KB: Well today is Thursday, March 24, 2005, and I'd like to thank King County Executive Ron Sims for talking to us today in downtown Seattle about his experiences at Central Washington University, class of '71. Congratulations.

RS: Yes, it was a great class.

KB: Would you talk first a little bit about your background before you went to Central?

RS: I grew up in Spokane, Washington, and I went to Lewis and Clark High School, where I graduated, and I applied to Central Washington for no other reason than I was on a trip with my father when I was a junior in College, and we had stopped at a restaurant called the Highway Grill. And we were eating breakfast, and there were some students who were studying and eating. I thought that was so cool. I thought that was just so cool, that – and we'd come to Seattle to – my father was a social worker, and there was a film that – a training film called Superfluous People dealing with people who we just leave out of society for any number of reasons. And we came back through Central, and I – in those days there wasn't an I-90. It was highway 10, I believe, that you went on, right through the middle of campus, and I said “I want to go here.” So my senior year my locker partner, Mike Shehee was going to Central, and asked me where I was going, and I said I didn't know, but I'd like to go to Central. So he said, “Here, I have an extra application,” and I was accepted, and I went to Central.

KB: Well what were your first impressions? Did you live on campus?

RS: I lived on campus – matter of fact, in the days when I went there were a number of rules. I actually moved into Muzzall Hall before it was finished, so the bathrooms were there but not all of the walls between them. The elevators, you could see actually the raw side of the building. It shook. So there was two – we were the first occupants of Muzzall and Courson Halls. They had just finished building the Bissetti Dormitories and the North Campus area, as well. It was a – and my first impression – I'll never forget – my mother and my brother had taken me to campus, and we had walked through, and moved my – I had a roommate, Chris Koslawski, who was also from my high school, so his parents and my mother and my brother, just kind of left us there, and I remember looking out the window watching my – them drive away, and being forlorn. I said, “Wow, they're just leaving me here. I mean, they're just dropping me here.” And so I was overcome with homesickness for about a week.
We had initiations in those days. If you were in the men's dorms you were required to wear turbans, and they had a – for the first several days what they would do is they would blindfold you at some time – they’d blindfold you in the morning, make you go to a gathering of the women’s dorms and the men’s dorms, and then you would walk across, and whoever you grabbed first is who you escorted to breakfast, escorted to lunch, and escorted to dinner, and you had to do that for a full week. And there was some competition. It was very much like an initiation that you’d see in a fraternity, and had a great time. I got to meet people. It broke through the barriers of people who you were going to class with. Some of them are the people that you ran into in these really odd exercises of initiation. I’ll never forget that. That was dropped – I don’t know the reasons why they quit doing that. I think we had an incident where people were told to eat soap, and people had gotten out of hand, and I think maybe at some of the dormitories it did, but at my dormitory it was handled incredibly well. Your heads were shaved, but I already had short hair, so it didn’t quite bother me that I had to wear a turban on a shaved head. But it was an odd exercise. I’d do it again. I’m not too sure I would make you shave your head.

It was also in those days that if you were in the dormitory and you – men had dormitory keys, so we didn’t have hours that we were limited to do. The women’s dorms actually did. They had den mothers, and they had to be in at 11:00 on Monday through Friday, and they had to be in by 1:00 on Saturday, and 12:00 on Sunday. Men could get off campus after your sophomore year. Women couldn’t get off campus until they were 21, of juniors. So it was a – you know. And then we didn’t have co-ed dormitory. We didn’t have visitation privileges, and that changed later on in my campus life, where – is that making too much noise? [Inaudible response from videographer] So in the – there were these real, apparent double standards, and you could be kicked out of campus if you violated them. So when you dated it was really important when you were out on your date to make sure that you got your date back on time. And the other thing that was really interesting is if you didn’t get your date on time, you could sneak them in the back doors of the dormitory, and they would call their roommates to come down, and sometimes the den mother would be there. Or as I did one night, we just drove all over the place. We just drove all over the place, because they had a rule that if you went to any of the motels or off-campus sites, that when you brought your date back they would ask your date where she was, and there were sanctions based upon whether or not they thought there was any sexual contact. So there was huge prohibitions on that, even – I mean, there was big prohibitions on that, so one night I had to drive all around with my date, more because both of us were young and stupid and had decided for the first time to drink. She got really sick, so we knew when I returned her back that her dormitory would call her home, and they did, and fortunately her older sister, who sounded like her mother, said “Oh yes, she was down here last night.” Oooh, that was so good! And she remained on campus. But those were some very interesting days socially.

