CWU LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

ROBERT EDINGTON

KB: Today is Sunday, March 12, 2006. I’m Karen Blair about to interview Dr. Robert Edington. [Would you tell us] a little bit about your background before you came to Central?

RE: Well yes, I uh — one of my great tests is patience, and one of the manifestations of that is I get bored very easily, and one of the results is that I move around a lot. And since — and so we, once I got my Doctoral degree — I started out in the Student Personnel field as Assistant Dean of Students, and then I came up here and got a PhD and D [?] — a Master’s and a PhD degree. My interest was international politics, and so I had the opportunity to go to the graduate school in International Studies at Denver University to teach for a couple of years, and to meet some very, very interesting people including a fellow by the name of Joseph Corbel, who was the father of President Clinton’s Secretary of State, and he was a former diplomat. I enjoyed that very, very much. And then to — what after that — then to Canada. We went to the University of Waterloo in Canada, and I started a program there — always doing that — and then from there I went to Michigan State, to a very interesting program. We had a undergraduate, interdisciplinary program in Public Policy, and so I was brought there to start the Foreign Policy part of it, and did that. It was a wonderful experience. A real burn-out kind of thing, because it was very — the students lived in the place, and it was [inaudible] and so on, and so on. And from there I went to Idaho State. That’s when I became my — that was my — I was an Assistant Dean. That was my first real, full-time administrative job — then became the Dean of Arts and Sciences there. That was a really great experience. We were there from ‘74 to ‘83, so it was a pretty long time. I enjoyed it. And then I went to Pennsylvania.

I have to just tell you a little bit of background. I had been appointed to a couple of commissions in — having to do with collective bargaining in the State of Idaho, and I thought, “Gee, this is fun. I’d like to learn more about collective bargaining, and how it affects higher education.” So people who knew said, “Well, there’s two places to go. You either go to the SUNY [?] system, or go to [the] Pennsylvania State University system, and so I — there was a job at the Pennsylvania, so I became a Vice-President there, [and] stayed there for about five years. Another real great experience.

And then we decided to come back to the west. My wife’s mother was not well, so we said, “Well, let’s see if we can go back to Seattle.” Well the closest place — I mean it was just fortuitous that there was this job available in Ellensburg, which was pretty close, and so we came there — came for a couple of interviews, and then was offered — negotiated for that job, and came there, and was just an absolutely wonderful experience. I’m so thankful to Garrity for giving me the opportunity to attempt to do something that I had never done before, which was to re-make a University. And so we started doing that. We did not succeed, but a couple more — three — three or four more years we could — we probably would have been able to pull it off, but we — it just didn’t happen. But it was fun nevertheless. Certainly never a dull moment during that time.

KB: Now tell us when you arrived from Clarion in Pennsylvania, and tell us what you saw. What needed to be done when you arrived?

RE: Well, it was a quiet campus. I think people were pretty well satisfied with the way it was. Excepting that — my sense as an outsider was that the senior faculty had come there expecting something that didn’t happen. In fact, talking to some of the faculty who had come in the Sixties, that it was supposed to be a — or they were led to believe that it was a — going to be a University that was — had strong graduate programs, had opportunity to do research, but did not have the pressures that University of Washington had — you know, that teaching was also still valued. And it never really did become — I mean, I think it’s now becoming that, but it — it — in all those decades it didn’t become that kind of thing, so there were a lot of folks who were disillusioned.
KB: Why didn’t it become that?

RE: Well, you know, who knows? I think that part of it had to do with funding, part of it had to do with lack of understanding on the part of leadership as to what it took to make that kind of an institution. The financial kind of — the support — the financial support began to go down, and — all the way from — you know, I mean — went through several [inaudible] of reduction. We — when I first came there, higher education accounted for about 15% of the budget by the State [inaudible]. Now it’s probably less than half that. And it just is not only that the budget has grown, but the share that higher education has had, and the burden on the students has increased. So that made it very, very difficult. And I think — nobody quite understood what it took to make — to do that.

KB: You mean dollars? Or —

RE: No [inaudible — sounds like it could be an acronym starting with N and ending with E, or it could be “end plan E”], and, you know, the kind of people that were there, and the strength of their determination to do that. And so it became much more of a teaching university than it might have been, or that might have been predicted in earlier days.

KB: Do I hear you saying that the School of Education was still the driving force?

RE: When I first came there, the School of Education was clearly — I don’t know whether “driving force” is the word, but it was the most prominent division — academic division, and it was the best known, in fact, throughout the state. As I became aware of very few — that was just about all Central Washington was known for, was Teacher Education and Music.

KB: I thought its Business majors were on the rise, as well.

RE: They were getting — the Business programs were beginning to rise, and they did, of course, very significantly thereafter. And — but the — I think the whole university suffered from not knowing exactly what it was and where it was going. It so — it was a — there was a wave of accreditation that was going to appear. Northwest Accrediting, and the Teacher Education Academy — NCATE. NCATE had just gone through the adoption of a whole new system for accrediting — new standards, new approach, new requirements on the part of each of the institutions, and I think we are — the people who were — that process was well along when I first came, and I — my view was it definitely wasn’t going very well, and it turned out that it hadn’t gone very well, you know, because we sort of— just about lost our accreditation. But that turned out to be, in the long run, a good thing from my point of view, because it did shake up the folks to say, “Look,” you know, “What we’ve been doing all these years just isn’t going to hack it.” Not that the quality was low — it wasn’t low. I mean, we were producing very good students, and very good teachers, and the greatest number of teachers of any institution in the State of Washington. But from a national point of view — now that national standards had evolved — we were sort of considered a backwater. As a matter of fact, that word was used by one of the visiting teams.

KB: What are the kinds of things they wanted to see?

