

LOUIS BOAS
Second Interview

Interviewed by:
Sam Schrager

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LOUIS BOAS

Moscow; b. 1900

newspaper editor

2 hours

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with Sam Schrager

September 3, 1976

II. Transcript

LOUIS BOAS

This conversation with LOUIS BOAS took place at his home in Moscow, Idaho on September 3, 1976. The interviewer was SAM SCHRAGER.

SAM SCHRAGER: You had mentioned to me that you had a chance to go overseas to Tokyo.

LOUIS BOAS: Yes.

SS: Now, you decided to go to Moscow instead?

LB: Yes, well, the man who I was working with ^{who} was editor of the Idaho Statesman, it was a man by the name of Applegate; ^AA. Applegate. And he used to be professor of journalism at the University of Montana. And he had connections with people in Japan. And we talked late at night and he said he thought he could get me a job with the Tokyo Advertiser. And I said, "I think that would be interesting. I would like that." It never came down to the point where I had an offer, but he was starting negotiations. Then I had a chance to come to Moscow and buy an interest in the paper here. So security was the reason why I came, rather than adventure of being overseas. And at that time one journalist from Boise was on the Tokyo Advertiser, Hallett Abend. And during World War II he was in the news quite a bit as an expert on Japan and he lectured in this country and so forth and he had come from Boise, also. So that was an idea to have fun and have adventure and so forth. The security of coming here and making some money was the reason why I chose it.

SS: When you first came here did you look ^{at} it as a longterm commitment?

LB: Yeah, because I bought an interest in the paper. I had gone to school here so I was familiar with the town and I had worked on the paper part-time, so that I knew what it was and so forth. So I committed to make this my life's work.

SS: I wanted to ask you who you remember in the '20's as being the prominent people in Moscow.

LB: In Moscow? Well, there was A. H. Oversmith, a lawyer. And George Lan-

phere, who was my partner and Haaken Melgaard. He owned what is now the First Security Bank. At that time it was a private bank, First Trust and Savings Bank. And he and his brother in Minnesota owned it lock, stock, and barrel. And he was quite prominent. And then Roland Hodgins, who ran a drugstore here; the drugstore still carries his name: Hodgins Drugstore. And he was very prominent. And then of course, F. A. David, who was the father of the David Brothers who own David's store. Frank A. David owned the store outright, it was just a family affair and the sons worked with him, of course. And in the 1920's- Oh, trying to think- Dr. Gritman was quite well known and quite popular. It is for him that Gritman Hospital is now named. And he owned a hospital that stood upon the grounds where Gritman Hospital is now. It was a frame structure. He was quite prominent. I've missed some, I know, but those are the ones ^{that} I can think of.

SS: How important were the newspapers in town at that time?

LB: Oh, I think it was important to the town. It was the only source of getting information through the town. We had no radio station then. Radio station didn't come until, gracious, in the 1940's, I believe. I would say we didn't have any radio station until about 1940, and it was the only way of getting information out, was through the newspaper. Much more so than now, I think, actually. And the items were small items, but they were important to the people of town. And it gave the merchants an opportunity to advertise. It was the only advertising media.

SS: Do you think the local coverage of the paper was more important than the national at that time?

LB: Yes, definitely. Still is. I think more than half of your people in town take an outside paper, either from Spokane or Lewiston. Both the Spokesman Review and the Lewiston paper have large circulations here.

And I think they take the local paper now for the local news, because they can get the world news in larger proportions through the Spokane or Lewiston publications.

SS: At that time?

LB: At that time and I think today.

SS: They were tak^{ing}~~a~~ the Spokane paper?

LB: Oh, yes. Not so much in the early '20's. The Lewiston paper didn't have any circulation here but the Spokesman Review did. And more than half the people took it. And I am sure that more than half the people now take one or the other; the Spokesman or the Lewiston Tribune. But there's no other publication that serves the city and gives the city information. The Lewiston Tribune has some Moscow news and the Spokesman Review has some.

SS: But not much.

LB: But not as much, no. That's what your local paper is for is to stress the local news and people can take the outside paper or ^{they can} take Time Magazine, or News Week. But your local newspaper should be, and must be the conveyor of local information and serve as a watchdog over local government. That's No. 1.

SS: Did your paper give that?

LB: Oh, yes.

SS: In those days? In the early '20's?

LB: Oh, yes, surely. That's the major responsibility of a newspaper is to be the watchdog over public institutions as a representative of the people. That's why you have to constantly needle public officials. That's your job; keep them on their toes. No question about it. I've maintained for years that any newspaper that didn't fight with the police department wasn't doing anything. Always. Because they like

to hide things. That's natural. And your job was to fight 'em! I never let a reporter fight. If he has trouble getting something out of the police blotter or the city official, if he had trouble, he was to be quiet and calm and just accept it; tell me. And I'd go and do the fighting. Sometimes you had to use threats. Say, "Okay, if we don't get this, I'll call up a lawyer and you'll get a subpoena." So you'd break 'em down. Does that sound funny to you?

SS: No, it doesn't at all, because that seems to be the way it is now.

LB: That's what the newspapers are for. They are charged with that by the constitution. ^{When} the Constitution says the First Amendment: The people shall have a right to the free press and free speech. The people have a right to a free press; not the newspaper. The newspaper has no more liberties than I have as an individual, but the people have the right to a free press. So that puts responsibility that free press work for the people. If you find corruption in city government; expose it. Don't let's cover up. Many people think that the newspapers are given a privilege under the constitution; they are not. It's the people that's given the privilege to have a free press. That's a great distinction.

SS: In a small town like Moscow, as it was then, in practical terms, it would seem to me that it would be difficult to have a town ^{factualized.} ~~to become very~~ ^{very} I mean to have too much of an adversary relationship within the powers of the town itself. I would think that there would be pressures, a lot of pressures on the paper not to look too closely ^{into} into the-

LB: There is, there is.

SS: Even in a small town like this, I wouldn't think that they could go too far.

LB: Oh, you've got to use restraint. There is always a threat of libel, you've got to be factual; if you aren't you're going to get sued. And

I've been sued twice. My paper's been sued twice for libel. Both times we were freed; in other words, two different times I was sued for \$150,000 and the paper was sued for \$150,000. We won both cases. Because the main thing is, the truth will prevail.

SS: Tell me briefly what basis the suits could be brought against you.

LB: Well, having libeled an individual. I'll tell you the second one: The first one was over a controversy with a Naval ROTC student and a man in town having created a disturbance and the paper got involved in it and we upheld the student's rights and there was a public meeting and so forth; I'll skip that. The second one is typical of how a newspaper can get sued for libel and yet be innocent. A man came here a number of years ago with the idea of establishing a program- business- to provide programs for the radio stations of Idaho. Sort of a syndicate idea. And he rented a building up on North Main Street, and he was going to use the talents of the University and Washington State College and hopefully to get national advertising for that program. Well, he was living at Coeur d'Alene, Hayden Lake, and the police got a telephone warrant for his arrest from Coeur d'Alene, and the charge was; passing bad checks. Well, we carried just a little item about an inch and a half long that he was arrested here in Moscow at the motel upon a warrant from Coeur d'Alene for passing bad checks. Well, the police came down from Coeur d'Alene and took him back, and I didn't even pay any attention to it. About five months later we were served a subpoena as being charged with libel, referred to this article. Gosh, I looked the article up and I couldn't see anything wrong with it, so I sent a reporter to the police station and they looked back in the log and found where it had been typed out, and our story was absolutely factual. But it turned out that he had only written one check and the

police got it as checks, plural; we reported it as checks, plural. So we consulted our lawyer, we ^{got} a lawyer from Lewiston, who was very good, Clemmons, and he said, "That sounds bad." So he made a trip to Seattle to confer with the recognized libel expert, ^{of} the United States. He happened to ^{have} ^a live in Seattle. I can't think of his name now. He wrote a book on libel, which I have someplace. And he said it's libelous per se. Checks is different than check. I was sued for \$150,000 and the paper was sued for \$150,000 in federal court. Well, federal court means you - it's between states, between one state and another. So they cannot sue in a state court because one of the people resides outside the state of Idaho. Well, it appeared this man moved from Hayden Lake to Spokane. And so our lawyers tried to prepare as much as they could for the trial in federal court in Moscow and as a last resort, about two weeks before the trial we sent a local attorney, Maury O'Donald- Maurice O'Donald, down to Boise to check with the Secretary of State's office to look over the incorporation papers. Just thought we might find something. And we already had dug into this man's history and he'd been a highbinder in Arizona and Utah and Oklahoma, where he had promoted various stock selling schemes. He was not a very good individual. We knew all that and we had planned to have witnesses appear to testify to that effect. But O'Donald, when he went down to the Secretary of State's office, found in the file a letter from this man written to the clerk of the Secretary of State and he said, "Don't be surprised that the heading of this letter is coming from Spokane." He said, "This was only done at the request of my lawyer that it would be better to sue in federal court, so I have temporarily moved to Spokane rather than Hayden Lake." So, Mr. O'Donald got a copy of that letter and when the case came to trial our attorneys made a

motion that jurisdiction was not correct. There was no jurisdiction in the federal courts and produced the copy of ~~the~~^{his} letter to show the reason why. He had said that he was only moving to Spokane temporarily for the purposes of bringing suit. The judge threw it out immediately. And the statute of limitations had expired for bringing the suit in state's courts, so we were freed. (Laughter)

SS: You know that sounds--

LB: That's the life of a newspaperman.

