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James H. Brickley Oral History Interview, 1998 September 11

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EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
HISTORY

INTERVIEW
WITH
JAMES H. BRICKLEY
Sixteenth President
LNS: It's a beautiful September 11th day in Traverse City, Michigan, where I am visiting with Michigan Supreme Court Justice James Brickley. Born in Flint, November 15, 1928. Raised in Detroit. Former President Brickley's public career was extensive in all levels of Government, Municipal, County, Federal and State. After earning his Bachelor's of Philosophy in 1951, his Law Degree in 1954 from the University of Detroit. He attended New York University where he earned a Master's Degree in Public and Administrative law in 1958. Following four years of service as a Special Agent for the FBI, Brickley entered private law practice in 1959. A profession he continued until his election in 1961 to the Detroit Common Council. At thirty-two, he was one of the youngest men ever elected to the Council. While serving the people of Detroit, he was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Michigan Municipal League, an organization representing more than 400 Cities and Villages in the State. In 1967, James Brickley was named Chief Assistant Prosecutor of Wayne County. He was appointed United States Attorney for Eastern Michigan in 1969 and also served prior to that time as part time Register and Government at several Michigan Universities. He resigned as United States Attorney in August 1970 to accept the nomination to run for Lt. Governor with the incumbent Governor William G. Milliken. The Governor and the Lt. Governor running as a team on a four-year term of office on November 3, 1970. They were sworn in on January 1, 1971. As Lt. Governor, Mr. Brickley played a key role in State Government while helping Governor Milliken carry out the policies of his Administration. He was Chairman of several important State Commissions in addition to his duties as Presiding Officer of the Michigan Senate. It is now Nov. 1974; The Board of Regents of Eastern Michigan University has just appointed James H. Brickley as that Institution's sixteenth President. Jim Brickley and his wife, MaryAnn, and five of their six children are planning to move to the campus of Eastern Michigan University.

JHB: Five children.

LNS: Your eldest I don't think moved, right?

JHB: I think yeah, he did move and got arrested. Yeah.

LNS: Can you move closer to the mike? So, if I lose this then...that's great. Ok, so you've brought a lot of experience to Eastern Michigan University served in lots of different and interesting ways. What did you learn from all of those experiences that you felt would be most helpful or was most helpful to you in your Presidency?

JHB: Well I think that just the act of governing is something that comes through to you in an institution like Eastern Michigan, that is made up of a lot of different constituencies and a lot of programs that span the full spectrum of all of the things that we would expect in a body of education of such extension. To such an extent.

LNS: And when you think of your, you know, I always know when you were interviewing me for my position at Eastern, all the references you called said that guy must've been an FBI Agent and they were joking. I asked them why, I said, I've never had such. So many thorough questions being asked and it was sort of fun to find out later that you were that you had been an FBI Agent. That must've been one skill that you brought with you, for sure.

JHB: Yeah, those are lessons that I learned, that I have never regretted that is for sure. But I guess this again, just the act of governing a University is like governing anything else, rather it be a pretzel or potato chip factory, but some of the principals are the same management of people and providing leadership and the things that we have to do to keep large institutions on course as well as to see to it that they don't do things that they should not be doing.
JHB: Well I'll tell you something interesting that, what I just said, I realize, thinking about what I just said and that is that I'm the first, if not the only Republican to ask for the resignations of Nixon and also Hoover. And both of those, one was on a radio station one day and another was, I forget but it was in the newspaper, I think it got through somewhere on the East Coast while I was at one of the first Republican's to suggest it. Nixon ought to be on his way out. So while I admired, in a sense, both of them because they were doing what they should be doing but they did a lot of things they shouldn't have done. And one of the things, in particular in Mr. Hoover's situation is he really couldn't, he could not make a decision about himself. Somebody has to come, if we don't, if we don't get out when the time is right somebody's going to take care of it for us. And that's what happened there and Nixon stayed too long and Hoover stayed too long. And it might be before we're done here that President; the current President will have stayed, although that's a whole different problem.

LNS: Now Bill Milliken, here's a man who basically was what people saw and has remained in people's minds and the history of the State at least, the same person that they always voted for.

JHB: I'm glad you mentioned his name. Cause, I'm so used to him being there even though he's not in office, his stability, his good sense, and even when I hear his voice now once in a while on the radio or something, it cheers me up because he was a very honorable, was and is a very honorable man and took good care of himself and as a result, was able to take good care of the State of Michigan.

LNS: What do you mean when you say he took good care of himself?

JHB: The fact that he was Michigan's longest serving Governor, fourteen years, fourteen years I believe it was. And so he in even there is now, by the way when Coleman Young passed away, here not too long ago. There was a hastily put together function in downtown Detroit where the speakers came forth and so forth. And they asked Bill Milliken to give a talk and there is some well known, particularly in the Black Community in Detroit, a lot of well known people who knew the Governor and the Mayor. And when they mentioned Milliken, everybody stood up and there was a tremendous applause. So here's a man who was raised and educated, went to Ivy League school and he was able to establish a rapport with people who didn't have a lot of the advantages he had. But he understood that and I think that was very important so.

LNS: What would you say in thinking about Bill Milliken were his essential, defining qualities that other people who were studying leadership could study? Mentioned civility as one.

JHB: That's the big, that's the major I would say is civility. And there was no intrigue in the man at all. He was a, and he was, he seemed to be a pleasant person which was someone might say means he wasn't necessarily a brilliant person. The fact of the matter is, I found increasingly so with the years that I was with him, that he had good insights and that he was of good, high intelligence. And you could just count on it always being there. He was very sensitive, very sensitive to other people's needs, and when you. I remember him travelling to Vietnam or some place in that area of the world back in those years, it sickened him, I saw it in his face. He saw starving people and the human conditions. So again, here's somebody who is raised under the best of circumstances who could establish rapport with the people not in the same level that he was at.

LNS: Now he was able to fashion a coalition of both Republicans and Democrats at a time when most of the country was pretty well divided. Is that because, how did he come up with policies or what was it that had the appeal to both people? Was it his personality, or his policies?
JHB: I would say it was his...both. It was both. He was out front on the women's issues; he was out front on the race situation. He was out front and he was on what was it DDT I believe, the poisonous things used in Agriculture and he was out front on a lot of those things that were important to him. On the environment, felt very strongly about the environment. So he will have no trouble finding his place in history in Michigan it's there and it's something to behold.

