

**RICHARD THEW**

**December 12, 2005**

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[audio begins]

I: The history interview with Richard Thew in Cove, Oregon. It is Monday, December 12th, 2005.

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So, we'll do another quick test. And can you tell me your full name and your birth date?

RT: Richard Henry Thew. April 25th, 1940.

[audio clicks - no delay]

I: Okay, where were you born?

RT: I was born in Long Beach, California.

I: And how did you get to Union County? When did you first come here?

RT: In 1957. My parents are Oregonians, and my dad was a naval officer. And so when he retired, we had always-- they had always planned to move back to Oregon. They had grown up in Klamath County and wrote for a real estate brochure anyplace south of Baker. Well, Baker didn't have this particular agency, so they sent one from La Grande. And there was a place out in Summerville that sounded just like what we wanted, so we came up to look at it. But of course it was sold by the time we got here, ended up moving to a place in Cove.

I: And that was-- although your parents had been Oregonians, that's the first time you had been to Oregon is when you moved in '57?

RT: Oh, no. We-- we regularly came back to Oregon.

I: I guess I should say, but that's the first time you lived--

RT: Yeah,--

I: here in Oregon?

RT: it is, other than for short periods when we're visiting relatives which we did quite often.

I: Where were you-- your father was a naval officer, you say?

RT: Yes.

I: And what did your mother do?

RT: Well, during World War II she was a Rosie Riveter type, built electronic-- not electronic, but electric boxes. And other than that she had limited employment, mostly a stay-at-home mom. She did, for several years cook down at Ascension School in Cove as the camp-- camp cook.

I: Now what did your father do when he relocated your family here?

RT: Well, he did a lot of different things. Of course, he had his naval pension, and he-- he drove school bus for a number of years. And he worked out here for a wheat farmer drivin' grain trucks and combines and that sort of thing during harvest. And-- and then he was camp manager part of the time down at Ascension School.

I: Now where-- where was-- where did they homestead here in Union County?

RT: Well, it's a place that had about a hundred and fifty cherry trees up Mill Creek from Cove. It's an eighty acres, sixty of it in timber. And the cherry trees never paid off 'cause they're on the wrong side of the canyon there, and they don't get enough sunshine.

I: Oh.

RT: But-- oh, we still get some cherries off of 'em, but not commercially.

I: I see. Are your parents still living?

RT: My mom is. My dad died in 1993.

I: And your mother still lives at this homestead--

RT: Yes.

I: in that part of Cove?

RT: Yeah, she's been joined by my-- my daughter Jenny and her husband and two children. And that's been a real blessing for all of us because we have-- we're at the point where mom and-- and the rest of the family are considering her going to a assisted living. She's ninety-three, and you know it's gettin' too hard for her to stay by herself. So it was real nice for her and nice for Jenny and her family to live there. It's workin' out real well.

I: Now you said that you-- your family came to Union County about 1957, and so were you still in school?

RT: I was a senior.

I: And did you go to school here in Cove?

RT: Yes, moved from a school of about three thousand to one of forty-seven.

I: So, what year would you have graduated then?

RT: I graduated in '58.

I: And tell me about that. So, you went to Cove for one year and graduated. What was that like going from a huge city high school to one of forty-seven?

RT: Well, it was really kind of interesting as I look back on it. Of course, naturally I didn't want to leave my friends down there and that sort of thing. But it wasn't an unexpected move. We had talked about it a lot of times, and-- and I really liked Oregon from our visits we made up here. So, that-- that wasn't a problem in and of itself. But coming here from a large school to one of forty-seven, at first I was kind of resentful, and you know city boy in a rural area, that sort of thing. Didn't-- didn't-- didn't work too well, but it took me about two weeks to realize how much better off I was here than where I'd been before because now I had forty-six friends that I felt I could call any one of 'em up and say, "Let's go to a movie!" And you know we could do that. Well, I began to realize in-- in San Diego, I had maybe five real good friends that I could call up and say, "Let's go to a movie." And-- and so that difference in social things was-- was very, very big difference

and something that was really helpful to me. On the other hand, the educational opportunities were much more limited. I had planned [chuckles] for some stupid reason to take both physics and chemistry when I was a senior, and here at Cove they weren't offered in the same year. They were offered every other year because that-- because of the lack of number of students you can't do both of 'em, and-- and so I never did take chemistry. I took physics and-- 'cause that's what they were offering that year. And you know, I took things like Radio Shop down in-- in San Diego, and of course nothing like that was ever offered here. And-- and so, you know those kind of opportunities were gone, but-- but the education I received as far as basic and English and Social Studies and those kinds of things was-- was just as good or better.

I: Did-- did you have any problem transferring any of your credits from California? Were there any struggles in that regard?

RT: Not that I know of. I-- the only thing in that value was that my English teacher up here asked me what kind of grades I got, and I said, "Well, B's and A's." And she said, "Oh, well you're probably a B student then." And that's what I got after that. [laughs]. Didn't matter how hard I worked or how bad I worked even.

I: That was your grade still?

RT: That was my grade.

I: So you graduated in 1958?

RT: Yes.

I: And there were forty-seven-- how many in your class?

RT: Well, when we graduated there were eleven seniors and one junior that graduated accelerated.

I: Do you still socialize with any of your classmen?

RT: Not very often. We had a twentieth reunion in '78, and I think all but one showed up. Plus some that would have been in the class but they moved away or some reason dropped out or something.

I: So, any other examples of what it was like to what-- say what the stark differences were between living in San Diego and then living in Cove when you were just getting out of high school?

RT: Well, several things pop to mind. One is that I was never involved in sports in-- in San Diego because men in my family have always matured late. So, I didn't-- I still grew an inch when I was twenty-one. And consequently with that kind of a factor you don't have much chance to be among the athletic elite that requires you to be in a place like three-thousand \_\_\_\_\_ school. And here I suddenly discovered I was the biggest kid in school, and they said, "You play football, don't you?" And I'd-- you know I'd always enjoyed sports and play in P.E. and that sort of thing, but I'd never played in a scholastic league of any kind. And so I did play football, and I really enjoyed it. And-- and that's been a major part of my life since that time. I played a little in college, and-- and then I coached for almost thirty years. So, it's you know-- it was a life-changing thing for me. But another example that my brother always uses, who was in the fifth grade when we moved up here, he--he always joked about how they were going to go visit some place on some kind of field trip. And they were going to a big store, and the teacher was talking to them then about an escalator. And he discovered he was the only one that had ever ridden in an escalator at that time.

I: Oh?

RT: And so, you know that kind of experience difference was-- was pretty obvious. You waiting back-- I remember he talked about it, and-- and-- and I knew it to some degree. That a lot of students at our school had never been to Portland, never been down the river, had never been out of Union County at that time because travel was a lot more difficult than it is now. It was before the freeway was put in.

I: Was that also before they paved this road to La Grande? Was it paved when you got here?

RT: No, I think it was paved. Our road up to our house up Mill Creek was not paved, and a lot of the roads in the Cove Area that are paved now were not then. But I think-- I think what went-- that the-- that main highway was paved to La Grande and to Union.

I: Were you involved in any other activities here at school, besides sports?

RT: Not-- not too much. There were-- the music program was very limited at the time, and-- and I'm not much of a music person anyway. The main things were things that we did as-- as kids you know at-- at different times. You know, the kind of trouble we got into in-- at Halloween and--

I: Well, let's talk about some of those more social and day-to-day experiences with your friends and that kind of thing.

RT: Well, we--

I: What about Halloween for starters?

RT: Well, Halloween was-- was interesting. I'd-- when I experienced Halloween before, it-- it was basically school would have a carnival and you went to the carnival. And-- and maybe you trick or treated around your home a little bit, but that was about it. And at-- here they had kind of traditions that they did tricks. I remember one time somehow they got a donkey on the roof of the school, and that was a story that they told. And they-- they always had-- you drove your car around town and threw eggs at each other and that sort of thing. In fact I got in trouble for that 'cause our car was a '54 Studebaker hard top, and they hit it with an egg on the-- what we call the bee killer. That-- that pillar on the roof and it left concentric cracks in the-- in the paint. My dad wasn't completely then. But one of the-- one of the things that I remember that I know that you'd probably get thrown in jail today that we did was used to be a dump up-- up Mill Creek Road up into the forest. And we went up there and hooked onto an old car body and dragged it downtown about two, maybe three miles and-- and made a barricade in the middle of town! So cars couldn't get through it! [chuckles]. And I'm not sure what the purpose of that was other than just to do it, but one of the things that we did do was we cleaned it up. It-- the next day you know, it was gone. And-- and I remember being worried about the police showing up and that sort of thing, but in those days it just seemed like they just kind of winked at it and said, "You know, to make sure you take care of it." And we did. And if you knew the town, you knew that if you came to that barricade you could go around the old gas station and get through, but of course people who didn't know that were probably upset.