SS: It sounds a bit crazy to me, when there was no malicious intent.

LB: No malicious intent.

SS: You made a mistake that the police had made. Now police make mistakes all the time.

LB: Of course, truth is the biggest defense against libel. We were going to produce that naturally. We were going to produce the chief of police and we were going to produce the log from the police records that there was no malice intended and so forth and so on.

SS: But you weren't that confident?

LB: No, we weren't. We weren't. Who knows what a jury's going to do.

SS: When did this happen? I mean, what decade was it?

LB: Well, it was in the early '60's or late '59.

SS: This other case that you spoke of?

LB: That was in the '50's. I would guess about 1956 or along in there. But you always run that risk.

SS: But you had nothing in the '20's or '30's. Were there any situations that --?

LB: Oh, I was threatened with death, one time! Yes. Someone was going to kill me.

SS: For doing what?

LB: Running a newsstory.

- SS: You didn't run the story?
- LB: Certainly. It was a lawyer that threatened me. A lawyer from Lewiston who is now dead. That's common.
- SS: Was the story going to be hurting him?
- LB: Well, hurting his client. I can't remember the details of it now. But he called me on the phone and said if I ran that story he was gonna kill me! And I said, "Well, that's fine, I'm going to run ~~the~~ story." Which we did. And that's the end of it. Nothing ever happened. He may have lost his temper and said something he didn't mean, I don't know, but it was still a threat.
- SS: But in terms of dealing as a watchdog of government- what would that usually get down to in a specific, concrete way in the '20's and '30's? For instance, Prohibition came to my mind, because I know that from what I've heard, not only here, but in a lot of places, there were varying degrees of enforcement of Prohibition. It was what it would seem to me to be mostly a selected enforcement. That's because you only had a limited amount of resources, but what was the attitude that the paper would take, say, towards that Prohibition question?
- LB: I don't think I ever entered into it. It was unpopular with everybody. But I recall an instance where we were quite critical of a certain sheriff at that time who used high-handed methods in arresting people. Instead of being polite about it he'd bang 'em around. And we criticized that very severely. That's a case of watchdog. He reformed. But shortly after that he was not in office. That's the only one that comes to my mind right now. It's those things. I had an argument with- oh, a long time ago, I had an argument with the clerk of the District Court. A reporter reported to me that he was sure we were not getting all the news of minor things. Divorce actions filed; a marriage li-

cense issued. So I went and talked to the clerk and she said, "Well, they requested not to have this run." So, I said to her, "^{you know}, you're doing my job. You're deciding what's going in the newspaper. That's my job. Now, if you want to edit the paper, come on down and apply." And this clerk saw the wisdom of that and from then on out nothing was ever withheld. And that individual is a very good friend of mine today. Very good friend. But she was doing my job, you see, when she decided that if they asked not to have this divorce in the paper, why, she just stuck the papers in a drawer where the reporter wouldn't find ^{it}. Or a marriage license. And then after that, ^{they} always came to me. Dozens of couples have come down to me and said, "We're going to get married but we don't want it in the paper." And I'd say, "Maybe one of your parents does. I will not keep it out." I said, "If you want to keep it out go someplace some little distance. Go over into Washington or go to St. Maries, where they don't have any daily paper and where it would not be reported and sent on into Spokane. Go to Orofino or someplace else if you think it's necessary. If you get married here, it's going to be in the paper.

SS: This relates to what you were saying to me once when we talked about the newspaper being the paper of record.

LB: That's right. I think it should be. I think every newspaper should be a paper of record for it's community. I think it should carry every court action, whether criminal or civil. Because it should be a record, so that you as historian want to look up something, you can find it in the paper. You can see what it was about. I think every newspaper should be a newspaper of record for it's community. Of course, ^{we have,} ~~the~~ New York Times is the nation's newspaper of record. That is why every speech that the president makes, and this has been going on for years and years and years, it's published in the New York Times in full,

May take two pages, may take three pages; it's published. Every speech at the Secretary of State gives, no matter where, it's published in full in the New York Times. It's the recognized the newspaper of record for the United States. You can always find it there. Every act of Congress is reported in the New York Times.

SS: How did you regard social activities as whether or not they were newsworthy of record? What I think of—we take these rural papers for instance, the one in Troy, they would typically record what happened on Little Bear Ridge and it recorded really, the life of those people. In a place like Moscow, it was a city.

LB: Well, we did that in the early days; the 1920's, we had correspondents on Big Bear Ridge and Fix Ridge and Troy and Deary and Bovill and all those places, yes. Because we had readers in those places. We wanted to give them something. And they don't have big news. They don't have important town council meetings, but they do have John Jones going to Portland to visit his sister. So you put it in. Names make news.

SS: They qualify in your news of record?

LB: Right. That's news. Names make news.

SS: What about Moscow? Was the standard different for what would be included for Moscow?

LB: You wouldn't include as many trivial facts in Moscow as you would ^{for} the outlying communities. We had bigger news to publish-publicize. More important news. We ran some of those small things. We ran what we called a personals column every day. Somebody leave and go to New York, why, it was two or three lines. The bigger you get, the bigger the town gets the less you can do that. That's correct.

SS: In terms of political conflict in the '20's and '30's in politics;

Did you ever find yourself, the paper, involved in a big political issue?

LB: Oh, sometimes a big political issue, ^{yes}_^ like maybe the war in Vietnam as an example. But we didn't have the war in Vietnam in the early days, but on big issues of that nature we try to take a stand. Tried to publicize it. But we did not do the way it's being done now, recommending a candidate for election. I didn't think I was smart enough to do that. So we just kept that out. Let the people decide. We didn't try to say that the Democratic Party of Idaho was a better party than the Republican. We were smart enough for that.

SS: You didn't consider the paper was affiliated, say, with the Republican Party?

LB: No. No. We tried to maintain an independent attitude. Individually I was a Republican, but I tried to be fair on either side. And as far as choosing between candidates for state office or county office or city office, no. Tried to publish each side and make no choice of our own. I think it's wrong in a small town to try and make the choice. I think it's wrong now for the newspaper here now, and I suppose they'll learn this to decide that Joe Doakes would make a better mayor than somebody else. I don't think the paper has a right to that in a small town. In a big city where the individuals are not known, it's a little different story.

SS: What about dealing with questions of policy? What's the right stand to take on the issue? Did your paper feel that an editorial way was the proper way to take stands on the issues?

LB: No. No, I didn't. It's too small a town. People are too close. I don't think anyone on the paper is qualified to do it.

SS: Certainly, today now the editorial policy of the paper seems directed

towards those ends. The policy opinion.

LB: Yes, I know. I don't think they should be too local, because, as I say, I don't think the editor now anymore than I was as editor is that brilliant that he can distinguish what's right and what's wrong. Now your big paper's ^{the} stand is taken by a policy board. The Portland Oregonian, ^{or} the Seattle Times, the editorial opinions are not the expression of one individual person. They have a daily meeting of four or five. The editor would say, "Okay, you- what'll we discuss editorially ^{for} today?" ^{is paper} And they decide and hash it back and forth and then the editor would say, "Okay, we'll take the stand of so-and-so on this issue. Bill, you write that editorial." And then discuss some other issues. They've got an editorial board. But here, in this small town, just one person, and that one person's no smarter than you or I.

SS: But you would feel a difference between taking a stand on a local issue and taking it on a national issue?

LB: Somewhat, yes. Because you're too close to the local issue. And you can view objectively a national issue. You can't be objective in a small town when it is a small town issue. I ^{don't} believe you can. You're too close to it. They're friends of yours or they're not friends of yours.

SS: And that in itself could influence your position?

LB: That's right. Definitely.

SS: Rather than the merits.

LB: That's right. If you don't like Joe Doaks, why, it's easy to say, "Oh, his program's haywire." And if you like Joe Doaks, "Why, he's a fine fellow, I think he's on the right track." Those things are too close for a small town.

- SS: And yet, some of the smalltown papers, for instance, I've looked at some of the old Deary and Troy papers, it was venomous what the editors were doing.
- LB: I know it.
- SS: They were venomous- in fact one of their favorite targets of a smalltown editor was his neighboring editor.
- LB: I know it. I know it. Before 1920, in 1915 and 1916 the editors in this county used to battle back and forth. Every issue was libelous. (Chuckles) No one ever took them to court, but ^{every} issue was libelous.
- SS: Why do you think they were involved in that kind of thing?
- LB: Oh, they thought it was popular. I don't know. (Chuckles)
- SS: Sold papers, do you think?
- LB: Maybe, I don't know.
- SS: Pete Orcutts, when he was running that Troy paper, boy!
- LB: Yeah, that was awful. He could have been sued for libel every day! He was that kind of a firebrand; I knew him.
- SS: What do you remember him as being like, Orcutts?
- LB: Firebrand. He had been here, oh, way early, I don't know, in 1910, 1911, then he went down to Southern Idaho. ^(End of side A) Firebrand, I tell you, he was!
- SS: Do you feel that there was a period of time when this personal journalism, editorial journalism was in vogue and that that ended later? Or was it just in certain areas?
- LB: Oh, my impression is that it was more or less universal for smalltown papers. Not only in Idaho, but I think in other states, too. But I think it was ^ouniversal concept of that kind of journalism.
- SS: There was never one in Moscow- or was there in the earlier years?
- LB: Certainly, sure.

