

Dr. Albert W. Johnson
June 29-30, 2009
interviewed by Susan Resnik
for San Diego State University
208 minutes of recording total
PART 1 OF 3 PARTS

SUSAN RESNIK: This is Susan Resnik. Today is June 29, 2009. I'm in the lovely home of Dr. Albert W. Johnson, in Portland, Oregon. We are going to be doing his oral history as part of the project funded by the Jane and John Adams mini-grant.

Good morning, Dr. Johnson.

ALBERT W. JOHNSON: Good morning, Susan.

SR: Dr. Johnson, you certainly made so many contributions to San Diego State University, spanning the presidencies of Dr. Love, Dr. Golding, and Dr. Day, and contributed so much, but we'd like to go back and start at the beginning. I'd like to know when and where you were born. Could you tell me a little about your early years?

AWJ: Yes, thank you. I was born in a little town by the name of Belvidere, Illinois, a small agricultural community in northern Illinois, on July 29, 1926; and lived there all the time I was growing up, until I went into the military, which I can talk about later if you like; and then never did go back to live. And now, nobody from my family lives in Belvidere, Illinois. I had two parents, of course, Mother and Father. My mother was the daughter of a Lutheran minister in Belvidere, and played a *very* active role in the church herself. She was the organist, the choir directory, played the piano for all kinds of things, and of course raised the children. I had two sisters. [Mother] raised us all to be devout Lutherans. And

my father started out being a furniture dealer. In those days, the furniture dealers were also the morticians and undertakers, because, you see, the furniture dealers built the caskets.

SR: How interesting. I didn't know that.

AWJ: So that connection lasted probably up 'til almost World War II. If you went around to small towns anyplace in the country, and scouted out the funeral person, they almost always had some hand in furniture building or dealing. And then the dealing with the dead was a sideline—started out that way—but it soon became *the* dominant aspect of their life. And that's what happened in my family, too. My father then about 1942 or so teamed up with another furniture man/undertaker, and they formed a partnership in Belvidere, and that partnership lasted until, oh, twenty years ago, I suppose. And that's how he ended his career, too, really as a funeral director, as did his partner.

So that was the setting, kind of. Otherwise, there was nothing really unusual about my childhood or background. The family stayed together. My sisters were older than I by five and seven years, respectively. We were close, and they eventually married and moved away, and have since died.

SR: How about the early school years, do you remember?

AWJ: It's very typical, I think, of children, young people of my age and geographic location. Started out in *a* school in kindergarten, go through elementary school in *a* school, go through junior high school in *a* school, move on to *the* high school, and your whole career is taken up in those places, and the people you started kindergarten with are very often there at the end in high school. That's typical,

and that was the case with me, I was there all the time, and again, stayed there until I went away into the Army.

SR: Did you become interested in science when you were young?

AWJ: Well, I was always interested in the out-of-doors, let's say. My grandfather, my father's father, was *very* outdoorsy. He had had a career as a mill worker and a farmer, actually, an agricultural person. He *loved* the out-of-doors, and so he taught me how to fish, which I did an enormous amount of—fish and hunt. He had a little house right near sort of a natural preserve, and so he and I have spent days, months together, walking up and down the streams. He was a very, very interesting man, and a very rugged, outdoorsy, sort of a Mark Twain type really. My father used to say, "He's just like Mark Twain." And it was true, he was a rugged outdoorsman.

Otherwise, science, yes, I became interested in the more formal aspects of science probably in high school, where I had a very good high school biology teacher, and also a good high school physics teacher, the two of them. And because it was World War II just beginning, the physics teacher also taught a course in meteorology and things a little more applicable, I suppose, to the war effort. But I really became interested in biology then. And that coupled with my interest in being outdoors and nature.

SR: And plants?

AWJ: And plants, yeah—plants and animals, right. And so by the time I was ready to go to college—I came home *briefly* after my Army service and worked in a grocery store, and then made up my mind during that period, which was just a few

months, that I wanted to be a forester. I didn't become a forester, but that was my early thought. And that was consistent with what my interests were. But I did become interested in biology as a career.

SR: How long was your service during World War II?

AWJ: Very brief. I went in right at the end of World War II. I went in, in the earliest part of 1945, 1-23-45 [January 23, 1945], on that day, and was in until November 15, 1945, very brief. I went in as an aviation cadet. The promise, more or less, from the Air Corps then—it wasn't the Air Force then, it was the Army Air Corps—was that if you went in as an aviation cadet, they had an obligation to continue in that field, that assignment, until you either left the service or got commissioned as a flying officer. Well, by November 1945, the least thing they needed was more pilots. So they actually discharged all of us who were aviation cadets, so several thousand of us were discharged unexpectedly, but very welcome, glad to leave.

SR: And then when you came home?

AWJ: When I came home, I needed to find something to do until I went to college, so I went back to the grocery store where I had worked until I went in, and I worked there until March of 1946, and then left for college at what was then called Colorado A&M and is now called Colorado State University. All the A&Ms became state universities. But the A&Ms were the agricultural schools under the Morrill Act. And they still have that assignment, but they got rid of the appellation of "A&M." It was kind of lower status than being called a university.

SR: Yeah. So you went on in science then?

AWJ: So I went on in science. I did get a degree in biology from Colorado A&M, and decided at that point I needed another degree. And so I went to the University of Colorado for a master's degree, which led me to believe that I really needed a Ph.D.

SR: I understand that.

AWJ: So I did that, and I got my Ph.D. at Boulder in 1956.

SR: And were there any particular professors or courses that you really liked?

AWJ: Well, I was very attracted to the whole field of genetics, although I didn't become a geneticist. If I have any regret about my college education and subsequent career, it's that I didn't choose genetics to specialize in, because I really enjoyed it, did well in it, still enjoy it, and also, of course, genetics has exploded with the discovery of DNA. I would have liked to have been in on that. Anyway, yes, that. But I had other professors that I liked particularly. I don't know that I would say that any of them was especially inspiring. In my graduate education I had one professor who was an evolutionary biologist, and he was very influential in my life too. But anyway, most of them I liked well enough, but nobody really.... Well, my major professor, a man by the name of John Marr, was a plant ecologist, and he, probably more than anyone else, led me to where I was going. I worked for him as a graduate student. I worked for something called the Institute for Arctic and Alpine Research, and did that until the time I finished my degree, and went off for my first college job, which was at the University of Alaska.

SR: And during that time when you were in college—I'm also looking at the historical context, this is right after World War II. I'm trying to think, were you involved in

any of the things that were going on politically or socially, or were you pretty much focused on just what you were....

AWJ: Pretty much focused on the formal aspects of graduate education, I'd say. I was active, at a low level, in politics. I was a big supporter of Adlai Stevenson, for example. And I was raised in a family that was *staunchly* Republican.

SR: I would imagine so.

AWJ: Northern Illinois. I think the county I grew up in *never* voted for a Democrat in all the time I was there, until sometime long after I left they squeaked in a vote for a Democrat. I think it was JFK, perhaps. But anyway, my activities in college and political aspects were really pretty much straightforward party politics kinds of stuff, but not too active. Certainly not active in campus politics at all. Yeah, I think that's true. And otherwise, other activities, social—I was married, three kids, and I didn't have time to be a fraternity boy, nor an interest. I was interested in what I was doing, I was interested in getting a job, I was interested in supporting my family. Later on, of course, I got more interested in some of the more controversial aspects of science and what I was doing.

SR: Now tell me about your doctorate and what you focused on.

AWJ: Well, as I said, the man I was working for was my major professor, John Marr. He had maybe a dozen graduate students, and we were all working on a research project together, which was funded by the Army, the Office of the Quartermaster General, to characterize the climate and vegetation of where we were working in the Front Range of Colorado. Front Range is that range of mountains to the west of Boulder and Denver and Fort Collins and that area. It's probably important to

remember that at this time Russia was something to think about, and the interest in the Quartermaster Corps was if we have to fight a war against Russia—or anybody—do we know enough about the kind of geographic, climatological, biological situation that we're going to find ourselves in? So the Quartermaster Corps sponsored a number of *large* projects in which they tried to characterize the desert, the chaparral, the northern forests, the tundra in various places—mostly in the lower continental United States, but in Alaska to some extent. And those were fairly substantial *for the time*. This was before grant-funded research was really *courant* at all. I think my professor's research project that was eventually funded was probably one of the first that the University of Colorado had. And we had four years of what would be called chintzy funding these days, but it was big for that time. So that kind of led me in the direction of where we were going, where I eventually ended up. And it was exciting, because we not only were doing original research, but it had apparently some practical applications, maybe, at least, potentially.

SR: That is very interesting, given the temporal context of what was going on with the Cold War and all of that.

AWJ: That's right.

SR: So then what was the next step?

AWJ: Well, when I finished my degree—and I worked on the plant ecology of a high mountain valley that is part of the Boulder, Colorado, watershed. That's where I did my work. What I was doing was characterizing that valley as much as possible. It was pretty descriptive work, not much analytical—a little bit, but it

was mostly what is a high mountain valley at 10,000 feet, what is it like, what's the climate like summer and winter? What is the vegetation, etc.? And that's really what I was doing there, mostly. I'll let you read my dissertation if you like!

SR: I would like....

AWJ: No you wouldn't. (chuckles)

SR: I might!

AWJ: You might not, too! But anyway, that was the tenor of that research effort. And then, of course, I was looking for a job when I got my degree. It just happened that a similar job came open at the University of Alaska, just by chance, and I applied for it and got it.

SR: Where in Alaska is that?

AWJ: That's Fairbanks. Anyway, I stayed in Fairbanks for six years. During that period I spent a year in Norway doing some research over there. At the end of that period, then I moved from Alaska to California, went to UCLA. My interests were changing during this period. That's where my genetics interest started coming to the fore, and I thought, "Hm, I think I'd really like to get into some genetic research having to do with these plants." And so again, fortuitously, an opportunity came for a postdoctoral position at UCLA, where I spent two years.

SR: Big change from Alaska, I would imagine!

AWJ: (laughs) About as big a change as you can imagine! And spent then two years there doing research with a man by the name of Harlan Lewis, who was a plant geneticist. And then after that I got my job at San Diego State, and you know the rest of it, I suppose, from that.

SR: Well, I just know the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. So this pathway that led you to San Diego State, why did you decide to go to San Diego State, how did that come about?

AWJ: Well, chance plays such a big role in whatever you do. But I was at UCLA and Harlan Lewis told me I could stay on as long as I wanted to. He had this open position, he wasn't going to fill it with anybody permanently, he was happy with what I was doing, and said if I wanted to stay on, I could. But I didn't want to do that. I didn't see that as leading in a very career-wise way to anything much, except doing what I was doing, which I didn't see a big future for.

So I started looking around, and it just so happened that Harlan had a former graduate student at San Diego State, and he told Harlan they were looking for somebody. So Harlan said, "Would you be interested in going there?" And I said, "I need a job, Harlan." So I did, I went there. I have to tell you quite candidly and honestly, to go to the state colleges at that time was not considered to be a really prestigious thing to do. I mean, when I told various people at UCLA that I was going to San Diego State, they shook their heads, "Why do you want to do *that?!?*"

SR: Yeah. Well, as I have been learning about the whole evolution from a normal school to the state school, the college, and then of course part of what I've been hearing from so many people who refer to you, is how much you were involved in playing this role in bridging all that time span as San Diego State developed from a college into a university with major research. So when you first got there, had you thought about making a difference consciously?

AWJ: Well, again, there were some.... Yeah! Not so consciously as I'm indicating, not "Yeah!" Well, maybe. What happened, again, was that in 1963, the trustees of the California colleges worked out a deal whereby the colleges could offer a doctoral degree jointly with Colorado—or California. If I say "Colorado," I mean California at this point. So Harlan showed me this. He said, "Look, this looks like something you might be interested in." He had the complete text of the agreement. And what it said was, as you I'm sure know, in certain cases, not in all cases, but in certain cases a college department could offer a doctoral degree jointly with a cognizant department in the University of California. Had to be the University of California. Didn't matter what campus. So I thought that sounded like a good thing, and that comes into what happened then at San Diego State. That was fortunate, because if that *hadn't* happened, in the first place I'm not sure I would have gone to San Diego State, because I *was* looking for a place where doctoral research and teaching was going on. And secondly, it would have made an *enormous* difference about what one could do at San Diego State eventually—enormous.

SR: So when you first came to San Diego State, as I understand, you were teaching.

AWJ: Yes.

SR: And how did you get involved in the administration aspects?

AWJ: Oh that's a longer story. Let's see, how long did I teach? I went to San Diego State in 1964 and I became dean of the College of Sciences in 1969.

SR: Yes, we have this.

AWJ: In those intervening years, '64 to '69, I taught ecology, genetics, biology, some botany, and I must say I always did enjoy teaching. I wouldn't enjoy it now, but it was an important part of my career, I *loved* to teach. I liked the students, I liked what I was doing, I liked the whole idea of standing up and talking. But what happened was that Dr. Love, President Love, decided that he wanted to change the way the college was organized, and so what he did was to replace units that had been called schools. (phone rings, recording paused) Dr. Love decided that he wanted to have some units that were more typical of universities, so there had been a division of physical sciences and a division of life sciences at San Diego State, and he replaced those two with a single College of Sciences. There was a division of humanities and social sciences, and he replaced that with a College of Arts and Letters. And there was a music school, an art school, and a couple of other things, and he wanted to replace that with a College of Professional Studies. And so he did that. The faculty went along with that. It was put through the senate at San Diego State, and the senate agreed that there would be such a reorganization. The remaining schools, like Education, remained as schools; Engineering was a school, dot, dot, dot. But there were those three larger colleges, and each of them was to be headed by a dean, whereas the people before were division heads. So the deanship of this new.... First of all, there was a committee established to decide just how this college of sciences would be organized. And just by chance, I suppose, or by initiative, I became chair of that committee. We worked on that problem of organization, etc., for some weeks—months maybe—less than a year. And at the end of our work, several people

from the committee came and asked me if I wouldn't like to be dean. (laughs)
And of course I had never even been a department chair at that point. But I thought, "Well, maybe. Maybe it's possible." So I still didn't believe it would actually happen, but I said, "Sure, okay." So they arranged that I would be interviewed by the committee that was searching. They offered me the job. (chuckles) And President Love confirmed it.