There wasn’t any – I moved into the first co-ed dormitory as well, which is out by Nicholson Pavilion, and they were women on one side, men on the other side, and that was the first time that they decided that there could be some common lobby area. That evolved, and what happened was there was a huge push in student government my junior
year, when I was student body vice president, and a person named Ted Wing was student body president, and basically it began to change the culture on campus to catch up, and be modern. And so we had visitations on weekends for limited hours, and the rule was that the door had to be cracked, and there had to be three feet on the floor - I'll never forget that. I kept thinking, "Why three feet?" and somebody said, "Why three feet on the floor?" I said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." So there had to be three feet on the floor, and that evolved into another policy of just plain trust. But I'll never forget that period of time of huge social change.

KB: Was there communication with other campuses, or were you devising these ideas on your own?

RS: It was an - you know, it was - there was so much change going on that people were really focused on television news, and you were beginning to see what other campuses were doing. It was really hard. We had various groups on campus. We had the hippie group, we had the straights, I belonged to a group called the Straight Arrow [?] Athletic Club, which was an absolute misnomer. When I came up - and I smile at the time because it was so stupid - you had people who did drugs, and people who drank alcohol, and the Straight Arrow Athletic Club had its own place called the Rosenplatz [Pronounced Ross-en-platz] off campus, and they actually set the cultural tone for Central. So there were those demarcations between the hippies and the straights, which proved later on in the campus to be a pretty significant social conflict, because the Straight Arrow Athletic Club - they had a place called the Rosenplatz, and they just drank - they partied a lot - and I ended up joining that club, and then I found out how strong it actually was.

But I was actually changing my own social values - thinking far more about an inclusive campus, raising issues of its lack of diversity. We only had six Black students in those days. It's, you know, wanting to challenge - curriculum challenges, having a diversity of faculty and opinion - it was going through a very wrenching process. So the Athletic Club represented the past - a lock on - you couldn't be a student body officer - every student body officer that was male belonged to the Straight Arrow [Straight and Narrow?] Athletic Club. Every resident assistant who was - you had to go through the Straight Athletic Club, and the administration liked them, so they had this tremendous influence. We had major dances, and the Straight Arrow Athletic Club controlled those dances so that all the big money-makers went to them and their causes. That changed as we challenged the University - changed in a very significant way.

KB: Sounds like a fraternity.

RS: There were no fraternities on campus, but it was a fraternity in every way. There was a - there actually was a place on campus - Central, I think, prided itself at looking - had, at the time - my freshman and sophomore years - by the time I graduated it was an incredibly different, radical change and everything, but in my first two years Central, which did not have any fraternities, had a - what I always called a fraternity/sorority culture to it in regards to how things were conducted, and that changed. There was a
rebellion both by students — the times demanded the changes — but there was a — a very much. There was a place called Ellwood Manor — it was called the Men of Ellwood, I’ll never forget, and you had to be invited in, but you could be invited in as a freshman. But you know, it was white, and it was a fraternity, and I only found out when I was student body President, when I was — the student government paid for a lot of the functions on campus — art, athletics — through student fees. I got this bill, this invoice for the repair of the kitchen of Ellwood Manor, and so I said, “Why are we paying that?” And the Administration said, “Because the student government operates Ellwood.” I says, “But you — they discriminate at Ellwood, and you have to be invited in.” And they are exempt from every rule everybody lived under, and I refused to pay the bill. It brought the demise of Ellwood Manor, because the bill was huge. They had burned out an entire kitchen and a portion of a house, and I just refused to pay for it, so it resulted in the closure of Ellwood Manor. But that system existed.

By the time I was a junior and a senior — and I went there for five years — I arrived there — I graduated in ’66 from high school. I ended up by being student body President by taking nine credits a quarter my last three quarters. My parents were not excited about that, but what the heck? I had a great time. The Jackson State was a huge issue with us. Kent State was even a bigger issue. The anti-war fervor was very, very strong on campus because the government decided to go to a lottery system and you could no longer get a college exemption, and so far more people became engaged because on TV those images were always images of soldiers who were being killed. A lot of us were going back home on the weekends, or during the middle of the week, because our friends were coming back, and there were a lot of funerals. So there was this huge sense of — there’s something wrong, my friends are dying. The numbers were increasing.