SS: But in the '20's when you were here?

LB: I didn't do it.

SS: I didn't see it in your '20's papers.

LB: No. No. It was earlier than that. In the teen years in 1910 and on.

I think it was more or less universal. That's my impression.

SS: In fact, I've noticed--

LB: Ben Franklin used to have arguments with other editors all the time!

(Laughter)

SS: In the Star Mirror years of the '20's and '30's, the newspaper staff was not printed in the paper, usually.

LB: No.

SS: And editorials were unsigned or uninitialed. I mean there was no identification, really. Was there a reason for that? For the policy of not advertising who the staff was at that time?

LB: Yes, because- why advertise what the staff does? It's the newspaper's responsibility. The newspaper takes the responsibility as an institution for what appears in print. I've never seen any other newspaper ^{which} had signed editorials other than the Lewiston Tribune. I've never seen one. Now there may be, but I've never seen them. They aren't in the big papers. And I've often wondered ^{why} the Tribune does it, because it should be the opinion of the paper. The opinion of the institution as a representative of the people. That's what the opinion should be, rather than the opinion of J. Shalliday or Bill Hall. Who cares what Bill Hall thinks? You care what the Lewiston Tribune is representative of this this part of the country. Thinks and believes. Not Bill Hall. And I've never seen any newspaper that had signed editorials other than Lewiston. Maybe you have, I haven't.

SS: No. No. I was thinking also of who was on the masthead. I was curious

to see who was on the staff. I noticed they didn't--

LB: I don't know that any newspaper carries a full staff.

SS: No, I don't think so.

LB: No. It has the name of the ^{publisher}, if there ^{is} an individual designated as the publisher, and possibly the name of the editor and that's it. And with us, up until the time I sold out at the Idahonian, I sold my interest and retired in 1966, why, the publisher was designated by our articles of incorporation and by-laws as the corporation. There was no individual publisher. The publisher was the corporation. And after I left, they named William Marineau as publisher. And what it meant, I don't know.

SS: You feel personally, that the idea of the newspaper was a collective entity, is the way it ought to be considered, rather than as a group of individuals.

LB: Right. It should be it's own identity. Everybody in the organization contributing to present that identity to the public.

SS: What's the advantage of that in your view over the group of individuals approach?

LB: Well, the advantage is that it's-- it becomes singular, becomes speaking ^{with} a singular unified voice rather than as a group of individuals agreeing upon a choice. It should be, I believe, an entity by itself. Right or wrong, that's my belief.

SS: I wanted to ask you some about the-- about the booster way of approaching progress which I feel was very strong at that time. Not that it doesn't exist now with Chambers of Commerce, but I think in the '20's and '30's-- well, the '30's was the Depression, but the great hopes were certainly apparent in the newspapers at that time. I'm wondering how the paper felt about boosting the city of Moscow.

LB: Well, I think that you felt that you try to present the best picture you can of your community. I think that still exists. Little papers and big papers. I think the Seattle newspapers are trying to present the best and happiest side of Seattle at all times; I'm sure they do. And the Boise Statesman is trying to present the best side of Boise. Best foot forward. Sure, that's ^{for} natural, big or little papers. It's expected of you. And I like Moscow, that's why I live here. Why shouldn't I tell my friends? Same with you. Just the other day George Blanda was released by the '49ers football team and he went to his home in Illinois. Why would anyone want to live in Illinois, I don't know. But he does, that's his home, so he's a booster for Illinois. I can't imagine anybody- I guess Illinois, a fine state, but what I've seen of it doesn't appeal to me. And I don't know why anybody would want to live in Florida with the terrific heat they have in the summertime, but a lot of people do. And they like it and they tell their friends about it and they boost it.

SS: Well, just as - I see one problem in this- just to be the Devil's advocate- and that is that if you boost your town a lot, it can lead you not to want to see the things about it that are in need of improving.

LB: You can, that's right. You've got to look at it objectively. You've got to have an objective attitude. You can still support your town, support it's institutions and it's climate and so forth as a healthy program without overlooking it's faults. And we all know that every town has it's faults. Our streets are too narrow, and it's too bad. That's a fault. When they laid the town out they didn't make the streets wide enough. That's why you have parking on only one side in so many areas of the residential district. ^{It's} a drawback. And you've got to recognize it. You still see it. Salt Lake City's beau-

tiful. Great, big, wide streets. You've been there, haven't you?

SS: Uh-huh.

LB: Big, wide streets. I don't know how wide they are, 120 feet or something. Brigham Young had the right idea when he laid it out. He was looking to the future. And so many towns don't. Even Boise, years ago had narrow streets. It had to widen them.

SS: What about the prospects for growth? Did people in Moscow in the '20's were businessmen very concerned about attracting whatever growth they could to the city?

LB: Oh, they wanted it, certainly. I don't know why, but everyone wants his town to grow. The only one that didn't want a place to grow, I think was Tom Mc Call, as governor of Oregon. He said, "Come visit us, but don't stay." Which is very unusual. Most states want to attract population and attract business and attract money and attract growth. Just natural.

SS: Were there ways, practical ways of doing that in the '20's? You can say you would like a town to grow, but that doesn't bring people.

LB: I don't know, your Chamber of Commerce was constantly urging people to settle here and urging businesses to locate here. They're still doing it. They recently formed an Economic Development Association, I believe, and they got a tract of land down the southern end of the town as an Industrial Park. Well, that means that they hope to get clean some type of industry there. And that's just continuing the same thing that's been going on since the town first started. You always want to attract other people to your community. Where ever you live you do that. I think that's a universal appeal.

SS: You know, in some of the recent controversies in Moscow; the last five years, for instance over the new couplet, there was an effort made to

establish a difference in interest between the business community and the residential community in the city. Now, in terms of the early days, the '20's and '30's and back then; was there any difference in interest?

LB: Oh, certainly. Certainly. There's always a difference. If the city was going to open up a new area or create a paving district, why, there was some opposed and some for it, certainly. All of your street improvement in the town has come through creation of improvement districts, in which the taxpayers of that area pay for the paving and sidewalks and curbing and all that. And they never were unanimous, I don't believe they were. There was always one who didn't want it. Didn't want to pay for it. That's natural.

SS: The difference between business and residential interests is the one that I wonder about, because it seems from that point of view that business interests certainly are the people who do make the important decisions about it and what will happen in Moscow.

LB: Oh, I don't believe there ^{was} a division between the residential community and the business community. I don't believe there's any great difference, in those days any more than it is now. There's some opposed to it now. Some people living in the residential area are opposed to the business community, thinking they're making too much money or this and that. But it's not universal. It's just small. And I don't think there's any difference in the 1920's than it is now. I don't believe so.

SS: Well, looking at the University-

LB: Everybody's selfish, you know. I'm looking out for my pocketbook and so are you.

SS: The University faculty and staff; in those days were they a separate community from Moscow? Or were they, on the other hand, integrated

with the social structure? I have it in a sense, that there certainly is a degree of separation. It is a world unto itself.

LB: I think there was a greater integration between the town and the the university in the earlier days than there is now. Because the University depended upon the town to a greater extent for support, and the town would back the University for support for money and so forth. I think there was a greater integration. A larger proportion of university teachers belonged to the Chamber of Commerce than is true today. I think the President of the University would come to the Chamber of Commerce luncheons as frequently as anybody. And my understand^{ing} is now that Mr. Hartung never goes to a Chamber of Commerce meeting. And I think that there's a very small proportion, smaller proportion of the faculty who are interested in the community through the Chamber of Commerce and through the service clubs than there was in those days. That's my impression. I'm not active in any service club, or I'm not active in the Chamber of Commerce now, but I know that even at the time, ten years ago, when I retired, I think that, oh, the University felt a little more independent to the town and they didn't take as much interest in the town and it's civic opportunities than they had. And yet, they are more interested in politics than they were in the old days. And in the 1920's and '30's and '40's I only recall one instance where any person from the University staff was interested in the politics of the city; and that was Harrison C. Dale. Became a member of the City Council. But now, we've got always, seems to me, there's two or three on the City Council from the University staff. And they're more interested in the politics than they are in the community affairs.

SS: I know that in the early papers that I looked at that the coverage of university events, of speeches by a president and that sort of thing,

seemed much greater than it is today. Seems that what goes on at the University is often not considered news, unless it's sports.