LNS: For yourself, you worked with him for two terms.

JHB: I did.

LNS: What was it that you were Lt. Governor when you became, prior to becoming President of Eastern? Why did you, how did it come to be that Jim Brickley who has never been in higher ed how did it come to be that you were selected to be President of Eastern?

JHB: I think how it came quite directly was I was leaving Lt. Governor announced that I did not want to do that again. And all of a sudden, I got and I don't know where it came from first, but it became known to me that Eastern Michigan University was searching for a new President. And that they had trouble raising the necessary funds to do a lot of the things that the Board wanted to do there. And who, whether it was one or two people that mentioned it to me or several, I'm not sure. But it certainly occurred to me that here was a way to stay in public life and to even though I would not continue in a position like Lt. Governor. That somebody I had I said, I guess I said it too, that my mother didn't raise me to be Lt. Governor. And somebody asked me; one of the reporters asked me about what was like to be a lame duck. I said it was like being Lt. Governor. And so I had a lot of fun with that.

LNS: Now do you remember who nominated you for the Presidency?

JHB: Uh, no I don't know who nominated me.

LNS: I remember something from my research I don't have a note on it, but there was someone who wrote a letter of nomination for you, it'll come to me in a minute. So now you're visited by a few people who want to see that your President. The University sends a delegation down to you. I think it had Anspach on it, it had Dyer and maybe, Veda Anderson or something like that. Does that ring a bell at all?

JHB: No. One person who was very active on my behalf at Eastern and Ypsilanti was Peter B. Fletcher who had a considerable amount of difficulty with, at least that's the way he saw it. With what was going on with the University and the community generally. And felt very strongly about the University and the community. So he, he was certainly, I remember that he sent me a letter or two that somebody had sent to him that this would be a terrible thing if I ended up what, as you mentioned, without a higher, a Doctorate Degree. But I think, I know there was some opposition to it. To my going there and the Board of Regents, I was hearing from the Board of Regents the effect that they needed somebody who understood how the legislature functioned. And the funny thing about it is I went there so, with the understanding apparently, that I would, what they need somebody that understood the legislature but as it turned out, what I didn't understand that much more about the legislature. I understood there was a lot about the University. The problems were at the University they were not someplace else. And that was the feeling that if they just get somebody, legislator's, who could get them some more money, everything would be fine. That was not the case. So I take some pride and I think and I hope it's justified that my going there and some of the things that I've been saying about administration I think were very helpful to the University. And it wasn't easy to leave, I must say.
LNS: Well come to that in just a, in just a minute. You mentioned Peter Fletcher, before we get into this. There is always a feeling, not always, among people of the era of the sixties and the seventies that he had a significant influence on the future of the institution. Why do people hold that point of view? Do you have any idea? Is there any substance to the fact?

JHB: I think he was quite instrumental in the community generally. And he was close to; he had played a part in persuading the Governor to place some of the Board members that came there before and after I was there. So what that, where that came from, my guess is if you know Peter, as a lot of us do. I think he enjoyed it quite a bit. Enjoyed the fact that he could make some things happen.

LNS: Behind the scenes?

JHB: Yeah, uh-huh... I think that's true.

LNS: What was his power base with the Governor?

JHB: Uh, he was a good Republican, and I guess and very effective. I remember when I was running for Lt. Governor after or maybe it was before, before I had even gone to Eastern. And he was quite effective.

LNS: You mean in getting votes?

JHB: In getting, for instance, in my case of getting me around and getting me to meet the, what he thought were the right people and so forth. Yes, I think he was always a good contributor. I don't know if you remember or not but his license plate said "Go Blue" something like that. So he was a University of Michigan Grad. And

LNS: Later became an MSU Regent though, isn't he? He became a Regent. Wasn't he appointed to be a Regent at MSU for a while?

JHB: Oh yes, he was. I had forgotten about that. Yes, he did.

LNS: So the M-Blue probably went over well.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: I remember that....

JHB: He was a Highway Commissioner too.

LNS: I remember once that you and he and I had to go to lunch. I always felt that we went to lunch because he wanted to find out who I was. It was.. I'm sure you don't remember that.

JHB: I don't remember.

LNS: It only stands out in my mind because there was no context; it was rather interesting, rather early in my years. So there's no question he has played some role whether up front or behind the scenes in the historical development of the institution.

JHB: Absolutely, absolutely.
LNS: Um, when you think back at just in general, before you get into a few specifics about your Presidency. You were a lot younger then. You had a big family, they were robust, in the newspapers, your life was a fairly public life. Everything about you was out there for somebody to read if they dug for it. How did you feel about now living in a fish bowl, rather than, I know that the state wasn't a fish bowl for you. What kinds of pressures were...?

JHB: Well, it was local fish bowl. So in the sense of the University, that's true, but it was really a local cause the University is local. And again it's keeping my thought that it's kind of a local government. What was it they said?

LNS: Did your family feel any...

JHB: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

LNS: ...Invasions of privacy...

JHB: I had six of them in school, including one in the University. At the University. Yeah, they had some bad experiences in changing schools. You know, they're at a very sensitive age. And there were times that if I thought I had to do it over again, I wouldn't have gone there. Because I sort of dislodged them from their school at the just at the point of development in their life where their friends close friends so that was kind of a sour part of the whole thing.

LNS: They were young so it was really an impressionable period for them. And here you come to Eastern basically, pretty much well liked in the community and the newspapers have always, were pretty strong supporter of you. You had the umbrella of the Millican legacy as well. You come to campus and the faculty were upset. Was there a faculty strike during in your...

JHB: Yeah, well they were talking about it, but the first problem was that there were stories that I was going to bring the Republican Chairman to be the to be Head of one of the Departments of the University or something like that.

LNS: Republican Chairman of..

JHB: Of anything. Of the Statewide or the County, maybe the County. But anyway...

LNS: There were a lot of fears.

