanities courses very much. Aubrey Castell, I remember.

CAC: Ahhh. I hope you worked with Harold Deutch.

RB: Yes. Of course, he's the dean of them all.

CAC: He really was.

RB: Professor Deutch was a wonderful person. He has spoken at the Skylight Club that I belong to. He's spoken so I've heard him several since and he hasn't lost any of his ability or charm . . . a wonderful person.

CAC: As you know he just died recently?

RB: Yes, that was a loss. He certainly performed well.

CAC: Did you take the old Constitutional History Course?

RB: Yes, I did and I loved it. In those days, you went two years to Pre-Law and then four years to Law School. Dean Fraser had the idea that four years in Law School was better. I think that's proven maybe not to be the best in hindsight, which is always beautiful. I would rather have had four years of undergraduate work so you could have taken more Greek and Roman History and some other cultures. I had a lot of Greek and Latin in high school and in history, too, at the university. A lot of these things we struggle with were, as you know, around even when the Romans and the Greeks were trying to figure things out.

CAC: You bet.

RB: So, if I had it to do over again, I think I'd take four years of undergraduate. The Law School, a lot of it is kind of technical, hardware type stuff that three years is plenty of it.

CAC: Well, the law faculty had a hard time making that transition to a four/three rather than two/four.

RB: Yes. I think Dean Fraser's original idea was that in your fourth year you'd go back to the Liberal Arts College and take other courses that you now were interested in but it didn't seem to work out that way. Most of the students, once they're in the Law School, seemed to opt mostly for additional law classes. You had the idea of that a lot of these subjects were on the bar and I'd better take that fourth year of judicial administration or whatever it was that you might otherwise not take. I guess it worked out all right. I have to say I really enjoyed my undergraduate work at the university. I joined a fraternity, which I think kind of gives you a feeling of identifying with a group.

CAC: So, you lived on campus?

RB: I lived on campus over there at the Chi Psi Lodge right across from Folwell Hall.

CAC: Not many of our students have what I would call a college experience.

RB: Yes, that's been one of the problems. I think I was very fortunate because it gave you a group . . . I don't care whether it's athletics or band or a fraternity, Greek system or whatever, you need something in a large university to make you feel belonging and I did.

CAC: Particularly the years you were there. This was the GI Bill bulge and there were just tens of thousands there.

RB: Yes. I'll never forget my first day in the summer of 1946 going over to register. I was sixteen years old, right out of high school and these lines went all the way around the Mall up to the registration desk. Most of them were veterans. I was so naive that when I got up to the window if I said, "I want to English Constitutional History" and they said, "That's filled," I went back and got in the back of the line again. [laughter]

CAC: Oh!

RB: It's a wonder I ever got registered. The veterans were smart. They got up there and they'd been used to standing in lines all during World War II; so, they had a list of what they wanted to take and they were very willing to take anything else, just anything, and get started. It was kind of tough but, you know, we survived it once you got to your class. I remember my English class was a wonderful class. I don't think there were more than maybe twenty students in my English class. Then, of course, you had Econ[omics] and Psych[ology]. Those were large classes.

CAC: Yes.

RB: I always found the professors more than happy to discuss anything you wanted and to take office time or whatever to help you. All you had to do was ask. But unlike a smaller school, they kind of weren't going to bother you, if you didn't bother them. You had to ask.

CAC: You were lucky to be there if English and History were two of your concentrations. Those two departments were just really very outstanding at that time.

RB: They sure were.

CAC: There was some slippage in the 1950s and 1960s.

RB: But at that time, there was a lot of these Robert Penn Warrens . . .

CAC: Did you get to work with Robert?

RB: Yes, that was just [unclear].

CAC: What did you take with him, do you remember?

RB: I don't know if it was a writing class. It wasn't poetry but it seems to me it was some kind of composition course. I really felt that the professors I had were just topnotch in 1946, 1947. In 1948, I started the Law School and I have to admit that for me that was a very, I would say, traumatic and intensive time.

CAC: Well, you were still a young kid.

RB: I was still only eighteen or nineteen years old and most of the veterans were twenty-eight, twenty-nine, ten years older. They were serious because they wanted to get their families and their jobs started. Again, the Law School in those days, too, was an excellent law school. I think it slipped for awhile and Bob Stein did a lot to bring it back. Certainly Dean Fraser ran a taut ship when he was there. We had [unclear] on torts and Fraser on real estate, and Lockhardt on Constitutional Law. That was a wonderful course. With Dean Lockhardt, Bill Lockhardt, that Con Law Course was a great course. I really enjoyed it.

CAC: Was there anything in your undergraduate experience that pointed you toward being an active community participant or did that come from family, or church, or whatever?

RB: I think both. My family had always stressed volunteer activities as being kind of an obligation, to put back in the community. That had been part of our culture for three generations.

CAC: This was both your father and mother?

RB: Yes, both of them but particularly my father. His father, my grandfather, was the one that discovered the Minnesota iron ore range, the Mesabi Range out on the west end, about the time that the Merritt brothers were down on the east end. Those old guys came back down here to Minneapolis and they had kind of a culture from New England that said, start the Art Institute, start the orchestra, the symphony, start Loring Park . . . Mr. Loring, Mr. Carpenter, Mr. Morrison, my grandfather, Mr. Russell Bennett.

CAC: These were all friends and colleagues of your grandfather?

RB: They were all friends and colleagues. To this day, when you go to look at a place like the University Arboretum, which is much later of course, or as I say the orchestra or the Art Institute, you'll see Russell M. Bennett, the name all over . . . and the Hennepin Avenue Methodist church.

CAC: You carry your grandfather's name?

CAC: I carry his name. I felt, I think, a family obligation to continue that service that he had started . . . not only him alone but most of his contemporaries in those days. Governor Pillsbury and the rest of them all did their part. The regents were the finest group of minds in the state in those days—unlike today. They did a great job. So, that was something that came naturally for me. The other thing was that I got elected president of the fraternity—I guess that was eventually the Inter-Fraternity Council—and that got me working with nice Dean [Edmund G.] Williamson and Dr. [James Lewis] Morrill and some of those people so that I got to feeling a kind of responsibility to the university, at least a communication. It wasn't as if I was hostile or as if I was in a foreign land or something, it was one of cooperation. So many of the charitable activities first got their big boost from the Greek system. I don't say the Greek system is perfect—there's certainly been some abuses and that, too—but luckily the chapter I was in really

stressed academics. I'll never forget Jimmy Bye and my older brother Jim has straight 4-point averages the whole time they were there. We had the trophy for the highest academic average every year—no thanks to me. A few of us pulled it down.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: There was a great emphasis on studying at the Chi Psi Lodge in those days, the tone set by those veterans largely who, again, were serious. Certainly, when charitable activities wanted to get started—it was long before Campus Carnival—the Greek system played a constructive part. I'll never forget, we invited a Black pledge to join the fraternity and he was very honored. He turned it down but I'll never forget the stir at the national convention—see, the fraternities have national offices—and in those days, the southern chapters particularly thought that was just awful. If it came from Minnesota, or Iowa, or Ohio State, or whatever, that was the way you lived. I feel that that integration and that growing up really with—they didn't call them people of color in those days—the different cultures . . . That was very much a part of the university and part of my culture at West High School; so, it came very natural to me.

CAC: I'm just guessing—some of my questions will be baiting questions—that the broad cultural exposure to different persons of different culture and racial backgrounds was heavier at West than at the university at that time. Would that be true?