SR: Did you have direct contact with President Love at that point?

AWJ: Very little. A little bit. President Love was not a person to spend a lot of time with individual faculty, I would say. He was a very organized person. He knew exactly who he wanted to talk to. He had special committees that reported to him alone, like he had what was called then the secret committee. The secret committee had to do with making the final recommendations to him about who should be promoted. I mean, there were other layers before it got to the secret committee, but the secret committee was made up of people he knew and trusted. And you've heard the name Henry Janssen, I'm sure. (SR: Uh-huh.) Henry is probably the last of the secret committee members. If you ever want to find out about the secret committee, you can talk to Henry. I'm sure he's the only one left.

SR: Someone else mentioned him.

AWJ: Sure. That's how I became interested and involved in administration.

SR: Well, from what I've picked up, Dr. Love *was* interested in it developing into a university as well.

AWJ: Oh yes, he was. Yes, he was.

SR: So they became colleges. That was definitely one.

AWJ: They became colleges, that's right. The university move came later. And I can talk about that if you like. But these were colleges then. But this was unique. I mean, in the whole system of fifteen—whatever the number of colleges was at that time—in the whole system there was not another campus that had colleges—colleges of education maybe, but the academic mainstream was not organized that way.

SR: That's interesting. I was wondering that, in terms of the statewide perspective.

AWJ: Yeah, San Diego State has always been—yes, I will say that—has always been fairly unique in the way it sees itself, and sees its participation in the system. And Dr. Love was *very* powerful. When the system was organized, Dr. Love had been offered the chancellorship of the whole system. But he chose not to accept it, and instead—it is said, I'm sure this is true—well, I'm *pretty* sure it's true—instead he recommended to the trustees, Glen Dumke, who was then a history professor at San Francisco State. And Glen Dumke then became chancellor of the system, with the presidents under him. But Malcolm Love never let Glen Dumke push him around! I'm sure there were no formal agreements between them, but Love had an enormous amount of respect and influence on the trustees, and could get through very much everything he wanted. For example, the first of the doctoral degrees then, that was authorized under that new agreement between the university and colleges, was a Ph.D. in education. That didn't happen. Instead, it happened in chemistry, but it still was at San Diego State, and it was the first one for a long, long time. It was the first of those doctoral degrees. But Malcolm Love made that happen.

SR: And it sounds like sciences was the base that became strong.

AWJ: It's true. The reason that chemistry was chosen was because they had a professor by the name of Arne Wick, W-I-C-K, a Norwegian guy, who was an established biochemist, with connections at UCSD. And UCSD at that point was just getting started, you see, and so they needed to have some access to undergraduate chemistry courses for their.... They wanted to become a graduate institution primarily. They needed to have access to undergraduate chemistry courses, so the vehicle for making that possible was the joint doctoral degree, where the student under the agreement, see, would spend time at both campuses.

SR: I see. And at that time, how big was San Diego State? What was the whole campus like?

AWJ: In 1964, when I went there, it was.... I'm guessing, I don't have the exact number in my head, but let's say between 9,000 and 10,000 students perhaps. Something like that. Much smaller. It had grown during World War II and thereafter. During the Korean War, for example, there was a great fall-off in enrollments, and there were people being fired all over the place, not only at San Diego State, but professors at a variety of schools were losing their jobs because of the lack of demand. But of course that picked up then, about 1960. When I was hired, for example, in the sciences they were bringing in over a hundred new professors a year.

SR: That's a lot!

AWJ: Yes, that's a lot. No, that's not right, I'm sorry. It was a hundred new professors a year at the campus as a whole. Sciences were maybe bringing in twenty-five or

thirty. But still.... And that went on for years, that increase in faculty numbers, and the student numbers were growing apace. And eventually, of course, it just kept going. I mean, really, it never did stop growing until a couple of budget freezes and things later. But the general tendency was up.

SR: So when you were in this new role, did it involve primarily dealing with just the sciences, or did that come later, that you got involved with other things out in the community?

AWJ: Oh, well, primarily at first the job was a matter of getting the physical and life sciences together as a functioning unit, which is where I spent most of my time. But that soon morphed into wider interest and responsibilities both at the university and in the community. So the senate—you've heard about the senate, I'm sure. (SR: Yes.) The senate is a place where one could invest one's life if one wanted to. (chuckles) And I found the senate interesting, and so I became quite prominent in the senate and did a lot of things through the senate and its committees that had an influence on the college.

SR: Tell me more about the senate and how it worked and who was in it.

AWJ: Actually, Malcolm Love established it, and it was set up to get involved in things like promotion and tenure and hiring and curriculum and that sort of thing. And Malcolm didn't have time for that kind of stuff. And so again he chose wisely—not a *lot* of people, but he chose some influential people representing departments—often people that he knew of, or knew personally, and the senate established its own rules about membership etc., about who participates and how much and how long and all that stuff. And eventually it became.... And

“eventually” what I mean by that is probably over the next couple of decades, maybe even up 'til today, although I think it's changed a little bit. But anyway, during that time, the senate took on an increasingly active and influential role in the way the university was organized, the way degrees were offered, the way people were hired and fired and all that sort of stuff. Of course nobody ever gets fired, you understand. (chuckles) *And*, at the same time, became more intimately involved with the presidents, whoever they were, offering the president advice. And the presidents reciprocally became interested in *getting* advice from the senate. Now, Tom Day didn't always become so interested in that, but Brage [Golding] did, and as long as he was there, so did Malcolm. I mean, they wanted a responsible group of faculty they could believe in, who would tell 'em what to do. As time went on, the presidents, of course, became much more interested in the community and having that kind of role with the alumni and community members. So they really didn't see themselves as having that intimate time with the business of the college or the university itself.

SR: So as you became more involved in the leadership of the senate, clearly you became known as a leader. Then when did you become involved in working with Dr. Love? Did you work with him directly?

AWJ: Very little, because, you see, I became dean in 1969. I think his last year was like 1970, something like that. And so a little bit, but not much. I mean, he knew who I was, that's about it.

SR: Yes. But all this time you were still involved with the teaching, and you always have been in the teaching and research.

AWJ: Yeah, that's true.

SR: And so then we can move on towards Dr. Golding. How did you first get involved in working with him?

AWJ: Well, that was kind of interesting, because when we were trying to.... First of all, I managed to be on the search committee to replace Dr. Love. It was a large committee, fifteen or twenty people. So the process during those years was that there was a campus committee, and it would accept applications or search out potential presidents, arrange for them to be interviewed on campus, and then make a selection from that group. That would go to the chancellor's office, and the chancellor would make up his mind. And that was a source of a *lot* of trouble, a *lot* of trouble. And Golding was a product of.... He wasn't the cause of it, but he was the product of that trouble. What happened was the committee had nominated three people, I think—doesn't matter who they were. There was a chancellor from Michigan, and a man from New York State, and the third one I've forgotten where he was from. But at any rate, we had three candidates, and Glen Dumke said he didn't like *any* of them. And so he had his *own* choices, and he had us interview several people, none of whom *we* liked. So we refused to nominate any of *them*. But he chose a man by the name of Walter Waetjen, W-A-E-T-J-E-N, who was an administrator of some sort at the University of Maryland. And he chose him to be the president of San Diego State. Well, the campus just had a fit about it! And the senate refused.... The committee met and we refused to go along. And actually, the faculty got together and sent messages

to Walter Waetjen, telling him not to come. (laughs) Which was a little bit unheard of. But at any rate, it worked.

SR: These are the sixties, right?

AWJ: Early seventies.

SR: This is already the seventies, but the sixties had already been in full ferment.

AWJ: Yeah, that's right, the sixties had been there and gone. No, this was seventies.

SR: This is the seventies when Dr. Golding came, but I'm thinking that....

AWJ: Well, of course the students were *much* better organized in those years.

SR: Tell me about that a little bit, while we're in those years. How did that play out for you?

AWJ: Well, it really played out very little for me. Again, San Diego State, true to regarding itself as kind of a unique place, did *not* engage in the campus ferment, to a large extent, that was like UCSD or Los Angeles State, or name it—it just didn't do that. Yes, there were issues, but the students that were involved in that campus activity in those years were much more interested in who's teaching, the quality of the courses being offered, the role of the students in selecting, etc. The first evaluations of faculty were brought in during that period. Students, by and large, were pretty well-behaved, responsible, and they were not looking for trouble. *But* when Chancellor Dumke attempted to impose Walter Waetjen on the campus, students pitched right in. I'll never forget, we had a student on the search committee, and the search committee sent a delegation to meet with the chancellor's office group. We had a very bright young student on the committee, and he went up to Los Angeles to meet with the chancellor's group. And he

raised his hand and said, “Frankly, Chancellor Dumke, we just don’t trust you.”
(laughter) Chancellor Dumke got red. Never had he heard such a thing from a student!

So okay, Dumke agreed to search some more. And that’s when Brage Golding came in, in the next wave of applicants. The search committee liked him, the chancellor liked him. He had quite a bit of experience, of course. And so he came. And he very quickly became much more involved in the campus organization than Dr. Love had. So that’s how I became involved with him, because he would meet regularly with the deans, for example. If there was an issue involving something, like the College of Sciences, I would meet with him individually. He would even bring us in—I remember he fired one of his vice-presidents, and he met with me and another couple of deans to tell us what he wanted to do, and involved us in those decisions. So he was much more organizationally oriented and *did* involve us more. And that’s how I became involved with him, yes. I won’t say we were really intimate—he’s not that kind of man. But he was interested in keeping the lines of communication open. And I remember when he left to go to— where, Kent State? Is that where he went? Yeah, I think so—it was encouraged that we would write letters and notes to him, expressing our thanks and so forth. I wrote a short letter in which I said, “It looks to me as though Malcolm Love, when he was leaving, provided an organizational scheme, a new one, the colleges, to the campus, but your major contribution to the college has been making it work.” And he called me and said, “You’re the only one who actually saw what I was trying to do!”

SR: That's interesting.

AWJ: Yeah.

SR: Yeah, making it work.

AWJ: And he did, he did that very well, so that by the time Tom Day came, things were well organized.

SR: And the progression into the university status had moved along.

AWJ: Yes. Oh yes.

SR: Now from what I've read, and presentations that you've given, you talk a lot about the importance of the educator-scholar, the combination.

AWJ: The teacher-scholar?

SR: Teacher-scholar. And I'd like you to talk a little bit about [that]. Was that something that Malcolm Love talked about, too?

AWJ: No, not really. Nor did Brage Golding. That was an idea that was around. I think the only person who really embraced that was Tom Day. I may have made it function better. I mean, it wasn't that Brage Golding was working against it, it's just that wasn't one of his major priorities.

Okay, teacher-scholar idea. If you thought about it carefully, you would realize that with the attitudes of the University of California being as they were, that they were *the* graduate education facility in the state, and they would remain that. And the legislature confirmed that over and over again. Every time CSU would stick its head up above the trench, they'd chop it off. It just didn't happen, and it wasn't going to happen. Some of us—Jim Cobble was certainly involved in this—but others before Jim, actually back into the time when I first arrived, the

view was that we did good teaching, we were interested in teaching, faculty was very interested in teaching, but we were hiring—when I said we were hiring these lots of people—most of them were people who had Ph.D.s, were involved in research, and *wanted* to be involved in research, and couldn't understand how we could have an institution of higher education that would sort of eschew the whole idea of research. And so gradually the rules and regulations and processes, procedures that the senate and the presidents agreed on, skewed the direction more and more toward hiring people with higher credentials, making it harder and harder for people to get promoted unless they were doing research. In fact, they *couldn't* get promoted, unless they were doing research *and* teaching. That was the thing. “Okay, UCSD, you're doing research, we know that, but are you doing teaching?” And they would say, “Yes we are.” “But,” we would say, “no, you're not really.”

SR: So nurturing the idea that teaching is still very important.

AWJ: That's right. Not everybody, but most of the people on the faculty, and most of the administration, really embraced the idea that we could be great in teaching, we could have a research reputation of sorts, we could do graduate work, we could increasingly search out the joint doctoral degrees. And the stature of the faculty in terms of research work would rise, which is, of course, exactly what happened. So it was that notion, that you shouldn't hire people, in fact, on the faculty, with the idea that they wouldn't *have to* do research. It was, “You *have to* do research. You have to also teach. You have to have a solid reputation in both.” And that was a source of quite a bit of controversy, when it gradually percolated into the

minds of the faculty what was happening. I mean, they, of course, embraced it themselves.

During that period when the change was taking place, there were still quite a few faculty at San Diego State who did *not* do research at all, had never intended to do research, came to San Diego State with the idea that they would teach, period, and were hired that way, given tenure that way, and here they found themselves in this new, changing situation in which we were saying, “Let’s see some research and grant work, etc.” And some of the people just absolutely refused.

SR: The term that we all have heard, “publish or perish,” was that part of this new emphasis?

AWJ: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, I hate those terms, but that’s really.... Sure, if you don’t publish, you won’t get tenure, you will not be retained by the university. You’ll eventually have to leave after six years, I guess. And that shortened, I think, to four. But at any rate, yeah, that whole idea of an institution devoted to teaching *and* research, still pretty unique, you know. Is still pretty unique. I mean, you can talk about it and sort of toss it off as something that happens, but it really doesn’t happen, it really doesn’t.