I: Did you-- was there-- were they still using the old gym for roller skating out here when you were young?

RT: I think at that time they had banned that. It was so hard on the floor that they were-- 'cause I remember them talking about it. And-- but I don't recall that it ever went on from the time I was here on.

I: What kind of social things did you do with your friends as you were finishing high school?

RT: Well--

I: Where would you go? What would you do?

RT: In-- we had a lot more dances than the kids have now. We'd have one, you know probably twice a month at least, average. And-- and what in those days were called sock hops. And we would you know play records, and a lot of times for the bigger dance they'd have a live band. Some kids would put together a band, and you know of five or six instruments, and would play for the-- for the people. And those dances were a lot of fun 'cause it was fun to have that live band, but they were usually pretty limited in-- in what they could play. When I was in college, I-- I worked at Crater Lake National Park a couple summers, and they had a band that played at Diamond Lake which was not too far away. And we would go over there for a dance, and that band was probably the extreme. They played "Moon River" for slow and "Louie, Louie" for fast, and that was it. We got kind of tired after that for awhile.

I: Did you drive?

RT: I did. I had use of my grandfather's car. He had died the same summer we moved up here. And my grandparents lived in-- in-- in San Diego also. And so my grandmother moved up also and lived in La Grande, and-- and she didn't drive. So, I had-- I had use of their car, but I had to buy the gas for it too. And since most of the kids in the summer worked on the ranches and cherry orchards and so on and had gas money, but I hadn't had the opportunity to do that because of the fact that I'd come to school after school had already began, so. But I-- I remember that we used to save any pop bottles we could find and trade those in. You have a dozen pop bottles you could buy half a tank of gas or something. [chuckles]. And today probably not that much but it-- yeah, I drove. And-- and then like I said, my dad had a Studebaker that I'd learned to drive in. And-- and then we had a pick-up too that I drove when we did chores or whatever.

I: Did you-- did you drive into La Grande, or go anywhere with your friends driving? What kinds of things might you do there?

RT: Yeah, I had a-- I had a friend who had a '49 Chevy Fastback with a swept manifold that you could hear it coming for quite a ways. And we hung out together and did things. The drive-in was operating at that time, drive-in theater. And a lot of times we'd go on dates to there. We would drive in, and go to Nells-and-Out which was still operating-- was operating at that time. And-- and A&W which is now a Mexican restaurant down there, I think.

I: It's Cinco de Mayo, I think.

RT: Yeah, that's right. And we'd go to town and just cruise at times.

I: Tell me about cruising in La Grande.

RT: Well, I-- I don't remember much about it other than you know it's the stuff that wishful thinking is-- is made up of. You know, you always hope to meet-- meet girls, and they would be more than willing to jump in the car and ride with you, but I don't remember that happening very often. [laughs]. And--

I: What was the-- what was the layout of the cruise at that time? Where did it start and end? Where-- where did it go?

RT: Well, it seemed like we cruised down to Safeway, the old Safeway building where the new library is now and ODS. And then back up-- oh, different spots turn around at the other end of town. Seems like, you know maybe the Western Equipment Caterpillar place.

I: Was there-- was there anything like that here in Cove? They do any cruising in this--?

RT: Well, it only takes you about twenty seconds to drag Cove, so it wasn't too--

I: Uh-huh.

O: In that chair.



RT: Yeah. We'd always hang out and see what was happening. And then during the warmer months, the swimming pool was always a hangout place here.

I: Where was that?

RT: At the Cove Hot Springs.

I: Ah?

RT: Warm springs. They call it Forest Cove Warm Springs now, not \_\_\_\_\_. And-- and it was always a popular place 'cause they had-- you could buy a bottle of pop or candy bar and whatever there. And you could sit in the car and watch the swimmers, or you could go swimming you know. When we-- the summer after high school I worked some in the hay field. Well, I got a bad hay fever case. I-- we would always go to the swimming pool after work to relax and always felt good. Royal Horcran, who owned it at that time would always make us take showers-- make sure we'd take a shower before we got in the pool. [chuckles]. And we were pretty dirty.

I: Who owns that?

RT: That was always a hangout place.

I: Who owns that place?

RT: A man named Bob Pratt owns it now. It's gone through several owners since then. He's-- he's been doin' a lot of real good upgrading of the facility. I don't hang up-- out there much anymore.

I: Okay, so, what happened-- what happened after you graduated from high school? Did you work that summer? You said you worked in the hay fields so you got hay fever.

RT: Well, it-- it was kinda funny because my Dad being in the Navy and being in San Diego, I joined the Naval Reserve when I was a junior. But when we moved up here, no way you can attend any meetings up here with the reserve. So when-- but I'd always intended to join the regular Navy when I graduated. So when I graduated, I don't know, a week after school was out I headed for Portland to take my physical and get sent down to San Diego for boot camp and all that. And when I got down there they gave me an eye

test. And I flunked my eye test because at the time you had to have 20-- what was it, 20/40? Well, 20-- I think 20/40 vision without glasses, and mine is off in the thickness of my glasses. It's not real good. And even though they had let me in the reserves, three days later I was back home. And we always joke 'cause my mother had already turned my bedroom into a sewing room. And so I worked that summer after that in the hay fields like I said, 'til my allergy caught up with me. And then I went to OIT in Klamath Falls for a year in electronics. An about halfway through the year, I got a letter from the Naval Reserve that said, "Even though you flunked your eye test we're still going to take you for your two years duty." Well, a Reservist doesn't do anything different than a-- than a regular sailor does, so I was kind of puzzled by all this, but I said okay. And I went and took my test again in-- in Portland, and this time-- the first time it was a doctor that-- that did it. The second time with the Reserves it was just a Corpsman who did it. Then he-- and when you know you always have that chart on the wall and-- and you-- he asks you what lines you can read, one of the things he can chart? And so he said, "Well, walk up until you can see the big E clearly, and for me that's about four or five feet from the wall. And he said, "Okay." And gave me my papers back, and I went on my way. And it was years-- couple years later that I happened to see my medical records and read on the back that this Corpsman had written down, "I think he's fakin'." And so he sent me on down to San Diego, and I went through a week of boot camp. While at first they said, "You have to take an eye test again." And so a bunch of us who had glasses went over and took the eye test. Well, they didn't say anything about whether you passed or not. They just sent you back to your company. I went through a week of boot camp, and I got this note from the medical officer. Said, "Report to the medical officer," and I did. And he said, "Well, why didn't you tell anybody you flunked your eye test?" And I said, "Nobody told me that." And so he said, "Well, we're sendin' you home." Well, the day I was to go home, the Chief that was in charge of the people that were goin' home said, "Well, I've got good news for some of you." And that Congress had just changed the regulation so as long as your eyes were corrected to 20/40 with your glasses, then you were okay. And so I ended up going-- staying in the reserves for two more years, served on a destroyer that plied the Pacific. So then, when I got out of the Navy, then I went to Eastern for four years and graduated there. And taught in-- my first job was in Condon. Taught for two years there, and then I went to graduate school in-- in Boston at the Episcopal Theological Seminary. And then I came back and taught. Well, the first year I was back I was in Canyon City, and I earned my living however I could. And while I was in

graduate school, frankly, I got married also. I pumped gas and-- and Cathy worked for a dentist. She'd been trained as a dental technician and delivered fuel oil and-- and substituted.

I: Now was that here in Union County?

RT: No, it was in Grant County.

I: In Grant County, okay.

RT: And then I got a job in Prairie City where I taught for four years. And then I came to La Grande and was half-time at the Koinonia House at-- on campus and half-time at Ascension School out here for seven years. Well, I was only one year at-- at Koinonia House. Then I was full-time here at Ascension School. Well '82, when due to several circumstances the campus had money problems, and-- and so I went back to teaching and taught from '82 to a couple years ago.

I: Where at?

RT: Here.

I: In Cove?

RT: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: Okay, so let's back up then. Now, you came back. You get out of the Navy, and you came back and went to school at Eastern. Was that still a teacher's college at that time? Had they evolved to Eastern Oregon College by then?