RB: Yes, I think it probably would be true because West was a public school and they really had no choice and the housing patterns and the culture was probably broader there. The university was working on it but there weren't as many people of color, or Oriental, or anything else, at the university in those early days. They started coming, which I think was good. There was still very much a kind of a white male society. You'd run into it when you ran into, as I say, national fraternity conventions or things where maybe they weren't as far along as we were in Minnesota. You still had Hubert Humphrey and a kind of a liberal tradition here in the Midwest, I think, that set a good tone but it wasn't unanimous, that's for sure.

CAC: I'm trying to figure out the chronology. You started as a freshman in 1946?

RB: Yes.

CAC: It wasn't until 1938 that the university opened its dormitories without discrimination and segregation. That was just eight years before you came.

RB: It was just eight years before . . . that's absolutely right.

CAC: That's very recent.

RB: Then Murray Warmath was the first one to start seeing the opportunity of bringing Black athletes . . .

CAC: Yes.

RB: . . . because they were good. The other Big Ten schools even hadn't done that. That's why Murray Warmath had a little edge in some of those years, which was fine. There were not a lot of Blacks at the university, that's for sure. This guy that we wanted to pledge was just a wonderful guy. I'll never forget him sitting there saying, "I really want to thank you for inviting me and I've talked it over with my father. He really doesn't think it's a good idea but I want you to know that I appreciate it." Well, at least we did what we thought was right. The Jewish people had the Hillel Foundation in those days. Most of the Jewish people I knew from West, and St. Louis Park, and whatever, affiliated with that Hillel House and they were good citizens. They did a good job. They were good students. So, there was kind of a mixture, much more maybe than some other places.

CAC: Had either your father or your grandfather committed themselves to the university, apart from being students?

RB: No, they really hadn't. As I say, my father and all my uncles went to Yale but my mother's family went to the university. The grandmother that went to Law School, that was all on my mother's side; so, most of my university connection really was with my mother's side as distinguished from my father's side. I was a mixture of both.

CAC: But their philanthropies tended to be in the arts and museums?

RB: That's right. In the first place, they had more money than my mother's side for openers and you can't give away money if you don't have money. Secondly, their background from New England was kind of to support the arts, and the museums, and so forth. Their philanthropy for education was directed towards Yale and Columbia. My other uncle went to Columbia. He was a mining engineer from Columbia. Their philanthropy was more connected with their alma maters but it still set the tone that you had a duty to give something back to your college or your university.

CAC: You get your law degree and pass the bars in 1951, I'm guessing?

RB: In 1952. That's right.

CAC: Then went directly into practice?

RB: No, then I went directly into the navy.

CAC: Ah!



RB: I had a great experience there. I was married my senior year in Law School; so, my wife and I went first to Bayonne, New Jersey, and then to San Francisco. I tried cases in California for two years.

CAC: While in the navy?

RB: In the navy.

CAC: What kind of cases?

RB: These were primarily court-martial, what we called discipline cases. I was a member of the Twelfth Naval [unclear] Court-martial Panel on Treasure Island. I kept my sailboat up at Belvedere and the admiral said, "Now, son, you better not let the navy find out about that. You may get sea duty." [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

RB: I was fortunate because I got shore duty so my wife could go with me. I got California which was a marvelous experience for us. I got working with senior officers who were just . . . Well, you notice my clean desk? My partners tease me about it.

CAC: Ahhh.

RB: My admiral . . . my duty was every night to take everything off his desk and my desk and put it in the safe. It was all top classified stuff. Then the next morning, I'd have to get out just what he was going to work on; so, I got in the habit of working out of a cabinet.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: And that's stayed to this day.

CAC: You have a clean desk but you have a computer screen that looks like dragons coming at us all the time.

RB: Yes, that's the screen saver, they call that so it doesn't burn out. It just goes until you type.

CAC: I would be distracted by that if I had to sit next to it.

RB: Yes. Well, it's kind of like modern art. You have your choice of two or three different screens.

CAC: I see. Doesn't that look like a dragon to you?

RB: Oh, yes. You're got to keep your eye on that guy all the time. [laughter]

CAC: So, you were out of the service by 1953, 1954?

RB: In 1954.

CAC: Did you get service in Korea at all or you stayed stateside?

RB: No. We were at San Francisco but it was during the Korean War. Of course, the Oakland Naval Supply Center and those places were shipping an awful lot of goods to the Korean Theater. That was really the reason why [President Harry S.] Truman called up, started up again the draft, you remember, because . . .

CAC: Right.

RB: . . . you did have the Korean War going on. I was not overseas; so, I wasn't being shot at but that's why I was there basically was the Korean War.

CAC: Then, you came back to home.

RB: I came back to Minneapolis just to get my furniture because we thought we'd live in California. It was June and the trees were green. Both of our parents were living in Kenwood. We thought, you know, if you're going to raise children, do you really want to raise them in the Midwest or do you want to raise them out in Lotus Land? We thought, we've had a great time in Lotus Land ourselves as adults but in terms of raising family, we both decided that the right place was right here in Minnesota; so, that's why we stayed. We came back and went, believe it or not, to work for this firm. You know, I've been here over forty years, which is . . .

CAC: You came directly into this firm?

RB: Right into this firm. Nowadays, the lawyers jump around like popcorn.

CAC: You bet.

RB: But in my day, it was like a marriage. You picked a firm and you didn't leave it unless there was some very good reason. I've always been very comfortable here.

CAC: Initially, when you were a young lawyer, did you have particular portfolios or agendas for your career? How specialized was it?

RB: In those days, it wasn't nearly as departmentalized as it is today. Today, you're very much in a department. I was kind of one of the last of the general practitioners. Frank Blanton and myself are both, I guess you'd still say, a hangover from the old days of general practitioners.

Really, it goes back to what you were talking about before. If you lived three or four generations, you'd have to have two left feet if you didn't have a lot of acquaintances here. I was client driven when I first started. My clients were all buying houses; so, I did real estate work. Then, they all decided they were smarter than General Mills and they wanted to start their own companies; so, I did a lot of corporate work. Then, a little bit later, unfortunately, a lot of them wanted divorces; so, I did a lot of that.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: Then, a little bit after that I guess if I live long enough, I'll probably end up in probate. [laughter] My clients are 100 percent friends of mine.

CAC: You never touch criminal law?

RB: I did a lot in the navy but never since.

CAC: That was fortunate.

RB: That was interesting in the navy. I would say 100 percent of my clients are personal friends that I either went to high school or the University of Minnesota with and those associations last a long time, which makes it nice.

CAC: As you became a partner and senior partner, did you keep that same general practice?

RB: I was kind of the exception to the rule because I did. My practice was growing so fast that the senior partners were very happy to have me become a partner and kind of just follow my own career, which I did. You couldn't do it today because the law is so complicated today that gosh! you just can't know that much about any subject. You have to pick a subject and specialize. It's much more disciplined. I had the beauty of never being bored. It was always something different. The negative of that is you never know what you're doing. You have to kind of reinvent the wheel each time. It's more efficient to do what they're doing today, which is to be in a department, do the same thing basically day after day, and keep up on the regulations. I see these tax guys and SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] reading these services every morning. You have to do that today to keep up. The law has changed a lot.

CAC: Let me share with you . . . sometimes these become conversations.

RB: Yes.