SR: No. I would imagine that it’s attractive to students because of the fact that there’s still people who teach and are interested in *them*.

AWJ: That’s true, yeah. Well, of course I could regale you with chapter and verse of the wars that took place during those years.

SR: That would be interesting.

AWJ: Well, I'm not sure I could do such a great job of that. Just for the moment, understand in order to bring the whole faculty into line on this change in function, in focus, it took years of committee work and persuasion and new hires, etc. It was difficult to get those changes enacted.

SR: Was there a difference among the different disciplines in terms of...

AWJ: Oh yes.

SR: I would think so.

AWJ: Oh yes, very much so.

SR: I would imagine so.

AWJ: Sciences, of course, as you might imagine, led the way there. They had some advantages Arts and Letters might not have, like grants, for example. What the faculty member had to do in order to get time off from teaching, was to have some support for the research that he or she wanted to do. And grants and contracts, of course, was one obvious source. There were a couple of others that turned out to work pretty well. But the grants and contracts was the most obvious. You could buy your way out of part of your teaching load, and use that time for research. And many people still do, I suppose. I'm sure they still do include a fraction of their time in their application for a grant—quarter-time salary for replacing my teaching. And that became increasingly the thing to do. I mean, if you're going to run a research institution, Susan, you know you have to have time for the faculty to do research. And that's where the Arts and Letters people had a legitimate complaint, I think. "How do *we* get time? We don't have the access to grants and contracts like you do in the sciences. How do we do that?"

Same with professional studies—somebody in Dance. And the way we did that was to.... Do you want this detail, I don't know.

SR: Yes.

AWJ: When the chancellor's office realized that to tell faculty members, "You're going to have to teach twelve units per quarter," or semester or whatever it is, "and that's *that*, and there's no relief from that." They realized that was too harsh, and so they enacted something called release time. And what that turned out is, that you could do functions that were valuable, required, desirable in some way or another by the university, like very heavy committee assignments, like running the promotion and tenure process for the whole university—huge job. That's worth three units certainly. And so there were more and more of those, so we capitalized on that.

SR: Creative!

AWJ: Yeah. Oh, it was very creative. *And* we managed to bring in the idea that part of the release time could be research. That was the hard one. The chancellor's office had to swallow hard to accept that. And they didn't really ever accept it, but that was the interesting thing about the chancellor's office: they often didn't accept what you said you wanted to do, but they wouldn't fight it. They wouldn't fight it, and so you could get away with it. And eventually getting away with it institutionalized it.

SR: That's fascinating.

AWJ: It is, but it's true, it's absolutely true. You'd say, "Well, we want to do this." And you'd hear them say—and I'll give you my best example in a minute—and

they'd say, "Well, you can't do that." And we'd say, "Well, we think we can, and we want to do that." And they'd say, "Mm." They wouldn't say no, they'd just say, "We don't think that's advisable." So we'd do it, and then they would find themselves having tacitly accepted what we were doing.

The one I want to tell you about, which was a real scene changer.... And one of your questions, "What do you want to be remembered for?" this is one of the things I'd like to be remembered for, and that is what was called.... Oh gosh, you'd think I'd remember, since I want to be remembered for it! What's another word for versatile?

SR: Flexible?

AWJ: Flexible! Exactly. Very good. That's exactly it. The flexible teaching load. So I put a little committee together—I was vice-president then—of several prominent faculty, and we said, "How can we do this? How can we make time available to the faculty to do research, when they have to be teaching so much? Well, let's say that we'll detach ourselves from the idea of the individualized teaching load, and just say for a *whole department* you have to handle this many students. But you can do that almost any way you like, as long as it's responsible and the students are getting educated." So we came up with the idea of the flexible teaching load. As long as the students are getting courses, getting what they need, you can let people away from their twelve units into lesser. And I remember, I went up to the chancellor's office, they had one of the chancellor's committees—I've forgotten what it's called now, but it doesn't matter—one of his committees was meeting on things like that. And so I brought this idea from San Diego State

of the flexible teaching load. (laughs) They just didn't know quite what to do with that. But that became the rule, that became the law at San Diego State.

SR: Do you know if it ever went further, to other campuses?

AWJ: It did, but something else happened in the meantime, or after that, that made it unnecessary, in a way, to do that, because as you probably know, the system became unionized. Was it still in the Brage Golding years? Yes, it was, it was just at the cusp between Brage Golding and Tom Day that the faculty became unionized. And the unions, then, of course were very powerful for the whole system, took up that idea of a—they didn't call it flexible teaching load—but a reduced assignment. I don't know what they called it exactly. But that became so powerful that the system eventually agreed that, "Okay, well, we'll stop counting your teaching obligations by this method, we'll use this other method, and that gives you much more flexibility in what you want to do." And so I would doubt very much that these days much of anybody teaches twelve units anymore, whereas when I first came to San Diego State, it was twelve units, you taught twelve units—or more.

SR: I think so.

[END PART 1, GO TO NEW DOCUMENT FOR CONTINUATION]

Dr. Albert W. Johnson
June 29-30, 2009
interviewed by Susan Resnik
for San Diego State University
208 minutes of recording total
PART 2 OF 3 PARTS

SUSAN RESNIK: I'd like you to talk a little bit about what your role was like during the time that Dr. Day was president of the university.

ALBERT W. JOHNSON: When Dr. Day arrived at San Diego State, of course he was from the East. He really knew almost nothing about San Diego State University, or the California State University System. And so he was depending on lots of people for information, and since I was the acting vice-president for academic affairs, he very quickly started relying on me for information about the faculty, about processes, promotions, tenure, that sort of thing; hiring, firing, all the kinds of things that the academic vice-president could be involved in. And the relations between the administration and the faculty he left pretty much to the vice-president, to me. And as time went by and he found that he could trust me, then that became really my primary role as far as he was concerned. We would have weekly meetings, and any problem that he saw coming up, or thought existed, he'd call me in, we'd talk it through. If there was some issue that needed to have direct contact between him and one or more faculty representatives, he would call me in to witness the meeting, listen to it, advise him as to what to say sometimes. So I really became his voice. At the beginning of every senate meeting, I would stand up and lay out the agenda that the *administration* saw—not that the faculty saw necessarily—but that the administration saw for the upcoming period of time, whatever it was. I'd start that in the fall, and go through the whole year, in fact,

and do that at every senate meeting, talk about where we were and what we were doing, take questions from the faculty, give responses, report to Tom on whatever the issue was. And so he'd have a more or less firsthand account of what was going on. That way, we didn't always get agreement between, let's say, Tom—the administration is what I mean—but Tom and the faculty on some important issue, but at least there would be a point that he could rely on, where the issue would be aired and he could count on, from me, an accurate presentation of what the issue was about, and why he should or shouldn't get involved, or if he did get involved, what action I thought he ought to take. And he paid a great deal of attention to that, to the point where no matter what recommendation I made on anything—almost anything, I'm exaggerating a bit—he accepted it. Like on promotions. The annual promotion cycle we might have, oh, seventy or eighty cases that we had to look at. He would give all the folders to me, say, "Bring 'em back to me on Friday afternoon." So I'd go through them and I'd decide. There had been a lot of work before I got them, of course, but then I would make *my* recommendations, and Friday night I'd wheel the big stack down to him. And he'd give 'em back to me on Monday morning, and I know he didn't look at more than a few. I mean, he would check up on me occasionally. And the number of cases over the twelve, thirteen years that we were together, I think he disagreed with me maybe five times, out of hundreds of cases. And it was true, on most of the things that we dealt with, he just got to the point where he really trusted me.

SR: Yes, and valued your opinion.

AWJ: And the faculty knew that, and so they would come to me first. They would just not go to the president, often. And so that role was very important for me, and it was important for Tom. And when I retired, Tom, I think, always felt that was the most important thing that I did for him. It really made his life much simpler, if he didn't have to deal with the....

SR: Well, as I recall, during the time that he was president, there were some very tumultuous times and budget problems.

AWJ: Oh, there were, there were.

SR: And so how did that play out during the difficult decision making?

AWJ: Well, if there were budget problems, that meant that it was more than academic affairs involved, and he had a separate little committee called the budget committee, cabinet budget committee. And that consisted of all the vice-presidents, all four, plus a couple of other people, I've forgotten who now. But at any rate, there was a small committee. And if it was a university-wide budget problem, which could have been, the four of us would hash that out, then go back to him with a joint recommendation. I lost a few in that one. Case in point, the vice-president for business affairs was a *very*, very strong supporter of athletics. And so the fact that he handled a lot of the money—I suppose you could say *all* the money at the beginning—meant that we were constantly fighting about money, where it went. And the athletic thing came up frequently.

SR: Describe your sense of that and athletics.

AWJ: Well, I'm sure you're aware that athletic programs in general are almost always in financial difficulty, unless they're *extremely* powerful and strong and successful.

Like Notre Dame probably doesn't have any problems like that. Michigan might not either. *But*, I can assure you that the University of Kansas *does*, and so does the University of Colorado, and so does San Diego State. And these problems annually amount to millions of dollars, really. You're talking big money. The bigger the school, the bigger its aspirations, the bigger the problems. So the vice-president for business affairs probably had that arrangement, was constantly trying to insinuate himself into the budget process at some point where he could command some resources that he didn't currently have. And then he'd funnel 'em off to athletics. If he didn't do that—I don't blame him for trying—but if he didn't do that, then athletics would end up the year with a million-dollar deficit, or more now. So we would fight about that at this small committee meeting, and then there'd be a vote and I would lose, or maybe not—probably—or he would lose. Then we'd go to Tom for a decision. And so at *that* level, you see, when he was really doing—since he didn't have a provost at that point—that is when he had to deal with the layers as they existed. I often lost those budget battles on athletics, but there were other ones like that, I just used that as an example. So I'm not sure exactly what you asked me.

SR: I was asking also about your attitude towards the role of athletics in the university.

AWJ: Okay. Well, I'm not opposed to athletics per se. I think that it's just fine to have students involved in physical activity and sports—call it that—as a way. And the community does get drawn in, if the school has a successful program. And of course if the school's depending on the community to be drawn in and attend

games, that's where it gets really crunchy. So that's where I really object, because who pays for that? The way San Diego State's budget was, and may be still, but is in most large universities, the great bulk of the budget goes to academic affairs. We got 67% or 68% of the budget, the budget as it came from the chancellor's office. That's a lot of money. And athletics didn't get *anything* because the state college system did not budget money for competitive athletics, and to hire the football coach and all the other coaches. That all had to come from *somewhere*, but it *couldn't* come from the State—except you could get a little bit here and there, and that's what the vice-president for business affairs was always trying to do. Well, I objected to that *very* strongly, because the faculty paid the price for it, and still does. Faculty pays the price for a fiscal deficit in athletics. It does. I mean, that's money that comes right off the top of the—somehow it comes off the top of the academic budget. You can weasel that around any way you like, but that's the way it is. People have only so much money to spend. The state budget has only so much wiggle room in it, and if it's not there, you don't hire that faculty member you wanted to hire, you don't pay for the supplies you wanted to buy, you don't have money for travel, you don't have these things that don't *appear* to be so important, but are in the long run *extremely* important, of course, to the well-being of the program. So that's where I really objected so strongly to athletics, because although it's fine, when it gets big the values get all screwed up. The motivations to win, to have a winning team, to have a great reputation, to be noted—that's when it gets really unfortunate. And that's what

faculty by and large object to. They don't object to athletics per se, they object to the way money is spent.

SR: That's very helpful. You were mentioning in terms of your role that there were other vice-presidents. Could you describe how the organization was? Under the president, you had, what did you say?

AWJ: Four.

SR: Four. And they were....

AWJ: Academic affairs, student affairs.... And that person, the vice-president for student affairs then was responsible for admissions, for dormitory life, for really all of the things that involved student programs—not academic programs, but policies about admissions and records, and, oh.... What do I want to say? Scholarships and all that kind of stuff was in student affairs. Discipline, all those kinds of activities where the individual student would be involved some way or another.

SR: And then there was business.

AWJ: There was business.

SR: What did they do?

AWJ: Well, they interacted directly in this case—this case being San Diego State—they interacted directly with the chancellor's office, which had a business.... What did they call it? Well, it was a business unit in the chancellor's office, administered by a vice-chancellor for business affairs. He was the person who interacted with the business vice-presidents on the campuses. And it was at that level where the money reaching the campuses was really settled. I mean, the presidents could get

in there and argue, and did, but it was at the vice-chancellor for business affairs and *his* staff, it was at *that* level. He had programmatic people who dealt with new degree programs. Anything that cost money was really in that division in the chancellor's office. So that was the pipeline from the chancellor's office to the campus. And any revision in the state budget, which was annually made in May, for the campuses—the “May revise” as they always called it—that major negotiations there between the presidents and the chancellor's office, but mostly the business officers and the chancellor's office.

And then the fourth vice-president was the one for development. That was pretty loose, because some institutions have a very aggressive, well-thought-out program to interact with the community, with the alumni, to promote the well-being of the university for outside support, donations, etc. So they have somebody like that. And the president, as I think I said earlier, if there was some issue which involved one of those units, but the president could see would really have some impact on the others, then we'd usually have some joint meeting. He had a cabinet meeting every Monday morning, and we'd all get together on that point. And that had other people in it. That had the registrar, it had.... Let's see, who else was there at that meeting? The graduate dean was there. There were probably ten, fifteen people at that meeting—ten, let's say.

SR: Since you were there over this long span of time, with the people in these other vice-presidential roles, did they stay for a long time too?

AWJ: Yeah, they did.

SR: Who were some of these people? I've heard names.

AWJ: Well, the vice-president for student affairs was a man by the name of Dan Nowak.

SR: Oh, I've heard that name.

AWJ: Yes. And he came in probably.... Brage Golding hired him, so right early in Brage's career, Dan came. And he retired in ... 2000, let's say—sometime like that.