RE: Well I think they wanted to see more involvement in experimental programs. We had started a program down at Selah that was, I think, really excellent. Unfortunately it did not continue after I left, but it was an interactive training program that had students, and teacher, and school district — for every student — and it was really great. But anyway, the involvement of the students — and this is making — keeping track of graduate students — where they were going, and how successful they were, and what their long-term views were of the institution — and not a way to take Advantage of the newest — the impression was that we didn’t really understand what was happening — what the new trends were. So — but for whatever [inaudible], I think the main problem we had was that the self-study we presented did not — we did not understand — or the people who wrote this up said we did not understand what was happening on the national level, and what would be expected in that pool. So I think we were better than the report was
received, but it was not received very well. And then, at the same time, Northwest Accrediting Association accredited the whole institution, and just as I came there the first sub-study was done. I don’t know whether you were involved with that or not. And that was not received well. And we made the mistake, I think, of getting a little testy about that, you know, and challenging the Accrediting Association, and that was always a mistake. So we almost went on probation for the Northwest Accrediting Association. One of the great sources of luck was that the person who was the chairman of the visiting team was an old friend of mine, and he would come in and say, “Bob, I don’t know — this is terrible. You people are in terrible shape. The faculty is very disruptive, has very negative feelings about the administration, and this, and this, and this.” So we talked him into saying okay, put us on probation if you need to, and tell us exactly what you think we should do, and we’ll start doing — or we’ll head in that direction. So that was a very sort of exciting and uh — year, because it all happened in that first year that I was here.

KB: What kind of changes did they want from us?

RE: Oh, I think they wanted us to be more concerned about innovation in our curriculum.

They wanted the faculty to feel better about the institution. That was a great concern to them. They sensed that the faculty was really upset about the institution, and that was probably true. And so those sorts of things.

KB: Why was the faculty unhappy?

RE: Well I — you know, I think the faculty had been unhappy in the years just before I got there, for reasons that I’ve never quite fully understood. And I just don’t know, but I know that when I came there, and the opportunity that I had of trying to do some things, and having the promise of support for doing those things was very exciting, but it was very disruptive. When we began to emphasize programs one of the things that I was asked to do was to internationalize the University. Garrity was very interested in that sort of thing, and it had never happened — or he felt that it had never happened. So that was the first thing that I tried to do, and that — that part of it, I think, was pretty successful. I think Ivory [Nelson] was less committed to that than Don was, but —

KB: In what ways did the campus internationalize?

RE: Well what we did was — when I came there, my sense was that our international program mainly existed in sending a few students overseas, and primarily to Europe. It was a traditional kind of student-sent-abroad program. And so I hired a fellow whom I knew — had known — and he went through — I mean, it’s not that I reached down and grabbed him — went through the regular process of being recommended by faculty, and he — but anyway, he was a very — he was a very sharp young man.

KB: Who was that?

RE: I figured you were going to ask that.

KB: Was it Kelly Ainsworth?

RE: Yeah, yes, yes, yes. I got hired when I was visiting. He was in West Virginia, and I had hired him for the same reason in Pennsylvania — to really do something to that [inaudible] college, and he really did do that. He really was very, very successful. So when I came here, one of the first things I did was to hire he and Bobbie Cummings — [inaudible] also. And to give them a significant increase in budget. And so he set about not only sending more students abroad to study at places not just wherever there was a place, but at centers, and also, more importantly, to exchange faculty. We started exchanging faculty there, and we started — which I think was really excellent — sub-partnerships with Asian universities — one in China, and a couple of them in Japan — and then he traveled to those places and they came over to Ellensburg,
and — the leadership of those schools — and that way worked really very, very well. And so we started this exchange of faculty which I thought was very successful. And the other thing that we did was started bringing people over — and students over for language training, and that was more successful than we thought it would be. It got to be a little too successful — we got too many students! But one of the nice things we did there, I thought, was we required the students to live with Americans, and that was great for them because they were — just like everybody else, they wanted to do what was comfortable, which was huddle around with their own folks and speak Japanese, or whatever it was. And so this was sort of like an immersion program. And he hired some good people, and several academic departments were involved with that — and so things like that. I thought — it was just a completely new approach to international programs, and he was very, very successful. I was sorry that he left, but I remember the day he said, “Bob, if you’re leaving, I’m going to leave before you.” And I said, “No, no, you shouldn’t do that,” but he did, and of course, he [inaudible]. I was really sad about that. Died of brain cancer. Anyway, that was one the main steps I was specifically asked to do before I came. I remember the night that I came for my second interview, and I was sitting in Garritty’s house with the chairman of the Board of Trustees, and he — and they were saying, “Now here’s our agenda. Here’s what we want you to do. Do you think you can do it?” And there were several components to that, and I said, “Well you know, if you look at the literature of organizational development you’ll know that it takes five years to do what you want to do. So you’ve got to guarantee to me that the Board of Trustees will support that, because it’s going to be painful — there’s just no question about it. It will be painful because you’re going to disrupt old patterns of behavior when you start emphasizing new ways of teaching and learning. You’re going to start emphasizing new programs that have a potential of growth, and that just — any organization that you start doing that to, it’s just going to be disruptive.

KB: Is that because it draws resources away from the old program?

RE: And it creates new expectations for the faculty — to faculty. I remember a delegation of faculty one day said, “We’ve got five years to — before we retire, and if you’ll just leave us alone, we’ll leave you alone.” And I said, “No.”

KB: I don’t understand what they perceived you would change in their lives.