CAC: I've had so many interviews on campus and there come to be four or five major themes. One of them is the increasing fragmentation and departmentalization of knowledge, starting an accelerated rush in the 1960s, and continuing in the 1970s, 1980s, and down to this day so that a sense of collegiality, a sense of shared experience . . . I've had four or five, oh! more than that

say, "There's nobody in general education anymore. It's all little fragments . . . and to try to piece them together . . . " I would guess that science has gone that way, engineering, business, law.

RB: Definitely.

CAC: It has had a fragmenting impact upon higher education. We're a bunch of splintered specialists.

RB: I'm afraid that's right of education and true of law both. I think, being a generalist and being of a broad Liberal Arts background is still vital and really important to being a Renaissance man, or at least a total man, total person. It's gotten that way. A little example, they said—this isn't right exactly—"There's 150 words in the Declaration of Independence. There's five federal pamphlets on growing turnips south of the Mason and Dixon's frost line."

CAC: [laughter]

RB: So, everything has grown.

CAC: Yes. It complicates all of the institutions in which we live our lives now . . .

RB: Exactly.

CAC: . . . including the university. How soon did you begin to pick up . . . I'm sure you had to concentrate on establishing your career at first?

RB: Yes.

CAC: Then, you begin also following family tradition. What [unclear]?

RB: It was kind of interesting. I had worked for Dr. Morrill as a volunteer while I was on campus but then I got away from it for five or ten years because I was trying to get started.

CAC: You raise family . . . this is a hard time.

RB: I'll never forget, I got a call. Dr. Malcom Moos was president and his wife had bought a stern-wheeler paddle boat and was coming up the Mississippi—I don't care where you put this but be careful you don't every embarrass anyone by it—and I got a call from Bill Middlebrook saying, "We don't have any place . . . What are we going to do with this thing. Get rid of it!"

CAC: [laughter]

RB: As a young lawyer, I had to, as a volunteer, go to Mrs. Moos and to the committee she had and say, "As you know, I don't know much about a lot of things but I know a lot about boats . . . "

CAC: Ahhh.

RB: " . . . believe me, keeping up this boat and finding a place to put it . . . "

CAC: This came to be the Show Boat?

RB: It did later but we had to put it off for ten years.

CAC: Why on earth did he buy it to begin with?

RB: Well, he didn't but his wife did.

CAC: But with university money?

RB: No, I don't think so. She was raising money with Topsy Ritz and a number of people who were on her committee. They were artistic people that appreciated the romance of it. They were raising money for it.

CAC: I've never heard this story.

RB: Well, I'm not so sure you should tell it then.

CAC: Oh, yes, it's a good one.

RB: But it was true. My job . . . I finally got a hold of the captain and said, "Turn that thing around and take it back to St. Louis where it came from. We can't buy that at the university. Even private people are not experienced . . . They don't have any place to put it." The river flats in those days were all commercial with coal and whatever. This thing was half way up here and what are we going to do with it? She was ahead of her time. You've got to give her credit. I think ten, fifteen years later they did it and it worked out pretty well but it took a lot of . . .

CAC: But it wasn't that boat?

RB: No. It wasn't that boat.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: [laughter] No, it wasn't that boat. That's how I got working . . . doing the work for Dr. Moos. I've kind of forgotten exactly what happened but as each president came along why

. . . Oh, I remember Diane and . . .

CAC: Peter Magrath.

RB: . . . Peter Magrath was president. The perception was at least that Peter was doing a pretty good job at the university but that the business community . . . whether they thought he was —quote—too liberal or whatever it was, that he didn't have much going for him; so, I suggested to him, "Let me set up some luncheons where we take you around to the top ten, fifteen companies in town and talk about the university. You'll find any company you walk into, whether it's International Milling, or Multifoods, or the banks, or whatever . . . 75 percent of those people are Minnesota graduates. It will be a good opportunity to just sit down in a shirtsleeve session with them and describe what's going on at the university. Like a lot of things, once they start to communicate and understand the place, why, they aren't going to have the hostility that the business community might feel, where they just go on rumor." That program worked out, I've been told, pretty successfully. I know Peter and Diane were very appreciative of it personally. I think the business community was.

CAC: In the first instance, it had no particular goal?

RB: It was just friend raising.

CAC: This was just to introduce the university again to the business community?

RB: Exactly. Yes. We were not fund raising.

CAC: You weren't working through the Minnesota Foundation then?

RB: No, I'm not even sure that the Foundation existed. I'd have to check my dates.

CAC: It came into existence in late Wilson.

RB: Yes . . . under Met Wilson.

CAC: In 1967.

RB: Which was great.

CAC: But then it didn't really get going until Moos.

RB: Yes.

CAC: In 1969, 1970, they hired Bob Odegard.

RB: Oh, I remember that, yes. He was great—still is. I don't think I was even a member of the Foundation at that point. That's twenty-five, thirty years ago that they got the thing started. This was just a friend raising deal more than a fund raising. We never asked for any money.

CAC: I'm sure you appreciate how wide the chasm is between town and gown?

RB: Yes, that's the thing.

CAC: It's just extraordinary.

RB: That still needs to be cured. We still need to do that. Then, I was chairman of the board of Blake School and I guess somebody thought I did a good job of fund raising there; so, then Ray Plank called me one day and asked me to join the University of Minnesota Foundation. Ray was chairman at that point and he had set up a chair at Blake School for teaching economics and that's how he happened to know about me. I was flattered and said, "I'd be glad to go on the Foundation." Bob Odegard was very much involved in the Foundation at that point. That would have been . . .

CAC: The early, mid 1970s I'd guess..

RB: I was going to say twenty years ago.

CAC: Maybe more.

RB: Maybe 1975, yes.

CAC: In the meantime, had you committed yourself, other than Blake, to other community . . .

RB: Yes, yes.

CAC: Just say a bit about that. I'm trying to get a profile of how this community works.

RB: Well, at that point, I had been chairman of the Red Cross. I had been on the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts Board of Trustees. I'd been on Junior Achievement. I'd been on, at that time, Boys Club of Minneapolis. I'd been president of the Minneapolis Club. I'd been president of the Woodhill [Country] Club. I'd been commodore of the Minnetonka Yacht Club. I'd been active in all sorts of . . . the United Negro College Fund as a trustee for thirty years of that effort because I think it's so important . . . Radio Free Europe, which in hindsight maybe was a good idea . . . maybe not. I was involved in just a whole myriad of activities.

CAC: How do you manage your career and have all those distracting kind of time consuming activities?

RB: That's a real good question. I'd have to in all honesty say, "Maybe it was a mistake," because I think I did detract a lot from my career by the time I spent on those things. I was chairman and president of Pillsbury Settlement House and the . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

RB: . . . Community Chest. I was on the . . . in those days they called it United Fund or United Way, I've forgotten what, but I was on that board. In those days, the firms were much more tolerant and, in fact, expected their lawyers to put in civic time and to do that kind of thing. I think it held up my career because I think you can't do two things at once. You can't be working for clients and sitting around a United Fund Board. You can't do two things at once. In those days, that was just like brushing your teeth in the morning that you were going to work for the Community Chest or whatever. Now, that's changed in the sense that today, the law firms are much more, oh! much more, hours oriented. Everything is chargeable hours. The young people are supposed to get in 2000 chargeable hours a year, or whatever. It's not a profession anymore; it's a business and it's very competitive. I think in the long run, the community suffers. In those days, most of the banks, and General Mills, and people would put their top executives on United Fund for a year, or whatever it took, but as the foreign corporations have bought up, more and more merged with local companies, there's much less emphasis on putting in the time to run the Art Institute, or the orchestra, or the . . .