SR: So he was there for a long time.

AWJ: Long time, yeah. He probably wasn't there quite that long. It probably was in the nineties when he retired. I retired in '91. Dan was still there then. I remember Nancy Marlin, who is the current provost, was hired as vice-president for academic affairs, interacted with Dan. So he was there during a lot of the nineties. And he died suddenly in, well, let's say the late nineties, early two thousands.

The development vice-president was a person who changed often.

Nobody really succeeded in that role very well. The woman who was most active in it was a woman by the name of Leslie Yerger [phonetic].

SR: That's very interesting. What you're describing, however, has evolved so that now there *is* a provost. Could you talk to me a little bit about the difference between what your role was, and what the provost is, and what do you think about the provost's role?

AWJ: Well, first I think you have to answer the question Why should there be a provost anyway? I mean, is that really important? It is to the president, because the president's role over the years has become more and more complex—and particularly complex outside the university. So the president has to have an

accurate window that he can rely on, of what's going on *inside*. And he doesn't have time to get it on his own, and he can't depend on the internal dynamics among the vice-presidents to give him the best view—probably the view of what he ought to do if there's a conflict. So the provost can play that role for the president, really; settle the grievances among the vice-presidents; lay out the best future so the president can act on what he has now been advised to do. It isn't that the vice-presidents—and there's still vice-presidents, by the way, the provost doesn't *replace* the vice-presidents, just oversees them. There's still, I think, a vice-president for business affairs probably, and vice-president for academic affairs—there may not be.... I'm not sure how that's played out, frankly. But at any rate, in Steve Weber's case, he has Nancy Marlin, his provost. She is, in my view—I've worked with her—a fair, good judge of what's going on, has the best motives, has the well-being of the institution at heart, doesn't want to see the president make mistakes, so she gives him the best advice, I think. So that's the role.

It's not that the vice-president for academic affairs, in my case, for example, couldn't give that same advice, but if I didn't have any say about what goes on in student affairs, there was always a piece missing. Whereas the provost can balance those things, and does. So I think it makes sense. I didn't ever resent the idea of there being a provost. Some people do. Some people would say, "Ah, we don't need that!" But it's happened anyway. I think in the California State University system, probably twenty of the twenty-one campuses have provosts now. That's a real guess—I don't know, but I suspect so. I never even hear the

title “academic vice-president” anymore, so I guess they’re all provosts. That makes sense.

SR: Now during all of this time, tell me how you were involved with the foundation.

AWJ: San Diego State University Foundation?

SR: Yes.

AWJ: Right. Sometime during Tom Day’s earlier years, I think—it may have happened under Golding, but I don’t think so—it was decided that the board of directors of the foundation, who played a very important role in foundation business, by the way, particularly in business direction—but not entirely—programmatic to a certain extent—the foundation would appoint a board which included all of the vice-presidents, community members, the chairman of the faculty senate, I think there was an associated students president, a representative group of people of maybe fifteen or so people representing different influences on campus, were brought together to form the foundation board. And the foundation board then met quarterly, monthly, I don’t know—frequently—to do an annual budget, they would approve searches for new employees like directors, etc. They would get pretty much intimately involved in what the foundation was doing with its money. Actually, what happened, of course, was that the foundation started getting a lot of money from grants and contracts and renting property and things of that sort. The foundation started becoming powerful, a powerful voice in the role of the community—“community” being in this case the institution. And so everybody’s ox had a chance to be gored. And so it was important that everybody have a shot at the decisions that were made. So now the president oversaw the foundation

board. Nothing could really happen unless the president approved. But again, property acquisition—using an example—became a *very* important role for the foundation to play. It had money, property was available, property was needed to rent for classroom space, etc. The foundation could provide. That was one of the ways the university was able to handle its needs for space for research, additional classroom space, etc., was that the foundation had the property it could rent to the State, and did. And this was amounting to millions of dollars. Got to be a big thing.

I don't know if you're familiar with the layout of the campus as it exists.

SR: I'm trying.

AWJ: Well, there's the Alvarado Medical Center down there. That was once all private.

And now those buildings almost all belong to the university—foundation, really—and were used, and they're still used I assume, in supporting university programs. Now, where I was involved?

SR: Yes.

AWJ: I was involved as a foundation board member, involved in those kinds of debates and decisions to be made, voting along with everybody else. And occasionally, if the issue was considered to be in the domain of academic affairs, I would get directly involved in participating, like on committees. For example, we had a program—I think it's now defunct—but for some years we had a research program involving arid lands agriculture, between Israel and Egypt, funded by the Agency for International Development. And the idea.... We got the initial seed

money for it from a donor, who wanted us to devote this money to world peace.

(chuckles) That's right after Camp David.

SR: That's very interesting.

AWJ: Yeah, he came to the board—well, I think first he went to the director and his staff. But he said he had this money from a man who used to have a lot of property in La Mesa. And the family wanted a large chunk of that money to go toward world peace, and did we have any ideas? What can we do [unclear] world peace? I'll never forget the day I went before the senate and I reported to the senate what we were doing with this money. I said, "And it's devoted to world peace. And it's working!" And everybody burst into laughter. Well anyway, I was very much involved in that program, arid lands agricultural program. I was on their steering committee, and I would attend all the meetings and go to the sites overseas and meet with the investigators. It had nothing to do with academic affairs directly. It had to do with the business of the university, and the support of that program. The [I.D.?] wanted some university, of course, [unclear] administration involved.

SR: So it seems from starting teaching biology, it looks like things really broadened.

AWJ: Oh yeah. Yeah, that's right.

SR: What are some of the other kinds of activities/involvements that you had that were either community related or nationally related? Can you talk about some?

AWJ: Yeah, I think so. Community related, I was on a number of committees and boards and such entities in and around San Diego and California. At one point, my *cv* had a whole list of those things.

SR: We do have it, and there were museum.... Let's see, I think this is it. Yes, here we go. You can pick and choose, there's lots!

AWJ: Yeah, okay. Well, all right, that gives you an idea of the sorts of things I was involved in. Like for example I was a member of the National Academy of Science committee to review NSF's role [unclear] research in the arctic. Actually, I was an arctic/alpine scientist, so I was identified as the person to talk to about such things at San Diego State. And the National Academy has a board called the Polar Research Board, responsible for appointing this committee. And so I was known to that board, and so they came to me and asked me to participate, and I did, for a number of years. You go down the list, and there's a bunch of things like that.

SR: Were there any of these activities you remember particularly enjoying?

AWJ: Let's see, I could probably find something if I look really hard. Well, the one that was most enjoyable was the—I don't know how I list it here—maybe I *don't* even list it—I think I must, though.... Well, maybe I don't. That would be crazy. But anyway, this program I was telling you about between Israel and Egypt, that was the one that was probably, over the long haul, most interesting, because I got to meet with.... First of all, we had some very discreet objectives, and one in particular, of course, and that is we wanted to promote cooperation between agricultural scientists in Israel and in Egypt—no small matter. (SR: I would think not!) These people were not accustomed to meeting with each other at all, even knowing who each other were.

SR: Right, at that time. And what time frame are we talking about now?

AWJ: We're talking about the eighties, primarily—eighties and early nineties, up to the early nineties maybe, but mostly in the eighties. It was fun because we got to meet all these important and influential people. I mean, these got to be nationally recognized programs in their countries, got to meet with [Hosni] Mubarcic.

SR: Really?!

AWJ: Yeah.

SR: That's interesting.

AWJ: Shimon Peres, all those guys—not that we were intimate with them, but I mean Shimon Peres came to San Diego for a meeting, and I had met him before. It was really a boost to my ego, I must say. And they had a big dinner for him down at the University Club, San Diego. So he was there with his entourage. He's an important, you know, good target person if you were trying to assassinate somebody.

SR: Oh boy!

AWJ: But I had met him in Israel, had lunch with him in his office—a bunch of us did one day.

SR: Was that in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv?

AWJ: Yeah, it was in Jerusalem. And so he came to San Diego for this meeting, and my wife Susan and I went into the building, the tower there, on the ground floor. We walked in, and just as the elevator was coming around, and I looked over, and here's Shimon Peres standing there surrounded by all these people.

SR: Body guards.

AWJ: And so I said, “Hello, sir.” And he said, “Al!” (laughs) “I remember you!”

Wow.

SR: That’s nice. That’s very nice.

AWJ: Yeah, it was. It was, really, because really I didn’t know him from anybody. But I had met him, that was it. But the point is, those are the kinds of people we met with in conjunction with this agricultural program. It was the cooperation that *both* countries were interested in. They wanted to form some kind of cooperative venture. This agricultural thing gave them an opportunity to do so.

SR: And did it work out?

AWJ: It worked out for years. It did, it did. It worked out for ten years at least. It really did.

SR: Great.

AWJ: We formed a steering committee of people from both countries. We met in weird and exotic places. I mean, we traveled all over places. I mentioned the greenhouses in Holland—that was one of our trips. We met in Malaga on the southern coast of Spain.

SR: Explain that to me. How did that pertain?

AWJ: It pertained because these places where we went had developed specific technological programs to deal with agriculture—mostly arid lands agriculture, which is what the Egyptians and Israelis were doing. And so they wanted to see what other people were doing. So we would travel to Copenhagen, wherever. Copenhagen, I know, doesn’t sound like the desert, but again, they had technological programs that were applicable. But we did go to Italy, we went to

Spain. State Department eventually accused us of some kind of a boondoggle, because we were going all these places. But it worked out. And the thing about things like that, is that when you're working together closely, you also become friendly. A lot of people on the program, Egyptians and Israeli people, became friends.

SR: That's wonderful.

AWJ: They may not be friends anymore, I don't know, but they were at the time.

They'd meet together and have coffee and have a beer together.

SR: Well, that's promoting world peace!

AWJ: It was! We thought so. So that was probably, of the various things I did, that was the most interesting, because it was the most different, it seemed most elevated in its principles and objectives. Whereas some of the other stuff on the arctic, that was old stuff, I was used to doing that anyway.

SR: Well, that goes back to the earlier times. I think maybe you can talk now about the Firecracker Boys, because I thought that was fascinating. So tell us all about that.

AWJ: Sure. I can't tell you *all* about it. I noticed, you have the typescript of that piece which was actually the annual speech at Phi Kappa Phi, I think, was it not?

SR: Let's see if I can put my hands right on it. We have a lot of different speeches here, so just a minute. (leafs through papers)

AWJ: Well, it doesn't matter. I know what it is, and you mentioned it. That's what it is. The Phi Kappa Phi honorary has an annual lecture. (SR finds typescript) Yeah, that's it. And in 1997, I was invited to give the annual Phi Kappa Phi lecture, and

this is what I chose to talk about. Now, that was taken by Phi Kappa Phi and bound into a little paperback volume, and during our break I looked for it, but in our moving I can't find my copies. If I find one, I'll send you one.

SR: Oh, that would be wonderful.

AWJ: But this is the same stuff. Firecracker Boys is a fairly complex thing to talk about.

SR: You said that the story began in 1958 and ended in 1962.

AWJ: As far as I was concerned, yeah. And pretty much that's the story.

SR: And the major characters were a group of scientists and engineers associated with, or employees of, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.

AWJ: Yes.

SR: Some five or six biology faculty members at the University of Alaska, residents of an Eskimo village at Point Hope, and the administration of the University of Alaska, especially two of its presidents.

AWJ: Right. So you have that. And let me just give you a précis of what happened. After World War II—global issues here!—the Atomic Energy Commission was faced with the question, the nation was faced with the question, of what to do about atomic energy and bombs and that sort of stuff. And the agreement pretty much was between us and the Soviet Union at that time, and other countries, that we would not use atomic weapons anymore. And that's all very well, but the man who was sort of in charge of such programs on behalf of the Atomic Energy Commission, Edward Teller, the physicist, who was at Livermore in California at the time, wanted to preserve his research and development team intact if he could,

or at least as much of it as possible, and continue developing new and better weapons systems. He couldn't do that under the existing agreement, so he came up with the idea to use atomic weapons for engineering purposes, nuclear engineering.

Where can you find a place where you need a large explosion?, but it's not war, see. Where is such a place? And so he went around the country, he and his team, literally went around the country—and the hemisphere, really—looking for such places. For example, one place they considered was the Isthmus of Panama. Wouldn't it be nice if we could just blast a channel across? I'm serious! It would be nice if you could blast a channel across the Isthmus of Panama, and you wouldn't have to fool with these locks and all that stuff. And you could do it! The energy in several large atomic explosions is capable of doing that—at least. Well, that seemed not likely, however, because of the fallout and other problems in a heavily populated area, so they had to abandon that idea at least for the time being.

So they started looking for places that were remote. The northwest coast of Alaska occurred to them, way up there on the coast of Alaska. I could give you more than you'd want to read on that, but at any rate there's an Eskimo village way up there called Point Hope. Has several hundred citizens. South of Point Hope there is an area of coastline which is characterized by large cliffs and some narrow valleys entering the headlands. And one of the places about thirty or forty miles southeast of Point Hope was an area called, in Eskimo, the Ogitoruk Valley.

Cape Thompson is the name of the headland that became associated with this project.

Well, to make a long story short, the AEC people, Teller etc., decided what Alaska needed there was a harbor. (chuckles) And of course it didn't. There was no use for a harbor, there were no minerals, there was nobody living there—nothing. But it was a great place, they felt, to demonstrate that you could blow a large crater that would not bother people, because there's nobody around, and it wouldn't be dangerous. But you could demonstrate—and this was their important thing—you could demonstrate the relationship between the size of the explosion and the size of the crater you produced, including the amount of stuff that was blown out and where it went. That was the goal, was an engineering project, really, pure and simple.