LB: Yes. I agree with you. I said, I think there was a greater integration in those days than there is now. I think the separation is greater now. Probably because the townspeople think the university is well enough established that it doesn't need too much support. And the university family, believing that the town can't do it as much good, and so they go their own separate ways. But in those earlier days we tried to give the University news prominence. To keep it, it's our institution and we were proud of it, we wanted to publicize it.

SS: Do you think that the town was able to successfully promote the university at the state level in those days?

LB: Oh, yes.

SS: As compared to now?

LB: More so. More so.

SS: In what way would that be?

LB: We raised money to send people down to the legislature lobbying, supposedly, we would have somebody down at the legislature frequently.

SS: Businessmen.

LB: Businessmen, that's right. Go down and stay for ten days and support the institution; oh, yes. I think they send somebody down now, I don't know, I ^{really} haven't followed it that closely. But in those days, heavens yes,

SS: You know, talking about some of the leading citizens in Moscow as we were earlier. How closely knit was the social structure of the leadership of Moscow? How closely integrated was it in those days?

LB: Quite closely integrated. Much more so than now. Any businessman that didn't belong to the Chamber of Commerce or a service club and

wasn't active in those, why, an effort was made to get him active. And I think much more so than now. They'll pay their dues now, a larger number pay dues, but a fewer percentage, a smaller percentage take an active role in the Chamber of Commerce. They depend too much upon the secretary; let him do it. And it's like a small family and a big family, you've got to cooperate and the businessmen and the professional men were willing to do more of the work. The secretary, in those days, was a part-time secretary. They got maybe fifty dollars a month to keep the minutes and do the corresponding and so forth. Didn't have a full-time secretary-manager at the Chamber of Commerce. And so the leaders in the community, professional and business, do more of the work. Head up a committee; and the committee would have an objective and try to perform to reach that objective. Now, it's the board of directors that tells the manager to do so-and-so.

SS: When decisions were made affecting the community, the business community, was there much consultation among the leadership, would you think, between these leading citizens that we were talking about?

LB: Oh, sure, sure. I'm sure there was. Definitely. Well, during the bank crisis, as an example, in 1933 and the late 1932 when we had the banking crisis, as the recession approached banks were failing all over the country, and two failed in Moscow. The First Trust and Savings Bank was owned by Haaken Melgarde. And the First National Bank closed and it was a branch of the Old National Bank of Spokane. And the Idaho State Bank had closed previously, and everyone was fearful just about the beginning of 1933. Roosevelt went into office in March, in those days, rather than January, and the leaders of the town got together- my partner was one of 'em, George Lamphere- and they seriously and meant it, pledged their assets to the First Security Bank. And

they had a great big sign out in front signed by George Lamphere and ^{Franklin David,} Roland Hodgins, "We pledge our assets to this bank security." And they meant it. There was no run on the bank. And the bank stayed open until Roosevelt closed all the banks of the nation for a period of- what? two or three weeks? But those men did that. They got together as a group, not through the ^{Ch}amber of Commerce, but just individually. And about a dozen men who were worth a good share of money apiece, they pledged their assets to the bank. That's community cooperation.

SS: That is. That's an excellent example of what I'm thinking about.

LB: That happened. That happened. Definitely. I didn't sign it; I didn't have any money. But my partner did! (Chuckles) With the leaders of the community, I would guess about a dozen, pledged all their assets to the security of that bank, and it stayed open. A run never developed. That's a great asset to the community. Republicans and Democrats. My partner was a solid Republican, ^{Roland} Hodgins was a leading Democrat; didn't matter, they wanted to see the bank stay open and they wanted to see the town free of that fear of collapse.

SS: I understand that Haaken Melgarde was very upset about having to shut down at all.

LB: Definitely. Definitely.

SS: He felt that that was quite wrong.

LB: Right. He ^{felt} it was wrong, and of course, he had to shut down when Roosevelt closed all the banks. And I believe that they had an army of auditors check the banks before they would be allowed to re-open. But Haaken Melgarde kept his open, right to the end.

SS: These banks that had failed in Moscow, did they take many people down with them?

LB: The first- the State Bank- Moscow State Bank, yes, took quite a few

people down ~~with~~ them, yes. The Idaho First National Bank did not, because it closed in fear of a run. The Old National Bank of Spokane, it closed and all it's branches closed. And I don't think anybody got hurt. I'm sure everybody got paid off in full. When the bank reopened it was shortly after that sold to the Idaho First National Bank and instead of being a branch of the Old National Bank of Spokane it became a branch of the Idaho First National. But I don't think anybody ever lost a dime by that bank's closing. They closed to prevent a run on the bank and prevent anyone being damaged.

SS: The Moscow State Bank, it hurt?

LB: It hurt, yes, it hurt. I was banking there and all I ever got back was about fifty cents on the dollar. I didn't have much to lose in those days, so it didn't matter much.

SS: Still--

LB: Still, you lose half of what you've got in there. They paid out roughly fifty cents on the dollar, over a period of a couple of years, until they could get their money bank in on loans and so forth.

SS: What was the condition of the working people, you know, the more blue collar people, people definitely not well-off before the Depression hit? Were they in real bad shape?

LB: I don't think they were. Don't think they were in bad shape any part of the country. I think they were pretty good shape. Wages were quite low as compared to what they are today, but they bought just as much at that time as they ^{did} now. No, I think the working man was prosperous in Moscow. The ones who were hard hit were the farmers. Wheat was eighteen cents a bushel in 1931- 1932, rather. We burned wheat in the stoker of the old Star Mirror as an advertising stunt, just to publicize it. Didn't burn very well, but we took some eighteen-cent wheat

which was the price on the local market, and fed it into the stoker. Mixed a little coal with it and it burned! (Laughter) Just as a promotion stunt, to show that we were trying to help the farmers to get rid of the surplus- burdensome - surplus of wheat. The farmers were the ones that were hurt. A lot of institutions foreclosed on the farms, they couldn't pay off their mortgages and a lot of farms were foreclosed.

SS: I've heard so much about the city- people in big cities- really having a rough time. I had figured- well, the farmers who told me are still here, those that held out were in fairly good shape because of what they could grow on their farms.

LB: Right, uh-huh.

SS: But I was wondering- to me, Moscow, seemed like a kind of inbetween place and not a big city.

LB: We didn't have any industry. People who worked were people who worked in the stores ^{or} the university. There was no industry any more than there is now. We have no industry.

SS: Those people were not laid off.

LB: No, they were not laid off. No, not to any extent. The only industry we have now is the industry of building, ^{the} plumbing trade, the electrician trade, the carpenter~~y~~ trade. That's it. You've no industry. Don't have any blue collars, except service industries, more or less.

SS: Like the clerks in the stores.

LB: Clerks in the stores, they were not laid off. No, the town was in good shape. In better shape than other towns in Idaho because more students came to the University. They couldn't get a job in Nampa or Twin Falls, so might as well go to the University. The enrollment increased. Definitely. Definitely, enrollment increased because of the Depression. Student couldn't get a job, why, he'd come to the Univer-

sity. He had a few hundred dollars and they bached and papa could spare a few hundred and so they came here rather than to try and get a job. The enrollment increased during the Depression.

SS: Do you think they spent a lot less than they would have in the '20's? These students.

LB: Oh, I think so, yes.

SS: I've heard some people say that the entertainments and amusements became even more important in the '30's than they had been.

LB: Well, about all the amusement we had in those early days was the movie. And campus dances. Dances on the campus. We didn't have a bowling alley, ^{we} didn't have TV and radio was embryonic. And about the only entertainment that you had was the movie. Or to go out Sunday afternoon and walk the railroad tracks.

SS: Which you told me. (Chuckles)

LB: Yes. That's right.

SS: There is something about Prohibition I'd like to ask you. I had understood that the impetus for local option here came largely from the churches in the teens, or the early teens, and that the anti-liquor sentiment did run very high in some quarters in Moscow.

LB: I wasn't here then.

SS: Well, I heard that the revivals- some of those revivals-

LB: Yes.

SS: As late as the early '20's were also making a lot of hay out of that.

LB: Yes, that's correct.

SS: Do you remember the Bulgin revival?

LB: Yes, definitely.

SS: What do you remember about that?

LB: I remember that I got arrested. I was working on the Argonaut, and

Bulgin had a tent, I believe, that what we now would call the Christian Church lot; the lot right to the east of the post office where the Christian Church had been built later, and he had a big tent there. And I was working on the Argonaut- it was my freshman year, 1919 and 1920, and we heard rumors that he was attacking the University as a place of sin and so forth. So the Editor of the Argonaut, a man from Boise by the name of William Langroise and I went up to listen to one of his lectures on the night the Argonaut was going to press. And we sat in the back and just listened. We didn't hear anything said about the university at all. So after thirty or forty minutes, we got up and left and walked on the sidewalk on Third Street and undoubtedly, we were laughing about it and talking and the police or somebody or Mr. Bulgin made some remark to the policeman in the hall that we were disturbing the peace and we got arrested. And all we were doing, we might have joked about something or laughed as we walked down the sidewalk. And we were taken to the police station and released immediately. Nothing ever happened. But Bulgin was a fire-eater. He was a Billy Sunday type. Billy Sunday is probably too early for you, but you've heard about ^{Billy Sunday}. Bulgin was that type of individual. That was his living, was to work communities up and tell them how sinful they were and so forth. But I never heard any verification of the fact that he attacked the university.

