

Oral History Transcript
Ralph Prator, San Fernando Valley State College President, 1958-1968
Interview by CSUN Professor, John Broesamle
Interview conducted circa 1990

RP = Ralph Prator
JB = John Broesamle

[00:01] JB: Well let's begin. I'd like to begin if we may, in the broadest sort of brush strokes, general impression. And we could get into and will get into tales of these broad impressions later. But let me ask you, what expectations you held for San Fernando Valley State College when you agreed to come.

[00:28] RP: First of all, I had the impression, from my talks with Roy Simpson, who was then superintendent of public instruction in California, that a new era was on the horizon for the State Colleges of California. During the early times of the system, as you are aware, they were primarily teachers colleges. And some of the old institutions like San Jose State, San Francisco State, San Diego State, Chico State, and so on, had a relatively long history of turning out the vast majority of teachers for the elementary and high schools in California. But when Roy Simpson talked to me at Christmas time, in 1957, about the potential, I guess it was 1957, about potential, I was impressed with probability that the scope of the State Colleges would broaden appreciably. And since I had gone through a kind of a study of higher education while I was a member of the staff at the University of Colorado, dove tailing on the responsibilities of the various institutions in that state. I was keenly interested in having an active part, then, in the potential that Roy Simpson pointed out.

[02:28] JB: Again, broad brush strokes. Would you say that our campus at least have met those expectations as you originally held them?

[02:36] RP: In reality, probably, to some extent, even in wider since then I had envisioned. We were well aware at the outset, as I've indicated a number of times by a number of people that the size of our campus, in terms of the student enrollment, was probably going to explode and explode very quickly. We did the number of demographic studies helpful to us, where agencies like the Telephone Company, etc. And we anticipated that within ten years, we would be at twenty thousand students. And if we were left to uncontrolled growth, we could reach fifty thousand students by the year two thousand. And this meant then, that we needed to put our hands on all the land that we could get hold of, as early as possible. The original site was one hundred fifty acres, and that of course, was with the expectation that the size of the college would be somewhere in the neighborhood of five thousand students. Well over this data that I just cited, we knew that we better get cracking at it. And so the most available large tract of land was the Devonshire Downs, which was a fairgrounds to the north of us. And therefore, what we immediately set about trying to do was see whether we could get any lean on that properties as a possible add on to the campus. The fair as an institution, was probably on its way out anyhow, because of the urban nature of the San Fernando Valley, and its prospects of becoming even more so. So we started, or I suppose I should say, I started talking with members of the community who were going to be influential in helping us getting this added to our campus. Among the most enthusiastic supporters, were the publishers of the two Valley newspapers of size, Van Nuys News and Green Sheet and The

Valley Times. They were probably helpful in getting the entree into the members of the legislature who were from the Valley, and we had a population of size. And we had several legislators of course in the Valley. Julie Beck, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of the concept of having the campus, a campus, come to the San Fernando Valley in the first place, of course, was instrumental in it. And the one who was probably responsible in the sense for pushing to see the separation of California State at Los Angeles, and the creation of a new site campus for San Fernando Valley.

[06:19] JB: We'll talk to you in detail about land acquisition as well. It sounds as if that was your highest priority, seeing these demographic projections.

[06:29] RP: And that was the first priority, now then the second priority, which was immediately evident, at least to me, who had anticipated that we probably needed a new administrative structure for the kind of institution that we envisioned. It was clear that the broader scope of the institution would entail a administrative structure that was somewhat different from the structure that we were working under at the moment. Where we had, divisions, and that they were amorphous, they were not really clearly defined divisions. Each institution is a little different among the colleges of the system. But my concern at that particular time was to provide the services needed at the time they were needed. And this meant then that we're probably gonna have to develop some concept of colleges and schools within the university concept. Now, the university concept was not a very popular concept, with the University of California, of course. And obviously, we could expect, and I suppose we got some objection to this idea as the study for the higher education of California evolved. But we moved ahead on our campus with this concept and had what we called the committee of seventeen, which started rather early in the history of the institution. Chaired by Charles Chaplin, and the administration representative on it was Leo Wilson, our Executive Dean. That committee came forth with recommendations that we, in fact, become a collection of schools and colleges, school of professional studies, for example, school of business, school of engineering, school of letters in science, and so on. To the extent that we could then compartmentalize and cope with the growth that was coming, this proved to be providential in a sense. We were one of the first colleges to advocate this in the council of State College Presidents. And these, well I suppose, one of the supporters that we had was [inaudible] down in San Diego, who was also anticipating this kind of need. But in my opinion, we needed to do this because we might lose at any time any one of our key administrators, like Del Oviatt, who was a key factor in the history of the intuition. Or Warner Masters who had his finger on financial facets of the intuition, or Leo Wilson, who was Executive Dean and a marvelous peddler of detail. If we lost them, we were going to search, obviously, for a successor, but where would we get the successor? And my feeling was we better have them right here on the campus. We better have somebody who was coming up through the ranks, as it were, as dean of one of these schools and colleges, who would be a likely prospect to serve, in light of our losing any of these key people.

[10:48] JB: So the move to the structure of college is called for by the committee of seventeen, seeking schools, but otherwise with same. And getting away from a divisional organization was a function largely of perceived growth. And the fact you had very talented individuals on the campus, like Leo Wilson who could fit into administrative and executive slots right now, as the growth took place.

[11:15] RP: Truth, that's very true. Yes, we originally had two other factors that were troublesome at that time. The faulty that we had inherited to some extent from Cal State L.A. were, in some instances, filling spots for which they were not particularly qualified. And I was thinking primarily about critical

areas, like science and mathematics. They were people who were geared to the teacher college concept, but not to the university concept, where research and interval studies that relate to the development of discipline itself. We didn't have those kind of people. So we initially started off with the concept we must get people, first of all, who had a PhD Degree or a Doctorate in their discipline. And that promotion wise, we must insist that those who are going to be promoted, if they didn't already have the terminal degree, be making diligent strides toward it or promotion was of course, limited in their case. And this was not a particular popular concept at the time because these folks were anticipating the growth would push them into leadership responsibilities, you see. Now this didn't mean that we didn't have someone eminently qualified, a number of people were. But when we got into the concept of the schools and colleges, a number of the people that would normally have fit into slots of Division Chairman, were obviously not qualified. Let's take engineering, for example. So we were fortunate in getting a person like George Harness, who was already a skilled administrator in the field of engineering and had his tentacles into the accrediting agency for schools of engineering. We were very fortunate in drawing him on to our campus, and we were also fortunate getting people like Lundgren in business. He was already a relatively known person in the field of business, at business administration of course has become a critical part of the institution as is engineering. And initially were pretty strong in the field of arts, letters and sciences, letters primarily, not in science. And initially, then we were fortunate having Ellen McCuren, who was Dean of the College, Our first dean I believe, of the College of Letters in Science, and his successor, Jim Woodrest who was eminently qualified for this kind of post. Now, these people then attempted to draw strong members of staff, when we went out recruiting, they were, they impressed the people that we were interviewing. And of course in the early years, the recruiting was done primarily by myself, and then we grew Del Oviatt into it, and the two of us did practically all the recruiting for the first three or four years.

[15:14] JB: We've raised a number of questions that I would have built up to. Let's begin by backtracking a bit to individuals, one of whom I think I know very well. One of whom I don't know it all, originally not at all. Let's begin with that one, Leo Wilson, what sort of person was Leo Wilson?

[15:36] RP: Leo Wilson was a longtime friend of mine, that's a longtime in terms of my residents in California. If you're interested in the background I could tell you what his background was. He was, what I knew him, in the early years, he was superintendent of the Reedley High School and Junior College District. He was a very active member of the California Association of Junior Colleges, which I was affiliated with, when I was at Bakersfield, and subsequently president of the association. He went to Fresno State, from this position that he had at Reedley, as Dean of Students at Fresno State. When I decided that I should take the position at San Fernando Valley State, I called him on the telephone to find out whether he'd be interested in filling the slot of Executive Dean because he was imminently qualified and knowledgeable about California school finance. And that was an area in which I felt some need, because I wasn't particularly informed in this area. Secondly, he was a member of the Jewish community, and of course, that is a very highly representative group in the San Fernando Valley, particularly in Studio City and these other areas. I don't know if we were pressing at that particular time for that, it just happened that he just fit into this category beautifully. And he's a master of administrative detail. And of course he had administrative detail that was a pretty cool factor with us from the inception of the institution. And his successor, Carol Spencer, when Leo passed away, was also eminently qualified in this consideration. That was one of the areas which I felt least competent that is

handling administrative detail. And these people were very necessary, in the early history of the institution.