RT: Yeah, it was Eastern Oregon College. And while teaching was probably the major area that-- that they gave degrees for, they were beginning to branch out.

I: So you went there for four years. Did you major in education?

RT: Yeah. At that time you got an education degree and had a major area somewhere, and I had a major in Social Studies. And I think I was three hours short of a major in Humanities.

I: And did you train or do any of your teacher training in the Ackerman School when it was a lab?

RT: No, I was-- I was all high-school. I did my student-teaching at Pendleton High School.

I: And so what subjects were you certified to teach when you finished up at Eastern?

RT: That's kinda funny because my certificate which was known as a pre-1965 certificate allows me to teach anything in high school and middle school. And-- and my major fields were anything in the Social Studies area and-- and in the Humanities area. My first job was teaching-- teaching English at \_\_\_\_\_ up there which wasn't what I did my student teaching in, but.

I: What did you do your student teaching in over at Pendleton?

RT: Well, I was in a theme teaching situation. There was-- they were doing some different kinds of teaching. And they had three teachers who taught several classes together, and so I just fit into their rotation and-- and taught mostly U.S. History and \_\_\_\_\_, I think.

I: Then where did you say you got your Master's degree at, and what was it in?

RT: My Master's was at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[audio clicks - no delay]

I: And we're continuing our interview with Richard Thew. It is still Monday, December 12th, 2005. And so, Episcopal Theological cemetery-- Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts, it was a Masters of--?

RT: Of Divinity.

I: Of Divinity?

RT: Now I'm-- yeah. Actually, at that time we had kind of a-- it was kind of an interesting time to be there because that was right at the high point, if you want to call it that, of Vietnam War protesting and Civil Rights and all of that. And so it was a-- it was a time when things were changing a lot at the

school. In fact, I believe that my class is the only class that ever graduated from there that didn't have to take that oral exam or a written exam to graduate. Now most-- most graduate schools, you know you write a thesis or something of that nature. And at the time, a lot of students were protesting having to do things just for a piece of paper and that sort of thing. And so the faculty and the administration at-- at the school said, "Well, we're sensitive to that and you know." And so they said, "Well, this class of 1970, we're going to start not having to take these tests." And I was always very glad I didn't have to take any of them. [chuckles].

I: Now, what-- what was your intention when you left Oregon to go to Cambridge to get this degree? Did you have a plan when you started that?

RT: Yeah. At that time, one of the-- one of the important goals of the Episcopal Church in Eastern Oregon, the Diocese of Eastern Oregon was to find people who would be what we call non- stipendiary to person. And that means that you don't get a salary from the church. You earn your salary doing whatever you do, and then you serve the church as approaching beyond that. And-- and that was always my intention to be-- to come back and teach and be non-stipendiary, and that's what I've done for thirty years, thirty-five years.

I: So, you did this?

RT: Yes.

I: Okay.

RT: I-- right now, I regularly do services at St. Stephen's in Baker City, and at Sumpter Community Church. I'm at Baker City twice a month and once a month at Sumpter. And then wherever-- I do supply work wherever they need me.

I: What do you mean when you say supply work?

RT: Well, that-- well, maybe somebody like St. James, Milton-Freewater I called the other day. They are-- they don't have a priest right now, and so they try to get someone to come in and celebrate Communion for 'em and that sort of thing. And that's what I do.

I: Would that be similar-- no, not similar, but would that be in the same

category as \_\_\_\_\_ teaching?

RT: Yeah, sort of.

I: \_\_\_\_\_?

RT: A little different, but yeah.

I: So you came back to Oregon after you got your graduate degree, and you ended up here in Cove. When-- when-- when was that you came to Cove there?

RT: We moved to Cove in '76. We had been living in La Grande when I was half-time at the K House and half-time at Ascension School. When I went full-time here we moved to this-- this property here, and obviously we've lived here ever since.

I: Okay. What were the-- what were the duties there? What were your duties at the K House, the job that you had there?

RT: Well, I-- I was never real successful, I think you would say, at the K House because my idea of-- of what was the mission or goal of K House was a little different than what others saw. I had experienced campus ministries as the old cake-- the old coffee house model, and that's what I was prepared to do. But I think the churches that sponsored K House were thinking a little more traditional evangelism type of work. And-- and while we did some good things while I was there, I didn't feel comfortable, and I don't think they did either. And so when the opportunity came to go full-time at Ascension School, I-- I took that.

I: And so in the beginning you spent half a day at Ascension School. Tell me about Ascension School. Was that a private school?

RT: No it's-- it's actually not a school. Way back in the late 1800's, Samuel French who was an early settler in Cove left eighty acres to-- to the church on which Ascension Church down here is built. And-- and there's a parsonage, you might call it. And then in the early 1900's they built a school down there, a girl's school. And it was one of the first upper-division schools in the state. And they were successful for a number of years, and-- and Samuel French left the property for a school. Well, in 1924 it was taken

to court because the church no longer wanted to run the school. They wanted to run a-- more of a summer program. So the official name of the place is Ascension School Camp and Conference Center where Ascension School is a name, not a description. And-- and since 1924 when the judge said yes, school would include a Camp Conference Center that they used it for that purpose. And now to-- today it has developed into a really strong conference center with-- recently built a-- more of a hotel type facility down there so you can have private bedrooms. They do different kinds of programs with that kind of facility that you couldn't do in the old cabin where you had twenty people stayin' in a cabin together. And while I was there we had all kinds of groups that used it. The-- the church, the Episcopal Church, The Diocese of Eastern Oregon ran youth camps during the summer and-- and still do. And that was the main thing that the camp was there. While I was there, we-- we tried to develop an all-year musical camp, and since that time that has-- that has become a fully functioning part of the-- of the camp. Oh, I remember we used to have a lot of government groups that would come out and hold meetings, weekend meetings where they could, you know have food served to 'em and-- and in a relaxed type of atmosphere. And groups like-- probably the biggest group we had was the Women Aglow which was a non-denominational Christian group. And they-- in fact, one of the reasons that-- that I left the camp was the fact that they decided that they were too big for the camp anymore and decided to go to a Motel/Hotel kind of situation that could handle more than we could. And taking that rental out of our budget was one of the reasons I went back to teaching along with the fact that when Ronald Reagan became president he cut out a lot of the money that was used for government seminars and that sort of thing. So, we lost kind of a double whammy there. We lost a lot of rentals on one fell swoop, so.

I: Now your root-- you said a few minutes ago that when you left the K House, you went full time at the Episcopal Center there? So, you did this for a number of years. How long?

RT: Seven years.

I: Seven years. And then when the-- when the budget crunches came you started teaching positions then in the areas of Cove?

RT: Just happened to have an opening at-- at Cove. In fact, I was on the school board at the time. So, I resigned from the school board and-- and

interviewed for the job and was hired.

I: And what did you teach?

RT: Oh, I don't know. That's a long time ago. It basically was Social Studies in high school and junior high. And I don't-- I-- I taught a lot of different classes over my twenty-some years that I taught there. Anymore I don't really remember the sequence in which I found it, so. But I taught Arts and Crafts. I taught-- I even taught Math one year which was not ideal. But seventh grade Math is-- in those days was not too difficult, pretty basic class. But-- but even then they were using lots of terms that I never used when I took seventh grade Math, you know. It was-- it was hard for me to do.

I: So, this-- you taught Arts and Crafts? What was that about? Was that-- was that a fluke that you-- that you drew that assignment, or--?

RT: It was-- [chuckles] it was one of those things that happens. You know, that they needed somebody to do it, and because my certificate allowed me to teach anything, well, that's-- I also taught-- I also taught Auto Shop later. My hobby is street racing cars, and I've worked with that. And so they knew that, and-- and when they first built the-- the auto shop here about ten years ago I think now, they had a shop teacher who for one reason or another backed out at the last minute. And so they-- they asked me to do it, and I didn't do it for very many years 'til I got another job.

I: You did that for one year?

RT: Yeah.

I: What kinds of things did you do in Arts and Crafts?

RT: Oh, we'd-- everything. I-- I took some materials that I'd found and learned a basic way of teaching drawing. I-- we did some computer work. This was in the early stages of computer when we're using Commodore 64's and that sort of thing. But we did that, and we did some coloring. We did model rockets. We did kites.

I: Did you have-- did you have girls in the class as well as boys--

RT: Oh, yeah.



I: for the Arts and Crafts?

RT: Yeah.

I: And how long then did you teach at Cove? You retired when?