JHB: Yeah, there were a lot of fears. And the point that I'll never forget is that we, things were looking kind of grim that the Faculty was talking about formally opposing my coming there and so forth. And I remember one day when, this is before you came by the way, that I said, let's call the faculty together and we did very quickly. And, because one of the rumors going around was that a fellow by the name of Bill McLaughlin, who's a great friend of mine and was, was the Chairman of the State Republican Party. That he was going to be coming to the University and serving a position there. So I thought, That's enough of that. So we called all of, that afternoon and the next day, and I said to them, what I'm asking you to do is, I said to the Faculty, is whatever you hear, please keep a paper and pad in your hands or in your pockets so you can write the notes down. And keep track of everything you hear, for about the next thirty days and then we'll meet again, if necessary, to see what has happened and frankly, that was the end of it. Nobody ever came up and said, here's my list or anything like that. But they accepted that as being I guess as being, I told them by the way, that their rumor-mongering was stronger at the University than it had been at the State Capitol and it still is, I'm sure it is.

LNS: What, was there a vote of no confidence before you even became President or something?

JHB: Something like that.
LNS: The biggest gun-off before you even got there.

JHB: That's right.

LNS: So they could never take another vote of no confidence thing. Less than no confidence. Sort of a gift in a way.

JHB: When I was leaving by the way, one of the, the President of the Faculty Center or whatever the term, the proper term is now, stopped me on the street one day on the University says, you know, I've got a theory why you're leaving. I said, you know, why is that? And he said, because you are going back to where you understand what the politics are. But here you don't understand what the politics are. So you'll be better off, he said. He did it in a nice way. But he said, we, meaning they must've had, I suppose in those days they'd sit around for, doing a lot of chatting over their coffee in the morning.

LNS: Someone once said that the reason politics in the University are so intense is the consequences associated...

JHB: That's right.

LNS: There might be some truth there.

JHB: That's right.

LNS: At least in the way that you're describing it.

JHB: Was that Kerr, was it the...California...

LNS Yeah that was (mumbled) but since he knew that (same) Groucho Marx.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: When you think about Universities, you're President, you're not really 100% welcome, there's a political aura, you come to the school, things hadn't gone well for Eastern in the preceding years. The preceding President Spenberg has been basically forced to resign, all questions, his health, apparently some problems with alcoholism. The Board has been very, very active in the decision-making of the University at many levels, you come in and you're, you've changed the administration. Vice President for Instruction goes, Vice President for Student Affairs goes. And even when you read the papers, some people feel the former Vice President for Business and Finance who was now in the College of Business someplace in some lesser considerably lesser function goes, there's all kinds of turmoil. When you came in was that an agenda handed to you or was that your agenda? How did it come that so quickly in your Tenure that you could make those decisions or you made those decisions or...

JHB: One thing, that's the interesting question that I think that the answer may be interesting too is, frankly, I sort of enjoyed it. I enjoyed the fact that there was some trauma and that there was some, some trepidation about me and about everybody else, I guess. And but it didn't. As you have pointed out, it didn't last long. And I as I look back, I thought that that was what I should be doing. I thought I could, for instance, in comparing the Capitol with the University. And I thought that I could bring some, some peace and get on with the things that we were supposed to be doing. Same kind of...same kind of language that we are using right now nationally, with let's go forward or let's get it over with and let's get it behind us and all of that. So I had some of that going on too. And what we did and I also noticed there were a lot of things that should have, just the, just the communication wasn't there and to me that was quite easy. And again, I enjoyed it and I think I was probably, that was my major contribution, I would say.
If there was one. What would be the major...

Of my tenure there.

You mean of moving out old, bringing in new?

Yeah, that and the communication and being able to explain what was going on. These rumors I talked about a few moments ago, they were just rampant, that we wanted to be building a new stadium and that we're going to do all these things. Things we've done and we might even, it was so bad that we might be bringing a Republican in, and so.

Can you recall the state of the campus when you arrived as President?

Oh, I guess I didn't think it was anything extraordinary. I didn't think it was anything that was bad. But there wasn't anything that was crying out...I don't think that there was anything physically...

The crying out, role model was significantly... the physical facilities. Enormous reserves are currently built up during the previous administration, Which we will talk about in a minute. But, buildings were, seemed to be in tremendous disrepair, there was no faith in, by the Board in the integrity of the administrative practices. One thing that interests me, Vince Caralot was appointed President for Business and Finance prior to your coming

Just before

Did you have any involvement in his being appointed at all?

I had, I didn't have any involvement in his being appointed, but I did ask the Board not to appoint him. Not because it was anything contrary, not because of him, but because of that I was just coming in and I wanted a chance to look it over and see what needed to be done. And all of a sudden, now this very important position, particularly to them, when the finances were so difficult. And I remember, I forget which one of the Regents said to me "Well, we tried to stop it, but we couldn't stop it and we knew you would be coming on" and so forth. So he kind of got caught up in that. That was unfortunate.

Now he himself perhaps should have been wary of it because he knew some, he had worked for other Universities and he represented a seven-state senate and that sort of thing.

He didn't last but two years, I believe, or so.

At the most.

And went back to a state agency, I believe.

I think he did. In fact, one of the senate committees or something.

Gary Hawks had emerged as a very strong person and the declining years of the previous administration and certainly during the interim period, Ralph Gildon was Acting Vice President, Interim Based President, I think was his title. Any comments about his role in the University and his relationship to the Board and being a Vice President?

With Gary Hawks?

Yeah.
JHB: He was very effective. And he was very close had come very close to individual Board members. And that was partly because of the, of the absence of leadership and so many of these things these problems were came because of the absence of leadership at the top. And so things happened at the bottom that get out of hand once in a while. But yeah, he played a major role. And I think there was some resentment because he did not represent, just like I didn't in the eyes of the faculty, represent what they thought was a model President and they thought that he should not be, I don't know exactly what the reasons were with the University, with the Faculty. But in any event, that in due time was some changes when I left and other changes, I assume that he Gary went off to work at the State Department of Education.

LNS: This was after John Porter had come.

JHB: That's correct. Yeah.

LNS: Some years down the road. You didn't see in terms of the Board, it wasn't their actions on Bruce Nelson or their attitudes that you were acting on, and Jim Campbell. Just curious as to...

JHB: The great advantage that I had is that things were bad enough. I just thought of that as we were talking here. That's really the thing that I had going for me is that they were bad enough and I was able to say to the Board that we had lunch before the vote was taken on my appointment and I said what I've got to know is how you want to work. If somebody, if you're going to split up the duties among different Vice Presidents and everything, I'm not sure I can work under that kind of a situation. And so, they backed off right away, cause they had had enough too, they were hearing about the criticisms and the Faculty. I think Eastern Michigan has especially a different posture because so many of the Faculty and students live right in the University, so to speak. That's somewhat of a rarity.