RE: Well as you indicated, I was — I was making adjustments to the budget without consulting. That’s always very disruptive. Folks [inaudible] “Are we next? Is he going to do away with our department?” And what I did there — what I intended — it wasn’t as successful as I had hoped to be — was to say to the departments, “Tell me what you would like to do. Tell me what new things you think would be great to do that will not only revitalize yourselves, but will create the seeds of growth, and the strength of your programs, and in the strength of the University.” And I did that both in research, and teaching, and got some really — some good starts — some really nice points, and some of the faculty had some great ideas to do that. We started in the area of research. We started, and brought new strength into a very interesting research program that was administered by Professor Smith in Algebra having to do with LANSAT data. That was the — you know, back in those days LANSAT was a hot new thing now. But to take LANSAT data and marry it with Census data, and learn — be able to say something about populations — how are populations integrating? How are they voting by districts? We could get it — we finally got it down to where we could say “on this block.” And that was — it was just — well I thought it was a lot of fun, but as it turns out the biggest contracts that we [inaudible — wrote?] was with the government of Israel, and I thought, “God, I never thought of that.” That’s a ramification — they want to know about themselves. And so — and of course LANSAT — really, theoretically it was everywhere in the world. Well that program was, I think, highly successful. I thought the Department of Geology presented a very good possibility of some new research kind of thing — graduate kinds of programs — so we sort of got through the red tape, and that’s always — I think that’s always cumbersome and makes people a bit insecure. We gave the Department of Geology new resources, and we hired for the first time a couple. The female partner [Meghan Miller] was working for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and had just gotten an offer from [inaudible] Brown and was ready to go back there, but her husband was [inaudible], and it took him about half a day to say he could come — and we offered him some good money. We did the same thing in music. We hired a man and a woman who were married in the strings — low strings, high strings. I thought a
beautiful couple — wonderfully talented people [John Michel and Carrie Rehkopf], and they were very happy. They had the same kind of situation. Well, we thought that was working so well — I mean, we started doing that sort of thing. Well, in a situation of diminishing resources it becomes a zero sum game, you know — you say, “Okay, if you’re going to put money there, where’s it going to come from?” Well in the first year it was easy, because the Provost had traditionally had a huge sum of money that was sort of — not hidden away, but was unappropriated. So when I first came there, in my budget there was $400,000 that was not doled out to various programs. So without stealing things from people we could advance. That didn’t last for more than a year or two, because it was a permanent obligation [inaudible — could be “we’d hire the faculty and expect them to go,” or “the entire faculty expected to go,” or “retired faculty expected to go.”] And then we hired — in the Department of English we did the same thing. We hired Bobbie Cummings and her cousin, who wasn’t a faculty member, but we guaranteed him a job at the University.

KB: Keith Champagne.

RE: Yeah. And I knew Bobbie, and I knew that she would bring some wonderfully innovative things that had to do with the teaching — the teacher training and the teaching of students by interactive — you know, all this sounds passé nowadays, but back then it was really innovative, where she could just talk back and forth to her students from anywhere in the world, and grade essays, and all that sort — and she was very interesting and energetic, and so that — that worked very well, and so that was part of a general effort on our part to move the Department of English out of an almost exclusive literature focus to balance it with a writing focus. And so we hired three or four new people who were very, very good at writing, and I thought that was successful, and I think — you know, I don’t know what happened recently, but I think it still has been a very successful program. Well, you know, so we did things a lot like that, which I think were very successful, but we were not able — once that money ran out — that slush fund — then it did become a zero sum game, and so we had — if we were going to continue, we had to start taking money from this part of the University to give it to the promising but unproven effort on the part of this. And so we began to have some resentment between departments. Geography faculty didn’t like what we [inaudible] Geology faculty, and so on, and so on. But it generally was working very well, but that became pretty disruptive. But anyway, it was fun.

KB: Were things going — you mentioned that both NCATE and the Northwest Accrediting Agency were disturbed by faculty morale —

RE: Yes.

KB: And now you’re telling me that additional changes aggravated that.

RE: Yes, it got worse.

KB: Were there efforts to also deal with that question?

RE: I think not — I mean, not sufficiently. There were — Garrity was not — was a pretty private guy, and was not a gregarious, walk-around manager, and that was a disadvantage. And I wasn’t so much, either. That was a disadvantage. So I don’t think that the faculty morale improved very much. And when the word got out that we had trouble with NCATE, and had trouble with the Northwest — that everybody blamed that — tended to be that the administration — the President isn’t looking out for the institution. And there was some truth to that. The President wasn’t as much as he might have been — or he hadn’t — he needed to be more involved. But it was my [inaudible], and my view was — because of my experience — you know, this is going to be tough for a while, but then people will say — people will see what’s happening, and it will get better. Whereas if we wait ‘till folks are convinced of that — by beginning with not changing, and then saying [inaudible] — it’s going to take ten years to do that, typically, in an organization. So the big problem, I think, that interfered with all that, was the basketball schedule. [Tape is turned off. Remainder of side one is blank. Side two begins halfway through the tape.]
KB: Side two of the interview with Bob Edington.

RE: The — because of what happened to that basketball program, the President lost the support of the Board of Trustees.

KB: Do you mean the Trustees did not think Nicholson should be fired?

RE: That’s correct. They didn’t think that — I mean, and the citizens — the citizens in the community said, “Well he didn’t steal any money, you know, and he didn’t enrich himself. Whatever you think he did unethically, what’s — he had a good heart.” And so when the decision came to fire him that was — that was — I think he did that without — you know, I wasn’t so much involved in that, but I think he — Garrity did that without consulting very much with the community, and without consulting with the Board of Trustees.

KB: Well you knew him pretty well. What do you suppose was on his mind? Why did he decide to take that step?

RE: I think he thought that there was criminal activity going on, and that he needed to distance the University from that. Was he right about that? I don’t know. I just can’t - obviously I don’t know enough to even talk about it. But it went over badly with the Trustees, and there were a couple of private meetings, and the Trustees began to get very negative about Garrity, and they — and then of course that was then fed into the faculty’s upset, and that was put on Garrity’s — I mean, even that Garrity shouldn’t be permitting Edington to do this. [Laughs] That kind of thing — he’s not a real leader. And so that all — it became pretty clear at one point that he had lost the support of the Trustees, and therefore it would not be possible for us to do what we thought, because the negative part of it was so strong that — as I had said when I first came, you know, this guy — you’ve got to stick with this. And it was not possible, for whatever reason, or he thought it was not possible, and so I think that’s where it all began to fall apart for reasons that [inaudible] understood. But you know, in retrospect it was pretty — it was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed it, and I learned a lot from it, and —

KB: Well you’ve talked about the minuses of his leadership. Would you care to talk about the strengths of his leadership?