RT: Two years ago. This is my second school year out of-- of teaching then. Because I-- I retired as far as PERS is concerned before I stopped teaching. I have two retirement agencies.

I: Oh.

RT: So, when somebody asks me that, I always say \_\_\_\_\_. That's why I think of it as this is my second year of retirement.

I: And then since that time you've always lived out here in Cove?

RT: Yeah, we've-- we've never lived anywhere else. When we moved here, we had two daughters and-- who are just starting school. The oldest was just starting school. And-- and then my son was born just about the time I started teaching again. And so they-- they're all graduates of Cove High School.

I: Did any of your children-- let's back up a little more. What's your wife's name and where did you meet her?

RT: Cathy was a student at-- at Condon when I first started teaching there. And I tell people that, and they always start snickering because student/teacher things don't happen. Well, it didn't happen then, either. It just happened that we met after she graduated. She'd been going to dental school in Portland. And her Pastor at Condon was a good friend of mine and was running a sport's camp, and I-- he asked me to help him. So I was helpin' him, and she came out for a visit. And we got reacquainted at that time, and the rest is history.

I: When did you get married?

RT: 1968.

I: Where?

RT: Right here at Ascension School. At the chapel down here the-- the-- it's a very picturesque church, and a lot of people like to get married there. They restrict who can get married there because they don't want it to be a wedding chapel. But both my daughters were married there, and-- and we were married there and used the camp facilities for the reception.

I: So your wife grew up in Condon. Was a dental tech for \_\_\_\_\_ School. How many children do you have? What are their order from beginning to--

RT: Well, Jenny's our oldest,--

I: to last?

RT: and she's 34. And Rebecca, our middle child is 30, and Rick, our youngest is 23.

I: And they all went to Cove High.

RT: They all graduated here, and Jenny and-- and Rick both attended Eastern. Jenny graduated in '93, I think. And she's been a teacher in Nevada. She got her start teaching in Nevada. And now she's basically a stay-at-home mom, except she coaches junior varsity basketball girls down at Cove. And-- and has coached everything from boys' basketball to wrestling, so she enjoys coaching a lot. He enjoys hockey coaching together. And Rebecca is married and lives in Oregon City. Her husband's a Portland police officer, and she works for the, oh, Mission on Children and Families. Is that it? Anyway, the-- the social services divisions. She works with families with children that have some kind of problems and works with a team that use drug and alcohol counselors and justice department people. And-- and so they-- they work all through Friday, do it all themselves in a very good program. I think it started at Oregon City there. She was one of the first to get involved in it. And my son Rick is in his sixth year at Eastern. He thinks he will graduate someday, but he's-- he's working at it. And right now he's up at Tom Diamond's place up here in Cove taking a class in glass-blowing which I think is an interesting thing to be doing.

I: Well, they don't do very much of that out here on this art department. I know that. Do you remember which puppet he made for the show?

RT: I know he made a-- what he had-- the snake was one of those. I think he

worked on three different ones, and he got thrown in on a couple where some other people couldn't do it or something. And I think the frog, the snake and the frog. I don't remember which others.

I: So your son goes to Eastern. Did any of your other children go to Eastern also?

RT: Jenny did. And Becca-- Rebecca went to Western. We've had in our family-- when Rick graduates he'll be the fifteenth Eastern graduate in our extended family. We had to marry some of 'em.

I: Yeah, yeah.

RT: My brother is a-- my older brother is a teacher in Crane. He-- he has taught there since 1970. He retired years ago, but for-- he retired and then he continued to teach two or three classes in the mornings. And-- but I think this last year he actually, completely, retired. And his-- he has four children. And three of his children have been with Eastern, and his fourth one has been to school in Portland. And she's an Episcopal priest also. And my brother lives a block away down here. He-- he took after my dad and drove a school bus for-- when did he start? I think-- I think he had twenty years of driving. He drove a school bus. It's what he-- he has a degree in Bio-- Biology from Eastern. But for one reason or other, he started driving school bus and likes it. So, I can't imagine that.

I: I think we've heard of that. I mean,--

RT: Probably.

I: I don't know if we've interviewed or not, but--

RT: He--

I: it strikes a familiar chord.

RT: Yeah. Well, his wife works at-- or worked at Pierce Library for twenty years, or thirty or something. And she just retired. So they-- they have their motor home now, and so they're on the road. But his two sons both went to Eastern. JP, the oldest, he graduated-- oh goodness, I don't know. Well, not too long-- four or five years ago. He just returned from Iraq. He's in the

National Guard. And--

I: With this battalion that just came back here--

RT: Yeah.

I: a few weeks ago?

RT: Yeah. And he lives in the Tri-Cities now and \_\_\_\_\_. Christopher, his younger son, graduated from Eastern two years ago-- one year ago, and he is now going to graduate school in Omaha, Nebraska to be a-- a physical trainer. And he just got married last summer, and JP got married-- oh, when was JP \_\_\_\_\_?

I: Let's see, you probably know some of the people we've interviewed. It occurred to me Mrs. Loree up \_\_\_\_\_ said that she worked at the-- the Ascension place, or cooked there maybe.

RT: Yes, I think half the people in town have, on and on. They've always-- our current director down there does an excellent job of involving the school in the community. And since we have the new facility down there, a lot of groups hold things down there that they're not charged for or anything, and so that's been a real good community program. And-- and we've traditionally hired teenagers to work in the kitchen and-- and that sort of thing. And then of course we have counselors. Most of our counselors come from someplace else, but a lot of times-- all my kids worked down there. And they grew-- of course, when I was the director down there the girls grew up around it. I worked down there a lot and all that sort of thing. And-- and my mom and dad, like I said, were-- worked down there at different times. While I was the director down there, I think almost all except maybe the first year, my mom was the cook. And-- and that was really neat 'cause she-- she started off her cooking as a ministry. She wanted to treat people. Like she'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and make-- make bread for camp. You know where most people would go to the store and just buy the bread. But she would get down there, and she'd make pocket bread. And she'd-- it was her specialty. She won a lot of awards at the fair. We always talked her into entering her-- her-- her baking. So that was always a source of pride for me that she did that. But a lot of-- lot of people in town have worked there on and off 'cause it's a part-time job. Usually 'cause it don't have lot of-- like I said, it's just beginning to get so

it's used almost all year long, but even so, when it's used all year long it's usually just weekends.

I: Let's talk about some of the changes that you've seen. Now, you have an interesting teaching certificate that lets you teach anything. I haven't talked to anybody-- I don't think I've talked to anybody with that type of certificate. What sort of changes have you witnessed in the education field, especially in this area? Are there major changes or trends that have taken place since you began here? Where the-- would they be different now?

RT: Well, I could-- I could get on my soapbox. Certainly there have been changes, but-- but basically, it's the same. It's kind of like the more things change, the more things stay the same. Yet certainly, you know, when I went to school here almost fifty years ago we didn't have anything like Auto Shop. We did have a-- a Wood Shop of sorts, but that was a very small operation. And-- and you know those kinds of things-- and of course now, technology is a big thing in the schools. And-- and it's something that I was involved in when it first got started. I ran the Computer Lab that we had with Commodore 64's for quite a while. And that was when-- when computers were first coming into schools in the 80's, back in the dinosaur age as far as computers are concerned. And that's probably been the biggest change as far as teaching techniques, but also there have been some changes in curriculum. Now, one of the things I suspect people would expect someone to say are-- are changes like the No Child Left Behind legislation. Well, I've lived through four or five major programs like No Child Left Behind, and they all end up the same. I got kinda cynical towards the last one. Didn't pay much attention to those things when they came in because I knew in two years or three years or four years they would be gone again. And that's because the-- the poorest way to deal with education is to have a bunch of legislature decide what you're-- how you're gonna teach, what you're gonna teach and all that. It needs to be done on a local level with the local school boards and the-- and the faculty and administration and-- and those kinds of decision makers. It's-- it's-- it just doesn't work when you try to make all the schools the same. I give you an example: Oregon has the CIM and CAM program. Well, one of the areas that has never been-- unless they-- unless they're doing it this year-- successfully tested was the Social Studies area which is my area. And-- and if you just take U.S. History, you can see why. Well, number one, in the time that you have to teach U.S. History, you never can teach all of U.S. History. It's impossible. And so, a teacher usually picks and chooses what areas they're going to teach, and

usually they do that according to what they are best suited to teach. If they're an Economics major for instance, they might teach you U.S. History as an economic theme. They might, if they're a Civil War buff-- they might spend a lot of time on the Civil War. But when you get a standardized test, there might be only two questions on the Civil War. Well, that means that that teacher is gonna have to change what they teach and shorten that Civil War in order to include all the other questions that are on there and just cover the two areas of-- of the-- of the questions that are on the Civil War teaching for the pass exams. And-- and that's why there hasn't been any test on Social Studies. What are you gonna test on, you know? You know, it's not gonna be fair to some kids. It's not gonna be fair to the teachers.