SS: I've heard people say that he attacked the university.

LB: Yes, I've heard it, too, but I never could verify that.

SS: Must have been pretty mad about----

LB: Yes, I was mad.

SS: You really weren't doing anything.

LB: Not a thing. Just sat as quietly in the back of that hall as we could

be, and when we got out I don't doubt but what we may have laughed a bit about it or made some joke and so forth and the window was open and I suppose our voices carried into the hall and he was anxious to get somebody arrested for disturbing the peace.

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SS: Do you remember at the time that Prohibition was here that there was a definite division?

LB: Oh, certainly. Sure.

SS: A lot of people seemed to believe that it really was going to answer problems of our society.

LB: Sure. That's why Congress passed it. I don't recall now whether it was- it had to be a Constitutional Amendment. Yes. The Eighteenth Amendment. I think people believed that it would be something that would help the country, but they counted upon greater acceptance than turned out to be the case.

SS: I've been told that better families and parties in Moscow would drink socially during that time.

LB: Sure. I think it was ignored by a lot of people. Naturally. And my dad made wine during that period; so did I! It was ignored. Yet only a few years before it was approved by the Congress and the people. Or the Legislature, I forget which. You know, there are two ways to approve a constitutional amendment: One- by the vote of the Congress, and then the referendum vote of the people, or approval by the Congress and approval by ^{the} legislature. Can amend the Constitution ⁱⁿ two ways. And I don't recall how the Eighteenth Amendment was ratified, whether it was by legislative action or by a vote of the electorate. That happened in 1915? Or along in there someplace? I don't remember how it was ratified.

SS: I know what I'm told by Hap Moody that most of the enforcement that they were engaged in was out in the lumber country.

LB: Right. Picking up the bootleggers out in the hills. Hap Moody was No. 1. He was the best in North Idaho! (Chuckles) He looked like a lumberjack and he got dozens of bottleggers arrested. He was a deputy sheriff; I believe.

SS: Before he became sheriff.

LB: Yes, before he became sheriff. He looked the part.

SS: He was under Summerfield.

LB: That's correct. Uh-huh.

SS: They still have quite a reputation out there among those old-timers.

LB: You bet they do. You bet they do!

SS: Summerfield, Moody and Jordan.

LB: Yes, that's right. And Hap Moody was the best.

SS: He showed me a couple of pictures of himself. You wouldn't think he was a cop.

LB: Nope. Not at all.

SS: Oh, by the way, do you remember ^{the} Pastime?

LB: Definitely.

SS: Was that a place that everybody would use? Or just some people?

LB: Oh, just some people. Principally, farmers. A lot of farmers went in there in the wintertime in the afternoon and played cards or played pool. It was a workingman's headquarters. More or less the way the Corner Club is now. Same type of individual that goes to the Corner Club now. Except, go down there and drink beer, and of course, when I was here the Pastime didn't have beer. I believe they either stayed open all night- I'm sure it was a twenty-four hour operation.

SS: That's right.

LB: Twenty-four operation. I've gone in there as a student. Study for

an exam and knock it off at eleven-thirty and go down to the Pastime and get a sandwich and a cup of coffee. And a lot of students used to do that, occasionally, but it was mostly a workingman's hangout. They had a counter, a restaurant counter and there was a cook on duty I believe twenty-four hours a day. So, I've gone in there many a time and get a sandwich and a cup of coffee at midnight after studying for three, four hours. Get out and get some fresh air and go down to the Pastime and get a sandwich.

SS: What was the problem with President Kelly? It seemed to me in the reading that I've done about the university, he just had more trouble than any of the presidents that I've run across.

LB: He was only here a couple of years. Well, he tried too many reforms. He wanted to do this: He brought in an assistant. I was not too familiar with what happened up there but the faculty was all against him. He couldn't get the cooperation of the faculty.

SS: His junior college proposal was one that---

LB: Yes, I vaguely remember that. I think that's correct. I think he did start the idea of having a junior college as part of the overall picture.

SS: Two years of general preparation.

LB: Yes. He just didn't go over. He couldn't get the cooperation of the faculty. He didn't get the cooperation of the town. He just rubbed everybody the wrong way. Did you see my article on football?

SS: I haven't seen that yet, and I was going to ask you if you would briefly tell me the story of the Kelly *Estate*.

LB: Well, Mr. Kelly, one of his ideas was that athletics should be amateur completely. No athlete was entitled to any more than any other individual. IN those days the athletes would work for say, fifty dollars

a month. They would work around the gymnasium. They would set the chairs in the gym for a meeting and they would sweep the gym and do other chores. Or they would work for a dormitory as a hasher and get paid that way. But they worked. There was nothing given to them free. They had to work for it. Kelly's idea was that if you were an athlete he should not even get paid for working, and they should get no help at all. The coaches were quite disturbed. So, informally, a little group formed downtown to raise some money for athletes. And I was treasurer of what money we raised. Went up and down Main Street and we raised probably all told, maybe, \$2,500 or \$3,000. And I was treasurer at the ^{old} Star Mirror, and we kept our money in the Moscow State Bank, which was right down the street on the corner. And the coach would give a football player or a basketball player a requisition to me to pay him thirty dollars for work performed in moving chairs or sweeping out the gym or washing towels or what have you, or raking the lawn. And they did the work and I would keep that requisition and give the boy a check and he would cash it. Well, Earl David was one of the leaders of the movement, he's been dead now about ten, twelve years, Abe Goff was another, and I think it was Earl David, I'm pretty sure, that said, -- of course, we did have at that time, as we still have now, we were in the Pacific Coast Conference, and they had a commissioner. And all aid given to athletes, whether they worked for it or it was strictly aid, had to go through the University Bursar's office, to make it legal. Any under -the-counter payments ^{to} an athlete was wrong. So the commissioner would come once a year and go through the books and ask questions around town and see if he could find out whether we were abiding by the rules. So we thought what we were doing might become under suspicion. So we decided we'd hide the money. And because Mr. Kelly was so adamant no athlete would

ever get any pay of any kind, he said, "Well, let's put this in the name of the Kelly Estate!!" It was Earl David's idea. So we opened an account at the Moscow State Bank under the title^{of} the Kelly Estate! And I was treasurer and I wrote the check^s on the Kelly Estate as a joke, ~~by~~ President Fred Kelly. And then, of course, then the Moscow State Bank closed, oh, in January, I believe of '33. And our money was tied up and we had about \$1,000 left in that. We spent most of it for football, you see, in the fall. We had about \$1,000 in the bank. So everybody who had money in the bank, I had my money there, filed a form to get your money back when the bank was liquidated. So I filed a form for my own personal account and I filed a form for the Kelly Estate. And the bank examiner who came here from Boise to liquidate the bank said, "Well, that's fine. I've got to have your authority to act for the Kelly Estate. Get me your certified copy of your appointment as administrator or executor of the estate and I want a copy of any wills that were involved and so forth." And I tried to explain that it was not an estate, and the examiner couldn't understand why it was not an estate. It was the Kelly Estate. I argued and I wrote letters to the State Banking Commissioner at Boise and tried to explain the situation to him and he couldn't understand it. And after an exchange of letters over a couple of months, why, they finally-- and I think I've got some other letters from maybe Abe Goff or Earl David or something to verify what I was saying-- and they finally accepted the explanation. So eventually this little group got fifty cents back on the dollar, but we were strapped for any help for the athletes for the next semester. That's the story of the Kelly Estate!

SS: Were you able to float the athletes so that they could continue with the same level of competition they had?

I don't remember. I don't remember what they did. Of course, in January football was over and basketball was partly over and about the main help that was given was to football players. Basketball players is a small squad, let's say a small squad of fourteen. And I don't remember what happened then. I just don't.

SS: It sounds like--

LB: Of course, the people who ran the dormitories and the sororities helped out a great deal. They gave preference to athletes for hashing jobs. We contacted the sororities and they would help out to see that football players were the- had the hashing jobs in the sororities, which provided them the^y meals. Outside of that all they had to pay for was their room. And so, we got the cooperation of the Dean of Women and the people who ran the dormitories who ignored President Kelly's stand. And they cooperated a great deal.

SS: If it hadn't been for that then-

LB: -the athletics might have suffered severely. I don't recall what happened after the bank closed.

SS: Do you feel that in the past that there ever was a real conflict between funding athletics and funding academics?

LB: No. I think it was accepted as it is now. I don't think there was much opposition to it. A few students were against it, sure. A few faculty people were against it, but not many. I think it's recognized that intercollegiate athletics are^a part of campus living. It's a part of the campus life. I Don't think it's any different now than it was then.

SS: Let me ask you a little about George Lamphere. I remember his character- the kind of person that really stood out ^{in Moscow}.