RE: He was a — I mean, I loved the man. He was loyal to a fault. He was a very loyal person, and we had — you know, people who — who he knew there who were officers of the University — you know, he was [inaudible]. He was a very private person, but I think he was dedicated to excellence at the University. Whether he knew how to pull that off or not, I don’t — I’m not really sure. He was there since 1978, and it hadn’t happened as much as he had hoped that it would. But I think that he knew people all over the country in higher education, and people liked him personally. So you know, I mean, there were some very positive things about him. From my point of view, the fact that he was dedicated to international things was a very positive thing. I think it had a very positive effect on the University, and that was [inaudible]. He allowed his officers to — an awful lot of freedom. My predecessor [Edward Harrington] had an awful lot of freedom to do or not do what he wanted to do, and the same thing happened to me. He just sort of said, “Here’s your mandate, go do it.” And we met every so often, and I know that he was eagerly [inaudible] — he was a Sociologist and he really cared about people, very, very much. And that’s a good — you know, to be humane, I think, is a rare and wonderful thing. So I had — I have very, very good feelings about him.

KB: Who were the people he relied on, on campus?

RE: I think he relied on his Vice President for Financial Affairs.

KB: Courtney Jones?
RE: Courtney. And I have great admiration for Courtney. I think he had a great effect — a very positive effect upon the physical plant of that University. I mean, it was his — he brought that from what it was, and got rid of that barrier in the middle of campus [railroad tracks], built new buildings, remodeled old buildings, and was very, very supportive of that. He had his view about how he wanted to get very automobile off of the University campus. I guess we were having some fun teasing Courtney about that.

And so he deserved the loyalty that Don had for him, and as I said, he was very supportive of me up to that point, and he had a — and he had a Vice President for Student Affairs [Don Guy] that was — became ill soon after I came there, and probably was not as effective as he should have been, or could have been, and Don was nevertheless very loyal, and so that was too bad. And of course he became an Alzheimer’s victim, and that was really too bad.

KB: What about yourself? Would you be willing to assess your strengths and weaknesses on the Ellensburg campus?

RE: Well I think it’s always wonderful to look back.

KB: Hindsight is 20/20?

RE: Isn’t it, though? Yes, it’s wonderful. I think that in terms of the theory of what we were trying to do — and I didn’t think that was quite understood, and it was for reasons that was deliberate — we just didn’t talk much about that — but I think the theory of what we were trying to do was excellent. The implementation of it was mediocre. I think that — and this in the literature of organization development tells you that over and over again, that that’s the hardest part, you know. Dreaming it up is the easiest part. Actually doing it is the hardest part. Especially in a relatively old organization that has not changed a lot over the years, it’s very difficult because people are pretty well satisfied, or else there would have been changes. But — so I think that we might have been more successful if we had — if I had carved out an identity as more faculty-oriented than I was. I don’t think the faculty — a few did — I mean, about 20 or 30 faculty understood what, you know — but I don’t think the faculty ever saw me as one of them, and always I looked just a little bit suspicious. Now there are ways that I could have done better to bring the faculty along, or at least to alleviate some of the worst fears, and to sort of interrupt some of the worst stories that some ones — a small group of the faculty decided that — to start.

KB: Well now you have to tell those stories!

RE: Well you know, I think — I don’t — that’s something I really don’t want to get into, because that would mean saying — I would be talking about certain faculty members, and that’s water under the bridge. But I think that — you know — I related to you that this is — that I had from a group of faculty members who said, you know, “Just leave us alone and quit trying to do what you’re trying to do, and we’ll leave you alone,” and I said I wouldn’t do that, and they said, “Well then we won’t.” And sure enough, you know, neither one of us did, and we were all sort of stubborn about it, and to be less stubborn, to be more flexible would have been better for me. I think that was one of my weaknesses — to know what I wanted to do, to have already convinced the President and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees that that’s what we should do, but nobody else really understood that. The Deans were never really part of the story, and that was a weakness. Either replace the Deans, or replace some of them, or bring them along. Let them have the input as to, “Okay, here’s what we want to do. How do we best do that?” That should have been done, and I take responsibility for that. It wasn’t. It wasn’t done as much as — I think in the final analysis it would have still been very, very hard to change, but it might have bought it another year or two.

KB: Are there particular Trustees or other leaders who particularly noteworthy for their leadership qualities? Any stars you’d like to target?

RE: I think that there were — well the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at that time was a fascinating man who had — who was an old political operative who had been the — had been with Scoop Jackson for a long time, and who was prominent in the State, who was a very strong personality at the State level —
knew a lot of the legislators, and who was sort of my kind of guy. He loved to talk about things, and he loved to think about things, and he loved to be involved behind the scenes, as he should have been. And so I had great admiration for him. In the community I think there were some people who were very supportive of the University, although I think that there was more support for the athletic programs than there were for the academic programs, and there probably were reasons for that. But academic voices didn’t get out there and tell their story as the athletic folks did. And we had some good athletic programs. But when the crisis came, that’s where the University support was, you see. And so when the basketball crisis came along, the leadership of the community that had been very supportive of the University in the past said, you know, something very, very bitter — that we’re never going to do anything for this University ever again. Well, not all of them really did that — they got over it, and so do — but there were a lot of people who — who were very supportive of athletic programs that thought that the basketball coach had been given a raw deal, and were really pretty bitter about that. But up until that time there were some people who were very loyal to the University, and some that remained loyal and supportive of the University. We had some people who were personal friends of the Garritys, who he had first met when he was in San Francisco. He had a very distinguished career in San Francisco, as the Provost of San Francisco State, and he met some awfully rich people there, who, in a quiet way, were very supportive of the University, and one of them had an endowed chair in the Business program, and other had helped us politically and financially, and so it — these were people that knew, and were loyal to Garrity personally, more than to the University. When Roz [Woodhouse] became the Board of Trustees I thought she did a good job. I know she was very controversial, and when she hired — when the Board hired Ivory, it was — I had to sort of smile, because I heard some of the same things that Brooks said about you’re hired, and your money is here — you know, you’re hiring Ivory because he’s Black, and there may have been something to that — I don’t know. But I thought she was very — she was very supportive of me, and I enjoyed — I appreciated that. And she was prepared for our University to become more multi-cultural than it was. So we had already done the international thing, and now Roz said, “Well that’s good, but now we need to do the multi-cultural, and we need to bring a more diverse student body onto the campus,” and that was good. She was right about that, and she was very supportive of that. She was very strong-minded. She and Don Garrity never got along well. But she had a good heart, and she was generally very supportive of the University, I thought. So those were the kind of people that — that — one of the problems, I think, that we had was that we — the community of Ellensburg was not big enough to support the ambitions of the University, and we had not reached out to a greater community for the kind of support that we needed. And so in the legislature, for example, you know — the legislature saw us as not very significant, other than our Teacher Education program. Certainly the leadership of the Higher Education Coordinating Board never understood why we had — we were off our campus. They were never really supportive of our — the age-old tradition that we had had since we were a Normal School of reaching out to populations and actually taking the University to the community, and of course, doing that in Yakima, and in Lynnwood, and so on, was raised, and the Higher Education staff attitude was, “When we get more Universities here, you guys will just go home.” And we tried to show them that — convince them that no, we will always — there will always be a need for us here, because the Universities will not do what we were prepared to do, and they certainly won’t do it with the quality that we want to do, and mainly that is to bring very career-oriented programs to place-bound students who are probably full-time and otherwise working, and we will be the night school for them. And that was successful, but I don’t think they ever saw us as permanent until finally they did, you know, and now everybody understands.