[audio ends]

[audio begins]

I: And we're continuing an interview with Richard Thew in Cove, Oregon. It is still Monday, December 12th, 2005. So, getting back to what we were just talking about at the end of the last side there of the tape, basically you have to teach to a test.

RT: When--

I: And your--?

RT: when there's a standardized test.

I: And you, if I have this right, your feeling was that it wasn't fair to either the student or the teacher?

RT: No, I-- it-- it just depends on a teacher when-- when they test their students, test on whatever it is they covered.

I: Right.

RT: And in-- in covering History for instance, I might be talking about what John Adams did during the forming of our nation, and-- and-- and a student asks a question. And I get off on the relationship between Jefferson and-- and Adams, and you know that's not on the test. And so those students, when they get to the test and that's not covered, well they-- they're in a bad spot. And if-- but if I'm testing 'em, then I'm gonna ask a question about it because I know that I covered that. And you know that's generally the way you-- you

test in a classroom. So to me, that's-- that makes a standardized testing suspect. And it's not so bad in something like Math, 'cause Math is Math. You're going to learn to add and subtract and multiply and divide and you \_\_\_\_\_ the formulas and-- and all that. So, you can fairly-- be fairly sure that-- that teachers will cover a certain area. Some students may get a bit farther than others, but-- but what led up to that is going to be a basic-- basically the same in all schools.

I: So, do you think that CIM and the CAM are-- are trends-- are trends, or do you think those can change or-- or be dropped eventually?

RT: I think they're almost dropped now. And like I said, I haven't been teaching for two years so my ear hasn't been to the ground as much as it was, but they will be modified and-- and essentially \_\_\_\_\_ goin' out. One of the other things we went through was Behavioral Objectives where everything that you did had to be polished in behavioral objective terms. And that wasn't so bad. I mean, you could do that. But it wasn't five years and people forgot about \_\_\_\_\_. Not that those kinds of objectives weren't used, it's just the fact that being required to use them was a lot different than just using them naturally. So those things change. And you know, I'm supervising some student teachers now for Eastern, and that's a-- that's been a lot of fun. And one of the things that some of them are-- are learning is using the new technology. And instead of using an overhead to write on, they've got-- well, in Cove anyway, they've got a projector hanging from the ceiling that projects on a big screen, and the instructor's in the back of the room writing. Well, he can be anywhere in the room actually and writing on a tablet that shows up on the screen which is a really neat instrument. In fact, I'd wanted to get one of those for a long time. They finally got a grant that enabled them to-- to purchase those.

I: Is that what they call the equipment they use in a smart classroom? Is that the same--?

RT: I'm not familiar with that term, but it might be, yeah.

I: I think that's what they call it on campus when they have all of that new technology in the classroom. I think they call it a smart classroom, but I've only just begun to hear that.

RT: Well, that very well may be, and it-- and it certainly would match that

description because you have all kinds of electronics that you can use in it. And some of that's good and some of it's not. I-- I was just reading something that they're beginning to question student research on when they Google something, or whatever that-- they might get a page out of a book on John Adams and-- and use that for a reference. But they miss those pages that led up to it, and the pages that follow it. And consequently they're not getting the whole picture when they do that. It's a lot easier just to call up that one page, you know and then get that information, but they-- they're-- they're miss-- they miss reading the whole book. If-- if they give them a wider range of education, in that by having that research so readily available they can do a lot more research in different areas, but-- but I think it's a lot more shallow.

I: Let's talk about-- let's talk about a typical day in the classroom, but let's talk about it over time. In other words, I want to talk about basically your work day. You know, when you go through it there. There must be a lot of differences in that from when you began to when you retired a couple of years ago.

RT: Yeah, there were. Breaking out as a student when I came here-- in the big school, of course, things were pretty formal. And you know, you had-- had pretty much multiple-choice tests and-- and that sort of thing. And I remember we had a split class in English when I was a senior at Cove where there was one teacher for both the juniors and the seniors at the same time. And the juniors were in one room and the seniors were across the hall, so the teacher went back and forth between them. Well, that means that one group or the other was left alone a lot, [chuckles] and we would-- we would be working on say, a term paper. Still remember that I wrote my term paper on the Anopheles mosquito, the carrier of malaria. But I also remember that we would send one person across the street to the-- to the store to use class money to buy us all an ice cream. It was like that. [laughs].

I: When the teacher was gone in one of the other rooms?

RT: Yeah.

I: Now this is when you were a student?

RT: Yeah, it was when I was a senior. And-- and you know, those things didn't-- didn't happen when I was a-- was a teacher. Although Cove still runs a very



informal school, and which is the way I like it. It's an open campus, and-- and it varies from classroom to classroom and from administrator to administrator, but sometimes kids are allowed to have something to drink in the classroom. They're usually sometimes limited to water. Sometimes they can go and get a cup of hot chocolate or something. And-- and when we're having an informal discussion or watching a movie, there'll be kids maybe sitting on desks rather than in the desks. You know, and things like that that still reflect the informality of a rural school. But as far as the typical day, I'd-- it-- one of the major differences that I've seen is that students today would rather socialize. If they're given fifteen minutes to get their homework done, they would rather socialize in the classroom and then get their work done at home. Whereas I think over the years it's changed. It used to be that if-- if you had time to get it done in the classroom, you wanted to get it done in the classroom because when you went home you wanted to do somethin' else. But this is-- I think that a social change in-- in how the kids react. And that-- that's one thing that a-- that teachers have to fight against because it-- it penalizes the poorer students 'cause they're-- they don't want to be left out of the socialization. And-- and-- and consequently, they're tryin' to do their work at home. And one of the reasons they're a poorer student may be that-- that they live in a small house, and-- and Dad has the TV going. And-- and there's no place for them to study, and little brother's comin' in and you know, all kinds of problems. Or they-- they come from a family where there's a lot of farm work to do. Well, we don't have a lot of farm families anymore. We do have ranchette farms where you're able to keep the horses and you know whatever. And-- and so, I think students-- I think teachers have to realize that poorer students are at a disadvantage then if they don't have time to do it at home. So they come back the next day not having done their work. Whereas the students who have their own room, their own computer, their own whatever, you know, are able to get the work done at home and they can socialize in school. So, that's always the balance that you have. I never liked to be a task-master where, you know, I whipped 'em into shape all the time, and they drew their noses to the grindstone. For one reason, I-- I feel that-- that's a lesson that they have to learn, and that they have to discipline themselves. So, I would encourage them to do that, but I was never gonna let them get out of line. But I also allowed some conversation for them. So, that's one major change, and-- and another one I suppose is extracurricular activities. I think there's a lot more of that today, and I think that's good because one of the major factors in junior/senior high school is what you learn about yourself. And what-- you know, how you develop personally. That's the most important

thing that goes on there. Anybody can learn, you know what-- what's in the Constitution, but learning about yourself is unique and-- and something that's vital to the rest of your life. And-- and I think you'll learn a lot by doing extracurricular activities whether it be band or football or track or whatever it might be. Different clubs go on in bigger schools, of course. Smaller schools, you don't have as much choice. If everybody doesn't go out for football, then you may not have a football team. You don't have much choice there and so on. So, there'd be pressure to be involved when you might not have been involved in a bigger school. But then on the other hand, you don't cut anybody in a small school. So, if you come out for football, you're on the team. You may not-- may not be a starter. You may not play a lot or whatever, but-- but you're still a part of what's going on. And-- and I-- you know, I think that's good. In my-- my coaching-- I coached both football and track. And I also coached tennis when I first started out, but that's a different thing. You know, I saw a lot of things that-- that helps to learn to do things that they never dreamed that they could do. Learn that hard work pays off. Learn about caring about your teammates. All those things that happen on the-- on the field, I think are-- are-- are very important. And-- and students today are a lot more involved in those extracurricular activities, and they were good things to be handling.

I: How about trends in communication? Like they-- obviously, computers have perhaps reduced outright paperwork for the teacher, but maybe brought on other burdens that weren't there before. And also about communicating with parents, now versus when you began?