[18:05] JB: Someone I think everyone knows and has given insights into is Del Oviatt, what I ask you about your relationship with Del, he had wanted the job that you secured.

[18:19] RP: Yes.

[18:20] JB: Did that make things difficult in your relationship with him?

[18:23] RP: He was a marvelous person in more ways than one. He was a pillar of the place to start with, highly regarded in the San Fernando Valley, he was a very active community, and civic leader, was incidentally, a fine speaker to. He was very good at repartee, and the kind of give and take that took place in the number of community meetings. He was particularly strong with the Parent Teacher Associations of the San Fernando Valley. He, when I was selected as President, was one of the first to come by and say, I had his wholehearted support, and so far as I'm concerned I had it during the whole time that I was there. He was marvelous colleague and always very supportive.

[19:38] JB: Do you know from your conversations with him, the answer to a question that has baffled me, and of course he's not here to ask. How was it that he and Howard MacDonald went about dividing the L.A. State faculty? Did he ever tell you that?

[20:00] RP: As a matter of fact, I don't know how confidential this should be in that consideration. Turn this off for a second. [Tape Stops.]

[20:21] JB: We're back on.

[20:22] Alright, we probably ought to bear in mind as we think about some of the problems that were unique not only to our campus but unique to the times. Faculty members were hard to come by, they were at a premium, particularly in certain disciplines. Science it was very difficult for us to find qualified people within the field of science and was difficult for us to find qualified people in the field of mathematics. I would go from coast to coast on these recruiting adventures, we would list a large number of vacancies in these areas and I've be lucky to see one or two people what I visited mammoth institutions like the University of Minnesota, University of Illinois, Harvard, and so on.

[21:16] JB: You go from institution to institution.

[21:17] RP: Yes as a matter of fact, in this regard to kind of interpolate, I would leave the San Fernando Valley on Sunday and fly to Chicago, and that evening from O'Hare, I would go down too Urbana and start my interviewing at University of Illinois. That night I got on the train and went to the University of Minnesota, and then the next night, I went to the University of Wisconsin. And I was ready then at the crack of dawn in each of these places the next following day, of course, to start interviewing. And I would see as many as thirty-five to forty people, at each of these places because they were large institutions. This routine I followed for approximately two weeks, each winter in January. January is a good time for us to recruit, the weather's bad back there and the California crush. I could show you pictures of the registration on the campus where people were wearing short sleeves, so it helpful. But it was very aggravating for one thing, and secondly, people were making increasingly high demands that we saw. Therefore, we begin rather early in the recruitment process to list our candidates in terms of our desire to get him on one, two, three, four, five levels. And unfortunately, in some cases, we were

only able to get our third and fourth choices. So, that was a factor under the circumstances, the new people, and many of our people were young, because they're coming off of graduate programs, were activist oriented. They felt that their talents were very much in demand, and they were going to make as much of it as possible. That's why we needed relatively experienced people in our administrative posts because the evaluation process, was a very important one to us. If they came and we kept them for more than three years, they were sort of automatically on tenure. Consequently, we have to be certain that these people who served for three years and were reemployed for the fourth year, were going to fit our particular needs. Under the circumstances, we had a fairly high turnover personal, because in some instances we obviously made serious mistakes in the people that we brought on to the campus. We have to find other people to take their place.

[24:37] JB: What, what caused resistance to coming to The Valley? Why would it become necessary to get down to number three or number four, was it high teaching load, was it large class size?

[24:48] RP: I think this primary was a problem of supply and demand, and we were a new institution and in some cases, able people wanted to see facilities already there, and we didn't have the facilities, of course. That was that was a critical factor, probably the critical factor. Now then The Valley itself was a pretty attractive place, but the prestige of our institution, even in The Valley, was not what we would have wished, if we had our brothers. So we had to build a place for ourselves among the people of The Valley as well as, among the institutions that were growing to supply us with the kind of facility that we required. Now UCLA was very helpful, I must say that, at the outset. Not only were they helpful in terms of people, but they were helpful in terms of encouraging people to come to us. And that was a plus factor in our favor, of course, very much so. Our relations with USC were not nearly so good but because they're a little farther away for one thing, and a different kind of institution, our relationships with the so called Claremont Colleges was also very good and that was helpful to us, in this complex of trying to get faculty, you see, who were eminently qualified to do this sort of things that you need done. So early in this interval time, painting a rather gloomy picture of it, we were able to draw outstanding people in the face of these difficulties, for example, in the field of mathematics we've got a person who had been Chairman of the Mathematics Department at one of the eastern universities. We were able to draw two people in science, one in physics, and one in chemistry, Foster Garden in chemistry. These were imminent people and they were mature people, and as soon as we were able to draw those people on the staff then the recruiting process began to easy a bit. And I was able to bow out of it to some extent, and they were able to come in. Then we were able to operate like an institution of higher education.

[27:20] JB: They began as department chair, and started to do the hiring.

[27:24] RP: Yes true, they gravitated to, they didn't come in immediately in some instances, as department chairs but the people who were there recognized the superiority of these folks in terms of experience and so on, and advocated there, goes to chairman of the department

[27:47] JB: What year did you bow out of the hiring process? Approximately.

[27:54] RP: I stayed with it for about the first five years, gradually, easing out of it.

[28:03] JB: With you and Del?

[28:04] RP: Yes.

[28:05] JB: Substituting one for the other.

[28:07] RP: Right, He would go to a selection of institution in the east one time, and then I go to the Midwest, the big ten, and then next year, I would go east and he might go to the institutions of the big ten. Ohio State, Minnesota, Michigan, and so on.

[28:31] JB: My impression is that you took a roll in most of what was going on campus that might be a direct role, it might be quite indirect role, but whether you delegated authority or not, you were in the thick of it. For example, you provided ex official over the college curriculum committee, in the late nineteen fifties. Let me ask you, what would you regard as your direct administrative responsibilities? What were the things that you were hands on responsible for, as it were?

[29:13] RP: I felt particularly competent in the areas generally described by administration that is organization and certain of the other details as I mentioned earlier. Finance was not one of my keen interest, and was not one of the areas in which I was particularly competent. I knew this, and therefore I had to get people who were strong in this area and was very fortunate in having Warner Masters, of course. But I had to be sure that if Warner someday left; we had somebody to back him up. And this was one of the reasons we recruited Richard Persale, who was from the University of Denver. And I've known him when I was at University of Colorado, I was aware of his competences there. And I was not particularly; I didn't feel particularly interested in administrative detail. This is one of the reasons that the Leo Wilson was such a help and subsequent and as I mentioned earlier, Carlo Spencer. In the other areas, that is what it took to make a strong university. I felt I had some, important contributions to make. I have been at the University of Colorado and watched that institution change.

[30:50] JB: Pardon me for just a moment, were about to run out of tape. [End of Tape 1.]

[31:05] JB: We were talking about the trips to Sacramento. Do you recall any particularly memorable encounters or experiences there involving legislators; anything particularly memorable from a human interest story, institutional interest standpoint?

[31:26] RP: We had the feeling that the Department of Finance looked upon us with great suspicion. Partially because finance and Carson was interested in getting well, as little in the way of giving us that they could manage to any given institution. And we had one rather memorable experience, I don't know who the people who were involved, but we had originally contended with the Department of Finance that we needed the land adjacent to our campus. They were not helpful, incidentally in getting Devonshire Downs transferred to us. They were, in a matter of fact, opposed to this concept. But when we got to Devonshire Downs property, then it became almost obviously necessary to get the land in between the Devonshire Downs and the existing campus. Prior to that time, finance had assumed, I suppose, that they were going to satisfy our needs by getting the land that was so called the lap of the campus that is the land between the Devonshire Downs and us, on Plumber and that general area. So they had done something that I think they probably subsequently regretted. They came and made surveys and talked to the people who were in residences there about taking over their property and how much it would cost etc. etc. etc., and make in many instances commitments. Well when we got the Devonshire Downs property, they'd already committed this other they were felt necessary to follow through you see and buy the property, and as Warner indicated, I forgot one hundred thousand dollars an acre something like this, it was very expensive gesture and finance was livid about this business. They

felt we had coerced them into doing something that they just didn't want to do. And we didn't have any friends there.

[34:08] JB: But they had in fact walked into it.

