Elwyn O'Dell interview

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Mr. Overland: Where were you born and in what year?

Mr. O’Dell: I was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1913.

Mr. Overland: What were some of the key circumstances of your family background during your youth?

Mr. O’Dell: I was about seven and for health reasons my parents move to California, which changed the scene quite a bit. He had worked in the Ford factory as a foreman but because of asthma he had to move out to a drier climate.

Mr. Overland: What were some of your motivations for enrolling into college?

Mr. O’Dell: I had the encouragement of my parents, especially my mother, and a local minister.

Mr. Overland: What colleges or universities did you attend?

Mr. O’Dell: I graduated from…College in Michigan with a B.A. in 1937. It was a Methodist school. The next fall I went out to Los Angeles and went to the University of Southern California.

Mr. Overland: What was your goal upon completion of college?

Mr. O’Dell: I planned to go into teaching. I planned first of all to go into secondary education and then I got a fellowship at the University of Southern California and stayed on for another two years until I finished the course work there.

Mr. Overland: What jobs did you hold before you attended...before you became a Central instructor?

Mr. O’Dell: While I was going to graduate school I taught four evenings a week and I...in an evening class system that was designed to train young men to prepare for the air force examination. For those who hadn’t completed high school...if you hadn’t completed it you had difficulty getting the air force at that time, so this was designed to prepare them for a liberal education. I also taught at a new college called Westmont College for halftime for a year, during the same time that I was teaching nights and also doing research at Huntington Library.

Mr. Overland: Specifically what purpose did Central recruit you for?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, one of the faculty resigned at the last minute to take another job...late September and they asked me to come up for an interview and I was hired to fill that vacancy. I was hired to teach political science and history and sociology.

Mr. Overland: Why did you accept the position at Central?

Mr. O’Dell: It was the only one offered.

Mr. Overland: That’s pretty simply. Relate to us your first impressions of the school when you arrived.
Mr. O'Dell: A little small...I forget the number, 600 or 700. Rather quite and friendly, everybody knew everybody. There were a lot more girls then than boys. Boys weren't that interested in teaching at that time.

Mr. Overland: How about the town?

Mr. O’Dell: Oh, it was a country town…cattle raising town. Kind of quite, except for rodeo time.

Mr. Overland: Nothing special about the town?

Mr. O’Dell: Good old country town, the rodeo was the big deal.

Mr. Overland: During your first year what courses did you instruct?

Mr. O’Dell: I taught American Government and that may have been the only course in political science they had at that time. But, they did have an American History course, which was a general education requirement, an also a sociology course, which was generally everyone in the social science division that had to take turns at that.

Mr. Overland: For what reasons did you join the navy?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, I read a newspaper article in one of the Seattle papers that they needed teachers who would be trained in their program and that we would become teachers, that was the principal reason. Of course I was misled. The first thing I knew I had a helmet, a .45, some mosquito net and was on board ship for the South Pacific. I enlisted or volunteered for and was given a commission as part of the deal. I was in from March ’43 to September ’46, I was in Naval Communications that was coding and decoding... messages. Began in American Samoa, moved up to the Ellis Islands in the Gilbert invasion…and then went down to near…Islands area and sat and waited for nine months. Then we went to the Philippines in January 1945. The last tour of duty was in the United States at San Diego.

Mr. Overland: When did you return to the college here?

Mr. O’Dell: September of ’46.

Mr. Overland: Upon your return had any changes taken place?

Mr. O’Dell: I’m not very clear about that, I think women still out numbered men. There were some G.I.s back, about 46. They didn’t really hit their peak until after 1950.

Mr. Overland: Did the nature of your job change at all?

Mr. O’Dell: I think the number of courses in Political Science increased; such things as Political Parties; International Relations; United Nations...courses, I was the only Political Science teacher at that time.

Mr. Overland: These courses hadn’t been taught previously?

Mr. O’Dell: They may have way back before I got here, but I doubt it.

Mr. Overland: What effect did the influx of veterans have on the school?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, the veterans were more mature in the early ’20s, they were more serious. A lot of them were married and had families while they were here. There was kind of a sense of excitement. The veteran was disillusioned and maybe a little cynical, but he wanted to get his degree. He was serious minded,
worked hard. There were more faculty coming on staff, The school, I think, was becoming a little more cosmopolitan and less a ‘hick town’ college.