We became very politically active. TV was very, very powerful. There was no manipulation, at the time, of the stark realities of the Viet Nam War. You could see it every single night. And so you look at the Viet Nam War, what happened at Kent State in regards to a protest, Jackson State, assassinations of Dr. King and the murder of Senator Bobby Kennedy — so all of a sudden the campus was up in upheaval, and people were challenging fundamentally all that we had been taught up to those times as values and perspectives for the university. You know, why didn’t students — why couldn’t we be members of the Board of Trustees? Why couldn’t our voice be heard in the State capitol, Olympia?

We wanted far more control of the health — we had — health insurance had been — the same person had it since 19 — I think ‘47 when it was called Normal School — Central Normal School. It wasn’t called a college or a university as it is now. And [it] had been amended, but only to provide less coverage. And it provided — and we had a huge debate because it wouldn’t cover contraception. So there we were in ’70/’71 talking about a health insurance policy that would not deal with birth or contraception. It was a wonderful debate. Did we change anything? The answer is no. But we pushed the whole insurance debate on that campus in regards to the — the Women’s Movement only emerged in the early ’70s, so you began to see this incipient signs of this kind of disparity.
The school was dealing with, you know, people of color, and we were saying, "We’re isolated. We have no Black faculty. There is no text requirements. There’s none of that." So all of a sudden they established Education Opportunities Program to increase the number of kids who were poor, and kids of color. We went out and actively recruited. We – I can remember being six of us one year, and over 200 of us the very next year in regards to the Opportunities. It changed the demographic base of the campus in some respects.

And women became far more active. I had a professor named Professor Harliss whom I just adored, because I wanted to be in Psychology. She was a behavioralist, but way out front, and the whole issue of her leaving with grant because she couldn’t get tenure, and people saying, “Hold on a second. There’s a brilliant professor, brilliant. Brilliant! Why can’t she get.” You know, we loved her. She had an incredible research grant. Why is this happening? And there was a Betty Koski who everybody went to, and she was – you know, she – her husband was a line – worked for the local power company. He was called a lineman on the power company. And she had this incredible education. None of us knew she had a Doctor Degree, but we all went to her for advice – we all did – and she gave remarkable advice. She saved – I would walk in, and you know, you can mull over everything going on in your life, and she just gave incredible advice. And then she got job as the Dean of Women at an all women’s institution – I think it was Smith, which is an all women’s school, Ivy League, and we were all saying, “Wow, why couldn’t she have that role here?” And it was just because Central had not thought about the role of people of color, of women, of war, of community, of politics. It was a fascinating, radical time – radical adjustments as we searched – it was a wonderful journey as many of us tried to find ourselves, find our careers, find life’s meaning.

Some people did it because they chased drugs. I always tell people there’s no good to that. But to say that Central did not have a drink and drug culture in the late ‘60s and ‘70s would be a misstatement, because it did. We had a closed down we called Sweecy weekend which was known throughout the State of Washington as a tolerance policy. Nobody – the police wouldn’t enforce it. You could come to Central Washington and no matter if you were 16 or 19 [inaudible] and just get torched. And we had our own student rodeo. It was just a time of being totally irresponsible, and finally it was brought to a halt and that was a really good decision. I was glad that the administration under Dr. Brooks said enough is enough, because it wasn’t advancing the educational system.

Dr. Brooks was there when I was a freshman. It was really interesting watching the President of the College and his attorney – he had an Attorney General named Tom Dalglish – actually in a very partnership way begin to say, “Are we going to be the College of the future, or are we going to be a vestige of the past?” And here you had a President that had – we had student demonstrations every day, and we’d go down and march on the street, and we realized the Ellensburg Police were monitoring us, and taking – all student groups they were asking personell on campus who were the custodial staff and some of the administrators to go into our waste baskets and pull out our agendas on our meetings, and our meeting notes, and stuff like that – you know, taking our
photographs – I mean, like we were going to do something, right. We all loved the
country, so there was never any doubt about that. So – but it was a really active amount
of demonstrations.