[34:09] RP: That's, right. They fixed it so that they couldn't get out of it, I guess.

[34:17] JB: Did you feel, and this raises a question, which I think, I'm inclined to ask, but it almost comes up automatically. Do you feel when we became a system we have lost something in the way of the edge of the campus?

[34:55] RP: I made a note about that John. Yeah. Because, to recap it a bit. We under the Department of Education, as I say we were, felt kind of saddled with the concept of the Teacher's College per say. And therefore those of us who envisioned a institution of broader scope, were very pleased to have a separate identity with a separate board of trustees. And we envisioned then that this would give us, not only the kind of prestige that we needed, but the kind of opportunity to explore all the possibilities that were in store for us. So, as I say, a number of us, probably all of the State College Presidents were supportive of the concept. But something happened shortly thereafter that was kind of alarming. The uniqueness by campus, tended to lose something when we got trustees per say, there was an effort, I think, on the part of the trustees to have a kind of symmetry about the places that negated against our unique opportunities. And I mentioned now, the opportunity that we had in the field of drama and music, for example, because of our location. The trustees, using this is an example, tenanted too assume that each institution would have this kind of pattern of offerings, let's say, in the area of drama and music. I'm singling this out, because it's just relevant by way of illustration. But it would not be feasible for Stanislaus, for example, to expect the same kind of major emphasis in this area that we would have at San Fernando Valley State College, for example. But the trustees as I indicated gave us the impression rather early that they were in control of the State College Presidents have had their day, as it were. Partially I suspect this was to satisfy the feeling of a number of the faculty that the State College Presidents were running these places dictatorial. And I remember a critical meeting that was held on our campuses, in a matter of fact. When some of the activists among the faculty, and I don't think there are campus it was someplace else. Raise the question about this control concept, and I remember the Board of Trustees to satisfy your evening of concern about this. Remember, the State College Presidents work for us on the day to day basis. Well, that's a kind of a shocking thing to make public, you see, and it was disturbing to the president's, I'm sure of that. And I remember it, because it seemed so unnecessary. All of us are interested in doing the very best we can by the institutions at hand. But as I say, I think this member of the Trustees that sort of carried away at that particular time to satisfy the feeling on the part of the faculty that some of the state college presidents were pretty dictatorial. Now, as it turns out, I think it has been a plus factors are much greater than the minus factors. The State Colleges have grown, immensely, more respected now than they were previously. The size of the institutions. Even is a reflection of the tremendous support State Colleges have had. And fortunately, we've had some very strong able members of the board of trustees who have been instrumental in giving a kind of prestige to the system that is very necessary. I think the State Colleges are still struggling for their place in the sun as it were. But a great deal of the groundwork has been laid for their success in this regard.

[40:00] JB: So, on balance, it was a game?

[40:01] RP: Oh yes, decidedly so.

[40:05] JB: So we're moving from topic to topic and hope you don't mind it at all.

[40:09] RP: No I don't.

[40:11] JB: I've heard two stories about the origins of the architecture for the Oviatt Library, and one was told to me by Warner, and one was told by Norm Tents, and the story from Norm is that you envisioned Oviatt as a jewelry box, at night at least, the library ought to look like a jewelry box. And Warner says oh no it was designed after the Parthenon. Who is right? Or is either?

[40:41] RP: I don't think either one. No, my concept with the library was and that I repeated this many times, the library should be the heart of the campuses it's a pulsating heart of the campus, as it were, and things should emanate from the library, as it were throughout the campus. We wanted the library physically placed in the position where this would be evident or would help this concept. Secondly, the library, needed to be a place for serenity of thought, where this is probably stressing it considerably. Where students, with that in mind, to come together and get acquainted with really good friends, like Aristotle, so a setting that would be remarkable important in their subsequent lives. Now then, Mackleberry, who was the library at that time, marvelous person incidentally, did you know Stan?

[42:03] JB: You know I did. But it was only barely I heard stuff about him.

[42:06] RP: Well, he went onto very considerable heights, speaking from my brain, University of Texas, and he went from there to the big ten but I forget which institution of the big ten. He was a highly regarded person in library circles. I spent a lot of time talking with Stan about the role of the library in the kind of context that were just speaking about what is it. What kind of emphasis does the library have on the campus as a whole. And, generally speaking, I think he envisioned it this way. Now, then Tennis maybe has picked up this idea and sort of given it extra aura of respect, but the captain was very fortunate of having two people, like these two people, they're not a like, necessarily, but they certainly have given the feeling that the library is the most important adjunct to the total campus there's no question about that.

[43:19] JB: And that was your sense of things.

[43:20] RP: Yes, that's right. I felt of the place of the library was, as I indicated, that it needed to be the heart. Let things emanate from the library, as it were.

[43:31] JB: We have yet a third metaphor here. You realize now, that we've gone from jewelry box to Parthenon to heart. I'll take you as a final source on this.

[43:42] RP: Well, no broader course, you got to bear in mind, Waters was interested primarily, not primarily, but largely in the physical show of these things. You see, well these librarians are more interested in the philosophical facets here, the underlined influence of the library on campus as a whole, there. The difficult part of this is less important, I say, then the major rule the library places in the lives of these people.

[44:23] JB: We've talked about some of the ways in which you went about realizing your priorities as President and a couple came up, which I hadn't planned to ask you about, they cover conversation as we began and before we went on tape. But now I very much want to. One is the emphasis you placed on your administration, members of your administration joining service clubs and the life in The Valley, street outreach, could you talk a bit about it.

[44:53] RP: Oh, I'm delighted to because it was so essential, as I indicated earlier, we were a Johnny come lately, not only in State College circles, but also as an institution in The Valley itself. So we had to make our impact as quickly as we could to get two ideas across. One is we wanted The Valley to feel like the campus was a integrating influence. Now you bear in mind, The Valley had something like twenty six chambers of commerce, for example.

[45:30] JB: Is that right.

[45:31] RP: And I don't know how many rotary and kiwanis and lions clubs and so on. Innumerable members, and to some extent there only in a rivalry role with each other, you see, Sherman Oaks is against whether they [inaudible] All right, we from the start, probably better put, I from the start felt that we needed to try to, bring our emphasis to bear on uniting all these various and sundry avenues of concerning interest. So at one of our early meetings, we advised the administrative staff to pick out an area in which they want to make their contribution in influencing the community. And participating in community activities, so, Del Stelk joined the Reseda rotary club, for example. Willard Edwards became a member of the kiwanis club of, I think, Van Nuys. It was a big club and became our representative on the integrating of Chambers of Commerce, but I forgot what they called this, he was, Leo Wilson took on the industrial association. And then Del Oviatt took on the parent teacher association, which is a very big organization in the valley. Warner became a member of the Northridge rotary club, and so. Then Leo Wilson joined the kiwanis club over in San Fernando. So we spread ourselves around in the community as it were. They're started organization called the executive dinner club, and I joined this, and I was already a member of the Van Nuys rotary club, which is, if it wasn't one of the biggest club in The Valley was one of the biggest of the rotary clubs in the Valley. I've been a member of the rotary club, president of the rotary club in Vegas, as a matter of fact. So this was an easy transition for me. Now a kind of a sideline, one of the things that we hoped to emphasize partially was to get them involved in a project, a cohesive project where they all could get involved. So in the early years we thought an area would be too single out field of the role of the institution developing potential leaders, not only from The Valley but for the state of California or whatever. And in this connection than these service clubs could play an instrumental role and we were going to try to emphasize the moral and spiritual values concept of leadership, which is the theory. Willard Edwards took on the responsibility and we held on the campus a number of workshops for all these clubs, the rotary clubs were always there, that I'm speaking about, and they were pretty enthusiastic about this and these sessions were all day Saturday for example, we had students, members of the community, and members of the faculty that participated. Unfortunately we just ran out of steam because so many things going on we couldn't push this idea too it's maximum possibilities. But the associative chambers of commerce, the industrial association were also integrating influences in The Valley and we had to be very active in both of these organizations. So my feeling was that we could make a contribution and we could do the institution a great deal of good, in terms of good will, by participating, and by participating I mean actively participating, became officers in these clubs, and I became president of the executive dinner club, for example, which is a valley wide organization. I participated in the Fernando awards programs, which is these programs, if you're not familiar with them.

[50:14] JB: I'm not.