Mr. Overland: During your early years of instruction, what type of relationship did the community have with the college?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, I feel it was generally o.k. for some of the old timers on the faculty who for a long time had mingled socially with people in town. My impression is that most of the college was rather aloof…they live in their own little world up here. There was some concern downtown about radicals up here at the college. Students of mine continually reported that those who lived off campus heard from somewhere that I was a communist and I was a socialist...then one week I heard that again and at the same time another student said, ‘I hear you an F.B.I. agent working to find communists on the faculty.’

Mr. Overland: Was this a result of the war?

Mr. O’Dell: The state of mind then of the country was hysterical with respect to communism and the Soviet Union, so they suspected a lot of people. The liberals, democrats, were all out together, so are the socialists.

Mr. Overland: What kind of problems did the Political Science Division face in the Post—War years?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, we didn’t have a department, we had a division, a Social Science Division and we didn’t even have a major in Political Science till along 1960 or after that, so I taught Political Science and History and Sociology. So, there was no effect felt yet in the Political Science Department.

Mr. Overland: Are these courses required...or where they electives?

Mr. O’Dell: I think they were required, I think the American Government was required. I’m not sure about when the major came in. History...American History was required and Introductory and Introductory Soc. were required for General Ed.

Mr. Overland: What type of class enrollments did you have?

Mr. O’Dell: We had relatively small then. As I recall the first class I had in the Fall of ‘41 was about 15, something like that.

Mr. Overland: Could you relate how the Political Science Division grew during the 1950’s.

Mr. O’Dell: Well, we didn’t have another faculty member in Political Science until 1960 and that was Robert Yee.

Mr. Overland: So you were the only Political Science instructor from 1941 until 1960?

Mr. O’Dell: Right.

Mr. Overland: What type of leadership did McConnell provide for the faculty?

Mr. O’Dell: His primary interest seemed to be…administering the budget. He did not have very much interest in academic or program leadership or intellectual leadership. We were growing in the ‘50s, I think we got up to 1,300 about 1951 or so, so we were adding new buildings. The first student union, which is a small segment of the present Student Union Building, a new dining hail in back of Sue Lombard and another Library I think in 1960. The Pavilion in 1960, Hertz Hall shortly after that, I guess. As we moved
toward an enrollment of 2,000, why...in ‘60 there was a lot of activity in construction, concern about budgets for that, which he administered during that period.

Mr. Overland: What type of leadership did he provide for the school in general...including students?

Mr. O’Dell: I think I’ve answered that the best that I can at this point. It was an administering and growing institution, which meant a developing administrative...well, he didn’t change the administration very much, actually as far as I can remember. He dealt with the need for new buildings and hiring of architects and things of that sort.

Mr. Overland: What were some of the events leading up to his departure?

Mr. O’Dell: One of the crucial events was the enlargement of the Board of Trustees by the legislature in 1957 from three to five. In a year or two or three which followed there were members added to and to replace older ones, which were more...well, which wanted stronger academic leadership than they thought he was giving. They put, I guess, some pressure for these things... for a change and as I understand it he decided he would leave the school.

Mr. Overland: What effect did the increase of the number of Trustees have?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, the immediate effect was to...I think to reorient the administration toward program development and concern about faculty participation in government...more liberal I think, things of that sort.

Mr. Overland: What would you consider his major accomplishments during his tenure?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, he presided over the growth of the faculty and student body in 1960’s, more programs were emerging...for example there were more majors such as in psychology and sociology and so fourth, but these were sort of grass roots...events that grew up out of increasing student enrollment and increasing demand for more special departments...specialized departments. But, I think for the most part the development programs were in the hands of the Dean of Faculty, they called it then. The deans took care of the academic growth.

Mr. Overland: He didn’t really concern himself with the smaller problems?

Mr. O’Dell: No, he wasn’t too concerned about program development.

Mr. Overland: What effect did the arrival of James brooks have on the college?

Mr. O’Dell: His first talk to the faculty he projected that we would grow from 2,000 to about 5,000 in a very short period of time. This implied that we ought to get on the ball and realize what this meant...for the growth of faculty programs and so on. Within a relatively short period of time he overhauled the administrative system. He appointed, he eventually appointed all new, top administrative officials. Eventually, too, he pushed for a Faculty Senate, before that we had what was called a Faculty Council of eleven people, including the President himself. But, he wanted a Senate which would be more representative of all departments, all the segments of the college. This was eventually adopted. One of his early acts was in the first year, to approve the symposium, the idea presented by David Byrd and myself, was the suggestion that...as I recall, that his installation, his inauguration, might be an occasion to begin...he had delayed his installation well into winter and I understand the Board was getting a little restless. He wanted something that meant something academically and we happen to come up with this idea. So, what we did was...he agreed to set his inauguration in May and that gave us about three or four months to plan the first symposium.
Mr. Overland: What exactly was the symposium?