CAC: When you say foreign, you mean outstate?

RB: Out of state, yes. I don't mean overseas but out of state. Some are foreign, like Grand Met[ropolitan] buying Pillsbury. See, most of these big companies in Minneapolis were started by friends of my grandfather, by individuals . . . you know, International Milling and Washburn Crosby. Old Mr. Crosby officed in this office. When I first started here, John Crosby, who started General Mills, officed in this office because—we were down in the Midland Bank Building in those days—he probably felt that he'd get less interruption there as chairman of the board of General Mills than he would if he was at the General Mills Building, which is now the Title Insurance Building across the street. Old John Crosby was a great guy. He was a lawyer but he was also the head of General Mills. I'm just saying, in those days, all those companies that started out really . . . The Bean family for International Milling . . .

CAC: Ah, yes.

RB: . . . or whatever, they had a great civic conscience. As those companies were taken over by professional management, there's less . . . The Daytons were marvelous examples of families that really put a lot back and taught everybody to . . .

CAC: Well, in both St. Paul and Minneapolis, if you start adding up the family foundations that came out of family corporations, that's pretty impressive.



RB: Very impressive. I think you lose some of that when you go the way we're going now.

CAC: As an historian, I've tried to follow this story from the outside. I'm not a great economic historian but one of my fields was welfare history and philanthropy. When does it begin to accelerate in the metropolitan area here in Minnesota, this trend toward the foreign control?

RB: I think probably fairly recently. I'm going to say just off that top of my head in the 1980s. In other words, certainly from 1900 to 1975, the foundations, the Pillsbury House and all of them, were family driven. It seems to me that starting—I don't know exactly if one can point to any one thing—about ten years ago there was much more competition between businesses and a lot of takeovers and as I say ownership someplace else so that you couldn't expect the attention to the foundations that we'd had for 100 years, say from 1880 to 1980.

CAC: The specialization that took place in all of these corporations and law firms work in the same way?

RB: I think so.

CAC: They were overlapping kinds of . . .

RB: I think so. I think that's valid.

CAC: In the academy—again, to have a conversation—David Reisman wrote an article, essay, some time ago about the "Homeguard and the Mercenaries in Higher Education." The Homeguard were those who were loyal to the institution, and were good scholars, and good teachers—or less good. Then, there is this mercenary . . . and people begin to pursue careers in the academy and that becomes more important than the commitment to the home institution. So, we're describing parallel . . .

RB: The exact same parallel thing, I believe.

CAC: Yes, isn't that interesting?

RB: Yes.

CAC: In our case, it really begins to accelerate in the 1970s?

RB: A little earlier, yes. I think that's valid and I don't think we'll ever get back to it necessarily. Minneapolis and St. Paul are really a kind of small town that have grown up and you knew everybody pretty much. When I first started practicing, I certainly knew all of the bar. Today, I wouldn't have any idea who they were. I probably wouldn't know 10 percent of the Bar Association today. That wasn't true forty years ago.

CAC: Do you take this as a sense of loss or as just inevitable and then you just have to adjust to it?

RB: Both. I think it's inevitable because there are so many more lawyers now than there were then . . . a few hundred then and now thousands; so, there's so many more of them.

CAC: Look at the number of lawyers the university has. When I came, there was one lawyer.

RB: One? Yes.

CAC: In 1951.

RB: Now, there's probably thirty, forty?

CAC: Yes, and then we subcontract a lot of our work at that.

RB: Yes. No, it's a litigious society. I see that as a bad trend. I [unclear] always teach your kids responsibility for your own actions. I think we've gotten away from that in the sense that . . . you know, you do something dumb like spill coffee on your knees when you're driving, then you can sue McDonald's for \$2 million . . .

CAC: Yes, yes.

RB: . . . that type of thing. If you have stock that goes down, it couldn't be anything dumb you did. You must have been misled . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . so you've got a 10-B-5 action against somebody that sold it to you. There's so much more of that. That's what's lead to the great increase in lawyers. There are plenty of them out there waiting to take a shot at somebody. I think that's too bad. I think those best brains should be going into chemical engineering, and biology, and microbiology, and history, and teaching. Those are the productive things. You don't want more life insurance agents or lawyers in your society.

CAC: Do you have any idea what the burden is internal to the university of people down the line, I mean even to chairpersons?

RB: Yes.

CAC: Let me tell you, it's scary.

RB: It is because all these various federal laws and compliance laws . . . you know, a decent person hardly knows which way to turn. They sent around the other day, a long list of things from the Harvard Law School of questions you must not ask people you're interviewing. I read through it and I just can't believe this. This is all . . . it's not politically correct to ask any of these two or three pages of material.

CAC: But you have to ask to get good colleagues.

RB: You sure have to know one way or another. You have to find it out one way or another.

CAC: Yes, right. Let's get back to the University of Minnesota Foundation.

RB: Yes.

CAC: You kind of coordinated this work for Mac Moos.

RB: Mac Moos and then Peter, in particular.

CAC: Yes.

RB: Met Wilson, I knew and respected greatly. I don't recall ever being as involved . . .

CAC: He was one of the few persons that served on corporate boards when he was president of the university.

RB: Yes, in those days. He was a wonderful president, I think. That was before I was on the Foundation.

CAC: So, then you were caught up in the Foundation . . . give us an approximate date of this.

RB: I'm going to say 1975, maybe.

CAC: Okay.

RB: It was Ray Plank who invited you in?

RB: It was Ray Plank who invited me, yes. I was a great admirer of Bob Odegard even then. I'll never forget going to one of my first meetings—this is getting back to your farm background—it was supposed to start at 7:30; so, I got there at 7:15. Curt Carlson was sitting there and Elmer Andersen was sitting there . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . all these guys are there. I'm the last guy to come and Curt said, "Now, I want you to know this about [Vince] Lombardi time." I said, "Well, what's that mean?" He said, "You always get there a half an hour early. Now, you don't get paid for that half hour but if you like your job, you're there a half an hour early."

CAC: Ah.

RB: I always laughed at that.

CAC: What is the word [unclear]?

RB: To Coach Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers.

CAC: Oh, all right.

RB: He didn't want any of these guys [unclear] train or school bus, right, and had to wait for another stop light. If you get there a half an hour early, then you don't have to worry about anything that might have held you up.

CAC: Bravo.

RB: Yes, yes. I've never forgotten that. They did a good job and they set a good . . . The reason I was willing to work on the Foundation is that I had so much [unclear] admiration for Elmer, and for Curt, and for Bob Odegard. Those guys, and Steve Rozell, they were and are wonderful examples; so, when the Minnesota Campaign came along . . .

CAC: Where did this get started?

RB: That was funny. That's a story and a half.

CAC: That's a big . . . for a state university . . . Well, let's have the story a half.

RB: Here again, you're going to have to use judgment on how much of this you ever print. I'll have to depend on you.

CAC: I won't print it. Somebody will be using these; so, they've got to use their judgment.