So they came to Alaska with this idea, came out to the university, talked about it. What they didn't say—Teller was there, and a lot of people that were with him and around him—and he talked about this project they'd like to do. Well, what he *didn't* say was that they were already out there at Cape Thompson surveying the property. And this is where they had decided they were going to do this. He wanted support from Alaska for this project. They had already gone to chambers of commerce, they'd gone to the legislature, citizens' groups. They'd already laid a trail of trying to get people to be enthusiastic about it. They came to the university—fortunately, I suppose, from our point of view at least—there were several of us who felt pretty strongly about this use of radioactivity, and we denied that there were no dangers. So then the next several years, the next couple

of years, we actually *did* do a program of bio-environmental studies at Cape Thompson....

(brief pause)

SR: Wow.

AWJ: Yeah. Well, they had....

SR: Environment of the Cape Thompson [route?] in Alaska. That's quite a large.... Oh, this looks interesting: the people, the radioactivity. This looks like a very, very comprehensive....

AWJ: Yeah. Well, so our point was, "You say this is for peaceful purposes? Okay, then let's do a complete study of the area, so that we can determine what the potential harm is if you do such a project there." They could hardly say no at that point. And so AEC sponsored a several-million-dollar program which led to this volume. If you look through the volume (SR: I will. I'd like to look at it.) you'll find all geology, biology (SR: Everything.), water—everything is included. So there was a large group of scientists, maybe a hundred, all in all, out there at Cape Thompson. The AEC had a big camp built on the site. We all spent months of our lives out there and did our thing. You'll find me associated with the plants in that book.

And so at the end of the project—or nearly at the end of this environmental project—the AEC said, "Well, see, they've now demonstrated that there could[n't] be any harm." And they published several conclusions where they said the research supported, that weren't true at all. I mean, it wasn't that they were false, it was that they hadn't been done yet. For example, they said,

“Well, you could do this blast in the winter, because the ground is all covered with snow.” Well, it turns out that there are extremely high winds in this area, and so in the wintertime at Cape Thompson, the ground is *not* all covered with snow, at least half of it is bare. “Now, you can do it in the wintertime because nobody is there.” Turns out that’s the season when the Eskimos hunt caribou in that area. I mean, on and on. They didn’t know.... (phone rings, recording paused) I started to say they didn’t know—“they” being the AEC and people working for them directly. They didn’t know anything about the environment. They didn’t *know* that the Eskimos hunted caribou there. They didn’t *know* that the snow blew off in the winter. They didn’t *know* about the sea ice not being solid. They assumed so much. And the studies we were doing, if carried out long enough, would have given them answers to those questions, but they were impatient, they wanted to do the cratering test. And so they put out a report—“they,” again, being the AEC people. Let me just refer to them that way. They weren’t *all* AEC people per se, but they were associated with AEC.

SR: And AEC is?

AWJ: Atomic Energy Commission. They put out a report, published it, it was eventually published in the *New York Times*, saying the project should go on, it was perfectly safe, that blasting could be done. Didn’t pay any attention to what.... And we argued that and fussed about it. They said they would correct it. They didn’t ever. And so it got to be a very hot topic, very political, *very* political. And it was really “us” and “them”—“us” being [unclear] biology

people in Alaska. But we attracted a lot of attention nationally other places in support of our position.

SR: How did that get played out politically in the country? I mean, was there involvement....

AWJ: Well, mostly not, I'd say, because the centers of attention and opposition were usually small modest groups like the committee on such-and-such or so-and-so in Massachusetts would support us, or something like that. The Alaskan Conservation Society would come out in favor of it.

What really happened was that.... See, during this time I'm telling you about, there was a moratorium on testing of atomic weapons. The United States and Russia had agreed that they would not do any more atmospheric testing of atomic weapons, because people were starting to worry about fallout. That became an issue, big issue—bigger than you can imagine, if you weren't really involved with it. It became a *huge* issue.

SR: I'm aware.

AWJ: So then the Russians decided on their own, of their own volition, that they were going to abrogate the agreement, and they started testing again in the fall of '61—late summer and fall of '61 they started testing. Well, the Atomic Energy Commission immediately—see, it had a big nuclear test site in Nevada, in the desert. So it said, “Well, why do we fool around with Alaska? We can get our information directly from Nevada.” So they did, they went down to Nevada. They abandoned Cape Thompson at that point, went to Nevada, drilled the hole for the bomb, blew it up, produced a crater, they got what they wanted.

SR: End of story.

AWJ: End of story, except that it won't die. I mean, this is an issue that goes on in Alaska still.

SR: Is it?!

AWJ: Yeah, it is, it really is. If you ask people in Alaska who have lived there any length of time at all, "What was the Cape Thompson Project about?" they will say, "Oh, that's the harbor project." Well, of course it never was a harbor project—that's the way they advertised it. And what happened? Well, what happened was that some of the people involved on our side lost their jobs. The repercussions followed over the years. There are many things that happened, but none of them to the advantage of the AEC. That kind of testing is just not done. I mean, it's not going to be done, either. That sort of peaceful use of atomic explosives is not going to happen. But they did have, as I said, they had the Panama Canal in mind, they had some other projects of that sort in mind, that they wanted to do. But they all died in the sixties. And that's why I said from our point of view this project ended in '62, because that's when the AEC abandoned Cape Thompson. They just pulled out.

SR: I'm glad you shared that little piece of history, because I think it's fascinating. And with your involvement in it, it's just as you say, you happened to be involved in different places.

AWJ: Yeah, things happen.

SR: Well, things happen, but you got involved in different kinds of situations. In most places, certainly you emerged in different ways as a leader. And it's very interesting in terms of your whole career.

AWJ: Well, it *has* been interesting, I can't deny that. It was absolutely consuming while it was going on. It was just, "Aaahhh!" That's all we could think about was this *thing*. Anyway, I'm sure you've been involved in situations like that, where you just can hardly believe you're involved, it's so significant and important and consuming.

SR: Yes, and it becomes a very emotionally charged situation. Yes, I do understand.

AWJ: Yes it does. And so anyway.... And the Firecracker Boys title comes from a man by the name of Dan O'Neal. He's the author of the book called *The Firecracker Boys*. I don't know if you've seen it or not. It's around. I've got a copy. And Dan did a big research job on—correspondence and everything. I kind of file correspondence [unclear]. I've just been going through everything I've got lately, and so that's still there. And so the word "Firecracker Boys" came from an offhand remark that a colleague of mine made at the time, when somebody said, "Who are those people down the hall?" And he said, "Oh, those are the firecracker boys."

SR: It's great.

AWJ: It is, it fits. Because the idea was, what they were *really* interested in was blowing things up—or down. Anyway, it was an interesting time. But that was all before I really was at San Diego State.

SR: Right. And then getting back to San Diego State and fast forwarding again, up to the time that you did resign, you were working on this, you said, in this role. Did it evolve and change over time as the person who was the vice-president—did you find that it enlarged, or did it....

AWJ: It enlarged, really. Yeah, I think so. Started out as the fairly narrow view of “here’s the academic affairs, here are the deans, here’s the colleges, the deans, etc., etc., and then the senate and the faculty.” I mean, things just sort of—once you get people involved, inevitably the mission enlarges. You get more questions to be addressed. More interests are having to be considered. The university itself is growing.

SR: That’s true.

AWJ: That’s probably the most important thing of all, is that your sphere of activity just becomes much larger.

SR: And of course it seems that during that time—I mean, even with the different things that you experience, San Diego State was gaining more and more respect and prestige. You said this whole model with the increasing research, I would think....

AWJ: Yeah, that’s true. That’s true. There was a time when I first went there when we had *no* Ph.D. programs at all. It was *very* difficult to interest research-oriented new Ph.D.s to even apply for a job. They didn’t see why they should come there. “No, no, we don’t do Ph.D. work, etc.” And we had to change the entire climate on that. We had to prove that we *could* do it, and that we *would*, and we would attract good people, and we would do significant research. And when *that*

happened, then you started seeing people, “Oh! Yeah, San Diego State. Okay, I’ll consider that.” And they hired, really, some first-rate people, and still do.

SR: Yes.

AWJ: So it *did* change. All those things together really changed the outside view of what San Diego State was about. I’m going to say a very sort of biased thing now, and that is that the other CSU campuses didn’t do it—they didn’t do it at all, or hardly at all. You could scratch the surface of any one of them, and you wouldn’t find *anything* comparable to what San Diego State did. *None* of them did—none of them.

SR: I wonder why.

AWJ: That’s a very, very interesting question, because there was plenty of pressure *not* to do it—plenty of pressure not to.

SR: Where did the pressure come from not to?

AWJ: Primarily from the system in the State, and the legislature, etc. “Why should we upset the master plan for higher education for the State of California?”

SR: That’s what I was wondering.

AWJ: And I remember going before—many of us, Jim Cobble and lots of us went—Tom and various people went—before state legislature committees, and we’d talk about joint doctoral programs, and they’d say, “You don’t have to do doctoral work. University of California’s doing that.” And we’d have to make a case every time—have to make a case why we should be allowed to do that. Usually successful, but there were times when we weren’t. And the system was not very

supportive either. The one thing about the CSU system is that it's—I've probably used this term before with you—"one size fits all."

SR: No, you didn't, actually. Yeah, one size fits all. I see.

AWJ: It's what they wanted. I have a message on my e-mail right now, as a matter of fact, from Nancy Marlin, the provost, saying.... I had written her an e-mail about the budget and how awful it looked, and she said, "Yes, it is so bad. And furthermore, you know the system, one size fits all." So we're not going to be allowed to solve the problems ourselves. They're going to tell us what to do, and it's one size fits all, as usual.

SR: I see.

AWJ: And that was always a problem when you try to do anything the least bit different. They didn't want that to happen. It would complicate their lives. Didn't see it as prestige; they didn't see it as an advantage to students—which is most important—or faculty; or a chance to upgrade. They didn't see it that way. It was just a nuisance.

SR: I would think that a different kind of student body would be attracted as you did more and more of this, and that would be a plus.

AWJ: Yeah, graduate work in particular profited from that. Undergraduates don't see that. I mean, they don't really get involved much, except they get better teaching.

SR: Right.

AWJ: At least it's potentially there. It may not come, but it's potentially there.

SR: Yeah.

AWJ: And so it becomes a place where you can actually get better teaching, you can actually then do advertising. I don't mean for your own benefit, but San Diego State is now—Jim Cobble told me the other day on the phone that there were a hundred Ph.D.s offered this year at San Diego State, *a hundred!* That's incredible! That's more than Irvine or some of the small University of California campuses. That's incredible! I said, "Are you right?!" "Oh, yeah," he said, "I'm right." He said they have about ten, fifteen joint doctoral programs now. Some are big, like public health is *very* large; some education, very large programs, having scores of students—well, *a score*, let's say, some of them. And more attracts more, and if you've got the support, if you can support the students.... Graduate students need support, obviously. If you can support them and provide instruction and facilities, they'll come.

SR: That's very exciting!

AWJ: Build it and they will come.

SR: That's right. Apparently so.

AWJ: It is so, it is so.

SR: Now, when you mentioned Nancy Marlin, she was there while you were there?

AWJ: No.

SR: Not at all?

AWJ: No, not at all.

SR: When did she come in, and how did that happen?

AWJ: Let's see, I retired in 1991, and the man who replaced me was a man by the name of Ron Hopkins. He wasn't there for very long. He was there for five years

maybe, and left. Then they hired a new one, and that was Nancy Marlin. So her tenure probably began in about '96 or '97, sometime like that.

SR: And were these people professors in science as well?

AWJ: Ron Hopkins was a geographer, maybe. Had been at Pullman, Washington State University, as a... What was he? He was some dean or something. And then Nancy was a vice-president at Northern Iowa University—somewhere like that—I've forgotten exactly where. So they were people in administration already. Nancy's field is psychology, I think.

SR: You retired officially in 1991, but it seems like—I notice that you're very involved, you go back there, there's some kind of award. Explain that.

AWJ: Well, there's something called the Albert W. Johnson Annual Distinguished Research Lecture—whatever the title of that is. That was set up by Jim and the graduate council when I retired. There've been not quite twenty of those. I think the one they had this year was the eighteenth maybe—something like that. So there's been somebody every year, some faculty member—it's limited to the faculty, they have to apply annually, and then there's a committee. I think the graduate council does it. And they select the awardee annually, and there's an annual lecture, usually in March or April or sometime in spring.

SR: And do you usually come in?

AWJ: Oh yeah, I usually do. I didn't this past year, because we were moving, and selling our house, and a lot of activity. I wasn't feeling very good either. And so I skipped it this year, but I've been to most of 'em, I guess—all but one maybe.

SR: That's great. That's terrific.

AWJ: That's fun. (chuckles) It's a big ego boost. [unclear]

SR: Well now as you, from this vantage point, look at the university, do you see things that you think should be changed? Of course you see the difficulties with the whole California situation.

AWJ: Well, you know, I would be hard pressed at this point to identify things that I think need to be done. It would be very nice, and simplify things, if, for example, San Diego State were just given blanket permission to offer Ph.D.s where it could, and not have to go through that process of getting the approval from the University of California to cooperate. Sometimes they will cooperate, sometimes they won't. They're very fussy about their prerogatives. There are programs that I think could be done well in San Diego State, but the University of California has the state prerogative to give those programs. For example—in fact, I was just talking to a young man over the weekend—he's Susan's niece's husband, I guess. He wants to get a D Pharm, a pharmacological doctorate. I was saying, "Well, where are you going to go to school?" And he was mentioning places he could perhaps go. And that led me to remember how one of the things that Jim Cobble and I tried to get permission to do was a D Pharm at San Diego State. Couldn't do it. University of California has the prerogative to do things in medicine, closely related things. The state universities cannot give M.D.s, cannot give dental degrees, cannot give veterinary degrees.

SR: But they can give public health degrees.