[50:15] RP: The Fernando award is made each year to the person who's judged the outstanding citizen of the San Fernando Valley, and it's a big dinner affair in which the mayor of the city and a lot of other

notables come and participate. And I was the so called historian door to about five or six of these when Robert Fuller was made, Fernando award, Russ Quisenberry and so on. People who were involved with us, I did the background, as it were, the relating of the history of The Valley to the accomplishments of these people who are being honored. So I say, all of us had a role in this.

[51:12] JB: Did it work, was it helpful?

[51:13] RP: I think it was, I think it was very helpful. I haven't any way of measuring the help, of course in this connection. But, well, one of the evidences we looked at the pictures earlier. It was the reason why Hubert Humphrey came to the campus. It was the one place where he could meet all people of The Valley. It was the reason why Rockefeller came to the campus why Linda Johnson came to campus. Why Cabot Lodge came to the campus. The campus was the center for activities of The Valley, and I think that maybe these, haven't used that just detailed, we're helping in making the campus this kind of center for The Valley.

[52:01] JB: Interesting, because we tried over the phone to put that together. That strange. You mentioned summer administrated workshops,

[52:14] RP: Yes.

[52:15] JB Each year. We've come to a thing since the mid-seventies, so called long range planning. I believe it was first implemented in 1977, did you have long range planning in the face of this explosive growth, or a long range model with year to year plans unfolding? How's the planning done, in other words?

[52:44] RP: These administrative workshops were both short and long term oriented workshops. We tried to plan in some detail what we were going to get accomplished in the year ahead. But at the same time we wanted what we're accomplishing in the year ahead to relate to our ultimate goal. For instance, we knew early that we were going to reach twenty thousand students in ten years. Now then what kind of an institution is required to handle twenty thousand students? You see, when we're at three thousand students at the moment. So progressively we had to, we had to build the campus, to match the challenge, you see. Now then, as I indicated, I better go. We also envision that if we were left free to grow without any restrictions, that we could be a mammoth institution. All right, with that involved we had to have so many acres for parking, but getting that number of acres of parking we had planned on double decking that parking, at least double decking it. There may be some instances instead of double decking that we would have high rise parking facilities. We had to have residence halls of some consequence. We ran into some unfortunate problems there, but all of these things had to relate, you see, and we had to keep them in the planning process, because it was inevitable that we were going to have this confrontation at sometime in the future. What we going to do about this, we better plan from let's say part A instead of waiting until we get to C or D to start thinking about it.

[54:47] JB: Can we just touch a minute or more on your forecasting tools. Because I know there's a brigade of resistance to the idea that The Valley was going to explode the way that it did, with the Department of Finance. They didn't want to allocate the land or the money to grow. How are you proving to them that this was coming?

[55:04] RP: Well as I have said we had the evidence of institutions like the telephone company that was projecting its needs. The California Department of Water and Power, for example, had a number of

projections, and this is one of them here, of the Los Angeles headquarters of city development association, which I served as president for one year. There resources were magnificent, in projecting the kind of growth that was essential you see. So by participating in this agency, which was largely the creature of the Department of Water and Power, we were able to draw on their resource you see, for a lot of help. And they gave it to us in terms of what they thought the population was going to be and the nature of the population that is whether they're going to be professional people or other sorts of people in this context.

[56:13] JB: The reason I asked that question is because you seem to have had better forecasting tools then were available when we reached steady state since the seventies.

[56:24] RP: Very possible because you see it was necessary, we just didn't have any, there were no alternatives. They were not necessarily mattered about wanting to do this, we just had to do it.

[56:51] JB: We've talked about your priorities as president, I've liked to ask you what you view as your greatest achievements as president. And, if any, what your greatest disappointments are about the ten years you served in that role?

[57:09] RP: That's a pretty hard question to answer John. The achievements were not my achievements; they were achievements of the total community. I think we did realize the goals we set for ourselves that is being able to accommodate the students as the need came. We were able to get sufficient physical resources in the way of buildings and grounds, to match the kind of anticipated growth that we had. That's never quite exactly what you'd like to have, but it's adequate to this time. And as I say that achievement could be accredited to a very, very large number of people, our advisory board the press of The Valley, the media that helped us, these various agencies that we've test upon, of course, the tremendous dedication of the staff and the faculty, the faculty and the students. We had some students who are very, very competent, like this Vince Berava, for example, who's made a very considerable name for himself as head of the Census Bureau and a lot of things; he was president of the student body. And incidentally, to divert just a bit, every week I met with the student by the officers, too luncheon.

[58:50] JB: Oh really?

[58:51] RP: Yes, we had lunch in the conference room, the Presidents conference room, every, I forgot what day of the week, I think it was Tuesday. Every Tuesday they came and had lunch with me. And we tried to get problems of the students, you see, aired and whatever resources we could bring to bear to solve the problems with those sessions.

[59:15] JB: Throughout your presidency?

[59:17] RP: Yes, so that those were the achievements. Now the disappointments, I think that we were not able to realize the significance of the institution in certain areas. For instance, in the performing arts, we had opportunities that we didn't really match. We could have done probably better than we did. In Certain disciplines we had opportunities to be among the very best. And somewhere along the line we either lost some of the people or we lost some of the incentive to realize that. Take the field of geography, for example. See we started off with a magnificent advantage in geography, and attempted, I won't say taper off. But it tended to level off instead of our being able to climb ahead as we probably could have done if we have really taken advantage of all opportunities and kept some of the people that

we lost, for instance. So in these specific instances, in a few cases, I think engineering is another one. That we had a running start in engineering and I'm not sure that it's lessened any, but it probably hasn't reached the kind of level that we might have reached if it had been left to grow as it started to grow. Now then,

[01:01:11] JB: We got you of tape here.

[01:01:12] RP: Ok. [End of Tape 2.]

[01:01:13] JB: Let's just switch it. We're talking about direct responsibilities and delegated responsibilities, and you're pointing out you didn't make a direct interest in finance or detail; you left detail to Wilson and finance to Warner Masters.

[01:01:39] RP: And in the early years of the campus, it was, these were highly critical areas, particularly finance, because the state colleges were somewhat on their own. Each institution had to fight its own battle, as it were with the agencies in the state and that had control. So we had Warner make numerous trips to Sacramento, of course, to work directly with the Division of Finance, which had a tight rein, as it were on all state colleges. And in addition to that, Warner began to be very effective with members of the legislature, who were representatives of the San Fernando Valley. So we entertained on the campus as frequently as they were available. These legislators pointed out to them what our particular needs were. We felt two things. One, we felt that we have to get a lot of help as quickly as we could because we're going to grow so rapidly. Secondly, a number of the other state colleges were in the same venue that we were. They had to grow rapidly, too, so we were competing, in a sense, one with the other. Now, one of the things that militated somewhat in our favor. Was that we had a large number of representatives, considering the whole Los Angeles concept, to help us with our problems, as against say, they're ones up in Humboldt and some of the other places. But this was one of the reasons why we, I'm going to shut this off for a minute.

[01:03:43] JB: Although it's very sensitive. [Tape Stops.]

[01:03:53] JB: Let me ask you, did you have a distinct, what you would refer to as a distinct administrative style? Was there a Prator style to administration?

[01:04:04] RP: I don't know that I could call it a style per se. It might have been the approach. I had a feeling that initially at least. I better keep a fairly tight rein on as much on the campus activity as I could, because it was so relevant to the history of the institution. I already mentioned the land base, for example, and the organizational structure. But we had an opportunity to have a very high quality institution, if we didn't make too many mistakes in these early years. First of all, the population was there. Secondly, the San Fernando Valley is a fairly elite section of the Los Angeles complex and was at that time, at least, so that the opportunities we had were evident, and we need to be as sure as we could be that we didn't make any serious errors in terms of alienating the community, and hopefully in making also some inroads on the concept of the kind of prestigious necessary to have for an institution to be the quality we envisioned.

[01:05:39] JB: Did you have an institutional model, for example, you've spent ten years at Colorado. Was that a model for you, or was there any singleness, to this model?

[01:05:46] RP: Well, I think that you got to bear in mind John, that I was a major in school administration at the University of California and, during the time that I was a graduate student, not necessarily there. In conjunction with getting my degree there I was in the splendid position to study higher education and all of this parish ramifications, my doctoral thesis was in the area of admissions, what it required to do college work, where having the university work and also the kind of administrative structure that was necessary to get the job done. Byway of illustration, I found out that it took when I became director of admissions and records at University of Colorado. I found out that it was taking approximately three hours for students to start and finish the registration process, and this looked like a abnormally long time. So I set about immediately selecting a member of our staff in the office of admissions and records, had that person goes to a number of institutions that were particularly successful in doing this quickly. And then we began to make modifications to the extent that within a year so we were able to register student in forty five minutes. This was the kind of back ground encouraged me to do a number of things in administration that related to the kind of explosive growth we were going to have at the San Fernando Valley State College, I'm usually listen to administration.