LNS: So now, you're President, you've heard all kinds of things are going to be happening. The economy goes really south as you recall.

JHB: Yeah, it sure did.

LNS: Inflation was extremely high. Unlike this generation we currently are living through; they've never seen anything like we had spiraling inflation, double digit inflation. Do you recall those?

JHB: Oh I sure do. I ran for office during that time statewide.

LNS: Not only is the inflationary spiraling, the state is going into a recessionary period. Money becomes extremely tight and all the relationships with Lansing, notwithstanding, there's no money available in Lansing to give out. And so if you can hold your own prop...position, you're probably better...

JHB: than anybody, yeah.

LNS: …if you lost less than anybody else you did better than anybody else. Sort of, just sort of refocusing the time of the mid-seventies. Does that sound right to you?

JHB: You know what? It sure does, it sure does. I was here everyday all day there for a couple of months I was going around talking to people all over the state.
LNS: And so you had to, had to do, make some hard decisions for the University. I think we went to Plan C in those days where teachers could teach in the summer but not in the Spring or visa versa. Remember the Plan C? We were starting to make cuts within the University family, budget, money wasn't just that we could operate but costs were going up, inflation was killing us and appropriations were staying pretty much the same. You authored several requests for increased tuition. So there's all those kinds of things that were going on. And can you recall that at all, or you know?

JHB: It's very accurate; you have said it all. That's exactly what was happening.

LNS: And to face those times, you brought on your own crew of people, Tony Evans. He started out as Assistant to the President. Ended up, I believe as an Executive Vice President under you.

JHB: I think he also was he, President of the Faculty too?

LNS: No. No.

JHB: No I guess not.

LNS: He worked for Administration.

JHB: Yeah that's right.

JHB: He retired you know. Tony did.

LNS: Last year.

JHB: For the tape, he retired as, from the Presidency of San Bernardino, California.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: Now you brought Larry Smith onto Campus, one of your best....

JHB: Well we all make mistakes.

LNS: And you brought Jimmy Gant to the...

JHB: Yes. That's right.

LNS: ...Academic Princeton Graduate, Man of Political Science Department. Ultimately Bob Ronkama.

JHB: That's right.

LNS: ...some of the key appointments you made. There's tons of appointments that came up during this era. Any comments on any of the people or what you were looking for or what you were?

JHB: I really got what I was looking for. In your own case, of course, you brought a different, you certainly could go toe-to-toe with any of the Faculty, but you brought a business head and progressive marketing as I saw and that's what I was looking for and that's what I got. And you did a fine job in that, in those capacities. And I think it was a well balanced, those people you just ticked off, I think it was quite well balanced. And remember now, I was only there for four years. So as University Presidents go, I think that's about the limit. And but that was fun too. I had judged, I really enjoyed recruiting and deciding, making decisions about personnel. That's where it's all, that's we can only individually do so much. And that tells a story about the administration. With the kind of people that they pick. The kind of people that they rely on.
LNS: Now some people feel that you in a sense cleaned the house for John Porter's administration. You built a staff so when he came in he had a ready able staff and all of the bad things that had to be done in terms of cleaning up the University had been done. And that University was then in a position to really confront the future versus being confronted by the future. Would you say that's a...

JHB: Well I remember that there was something in the local paper in the Ann Arbor referring to me as "Brick the Knife". On cutting the budget cuts and that sort of thing and that goes back to what you were saying a few minutes ago, about what was going on nationally and state-wide. But, no I don't have anything nothing to add to that.

LNS: Would you agree with that as an assessment though?

JHB: I don't know. See I was gone then and I can't really don't feel comfortable making... My guess is with whenever you have a change like that that I guess I hate to use this term but, the sharks know where the blood's coming from and when there's a change and when somebody who everybody is assuming is in charge isn't there anymore look out. Particularly in a large organization.

LNS: Now some people feel that the downfall of Sponberg and Profit and whole era came about because of a Board that had a score it wanted to settle from earlier conflicts. And the arena of the city where Tim Dyer, who was a very prominent member of the Board, became sort of the point man of organizing Board Members, George Strip to name one. There was intrigue from outside through Peter Fletcher there was all kinds of things going on. And that that group with Mildred Smith I guess, was an alternate name that keeps coming up that were all part of, if not a conspiracy, at least a confederation of people who for whatever reasons felt that it was time for that administration to come to close and a new one emerge. And in some ways, you were the beneficiary. Was there...when you came as President, how would you assess...is the Board a highly politicized agency...?

JHB: It was, as they say, the palace... what? The palace guard. Is there's always intrigue you have careers at stake, you have ambition at stake. And so it's always going to be a certain amount of that and my guess is, that at Eastern at that particular time it would be more than the usual. More that what is normal. Normally, you're going to get a certain amount of that anyway, regardless of what you do. But, I think that, I would not be, nothing you said that I would be surprised about. Even though I wasn't there.

LNS: Now in terms of your own Presidency. What were they a potent force? Was the Board...Was it Jim Brickley running the University proposing and the Board disposing? Or was the Board proposing and the administration disposing?

JHB: Well it's. It was the first, I think. That really is the way it should be is that there should.

LNS: We propose and they dispose?
JHB: Yeah, and I remember one time the Faculty, some of the Faculty wanted to get together with me and what they wanted to talk about is a plan that whenever the Board made a decision they would like to pass on it before it became effective. The University, the Faculty Senate, or the Faculty Group. And I thought, I said to them that sounds like a pretty good idea because there's a lot of good heads on the Faculty and everything. Obviously, I assume you realize that you have to give up your Tenure. And of course, they were quite surprised at that. I said well see I don't have any Tenure and I can be fired in five minutes here. You'd like to come in and make the same decisions that I will make or the same amount of influence, but you don't want to take the responsibility and it's responsibility. So they, that was the end of that little plan. But that was that constant thing with the Faculty. Somebody said and I won't name the person but somebody said at that time that I'd never forgotten about, about the vanity of the faculty. Now for instance, mostly of what you and I have talked about here today we have not talked about the Faculty, we have talked about what you and I were doing which was administering. And so, the Faculty became, the Faculty could be utilized in a very helpful way. And I always thought that many missed out many opportunities to enhance themselves because there is a great wealth of knowledge and...