So my junior year I threatened to close the college down. I gave a speech in the student
union building and I was – I was very – as an African American student just said, enough
is enough. We had been working with the administration to increase opportunities for
Black students, get Black faculty on campus, expand the OP program, and it was like
nobody was listening, so I remember saying, “We’re going to close this campus down.”
And so it was “Yes!” And so we would march all over campus, and we gave the school
til the following Monday. And I’ll never forget my father saying to me, “I saw you on
TV.” I thought he was going to say, “Oh Bud, I was proud of you,” and he said, “Bud,
you’re – for you to graduate, and you’re going to close the school down?” I said,
“Yeah.” And so he indicated substantial dismay.

It ended up being a profound moment for my father and I, though. I wrote him a letter
that he received, ironically, one day later, where I said to him, “I watched you and mom
lead Civil Rights demonstrations in Spokane. I – you know – I am willing to accept the
responsibility for any of my actions, and that’s what you’ve taught me to do, but you’re
asking me to ignore discrimination. You’re asking me to ignore the double standards.
You’re asking me to – because it’s important for me to graduate – but wasn’t it important
for you to have – ” I said, “People used to send me home and tell you to behave – you’d
better for your job – you’d better for the neighborhood – and you ignored that.” So my
father called me up Monday morning and said to me, “Bud, if you’re going to be – if you
need bail, we’re going to be there.”

President Brooks, though, called me right after my father, interestingly enough, and said,
“You know, we’re going to agree to the demands you’ve made, so you won’t need to
have a demonstration.” I later learned that Tom Dalgliesh, the school Attorney General,
was the one arguing for that position. Tom was saying, you know, this is a point on the
road for the college as to whether we’re going to be a college that embraces diversity in
students, integrates our faculty, deals with the substantial issues that needed to be raised.

And I remember there was a professor on campus named Skip Wherry [?] – he was an
invited lecturer from the streets. He was a street person in Seattle – didn’t have any teeth
– who was brilliant, and he was so mad at us because he said, “You’re not driving these
issues, and these issues.” I remember saying to Skip, “Skip, but those are your issues.
They’re not our issues. Our issues are what it’s like to be on this campus and feel alone.
Our issues are what it’s like to be on this campus and feel abandoned. Our issues are
what it’s like to be on this campus and feel like a piece of the furniture. And so – and we
ended up being really good friends, because Skip all of a sudden realized that I wasn’t
laying out a tenor of environment and he was laying out a tenor for what this vision of the
campus would be.

Dr. Brooks gave an incredible speech that night, because – everybody on the campus
showed up at Nicholson Pavilion because they knew there was going to be a
demonstration. It was ended. Everybody came - faculty, students, it was packed - and he gave the most eloquent, powerful statement on education for higher ed that I have ever heard. I - I've told Dr. Brooks that my views of higher ed and its meaningful role in a society were distilled by his speech. It was so powerful and so passionate, and I've never heard anyone since 19 - since - those years - 1971 - 1970. So here it is 2005, and I've never heard a person in all the speeches I've attended on campuses - all of the lectures I have heard, all of the readings I've had, who gave a more insightful and more powerful statement about higher education and its meaningful role in society than he did. And I just thing - I look at those words, and he embodied them. Was he perfect? The answer is no. Was that speech perfect? The answer, yes it was. I will live with that speech forever.

It's - you know, the - I had created some controversy on campus when I was student body President, and this is why I liked Dr. Brooks. We had a student handbook, and in the student handbook I had said that we have a choice. I said the nuclear bomb was developed by smart, educated people. Adolph Hitler had surrounded himself by very bright, educated people. But the issue was whether we were going to come to a campus and find our humanity - find out our selflessness. And of course, the Trustees at the time controlled the student handbook and said, “We're not going to allow that to be put in the handbook.” Again, Tom Dalgliesh argued right of free speech, and protected it. Dr. Brooks talked about that search - that journey - what higher education was supposed to be - that we were going to find ourselves - that we were going to challenge the fundamental tenants of the society - that we couldn’t grow and mature - that we had a choice between being a living organism that grew and evolved, or whether we would stagnate and devolve, and it was just beautiful. It was just beautiful. And I remember at that point saying, “You know, why am I fighting this man? Why am I fighting this man? He spoke from his heart.” But he also was allowed to reshape the faculty, and do some pretty remarkable things.