LB: Uh-huh. He was Irish. He was Irish and he was a fighter. He was a fine fellow. I thought he was. Some didn't like him. But I thought

he was ^{a fine fellow}. He stood for what was right. But as I say, he was Irish and he'd lose his temper in a hurry.

SS: Did he share the same ideas about the operation - the purpose of the newspaper that you did?

LB: Yes, I'm sure he did, yes. Definitely. He knew it, and he believed in it, I'm sure he did.

SS: There are charges that Frank Robinson made in his autobiography, which I read not long ago, about Mr. Lamphere that I want to ask you about because I feel that they are strong charges.

LB: I've never read his autobiography. Frank Robinson's.

SS: I'll tell you what he says is about- he lays onto Lamphere nearly all his problems with the trial that he went through for the passport falsification and all that. He charges Lamphere with it. With the being the man responsible for bringing those troubles on him. Do you think that he was?

LB: Yes, George Lamphere called this situation to the attention of the naturalization service, that's correct. But I don't know that he did any too much. Frank Robinson was an opinionated man, too. And a fighter, just like George Lamphere was. But I've never read Robinson's autobiography. I've read several of his books, but never his autobiography.

SS: The way he tells the story, the way their disagreements started, this is Robinson's story- that it started when- after he had been having his printing done by the paper, he realized that, I think, that having it done by the Elk River Press that he could cut his bill in half. That rather than paying \$2,000 a month that he could do it for \$1,000 a month. He realized, he says, then that Mr. Lamphere was taking him to the cleaners for his printing. And he made that charge about him.

The ill will, in his mind, seemed to be dated from that.

LB: Well, I can assure you, having been a partner of George Lamphere, that he was not taken. That he was charged the same printing rate for his publications ~~as~~ anybody else. There was no attempt to charge him more. The trouble flared up between the two because he was- Robinson was always hard pressed for money in those days. He over extended himself. He had a couple of drugstores, in fact, he had three at one time. And he was always over extended, and he owed the old Star Mirror a sizeable some of money, something like \$5,000 from six or seven months in arrears. And so, George Lamphere went to Robinson one day and said, "You pay your bill or I'm going to sue you." That was the fracture. I can tell you that because I know it. And Robinson eventually paid up. And then he went to Elk River and had some printing over there and got acquainted with Bill Marineau. And so, mad as he was at George Lamphere and me too, he opened up his own printing plant and ran his own newspaper. Which eventually consolidated with the Star Mirror to form the Idahonian. But the fight occurred because he owed the Star Mirror money, which was long past due. And I say, Lamphere was Irish and I wasn't with him when he talked to Robinson, but I suspect he flared up and got pretty mad! And made Robinson pretty mad, too. So that was the reason why they split. Now anybody else in town will tell you the same thing. Robinson was always pressed for money. He run bills, run 'em as long as he could. And he had printing done in Spokane and he had printing done in Portland and he was slow pay, because he was overextended.

SS: This, probably because of the rate of expansion he was seeking with his movement.

LB: Yeah. That's right. It grew rapidly and a lot of money came in. But

he spent it just a little faster than it came in. And his advertising throughout the United States in newspapers and magazines, he had to pay those. That was probably cash on the line.

SS: Well, it makes sense to me because his argument did make sense when I read it but, you know, it started in that way.

LB: No. No, George Lamphere was too ethical to charge him any more money than anybody else. He charged him a fair price. That's all he wanted.

SS: Do you think that he had been, Lamphere had been suspicious of him prior to that?

LB: No. No.

SS: You don't think so?

LB: No, I don't think so. I don't believe he ~~believed~~ believed in his religion, but-

SS: My opinion is, from what other people told me that Robinson was never too solvent on Main Street.

LB: No, he wasn't . He wasn't.

SS: The business community in general had a not very high opinion of his business.

LB: Oh, they thought he was like Bulgin and Billy Sunday, he was capitalizing on his idea- that he didn't believe in it- this is what the general opinion was- he didn't believe in his Psychiana any more than Billy Sunday believed in God. It was a business. And he promoted it as a business, although he professed, I think, that he believed it; the opinion was that he didn't. That it was a racket. That he was running it as a racket to make money. That was the general opinion in Moscow. But he had thousands of students all over the country who believed in him implicitly.

SS: And he appeared very different to the people that knew him.

LB: That's right. He had thousands of students who believed anything he said, and paid him for their beliefs.

SS: Do you know, was there a lot of money involved for a student to pay, if he went in for all the lessons? I haven't been able to find out.

LB: I don't know. I think- I don't know.

SS: But there was a series.

LB: Yes, whole series of lessons and then advanced lessons then advanced lessons. But I don't know what the prices were that he charged. I may have known at the time, but I've forgotten. But I don't think they were too expensive; Let's say ten dollars for the first series and maybe twenty-five for the second series, I don't know.

SS: It was the numbers; it was the mass market.

LB: Yes, the mass market. And he sold his books, ^{he wrote}, half a dozen books. And he sold those to these students.

SS: You know, the way that he presented the starting of the News Review newspaper, is a bit odd to me, too. I'll tell you how in the autobiography how he tells it is that he bought the press with the idea in mind of just doing his literature, he says he didn't plan on doing the newspaper. But he says that the Spokane paper carried the story when he bought the Press, that he was planning to start a newspaper. That George Lamphere read it in the Spokane paper and confronted him on the street about it. He got so mad telling, you know, he was saying, "You better not start another newspaper in this town. This town's got one newspaper and that's all it ought to have." And threatening him if he did, he would make a lot of trouble for him, he says Lamphere did. And he says that got his ire up so much he told him, "You just better go down and start working on it because I'm going to run a paper." Now, that's the way he tells it. That in fact, he hadn't

really planned on doing that, running the paper until Mr. Lamphere got his goat and that's what made him decide. Does that seem plausible to you?

LB: This is the first time I've ever heard that.

SS: That's the way he tells it.

LB: I haven't read his book; this is the first time I've ever heard that theory. Doesn't seem plausible to me. Doesn't seem plausible to me.

SS: That's just the way he wants it told.

LB: It may have happened, I don't know. But I never heard it until this instant.

SS: The problem with his book is that it's very selective. He only presents the things to make himself look good. And he makes it look as if George Lamphere maybe had it coming to him, you know, that he died in that accident. It's as if it's a divine retribution for all the trouble that he caused.

LB: Well, of course, that would be libellous, but then George Lamphere was dead by that time, and so you can't libel a dead person.

SS: He presented himself really as a saint who was, let's say, going through the same kind of persecution that religious ^{figures} have traditionally been subjected to. So these things that happened and the problems he went through became, you know, signs of his vindication. But why I'm asking you about this at some length is because I see that as an historical record and I would like George Lamphere to be able to defend himself, and he's not here.

LB: He's not here, no.

SS: But Robinson's writing was very self-serving.

LB: Definitely. That would be correct. I would agree ^{with} the fact that his writing would be self-serving. But I never heard that story of George

seeing him on the street and threatening him about the paper. This is the first time I've ever heard that. Never heard it before. But I think, as I say- my belief is that he owed money and George Lamphere was not one to sit back and let him continue to owe it indefinitely. I know he went to him, because he said, "Louis, I'm going to go up and get that money." And he went to see Robinson, wherever he had his office, and he said he'd pay up, and I'm sure they had some strong words! (Chuckles) I wasn't there, but I'm sure ^{about it}.

SS: Well, you can tell just from the personality he projects in that book, that he was very bullheaded himself.

LB: Oh, yes, he was, yes, he was. He was bullheaded.

SS: But after that happened, would you say, that George Lamphere really did want to see him out? Out of Moscow?

LB: Yeah, I think that's probably correct. I don't know, I don't know what George thought! (Chuckles)

SS: He claims in that book, that Borah really befriended him.

LB: I heard of that, yes.

SS: And really helped him.

LB: Yes. I don't know, but I heard that, too, yes.

SS: I think that obviously that Borah would be a good ally to have.

LB: Right, right.

SS: So he tries to pin as much as he can on him.

LB: Yes. Borah was a fine man and I am sure that Borah might very well have helped him as an underdog. Borah was a brilliant man. And I think he was for the underdog at all times, so he might very well have helped Robinson in his struggles, I don't doubt that. But I have no knowledge that he did or didn't.

SS: Did you ever hear the story that Robinson came here from Southern

California because he had been promoting oil stocks?

LB: No, never heard that. He came here from Portland. I know that he came from Portland and took the job as a druggist at the Corner Drugstore, operated by Charles Bolles. I know he came from either Portland or the Portland area as a pharmacist. I've never heard- this is the first time I've ever heard that he was in Southern California as an oil salesman.

SS: He was for a time.

LB: Is that so? I never heard that.

SS: What I heard is not authenticated, that he had been selling some phony- some oil stock.

LB: I never heard that until this time, this instant. That's the first time I've ever heard that.

SS: I don't know whether that's true or not. But he himself-

LB -didn't mention it in his book.

SS: No. He mentions being in Southern California but not what he was doing there. When he talks about his previous life before coming here, he does make it very clear, really it is strange in the biography he dwells on the- I guess he was alcoholic for at least six years or more.

LB: I've heard that.