Mr. O'Dell: The symposium was an occasion each spring, two or three days when classes were dismissed and we would invite four or five, or six well-known speakers to the campus, each would give a speech and we would have discussion groups after each speech. It was, at least in the beginning, very exciting event for kids and faculty.

Mr. Overland: How effective was the faculty Senate?

Mr. O'Dell: I served on it once, a three year term. I think that it was over burdened with curriculum detail. A great deal of their time was spent on approving or disapproving the proposal of courses, things of that sort. I don’t think that it was very effective.

Mr. Overland: What kinds of problems did Brooks encounter when he first arrived?

Mr. O'Dell: He had to restructure...as I said earlier, he had to restructure the administrative setup in order to meet the expected rapid growth of the college. This meant, eventually, abolishing divisions, creating departments and more recently establishing separate schools, such as and each with its own boss or Dean. So he has changed it...it’s been changed radically I would say, since he came here.

Mr. Overland: What effect did his arrival have on the Political Science Division?

Mr. O'Dell: None at all, except that he favored making divisions into departments, so eventually our field became separate.

Mr. Overland: You mentioned in 1960 you got the second instructor. Who was this and what type of background did he have?

Mr. O'Dell: Robert Yee, who is now Chairman of the Department, he got his degree at the University of Washington and he had taught at Whitman College.

Mr. Overland: Who was the initial Department Chairman?

Mr. O'Dell: Well, we didn’t have one titled that way for a long time. I was the senior member of the department, that’s all there was. I’m not sure when... I can’t recall precisely when we became a department. I think Yee may have been the first one, however, there was a time when they were breaking up divisions and Sociology, Anthropology and Political Science were under one head, and I think that was James Alexander who headed that in the late ‘60s. Then we split up and I think Yee was the first Department Chairman.

Mr. Overland: What roll did you play in the organization of the United Nations program here at the school?

Mr. O'Dell: Oh, I suppose I was the instigator of it. I remember having former Dean Samuelson sending me a note about a College Model United Nations of the West Coast that was going to meet in Los Angeles. The first one...I think that was 1950. So, I took it up from there and there were a few students in my class I think went down to have fun as much as anything else, on their own...at their own expense. They went down to the University of Southern California. Somehow we managed to get a Security Council seat as I recall. I think we were one of the first two colleges in the state to send a delegation to the College West Coast Model United Nations. The students became more and more interested and each year we would send a delegation to attend. Sometimes they were at the University of Washington, sometimes San Francisco. In 1955, which was the tenth anniversary of the real U.N. they met in the Opera House of San Francisco where the original U.N. was created. I went with them on that occasion and it was rather exciting to sit where the dignitaries from all over the world had sat and instructed the United Nations Charter. Then
shortly thereafter we started a high school U.N. that was for high school kids around the state. This was opposed at first by the administration because the U.N. was kind of a dirty word to some people and the administration was afraid that this would create local difficulties for us, so we had to delay a year before we got it going. The first one I think we had maybe 13 kids. Eventually it grew to 400 or 500 kids from all over the state. We met in McConnell Auditorium and each school played the role of one or more countries. They would all get very excited and act like the countries that they represented. The Russians would walk out as they did in the real U.N. and things of that kind.

Mr. Overland: How long did this generally take place and in what months?

Mr. O'Dell: Almost always in the spring. The first one was in the fall, October and November and that’s kind of hard weather so we switched it to the spring.

Mr. Overland: How long did last?

Mr. O'Dell: I think it lasted well into the ’60s.

Mr. Overland: What was the eventual fate of the program?

Mr. O'Dell: The students...I should have explained that...the college students here who were themselves planning to go to the west coast conference, actually provided the secretarial functions...they did all the work, setting up the various committees and did so most of those years. Finally the interest in the leadership group...student group...petered Out and not enough interest to continue with the high school anymore.

Mr. Overland: What forces prompted you and several other faculty members to make a proposal to Brooks in 1961 that the college sponsor these lectures by scholars that you mentioned in this symposium? What were some of the forces behind that?