KB: Don Schliesman, in his interview, thought that Garrity was curt with legislators, and that he didn’t cultivate connections that he might have.

RE: That’s true. I — that’s true. He didn’t like doing that — even going to the Higher Education Coordinating Board meetings, for example, and he didn’t go to the legislature excepting when he actually had to.

KB: Was he shy? What?

RE: No, he didn’t want to put up with that. It’s just part of his personality. He would say, “Edington, I don’t want to go to that damned meeting. You go to that meeting.” Or Courtney — Courtney and I really
went to a lot of meetings where — and that was fine, but there was nothing — everybody asked if the President was coming. [Inaudible — sounds like “All the other Universities”] the President was coming, and the President was coming frequently — not just during hearing, but was cultivating, and that needed to be done. But — where was I?

KB: At the Centers.

RE: Yeah, but that was not understood well, nor appreciated, and the University of Washington never supported that. I remember one time I went to a meeting with — and there was — we had the Director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the President of the University of Washington with the Dean, and the Provost of the University of Washington, and myself, and it was a time when we were thinking about Issaquah, and in Bremerton. And so they were saying, “No, I won’t allow that to happen.” And well, okay, then, you know, I went to a meeting in Bremerton where I thought I was meeting with just a couple of members of the Board of Trustees, and 350 people showed up, and it was like being at a revival meeting. People were standing up crying, saying, “Central Washington University was the greatest thing ever, it’s changed my life, gave me an opportunity — won’t you please come over here?” So you know, there is need there, or there couldn’t have been 350 people coming to that meeting. So if we — if you’re going to let us do it, and we knew that they could be [inaudible] — then you do it. You go over there and serve these people. “No, no — we don’t want to do that.” So I mean that was just the kind of thing — you know — they weren’t going to do it, and they didn’t want anybody else to do it, and that’s still true today. Bremerton — they’ve got a few more things happening over there than they did then — I think Western is in there doing a few things and so on — but — and now, of course, there’s more internet and stuff going on — distance learning sort of stuff But you know, that happened. The University of Washington just did not want us to come over here, or expand, and I always said, “Well why won’t you do a trade, for gosh sakes? Here’s the University of Washington, here’s Central Washington University — there’s no way that we can ever compete with you doing the things that you do, and we do these things better than you do, and we’ve got a commitment to these kinds of students, and you don’t. And I knew that because I had worked for the University of Washington. But no. It wasn’t going to happen, and it didn’t happen. So that was another problem we had, was getting these Centers going over here. But we made progress, and —

KB: So you moved over here in ‘91 with a new title, is that right?

RE: That’s right. When I — well, we had hoped to come over here. We’d hoped to get to Seattle, as you know, and so when it became clear that we were not going to be successful in what we were trying to do in Ellensburg, I began talking with Garrity about what was going to happen, and by that time we knew that Garrity was going to be fired. It was just a matter of how it was going to happen. I had already had a vote of no confidence, so we knew that I was going to leave, and he [inaudible] — he got in trouble with the Board of Trustees and it became clear that he was going to leave. And so I moved up to the next job like I always have done, and Carol Barnes — I don’t know if you remember Carol Barnes — came to me one day, and she and I had our problems, but bless her soul, she says, “Why don’t you go over onto the West side? You’re good at this kind of stuff— fixing things up — and Lord knows we need to have things fixed up on the West side. Why don’t you do that — go over there and do that? Be a half-time teacher, and half-time administrator of that Center down at Pierce College?” So I talked with Garrity about that, and negotiated some stuff in terms of my responsibilities and my salary, and so we did that. And that was a wonderful move. I felt that there was no point in my staying on that campus [Ellensburg] any more, because it was — it was not going to be a pleasant situation for anybody. And so then we came over here, and that turned out to be very, very positive. And then Garrity did leave, and when he left we knew that he was in very serious physical trouble, too. But he wanted to do at the end of his life what he had wanted to do for a long time, and that was to go to Japan. He loved Japan. And so he did, and I think that was heavy for him, at least for the first year some more expansion, and so I was making a proposal that we would start a Center in — over by Redmond, in there, or maybe Issaquah, and in Bremerton. And so they were saying, “No, I won’t allow that to happen.” And well, okay, then, you know, I went to a meeting in Bremerton where I thought I was meeting with just a couple of members of the Board of Trustees, and 350 people showed up, and it was like being at a revival meeting. People were standing up crying, saying, “Central Washington University was the greatest thing ever, it’s changed my life, gave me an opportunity — won’t
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— looking for a new place was really a lot of fun. That’s another thing I’d never done before, you know. And so we ended up at Sea Tac, in this old — this ancient old junior high school that we — which wasn’t the best thing. We wanted to go to get onto a community college campus, but we couldn’t do that right at that point. They weren’t quite ready. The legislature wasn’t ready to fund that. So we took some money — it cost us about a million and a half dollars to fix that place up, but to build a new building would have been 25-30 million, and they just weren’t quite ready to do that. But anyway, we moved down to Sea Tac and that began to grow, and then a year later he contacted me and said, “Okay, I want you to take over the Lynnwood Center also.”
KB: Had somebody else been doing that?