But campus was fun in those days. We had - the editor of the campus newspaper now is one of the early people who worked for Microsoft - Bonnie Dietrich. She was great. Brilliant, great writer, provocative - kind of those early investigative reportings when it wasn’t - you know, campus newspapers were supposed to be talking to you about the next dance - she was talking to you about what’s going on on campus - just [a] really, really powerful newspaper writer. I thought she was going to go on and remain in the news, and she ended up going to Microsoft and making far more money.

The - we used to have something that I miss, though. We used to call them Colloquia. Every - Central Washington used to have one week of the year when they would bring in - they’d have a topic - technology, one was on race - and we would bring in these unbelievable, brilliant people. I remember Dr. Sidney Hook, who started as a [sounds like “Congress”] and had become very, very conservative. We had Claude Brown, we had Stokley Carmichael, we had Leroy Jones, who later became Mr. Baraka, we had Dr. - the baby doctor - Dr. Spock, and it was interesting, because what they wrote - what you would do is you would sit through these seminars for a whole week, and I can remember this person getting up and talking about the feature [future?]. Bishop
Pike came one year. I remember Bishop Pike. We had an issue on morality - what is morality? And we were looking at the Viet Nam War, moral or immoral? Does the end justify the means? We called it teleological ethics. And I remember always now wrestling with my decision - does the end justify the means? Is there - you know, is it okay to go shoot Hitler? And he - I remember that being raised, and the answer is, do you let him kill millions of people, or do you assassinate him? One is end justifies the means, and another is, is it right to kill. And so Bishop Pike was raising these incredibly powerful debates on morality in his speech, and I hadn't though about that ever, and all of a sudden I'm sitting there listening to a very thoughtful presentation.

And then what was really great, also, about him is - we all raised our hand, because this was the incipient stages of what later became kind of a free sex era, and all of us trying to figure out, are our parents tenants about being conservative on sexual matters - you know, is abstinence good? And I came out of a Baptist family, so really, really conservative. There were people on my campus who were not, and so my thing was, I was more repulsed by their conduct than invited by their conduct, and so I, you know, to me it was like, you know, you never have sex 'til you're married, because my parents said you don't ever have sex 'til you're married, and you only have sex with people you love, and - you know, there's no experimentation and all that kind of stuff. And so obviously Bishop Pike was thrust in the middle of that by questions by students - frank, open questions, and I'll never forget his answers. He said, "Sex is good. Love makes it better." And I told that to my kids. You don't want to dismiss sexual pleasure, but the issue is that won't sustain a relationship. And he really drove that home, and it actually really settled the debate on our campus as to how we looked at it. It wasn't - the issue was what did we want for a loving, permanent relationship, and I wish that I could see that repeated again and again and again, because it talked about the importance of relationships, and in society today we know now that's really important - having loving people be able to act as a cohesive unit, and mature and grow together. And here was this person - again, 1969 - saying this - Bishop Pike.

Stokley Carmichael - we were - he - I didn't know very much about him. I read about Stokley Carmichael, um, you know, he - incredible speaker. I didn't realize he had Doctor in Philosophy. But he said something that was really very, very good. He did the - he - we were doing a section on literature, so we had Claude Brown, who authored Manchild in the Promised Land, and now you have Stokley Carmichael. Stokley Carmichael raised an issue. He said, "Let's talk about what's in books, and the message they send." So he said, "Let's talk about Huckleberry Finn." And so he was asking around the room, all of us, what do we think about Huck Finn? What do we think about Huckleberry Finn? And so we all realized that in the end, Huckleberry Finn waves at Jim as Jim goes North. And so he said - that's fascinating, and we all felt pretty good about Huck Finn, and he said, "Huck Finn never questioned slavery." And so all of us said, "Sure he did." No, he actually never did. He released Jim from slavery, but never questioned slavery. The moral debate of the time when Samuel Compers [sic] wrote the book was, who was fit to leave, and who was not. Do you believe that Mark Twain actually, actually - Samuel Clemmens, it was Samuel Clemmens - that Samuel Clemmens actually was dissenting at that time on the issues of race, or was he condoning
slavery? Do you believe he condoned it or not? And all of a sudden the whole meeting changed, and all of us were saying wow, we had never looked at the book that way.