LNS: What would have been some of those ways?

JHB: I think to, 'fess a willingness to meet even though they're trying to get, trying to extract something for that, the little thing, the plan that I was just describing to you. I think that, oh, what I started to say was this friend of mine referred to the vanity of the Faculty as an inherent problem in higher education. A feeling and that's what made them vulnerable and made them less effective and somehow, it was a question, I think of not being, not being sufficiently informed. Not... being distrustful of anything that's coming out of the administration. Those kinds of things.

LNS: Now, one of the things that you did to try to bring the University together was to create a big commission to study the future of the institution.

JHB: I had forgotten about that.

LNS: And it labored for many, many weeks, months. Months turned into many months and finally produced a pretty interesting document. Number of pages, lots of recommendations. Do you remember that as...?

JHB: I do know.

LNS: We were talking about the report, the big mission study, lots of Faculty, Staff, students. Very wide representation. Document comes out, Drummond is now the Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs, McGee went back to the classroom, he was less than effective. It didn't work out as Vice President, I believe that was part of the problem or did he become sick, I forgot.

JHB: Yeah, he had a stroke.

LNS: Was it prior to becoming President, Vice President of the...

JHB: No right after.

LNS: Was it right after?

JHB: He's still serving, he's still...

LNS: He's still teaching. A very popular teacher. A very fine person.

JHB: He is very popular. Yeah, he deserves to have that, that's true.
LNS: So Drummond is, Drummond becomes the point man. Remember we had a big retreat at Fish Lake? And the President asked for a response to the mission study. Drummond comes out with a memorandum some beautifully phrased as Don was confident in doing document, that sort of puts to rest this mission statement. Do you remember that?

JHB: No.

LNS: You don't remember that?

JHB: No.

LNS: Oh, Ok.

JHB: It's coming back but...

LNS: Well, but you do remember having a mission statement?

JHB: Oh yes. I remember that that was the thing that sort of saved it. It bought us six months or so, didn't it? It bought us valuable time.

LNS: A lot of time to think about the...

JHB: And a lot of time to go ahead and make decisions. One of the things I was determined was we weren't going to stop making decisions just because there was study going on.

LNS: Eisenhower once said that developing, in producing a plan for battle, the plan was worthless but the planning was essential. And I don't know if that describes that era, but there were a lot of high hopes attached to that. People took that plan pretty seriously. And I was going to ask, and I still will ask if you thought that that had any bearing on the legacy that you left, at all.

JHB: I think what it did was help us, it helped us to get what do you call it, certified, not certified for the...

LNS: Accreditation?

JHB: Accreditation for the University. That made that much easier. Tony Evans was working with that and as you know he's very effective and I'm confident that that got us through some of that. Otherwise, we might not have.

LNS: One of the statements made right prior to your coming was by, at a meeting and George Strip and a Regent was very upset with the way that the Board was perceived on Campus. The Faculty Senate was upset with the way it was treated by the University. There was feelings in Lansing that the University wasn't taken seriously that is was seen in a rather perjurative terms. There was, that we had poor relationships with Lansing, that some people in Lansing thought we might have our own difficulties, we might consider closing the institution.

JHB: That's right, I remember that. That was after I left.

LNS: That was also prior to your coming in a sense. There were great insolvables. Any thoughts on these?

JHB: No, not really. There's nothing that I can coherently...

LNS: Did you feel as you were President that these things were, did you think that these things were, here you were Lt. Governor, you certainly were well-informed of the...
JHB: In all honestly, my focus had shifted obviously in 1978 that's when I left, in '78, yeah. And so I'm sure there was a lot of going on and a lot not going on after I physically left there. And even though I think I stayed for I think another thirty days or so, something like that. So I really don't have anything to add to that.

LNS: Ok. Well comes, when your first meeting, I believe was November, it was January '75, that was your first Board Meeting that you attended. Veda Anderson was a former Board Member; not re-appointed. The governor wrote a beautiful letter to the University saying that he didn't think it was in the best interest at this point to re-appoint you to Eastern but that any other thing that she would like you to nominate her for....what was behind that? Do you have any thoughts?

JHB: There was a...it was the same time. No I don't know what transpired there.

LNS: Someone didn't want her to come back.

JHB: That's right.

LNS: But it wasn't you.

JHB: No, it wasn't. Because I did, I did not know the woman. So and but my guess is that some of those in the community

LNS: Mainly Fletcher...

JHB: ...could've played a part. I'd be surprised if they didn't play a part.

LNS: But you are given two great new Board Members. John Ulrich becomes appointed at the beginning of your term, Dick Rob is elected Chair of the Board, which will serve as Chair for another twenty, another ten years. Carl Rush was appointed.

JHB: That's right.

LNS: That's how you began your terms. You had two new Board Members for sure, you had...any thoughts about the Board as you start in terms of, I keep going back to the Board because I think it's so pivotal and.

JHB: Yeah well the Board, they were very helpful to me, they, I can't think of anything significantly that I asked for that I couldn't get. The one thing I remember that was disappointing although, we had to make some cuts and maybe you remember this, where we said, we'd cut the gymnastics program.

LNS: Marv Johnson.

JHB: Oh yeah. And frankly, I moaned and groaned because I said "We're going to have to make cuts, that's all there is to it" but after I said I told a few of them that it wasn't bad, that we can live with that. And we did live with it.

LNS: Well, the first time we cut it Beth Wilford sort of rallied the chiefs to keep it from being cut, as I recall. And then we studied it a little further and then there was the final big act and Marv Johnson has never forgotten that.

JHB: Is that right?

LNS: He still is, was a formative experience for him and one that he will take to the grave with him.

JHB: Who's he, the Coach?
LNS: He was the Gymnast Coach, Gymnastics Coach. Still feels, those days, as if it were yesterday.

JHB: Is the swimming program still as strong as it was?

LNS: Very strong.

JHB: Is the baseball program still strong?

LNS: It's semi-strong. Our record for Football speaks over the front page of all the newspapers.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: But one of the things that you did, you had to hire a new Athletic Director.

JHB: I did, I did indeed.

LNS: Posty Frizaka, was that his name...resigned. The new Athletic Director was going to be Al Smith.

JHB: Right. Right.