[01:07:34] JB: You went back to teaching after you left the presidency. How active were you in shaping the curriculum while you were President?

[01:07:52] RP: As I mentioned earlier, I envisioned the university complex for our institution, and my feeling was that we had a tremendous opportunity, particularly in the practical sciences. University of California was obviously entrenched in the theoretical sciences. The University of California is interested in preserving their role in the higher echelons of graduate's services and studies, for instance. They were not particularly sympathetic to the practical areas. Now the practical areas were business and engineering, and although they had strong schools in this area they were mortgaged it in the in their research and the kind of exploratory growth of these disciplines than they were in turning out engineers, for example, in sequins, people in business. Nursing is another area in which they were not, that the university was not interested. My feeling was we have to move into those areas as quickly as we could, and I'm speaking about the system as a whole, not necessarily our campus. And pick up whatever opportunities were there for us to develop strong majors in these fields. And we were successful in drawing a number of people to our campus from the University of California, who were disillusioned by the universities, disinterest in more practical aspects of the campus, and more interested in the theoretical our people who were interested in the practical, not steeped in theoretical concepts as it were.

[01:09:44] JB: There was a great deal of emphasis placed on, at least among the faculty, on becoming a liberal arts institution with a strong stress and traditional disciplines. And I'm gathering that you had a very different concept on that.

[01:09:59] RP: I didn't think I certainly doesn't oppose to the liberal arts, I was a liberal arts graduate at the University of Colorado, in both the back part and the master's degree. No, I didn't have any contingent with the concept of a strong program here, but I didn't feel like this was going to be one of our, one of the areas in which we could make a lot of progress in the face of the kind of competition we had. We're surrounded by institutions who excelled in the liberal arts, the whole. Clermont College concept, for example, strong areas in the liberal arts of course at UCLA and as I pointed out they were trying to hold the advantages they had in this area. As against the kind of competition they felt would be coming from the state colleges. So my thought was our great opportunities were gonna be working and

lie in the more practical field. In this connection I was probably not especially sympathetic to Grand Dunkley's emphasis. He was interested in our becoming strong liberal arts institutions. And, as you say, a number of our faculty where and some of us in the state college presidents, were sympathetic to the idea. But as I've explained, we didn't feel that this was going to be our strong suit.

[01:11:57] JB: As a matter of finding a rule between the two preexisting sectors, community colleges, on the one hand, with their strong local support and the University of California, with its constitutional charter.

[01:12:09] RP: Right.

[01:12:10] JB: As you described to Justin Garner, in 1980.

[01:12:13] RP: Yes.

[01:12:14] JB: So this was partly matter of fashioning a role for us.

[01:12:17] RP: That's right.

[01:12:18] JB: Why?

[01:12:19] RP: That way had to make a place for ourselves. And we had to do it rather quickly, because this explosive growth wasn't an encouraging concept. In this context, we also had several unique advantages in the San Fernando Valley for example the whole movie industry is located in that area, the emphasis on music, for example, and drama gave us unique opportunities so early in the history of our campus. I was encouraging Clarence Wiggins who was a member of our staff who would come with me from Bakersfield to get cracking at getting as many contacts that he could make with people in this area and of course early we brought onto our advisory board Steve Allen and Francis Letter and Livie who were all in these arts programs as it were, performing arts. And they were helpful giving us contacts that we could draw on and a number of part time people that were able to draw on the campus we're magnificently qualified to perform in these areas. Now this was one of the unique places for us among the state colleges even, because of our location.

[01:14:03] JB: You brought Paul Walker and Clarence Williams with you from Bakersfield?

[01:14:06] RP: Yes.

[01:14:07] JB: I understand they were given others that wanted to come but did not get invitation.

[01:14:09] RP: Yes.

[01:14:10] JB: You were very careful in who you choose.

[01:14:17] RP: Yes in the case of in the case of Wiggins, I've already pointed out, he was a strong person in the field of music and is just a strong person to, and same could be said for Paul Walker. But Paul had some rather unique qualifications for us. He was able to bridge this gap between the liberal arts, as it were, and the practical arts. He was, his rapport with people in the liberal arts was excellent, and I felt on occasion he probably was contentious with my point of view, in this consideration. But I think he understood why I was pushing so hard in these practical fields. And he was good at communication, excellent at communication, and soon made good contacts for us, among the press and the media, television, and radio.

[01:15:25] JB: Could I raise just a couple of impressions,

[01:15:26:] RP: Sure.

[01:15:27] JB: Which would come from my conversation with Paul and other observations. One is that you and Paul, for example, could fight hard over an issue having to do with campus and walk away from it, close friends.

[01:15:45] RP: Yes.

[01:15:46] JB: It didn't really matter to your friendship at all.

[01:15:47] RP: No.

[01:15:48] JB: It had to do with what was going on in the office,

[01:15:49] RP: Right.

[01:15:50] JB: The institute,

[01:15:51] RP: Right.

[01:15:52] JB: Another impression I have is you could delegate with confidence and ease, and you did a good deal of delegating, so long as you have people you trust to delegate to.

[01:16:01] RP: True and in this context, I was marvelously blessed. Del Oviatt was a strong supporter and a strong factor on the campus, and I could delegate a tremendous amount of responsibility, he always followed through. The same with Warner Master, I felt close to them as colleagues. They were very dependable colleagues, and like the episodes between Walker and me. We had the same thing with Oviatt and with Warner. And the end result was I suppose this, that as soon as we got all the information on the table and a decision had to be made, they didn't like, we made it, and they followed through. It was no backpacking at all among these people that we were marvelous lucky in the light of the explosive growth that we had. And the contentious times, sixties were a bad times in higher education for everybody not only did we have activist in the faculty; we had tremendous activism and questionable students.

[01:17:31] JB: We'll talk with you about both of those. Why don't we start with the faculty, take them in that order. What did you see as the faculty's role in shaping a new and explosively growing campus? And did they live up to that role in the end?

[01:17:46] RP: Well, I think I pointed this out an another interview. That early in my life experience I've found that faculty were primarily interested in their discipline that the institution as a hole was down the letter of importance as far as they were concerned. And therefore, to keep the concept of the institutions as a hole in the foreground, the members of the administrative staff had to take a very strong position with respect to this idea, sometimes in conflict with what the factory would like. Also, we had to divide up the spoils as it were, and where history might think they needed certain library allocation. We had to decide whether it's going to go to history or geography, or one of the other disciplines. And we couldn't be terribly concerned about hurt feelings. It's, just one of the facts of life. We wanted to stay friends with everybody, and I think, for the most part, did. And this is where people

like Oviatt and Walker, and Masters were very helpful. They could bridge these gaps, as able to as anybody I have ever seen.

[01:19:20] JB: Early on in the late fifties they were faculty meetings once a week.

[01:19:23] RP: Yes.

[01:19:24] JB: Did you preside over them?

[01:19:25] RP: Yes, not the faculty meetings, the faculty meetings per se. When we, to back up a bit, one of the things that we mentioned earlier the administrative structure, I felt early in our association with the institutional advisor and with my association with the institution that we had to downplay the general faculty per se and get a represented group that could meet more frequently and be more facile in terms of response. So we needed the senate concept and then the senate was then supposed to be representatives of the faculty when I came the general faculty met, the whole faculty met and deliberated and obviously we're gonna have several thousand people this was not a feasible plan, so we had to have a representative group. I suggested we have a senate concept and, turn this problem over to the committee of seventeen that we mentioned earlier and we concluded that we would have sixty members of staff who would be on the senate. Because I didn't want this thing to get out of focus in terms of what our objectives were. I insisted on being the presiding officer of the senate during the early years. I don't think this was particularly popular at the time, but it was acceptable and it was a marvelous way for me to keep my association with the faculty sharp. Every week, meet and we debated a lot of issues. And it was an opportunity for me to explain to the faculty representatives why it was essential that we have adequate land based, for example. Why was it essential to have strong people in positions of leadership for recruitment purposes. And although these were not issues that were part of the agenda, they would creep up into discussions of other items that were on the agenda. And for the most part, I felt it was an opportunity to hear what the faculty had to say about critical issues. And they were pretty outspoken.