Mr. O'Dell: The beginning of that goes back three or four years...three years I think, when somebody...I don’t think it was I...proposed to the President that the Board put up some money to do this, which they had agreed to do and had done....maybe as far back as ’59, but it wasn’t spent. Either nobody pushed it or nobody could think of an idea to use it. So, that money was sitting there when the symposium idea was proposed, so there was a little nest-egg to start with and then each year the cost of the symposium grew and I think it eventually got up to $9,000 a year. But, the idea for having a symposium grew out of personal conversations Mr. Brook and I had had about the state of the college and University and the state of the country and where we were going, what its strength and weaknesses were and that we ought to...we were concerned about the quality and character of higher education and thought it would be a good thing to do if the faculty and student body as a whole re-examined what the college was supposed to be doing. These...the idea came out of really two or three years of now and then conversations with...between him and me.

Mr. Overland: How did you determine who would be the speakers for the symposium?

Mr. O'Dell: Well, we first discussed a theme...we would always have a theme. The first one was the American Values in a Time of Crisis. We didn’t know that we were going to go on after the first one, then, but that sort of provided an overarching theme for those which followed. Getting the theme first was important; what’s the subject and then we would look for people who we thought could talk about it.

Mr. Overland: Did your theme change every year?
Mr. O’Dell: Yes, although it all related to American Values. The second one was on the idea of a college another was on man and man worshipping, another one was on man working. We had one in ‘67 on Revolution, that’s when Stokely Carmichael was here.

Mr. Overland: How successful in its beginning stages was the symposium?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, it really was remarkable... the first one the pavilion was packed. I don’t think we had less than 1,500 people at any sessions and some of them were in the morning, but in other... later years, depending on the speakers, we would have a full house over there too. Gradually, for whatever reason, the interest in it began to decline. That’s what Sam Mohler reports... in his book.

Mr. Overland: What type or reaction did your 1967 symposium have in the theme of revolution?

Mr. O’Dell: In the summer of 1966 Dr. [Carmichael] became President of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and subsequent to that the press reported the events in which they alleged that he stirred up trouble in cities, which he denied. Was a...instigated riots and things of that sort. But, this...that followed our requesting that he come and he was very difficult to reach, very difficult to communicate with. His headquarters was in Atlanta. He wouldn’t make a commitment and months and months went by. Finally there was a group in Seattle, black people, who wanted him to talk to them and we sort of worked together to get Carmichael up here and we did and he spoke at Garfield High School in Seattle the night before he came over here. That speech was typical...well, typical arousing type of speech, which Carmichael was noted for. When he was here he talked very calmly, very quietly.

Mr. Overland: Did this create any controversies on campus?

Mr. O’Dell: Oh sure. We always had controversy up there. The President almost always got letters critical of the subject matter and the speakers.

Mr. Overland: What year did this program stop existing?

Mr. O’Dell: Well it stopped, I think the last one was in 1970. I disassociated myself from it after the ‘67 one and David Burt continued on for three years.

Mr. Overland: What were the reasons for the decline of the program?

Mr. O’Dell: Well the decline...I don’t know, the attendance, the President was concerned about the attendance...about the money being spent for the number of students who shared in it. It became a practice in the spring and April when they usually held it, for kids to go home and look for jobs in the summer, so they would leave in droves. There some really interested students who would stay around and were outraged that so many would miss this opportunity to hear those that came to the campus. But, pressure...because of the decline in student interest to end it...resulted eventually in the termination in 1970.

Mr. Overland: What other well-known citizens participated in the symposiums?

Mr. O’Dell: Margaret Mead an anthropologist; Alan Watt, who was a student of oriental philosophy, Kenneth Burke, probably one of the greatest social and literary critics of the twentieth century. One of the great theoretical biologist...who is dead now, W. H. ...who was Vice President of the fund for the Republic of Santa Barbara, a Ford foundation creation; Martha...a child psychoanalysis from New York; Max Capland, a musician and sociologist who was a great authority on leisure in the world. With Stokkey Carmichael we had...a man from New York University in philosophy....I’ll think of the name in a minute. He gave us more trouble, I think, than everybody else put together.
Mr. Overland: Seems to me that I saw the name Leary...Timothy Leary.

Mr. O’Dell: Yes, Timothy Leary was here too, that’s before he became the god of the LSD.

Mr. Overland: His talk…what was the nature of his talk?

Mr. O’Dell: His talk was the scholar, the nature of his commitments and his work. By the scholar he meant students and faculty. He had just quit Harvard, we didn’t know it. We knew after we had asked him and he had agreed to come that he was in trouble, because Time Magazine had a little article in which they reported that he had been asked to take his LSD experiments off campus. He had been experimenting with graduate. But, we didn’t know when he came that he had left....we don’t know rather he was fired or he just quit. He announced that in his speech here. His plan then was to go to Los Angeles and Mexico and set up institutes for study and experimentation with drugs.