RT: Well, there-- there's a lot of that that's just on the verge of-- of being used now. For instance, down here at Cove if you wanted to know to some extent what your student is doing, you can go on the school website. And if the teacher has posted some work, you can find out what they're-- what they're working on at this-- at this time, maybe even homework. But for most teachers it's-- it's pretty hard to every day put the homework for each class on-- on the website. That-- that is extra work. That's not easy. But I-- I think a lot of them do that, and that was not available when I was teaching. But that certainly can help a parent, but what I've heard most of the teachers say is that they question how many parents use that. And you know obviously, there're still households that don't have computers, and so that-- you know that really hasn't changed in that they don't have that extra communication. Certainly telephones, cell phones, and all that have made it easier to communicate with teachers and-- and-- and students, and-- and--

and that's good. But I really-- I think that's-- that hasn't changed that much, I guess. It's-- it's a function of how much somebody wants to communicate with the parent or a teacher, rather than the tools they have to use. And I've found over the years that-- that communicating with parents is-- it's more likely the good students' parents who are going to communicate which of course are the ones who don't need to communicate. And you have an open house night when teachers can come. I mean, parents can come and go through the classes, for instance in high school. Now it's different in grade school, but in the high school you have-- well, out of a class of twenty you might have seven or eight sets of parents, and they would be probably the top students. Occasionally you would get in-- one of the instit-- things that we instituted at-- at Cove that I think has been a absolute wonderful thing is that-- it's what I call the Student Study Team. SST, we call it. And-- and this meeting can be called by the student, by the parent, by the teacher, by the administrator, anybody who is involved with a student. And it's a meeting of all the students' teachers, the parents, and the student. And one of the great things that have come out of this is, is that if a student's having a problem, a lot of times they're having the same problem in all their classes. And-- but you don't know that. And so, that's just one way to invite that's communicated. And a student is sitting there, and-- and there's teachers there who are saying basically, "We want to help you." And a light bulb comes on for those kids sometimes. They say, "Hey," you know, "These people aren't here to torture me. They're here to help me!" You know, the teacher knows that, but-- well, some of 'em might torture 'em at it. It certainly is a-- one way that you can get through that. Now this also replaced the-- the quote, end quote, "punishment of athletes" too. That if an athlete in some schools is having trouble, well then they can't be on the team. Well, with the SST, they develop a plan, and that plan might be, "We're gonna hold you off the team for a week." Now, they don't do that very often. Now, I'm sure they have but very seldom here at Cove, and because they developed a plan. And they have a reporting system that they developed. And it's different for every student, although there may be some elements the same. And the student knows what they're supposed to do, and the teachers follow through with what they're supposed to do. And whatever the problem is, you know, it's helped. So, it's been a-- that kind of thing has been a real change. Where it used to be just between an individual teacher may or may not call parents, and the parents may or may not be concerned enough to come to school and find out what's going on. And certainly the students, many of them are directed by, what's the least amount of work that I can do? [chuckles]. And some of 'em are directed by feeling very

inadequate and behind in classwork, or a lot of different-- so, I think that's been helpful.

I: Now you said that you served on the school board here in Cove. When was that? How long did you do that?

RT: I was on the school board for two years, from '80 to '82. I-- of course, when I was elected to the school board, I had no idea that I was in two years gonna want to teach anything. But that's the way it worked out. And in my government classes that I taught, I always tried to help the students understand that they owe something to their community. That-- and the school has followed up on that philosophy by having graduation requirements that they have to do a certain amount of community service. And they have some kind of a-- what's loosely called a Senior Project, although it can be a several year project. In which they-- well, people have done everything from planting an area right across from the school. Kind of a decoration in a-- in a part of the new road when they put it in that was just gonna be nothin' and didn't belong to anybody. And they, you know made it so it's low upkeep and planted some different kinds of plants that wouldn't take much and rocked in a lot of it so that when weeds growin' up in there. And another student painted a mural in one of the school rooms, all around the room. It took her-- I think it took her more than two years to complete. And you know, some of 'em work on their cars. Some of 'em do other things. But anyway, I've always told them, encouraged them to, you know find out what they can do, whether they serve as a volunteer fireman, serve on the city council. I've been the mayor in Cove for-- for twenty years. I think-- I think twenty years. And you know, that's a way that I saw that I could serve. And-- and so, I've wanted to encourage the students wherever they go, to find out how they can.

I: Now, were you the mayor even when you were teaching?

RT: Oh, yeah.

I: Let's go back here. We-- we forgot about the school board. So you got on the school board, and you were-- did you resign mid-term?

RT: Yeah.

I: Or did you do any longer when you were teaching?

RT: Yeah, it was four-- four years.

I: I see, mm-hm.

RT: A woman who ran for the school board at the same time I did, we were-- we were concerned about what was going on with the school board 'cause we attended school board meetings as members of the community. And-- and I remember, you know sitting in the meeting for forty-five minutes, and nothing was said because nobody wanted to be the one to put their opinions forward. They were just kind of afraid of each other or something, or public, or I don't know. And their-- the meetings would go on until one o'clock in the morning. And so we ran-- [chuckles] we ran on the campaign that-- that we wanted the-- and they would have several meetings a month whereas instead of just one. And we said, "We're gonna get business done. And we're going to meet once a month, and we're gonna be done at ten o'clock. And so both of us were elected, and--

I: This was your campaign platform?

RT: Yeah, yeah. Yeah well, as much as you have right in a small town. I don't know that-- you know that I'm sure people didn't elect us for that reason. That was just things that we felt about it. But we-- we took that on. At that time, we were getting about a fifty percent turnover in faculty every year, and one of our goals was to stop that. Find ways to encourage teachers-- good teachers to stay, and we did that. Our salary schedule was about the lowest in the state at the time which is one reason of that. And so we-- we found ways of raising that, raising the salary schedule and attracting more teachers. And since that time, whether that was just the start of it or it just happened I don't know, but we had a very experienced staff here. A very stable staff where if we lost two teachers a year, that was quite a few, and-- and usually, we didn't lose any because our salary is probably in the middle of the pack now. And-- and it's a good place to work. When a teacher would make it for an eighth grader, give her name to the board, and it's more, let's see what we can do as a team to do a good job.

I: What were the-- what were some of the specific duties of the school board? In fact, you had mentioned some of them around the periphery.

RT: Yeah.

I: Hiring faculty--

RT: I went to-- the Oregon School Board Association puts on a new school board member clinic. And that clinic is designed to teach the basics to a new school boarder. And one of the things that impressed me when I went to it. Not all new school board members go to it. And I encourage them to go, but it didn't always happen. And when I-- when I went to it, one of the things that they-- that they really made a point of was that the school board's job is to decide policy. The administration's job is to carry that policy out. And if you're gonna have an administrator you'd better hire one that you can trust to do the job. That doesn't mean that you don't ask questions about how money's being spent, and you know that sort of thing. But you-- you don't say, "Well, wait a minute. This teacher doesn't need ten pairs of scissors. They only need seven there." School boards shouldn't be doing that. They should make a policy that says, "The teachers should have an adequate supply of-- of scissors." And-- and so a school board member's job is-- is not to micromanage, but to set basic policy about how things are-- are functioning. And to hire an administrators who pretended that he is going to do-- get it done.

I: So, you-- one of your-- one of your contributions was-- was improving the retention rate of teachers, and paying them a little bit better than when you came onto the board. Were there any other major accomplishments of the board during your tenure there?

RT: One-- [chuckles] one thing I always like to point because it's one of those where you, "I told you so." We-- at the time I shifted from being a school board to being a teacher, just before I left the school board they debated the athletic policy. And-- and basically the athletic policy was a, "You break the rules, you're gone." And of course drinking was part of that. But this was-- this was a rural community, and every one of those board members probably had a beer when they were in high school and-- and so on. And so board-- you know, they don't want to say that-- that-- that's absolutely, you know the death penalty if you-- if you drink. But rather they want to say, you know, "Kids will make mistakes, and so we need to deal with that mistake." But the board at this time decided that you're gone if-- if you-- if you break the rules, and one of the rules was if you'd been drinking. Well, we had a-- when we passed that rule, the next year I-- I started teaching and coaching football. I was the assistant coach, and we had a good team. In fact, in the next ten years we went to the state championship seven times, and-- and that

was a year that we ended up being the state champion. And-- and we had a bi-week early on, and the other coach--  
[audio clicks - 3 second delay]

I: And we're continuing the interview with Richard Thew. It is December 12th, 2005. So, on the previous side before the tape ended, we talked about while you were on the school board they had developed this athletic policy that involved zero tolerance, and you went to another school to do some observing.