AWJ: Yes, that was always very on the edge, you know, on the margin. We have great opposition from UCLA and Berkeley, as a matter of fact, who felt that we were

invading their territory. But it was far enough out of the official things that we couldn't do.

SR: That's very interesting, because, well, for example, my public health doctorate at Columbia University was based in the medical school. It's interesting.

AWJ: Yeah, but a lot of them are not, a lot of them are separate entities.

SR: That's right.

AWJ: I think UCLA's is separate. I think Berkeley's is too.

SR: It's very interesting.

AWJ: Yeah, that was a fascinating fight we had to get *that* through. We first had to convince our own faculty that that was something we ought to do. They weren't convinced, you know. There were a lot of people who thought we shouldn't be involved. But anyway, those are the kinds of things.... In other words, what I'm saying is, if the university were *not* under the rigid control, in some cases, of the system, there are things that it could do, controlling really a lot of money in a big university.

SR: Now, with President Golding and President Day, did you all have that feeling, was it a constant feeling of this balancing?

AWJ: Yeah. One of the wonderful things about it was that the chancellor's office would hire people they thought they could put under their thumb, and do what they wanted them to do. But I remember when Golding had his epiphany, and Tom Day too. And then they became *ardent* in favor of San Diego State, and equally violent against the system. It was really funny. In fact, Brage left, I think, and resigned from San Diego State. His arguments with the chancellor, I think that

was really the motivating force for him to leave, was that he and the chancellor just fought it out. And of course he couldn't win that one. And Tom? *Endless* battles with the chancellor—*endless* battles with the chancellor's office. But it was always a case where the chancellor's office was saying, "You can't do this." "Why not?" Take the issue of computing, which was once a very big issue. Can you have a computer or not? Well, that seems like a no-brainer, but in fact, back in the seventies, not everybody had big computers. And for a big campus, you need a big computer. And so finally, when Tom came, he worked with the foundation to get the money so we could buy our own. The State didn't provide it. We bought our own. We were the first campus to have an IBM-dah-dah-dah, whatever it was.

SR: So there were other avenues.

AWJ: There were other ways. And that was the beauty of having a very important and large foundation. There were things you could do.

SR: That's *very* interesting.

AWJ: Yeah. And I will say that the presidents, Golding, and Day particularly, took advantage of that, took advantage of those opportunities and made the most of it, and really were able to ...

SR: It's creative.

AWJ: Very creative. ... and bring San Diego State along in areas where nobody else went in our system—and still haven't, in many cases. Now, I'm not saying they weren't doing other things, but they weren't doing the things that we were doing. And so San Diego State's take on annual research money is larger than the sum of

all other twenty campuses—it has been. I don't know if it is any more or not. But it was always a comparison of numbers thing that we'd get into.

You mentioned, did they get involved, Day and Golding? Yes! There was this immense energy created by the faculty primarily. “We want to do these things!” And the presidents got caught up in it. They really did. And sometimes to their disadvantage. They'd get beat upon by the chancellor's office for wanting to do these things. But they stuck to it, both of them. And they would get to the point where.... Tom came with the idea.... I remember saying to Tom once.... Just as he was coming in he said, “What are you doing next week?” And I said, “I have to go to Long Beach to a meeting of the chancellor's office.” “Why do you have to do that?” I said, “Well, somebody has to represent us, and there's some money issue involved.” He said, “You shouldn't have to be doing that.” I said, “Who else is going to do it?” And he said, “Well, the president should be doing it.” And I said, “Good!” But he came in with the idea that he would have to do something. He thought the chancellor's office ought to *automatically* take care of all these problems. And then he discovered uh-uh, it doesn't work that way. If you want it, you're going to have to do it yourself.

And I'm exaggerating, no doubt, the significance and success of those attitudes, but by and large, pretty successful—and pretty significant.

SR: Yeah. It seems so.

AWJ: And it was a point of pride of the faculty. We can do this, we're going to do it. It had a lot of advantages.

SR: That's terrific. All along, in addition to all of the administrative situations that you were involved in, I gather that you maintained your role as a scientist and researcher. And I know you were highly respected for doing such. Could you tell us a little bit more about what your work entails?

AWJ: My research work, I assume you mean. Well, if I can take an example—because it would apply to a lot of different situations—let me take the example of Cape Thompson. Cape Thompson was established—let me just use the words “Cape Thompson” which describes a lot of people working in an area of about forty square miles in this valley in northwest Alaska. But what was wanted there, and needed, was a characterization of what that environment was really like. I mean, if you were talking about blowing it up, or developing it, or whatever word you want to use, it was important to know what was there, how it worked, what would happen if it was disturbed, was it necessary or important to preserve it—all kinds of questions not purely scientific, but partially scientific, would come up in such a situation. So in that case, I had several people working with me, our goal was to establish what the environment, what the vegetation of Cape Thompson looked like. And we went out into the valley and surveyed it and ended up with.... I have not chosen the right map, this is the soils map. But there's a map like that of the vegetation—here it is!—of the valley.

SR: Wow.

AWJ: Now that's just a black-and-white, essentially, picture of what's there. It doesn't explain really what happens on an annual or longer basis. Is this being used in any way? Is it subject to annual fluctuations? Is it in peril of being destroyed by

extreme environmental situations? I mean, there's a lot you don't know. First of all, it's important to know what's there. But then you have to know a lot more about it than that. And so the role of—let me call myself a landscape ecologist, which would come close to being what I turned into eventually—somebody interested in more than just a little spot on the face of the earth, but some reasonably significant piece of land with vegetation on it, and try to explain why it is like it is, what produced this? Was this ever glaciated? No, it was never glaciated. Has it ever been overrun by the sea? Yes, part of it has been. Where? How much? And what was the influence of *that*? Was it ever part of the land bridge connecting Siberia and.... Apparently it was at one point. Et cetera. There are all kinds of questions of that sort that come up, that explain a great deal about *why* this area is as it is. I could go on and on with that. I mean, there are hundreds of questions you could ask.

SR: That's fascinating. That's the scholarly part.

AWJ: It makes it interesting. It makes it very interesting. And at the same time, there are people—botanists, plant ecologists—who are much more interested in why a particular plant is growing where it's growing, what's going on with that species? I'm interested in that too, but I'm really more interested in the broader picture of what this whole forty-square-mile area looks like. So at any rate.... And if you look at symbols....

SR: Yeah, it's very clear.

AWJ: More [unclear] than this, and so forth.

SR: Yeah. It's very clear and understandable.

AWJ: And then you say, Well, do the Eskimos hunt this area? Yes they do. Where do they hunt? They hunt this area particularly.

SR: Well, anthropologists, of course, are interested in this.

AWJ: Absolutely, yeah. I didn't explain to you that Susan got her degree in anthropology.

SR: My dual doctorate's in anthropology.

AWJ: You mentioned that.

SR: And that's interesting.

AWJ: Yeah. So Susan is an anthropologist in a way, as well, although she doesn't have an advanced degree. (looking at printed materials) What's this? Oh, that's a book review of this, as a matter of fact. That's why it's in there.

SR: Well, this is fascinating.

AWJ: So when you asked me to explain my work, it's not as satisfactory for me to try to explain it. It would be easier to explain it if I could say, "I'm interested in the ecology of *areafrum vaginatum* [phonetic], and I'm doing...." Well, I can't say that.

SR: And I'd have to [spell] that for the transcriber!

AWJ: And I can't say that. I much prefer to stick to this idea of landscape ecology: Why is a particular landscape the way it is, and what is it doing, and what's happening, and all those kinds of questions—they're much more interesting to me.

SR: And when you were teaching, were you able to teach courses relating to this?

AWJ: Yes. At San Diego State there was a basic ecology course we all taught, and then there were branches away from that. Then I taught a couple of graduate courses in plant ecology and things of that sort. So yeah.

SR: That's exciting.

AWJ: Well, I'm not sure how exciting it is, but it's at least what we did, and it was what we wanted to do, and we were allowed to do pretty much. Students were impressed. And I think we turned out, during that period we had a lot of people, a lot of students, interested in the arctic, some of whom are still currently arctic investigators somewhere or other.

SR: That's nice. Well, I know I asked you about particular teachers and professors who were role models for you, but I'm sure you must be for students....

AWJ: Some people, probably, yeah.

SR: Which is really wonderful. Well, this is fascinating, and I think that we can continue by discussing, as a parallel, going along with what happened with the development of your career, your personal life, family life, other interests, when we continue.

[END PART 2, GO TO NEW DOCUMENT FOR PART 3]

Dr. Albert W. Johnson
June 29-30, 2009
interviewed by Susan Resnik
for San Diego State University
208 minutes of recording total
PART 3 OF 3 PARTS

SUSAN RESNIK: Today is Tuesday, June 30, 2009. This is Susan Resnik resuming an interview with Dr. Albert Johnson. Good morning, Dr. Johnson.

ALBERT W. JOHNSON: Good morning, Susan.

SR: This morning I'd like you to talk a little bit about your interest in Mark Twain, how it started, and bring us up to date.

AWJ: It all started with my growing up in essentially a rural part of northern Illinois. I start there because my grandfather was very influential in my early life. He was a rugged outdoorsman and was retired by that time, but he was very much interested in fishing and hunting and being out in nature. And I spent a lot of time with him and my grandmother. They had a small farm just outside of Belvidere, Illinois, where he raised chickens to support himself in his retirement. There were no big retirement plans in those years. So if my parents had to go somewhere, or just if they wanted to give me a break from *them*, I would spend an evening, a weekend, a day with my grandparents. And my grandfather would make himself available to me. He liked being with me. He would take me around. He had an old, old Model T Ford, which he would drive out into the countryside. The countryside then was rural and agricultural, but it was not as highly developed as agriculture later became and is now. It was back in the days when a section of land would have maybe five or six farms around it, whereas now there might be one. So it's very different. But at any rate, he knew all of the wild places around

the area, and was able to tell me stories about what was going on, and who settled here, and so forth, as we drove around. And he was a great storyteller, and that's the connection with Mark Twain. He *loved* to tell stories. And he was sort of a gruff, hardy person, and although I obviously never saw Mark Twain, I have read a lot of [his works] and of course I've heard Hal Holbrook imitate him. And I've also heard my father often remark that his father, my grandfather, was very Twain-like, *very* Twain-like. I can still hear my father saying, "He's just like Mark Twain," talking about my grandfather—and looked like him too. He had shaggy white hair, with sometimes a moustache—not often—and just a rugged-looking man, and kindly also.

At any rate, that kindled my interest in the whole idea of Mark Twain, although I didn't do anything about it then, but at least it was in my head that there was some kind of connection there between my grandfather and Mark Twain. So later on, of course, as a growing person reading more, like most people, I read *Tom Sawyer*, and there were lots of stories about Tom Sawyer. There were even movies about Tom Sawyer. And I eventually graduated to *Huck Finn*, which of course it a much more sophisticated book and account of that period. So that got me very much interested. And then I mentioned Hal Holbrook, as I then was in college and beyond. There was, again, an interest in Mark Twain, stimulated by the recordings of Hal Holbrook. I got very much involved in listening to those. And I started in a very modest way collecting things as I saw them. When I would go out into the field—field biologists spend a lot of time outdoors—when I'd go out into the field I would always include in

the books I was going to take along to read in the summer, something of Mark Twain. And so I had read quite a bit. As a matter of fact, I sort of complimented myself in thinking that I had read *most* of Mark Twain. But in fact, what happened next proved to me that I didn't know much of Mark Twain at all.

My son Curtis, who was a graduate student at Columbia in the 1970s and early eighties, worked as a way of supporting himself, in addition to his support that he got from the university, by working in the Argosy Book Store in New York. And so he knew of my burgeoning interest in Twain, so whenever anything came in that they were buying, he gave me a chance often to buy it, or he bought it for me and sent it to me and I'd pay him back. So one of the things that came in early was what's called the definitive edition of Mark Twain, thirty-seven volumes of Mark Twain. And it did not include a couple of the things that he wrote very late in life, that were not published at the same time as the definitive edition, but became available later. So the definitive edition was thirty-seven volumes in addition to the later things. And furthermore, this definitive edition had Mark Twain's autograph/signature in front; and also his biographer, who's a man by the name of Albert Bigelow Paine, the official Mark Twain biographer. And Albert Bigelow Paine's name is also in this edition. I think there were one thousand copies of the definitive edition published, of which the one I had was.... I don't remember the exact number. It's in the book.

And so I had this wonderful set of Twain. I just could hardly believe it. And so I started reading that, but I decided that was not the way to—this was an uncut edition, the pages were still mostly uncut. So I didn't want to destroy that

part of it. But it gave me the interest to look for the other volumes separately, which I did. So I started buying what I could, and my son helped me again, buying single volumes, first editions of the same things that were in the definitive edition, of course. And so I started taking a much more serious interest, and I was spending *money* on it. It seemed like a lot of money then, but it was nothing compared to what those same volumes command today.

And people started understanding that I was interested in Twain. And so I was invited to give lectures on Twain, and did at the university, and around in San Diego. There were book groups who had eclectic interests, and one of the groups was a sort of American history group, and they invited me on a couple of occasions to talk about Mark Twain. So I would give a little homemade biography of Twain. I was introduced at one of these meetings as an expert in Mark Twain. I had to say, “No, no, no, I’m not an expert in Mark Twain. I *like* Mark Twain, and I know *something*, but I’m certainly not a scholar.” I think they used that term. I’m not a Mark Twain scholar by any means. I’m interested.

So that interest kept going, and my collection of Twain increased gradually, until I had, oh, I don’t know, thirty, forty, fifty volumes of Twain—something like that—*some* first editions, not all by any means. In fact, when I retired from San Diego State, one of the retirement presents that President Day and his cabinet arranged to give me were several things of Mark Twain that I didn’t have. That was very nice.