And I realized that Samuel Clemmens actually more powerful works were written—you know how you develop a fascination with a person and you see a book that discusses this debate—did Huck Finn—was that a book that said slavery was wrong, or was it a book that said slavery was right? Was it [gap in tape]. And I don’t think people realized that he became a very significant writer in the anti-imperialist movement. Because in the early 1900s where President Wilson was feeling that we had a mandate to invade and control everybody, and particularly Mark Twain’s writing—Samuel Clemmens’s writing regarding the occupation of the Phillipines, and his incredibly powerful work. So I wish I would have known that when Stokley/Carmichael was talking, because I would have been able to say, “Well hold it a second. I believe, in fact, his book was saying slavery was wrong.” And a way—I can’t believe that people looked at that and didn’t think anything else. But it was—but to say here’s an anti-imperialist. He was a person who believed in the freedom of people fundamentally, and that was embodied in that book. But at least I took the next step. I will say that these Colloquiums, as we called them—or Symposiums—I think they were called Symposiums—Colloquiums and then we had Symposiums—actually led me to venture into lifelong learning, and beginning to pursue policy.

Back in—Dick Gregory spoke, and he was great. This was—when Dr.—Dr. Spock spoke—Benjamin Spock—it was interesting, because he was at that time being challenged for not—you know, he was the—for not admitting more fully the role his wife played in the research and work that he had done. And so on our campus he actually was quite open to her role, so they both presented, which was—it was interesting. Again, we were going through the age of the role of women, and for a long time women had—did not have a significant—you know, were—even if they did significant work, it was never being laid out for people to see. And I remember him being asked about that, and his acknowledgement as to her role, and that’s why they were jointly presenting that day.

But it was—like I said, it was a—we had a member of congress who was in—represented the area, and she was nice, but she didn’t like students. She used to rail about our anti-Americanism. And so we had a state Senator who always welcomed us to Olympia—the name was Senator Mike McCormick, and he ran and won, and he won because the campus became so galvanized. We wanted to make a statement politically, and we had high turnout. It was the first time I understood about voter registration and your right to vote, and it altered that. There was a person in my—later on in my career at work in the early Eighties—a person named Senator Tub Hanson, and I used Tub that you can stimulate students if you care—if you welcome them, and the same phenomena had, when people thought Senator Tub Hanson most likely was going to be defeated he was actually carried the campus and the faculty because he became such a supporter of higher education, student services and access.

So they were great times on campus. I can’t think of—I had some faculty that resented the changes, and we had those little wars that you had with them, but there were far more
faculty that were demanding, and asking you to rethink, and expand your horizons – just an amazing adventure.

Socially, the Central campus was fun. You know, we used to have major concerts. I can remember Ray Charles, when he came in. I can remember Ike and Tina Turner, with the Iketees. We loved Tina. I'll bet nobody cared about Ike, but everybody came to see Tina. You know, we had Cold Blood – I mean, these groups would come in – rock – I [inaudible] understood rock, and you used to sit there in Nicholson Pavilion and they would turn. Before they even hit the chords on their guitars you could feel these waves and waves of non-audible sounds going past you, and you said, “Ooh, this is going to be a concert!” You see, you had to make a decision about whether you were going to go to the back of the room and maintain your hearing, or sit in the front of the room and just get caught up in it all.

The student government races were very interesting at the time, but when I ran there were three people running – Frank Fisher, who I still like – I really do. He’s – I’ve always liked him, and he represented the Straight Arrow Athletic Club. Then you had me, the person who understood that there needed to be a more radical change. Then you had Finley Breeze, who was running because he wanted to have our campus be the next site of a major concert out in the valley where people would come, and we would have Ritchie Havens, and Peter, Paul and Mary, and Bob Dylan sing. It was going to be a really fun time. I won, so there was no concerts.

KB: What kind of campaigning took place?

RS: Actually it was interesting, because you had to raise money in those days. Most student government campaigns never have to raise money, but the Athletic Club realized that if I won, or Finley Breeze won, there was actually going to be a change in who controlled campus politics, and that they would be on the wane. And that happened. I won, and all of a sudden the system that had been there for so long of control in regards to who got to be resident assistants, and who got to be the floor residents, and who got the good jobs on campus did change, and we diversified that – based it upon need more than need, and maturity, and who was going to graduate school, than on who knew who. It was a pretty significant change in the fabric of the campus.

KB: So how did you raise money?