SS: By his own admission.

LB: I've heard that he was an alcoholic. I think he mentioned that when he was here. But that California episode's brand new to me; never heard it.

SS: What's also interesting to me is that- the divergence that the people seemed to have of him, and on the other hand, of his wife and children.

LB: Uh-huh.

SS: Because they seemed to have been highly respected.

LB: That's correct. Yeah. How much his wife and children believed in his

religious philosophy I have no way of knowing. His wife was highly respected and she went to the Presbyterian Church; was active in women's affairs of the church and the family was highly respected. One of the granddaughters is living here now, I can't think what her name is, lives out east of town someplace. That's Alf's Robinson's daughter. Be a granddaughter of him. No, they were highly respected. Definitely.

SS: What happened then? The way the merger of the papers came about. How did that happen?

LB: Well, George Lamphere died and it was a partnership between George Lamphere and myself and my brother-in-law, John Montgomery. And, of course, when one partner dies the partnership ends. That's law. That's the legal fact of the case. As soon as one partner of any business dies, the partnership ends. So that meant that George Lamphere's widow merely was a part owner of the business, but she was not a partner. So it became necessary then to either dispose of the business and divide up the selling price or for one of the others to buy it out. And we advertised the business for sale and had some prospects. One person came in from the Middle West someplace and looked into it. And so it became that way. And finally through the auspices of Abe Goff, who was our attorney, he approached Robinson and said, "Why don't you get together, George Lamphere is out of the picture, he was the one you had war with, why don't you and Louis and John Montgomery get together and settle this thing?" So, that's the way it happened. And we got together and in a very short time decided to merge and that was it. And then the merger was through the News Review Publishing Company.

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SS: Did you decide that it was part of the agreement that you would go on as editor?

- LB: Yes, that was part of the agreement. Part of the agreement was that I would be editor; John Montgomery would be advertising manager and Bill Marineau would be business manager, general business manager. That was part of the agreement as stipulated in the agreement of merger.
- SS: Did you have much of any doubt or intrepidation at that time that you might not be able to get along with him?
- LB: Yes. Sure. (Chuckles) Though we did, we got along fine. He didn't take any active part in the newspaper at all. Bill Marineau didn't want him around any more than I did. He owned stock in it and that was that, just as much as I would own stock in General Electric Company in New York. But he didn't have anything to say about the newspaper's operations or anything.
- SS: So he didn't try to dictate how anything was done?
- LB: No, he didn't. No, he didn't. Well, that was kind of understood. He would be a silent owner of stock. And then when he died, why Mrs. Robinson was the same way. She had no part of the operation. And she was a fine woman; she still is. She's still living now with her daughter someplace in Texas. Florence. But I've seen her several times. She moved to California and we'd drive down there and we'd stop and visit with her. She's a fine woman. And I count her as a good friend and I'm sure she does me. We got along fine.
- SS: The Sampsons have told me about visiting her.
- LB: Near Monterey.
- SS: Carmel.
- LB: Carmel, yes, that's correct. We were down there just, oh, a year and a half ago and didn't get to see her then but I called her on the phone and I suppose we talked for forty-five minutes on the phone. And she urged us to come out and see her, but we were trying to get on South

so we just kept on going. But the year before we'd been out to see her and I guess we went out and spent several hours at her apartment.

SS: As the News Review operation as a whole went, was the portion that was the Psychiana mailings the majority of the business?

LB: No. No.

SS: The newspaper?

LB: The newspaper was and other accounts. It was a good piece of printing, yes, but it wasn't the majority by any means. No. Of course, not too long after the merger, why, Frank Robinson died of a heart attack. Oh, roughly five or six years, I don't remember too much. And of course, Psychiana stopped. The son, Alfred, liquidated Psychiana.

SS: Which is interesting to me because I understand that he could have gotten a lot of money for it if he had wanted to let somebody else take it over.

LB: I wouldn't be surprised. Sounds logical. But he didn't.

SS: He didn't.

LB: He didn't care for it. No. It was liquidated.

SS: Well, it seems to me that that sort of polarization between the two men is not unusual to happen in small cities. It happens now and then I believe in small towns, but I mean on the scale that it was. It seems really, not to be that uncommon in other places I know of. And yet, from what I heard, Robinson did have some friends.

LB: Oh, yes, sure.

SS: And yet he still strikes me as an isolated figure, from what I've been told. There really weren't many people -

LB: ^{Not too many, that's correct.} Sure, he had some friends. Sure anybody has friends. And he had friends in town. But I am sure that he had a lot of people who didn't think

very highly of him. Who thought he was running a racket and so forth.

SS: During the period of competition between the two papers, was that a difficult period, do you think, for both papers?

LB: I think it was. Neither of us made any money because the town wasn't big enough to support two papers. So you cut prices and you cut prices on ads and you cut prices on printing to survive. We both survived, but I'm sure neither of us made any money. The logical thing was to merge or have one of 'em quit. *So forth.*

SS: When you think of why Robinson started the paper in the first place- I mean in your understanding of why at the time. Why do you think he had done it? Just out of spite?

LB: I think out of spite, yes. Partly out of spite and partly out of, oh, conceit; that he wanted to be a big shot. He wanted to own a newspaper. An inflated ego as the publisher of a newspaper. He could go back all over the country and say, "I own a newspaper. I own three drugstores." And I do this and I do that. That's part of the ego image that he wanted to create. And he did run- he had three drugstores.

SS: How did he become the owner of three drugstores?

LB: Oh, he got mad at one of 'em and decided to run him out of business and the best way was to buy a drugstore and open two new ones, and he did that. He was a man of peculiar philosophy. And he got mad at one of the druggists, I forget which one, and so, "I'll show you, I'll run you out of business." So he had three of 'em. Which meant that no drugstore in Moscow was profitable. He cut the liver out of all of 'em! And gradually he closed one then ^{he}closed another and then he closed the third.

SS: So he wasn't really successful?

LB: No. He poured a lot of money into them. That's his nature. And I'm

satisfied that he got mad at George Lamphere and wanted to open a newspaper. Also, because it created an image that he wanted to reflect over the nation as a newspaper owner, as ^{an} owner of several drugstores and driving a Dusenbergs car, and all these things, that were part of his ego image.

SS: What about this Robinson Lake he gave to the county?

LB: Well, it was a spot for a picnickers and the Soil Conservation Service put in a dam to create a small lake and prevent flooding down below. And so Robinson decided that he would buy the land surrounding that and give it to the county as a gesture of goodwill to win the approval of the people of the area. So he did. And the county commissioners named it Robinson Lake in honor of the donor of the property. He gave them the property. I don't know how much it cost him. Not a great deal, maybe \$7,000 or \$8,000, which was of course, worth a lot more then than it is now.

SS: I have seen it claimed in more than one place that by getting that land he prevented it being developed for resort purposes.

LB: Oh, I doubt that. There was no attempt ever made to develop that as a resort. It wasn't big enough. And of course in a very few years it silted up. It's dry now. I was by it not too long ago and it's dry. It just silted up and full of weeds because it wasn't deep enough. It was built for a purpose, to catch the waters of the creek, And of course as the timber was removed from the mountains, the flow in the creek became less and less until it is no longer a threat. But forty years ago it was a threat. It used to flood down below.

SS: Let me ask you about social life in Moscow in the '20's when you came back here and started in the newspaper and through those earlier years. What were the main social activities, let's say, that you would be involved in.¹

- LB: Oh, dances. Friends visiting back and forth. That's about it. There were many more dances then than there are now. The Elks used to have dances frequently. And of course now, they have open dancing every weekend I guess for people who go there, but it's not a regular dance. you know what I mean. There were dances and you'd go to dances of your fraternity and sorority group on the campus. My wife belonged to one sorority; I belonged to a fraternity. And we'd be invited to their dances. And you'd go to a dance and you'd play cards and go to the movie. That's about it.
- SS: It wasn't a very structured social life with a lot of organizational affiliations-
- LB: Not too many, no. But we had ^{your} lodges and they would have dances. More so than they have now. I'm sure the Moose and the Eagles, to which I did not belong, used to have dances. They may still, as far as I know. I just don't know whether they do or not.
- SS: What about the political party activities? My understanding has been that Moscow was very strong Republican town.
- LB: Used to be.
- SS: At that time.
- LB: Yes, at that time it was. I would say you're correct. Latah County was one of the Republican strongholds in ^{those days}. Probably the most Republican county in the state of Idaho.
- SS: Do you know why?
- LB: No, I don't. No.
- SS: It's curious to me.
- LB: I don't know why; it just was.
- SS: I know the GAR was very strong here in the early, early days. Seems like there were a lot of Northerners that had pretty strong Civil War

feelings. But that's as far as I've got to understanding.

LB: I think the GAR in the early days, the early 1900's was strong all over the state of Idaho. Very active in Boise where I was reared. GAR was quite active. They had their own building and was quite an active organization. Of course, it died when the members died, and that was the end of it.

SS: Did you take part in politics at all when you were here?