LNS: Who was African American.

JHB: He was. And...

LNS: ...still is.

JHB: ...still is. I don't know where he is now.

LNS: I don't know either.

JHB: Yeah we did have to make that change and we, he and I had some differences that resulted in the fact that one of us had to go. And I didn't want to posture it that way but he did.

LNS: What were the differences over?

JHB: The differences were he said, "I can't implement that". We asked each of them to show us where they would cut ten percent something like that.

LNS: This was Al Smith?

JHB: This was Al Smith. All the funding units. We said, we said, Let's see what you, if you had to cut, let's see what you would cut. Well, I can understand that's hard to do because once you show that... then they say, why don't you make it, if you can get along without it, why don't you? You know, why do you have to come back to us again? So, but he said, "I refuse to do that, I can't do it" and so I said, then we can't work together anymore. And that, he left the University then.

LNS: Trying to figure who to replace them with.

JHB: Yeah, I am too. Oh yes, I remember, he was from Wisconsin he would've been an All-American.

LNS: Alex Agassi?

JHB: Yes.
LNS: Was it Alex Agassi?

JHB: Yeah, it was. And then that was followed by... no, I'm thinking of Basketball.

LNS: You appointed Ray Scott.

JHB: Ray Scott. That did not work out very well.

LNS: You had high hopes.

JHB: High hopes, really high hopes. Got a lot of attention when we appointed him, showed that we were serious.

LNS: Not a very good recruiter?

JHB: He didn't recruit at all. Didn't seem to know how to or didn't seem to want to or I don't know what.

LNS: Ed Clevic was another appointment of yours, Football Coach in '76. Came and stayed for a few years and then left.

JHB: Oh was he the small fellow?

LNS: Blonde-haired guy.

JHB: Yeah, sort of, yeah.

LNS: He made a big impression.

JHB: He went to Boston College and he did have some pretty good years, a couple of good years there.

LNS: At Eastern.

JHB: No at Eastern, yeah, they stole him from us.

LNS: Yeah, he didn't last... moved around pretty much. One of the things that you found when you came was the condition of the Residence Halls were very poor.

JHB: Right, I remember that well.

LNS: And we had a big meeting with security, remember a couple of incidents?

JHB: We did.

LNS: Affirmative Action. That was a big issue.

JHB: Yes it was.

LNS: 

JHB: Right. I think we were all on that score, I think we were doing a pretty good job on that score. I remember when we appointed the... Al Smith. We had to quickly put together sort of a cocktail party for, because of the rumors about this first black at the University and so forth. And we already had this so-called image about race image. Do you remember everybody said we had we seemed to have more players and everything, whatever than what we were doing.

LNS: Reputation.
JHB: Reputation.

LNS: That we were predominantly a black institution.

JHB: Exactly. Exactly. So anyway, we put together this cocktail party and a lot of the local people came and so forth. And the time came to introduce him and I said how pleased you all came on short notice. And we were very pleased to have him and then I said, But I have to tell you that has absolutely nothing to do, his appointment, I want to make this perfectly clear had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that he's a Baptist. Do you remember that by any chance? You probably...you might now have been...Brought the house down. It was sort of like Kennedy saying that he wanted his brother, he didn't see what's wrong with his brother being the Attorney General? Practicing Law for a while.

LNS: But his father wanted...

JHB: Al Smith, I looked, I said, I want you to know certainly, I could see him, he was turning white right in front of me. He's probably saying, what have I got here, this guy's thinks he's got to say something. And then when I said because he's Baptist.

LNS: He was a pretty nice fellow, though, right?

JHB: Oh, yeah. He was very effective. I was sorry to see him go.

LNS: You talked about WEMU Radio was another big issue.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: It was part of your administration and growth. Bud McCormick was the assistant that we got to figure the frequency. Do you remember those?

JHB: I do. Yes, I do.

LNS: We focused on everything, it seemed, except on Academics. Do you remember much of a focus on the Academic side of it other than the North Central?

JHB: I didn't feel that, I felt that my job was to protect the Faculty frankly. And to provide the right, the chalk and the blackboards and the books and the surroundings. That my job, that they knew more about than I did. I think I knew more about administration than the Faculty did, in fact, they got into a lot of trouble because they didn't understand. Sometimes.

LNS: So it's part of your conscious?

JHB: Yeah, yeah. It was. That's right. And to make the, and then remember when we decided to put a, and you were particularly involved in this, a campaign, a Marketing program about, where we use teachers that we teach and everything?

LNS: Right.

JHB: We ran a couple of those and I thought; Oh now they're gonna be mad at us for spending money on this when they find out. It turned out that the Faculty loved it, it made them feel good. So I remember that very distinctly.

LNS: We hired the Stein Company and they came out...

JHB: Yes.
LNS: We interviewed them.

JHB: Sort of like, Say Yes to Michigan.

LNS: We had a... it was a very good campaign

JHB: It was. It was.

LNS: ...and we did pay a price for it a couple of Board Members tried to make it look like there was something that had gone on because...we'll come more to that in a minute. But, Linda Bernard now, and ______ on the Board. Mildred Smith, Board Member, one of the early long appointed Board Members she was asked to resign over I think it was some tax issues or something.

JHB: Oh there was, indeed. Yes she I think she was put on probation or something like that. I think she was.

LNS: One of the penalties was that she had to resign offices of public trust.

JHB: That's correct. She had to leave the Board.

LNS: And a lot of people thought that the President with his Lansing connections had something to do with it. Is there any truth to that?

JHB: The President. Oh meaning me? You know the funny thing? Is that I helped her, I'd forgotten this, I helped her get an attorney and a good one. And he worked this out and obviously, that there we weren't totally distraught. We felt that she was a good person and so on. But, she was not, I don't think that I could say that she was a strong Board Member.

LNS: And she's, she is replaced by Linda Bernard. Remember Linda Bernard?

JHB: I do, yes.

LNS: And Regent Strip now goes off the Board and he's replaced by Delores Kinzell.

JHB: Oh my.

LNS: Remember that?

JHB: Oh indeed.

LNS: Do you still see her at all?

JHB: No I don't. No I don't, but we got along fine and she was a good Board Member.

LNS: She was very supportive.

JHB: Yes, she was very supportive.