Mr. Overland: So, actually this was a springboard then for a new career for him?

Mr. O’Dell: That’s what he announced, he said in his speech, ‘I’m changing my,’ he used a drama metaphor, ‘I’m changing my makeup, I’m taking off this set of clothes and putting on another set.’...or something to that effect. So, he really announced this...his new venture, here.

Mr. Overland: Any other names that come to mind?

Mr. O’Dell: I’m still trying to think of that man from New York, a very famous philosopher. I wish I would have thought of this and I would have made some notes.

Mr. Overland: What lead to your writing the book, *College Looks at American Values*, and what role did the symposium play in that?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, of course it’s about the symposium and the book, called *College Looks at American Values* includes all of the speeches of all the first six years, from ’62 to ’67. One of the Board members was very interested in the symposium and made a substantial contribution for the purpose of getting the symposium speeches published. I undertook to do that, to edit the speeches and to get the book published.

Mr. Overland: How well received was the book?

Mr. O’Dell: The notice of its publication was rather wide spread, we sent out fliers on it and there were only 500 copies made, with the money we had, and it was a very expensive book to publish. The first 500 were $12.50...so, it wasn’t a very marketable....we sold it at considerably less than that. There are a few copies left. Many, if not most, were given away by the administration or the Board.

Mr. Overland: What was the goal then of the book, was it to get these speeches down on record?

Mr. O’Dell: Yes, that was it of course all of these speeches are still on audio tape in the library.

Mr. Overland: You were involved in a number of other programs; what was *Inscape*?

Mr. O’Dell: *Inscape* was a student magazine...a student - faculty magazine. The so-called little magazines were popular on campus...college campuses in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s. This was an idea which Mr. Burt and I and two or three other people had as a means of giving students an instrument to which they could express themselves in writing or painting, or poetry or photography. I forget when the first issue came out, I think there were six years of it, but that was the main idea, to stimulate academic and artistic interest among students and give them something visual to see, that they had produced.
Mr. Overland: Were you one of the original creators of this?

Mr. O’Dell: Yes, I was, I was in the initiating group and I was on the Editorial Board for the first year or so.

Mr. Overland: Was this a monthly publication?

Mr. O’Dell: No, it started out to be a quarterly and I think actually it was three times a year...two and then once toward the end.

Mr. Overland: Why did they eventually decline?

Mr. O’Dell: I wasn’t involved with it at the end. It may have been lack of students or faculty interest in doing things for it, or the editorial group didn’t have time or lost interest in it.

Mr. Overland: What was your role in the speaker in the union program?

Mr. O’Dell: Speaker Union Program came about as a result of conversations with student leadership, a member of the student body...President, was very much interested in something like that. That was long before the big union now. In fact, the dining part of the union then is now comprised of the S.G.A. offices. It was relatively small and we weren’t all that big yet. The idea was to bring in stimulating people to the campus and give the students a chance to talk with them and discuss with them.

Mr. Overland: What eventually happened to this program?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, I think that it gradually emerged into what students call the Curve Stone, in the early ‘60s. So, maybe it just mainly changed it’s name.

Mr. Overland: I think it’s still in existence, the Curve Stone, right now. That name sounds very familiar. That program then is still continuing in a sense. When were the young Republican and Democratic clubs organized?

Mr. O’Dell: Oh, in the 1950’s sometime. There was no political activity at all organized such as that. I was the only faculty member who was involved in politics that is in being involved in party meetings. I was and I guess am a democrat and I helped to get the young democrats started, but I thought it was only fair that we tried to get the young republicans going too. I think I found someone on the faculty who was either a republican or sympathetic to the need and they kind of took that.

Mr. Overland: What eventually happened to these clubs?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, the young republicans club has been off an on, and I haven’t heard much about it for quite a while. The young democrats have survived, sometimes just barely, but they always seemed to have been more active and they get wound up in Presidential election years...just as they are getting now, they are getting involved.

Mr. Overland: Do you still play an active roll in that club?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, I’m normally their advisor, but they are self-motivating.

All I have to do is sign a statement that they have so much in the bank.