RS: You asked your friends. So everybody gave you a dollar. And in those days if you got $100, you were just rolling in money. It was like a million dollars. So the – I can remember being told by the administration I could have no sign on any building, and then all of a sudden finding out that Frank Fisher had signs on every building – and saying how did he get his signs, and I couldn’t get my signs? And they said to me, “Maybe because we like him, and we don’t like you.” It was just, you know – and when I won, everybody was stunned. It was like, how could he win? I did very well in women’s dormitory, and very well with off-campus students, because people wanted
change. People just simply said that the status quo was not where they wanted to work. So student government changed as well. It became far more active.

KB: How did you spend your hundred dollars?

RS: I made bed sheets and put — a friend of mine, Bruce Jacobs — I don’t know how he did it — made a picture of Superman on it, and it had my face superimposed on it with a photograph. And so we’d have these bed sheets with Ron Sims Superman on it, all over the campus. It was great. I don’t even know why he chose Superman, but it worked. And then you campaigned, and we had little — we had to, you know, go down and — we didn’t have — you didn’t have — there was no copy stores. You had terrible machines — you used ditto machines, and so we had to buy the — you know, you had to rent a ditto machine, buy ink that was always a mess. Copiers would have been so much better. Of course, nowadays you wouldn’t need any of that.

KB: So did you give speeches, or did you —

RS: Oh, you gave speeches. We had a convention, and the convention was really interesting. The convention only had allowed two nominees, and each of them — everybody thought it was going to be Ron Sims and another person, but what happened is that since I wouldn’t work an agreement or a deal on the nominees, the two people opposing me, they organ- [breaks off word] — they had it. And — but it was interesting what happened in the convention. The — remember I kept telling you we were in a drug/alcohol culture? So on the convention floor, people were bringing keggers. So the people supporting — again, Frank’s really great. All these people — I mean, they’re really good people, but all of us did stupid stuff. So they brought keggers in for the people who were the guzzlers, and then they were bringing dope in for the people who were, you know, wishing to get loaded — in the middle of the student convention. My people didn’t do any of that, and we made it really clear that we would not participate in that. We were the people who were straight. So there was a raid on campus where the police had to come in and remove the keggers — the kegs — there were a lot of them — and collect the — and nobody got arrested, but it made the campus newspaper. Well, the campus newspaper and the Ellensburg Daily Record. So everybody was embarrassed, and everybody kept pointing out, “But the Ron Sims campaign. . . .” And interestingly enough, people were so loaded, they changed the Constitution. They said, “Oh” — you know, people were just torched. Somebody said, “I move that we change the Constitution.” [Taping stops, then resumes.]

KB: In May 1970 half of the colleges in America closed on account of Kent State, but Central did not.

RS: It didn’t.

KB: What went on at Central’s campus?
RS: We demonstrated. I remember the call for closing down, and there were more—they—everybody left their classes, and we had a big demonstration. We had a big Kent State. So maybe it wasn’t a formal close-down, but it may not have been a formal close-down, but I can tell you that students were not in class that day. It was probably our single, largest demonstration.

KB: Would you say that most of the campus was politicized? Or was the energy coming from a small group?

RS: I think that initially it was a small group. After a while, it wasn’t. It was—even the college Republicans became pretty active then, so I think that it kind of became a part of being—the Central phenomenon. I think a lot of campuses at that time—because it was an isolated campus—this was Ellensburg, and so you got caught up, and there was no alternatives. It’s not like in Seattle, where University of Washington was, where you could just kind of—so the Pullmans, the Central Washingtons, Western Washingtons ended up being pretty hot bed at that time. I can remember Governor Dan Evans mentioning that in regards to student activism, and actually, he stunned everybody. There was an election for Governor in 1970, and there were two candidates running, and the Democrat had come out talking about needing to get control of the campuses, and used Central Washington as an example of a campus out of control. Governor Evans had taken the position that nobody was destroying property, the students were using the Constitutional vehicles available to them to express their feelings, and embraced it as a part of the dynamic of campuses. So when the Democrat came, nobody came to hear him speak. When Dan Evans came, he couldn’t speak because people gave him a standing ovation as long as he stood before them, and he kept trying to tell people to sit down, and people would not do that. He just got sustained applause. And I was the moderator, and I said, “Nobody wants to hear you, Governor, they just want to thank you.” And it was the longest—I think—it was just sustained over