RB: I'll be dead by then; so, it won't matter. I was on the Foundation and Ken Keller and Dave Lilly thought we needed a campaign. They called me over to the office. I went skiing with Dave Lilly every year. I was a great admirer of his. They said, "Who do you think is the best person to head up this campaign?" I said, "Well, there's two people in my judgment that would be ideal. One would be Elmer Andersen because everybody in the state loves him and respects him and the other would be Curt Carlson because he's been also on the Foundation, and he's been

very successful, and he has the wherewithal to make a lead gift." I said, "Either one, you'd be real lucky to get. I have no preference." They talked for a minute and said, "Why don't you go ask him?" I said, "What's this me stuff?"

CAC: [laughter]

RB: "I thought I was giving you advice." They said, "Well, why don't you go out and talk to Mr. Carlson?" So, I went out to see him and I knew Curt's children real well but I really didn't know him at all. I go into his office, [unclear] place about three times as big as where we're sitting here. He said, "Well, what do you want?" This is going to be a long afternoon.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: I said, "Well, Curt, you went to West High School. I went to West High School. You went to the University of Minnesota. I went to the University of Minnesota. But then our career paths seem to drift apart." He looked at me for a minute, started to laugh, and laugh, and laugh. He said, "Okay, I hear you." I said, "We've got to have a campaign to raise some capital funds and the Foundation has to do that. That's why we are a Foundation and you're the logical guy to head it up." He said, "If I did that—to show you how smart he is—how much would I have to give?" I said, "Well, you don't have to give anything. The goal hasn't even been set yet but I can tell you the rough rule of thumb in fund raising is that you ought to get 10 percent from your lead gift; so, if we're going to have a \$250 million campaign, why, you're looking at \$20 to \$25 million." He said, "I'll do that." I said, "What?"

CAC: [laughter]

RB: He said, "I'll do that on one condition." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You do the work." I thought, oh boy! now I'm going to go back to Ken Keller and say, "Well, I went out to see him and he was willing to give the money and head up the campaign but I turned it down because I didn't want to do the work." So, I was hoisted on my own petard.

CAC: I can see.

RB: Yes. But I enjoyed it.

CAC: Do you know that that story is generally known? I've heard it from other people.

RB: Oh, have you?

CAC: Yes. Elmer Andersen said, "Well, Curt, you know, was . . . but it was Russ Bennett who did the work."

RB: Well, I don't know about that but I will say this that Elmer and Curt both were excellent. Curt would make any call we asked him to. We could take his airplane and fly out to California. We went out in the morning, called on people for lunch, came back the same day—which is not a lot of fun.

CAC: You did a lot of traveling?

RB: Oh, yes. Every call we asked Curt to make, he made. He's an excellent fund raiser. We tried to save him for the big heaters, for the big calls, but he was excellent. Of course, Elmer and Dave Lilly both knew where all the bodies lay. They were both very informed about both St. Paul and Minneapolis. We'd meet once a week on Fridays in Curt's office.

CAC: Excuse me. Who was the St. Paul liaison?

RB: Dave Lilly, you see, is from St. Paul. At that point, he was . . .

CAC: Vice-president for Finance.

RB: Yes, right. We'd meet out at Curt's office. We'd have Curt, and Elmer, and Ken Keller, and myself, and . . .

CAC: Ken took a personal . . . ?

RB: Yes, and Ken was a good fund raiser at those levels, at those top levels. I don't know if he was real good over at the legislature where they probably didn't understand him. Ken was very quick. He was very bright. They didn't, maybe perhaps, understand him at the legislature. In the calls that we were making, he was very much at home and very quick. The business community . . . greatly . . . finally, someone saying, "We've got to focus; we've got to cut this thing back." The idea in those days, the more students you had the more money you got from the legislature.

CAC: Yes.

RB: So, we grew like Topsy during those 1960s and 1970s. The business community welcomed Ken's message. Carrying that out, I realize, is like pulling teeth at a university. You're going to offend . . . Everybody is in favor of focus until it turns out to be their department and then they're not so sure. That's normal.

CAC: Well, you run against the grain of the expectation of the citizens generally of this state, that they had free access to the university.

RB: This is a big part of it.

CAC: Yes.

RB: You're absolutely right.

CAC: In the sense of what someone told me yesterday is called birthright.

RB: It really is regarded as kind of a Scandinavian background maybe of education and birthright of . . . I went to the university . . . you mean my kid can't go to the university?

CAC: Yes.

RB: The minute you try to upgrade, you're . . .

CAC: It runs against the legislature.

RB: . . . accused of elitism . . . the minute you try to change that culture. It's very hard to change. But it was on the right track because we didn't used to have all the marvelous private colleges we do now. When Ken Keller looked around, you had Macalester, and Carleton, and St. Olaf, and St. Catherine, and St. John. You just had a whole slug of excellent schools that you could do your undergraduate work at if you wanted to and then come to the university for your graduate work or even come to the university but come with high school preparation. Gradually those higher requirements of four years of English and four years of Math, or whatever it was, started to seep down to the high school level. It did have a good effect but you always run the risk at the university that the legislature will say, "That's elitist." Boy! in this state, if there's anything you don't want to be, it's elitist. So, it's a tough problem, still a tough problem today.

CAC: Oh, I think Nils [Hasselmo] has a hard time straddling that.

RB: Oh, it's a terrible thing to straddle. It really is the same problem. Dave Roe used to argue with me on the regents and he'd say, "That's elitist." I said, "Dave, let me tell you something. The real elitist position is the people at my level who send their kids to eastern Ivy schools and they think Minnesota is good enough for—quote—you slobs. I don't buy that and I know you don't buy that, Dave. Don't ever get confused about making the university better. We've got to make it just as good as we can because the real elitist position is to send your kid east and you see how many of our Minnesota graduates end up sending their children to an eastern school if they can afford it, to an Ivy League school."

CAC: And then many of them, commit themselves to the Minnesota Campaign though?

RB: Sure. Sure. I think that deep down people still have a great respect for the University of Minnesota. It's the engine that drives the state. If you don't have that university, you're a *cold Omaha*. There's no question about it that all of your cultural institutions around here, all of your

business . . . You look at those boards as I say and 75 percent of them came from right over there across the river.

CAC: There was this latent support there but it really wasn't until the event you're talking about that that's tapped in a major way?

RB: That's true.

CAC: I mean, the Minnesota Foundation was through the 1970s doing, raising money.

RB: It was minor compared to that.

CAC: But this was really the turning point, wasn't it?

RB: Definitely, and we ended up . . .

CAC: You found that the corporations and other civic leaders were then prepared to commit themselves and if so . . . ?

RB: Absolutely. It was amazing. We ended up setting the goal at \$350 million and we ended up with \$365 million. You can always say *if* but if the Eastcliff situation hadn't come along, we'd have hit \$400 million because we hadn't even started the public campaign. The calls that I made on Minnesota Mining, and Honeywell, and General Mills, and those people . . . I think we got \$5 million from Mining and \$1 million or \$2 million from Honeywell. Every place Ken Keller and I went . . .

CAC: Ken went with you?

RB: Yes.

CAC: Not always but frequently?

RB: Always, just always . . .

CAC: For the big donors?

RB: As I've said to Nils, "If you are going to ask somebody for a million dollars, you darned well better have the president there." My function really was just to get the appointment and kind of introduce them. I tried to shut up as quickly as I could. Ken was the guy they wanted to hear, not me.

CAC: What kind of arguments would Ken use? What would a typical conversation be?



RB: Typical would be first of all that Odegard, and Steve Rozell, and the staff at the Foundation had done a good job working with the staff of the company's foundation way ahead of time.

CAC: I see.