Mr. Overland: What was the Citizen Education Project?
Mr. O'Dell: This was a project of a National group, which never got underway here really. It had a very complex system of indexing sources of materials on particular themes and no one really picked it up. It would involve very comprehensive academic program. But, you may have been referring to the Citizenship Clearing House program. The Citizenship Clearing House was designed as a national organized thing and its object was to interest college students in politics. It was funded over a period of time by two foundations. The Ford Foundation for a while, it paid the cost of conferences and food for those students at conferences, expense for faculty who prepared for these annual affairs. There was a political scientist from practically every college in the State who served on the Board, Citizenship Clearing House Board. The...each school or combination of schools would design a program for the students annually. We did that here two or three years. We had banquets, we would invite politicians, legislators, officers to talk with...well, it was about a one day thing. I forget...in the late ‘60s interest in that petered out or the Ford Foundation felt it wasn’t as useful as it used to be or they had other places to put their money so they stopped funding it and that ended it.

Mr. Overland: Were there any other programs you were involved in that you would like to mention?

Mr. O'Dell: Where are you at...

Mr. Overland: I just caught these thumbing through the book and I thought perhaps there were some others that you have initiated in some manner.

Mr. O'Dell: One was the Inner Disciplinary Studies Program, which I moved into after I left the symposium committee. We started that in 1968. This was modestly funded program by the college. It involved bringing the disciplines together on a common subject or problem or theme. I was the coordinator of it, I think half time...time.

Mr. O'Dell: This would be a program such as South Asian courses and you would take from different departments. It went down the tube in 1970 partly because it was so expensive per student head, because you would have three or four faculty involved in the seminar and maybe twelve kids. The ratios were heavy there. Also, I think the themes or subjects that were developed by interested faculty and myself which were too theoretical, to abstract, they weren’t focused sharp enough on problems. It’s kind of ironic now, however, we have since then...the administration had developed an under graduate inner departmental major and a graduate program on inner disciplinary...individualized study, all of which now are inner disciplinary.

Mr. Overland: So this is a direct spin-off then from...

Mr. O'Dell: I don’t know that there is any connection. I just said, ‘It’s ironic.’

Mr. Overland: A real coincidence. Any other program that you would like to mention?

Mr. O'Dell: I’m presently involved in a new program on aging and retirement, it’s S-T-A-R, star. I don’t know if you’ve heard of it. There are three parts to it, one is an academic program leading to a BA or Masters degree; another part...this all started last fall, fall of ‘75...another part is to bring to residents, older people...retired people, and there are some on the campus now; the third part is to develop a retirement education program for faculty and staff here and then see if it will work with the community as a whole.

Mr. Overland: What are the reasons behind this STAR program?

Mr. O'Dell: It’s a combination of four years of study by a committee called the Retirement Planning Committee, which I was chairman. The initial push came from the fact that during the winter of, I think, 1970, I reserved some Sunday television programs on the subject of aging. To me it was quite interesting. Then I think in April the President of the College sent a memo to all faculty members asking them for
suggestions about new things to do, new program. So, I wrote a brief precise and sent it in, next thing you
know I’m chairman of a committee and we spent four years studying various aspects of it and the STAR
program is the result of that.

Mr. Overland: What would be your ultimate goal for this program?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, I would like to see a sound academic program at the graduate and under graduate level.

Mr. Overland: What would you have to do to insure its success...of course it’s in its early stages...you really
don’t know.

Mr. O’Dell: We have now almost ten, just since fall, almost ten under graduates and four graduate students
in the program. We need to strengthen the program. I’m not a gerontologist...we need an expert and were
submitting a budget request for the next biennium to finance a professional at it, who knows the academic
side and also knows the service side, he knows how to work with agencies of older people. We would hope
to provide assistance to such agencies and to be a research center and information center for agencies
serving those people in the Central Washington area.

Mr. Overland: By the 1970’s how had the Political Science Division changed?

Mr. O’Dell: We didn’t have a division, we had a department. The...by that time...during the Vietnam War
the funding from the United States Government to institutions of higher learning, particularly graduate
schools, grew tremendously. This and as the student enrollment rose...because if you enrolled in college
you could stay out of the army. There were a lot of young people here as a result, so every department
grew, including ours. I think by 1970 we had seven or eight faculty in the department alone.

Mr. Overland: How has your job changed specifically? You mentioned in the beginning that you taught
many different courses.

Mr. O’Dell: Well, we tended to become more limited in what we do. I am now completely out of
International Relations, have been for years. In times past I taught everything, Public Administration. Now,
my field is limited to American Government and American Political Institutions of Political Parties, Public
Opinion, State and Local Government. Others now specialize in International Politics.

Mr. Overland: What were some of the problems of the college during its grow years?

Mr. O’Dell: Problems of growth...recruiting faculty, either developing new or enlarging existing
programs...courses, more specialization, special types of courses. Making the administrative structure
adjust to more and more people, more and more faculty...bigger and bigger budgets.