RT: That's \_\_\_\_\_. And I-- and I should have said beforehand that when we passed this athletic policy, I was the "no" vote. And I said, "You gotta have a policy with forgiveness." A student needs to be able to earn their way back. Maybe you miss a game. Maybe you miss two games. Maybe you do somethin'. But you need to be able to work your way back, and show that you have learned from your mistake and-- and-- and have grown from it. Oh, boy! They threw up work kickin' off! So, that next fall during football, we've gone to Prairie City to-- to do some scouting, and a group of the players went down too in a car. Well, one of the players came from a family where the refrigerator in the garage was always full of beer, and his parents didn't care if they went out there and had a beer. Well then, when they went to go down there he grabbed a six-pack and took that with him. Well, [chuckles] those silly kids on the way back, outside of Baker was a place where they weigh trucks. And they were stopping people there who had been in the forest getting firewood to check their permits and everything. Well, a car didn't have to stop, but these kids stopped 'cause they think they're supposed to. And so the sheriff or state police guy that was there smelled the beer or something. The driver had not been drinking. They were that smart. But there were six of 'em in the car and six beers, so you know they weren't-- [chuckles] they weren't loaded or anything. Right here they get an MIP. Well, on this policy, they were done. And of course they were all upperclassmen, and all important to the team, and so on.

I: All six of 'em?

RT: Six of 'em

I: All six got suspended or booted?

RT: Yeah.

I: Okay.

RT: And so, the pierced the state championship team! And the board says, "Oh, wait a minute. We can't kick all these guys off!" Can't afford-- can't-- and so they have an emergency meeting. Back off their policy and made the kids, oh, write a letter of apology, and you know I don't know what else they did. But that-- I-- I remember that so vividly because that was my chance to say, "I told you so," you know? But of course I didn't because I was workin' for 'em then. [laughs].

I: Right, right. Were there-- were there any other episodes like that when you were on the board?

RT: No, not that-- not that I recall. We did one year later on, I remember we had a pretty good basketball team. And they were going to the state tournament, and two of the kids got caught smoking. And the policy then was a little more flexible, but they were caught the day before the game, you know. And so there wasn't much they could-- they could do but hold them off for a game in there, and of course they lost. But in general, that's-- that's my philosophy with a-- maybe that comes from my church background. I don't know, but I-- I believe people have a chance to redeem themselves and have a chance to show that they learned, and I think that's the best that that's the best for kids.

I: How many people served on the Cove school board?

RT: I think there's five.

I: Are they compensated?

RT: No. None of the local political governmental positions are compensated.

I: So, what would be the incentive then to be on the school board?

RT: Well, they basically to serve your community. You know, that we all owe something to the community, and-- and people who feel like they can serve on the school board do that.

I: Now, we're gonna talk about your-- your mayor background in just a moment, but did you hold any other local offices or community service



positions in the area out here over the years?

RT: Well, I-- I've been-- I was on the school board, and then I'd be mayor. And that's the scope of it.

I: And you did two for-- or two years of the four-year term on the school board, and that's the only time on-- on that. I think we're a \_\_\_\_\_, but let's-- let's talk about the mayorship then. When were you first elected mayor?

RT: I think it was '85, but I'm-- I'm not real sure about that, to tell you the truth.

I: What-- what--?

RT: I never looked it up to see what [chuckles] exactly what year it was.

I: And you did this-- you've done this for you also taught school?

RT: Yeah.

I: So, while--?

RT: Well, the mayor's job is not a-- not a big time consuming job. You know, you can really put into it as much time as you want, and our city government is what is called the, "weak mayor system." So, the mayor doesn't have a lot of extra duties like if-- like Tom Potter in Portland does, you know. I run the meetings, and I sign the checks. And-- and that's about it. I go to other meetings representing the city, but I don't have any more influence over what happens than-- in fact, I don't have as much because I don't vote in the council unless there's a tie. We have six council members so sometimes that happens, very seldom. We use a modified system of Robert Rules of Order. We're-- we're informal, and we generally discuss an issue before we make a motion. And so when the motion's made it's usually made in the direction that most-- we were gonna vote anyway. So, you know if we have a negative vote, it's-- it's five to one usually or something like that. I do become a voting member if there are only three council members there, and we need four for the \_\_\_\_\_, but that kind, so.

I: Is the mayor position compensated?

RT: I'll have to ask.

I: I assume that they-- they provide for travel if necessary?

RT: Yeah, if-- if I'm being sent to a meeting or something, they-- or anybody else for that matter. They would go overnight they'll pay for housing and-- and meals and travel. We-- the city government here, you know it's obviously very small. We don't-- our budget is very low. And-- and so it-- the big thing that's happened in the twenty years that I've been here, just before I became mayor, they started a project which was to build a power plant up on Mill Creek. Where there was an old one before. And during the '80's the policy that was the federal policy was that we want to divert-- diversify the power grid so that all the power isn't coming from one source. And-- and so they passed this law that said, "If the nearest municipality to a hydro-- hydro-possibility, I guess I'd say, has first dibs on developing that policy or that-- the project." And since they're-- when we moved here in '57, this power plant was still operating back then, but later on it was taken out. And so-- so, people go together and said, "Well, why don't we do this?" And they did it on revenue bonds, so it didn't cost any tax money. Revenue bonds, is of course paid by-- paid off. The money is loaned and then paid off by the income from the plant. We sell our electricity to the local power company which is OTEC now, but it was CB National then. And we had a twenty-year contract which is-- is up now, but it was extended due to repairs we had to make. And-- and also the man who engineered the plant for us made some serious mistakes and disappeared; we never did find him. So, we never could collect on the bond or anything. But the plant was supposed to produce nine hundred kilowatts per hour, and it only produces about six hundred. And-- and we know why, but it would cost a lot to fix it. So, we just have been happy with not bad six hundred, although it has cost us at different times. But-- due to how it was set up. But we pay it off this year, or next year rather, and-- and then for two years we'll have a real decent income from it. All the money's been-- so far besides upkeep and salaries, it has-- money's all gone into paying for the bond. And the idea that the federal government put forward this time was that we decentralize, and this will allow electrical companies to avoid having to build a dam or a coal fire plant or a nuclear plant or-- or whatever. So, because they're saving money, they can pay these hydro plants or cogeneration plants more than what they would pay normally. And so the contracts were put on an escalator so that our income from the plant keeps going up, and they pay us probably twice as much as what they sell it at. I just-- so, companies like OTEC don't like this kind of contract because they're not-- they never were going to build a power plant or build a dam because they just-- they're just a line company. They

just move electricity from one point to another. And so, it really didn't save them anything. And now, you may have read about the fact that OTEC is lowering their rates sixteen percent starting the first of the year because they just-- their contract with the cogeneration plant in Prairie City has just run out. And it's been costing them a lot. We're just a drop in the bucket. Six hundred kilowatts is nothing. But the plant in Prairie City was producing twenty-five percent of their electricity or something. Twenty-five percent may not be correct, but a lot anyway. And so, it was-- it was costing them quite a bit of money, and so they were happy to have that contract run out. The plant at Prairie City will now sell their electricity for a lot less. I don't know whether they're selling it to OTEC or whether they're selling it to Idaho Power or where, but. We'll be in that position in a couple years where we'll have to find a buyer for our power. And that-- that's been a lot of work, you know. Because here's a bunch of guys who, you know what do we know about power plants? And-- and so, you have to trust people that you're working with, number one, and number two, you have to do a lot of education of, you know what goes on. And-- and you have to find a city worker who can understand what goes on up there. And that's hard enough because you know we don't-- you're not gonna get rich bein' the public worker out there at Cove. It's not-- it's not there. And so, you know our-- our choices we've been really lucky. We've had some good ones. Mike Brown's our public works director now. He is just top notch, you know. And so, that's been-- that's been good, but it hasn't been easy. We don't have a lot of controversy. We've never-- the biggest controversy I can remember was at one time, when the old tavern had been taken out and before this new one was built, the guy who had taken the old one out wanted to start-- what-- where the beauty salon is next to the post office in Cove. And some people objected to that. They said, "It's too close to school." You know, never mind that beer is sold right across the street from the school. And-- and-- and so, protested the granting of a license. And-- and so we-- we held a hearing, and-- and the room that we hold our meetings in was packed. But there were only about two people who were against it, and the rest were for it so [laughs] that ended the controversy.