So when we moved to Oregon, of course all this stuff came with us, but it was just sitting here, and I wasn’t doing anything with it particularly—reading

occasionally—but I wasn't adding to the collection, I wasn't really doing anything. There was not the same kind of current interest here as there was in San Diego for that kind of thing. And I didn't really search it out, either. I mean, I was kind of burned out about collecting. I had collected other things, but Twain was the big area of my collections.

And my connections with San Diego State continued during this period, and I became good friends with the librarian Connie Dowell during that period, and she had a very strong interest in special collections. And I knew the person who was working in Special Collections, representing her. I knew her well. That was Lynn Olsen, who is still there at the library I believe, but somebody else is in charge of—I guess Rob Ray is in charge of Special Collections.

SR: Yes.

AWJ: So my wife Susan and I talked about—again, when we moved—“Are we packing this up yet again, to just sit on shelves in our new house?!” And I decided at that time.... And Connie was leaving too—leaving San Diego. I had explored with Connie a little bit about whether the library would be interested in the Twain collection, and she assured me they would. So we decided before we moved and did all the packing and moving of it, we would offer it to San Diego State. So I did call them and offered it to, it turned out, Rob Ray. And he was very enthusiastic about that.

SR: Absolutely! I mean, he told me about it, he was very excited.

AWJ: So just a month or so before we moved, we packed it up, sent it down to San Diego, where it was received, and Rob reported that as it was unpacked it was like

children around a Christmas tree, unpacking new things. And so there it is, and I'm glad that it's there. It will be used and consulted, and adds to the luster of their Special Collections. So that's where it is, and that's about all I have to say about it.

I, of course, continue to be interested in Twain as a character in American history, and do a lot of, let me call it secondary reading. I don't do a lot of original reading in Twain anymore. But I do, any time—or as often as I can—I notice what's coming up in other writings about Twain and try to read it.

SR: I think a lot of people will be interested in looking at your collection. I know you've certainly inspired me to find out a little bit more. I think [Twain is] such an important figure.

AWJ: Yes. Hemingway once said *Huckleberry Finn* is the best thing that's ever been written in American literature—the best thing. And that quote of Hemingway's is repeated often. Every time there's something written about Twain and his writings, they almost always include Hemingway's statement about *Huckleberry Finn*. And in fact, if you want to buy a first edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, which you can do, if you're really intent on that, you're going to pay \$600-\$700 for a single volume—or more. I mean, prices have gone up enormously. The definitive edition, for which I paid like \$800, I think, for thirty-seven volumes, now sells for, is listed for, \$30,000. I don't know that it's worth that, but that's what it would take to get it, I think.

SR: How nice for the university!

AWJ: Yeah. Well, I told 'em they could do whatever they wanted to with it. If they want to sell it, that's fine, but I don't think they want to do that.

SR: No, they're very happy to have it.

AWJ: Yeah, I think so, and I'm glad that they have it. There *were* people on the faculty who were Twain specialists, but they have all retired. And I don't know if there's anyone that's interested in that period of American literature now there. I just don't know. Could be.

SR: In the times we live in now, I imagine you go online and just type in "Mark Twain".... Do you ever do that?

AWJ: Oh, yeah.

SR: And I would think that there's all kinds of people and things.

AWJ: And there are some big Twain collectors in San Diego. There's some *huge* collections of Twain in San Diego. I remember going to a couple of them. They advertised that this collector was showing his collection, and you walk into a whole room of Twain. Mine was nothing like that. And so the popularity of Twain as an item, in the literary sense, as an item to collect, has never receded—it's increased.

SR: He apparently was so productive.

AWJ: Oh yeah.

SR: How long did he live?

AWJ: Well, he died in, I'm going to say, 1907, and that might not be quite right, but it's close to that. And he was born in 18.... Well, subtract seventy-five years from that.

SR: So he was about seventy-five?

AWJ: Yeah, he was about seventy-five.

SR: So he just produced throughout his lifespan?

AWJ: Well, no, not really. His early life was, of course, spent doing other things. And he didn't start writing until he was probably in his twenties. He moved to California in his twenties, I think, and did a lot of writing. He was a newspaper reporter.

SR: I remember him doing that, yeah.

AWJ: Yeah, he did a lot of writing. And he had had this life as a river boat captain on the Mississippi, and some of his finest writing is *Life on the Mississippi*. There's things that are just so lyrically beautiful about *Life on the Mississippi*, that you just kind of ... "Wow," you know. And he kept writing, and he really depended on his writing for not only a living, but he had other ambitions. He tried to develop the first real mechanized printing press, and invested thousands and thousands of dollars in that—you know, the automatic typesetter machinery and all of that. He went broke, essentially, doing that, and had to reinvent his speaking career and some of his writing career, in order to recoup all those losses. He essentially lost all his money on the printing press idea, and it never did work out. The inventor.... There was always something wrong. They would be right on the verge of it, and it just didn't connect. So that's why he went on his last big lecture tour, really in support of just his life. And he helped Ulysses Grant do his autobiography. Those were the ways he made money in those days. But he lived

comfortably even then. But he stayed active. What I'm saying is, part of this continued activity was simply self-support.

SR: And then he moved east at some time?

AWJ: Oh, he moved east much earlier than that. His wife was from Connecticut, I think, or Massachusetts, or one of the states there. So he never moved west after they married. Most of his life was spent in the East. His western life, when he spent time in California and Nevada and the mining camps and on the Mississippi, that was all early. That was, I'm going to say, pre thirty years old, or something like that. And then he started making a lot of money, they moved to Connecticut, and he built this big house.

SR: I read that somewhere.

AWJ: Became prominent, and much more of a national figure after that, than he had been. But even in his early days, in his first attempts at being a lecturer, even then he was attracting a lot of audience. And he was very young, still then at that point.

SR: Did they have recordings of his voice?

AWJ: No, not that I know of. I don't think so.

SR: I'm trying to think in the time frame.

AWJ: I don't think so. I don't think there was any recording going on in those years.

SR: That's too bad.

AWJ: Let's see, 1907—there could have been.

SR: There could have been, I think.

AWJ: I have never heard anything, but it could be there.

SR: That's terrific. I like the fact how you became interested because of your grandfather.

AWJ: Yeah. That's right. I've often reflected on that, as to why my *father* thought my grandfather was a Mark Twain-like character. And as I read more and more of Twain, and learned of his interests, and just his physical presence, the pictures—lots of pictures of Twain, of course—reminded me a great deal of my grandfather.

SR: That's lovely. Well, as you reflect back a little about your family, I'd like you to share more about your family over the years, and bring us up to present.

AWJ: Okay. (chuckles) That's not so easy. I said yesterday a little bit about my mother and father. I'll repeat myself. My mother was born around the turn of the century. My father was born in 1892, and my mother was born in 1897, I think. They were both born in or around Belvidere, Illinois, southern Wisconsin. That whole area of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin was home to them and their parents and relatives. But they moved to Belvidere, Illinois, in the early part of the twentieth century, and then stayed there during the rest of their lives.

I mentioned what my father had been and done, and my mother as well. She was born of a highly religious German Lutheran family, and played a very important role in the church during the rest of her life. She was a very devout Lutheran. She impressed those values on the family. I don't mean to say that we all turned out to be devout Lutherans, because we did not. I think that was certainly true of me. I think it was also true of my sisters, that they drifted away from the church in any formal sense—much to my mother's dismay. She thought that we were doomed to hell for sure—or at least she was “not going to see us in

Heaven,” she used to say, because we were not sufficiently religious. At any rate, she was a *wonderful* mother. She was *very* devoted to the family. She never missed a chance to be the hostess at a family gathering. She was a wonderful cook, a great housekeeper, everybody always felt at home with her in our house. If there was a family gathering in or around Belvidere, it would almost always be at our house. I’ll come back to that in a minute. She had three brothers, two of whom lived in Belvidere, and a sister who lived in Belvidere as well. And they all lived to be in their seventies or eighties before they died. But she outlived them all. But they were always welcome at our house, and often spent a lot of time there.

I mentioned the fact that she played the piano, and played the organ as well, and she gave lessons to *hundreds* of kids—not at the same time, of course, but over the years. I’m not exaggerating when I say that hundreds of kids of Belvidere, Illinois, learned to play the piano with my mother. And she really made a thing of it. She would have one or more annual recitals of the students, and she would arrange to feed everybody, and the parents would come in.

SR: That’s nice!

AWJ: She really took a very strong interest in that. Even today, if I go back to Belvidere—which I do *rarely*—there’s a very good chance if I walk down the street I’ll run into somebody who’ll tell me that they took piano lessons from my mother. So she was influential in that sense.

SR: Did the kids come to the house for lessons?

AWJ: Yes, kids came to the house. My school years are filled with memories of (hums a scale) somebody playing scales.

SR: I can well imagine. And I can even imagine, having been one of those kinds of children, the kinds of books that she must have had.

AWJ: That's right. And she was frequently frustrated with them, but she also had some very good students who became, not professional of course, but became competent pianists.

SR: Very nice.

AWJ: But she took care of us very, very well. She was devoted to my father, and she did everything possible to make his life easier. She was a real *home* person. She didn't go out in the community, she didn't party much except with him. Her social activities were really confined to the church—women's groups and things like that. I have only the fondest memories of her. She was not a strict disciplinarian, but she was enough of a disciplinarian so that you knew what was right or wrong about things. She tended to our needs, and she tended to our moral upbringing as much as she possibly could. And as a result, I think that my two older sisters and I turned out to be reasonably moral people, with the values that she embraced. If I came home late, if I'd been out fishing or hunting or walking or doing something, and I came home late for dinner, I could always depend on it being there. Even if it was eight o'clock at night, there'd be a quart of milk sitting on the table. Whatever they'd had for dinner was there. So I never had to worry about being taken care of.

SR: What a nice base to start from.

AWJ: Yeah, it was very nice. And my father on the other hand—I shouldn't say "on the other hand," that makes him sound like some kind of monster—he was an extremely affable and friendly, funny, family oriented person. He loved nothing more than to have a big family gathering where he could do some of the cooking, and people would come in and have a beer with him downstairs and things of that sort. He was a very funny man. He loved to tell stories. He was like his father in that sense, that he loved to tell stories. He knew everything about whatever had happened in Belvidere, Illinois. And so in his later years, he had a special room in our basement where he had his refrigerator and some beer, and he'd have cheese and things down there, and he'd invite me down, or whoever was coming, he'd invite us down to his room, and we'd sit there and drink beer or wine or whatever, and he'd tell stories about Belvidere and his life. And he'd go on and on—he knew everything about the city, about its development, about people.

SR: Did he ever write any of this down?

AWJ: No, he didn't, not that I know of. He was not scholarly in any sense.

SR: Too bad we didn't have an oral historian around!

AWJ: I've often thought of that, Susan. I should have realized it myself, as I was getting older, that he would be gone eventually, and those stories would stop, and nobody would ever really know much about them, except little fleeting memories of what he might have said. As I told you yesterday, he was an undertaker. And in those days, being an undertaker meant that you had to go out into the countryside and pick up the body. And as we were driving out in the countryside, he would point to a farm and say, "Oh, I had to go up there and pick up So-and-So

last December. It was snowing, had somehow to get up to the house.” Full of those kinds of experiences. So he knew everybody.

SR: I would think so, in that role. I was just thinking that as you said it, that you’d get to know every family.

AWJ: He did. He would tell very funny stories about them. I’ll give you a couple of examples. In those days—when I say “those days” I’m really talking mostly about pre-World War II, talking about the twenties and thirties, maybe the forties to some extent. But the whole funeral business was starting to become more rigid and formularized as time went on. So in those days before that, though, the family would come into the city somehow and pick out a casket for the loved one, whoever had just died. And often those families were poor, really didn’t have much money. And so I remember my father had a show room of caskets with various prices. The high-priced ones were the solid copper and solid bronze, which cost hundreds of dollars in those days, and that was a lot of money. But then there was the very cheap cloth-covered wood ones. Then the cheapest of all were the ones that the county would pay for, for indigents, which were nothing more than a pine box, essentially. But my father would size up the family beforehand, and when they came in to look at caskets, which they inevitably did, he would try to steer them into the price category he thought they could afford. But sometimes the family’s pride would emerge, and they would say, “Well, Mother never had anything good in her life, but here’s our chance to do something for her,” and they’d spend more than they should have, and more than they could really afford.

SR: Interesting.

AWJ: And so my father would, again, try to get them over into a more modest category, and succeed sometimes, but sometimes no, the family had to have its way. Ma was going to get her reward finally.

SR: That's very interesting.

AWJ: Yeah, it was.

SR: I hadn't thought about that.

AWJ: A lot of status in caskets, believe me. And I remember, as a matter of fact, my father would come home for lunch, and he would talk about a family where there had been a death, and he would report to my mother the kind of casket that the family had chosen, and how much it had cost. And of course he was in business, and if the family could afford a solid bronze casket at \$900, great! I don't have any idea what his profit on that might be, but there was money involved. As a matter of fact, we went through the entire Depression, and I wasn't even aware that there *was* such a thing as a depression. We lived well during that entire period, even though lots of people didn't pay their bills. But we always took a summer vacation, we lived in a great big house that was comfortably furnished. I never remember my father complaining about money, or my mother, during all that period.

SR: That's unusual.

AWJ: Yeah, it is. Now, I will say that I was born in 1926. That was before the Big Crash, but I was much too young to remember the crash. All I remember is when I was about four or five years old, so that would have been 1930, '31, and '32, my

father and mother bought this enormous house. And my memory says it cost \$3,200, which sounded like a lot of money to me *then*, but that was the house that we lived in for a long, long time. And it was the house eventually that became the funeral home, too—eventually.

But anyway, we always had food, plenty of it, good food. My father did a lot of bartering with farmers.

SR: I've heard people talk about that.