Mr. Overland: What type of relationship has Brooks had with the faulty?

Mr. O’Dell: It was my impression that his relationship, in part at least, with the faculty has been strongly
influenced by the nature of the Boards of Trustees..., when he first came the first Boards, the first few
years, were very liberal in their attitudes toward faculty participation and governance for the college.
Subsequently Boards were more conservative and introduced more limits on faculty participation. I think
one of these is reflected in the Faculty Code, which has existed since last 1940, which faculty regarded as
kind of a constitution and which could not be amended without approval of the Faculty Senate. Subsequent
Boards took issue of that and felt that since they were legally responsible for the administration of the
college, that they and they alone could determine what’s in the Faculty Code. The Faculty Code involves,
among other things, a tenure promotion and the issue of amending the Code itself, which I understand later
Boards felt that it was their sole responsibility to do that. The faculty has objected to that.
Mr. Overland: What were some of his major accomplishments?

Mr. O'Dell: I think the major accomplishment would have to be the development of the administrative setup, to deal with the very rapid growth of the college in the 1960’s.

Mr. Overland: Then this is something that McConnell did not have?

Mr. O'Dell: We weren’t that big then, we were just beginning to grow, which if he would have stayed on he would probably have faced that problem too.

Mr. Overland: During your years in Ellensburg, how has the relationship between the college and the community evolved?

Mr. O'Dell: I think there is more involvement by the faculty in community affairs in the last numbers of years...we have had two or three members on the city council...elected to the City Council. Perry Mitchell retired and Harold Williams and Lynnwood Reynolds, who is of course now retired, those three I think were on... They are more interested politically in the politics of the city and county government, and in politics in general...party politics.

Mr. Overland: So, there is a more healthy atmosphere...the townspeople except the college?

Mr. O'Dell: Well, I wouldn’t go that far. But, I think that the town feels ambivalent about the college. They don’t like what they regard as radicalism from the radical profs and radical students and crazies up here. But, they also benefit financially, substantially from the fact that this institution exists here and it’s the biggest employer in the whole County, so they may like the money but they don’t like some activities of it.

Mr. Overland: How would you compare a Central graduate of 1951 and 1975?

Mr. O'Dell: I mentioned earlier that the G.I. was serious, he survived...he was either married or about to be and a number of them had kids. He wanted to get his degree and get out, no monkeying around...he was serious. Probably bitter and somewhat cynical. The younger kids coming in the ‘50s, their attitude was typical of their parents, they were very apathetic...they were fed up to here with war and depression. One reason why Eisenhower was elected in 1952...they wanted a father figure to take all the problems away from them. So, the students were like there parents, very apathetic about politics. That’s all changed...you had the ‘60s, the radicalism on the campus in the ‘60s, you had the Black Revolution and all sorts of other things that stirred people up. The present kids are too young to remember much of that, but I think a lot of it has rubbed off on them. They are considerably cynical, but I think they are more politically aware and interested. I think they are more liberal with respect to race...all of these things they grew in. They are tolerant, considerate or compassionate toward minorities of all kinds, but I don’t think they write as well and that’s a common complaint.

Mr. Overland: What was your philosophy of education then and now?

Mr. O'Dell: It’s hard to recall...I think that basically it hasn’t changed much. There is more concern now about job preparation for higher education. The fragmentism, utilitarianism of it...I’m more concerned with...about traditional or classical liberalizing or freeing effect of becoming an educated person, an aware person. I think the core of higher education should be to provide a respective human experience, help them see the forest through the trees; as a basis for being able to make sound judgments about things and to encourage a commitment to the values of knowing and thinking, to the life of a mind; freedom of thought. Those, I think, are traditional, classical and I think they may not be eternal, but I think they are crucial to civilization.
Mr. Overland: You seemed to be real concerned with student involvement, have you changed your opinion on that? Some of the programs that you have initiated all seem to lean towards student involvement, democratic and republican parties; inscape; the symposium. Have you changed your opinion on those types of programs?

Mr. O’Dell: No I haven’t. I believe just as strongly in that as I ever did.

Mr. Overland: Do you think there is a lack of that type of program at the college today?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, the college is so big now that I don’t know 10% of the faculty, probably less of what’s going on of that nature in other departments. I gather music and drama are doing good things involving students.

Mr. Overland: What must the college do to keep pace with the changing job market and society?