RB: So, if Minnesota Mining wanted to talk about surface friction . . . I was in the navy and I knew surface ships. I didn't know what surface friction was. That's whether scotch tape sticks good and post-its don't stick quite so good. That's what surface friction . . . I didn't even know what it meant but Ken Keller knew because his staff had briefed him.

CAC: Ah. Of course, he was an engineer. He could pick those things up.

RB: Exactly. Absolutely. He could talk to Honeywell about engineers that can't write. They wanted to have a joint program. Ken, who was an engineer, could [unclear] say, "You've got a lot of engineers that can't express themselves out here and we've got a lot of good English majors that can't add two columns of engineering material; so, let's get a joint program." Well, we're still trying to work on that. The concept was good. The business community bought it. Of course, Curt setting the \$25 million, you see, set the tone because they knew he wasn't kidding when he put up the \$25 million to start it. That was a marvelous thing to do but it also told the Don Daytons and all the other people of the world that we were coming and this is for real. Minneapolis . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: We're talking about the arguments, the justifications, that would be put forward and how they were responded to.

RB: I think that Ken Keller, first of all, could prove and demonstrate that the legislature no longer was keeping up, that there was a real need for the university.

CAC: Okay.

RB: That was number one. Number two, in order to justify private support, we had to become more focused, that it wasn't fair to ask the business community to take on a burden of KUOM [radio] or whatever that was just a broad thing, that you had to become focused. You had to let academia decide what the focus was. There is no suggestion that the donors should tell you what to teach. They didn't make any effort that way. They were glad to see Ken Keller because he had the concept of focus, and they knew about Curt's major gift, and they knew the university was important to them because their employees and their board members, not all but many of them, came from there. They knew if they didn't have a great university, they weren't going to have a continuous source of quid pro quo.

CAC: That support had latently been there for decades?

RB: Really for decades.

CAC: You're suggesting that it was Lilly and Keller that started the . . .

RB: I think they saw the need, and I think they came to the Foundation, and I think the Foundation with people like Curt and Elmer—Elmer, you know visionary—saw the need to make the university continue to be good. They knew it was slipping because of the legislature treatment on funds; so, they responded very quickly that, yes, we'll try to have a campaign. That was vital and, now, we're talking about another one.

CAC: How many years was it to get up to the \$350 million?

RB: Only three years? I think we started—I may be off a little bit on this—planning the campaign in 1985 and it seems to me most of those pledges ran, say, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, roughly in there. Some companies said, "We're going to take five years to pay it off," most of them three years. Those were the years of the campaign.

CAC: But you have a sense that Eastcliff put a real . . .

RB: Well, it did. It was so sad because Eastcliff really is a nothing issue. You had twenty-five years of regents ignoring the upkeep and presidents ignoring the upkeep of Eastcliff. Nobody had the guts to say, "That white building needs to be painted," so, it just kept getting worse and worse. Ken's contracts, most of them, actually said, "You have to live in Eastcliff." That was part of being president.

CAC: Yes.

RB: It got way blown out of proportion by the newspaper as to a scandal. It wasn't a scandal. It was simply a . . . Poor Bonita [Keller], it wasn't her idea to redo Eastcliff. The place was falling apart. It badly needed doing. Like a lot of things, Ken was working hard on the campaign, and running the university at the same time, and I can just see the scene. He'd come home at night and say, "Well, how did things go today?" Poor Bonita would say, "I don't know. The contractors had to start over again because . . ." this or that. You can just imagine the overruns. But in hindsight, you know, it really was, compared to the \$365 million raised, a nothing issue but the press had fun with it.

[break in the interview]

. . . started witch hunting and oh, the disclosure of the internal funds that Dave Lilly was trying to get under one central place. Then that seemed like some big kind of a hush up or something. Again, it wasn't. In the first place, there wasn't that much in it and in the second place, there

was nothing wrong with it. When Dave Lilly started, the band would have a separate fund to go to China and somebody else would have a fund to do this, or whatever. He was trying to get it under central control.

CAC: It was around \$40 million.

RB: Yes. It really wasn't a scandal. Nobody was stealing it or anything like that.

CAC: How does the Minnesota Foundation in this campaign relate to the Board of Regents? Was this all done out of the president's office? Did it involve any of the regents?

RB: No. It was all done out of the president's office.

CAC: And the regents were mildly supportive?

RB: Mildly supportive.

CAC: I don't want to put words in your mouth.

RB: No, they were mildly supportive and, really, they welcomed the money but they really didn't know anything about it and they didn't know how to go about it. Chuck McGuiggan, dentist from Marshall, or whatever . . . not bad people but they didn't have any experience with the Minneapolis business community because the regents, thanks to the legislature, were a microcosm of the legislature, which was not business oriented. You get that university budget, it looks like the Tokyo phone book. They had done all their politically correct things of having certain people represented on the regents but there was nobody that could read a balance sheet, or understood fund raising, or really understood the magnitude of running a university. And that's not a whole bunch better today, in my opinion.

CAC: The chair of the regents at that time was a fellow lawyer?

RB: Chuck McGuiggan was the first one; he was a dentist. Then, our fellow lawyer, a nice guy, from southern Minnesota, too, but a good guy, a lawyer. He was good. He did a good job. I'm trying to think of his name. His picture is right over there but I can't think of his name . . . the guy right here. He's a lawyer, a nice guy, despite being a lawyer. I can't think of his name at the moment. They weren't all bad, as I say.

CAC: But they weren't actively involved?

RB: They were definitely not actively involved. They didn't go on any calls with us. They were not actively involved at all.

CAC: I will be interviewing Mr. Keller; he's coming on campus this fall for a series of seminars. You have no sense of the degree to which Mr. Keller was sharing with the regents this initiative, which was a major one . . . I mean just of enormous importance.

RB: Oh, I think that he was trying to keep them advised because I think they welcomed the effort, you know. I think that he was trying to keep them advised and so forth but I don't think they had any idea about this internal fund, this \$40 million. I think they were . . . Oh, Dave Lebedoff, then became chair.

CAC: Yes, it was Dave.

RB: David's good. Dave was an excellent lawyer and an excellent chair. It wasn't David's fault that the shit hit the fan with Ken Keller and Dave Lilly. Dave Lebedoff was caught in a awkward place where the regents were pushing him, and the press was pushing him, and the thing unravelled. David Lebedoff was basically a good chairman and he had no hostility to Ken Keller. It was just that in this atmosphere of a public university you can't even have anything like a fund . . . even the governor called it a slush fund and that is not a fair description of it.

CAC: Every corporation has a reserve fund.

RB: It was a reserve fund. Compared to the total budget, it was a tiny reserve fund. It should have been ten times as big.

CAC: I should share with you that from the bottom, that is with the faculty, they didn't know much about it. It looked like a lot of money to a faculty. They were being pressed with retrenchment, you see.

RB: Yes.

CAC: So, there was hard feeling there, too.

RB: Well, you can understand that. The faculty is being pushed with retrenchment. They're being pushed with some departments being cut out. Then, to see \$40 million sitting there, you can see that it created tensions.

CAC: Your goals had largely been achieved by the time of this crisis?

RB: Yes. Luckily, yes. It's just that it could have gone . . . We had a phone campaign and a public campaign all organized and it was just starting. It seems to me the faculty contributed \$10 million or \$12 million. I don't remember numbers very well but they were marvelous. The public campaign would have picked up another \$40 million. We would have hit \$400 million if we could have kept it going.