LNS: Linda Bernard? Was

JHB: I don't know her very well.
LNS: It was in that '77 that Jim Mastick thing that we just talked about. Proposal C becomes a big issue. Remember Proposal C the Shiawasee County Drain Commissioner Robert Tisch pushes for a subscription of state spending Proposal C really threatens the university. I don't know if you recall that, but we spent a lot of time as an institution. One of the few times in the history of the University that it really all of higher ed mounted a massive attack against a possible piece of legislation. Maybe even wandering into an area we're not supposed to wander into as a non-profit organization. I don't know if you remember.

JHB: No I don't remember.

LNS: So much for history. Do you remember Robert Tisch, though?

JHB: Yes, and I said to Governor Milliken right about that time, he was about to go out on the press, out to meet the press one day and he knew that was going to come as a question. So I suggested to him that he say that Tisch was giving Drains a bad name. And Milliken, as he went through the door, I can remember that I could...and sure enough, a few minutes later I heard him say that he's giving Drain a bad name.

LNS: Now EMU and the MAC came up during that year.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: Our status in the MAC. Part of our whole athletic configuration, some decisions are going to be made now that influence the University for, to its current day. And we made the decision that administration with the Board that we were going to fight to be in the Mack and do you recall any of that?

JHB: Vaguely.

LNS: Vaguely. Ok. There was a big pressure for an All Events Building.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: And now, we're building one here it is, since 1998 some time long after the '77 year. But we're going to build a dome stadium; we have all of these things on the table and other things we're pushing for. Do you recall that?

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: Do you have any comments on it?

JHB: Well, I thought it was kind of crazy.

LNS: You, was the Board aware of how you felt?

JHB: I don't think, I think it was right after I left, wasn't it?

LNS: '76 this was going on.

LNS: It might not have come to closure until 78. The economy of the State was such that those decisions were not going to be made anyway.

JHB: How is that working out?

LNS: Well we haven't opened it up but it's one gorgeous facility.
JHB: Really?

LNS: We have a $50 Million investment in the last decade just on the Athletic part of it. You haven't been back in a long time.

JHB: No, right.

LNS: You'll have to come and see it.

JHB: Yeah, I will.

LNS: But there was questions of the...

JHB: What's the enrollment now?

LNS: The energy...

LNS: The enrollment's probably about 23,5 or so, it had gone up to 26,000 during the Porter years, but it put such a strain on the University facilities and the resources that it was just too much.

JHB: Oh.

LNS: The ideal Enrollment is 25,400 students, 580,000 credit hours in terms of current configurations. The State wanted to use the campus for a prison. We went around trying to figure out what to do with the excess dorm space. Enrollment still persisted to be a problem. You did one thing that has reverberated; we were the first school to cross your political instincts to do away with the health center fee as a support...

JHB: No kidding?

LNS: You don't remember that?

JHB: I do, too. Indeed I do. I remember Linda Bernard

LNS: No more general fund support

JHB: I remember Linda Bernard said "Jim, you can't do that. This is a new age". That's interesting.

LNS: But now everybody is.

JHB: I said we're not an all-purpose social agency.

LNS: And we acted on that. We also did away with the Counseling Center.

JHB: Oh my. That's too bad.

LNS: Our doing...we couldn't solve some of the problems. That was done then. And Starkweather Hall no longer remains a Religious facility. We took that out of.

JHB: No.

LNS: No?
LNS: No. Shows you how selective mine turns out all of these unpopular decisions. Now people think I'm the one who caused all those problems. I kept saying it was Brickley and... anyway. Evans was made an Executive VP and that's 1977, your father, I think, died in 1977 as I recall. Yeah, October or November?

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: Is that a big influence on your life, your father?

JHB: In a way, not really. Because he really wasn't there when I was smaller. But he sure took an interest as I got older and got involved and he was very proud of me in some of the things that I was able to do.

LNS: When you decide to that it's time for you to run for office again. You have a lot of things going on. We had just signed a tuition reciprocity with Ohio in those years, Warren Borders is now a Member of the Board of Regents, replacing I think, John Ulrich, at that point, if I'm not mistaken. Things are sort of starting to go nicely and then you upset the whole apple cart. Why did you want to go back and run for office?

JHB: Well that's the one that I was telling you about in...

LNS: In '78.

JHB: Yeah. That the professor said he finally figured out what I really meant, as I knew what politics...outside of the University were.

LNS: Do you agree with that assessment?

JHB: Partially.

LNS: Did you think that it was time to go?

JHB: No, I didn't think it was time to go. I knew that what I...I'll tell you how I did feel. I felt that with all of the things that I saw were ahead that if I stayed the things that I would be involved in I just didn't feel to be up to it for some reason. I'm not quite sure what that was about.

LNS: Why did the Governor want you to run with him again?

JHB: I know that he was awfully anxious to have me run again. I think he thought that it made a pretty good ticket. But it was, we had just come out of those days that you were talking about. We were in Dick Headley made the most of it.

LNS: Those days there was a scenario being written that the Governor was going to win and then he was going to resign and...

JHB: I was going to be appointed.

LNS: ...and he was going to appoint himself to the United States Senate and you were going to be. Do you remember those scenarios?

JHB: I remember them, but they never came true.

LNS: No I guess not.

LNS: I won't go into how Headley won, but how did Headley win?
JHB: Because of the times, because of the people were moving out of Michigan. It was terrible.

LNS: Were we coming into a rough spell?

JHB: Yeah, right. I was gone for four years. Between those two Lt. Governors stints and when I came back, I remember a couple of days later after the announcement and everything. I went to speak to a small group of business leaders, I came out and I said What in the world is going on, the hostility. And then, I'll make a skip now to sitting in, standing in front of the State Capitol, the State Legislator who is Retired State Trooper walked up to me and said, "Do you know why you got beat, don't you?" I said, Well, tell me. I'm not sure, but what? He said, "Because of the single business tax." And he was right. And what it did was hit that middle crush of professionals self, in business for themselves and that's what it was, they were fuming and the auditors were telling people who were all their clients and this was a terrible law even though it wasn't and even though it remained there.... But that was a big change in the four years that I was away. And so I come back and I have the whole Milliken thing on me. And Milliken, the polls are not showing Milliken doing good, he was doing ok, but it was not showing that he was going to be doing too well. At that point, one of the things that he said to me the night of the election was I sure wasn't much help to you. And he couldn't, there wasn't much he could do. The only thing he could've done I suppose was leave early. Like some of the rumors.