Mr. O’Dell: There again I refer to what I just said. I’m not so much concerned with college keeping pace with society, but I’m concerned more with the college’s understanding what is going on in society and reporting it, or reporting what we think is going on and evaluating it. I agree with Justice Douglas that the colleges should be stronger critics and evaluators of what’s going on in the society and the world. I agree with them too that I think higher education is to a substantial extent, especially the 1960’s, forsaken this function. It’s too much become an edge into government and industry with all these huge contracts and grants, which has sapped the strength of graduate schools and they have adopted many of the goals of industry such as productivity, they use their measuring devices like efficiency, and even their terminology is of the business world. So, it’s as if we borrowed the model of the business productivity efficiency and then tried to apply it to academic institutions, which I don’t think it fits.

Mr. Overland: Do you view this as providing a decline in education?

Mr. O’Dell: I think it has, but I couldn’t prove it. But, I think the obsession with graduate schools, the Berkley MIT syndromes of gigantic grants for research and military…other things have diverted. Of course they add to the national welfare and national security. But, I think they have had a pervasive impact on attitudes of the profession toward their job, and to what a college should be doing. Not getting government contracts, but concerning themselves with studying, analyzing and describing what’s going on in society, and reporting it.

Mr. Overland: What must the political science department do to keep... to insure success in the future?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, basically what I said applies to any individual teaching college and the extent of which, if it’s possible to do that to the extent to which it’s accomplished depends on the individuals who are the teachers. So, in this field, political science, probably as close as any other discipline relates to the subject of social action and political process and power. They should include in their work and their teaching someway for the students to see and understand what is going on and perhaps even some evaluation. I don’t think a prof should be a preacher or a doctrinaire, but should present the student with capacity in information necessary to make the best judgments that he can.

Mr. Overland: What is your stand on unionization?

Mr. O’Dell: Well sadly, I feel it may be inevitable, but I regret it. My notion of a college, as you may have gotten by now, is a community of scholars working toward commonly valued goals...some of which I mentioned, and not a system in which is shaped by an adversary relationship between the administration on the one hand and the bosses on the one hand and the workers on the other hand. I think they all vertically should be committed to the basic goals of an institution and not fight each other about pay checks. As I say, I’m probably old fashioned, but it’s going to come anyway.
Mr. Overland: What are your future plans?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, future plans now are to develop the STAR program as far as we are able, develop a sound academic preparation for young people who want to go into the field of aging; to develop a comprehensive service program for older people throughout the region and as I may have mentioned; provide information and resource centers for agencies which do work with older people, both public and private.

Mr. Overland: What would you consider the personal highlights of your career?

Mr. O’Dell: I suppose getting over the degree hurdle, the doctorate and World War II...surviving that and my involvement in party politics from 1948 on. During the 1960’s, I was on the State Central Committee of the Democratic Party and saw lots of interesting people and action. I’m still interested...however I have become somewhat disillusioned since the Vietnam War...as a result of the Vietnam War, and quite concerned about the concentration of power in executive...presidency. I’m encouraged by some rumbles of change in the congress to reassert its role in the legislative process. The Model United Nations, for a period of eight or ten years, was fulfilling for me and I think kids liked it. I was glad to see the enthusiasm of high school kids...some very, very bright high school kids...the best, that come here. Sadly, too few of them would come to Central, they went somewhere else. I think the symposium, which was another six or seven years, was exciting and rewarding experience for me. The Inner Disciplinary Studies Program, which was a short lived...had potential, but perhaps we weren’t ready for it. It does find a successor at least in the under graduate and graduate inner departmental program. Finally what I’m doing now is the studies toward aging and retirement program. I’ll be involved in that probably the rest of my tenure.

Mr. Overland: Is there anything you would like to add in conclusion... anything that we’ve talked about? Any final comments? Is there anything you would change it you could?

Mr. O’Dell: Well, if I had time to think about it I might think of a couple.

Mr. Overland: But, you have been most satisfied with your stay here at the college?

Mr. O’Dell: Generally yes, I’m pretty well pleased with school life. I think one thing that I have regretted is that it has become so large...specialized in the lack of communication among individuals and among disciplines. By the way, another thing that’s in the offering, I’m on a committee to establish an honors college within the college. What it’s projected now is that a substantial part of the four year program will be inner disciplinary seminars, so maybe we will get that back....I hope. We have the go ahead from the administration to do it, it’s just a matter of working out the details. I think the committees all agree that inner disciplinary components should be an important part of it.

Mr. Overland: Then your still actively involved in....

Mr. O’Dell: Were coming back into it, yes. You can’t get away from it.