CAC: So, that was washed out?

RB: It was washed out because of Eastcliff and this so-called slush fund, and then Ken's resignation. That hurt the campaign. There's no question about it.

CAC: Then, you folks who were so active in it and committed yourselves and so much of your time, and energy, and capital, did you know much about Nils when he came aboard?

RB: I didn't know him at all. I'd never met him. Stan Sahlstrom, the regent from Crookston, was very high on Nils. I had heard that he'd been at the university and, therefore, I had a strong prejudice in favor of him because I knew that to understand this place, you almost had to grow up in this culture. If you brought some person in from New York or something, I don't know what they'd do as far as trying to understand the university.

CAC: Well, it took a bright person like Magrath several years to . . .

RB: It does. It's just a so different culture. I'd heard very good things about Nils. As a matter of fact, he was doing some of the Commitment to Focus planning even when he was on the staff long before the campaign.

CAC: Yes.

RB: I think Nils was an excellent choice. I'm very high on him myself. I think he's absolutely the right person to have led the university during these years.

CAC: But the momentum was difficult to pick up again?

RB: Definitely difficult because the legislature was mad, and the regents were mad, and the public was thinking this was place is too big, nobody can run it.

CAC: You're still on the board of the Minnesota Foundation?

RB: Yes.

CAC: What do they do in the interim? Can you describe to me . . . ? There must have been a sense of dismay because the faculty was dismayed by all of this.

RB: They're all hurt. But, you know, the amazing part is that we still continue to raised \$40 million, to \$50 million, to \$60 million, to now \$70 million a year on annual giving. That's not because of Russ Bennett or anybody on the Foundation. It's basically because people love the university and they are supporting the various deans, and the various colleges, and the various departments that they're interested in. That annual giving has grown from \$40 million to \$70 million just, say, in the last four or five years.

CAC: Yes. How important was Lilly's idea of having multiple chairs?

RB: Oh, that was a brilliant idea. Even rich people like a lot of bang for their buck. That idea of getting the legislature to cut loose the university iron ore fund, or whatever they call it, to match chairs was a brilliant idea because you went in to somebody and said, "If you give \$1 million, we can make a \$2 million chair. If you give \$500,000, we can make it a \$1 million." That was great.

CAC: Was this part of the Minnesota Campaign?

RB: Yes. That was the key, really.

CAC: I see.

RB: That was Lilly's idea.

CAC: So, a lot of the money went into chairs of the \$350 million?

RB: It almost all did. The drive was basically for chairs. We went from something like 17 chairs to about 150 and now there's about 250, something like that.

CAC: And each of these chairs had to be individually negotiated?

RB: Each one had to be individually negotiated. Giving away that much money, there was a lot of give and take about what they expected and always whether our stewardship [unclear] matched up to what we've taken.

CAC: Yes.

RB: You try to report back and do it.

CAC: Typically, how would those contracts have been written?

RB: Well, usually the donor was a foundation or a company and they had a specific interest. There were some individual ones, of course, but whoever it was, individual or foundation, they had a very definite image of what they were interested in at the university, whether it was architecture, or medicine, or whatever. You know in fund raising, you go with what they want. You're donor driven. We always said, "If it's real screwball, we won't take it." There was one person that wanted a chair in podiatry and Ken Keller said, "Podiatry really isn't the function of a major teaching university." So, we didn't do it. We tried to be disciplined as far as not just saying, "Give me the money, we'll run." We tried to follow what the academia people had planned as the important chairs. That president's council that got through all that, they did a lot of gnashing of teeth and work to try and get a focus.

CAC: Was there any concern—I'm expressing now the concern of an historian—that disproportionately they were in the professional schools, Engineering, Law, what came to be the School of Management . . .

RB: Very much so.

CAC: . . . and Medicine and some in Agriculture? But there weren't many in Poetry?

RB: No, that's right. That's absolutely right and there most definitely was concern. That's true that most of the big donors, the big hitters, were giving to professional schools with which they had a direct connection, a quid pro quo, to be blunt about it. The Poetry, and the Arts, and History, and a lot of things that are just as important were harder to raise money for. Luckily, there were a few people that did give to CLA [College of Liberal Arts] or SLA [Science, Literature, and the Arts].

CAC: CLA.

RB: CLA? But that's true and that is definitely always, to me, a negative that you have to . . . well, it's not a negative. I mean you want to be sure to try and get the support for the various things that are not the big hitters. Medicine will always draw. Even with our troubles, it still draws an awful lot and always will. Engineering does. The Law School does, thanks to Bob Stein. You know, if you can't get a good CLA and get the people through English to read and write, it doesn't do any good to have them go on to a professional school; so, it's so vital to have that college be good.

CAC: Yes.

RB: I think Julia Davis has done a good job, too, incidentally. She's good. You lose a Professor [Harold] Deutch or yourself, you'll never maybe make the heydays of the English Department and the History Department that we had at Minnesota. I don't know how you would, to duplicate it today. I'd like to think so but it would be tough.

CAC: You were suggesting several minutes back that another campaign is beginning to gel. Are you free to describe that?

RB: Sure. We're in a planning stage right now that Nils has as year 2000 as kind of a goal for what he's trying to do.

CAC: Yes.

RB: it's been suggested that we need another capital campaign and I'm the consultant. Bert Gibson has been hired to plan it. The Foundation is increasing staff trying to gear up to do it

. . . doing research right now on what we call prospect research and so forth. I personally think that campaign's got to be at least three years away.

CAC: Nils will be gone by then.

RB: He will. That's again unfortunate. I blame the regents for that. I think that he will have survived longer than other college president probably; so, the term will be long but I think it's just criminal the way the governor and the chair of the regents try to micromanage the university, telling Nils whether he should hire a volleyball coach for the women or not hire. I mean, come on! You're going to find a replacement for Nils and you tell her or him that the governor has great interest in the women's volleyball coach or the chair of the regents . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: Luckily for us, Nils is a very patient person. If he weren't patient . . .

CAC: Ohhh!

RB: . . . when that Shively vote came out 6-5, most people would have said, "Hey, I'm out of here. If I can't win by more than one vote and the chair of the regents votes against me, I'm out of here. You run it. You go find yourself another president."

Maybe it's clicking off because it knows I'm saying things I shouldn't.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: Then, they finally got a deal worked out where Nils has about a year and a half left but that puts the Foundation in a terrible bind because you can't start a campaign with a new president.

CAC: Yes.

RB: She or he has to be there at least two or three years to learn the territory. As I say, I don't know who in their right mind would take it if the legislature doesn't get the message on appointing high calibre regents—and they haven't so far. I can get shot for saying what I'm saying but the . . .

CAC: You'd be in good company if you were.

RB: Sure. That's what I figure. Ken Dayton and Tom Swain worked so hard on this so-called Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee to get better regent selections and the legislature still takes the bottom [unclear] to them. [unclear] to have a guy like this Chuck Denny who runs this ADC Company or even Ann Wynia? There are so many good people that have been turned down. They take somebody just to be politically correct. I realize you can't have all white Anglo-Saxon



males or CEOs [Chief Executive Officer] as running your regents. I don't advocate that. I never have. We have to have a balance in Minnesota but you've got to have at least a nucleus of three or four people on there who have a track record of running a major company, and realize what is governance, and what is staff. That's always been the problem. Most of them want to get into minutia, as I say, of whether you should hire a volleyball coach, or whatever.