AWJ: Yeah. For example, some of the students that took piano lessons from my mother came from the farm, and they'd bring in a dozen eggs for the lesson—things like that.

SR: That's nice.

AWJ: And I recall one morning during World War II, so this was a little later, that I remember going out to the garage one morning and there was a whole hog dressed out, lying on top of the car, that somebody had brought in during the night. Now, my father would know who that somebody was, but it was a farmer who was bartering food for services—the services being burial or whatever. So there was a lot of that going on. My father *loved*... My father should have been.... Not that he didn't succeed well in the funeral business, but he would have really been happier in his life, I think, had he been a merchant dealing with food and furniture somehow. That's an unlikely combination, but he *loved* that kind of shopping, and the presence of these fresh food stores in town. There was a big grocery store where the grocer was an entrepreneur who would deal nationally for whatever was in season. Out in front of his store he would have bushel baskets full of

peaches in season, and things like that. My father would gleefully pick up a bushel of peaches and bring it home to my mother, and she was expected to take care of that—canning, essentially—and did it, happily.

So anyway, we were always, in my view, in my memory, well off. There was no showy sense of having a lot of money—they didn't. But we always had a car, a relatively new car; always went on a vacation in the summer; always had big holiday celebrations. So my life was not in any way negatively influenced by the Depression—at least not that I knew of. Maybe it was in some way, but.... Always had medical care, [unclear], everything, you know. It was a well-supplied life.

It was expected we'd all go to college.

SR: I was wondering about that. You went after World War II—did you go on the G.I. Bill?

AWJ: Yes, I did. But my sisters, of course, did not, and they both went to college. And that had to come out of my parents, because there was no support for that, I'm sure.

SR: How did you happen to decide to go to Colorado to college?

AWJ: Ah! Well, that was also due to my father. He had, as a young man, probably right after high school, I think, he and his father, my grandfather, decided that they should go out to Colorado and buy some land and raise peaches around Grand Junction in Colorado, which you probably don't know of, but Grand Junction is a fairly good-sized city on the western side of the Rockies there, along the Colorado River. Grand Junction turned out to be a *fabulous* peach-growing

area—still is. There was land to be had, so they went out to the Grand Junction area, to a little town by the name of Fruita, exactly, and they bought I don't know how much land, some acres, and the idea was they were going to raise fruit on this land. And so that introduced my father to Colorado, and even despite whatever happened with the fruit-growing business, he was able to travel around Colorado and just fell in love with it—just loved Colorado and the Rockies and all that. The fruit business, by the way, failed because the farm that they chose had soils that were too salty. So that didn't work. And my grandfather came back, and my father too. But my father retained his interest in Colorado.

So when I was growing up, Colorado was on his mind a lot, and we took a summer vacation when I was in my teens. We took a summer vacation out there, went to Yellowstone Park and down the Rockies and spent some time in Colorado. I thought it was pretty nice myself. Decided then that I was interested in those years, for a college career, being in some outdoor thing. I think I told you forestry was my choice then, and Colorado A&M, as it was called then, had a good forestry school, it was known for that. So it was a chance to combine my interests in the field with the state itself. So that's what really drew me there in the first place.

SR: It *is* interesting, how one thing leads to another.

AWJ: Yeah. And then once I was there, I too became *very* interested in Colorado, spent the rest of my education years there.

SR: Yes. And as you got older, tell me more about the family that *you* had.

AWJ: Well, actually I was quite young. I had graduated from high school, I enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, rather than be drafted. And I was qualified by tests, I qualified for aviation cadet training. In the meantime, I had my high school, post-high school sweetheart was a woman, same age, who I eventually married. And I married her when I was like nineteen and she was eighteen—one of those kinds of situations. I was still in the Army Air Corps at that point. And we went from being married in Belvidere, Illinois, to where I was stationed at that time, which was in Douglas, Arizona. There was an Army Air Corps base there, Douglas Army Air Field. But it was just at the end of the war, as I think I mentioned. I really didn't spend much time in the Air Corps, because the war ended. VE-Day, Victory in Europe Day, came in May, was it?, of '45. Where was I stationed at that time? I think in Texas maybe. And then moved to Arizona, and VJ-Day, Victory over Japan Day, came. Actually, I was on furlough. Got married during those few days when the first "A" bomb was dropped. And then we went back, however, to Arizona, after we were married. That was August. They started closing bases down. And that one was closed down and I was sent to Illinois, to an Army air base there, and was finally discharged from there in November of 1945. So my Army career was really very brief, all spent in the United States, all under sort of ideal circumstances, if you can call being in the military ideal in any sense.

And then the G.I. Bill came along. I still remember sitting in the session where we were given some information about after you're discharged, what, and a major standing up in front of us and announcing to us that there was going to be

something called the G.I. Bill. And he said—I'll never forget this, because he was prescient, he was quite correct—he said, "It's the greatest program of social engineering that's ever been enacted in the United States." And I thought, "Well, okay." But it turned out to be the case, it really did. But anyway, I was sufficiently impressed by that. I was going to college anyway. I mean, it was clear from the time that I could even think about it, that I would eventually go to college. Somehow or another, I'd go. And so the G.I. Bill just made it certain I could go. And my wife and I then packed up and moved to Fort Collins from Belvidere. I spent a few months in Belvidere after November. From November to March I was working in a grocery store in Belvidere, with the idea, though, that we would go to Colorado. So we did, we packed up in March of '46, drove out to Fort Collins, and the rest is history.

SR: And you have three sons?

AWJ: Three sons, yeah. Two of them were born in Fort Collins, and one in Boulder. The oldest is Mark, his name is, and he was born in 1946, so that makes him sixty-three, I think. He'll be sixty-three in July. And his brother, who lives here in Portland, Curtis, is sixty-one right now. He'll be sixty-two next March. And the third, Chris, who lives in Oakland, was born in 1953, so he'll be....

SR: Fifty-six?

AWJ: Yeah, he was born in '53.

SR: I think he'd be fifty-six, wouldn't he?

AWJ: Yeah, I think you're right. Seems like he's a bit older than that, but I guess not. Anyway, he was born in 1953, that's for sure. So anyway, those are the three.

We all lived together through my college years, first in Fort Collins and then in Boulder. When I got my Ph.D. at Boulder, we moved to Alaska, where I was on the faculty there from 1956 to 1962, six years, with a year out going to Norway. So we were all together during that period.

The oldest of them, Mark, then left home and went to college himself. He's had a sort of checkered career, but he finally finished at UC-Santa Barbara. And his brother Curtis started out at UC-Santa Barbara, got his degree at Berkeley, and got his graduate degree at Columbia. And Chris got his bachelor's degree at Berkeley, and has not gone back.... Well, that's not true, he got a master's degree at San Francisco State in communications. So they've all had college educations, with surprising results sometimes!

Curtis became—I'll pick on him because he was probably, in academic terms, had the most successful career. He was a successful faculty member, liked to teach, do research, came to Lewis and Clark College here when he finished his Ph.D., and has been here ever since, so he's been here for twenty-some years. And he rose through the ranks, eventually became dean of the college, which is a position very much like provost, but the small college doesn't have the provost position. They have a position called the dean of the college, who reports to the president. He had that position at Lewis and Clark. And then the president left, and as is traditional, the new president comes in and brings his own people with him, or hires them. So he's back on the faculty there, but doing well, and enjoying life.

His brother Mark has had a very checkered kind of career. Mark does not believe that he was destined to have an hourly job somewhere in life. (chuckles) So he's gone from one thing to another. But he's alive and well. That's about all I could ask.

And Chris, who was not a really good student, but enthusiastic, got his degree in biology, of all things, (chuckles) which he shouldn't have done, because I don't think he had the slightest interest in biology, but he was somehow taking after me at that point. And then he worked for Pacific Gas and Electric for some years. Finally decided he liked communications, so he went to San Francisco State and got his master's degree in communications. He's had several jobs since then, but the one he's had most consistently and is now still in is the IRS job. He likes that. He's in sort of a middle management position, doing well.

So they've all had quite good lives. Of them I've had two grandchildren, they're Curtis' kids, girls both of them, Sophia and Alexis. Sophia graduated from Whitman College, which is out in Walla Walla, Washington, a year or so ago, and is now working for Americorps in New Orleans. Her sister Alexis is a student at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. I think she's going to be a senior this coming year. So there's those two, and those are the only two grandchildren from those three older children. Mark, I know, will never have any children. Off the record, he's not gay, but he's not interested in marriage. Well, he was married for a while, but he's not a typical family man in that sense. And Chris *is* gay, and so he will never have any children either. But he's great with kids, and really a wonderful person. They're all nice kids, they're all great.

So anyway, then Beverly, my first wife and I, got divorced in 1969, and Susan and I got married in 1970. And this was all in San Diego now. So Susan and I have been together since 1970 as a married couple. And we had two children: David, who is thirty-three or four—how old is David?—thirty-three, I guess; and his brother Peter, the one who's in Manhattan, and he's thirty-one in December, I think. And *they* are wonderful kids. Peter is married to a woman by the name of Erin, and as I said, they live in Brooklyn. He works for this hedge fund guy, H.D. Shaw or whatever his first initials are. And David is here in Portland, and he works in the development office at Reed College. And he and his wife Amy have two children: a daughter by the name of Lane, L-A-N-E, Harper, Lane Harper; and then more recently a [son] by the name of Cormac, as in Cormac McCarthy.

SR: I think that's who I met yesterday.

AWJ: You did, you met Cormac yesterday, yeah. He's less than six months old. And so they're very happy here in Portland. They both graduated from high school in San Diego—Amy and David. Their birthdays are exactly the same day. They got married on that day. July seventh is the only day they have to remember really.

SR: So you have festivities coming up!

AWJ: Oh yeah, that's right! So that's very satisfactory. I mean, part of our moving to Portland had to do with our kids. My wife also has a sister here—not in Portland, but out in Newberg, west of town a bit—a little town. They have five children, I think. So there's a sizeable nucleus of family here.

I don't know what I can say about them in sort of global terms as a group of five boys and their families. They've all led, I think, successful, responsible lives. They're very friendly, nice people, very family oriented some of them are, especially David and Peter and Curtis—very family oriented kids. And sort of in a way I can see us continuing the patterns of my own natal family, my father, in sort of the celebrations that we had, and that sort of thing. There's a lot of carry-over, over the generations. Very satisfactory, very happy.

SR: Well certainly your hospitality and warmth—you and Susan have been so gracious to me over the last two days as we are pursuing this oral history. It's a very nice feeling to have such a welcoming, warm home.

AWJ: Thank you. Well I think both Susan and I... Susan's family, of course, she has two sisters and a brother. Her parents have died. But that group of siblings is close, friendly, happy people. We don't spend as much time with them as Susan would probably like, but we are together with them. We were just visiting one of her sisters and her family over the weekend. So we do see them, but not as often as we might. But they're all very nice people, very gentle, nice people.

Her brother especially is quite an interesting guy. He's a very independent, outdoorsy type of guy, and lives in Arrowhead, Big Bear Lake and that area of California. *Loves* to be outdoors hiking and things like that. He was educated in college and became a teacher. He spent I don't know how many years being an elementary school teacher. Then he gave it all up and had this little house, and he spends his time—as nearly as I can tell, he spends most of his time outdoors, doing things like that. He's independent. Doesn't spend a lot of

money. Of course he doesn't have a lot of money. At any rate, he's a very nice and interesting guy. Quite impractical, but nice, very nice. We see him *occasionally* because he's so far away.

Anyway, what more can I tell you about all those folks? Not much.

SR: I think that you certainly have painted a picture, going back to your family when you were growing up, to the present, and it comes around, it's a very nice picture.

AWJ: Thank you. Then there are a bunch of kids who were my sisters' offspring, and that's multiplied. There are several marriages in there, and a lot of kids. We don't see them much, because most of them live in Arizona, and a few in Colorado.

SR: Well, I'm sure they'll be interested in sharing your oral history in the future.

AWJ: Ah, maybe! (laughter) They might be. They're really pretty independent people themselves, and we see them rarely. But we are sort of in touch. At least I know where they are most of the time. But since my sisters died, both of them, within the last decade, that has distanced relationships there, because there's no magnet, really, to bring us together much—occasionally something, but rarely. But anyway, they're happy in Arizona. Most of them live in Phoenix, which is a place I could not stand to live, but they do. One of them lives in Scottsdale, and the others, I don't know. Prescott Valley, if you know where that is.

SR: Yes, I do. So now as you go on here with Susan, you are coming back to San Diego State on occasion?

AWJ: Yes. We've been back.... Really, we've only been up here about five years. I think we've been back to San Diego maybe five times—perhaps once a year.

Could be more often, but again, there's really.... Susan has one sister remaining in San Diego, and they are very close, and so she likes to see her. And I think we're planning a trip to San Diego probably in October sometime. We will see Sally, her name is, and her family. But her family has moved away mostly, too. At any rate, the drawing cards.... And most of the people I worked with at San Diego State are retired, of course, and they moved away. Our closest friends from that group are in Arizona: one in Tucson, Arizona, and the other in Santa Fe, New Mexico. So those are our closest friends from when we lived in San Diego, and we have seen them occasionally. But most of the people, if I go down the roster of the biology department, of which I was a member, starting in 1964, I don't think there is a single person who is still employed, and practically everybody is retired, left, gone wherever. I'd have a hard time getting a card game together, I think. But that's true of the university as a whole. I know fewer and fewer people, of course, as you'd expect.

SR: However, people are interested in hearing about you and how you're doing, and think very warmly of you, so here we are. And I'm so happy that I had this opportunity to obtain your oral history, and that we can do this for the San Diego State University Foundation, and as we said, under the auspices of the John and Jane Adams mini-grant program. I want to thank you for doing this.

AWJ: Thank you. I enjoyed doing it, and if it serves some reasonable purpose, I'm well rewarded.

[END OF INTERVIEW]