RE: Somebody else had been doing that, and he, for whatever reason, decided not to do that anymore. Well I — now that I’m talking I remember what the reason was. So I said, “Fine, I will do that.” And that turned out to be very — I just did not enjoy that at all because of the — mainly because of the commute. Going two or three times a week from here up to Lynnwood in the 1-5 corridor was just more than I cared to do. So I knew right from the beginning that I would not stay there very long. But we had some very good relationship with that President of Lynnwood — of Edmonds Community College — although he turned out to be a crook. He nevertheless was very friendly to us, and very supportive of Central. So we had a very good time there, and we moved off of their campus, also — across the street to that new building. And that was — that was

— good enough that we wanted to come back. We wanted to have a true two plus two situation on the campus.

KB: Did Lynwood — did Edmonds Community College run out of space, too? Is that why we moved across the street to an office building for a while?

RE: It was at their initiative that we moved out of there, because we wanted more space because our programs were growing — especially the business program. By that time we had several majors in Business, and there was talk of doing a lot more, some of which we are now doing. And so we obviously needed more space, and they couldn’t give us more space. As a matter of fact, they really wanted to use the space that we had, but they were very nice to us and they never said “leave.” So we began to look around. Dwane Skeen was — Dwane Skeen was so good at that. He was a jewel, whether you were down there interviewing him or not — but he really was very helpful to us, in helping us find a new place at Sea Tac, and a new place at Edmonds. We were not successful in getting the money for permanent buildings, but we — it was satisfactory for quite a while.

We moved into a neighborhood at Sea Tac that was a pretty rough neighborhood, and so our early months there were very disruptive. I mean, we had a major burglary, and we had about $50,000 worth of computers stolen, and etc., etc., and so it was a very rocky start there, but it turned out to be fine. We had a good staff on the West side. We had the clerical staff — George Kuniyoshi down here, Dusty [NadaLee Brady] at Sea Tac, and whatever her name is up there at — isn’t that terrible — at Lynnwood — they were a rock. I mean, they really were the thing that held us together. They were very, very dedicated, and very, very skilled clerical folks, and became more like sort of administrative assistant kind of folks rather than clerks, and were very good. We then hired — or Ivory hired — a new Associate Provost. That was when the Dean of the Business School had become the Provost [David Dauwalder].

KB: [Inaudible] Logan.

RE: [Inaudible] Logan, yeah. And they hired a new person as Associate Provost who again, I think, or at least he said, and he may tell you — you may have interviewed him already. I think he would say, still, that he was led to expect something different than what was actually [inaudible]. He thought that he was really going to have a lot more power over finances and programs than he had been given. He didn’t get — I mean, his relationship with the people on the West side was not good. [End of Tape One]

(Transcription of Tape 2)


BE: Well of course Teacher Education was the strongest program that we had on the West side when I came over here, and that was a program at Highline — I mean, not Highline Community College, but South Seattle Community College, and then at Sea Tac in Early Childhood Education as a primary program with
an endorsement in Elementary Education, and that was really what we were seen for out here. We were known for that on the West side, and it was a good program.

KB: And were those faculty from Ellensburg?

RE: It was about a third of the faculty were commuting from Ellensburg. I don’t think that ever worked very well, and we got to the point where there were a lot of wonderful people who did that, and I can’t imagine how they put themselves through that all those years, especially in December and January [laughs] — come over here once a week, or whatever. But once the population grew and we were able to afford permanent faculty over here, then I think that worked a lot better. It created some problems, but it solved other problems. You know, are they really members of the department or are they not? Should they be spending some time in Ellensburg? You know — [inaudible] those are always issues, but then also, the program — the various business programs began to increase in population — in student population — especially at Edmonds. The University of Washington didn’t care what we did up at Edmonds, so we had a lot more freedom to do some things up there, and that worked very, very well. And we had some faculty there who were hired to teach there — who saw themselves as West-side faculty, who were very, very good. Some of them were recognized nationally in their field.

KB: And did they limit themselves to one of our West-side campuses, or did they commute to all three?

RE: They were mainly in Edmonds, and then, as our program at Sea Tac grew at Highline — I keep saying that — at South Seattle at Sea Tac — then they sort of split. There was commuting back and forth, but there were a core faculty at Edmonds, and a core faculty at Sea Tac, and that worked pretty well.

KB: And did you have adjuncts as well?

RE: Yes we did. Not so much in — we did have some. We had a — maybe a full-time faculty there, and they were very good. I suppose they still are very good. Then we tried a Criminal Justice program. That never became the strong program that I think it should have. I don’t know why. But that’s — maybe one of the reasons was that’s the program we used an awful lot of adjuncts in. There was almost no full-time faculty in the — what we called Law and Order — or the La and Justice program. It was a good program, and we had some good faculty members, and it’s still a good program. It just hasn’t thrived the way that it should.

KB: Meaning attracting a lot of students?

RE: Yeah, attracting lots of students. It was pretty strong for a while at Sea Tac. That was the strongest center for Criminal Justice. And we had some excellent adjunct faculty that was really terrific — people who were practitioners in the field — who were Assistant Attorney General, or who were part of a State Corrections — and so on, and so on, and so on. We had some very, very good faculty there, so we had a good mix of practitioners and traditional faculty, you know, that supported each other. You know, the theory with the practice, and that worked very, very well. It [inaudible] down here for a while, but it’s beginning to decline again, unfortunately. But that’s always been the core of what we were doing, and we were doing very, very well over here on this side.

KB: What about the limits of the program? The community colleges didn’t have advising, or library.