CAC: Well, Jean Keffeler came out of a business, corporate, consultative background.

RB: Yes, she did and Jean has a lot of talent. Jean has a lot of talent but I think there is still a real temptation to micromanage the university. Jean should know better, in my judgement, and most of the other regents are probably worse. Larry Perlman, the one guy on there that came from Control Data that you might hope would know something . . . he just left and got off. No, I think the legislature has to . . . I'd say they're only playing 29 percent of the ball game now. Maybe, you should have a change . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

RB: . . . three regents from the legislature, three from maybe the Foundation, three from the faculty, three from the Alumni Association, three from the governor, something like that. I don't have a proposal. I don't think the states that have the governor doing all of it is good either but you've got to change that way of electing them.

CAC: Now, persons like yourself in the Minnesota Foundation appreciate the changing role of the state legislature but it's also in this political climate nationally . . . the very probable sharp decline in research grants, which really have underwritten Engineering and Agriculture and the Health Sciences . . . ?

RB: Absolutely.

CAC: You folks are up to speed on that? You know that that's part of the crisis?

RB: We know it's true and that's part of the crisis. Unless you can get private industry to replace it, you're going to have a decline because that research is vital . . .

CAC: Yes.

RB: . . . and the only way to get private industry is to get the image of the university some credibility. This Health Science thing obviously has hurt us. [William] Brody, this new guy, is good. I'm very impressed with him . . .

CAC: Yes.

RB: . . . and with Win[ston] Wallin. That's back on track. It's going to take ten years but they're going to get that straightened out. The new dean is good; so, that's good.

CAC: Mr. Wallin has been active in the Foundation?

RB: Yes, very much so. Win Wallin's a great guy.

CAC: I'm interviewing him next week.

RB: Are you? Well, he's a bright guy. He's had quite a track record of success at Pillsbury and at Medtronic.

CAC: What do you perceive his role to be? It's really a consultative role?

RB: Yes, he's a volunteer. He doesn't get paid for it. He went over to the Medical School, and dug right into it with all of the people over there, and made a report to the president, and I think made a report to the regents telling them, "You've got to get across the street and see what's going on over there." The fact that he wasn't getting paid was good because he had no ax to grind except trying to make the place better.

CAC: Yes.

RB: He's a great guy, went to South High School, gave \$1 million for scholarships at South High School . . . a great guy. He's been very generous to the university. Medtronic's done real well. That's the kind of people that you've got to have as regents instead of what you've got. It may take a constitutional amendment to get this thing changed around. The legislature is never going to give up that power unless somebody . . .

CAC: Right.

RB: If the public gets fed up enough with it, you know, they will but the trouble is the university is such a great place that the average person . . . We have our warts, of course. I don't know how you get the legislature to realize that the way they're doing it isn't working, it isn't good . . . per regents.

CAC: I'd like to come back very briefly at least to a concern I expressed earlier and you've answered parts of it. I really am curious. Within this corporate, and philanthropic, and foundation world, what points particular corporations, persons, CEOs, toward the university rather than to the whole range of orchestra, art, conservation, welfare, health, United Way, and so on, and so forth? Do you know what the profile is of persons like yourself who commit yourself in a major way to the university?

RB: Well, I think what you just said is a problem. I think that there is great demand from those other institutions on corporate support and beyond that, private colleges more and more . . . you definitely include those twenty or twenty-five colleges which are so good in Minnesota that you could make the argument that they could take more and more of the burden of educating people of this state because they're local and they're good. It's definitely a problem as far as how the university can come out in this atmosphere. The only thing that I think saves part of it is that there is a quid pro quo, to be real blunt about it, between the research at the university and the success of the ten corporations around here.

CAC: Okay.

RB: There is a real tie-in between Dr. [Edward T.] Davis, for example, and my family discovered taconite, you know, and that allowed the taconite . . . The reason I'm a lawyer instead of a mining engineer—all the other people in my family are mining engineers for three generations—is because in 1948 when I started school, my father said, "The iron ore industry is all through in this state." He was right. In about 1950, Dr. Davis comes along but my point is that that interplay between research and the state of Minnesota is vital. Certainly the Medtronic story and Earl Bakken going back and forth to the Medical School with his soldering iron till they finally gave him a locker over there . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . literally.

CAC: I didn't know that story.

RB: Earl built the first pacemaker out in his garage in north Minneapolis and it was a cabinet about the size of that thing over there. From that it got down to something that fits inside your implant. He was an electrical genius that was going back and forth between the Medical School and his garage working with [Dr. Richard] Varco and [Dr. C. Walton] Lillehei and those guys that knew what they needed. He'd go back and twist a few wires, and do this and that, and come back; so, they finally gave him a locker over there so he could work with them and that's how Medtronic got started . . . the pacemaker.

CAC: Yes.

RB: It's a marvelous story of research at the university . . . and the gain to all of us from those efforts, my gosh! is so spectacular that it is criminal to think of the university not getting that kind of support in the future.

CAC: Do you find in your own career that there is a differential, psychological, spiritual reward from committing yourself to different kinds of projects? I'm wondering how the university fits into your own personal reward system.

RB: Right. It would be at the top now in this sense that I've done, as I mentioned, a lot of those other things and they are important but I go back to the fact that if you don't have the major research university as a success, all of those other things will fail sooner or later. I used the phrase *cold Omaha* and it is. That's the engine that drives the whole rest of the state, the industry, and the whole research, and the whole business. If you don't have that, all those other institutions ultimately will suffer and the corporations will suffer because they're getting 75 percent of their people from right across the river. If we're a bunch of dummies and a mediocre university, we'll end up a mediocre, kind of have-not state out in the Midwest. We've got to head start. We had timber, water power, iron ore.

CAC: Good soil.

RB: Soil for farming. Most states get one of those assets, we got four. We were blessed with four of them; so, we got a head start. That isn't going to go on forever unless we find the technology to keep it going. That's why I think the university is so vital. That's why I get personally a big reward, kick, out of trying to help the university because I think it's so important. The other things are important, too, but without the university, they're nothing, I think.

CAC: Well, these reflections have been extraordinarily important. See, we're speaking for posterity. I hope that these remarks will be listened to or read—a lot of the better ones and yours will be transcribed—five years, ten, twenty years from now. It's important to know how these things were put together.

RB: I hope some good comes out of all of it because I think history and research are important in the sense that you don't have to reinvent the wheel. If you don't look to the past to know what's happened and how you got to where you are, there's not much hope of how you're going to solve it in the future. I would hope that over the years that the history would be written and people would realize how vital the university is.

CAC: Yes.

RB: Because it is. There is no question in my mind that it is.

CAC: That may be a good high point to kind of conclude unless there are other things you would like to share with posterity?

RB: No.

CAC: Not with me but with posterity.

RB: I don't think anything I've said is particularly brilliant or worthwhile for that matter. Elmer Andersen and even a Win Wallin, guys like that, they know more about what's important than I'll ever know. I'm so glad you started with Elmer because . . .

CAC: Yes. I started with Elmer because I knew him personally . . . I mean, apart from his reputation.

RB: Yes.

CAC: Then, I've got to kind of feel my way with this. I'm at home with the faculty.

RB: Yes. They're some good people, too, and a good place to talk, and you will get a lot there.

CAC: Yes. Thank you very much not only for the interview but for all your contributions to the university.

RB: I enjoy it.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

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