[01:21:56] JB: I'm sure they were. I got called by the time I came on board. They certainly were. What kinds of decisions were the faculties included in and what kinds of decisions where they not included in? And what came before the senate, what didn't? Anything different from today, you perceived or different at least from the time of which you retired?

[01:22:21] RP: Well, I think in the early years, we were involved with a great deal of detail more than we were involved with philosophy, as it were. I think later, we began to take a much more mature outlook on the role of the faculty, for example, in development of the institutions, they were critical in terms of the hiring process. They were the key people who would not only help bring to the campus outstanding leaders, but they were critical in terms of retention of the best of the ones that we were able to recruit. Also the Faculty, of course, the old line of the institutions is torn between research and teaching. We had to emphasize in our case, and not just the administration, team members of the faculty that our role had to be pretty much emphasizing teaching as against research, in the early years. We had to make a name for ourselves as a good teaching institution. Research was necessary to be good, teaching, and to be good at teaching, but the teaching was a highly significant factor with us, and therefore we tried to wrestle with how to do measure this concept of teaching. And, of course, that's a perennial problem in institutions of higher education. What constitutes good teaching? Well as a member of our faculty says, it's a kind of an inherent thing and you know who the good teachers are. You just know when the

students know who they are. And the poor ones, they know who they are also. Now, in our case, we had to get rid of the poor ones if we could.

[01:24:27] JB: How successful were we at that?

[01:24:31] RP: As a matter of fact theirs probably more successful than we thought. We had a kind of rule of thumb, if there's any doubt in the early years, we had to let it go. That meant that we probably let some people go who were very good. But this was kind of a rule of thumb, that if there was any doubt in anybody mind and we had a critical examination process that started and worked its way up through the echelons to primary Oviatt's concerned. If there was any doubt in any one of these levels, serious doubt, then we let them go and faculty became greatly involved in this process, of course. They were not only involved, they were insistent on their role, and I think rightfully so.

[01:25:29] JB: In your interview with Justin Grener two years ago, you referred to the faculty as difficult to manage.

[01:25:35] RP: Yeah.

[01:25:36] JB: That parse struck me, and you've just said almost the same thing, a moment ago. They were contentious?

[01:25:43] RP: Right, and I think practically all college presidents would agree with that feeling. As I said, it stems from the fact that their primary concern is with the discipline and the larger administrative concept to school and the college or university as a whole is less important.

[01:26:18] JB: We've talked a bit about land acquisition. I want to talk to you about students to, but perhaps we can talk about land acquisition, just a bit. That was a crucial priority, and we dealt with it in part, and you dealt with in part with Grener. And of course, I have transferred to that. We know it was a key priority, and I know essentially what strategy was, talking with you and having talked with Warner. We wound up with something over three hundred acres, what was your ultimate goal to get what we wanted?

[01:26:58] RP: I felt that if we can get the Devonshire Downs property, that gives the lien on the property in between the Devonshire Downs and the existing camps at that time, and as you probably found out from Warner, with the last acquisitions of the campus came pretty expensive.

[01:27:16] JB: Yup.

[01:27:18] RP: We needed an integrated campus now, by way of illustration. Somewhat early in the process of using what influence we had to get what we felt we needed, we invited, or I invited, the Governor down, Governor Pat Brown, to the campus. And we took a little trip around what I hope to be the ultimate campus and stopped near Lesson Street to look out over this expanse of that time, we had just a few buildings underway. I pointed out to the governor that within a relatively short period of time, this would be a complex of institutions, similar to the sort of thing at UCLA. Many buildings and some of them have had to be high rise buildings because of the nature of the potential growth. This comment was very interesting, he said; boy are you quite a dreamer, aren't you? And I said well with your help we can make these dreams come true, and he was helpful from that point on, of course it also helped having Julian Beck as his administrator assistant.

[01:28:43] JB: Did he brush on any reservations about where the money was gonna come from?

[01:28:47] RP: He did indicate that there were a lot of calls on the finances of the state. And then we'd have to take our place, and my response was, well I hope we could take our rightful place in this context. And he seemed to be impressed, I don't know if he was necessary impressed to the point where he helped us any more than anybody else. But he was, he was sympathetic, to put it that way.

[01:29:20] JB: Spoke on campus, not to long ago.

[01:29:21] RP: Oh did he?

[01:29:22] JB: The year before last, yes. Let's touch on something we've, again, already brushed on. That is your trips to Sacramento; you've talked with Greener a good deal about this because, of course, his focus was on the system.

[01:29:37] RP: Yes.

[01:29:38] JB: And that was very useful from my standpoint, I understand you have something like seven or eight times a year.

[01:29:45] RP: That's Right.

[01:29:46] JB: On average. I know how it, approximately, how it operated. And I know from Warner what he did up there, and how he approached it, and we're just about to go off tape. So I'll hold this question in thin air until we reverse these.

[01:29:59] RP: Okay. [End of Tape 3.]

[01:30:22] JB: Okay we are back on tape.

[01:30:23] RP: Alright we'll to continue. That also, we probably didn't maximize the effort of some of our citizens to develop financial resources for the kind of icing as it were on the cake of excellence by raising funds for special purposes. Like faculty research, for example, which is now pretty much underway as you know, we have some 80 million dollars now in that fund from the people in the foundation. We had people who were willing to help. It could have been very helpful to us if we had the time to use that resource in developing these extra funds as it were for these extra purposes that would have been very helpful to us, now this is one thing that I think Jim Cary has done very well. So he has been able to muster this kind of response and I think that as an aklade that we partially, because we're just didn't have the time, but also because we were unable to pinpoint the kind of people who could help us in this category. You see now so far, right off the top of my head, think of things that are disappointments or achievements either pretty much belongs there.

[01:32:22] JB: Were you administratively shorthanded, or were things just so frenzied that it was difficult to maintain all the balls in the air?

[01:32:32] RP: They were both related, we were very shorthanded, administratively speaking. To develop a kind of community resources that we test upon takes a lot of time and a lot of planning. We didn't have that kind of time planning. We didn't have the kind of people who could help us with press in terms of numbers, and so on, who could write stories and influence the people who were going to let's say, respond. We didn't have the kind of money that would be required to develop a strong athletic

programs or bands and the other things that tend to show. In that conjunction, we realized immediately that take, the field of athletics that I'm pretty familiar with. The chances of our having any particular place in the sun were very remote, still are very remote, and I think it's too many strong contenders, this area in the Los Angeles complex for San Fernando Valley, or Cal State Northridge, any particular role to play because of the excellence of the teams at UCLA and USC and the professional teams. But you've wasted a lot of time trying to compete in this area, and I think a lot of money trying to compete in these areas to. So my thought initially was, we ought to have a league within ourselves. We've got enough state college, and we could just play nobody except each other. And I worked hard at this, trying to get them to concede, two things. One, we couldn't afford to compete to get the kind of athletes that are going to be required for nationals significance, just can't afford it. I know this because I was a coach at one time. I know what it takes to sell in this area. Secondly, there tremendous obstacles to doing well here for instance, there's an insatiable appetite on part of these facilities and teams it's like feeding a tapeworm, the more you feed it the bigger it gets and the more you got to feed it, pretty soon it will eat you out of house and home. That's the way I'm judging this business. So I thought if we could get all the state college organized just kind of a league we could have a northern section and a southern section and have a playoff between champion down here and the champion up there. I couldn't get to first base with this, with the college presidents. They were not going to listen to this for one minute, I had a few people who came to all the meeting but they were not sympathetic with this idea. Some of them envisioned being national powers for example, and others of them felt that I had an ax to grind here I was more knowledgeable in a certain sense and some of the others and I must have some ulterior motive to try to push this off on them. There is suspicion involved, and I had a few supporters like Lang Store at Cal State Fullerton, but it was an impossible thing. But you see, the possibility was there and we could have had something, we could have played the bona fide athletes. We wouldn't really need to recruit we just use the kids that come and wanted to play. And we wouldn't have to do all this recruiting and all this fundraising abilities and stadia and all this sort of thing. Couldn't do it.

[01:36:33] JB: I had a chat with the head of state academic senate at Cal State Fullerton not too long ago, he said they're playing body bag games with their football team to generate revenue. Several are half a million, a million in the red with division 1.

[01:36:44] RP: Yeah, well as I say, it reflects what I said about going like this, it's like a tapeworm. I don't care how big you get you never get quite big enough you see, Michigan with, I don't know, twelve or fifteen coaches for the varsity team, and you got one hundred and some odd thousand people in the stadium. They still don't have enough money. Why? Because Ohio State will add something, then they have to have it in Michigan.