RE: [Inaudible — could be “Don had to build”] the library, and what we did was enter into contractual agreements with — first of all, we only did two plus two — that is to say we did not invent a new program at the upper division level that was not already there at the lower division level in the community college. So it was truly two plus two. So they added elementary — they had a core of resources in the library, and we just, then, added to that, and it was integrated. It was [inaudible] one library, and we were contributing — we, the Central Washington University was contributing to the growth of that library, and so everybody
— everybody succeeded, and the ability of students to move directly — place-bound students to move directly from the community college and get a bachelor’s degree on the same campus was really very nice for some people. Our Engineering Technology program has never thrived, and it’s one of our oldest programs. It’s offered on the Puyallup campus of Pierce College, and it’s a good program, but it just never thrived. It’s never been able to assign more than a couple of faculty members to it, and it needs more. They rely on community college faculty to some extent. So the programs are generally have become, and are now strong, for the most part, but now I think we just at the place we — saying “we,” but I’m no longer connected with it — but we — but Central Washington University, I think, is at a place where they can begin to expand more in the West side if the institution wants to do that. I don’t whether the institution does or not, but I think an opportunity is there, if they want to do that, of bring more programs over. A lot more positive things have happened. I have — the whole business of where shall we be — you know, where is the physical locations of these centers — has been settled, so everybody understands they’re there, they’re going to be there forever — however long forever is — so that’s no longer — it’s clear that they are not taking students away from the University of Washington, and they’re not taking students away from the University of Washington at the college. Those were the big worries that the UW had. They haven’t happened. There are more than enough students to go around, and they’re different programs. They just attract different kinds of people. So that’s no longer a big controversy that’s going on here. The faculty has become comfortable with its role over here. I think there’s a much better relationship between the — and you know, I’m not a faculty, but the relationship between the faculty on the West side and the faculty in Ellensburg I think is better than it was when I first came over here to the West side. The other departments in Ellensburg own the programs over here more, and I think that’s mainly because the Deans have taken responsibility that they did not have.

KB: Ivory Nelson told me that that was a pride of his — that he felt he brought the centers closer to the Ellensburg family.

RE: Yeah, I think that’s true. And what mainly happened there was the Deans were given responsibility for the success of those programs, whereas before Ivory did that, the Deans really were sort of out of it. And that was a very good move on his part, in terms of strengthening these programs.

KB: He pulled the Centers out of the Continuing Ed program, didn’t he?

RE: Yes, uh — yeah, they were Continuing Ed, and there was a lot of silliness going on in that regard — they were cooking the books, as I recall.

KB: You mean the accounting?

RE: Yeah, accounting for FTEs, and how FTE is counted. And so that helped make it permanent, also. In other words, it became a part of the Provost’s budget, rather than the Continuing Education budget. Now that hurt Continuing Education in the sense that they were making a huge amount of money out of that, but it made — it helped the programs a lot, because these were not just faculty that were making a little extra money by working for Continuing Education, but became a part of what the University was really doing. And I think most faculty liked that. I don’t know how you felt when you were over here, but I was glad to see us starting bringing faculty members — I don’t know whether they’re still doing that — but trying to allow faculty to take some time off from their Ellensburg job, come over here, and teach. You were one of the first ones who did that.

KB: I was here for 10 weeks, I think, in the Winter Quarter of ‘93, and the funding really was the problem. I think I was given $2000, which was not sufficient to rent an apartment, pay utilities, and a phone for 11 weeks. I had to — I lived with friends.

RE: And I suppose that’s probably still a problem for Ellensburg faculty who might otherwise want to come over here to do some things that — like do some research, or whatever. That there needed to be, and there still needs to be a living allowance. Because in effect — that’s only 140 miles, but they’re
establishing a new home, and I know that’s expensive. That’s what happened to us. When I left over there, Ann stayed in Ellensburg for another year because she was finishing this Master’s Degree, and so we were meeting in Issaquah a lot of the time.

KB: What about our sister schools, Eastern and Western? Were they rivals? Were they supportive of Centers? How did that — you’ve talked about UW’s reluctance to see the Centers grow. What about WSU and the other two colleges that are out here?

RE: At the time that I was involved we really didn’t have — we weren’t in competition. None of the other Universities wanted to do what we were doing. What we were doing was really unique, and Western didn’t want to do it, and Eastern didn’t see the possibility of doing it, and WSU was busy with its thing. It’s only when the Business Learning stuff started where they were able to offer courses by the internet, or visually, that they really became competitive, and that was really only just starting when I left. It had been a very recent phenomenon. And I have a sense now that there is a lot more competitive atmosphere, especially with Eastern, that came to the conclusion, I think, that if they didn’t do something in the [inaudible] area they might go out of business. They were declining enrollment, and they were shutting down buildings, and all sorts of things, and if they didn’t start doing some stuff on the internet, doing some distance learning and getting into this market over here, that they were dead. And I don’t know how successful they’ve been.

KB: Where are their campuses?

RE: They didn’t have any campuses here. They did it all with distance learning. Both — now WSU made a couple of agreements with some outlying community — Grey’s Harbor Community College — they started a program — that was all distance learning. There was never — as far as I know, never anything happening on that campus. There was coordinating going on there, but not really faculty. And Bellingham has never really done much. They’ve got involved in this joint operation in Everett with several colleges — several State Colleges come together for that one Center, but it has not really gone very — not really done very much, but it’s there. And they have done a few [inaudible] down in Bremerton now. Mainly they got other sort of pressure to do that. And so they have a couple of things down in that area, at some of the prisons. But Central Washington University is still doing community — after all this time, we’re still serving — Central Washington University — and I think that the University ought to be very proud of this, because they are doing — they — the staff — nobody else is prepared to make the commitment to, and they’re doing it very well. These Centers, and I guess [inaudible] on Yakima and Moses Lake, Wenatchee, really, because I never had much to do with them, but these West side Centers are performing in a wonderful way to go about meeting the needs of place-bound people. I mean, I don’t know how many different students I have talked to that — you know — that say to me, “Here I am. I am a divorcee trying to make it. I have to work full time. I’ve got three shifts. But I want to get my degree, and so the fact that you make it easy for us — because you’re offering courses at night, and in such a way that — you — you know, you have saved — you guys.” And I so admire those people. Just think of the effort those people put in, and nobody — hardly anybody can just say well I’m not going to have a job, I’m not going to do anything, I’m just going to go to school full time. No. They go to work, you know, at Boeing or wherever it is, and then they come to SeaTac Center after work, and they go to school ‘til 10:00 at night, and they still have — try to do their family. And it is just an amazing thing that I’m so supportive of.