LB: No, none at all. I promised my wife I would never run for public office. (Chuckles) I think she made me promise that before she'd marry me! She's in the other room, you can ask her! (Laughter) I took no active part in politics. Never have. Never went to the meetings. Never was on the Central Committee or never ran for office or anything.

SS: Is that just because it doesn't interest you? Or the principle--

LB: Well, I wouldn't want to be in public office. I wouldn't want to be in politics, so I just didn't take any active part at all.

SS: Is there a special reason why she would n't want you to?

LB: Well, it used to be in the early days, that the ~~first~~^{first} thing a newspaper editor of a small paper would do was to ^{be} get in politics. Run for political office. That was common all over the country. So I didn't want to. I think it was better for the paper that I didn't. Also, we were doing printing for public bodies and if I had been in the City Council, we couldn't have done any printing for the City of Moscow. You'd be hauled into court if you did. A man at Lewiston who had a hardware store was on the ^{state} road commission in the State of Idaho, and he sold some equipment to the State Highway Department and the Attorney General immediately raised the question that he could not accept payment for that because he was a member of the State Highway Commission. So he immediately resigned his State Highway Commissionship.

And so, if you're in politics and doing public printing you couldn't. Now as far as the newspaper's concerned, that's different. But commercial printing would be the place where you'd get caught. You couldn't do any for the county if you had a county position, or for the city if you were on the city council. If you were in the legislature you couldn't do any state printing. We did a lot of state printing. Always have. University of Idaho's state printing. So you'd be caught up in that conflict of interest.

SS: I understand that the newspaper had a cooperative program with the university for giving some training to journalism students.

LB: Yes. We did for many, many, years through the journalism department at the university. There was no formal agreement. The teachers at the university journalism department wanted to know ^{whether} I could use some of their senior students as reporters. I said, yes. So they reported to me for- like a laboratory. And the lab work would be twice a week to spend three hours at the Idahonian and I'd send them out to get a story. I'd say, "Go to the high school; cover the high school today. Or, get this story or that story." It was an informal agreement. Nothing ever formally signed; just informal. And that went on for many years. I don't know if they still do it now or not. I've seen some articles that the Idahonian has run in the last few years written by university students.

SS: I've seen them employed after they graduate.

LB: Yes, oh, yes. They do that, yes. But I don't know whether they have any informal agreement to use students as reporters or not. We did.

SS: Give me an idea of what you viewed as a broad coverage of the town. What do you call appropriate cover that made the news in Moscow.

LB: Oh, anything that somebody else was interested in. If you're interes-

ted in this, then I should run it for you. If you're interested in report of the Chamber of Commerce, I should run it. Adjustment of whether it's of interest to the community or not. I can't ~~define~~ news. News is what somebody else wants to read or hear.

SS: How big was the staff in the '20's. '20's and '30's?

LB: Oh, in the '20's the staff was about three. In the '30's about four. And after we merged, why, the staff was probably for the newspaper, five. And I don't know what it is now. Seven or eight.

SS: Staff, meaning what positions?

LB: Oh, editorial positions, you know, reporters, that nature, yes.

SS: Was that including yourself?

LB: No, not including myself. And of course, when you come to the printing department, it was much larger, naturally. But I meant staff, meaning the reportorial staff and editorial staff. It was small. It gradually grew. I don't know what it is now.

SS: Did you tell me that you had somebody stationed in Pullman?

LB: We did have in about the 1950's. We had an office over there; right on Main Street. Staffed by one or two people and covering the news and trying to look out for circulation. The office was on Main Street in Pullman. We operated that for several years. It was still being operated when I retired. And I know they closed it not too long after that. I see that they just announced the other day they had a correspondent from Pullman. But I don't think they have an office there. We had an office there.

SS: In those days was there a keen business rivalry between Moscow and Pullman? Rivalry between those two?

LB: Yes. Certainly. There still is. Always has been; far as I know.

SS: How did it compare ~~with~~ the rivalry with Lewiston?

- LB: Oh, more intense. Lewiston's that much farther away, that much harder to get to. As it is now, there's great rivalry between Colfax and Pullman and Spokane. Lot of people shop in Spokane. And of course, Pullman and Moscow being close together there's always been an interchange of people between the two. People from Moscow go over there to see what the furniture stores got and sometimes buy. And people from Pullman come to Moscow to see what the stores have got here and buy. Because we've got a much bigger business area here than Pullman has, so there are more come this way than that way.
- SS: Can you speculate for me, show a little light on why that is so, that Moscow seems to be such a much more dynamic as a business community than Pullman?
- LB: Well, it's the fact that we had a more vigorous bunch of merchants. Merchants who were more aggressive and built up their own businesses to attract trade. We had, when I first came here, Mr. Williamson^{who} had a big department store, which is now the ~~Tatuna~~^{Tatuna} Apartments. And he was a vigorous merchandiser. We had David's store, which was a vigorous merchandizer. And Franklin David and later his sons, who were all in the business, and they were competitors; promoters. And Pullman just never had any good, solid merchants. They were lackadaisical. They ~~didn't~~ go out and push and compete, so ~~that~~^{that} they didn't grow and we did. That's why we got the shopping center west of town and Pullman didn't. It was a cinch two years ago that the first one to start it was going to get it. So, this one started first. The merchants here don't like it, but I think it's going to help the town. My viewpoint is that it'll help the town. My viewpoint is that if I was going to have a restaurant I'd want to be right next door to the other restaurant. Attract the trade. So I think the stores out there will attract shoppers from

a wider area and the merchants on downtown Main Street are going to get the fringe benefits. If they can't find what they want out there they're going to come downtown here and find it. The more traffic you've got the more merchandise you're going to sell. That's going to be an asset to the community. And I think it'll be an asset to every retail merchant in town.

SS: Do you think that they initially have a depressing effect on some of the townspeople?

LB: I don't think so, I don't think so. I could be wrong, but I don't think so because, as I say, - any businessman will say he wants to be where his competitor is. As close to him as he can.

SS: The only question I have about it- the thing I wonder is the size of the potential market. If there aren't going to be enough people coming in because of what they are offered to come into Moscow, it will affect the competitive effect of those stores.

LB: I think it will, because people from Moscow now go down to Lewiston to shop at K-Mart. They have a K Mart at Lewiston and they go down there to shop down there because they have bigger stores and more stores. And they will drive that thirty-nine miles. Well, now with this thing out here ~~it~~^{it}'s going to bring people from a wider area. More are going to come to Moscow to shop from Palouse than came before because they'll have K Mart out there, they'll have Payless Drugstore and we've got the Drug Fair here. It's greater selection, more choice, so they'll come from farther away. I think more people will come from Colfax to Moscow and Palouse and Genesee and around. It'll take certain trade from south of here that now goes to Lewiston will come to Moscow; it's shorter.

SS: It strikes me that Moscow has much more stability as a city than Pull-

man does. Between the two towns there is much more continuity here.

LB: Well, I think part of that is the fact that Washington State University has a greater impact upon Pullman than the University of Idaho had upon Moscow. Because Washington State College is just double the size of the University of Idaho and I think it overshadows the town to a greater extent, than it does the University. Overshadowing it they've been more active- the faculty of WSU has been more active in politics; in running the City Council and overshadowing the town in the service clubs. The Kiwanis and Rotary and so forth. They dominate to a greater extent, and that hurts the town.

SS: Then Moscow has a much better balance as a service community; in Moscow it's very strong.

LB: Yes, I think that's correct.

Have I helped you?

SS: Yes, a great deal. I think of one more thing that I'd like to ask you about. As you went on^{with} your newspaper work; did you find that^{you got} your education on the job to learn journalism?

LB: No. Oh, as a senior in high school I was a parttime reporter for a Boise newspaper. A senior in high school, and I worked for that newspaper, the old Capitol News during the summer before I came to the university. And I liked it and as soon as I got up here I started working on the Argonaut. And after about a year, we were getting into the recession of the '20's, I realized that I was a burden upon my dad and so I free-lanced. And I got to be a correspondent for half a dozen newspapers.

SS: Is that the way you put yourself through school?

LB: Yes.

SS: Free-lance newspaper work?

LB: Yes, that is correct.

SS: I didn't realize that.

LB: I wrote for the Salt Lake Tribune, the Portland Oregonian, the Seattle Times, Spokane Chronicle, the Oregon Journal, the Seattle PI. Had both newspapers in Seattle so I'd write two stories. And I wrote for the Christian Science Monitor. As a senior, in my last year at the university I was averaging three hundred dollars a month income. And wages were thirty-five cents an hour. I made more money then than I made after I left here, by far. I took a job for \$100 a month. But I made \$300 a month ^{my} last year in college. ^{Free lancing} So I had training.

SS: And a long-standing interest.

LB: Long-standing interest. I think I told you before I went ^{back} to the Westinghouse Company in the publicity department as a ghostwriter and then got disgusted with Pittsburgh and came out to Boise and got a job on the Idaho Statesman and then the chance came to come up here.

SS: Do you know what attracted you to journalism?

LB: No. Have no idea. Just liked it. Better than I liked engineering.

SS: That's what you said before.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.

Frances Rawlins, September 21, 1977