[01:37:13] JB: It's an arms race.

[01:37:15] RP: Yea, let's decide.

[01:37:20] JB: It's Germany, it's very Germany. I was talking to Paul about the sports programs, he and I chatted, you know, because he was dean of favs.

[01:37:28] RP: Yes.

[01:37:29] JB: Let me ask you this and that the question is linked in such a way that I'm going to ask it dully. And I don't think it will be an odd residence when I do. You decided to retire from the presidency

after ten years, at the same time student of peoples were in the offering. And I'm told you were very far sided in seeing what was coming.

[01:38:02] RP: Yes.

[01:38:03] JB: Was there a connection there?

[01:38:07] RP: No I don't think so. I anticipated, of course, it is going to get worse before it gets better. But my goal in retiring when I did was, I thought we had reached the end of the first phase for California State University Northridge. We had the land base that I've talked about, maybe too much. We had the organizational structure that I thought would fit the bill, and it was functioning. We had gained a kind of status among the people of the San Fernando Valley and among our sister institutions that I felt was promising. And as I saw it, at that particular time we were ready to start the second phase and the second phase I felt was going to be a pretty long one. This was too implement all these possibilities that were germinating and to settle down and let the institution grow in its normal course, with particular emphasis on the quality concept that needed to come. And I felt this was next phase and I thought this would be a very long one, and somebody ought to come in who was relatively fresh and able to cope with this concept. Now there's probably a little personal feeling about this, I felt as an administrator, I was best able to start and push something to its maximum possibilities but to settle down and run it was not my cup of tea. I've just not especially interested in that kind of challenge. I had left Bakersfield after we had already developed the campus and was now ready to run itself as it were. And the exciting thing to me, an administration, is too be at the ground floor and push these things to see what the outcome is going to be, then when we get to the outcome and let somebody else run it. With respect to the trouble, a thing happened to me that I don't know that anybody has ever talked about, particular. But you see the sixties, as you reflect on it, were troubling times, not only to the San Fernando Valley State College, we probably had as little as most institutions had. But the last, my last year, I hadn't necessary planed on this. We've had the spring before, an episode that was distressing, the students had invaded the corridors of large instructional structure, and the police were called and we had a confrontation. And I came on to the campus; this was on a Friday afternoon about four o'clock, I think. And they were everywhere, to the administration building. This president of student body, William Snyder, met me at the door and said, Dr. Prator, there waiting on you up in your office. They completely crowded the facilities, and I said, I forget what this kids first name was, I said you go back and tell him that I'm not going to go up to my office. If they're going to see me, there going to see me out on the campus. So go up there and tell them I'm waiting out here for them, because I wanted them to clear the building, it dangerous to have them in their by the numbers, since there was several thousand of them. Well, at this particular time, we were trying about four or five kids who are guilty of infraction. So this thing that I spoke about crowding the foyer of the campus and a committee of faculty and students were sitting in judgment on these people as to whether were going to expellee them or what we were going to do. So I want to get the building clear, and he went up and addresses the leaders and we had some very forceful ones that kicked in the shin often, some of the others were really tough characters, they were imports and I don't know where they come from out there, they weren't there very long. At any rate they came down onto the campus, and they had three things that they wanted to be sure and get cleared with me. One, they wanted to disarm the Police, for example, carrying a firearms. Secondly, they could meet wherever they chose to meet. It had to be in the outdoors that would be required, and then they wanted the exoneration of these people who were on charges. So I said to the first one, that disarming the police is entirely up to you. Soon as you get quiet and we don't have any of these kinds of problems

and this kind of advantage that you have in numbers over our people who are few in number that be a positive factor in terms of what kind of armament that police had to have. With respect to the facilities there here for educational purposes, not for rebel causing and so on, we can't afford to have you fill the buildings, their fire restrictions and a lot of other things. So the answer to that is no. And then we haven't got the end for this trial is underway here at the present time. Well, a lot of her reign went on here. One kid got up and raised hell and that the kids were raising hell. So a big flack starts with this particular student, and was a very good meeting in terms of airing the difficulties and one of the novelties at the time, because there hadn't been many of these kind of experiences on other campuses. What I'm coming to the next year, we anticipated that they're going to be pretty troublesome times. We had a youngster by the name of, what was his name; he was vice president of the student body. His name just escapes me at the present time. But he came to see me. Towards the end of the summer, and he said would you like some help, in respect to this next year, among the students. And I said, I really can use all the help we can get. And he said, leave it to me. I'll get them organized. Well, the first thing that was to happen, two things that were to happen, one of the kids by the name of Freed, who was a very active activist, a member the Democratic society student.

[01:45:28] JB: That free.

[01:45:31] RP: He came to the registration and to interrupt the process, we had set parameters where they could have meetings and he meet deliberately outside the parameters, and I had said to our campus police, if any of this happens don't spend any time, book him right now and take him down and put him in the jail, just like this. So they did, and took him down and found a number of things that were interesting when they kept through this process. So they're going to have a mass meeting, protest meeting, and they're going to come by bus from UCLA and from all the other campuses and really have a showdown. This kid that I'm talking about and they're going to meet me up in the outdoor area. He arranged to have all the members of the athletic team and the supporters that he could gather to come. And they got out of their classes early, and they took all the front seats, all the front places to sit. So that when the meeting started and they had a person I think from Valley Junior College who was a noted rabble rouser, who was going to be the speaker. And when he got up to say this is an institution and as the first president to allow you to do this and so on. The kids down front, say ya we're number one then he gets somebody else to say something that gets him started, ya were number, well the meaning just broke up in to a tremendous turmoil and the, now to show you how alarming this was. Apparently, a number of these people have come with sawed off cue sticks, you see. There was going to be a real bloody battle.

[01:47:25] JB: That is imperative. They were prepared to fight.

[01:47:28] RP: They were prepared to fight. Well, what happened when this became evident, and I think this probably developed kind of spontaneously. Remember the athletic team walked right inside, one of these people who had this weapon, you see, to be sure he wasn't going to use it on anybody. And meeting broke up and we had no problem at all that year, just like that, you see. So I didn't anticipate in a sense, it was going to be such a thing has happened. And it wasn't the kind of context it was in the context that I just described. That happened the next year. You see, it came over the segment of the students, the black students, who incarcerated members of the administrative staff in the building itself. We really hadn't anticipated anything like this, and I don't know that anybody had, way knew that we're going to have more of this rabble rousing thing. And I won't say what I would have done had I been

there because I don't know what I would have done. But to say that i was clairvoyant in knowing something was going to happen, I think so.

[01:48:46] JB: How imprisoned, I think that Paul used.

[01:48:50] RP: Yea, well they tried to get me stay on, you see, the next year because they hadn't selected my successor. I had announced the summer before this last year that I served, that I was retiring at the end of that year and they had a whole year to find somebody to take my place, you see, and then they haven't done this. They came to see whether I would be willing to serve the next year. And I said, no, this is the end of it from me for two reasons. One is I would be a lame duck for one thing. Secondly, whatever control I had with you, had been moderated considerably by virtue of my lame duck status, and that I was gonna hang it up. You could get somebody else to do this job. And I wasn't on campus when this thing broke out, I was doing one of the administrative responsibilities that I had my class, they bring school.

[01:49:52] JB: One of them risk in doing oral history, is a risk of failing to ask the question you should of asked. And I wonder if there's some question you've been anticipating some serious questions that I would have asked, that I have not asked.

[01:50:08] RP: Well, let me see here John. And you might wanna turn that off while I review these.

[01:50:25] JB: Sure, Sure. [Tape stopes.]

[01:50:31] RP: I was going to talk, rather speak specifically about what role that I felt our advisory board played in the early years of the campus. But to back up just a bit we talked, or I talked recently about this student activist. I forgot to mention one little episode that I remember vividly, the most aggressive and popular activists on the campus during the year prior to my resignation, was a student by the name of Shinoff. And he was a remarkable person, as a matter of fact, he unsolicited, came to talk with me and the opening conversation went something like this. He says, I suppose you're pretty curious about me, and I thought that's very curious about it. And he said, well let me give you a little background. Now I don't know how much of this is fact, and how much is fiction, but he said, I've been an activist all my life, and I assume he probably was in his early twenties and maybe middle twenties. He said, I rode a motorcycle from Singapore to someplace important in the European situation I forgot which city it was. Which is just a very remarkable thing to have done you know, and then he recited a number of other experiences he had have absolutely fascinating, this guy had a really of a most unique background of experience. He was I understood a member of the central committee for students with democratic society which was the motivating agency on most of the campus you see, for a lot of the friction of the sixties and were there any of the other students that we have were on this council or not, I don't know they probably were because they were able, they were extremely able students these activists. As I say they were not regular students of ours they just come for, well I suppose a purpose. And this looked like a pretty interesting place because it was new and there was growing rapidly and I was at the center of things, you see, they could draw on their own resources form neighboring institutions.