I: Have there been any other major events or changes during your term of office over the years?

RT: As far as the city's concerned?

I: As far as the city goes. We talked about the electrical plant which sounds

like it has brought in revenue to the city.

RT: Yeah, we'll-- we'll have some money to spend on some projects. In fact, we're-- we're right now discussing what kind of projects we want to spend the money on. But it'll-- it'll be a substantial piece of money, so we're looking forward to being able to do some things. Probably when we get done spending that money is probably when I'll retire. I put in twenty years of, you know doing that [chuckles]. So, I think that--

I: [chuckles]. You've paid off our money.

RT: I had a hand in doing some projects with the money.

I: Right.

RT: But it-- as-- as far as other things are concerned, there hasn't been any really major things. We-- when the state came through and redid the highway and put in sidewalks and so on, that was a big deal. We've put in a new water system this last year with a new well. And while that should have not been eventful, it was because the well-drigger'd kill it-- well driller that we had hired was-- well, I don't want to get sued for saying he was incompetent. So, I would say he had some problems. And-- and so that was a-- that was a hassle. We had to go to arbitration and-- and all that. And we got the well finished, and it's in line. And-- and it's very good. It's-- it's in the same aquifer that-- that Artesian Blue gets their water from. And you know, it's sold all over the country, and-- and so that's real nice. In the '80s we put in the sewer plant down here, and we're-- we're doing a plan right now to-- to upgrade that because Cove sits on tons of water. Everywhere you go in-- in the area, you know there's water. Either-- either irrigation ditches or little springs or-- I had a hole open up in my garden out here one time about this big around that-- that all of a sudden gushed water out of it. I'm sure it was run-off from the spring, you know and that sort of thing, but that's-- that's the way it is here. And-- and because of that water that's everywhere, we get a lot of extra water in our sewer ponds which pushes them to capacity. So, we're-- we're-- our next project will be to put in a-- some kind of sewer upgrade. We're talkin' about maybe doin' a wetlands project like La Grande has out in Ladd Marsh. I really like that idea, and I've been pushin' that. Oh, but there are other options too that we may have to consider, but hopefully that'll-- that'll work.

I: Has this city grown or not since you've been here?

RT: Not much within the city limits. And when I say that, I'm talkin' about the city itself, within the city limits. I don't know what it was when I started, probably four hundred. Now it's six hundred. You know, in twenty years that's not very many percentagewise, but it did go there, I know. But in the surrounding area there's been a lot of growth. Probably in the Cove community here, if you want to call it that, there's probably a few thousand people instead of just the six hundred.

I: There's-- I've heard the faculty at the university chuckle that Cove was the faculty reserve of the university, but \_\_\_\_\_ was out of here.

RT: Yeah, I don't know how many, but there's quite a few livin'.

I: Actually quite a few. I went to the U directory.

RT: Oh, did ya?

I: It helped. But I got an address for the faculty there, and I just was amazed at how many lived out here.

RT: Well, it's a nice place to live, and basically, that's very typical because we are a bedroom community for La Grande. We don't have any industry. The water plant is as industrial as we get, but fortunately, that's a nice clean industry, so it's good. But it only employs four or five people, I think. But that's the way we-- we prefer it. We-- I think most people here don't look for economic growth. I go to meetings of other cities in-- in this area, and they're always promoting how they're gonna get industry to come in, businesses or whatever. And we really don't look for that. Somebody wants to open a business here that's fine. I mean, you know. But we're not-- we're not going out and looking for them because our economy is really tied to La Grande.

I: So, do majority-- probably the vast majority of people that are employed here in Cove are employed in La Grande?

RT: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me anything about-- when I first moved here-- that was about

fourteen, fifteen months ago, there was a major murder/suicide that occurred here in Cove. Do you know about that, or do you have any--?

RT: It was right across the street.

I: I knew it was right here in your neighborhood.

RT: Yeah. In fact, the man that was murdered was our city employee. \_\_\_\_\_ worked there and a good friend of ours. And his wife would-- had died the spring before, and she was my wife's walking partner and walked every morning. And so yeah, we were-- we were very appalled. That was just one of those unfortunate things where people are in the wrong place at the wrong time, and-- and the couple that was involved moved across the street had kind of a-- you know, I try not to get into personal things, you know. And I don't know the whole story. You don't even hear to know the whole story. But their marriage had been off and on, you know. One would move out, and the other would move out and that sort of thing. And-- and our public works director was good friends with this couple. And in fact, she was-- she worked as a part-time employee of the city for awhile. His-- would help him through his work of readin' meters and so forth. And when they split up, and they were-- I don't think the divorce was finished. But when it was in the process she had moved up to this other place up beyond the school there, and they happened to be at her house. Now, there's some rumors they were having an affair. Well, that's their business, you know. They were both free to do that. And but all I know was that he happened to be there that morning at seven o'clock. And I know that-- that a lot of times he got up at five in the morning; would do his rounds in the city. That was his style, and-- and-- and then he would go and have coffee with somebody. And I think that's probably what was going on. He stopped there and talked to her and had coffee. Well, her husband-- her ex-husband had planned this out that he was gonna go up there and shoot her. And then of course, we don't know all the details because he killed himself. So, we don't-- we don't know what was going on. But we know that he built a-- barricaded himself in this house that was across the street \_\_\_\_\_. And because neighbors heard them-- heard him building in there all night the night before. And-- and he had barricaded into a place in this one little room in this what was kind of a double-wide tract-- trailer. And-- and when he went up there to do this, Abe was there. And-- and Abe tried to stop him, and so he shot Abe. And-- and meanwhile, she locked herself in the bedroom or wherever, and so then he left and came down here. And the police came, and I was out of town. It was on a

weekend, and I was-- I forget what I was doing, but I was out of town. But I was on the way back about Boardman, and-- and my wife called me on the cell phone and said-- told me the basics of what was going on. And when I got here, we couldn't even get to the house. We had police sharpshoot-- sharpshooters out the window here, and this window here that was right there where this door is now. And, well you probably read about the rest of the story where they knocked the building down practically to get at him and then found that he had committed-- committed suicide. Cathy stayed up with my-- my mom's house, and I stayed down at my brother's house that night.

I: How long before you could get back to your home, or--?

RT: We were in the next day. It was quite an experience. I've never had that kind of thing happen. And generally, you know very little of that kind of thing happens in Cove. It's just a pretty laid back community. But it can happen anywhere.

I: Right. Has it changed anything about Cove?

RT: Not that I--

I: People still remain friendly and farm well with each other?

RT: I'm sure the-- I know the family of the man who committed suicide was upset and thought the police could have handled it differently, but why wouldn't they? I mean, you know that's pretty hard goin'. And-- and-- and in a community like this where both families are known and have friends and so on. But I never really heard of people taking sides with it actually 'cause people just felt bad that it happened. You know, that they--

I: Does Cove have a police force of its own?

RT: No.

I: Does it contract it out?

RT: Yeah, we-- we depend on the sheriff for this district. It would-- it would bust our budget to have a police officer.

I: Right.

RT: \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Are there-- are there any-- Mrs. Loree had told us this, but are there-- are there things that are not here anymore that-- that used to be fairly institutional for Cove? Is there things in the landscape now?

RT: Well, yeah, if you go back, she'd probably know a lot more than I do. Down across from the post office there and down Orchard Street there was a hotel there at one time. In fact, one of my friends lived in that hotel when I was goin' to school. It's since burned down. And behind the post office was the flour mill. There's still remnants of it back there. Used to be a railroad that ran from here to Union and came right up in front of Ascension School there.

I: Was that a freight train or a passenger train?

RT: Basically freight. I-- In those days you could probably ride in the caboose or something. I don't really know. Well, not the--

I: Do you remember the name of the flour mill?

RT: It was-- it was gone when we moved to Cove.

I: Oh, I see.

RT: And then there was a boy's school up in that same area as the flour mill at one time, a high school type private school same time that the girl's school was at Ascension. No!

I: Was that when you lived here also?

RT: No, they-- they had gone in the early '20's or '30's or \_\_\_\_\_ some time. It was back in the old days.

I: What are you gonna do next?

RT: Well, I've got several things that I'm-- I'm doing. I'm still involved in my ministry, of course. And-- and I have three, usually running, Studebakers



that I work on regularly. And I-- I say, usually running because they all decided to die when I was involved in this project here and hadn't had time to work on them. [chuckles]. But I do that, and I still substitute up at the school. And I like to support the-- the teams. Last year I helped with the track team.

[audio ends]