KB: When I was here, a good percentage were immigrants new to the United States.

RE: Especially, I think, up at Edmonds that’s true, yeah.

KB: Yeah, and —

RE: I don’t know whether that’s still true or not. I just don’t know whether — I think in the Criminal Justice program that has not been so true, but yeah, you know, that’s an interesting phenomena that’s happened in the Western part of the state. You have clusters of immigrants — mainly from Asia, but in the Edmonds area you have Japanese and Russians. In the central part you have Bosnians and Pacific Islanders.
— there’s a lot of Bosnians living in Sea Tac and near, and then down here it’s Korean and Pacific Islanders, and Southeast Asians. And so the Asian I mean, Tacoma has become — there’s a very significant impact of Asian culture on Tacoma now. Especially South Tacoma where you go down the street and you see nothing but signs in Korean, you know. And some of those students have come to us — especially the Pacific Islanders and the Filipinos — not so much the Koreans. The Koreans have a really hard time learning the English language. Harder than — in my experience, harder than any other Asians. There are reasons — there must be a reason for that, but I don’t know what it is. Japanese have an easy time learning the English languages [sic]. A lot of Pacific Islanders already know English when they come here, and they have extended family here. The same way with Vietnamese and Cambodians — they have extended families here that — and the Koreans are beginning to do that, but just — and so that’s reflected, certainly, in the community college population. Lesser so in Central’s programs, but — you know — there also there are some. And that’s really neat. But I would like to see us — I would like to see Central encourage that more. There are some things that we could do to encourage that diversity even more so than it has happened.

KB: Well so you came to Ellensburg in ‘89, and you retired in Steilacoom in ‘98.

RE: I came in ‘88 to Ellensburg, and in ‘98 I left.

KB: Okay, so in a decade, how would you characterize the evolution of the institution?

RE: I think it improved considerably. I think that it was already a good institution, but it was an institution that was too satisfied with itself, and so I think we had the opportunity to shake it up, which we did, and then the folks who came later had the opportunity to build — Ivory, to a certain extent, but Ivory had to finish off some of the shaking up, and in a way the present leadership is fortunate in that a lot of the dirty work was already done, and they can be positive, and they can build. Our present President, who I think is — seems to be very well liked — seems to be very good at what she does — is able to build in a very positive way, I think, because of some of the less positive things that were done before she got here. The same way in the Department of Education. The Center for Learning and Teaching, I think, is a concept that became possible only after there was considerable change in those programs. So I think what we have today in Central Washington University is an infinitely better institution than we had in 1988.

KB: What should it be proudest of?

RE: Well I think it should be proud in that it has become a part of the State of Washington — much more so than had. I think that the diversity on the campus — international and multicultural — the ability to strengthen the programs that were already strong — that’s something that they should be very proud of, I think. A newer commitment to graduate education — I like that a lot. Support of some research, and I guess there should be more support of faculty research, because I think that’s the way to keep faculty vital. The worst thing, in my view — the worst thing in the world is to have a faculty who feel that they are trapped — that they can’t go somewhere — I’d much rather have a faculty who knows they can go somewhere else, but want to stay. That’s the kind of faculty that will keep the University strong, and that’s much more so now.

We had this faculty that came mainly in the 1960s when we became a University. That was just the early ‘60s that that happened. And those people who came in — and I think some of them became very bitter, and very resistant to change — are all gone now, for the most part, and you now have a new people who don’t remember what happened in the ‘60s, and say, “Hey, this is neat. We’ve got a neat place, and this is a nice place to live.” They like a small town that’s close to urban centers, and it’s got a good array of programs growing, and its student population is attracting people from a lot of different places, and it’s a vital institution, and so it’s an institution that ought to be fun to go to and stay for a while. Maybe I won’t stay there forever, but — and the University often try to keep faculty there forever. You know, you bring the faculty there, encourage them to be creative, and then, when it’s time for them to leave, let them leave. Let them go on and do — let them advance their career, if they want to. But if they want to stay
forever, that’s great. But I think it’s just a lot better institution than — I think it’s a neat — and I’ve lost track of a lot of stuff that’s happening there, so maybe I only hear the good stuff. [Laughs.] But you know, I talk with people from time to time about what’s happening over there, and I hear very positive things. Very good atmosphere. Good attitudes. People are saying good things about the University, which I think means it’s going to be — it’ll be great.

KB: Any last thoughts before we close?

RE: I — I’m very happy in my retirement. Many of the things that I learned in my career I’ve been able to think about in retirement, and to do a little writing, just for my own purposes, and I’ve been writing some fiction, and that’s been wonderful. I was encouraged by some of the faculty over in Ellensburg to do that, so I’m happy, both that I’m retired, and that I’m having such a fun time in retirement. And I’m really pleased at what has happened to the University. I feel good about that. Regardless of how disruptive it may have been to everybody when I was there, I think that it has all worked out very well, and it’s a very positive feeling that I have about the University.

KB: What was the topic of your dissertation at UW?

RE: It had to do with Japanese foreign policy and the United Nations, and I almost moved in that direction of teaching. I was offered a job at Leffridge, Canada, teaching Japanese Foreign Policy and East Asian Government, and I thought Leffridge? Leffridge?? Why would there be that need? Well it turns out that was the location of one of the main internment camps during WWII, and so there’s a sizeable Nisei/Sansei population and they — you know, they think we ought to pay attention to our culture, you know, and — we’re Canadians, but we’re also Japanese. I think about that, and — but I ended up going in another route where I was able to really be creative doing things, and I don’t regret that at all. It was lots of fun.

KB: Well thank you very much.

RE: You’re quite welcome. [End of interview]