[01:53:12] JB: Were they taking courses at all?

[01:53:13] RP: Beg your pardon?

[01:53:14] JB: Were they taking courses at all?

[01:53:15] RP: Oh, I think they were, yes they were they were involved they were there one of them was in sociology. I don't know what the others where, there were about five of them who were very able student leaders, set among these activists. And as I say, when the trouble began to wane they were gone and then they're just not around there anymore and to my knowledge, they hadn't been there very long before they, you know, took their active roles. Well, to get back to the advisor's board. We were very fortunate in having some unusually capable people. The records, of course, which show who they were. But let me just recap it. We had Ruskelbery who was the publisher of the Van Nuys, or rather The Valley Times newspaper and Pert Minitel who was the son of the founder of The Van Nuys News and Green sheet, and then Sam Hoffman, who was vice president for Rocket Dyne. And Nate Freedmen, who was one of the most active civic leaders in The Valley, remember they were the board of directors of Water and Power and a number of other agencies in Los Angeles, and a very outstanding attorney. We had from the field of the arts, as I mentioned, Dan Blythe, Steve Allen Francis Letterer. We had a person who was a member of the medical fraternity of considerable influence, Dr. Marshall, a union backer of course who was chairman of the advisory board, and a major factor in early history on campus. Mrs. Owens who was one of the most active leaders among women's groups, parent teacher association and so on. And Robert Fuller, who was president of the Valley Federal Savings and Loans. And these people were means of our getting to a number of agencies we couldn't reach otherwise. You see, the press for example, is obvious what they could do for us. And they were very helpful with all these problems that I've pointed out, the acquisitions to campus and so on. The fair didn't go easily I might say that Devonshire Downs. It was kind of contentious the people who were on the board of directors and who are in influential in this, the agricultural circles. They didn't want to see this fair abolished at all. So these people that I've mentioned a number of them were the most influential in pointing out that The Valley was really not suited to this agricultural concept that had been major apart of affairs to that time. And when we entertained people like the board of trustees, which we did several times. They picked up bill, these people did, the members of our advisory board. They have been very helpful to any venture that we wanted, Steve Allen, for example, helped us with certain of the facilities of the little theater.

[01:57:41] JB: And design.

[01:57:42] RP: Well, and how to make the most of the facilities that we had, sort of thing. Francis Letterer, very helpful in making us contacts with the Hollywood contingent, who could give us names and places and people who would be willing to serve without faith in some of the capacities that we required. So these people were most helpful in these early years of campus.

[01:58:20] JB: There's a remarkable sense of, if you use the word that's in the news these days is neovoluntarism. That is our administrator's are out as corneas and rotarians deeply involved in those organizations and other organizations. Meantime, this body of stars and a prominent civic persona are deeply involved in the campus in a advisor capacity and as a lobbying group as well. A lot of spirit that seems to reflect spring was there then. I sense it among the faculty too, Koji Alan, early on, probably the function of the small size.

[01:59:20] RP: Could be. It could be, there were some members of the faculty who were quite resentful of this rapid growth. They felt that we alt to stay small and intimate. One of them felt that we probably should stay over there in the Orange Grove. I remember this staff that comes to us from the University of Denver, I remember, and she felt that this intimacy was something we're losing very rapidly and was

highly hopeful, you know, that something could be done to preserve, the kind of thing you say, collegiately that we had in these early years where everybody knew everybody.

[02:00:09] JB: Well tape this for a moment [End of tape 5.]

[02:00:13] JB: This might be a defective tape. Anyway, to finish what we were saying about the small college in the Sylvan Orange Grove, which is what she had in mind.

[02:00:24] RP: Well, our community relations were not too good in the very early years, for obvious reasons. First of all, the campus developed so quickly. And the number of bulldozers and the uprooting of trees in this sort of thing that went on, was very distressing to a number of our neighbors. And pervading wind that comes from sort of north to south. Blew this dust off the campus into their swimming pools, and so I had a number of the neighbors have called on me, too complained about what a disruptive influence this was. But the final thing that really kind of pleased me, when I explained to them that we were to accommodate a large number of people who might not otherwise come in terms of students, and also that what a magnificent place this could be in time with the collegiate atmosphere that is so relevant to any elite community. That these little nuisance of time might very well be sort of tolerated, and the interesting thing was they all agreed. This probably makes good sense, and so we didn't have any real trouble. We had some people who wanted to put one of the streets through the campus against miss Plummer Street, through the campus, and we had a terrific battle with the member of the city council over this issue. Explain that this would bisect campus just completely destroy us and a fight came down to a kind of a kind of confrontation, that we were forced attending Charles Luckman from the board of trustees. Who was a excellent negotiator, of course. But in one of these, one of his visits with the councilman, he explained very sharply that when it came to priorities, the State had priority over the local community. And he for one would see to it that all states influence was brought to bear on resolving this issue, in favor of the campus, that suit person better back off on this Plumber Street business and the conversation was quite heated for the time, but they did finally exceed the fact that if they're going to put Plumber Street through, it had to go underground. And so, I think that it's probably a dead issue at the time, but then it was a very live issue, and he had, the council had a lot of support because a number of people who commuted you see. Thought this was a ready avenue for commuting, and now that the campus is sort of integrated and settled, those kinds of problems don't come up because the people recognize the importance of the institutions, not only to the community itself, but to the state as a whole. Then this was not an evident factor, you see. So we had a lot of these kinds of problems. For instance, Leo Wilson spent a great deal of his time going to meetings of agencies that were speculating about moving in close to the campus, for example, cocktail lounges, and obviously, already well-planned of why can't he move in. Well, one of a kind of interesting I had noticed here, they had to have hearings, ahead of time. And so they were all sorts of roses resorted to keep these hearings out of the press. If they could possibly keep them out of the press, we wouldn't learn about them. So I suggest to Leo that maybe one of the things he should do is go to, I think, was the Methodists Church, they had a very active women's club. And why don't you go to the business club, and see if they won't go to this meeting with you, or you're instead engagement, but they were glad to go in. They were influential, so we had a lot of these kinds of problems; you see that a person would never think would come under these circumstances. But because of the novelty of the time and the place and kind of institution we had these sort of thing that were sorted different, and nice to reflect on, but very troublesome with the time.

[02:05:14] JB: It's rather like trying to find the batteries of fresh country.

[02:05:17] RP: Yes.

[02:05:18] JB: Where everything is malleable information.

[02:05:20] RP: That's true. That's very true, but it was a very exciting experience. I'll have to say that part, exciting time for a lot of us. And as I say, we were blessed with excellent colleagues.

[02:05:39] JB: You know, I think you're pleased you did it.

[02:05:41] RP: Oh yes, as a matter of fact, I am. I'm quite pleased about it, for two reasons. One, it was a good climax to the experience that I had, for one thing. I had a marvelous experience in Bakersfield, and a marvelous experience with the University of Colorado and this was kind of a climax too a very happy time in college administration, which is well worth wild.

[02:06:14] JB: As I look back on these were sold years?

[02:06:17] RP: They were.

[02:06:18] JB: How were the administrators?

[02:06:19] RP: Well they were very difficult years, John. See we had, as I mentioned the outset, you have in the early times where it was difficult to draw faculty, and when you grew young ones, you sometimes got a large number of militant faculty, who are difficult to manage, managing is the term to use. Then you had the sixties, of course, with the tremendous turmoil to us, a part of it. Then you had the very accelerated growth of campuses like Cal State Northridge and Fullerton, Long Beach, where money was such a tremendous factor. You had to get it, and you had to get it now. And it was not always readably available. So it's a contentious thing among the intuitions who were fighting for these funds to get enough to do the kind of job that was necessary, so they're not easy times. But as Emerson, I guess, who said, anytime is a good time if you make the most of it. So that's what a number of people had to do.

[02:07:31] JB: Is there more that we've missed?

[02:07:32] RP: I don't think so, so far as I'm concerned we've run the gambit maybe several times over.
[End of tape 6.]