LNS: The fact is do you think Headley's campaign just out-paced your campaign in terms of organization and all of that?

JHB: Oh sure, some of that. But he put more in to the Republican mold, small businessman.

LNS: When you look back to that election and we'll come back to the campus, do you think that it was the beginning of the change of the country's mood, the whole beginning of the very strong republican right wing of the...

JHB: Totally different...

LNS: You don't think that the two are, you don't think that Headley was the beginning of all of that?

JHB: Yes, Headley was sort of the begin...no, he wasn't, he was at the end of it. He was at the end of when the Republicans were business. Now they are abortions, right to life.

LNS: Oh I see what you're saying. He sort of represented the swan song to that.

JHB: Exactly. Right.

LNS: Engler is the legacy of the new group.

JHB: Right.

LNS: Oh, OK.

LNS: When you decided to leave it threw the University into cardiac arrest in I remember one big incident. A very unnatural thing was happening. A person on the Board, Tim Dyer who had very little Faculty support because he used the Board pulpit to say so many negative things about the Faculty during his Regency. You have a rumor that starts to erupt that Dyer's going to be the next President. I remember personally, coming into your Office saying, "You know, I heard the strangest rumor." I can remember this day; I can see you sitting behind that desk and you said well there may be some merit to it. Apparently, you had also known of the rumor so it wasn't secret but Dyer was working the Board to become President of the University. He was?
LNS: He became Chair of the Search Committee's group to draft the requirements. And there was a big discussion on the Search Committee whether or not the new President had to have Academic Credentials; meaning had to be someone who served at a University level. And Dyer led the Board Sub-Committee to say that he didn't have to didn't have to have served on the...and he kept denying that he was interested in being President. He never really ran for President as I recall. There was obviously a lot of jockeying, Board members were aware of it. There was one coalition of Dee Kinzell, Warren Board and Karl Rush who were very, very strongly against it. There was a lot of people working on Dyer's behalf. Does this sound familiar to you at all?

JHB: Yeah, it does.

LNS: And it comes down to even the Faculty taking an ad out in the newspapers spending their own money to openly oppose the Dyer Presidency. And low and behold, the day of your Retirement Party, if retirement is the right word. Going away party.

JHB: Going away dinner.

LNS: Dinner. That day was the Board Meeting and right before the Board Meeting Dyer withdraws his name.

JHB: Right.

LNS: And the reason he withdrew his name...

JHB: The reason? He withdrew his name because the Governor called Dick Rob and asked him to seriously consider what they were about to do. And there were some other people that got involved and I was one of them. Pointing out some things that he had said and what it would mean to the University. So all said and done, I know that, I'm not going to give you any more of the details, but I just know that I felt awfully good. And the day that, that day, I think it was that day, Tony Evans came in the Office, closed the door and said, "If you're going to do anything, now's the time. Otherwise, I think it's going to be hell to pay." Something like that. So and that's the way...Dick did pull out, it was very emotional, do you remember that at the meeting and...

LNS: I remember it, yeah. I could be sitting there today, that's how clearly I remember it.

JHB: Yeah.

LNS: The rumor was that Beth Milford was the one who pulled her vote. That she changed her vote. That was the condition of her being re-appointed by the Governor to the Board of Regents.

JHB: I don't think that's true. I don't think that's true. I think she was, I know that they were...

LNS: covering up...covering up...

LNS: Beth was what?
JHB: She was, I'm not sure, I want to get the facts straight, but she was in effect saying, tell me what to do. That was sort of her mode. And I said to Dick or to Tim as we moseyed up to the table to get something on our crackers. I said, I hope something...you don't feel too badly or something like that whereupon he said, well, do you have to worry about that. I guess I just don't understand something. And basically, what they were saying and those who felt that way is that I got, that's the way I got my Presidency, see? They felt the same ways. They were saying well, a lot of good it will do you. So in a sense, there was some truth to that. But if it was it was time to correct it. So it wouldn't happen again. But that was a very crucial... can you imagine the kind of difficulties we would've had at the University with that kind of thinking?

LNS: It would've been a reign of terror for you.

JHB: Yeah. Yeah.

LNS: So, do you remember the party, though?

JHB: I do.

LNS: Some party. They gave me a suitcase and they gave me some other things, some nice things.

LNS: You needed a suitcase to get out of town.

JHB: Yeah. That's right.

LNS: It was one of those very strange and there were two or three events. It was a funeral, a party.

JHB: Yeah. How about that movie, Four Weddings and A Funeral?

LNS: Yeah right. This way, the funeral was over there. Anyway, we come to sort of closure.

JHB: That's a bad habit I have of looking at my watch, I shouldn't do that.

LNS: That's Ok. I do too.

JHB: I think we're both making progress.

LNS: Yeah, so any comments as you think back on your Presidential years? What do you want said about them?

JHB: Somebody asked me at the University one time. Remember when I said I had that meeting with the Faculty explaining to them and so forth? Somebody asked me on the radio station, how do you want to be remembered? And I said "Truthfully" and that's all.

LNS: What is the truthful?

JHB: The truthful, do you, how do you want to be remembered. I want whatever happens, I want it to be known. In other words, I want whoever's talking, like you and I are talking right now, I don't want to, like nobody would want the wrong thing said about them, usually.

LNS: You don't want to write your own epitaph at this point?

JHB: No.
LNS: Let me ask you a question. What happened after you left the Presidency, for the sake of this tape? You went on to serve as Lt. Governor and served with Milliken and ran for Office in the Primary, Headley, unfortunately, won. And then you become a member of the State Supreme Court.

JHB: Right, Milliken appointed me.

LNS: Milliken appointed you. And you have successfully returned via elected. Now, what term is this for you?

JHB: This is my third, let's see, my third term. And I cannot run again, because you cannot run after you are seventy. Thank God.

LNS: And now you're going to retire?

JHB: I don't know, because I have six years to go.

LNS: Oh, Ok. Oh, I see. You will be seventy-six when your term is up?

JHB: That is correct.

LNS: Oh. At that time you may not want...

JHB: I'll run all right, yeah. Eh? Eh?

LNS: Well, thank you very much.

JHB: It was fun. It was fun. It helps me think about things, that's for sure.