

5-18-2016

Interview with Judith Ramaley

Judith A. Ramaley
Portland State University

Clarence Hein

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Recommended Citation

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Portland State University Archives Oral History Project

Narrator: **Dr. Judith A. Ramaley** [JR]

Interviewer: Clarence Hein [CH]

Present: Cris Paschild [CP], Carolee Harrison

Location: Portland State University Library, Portland, Oregon

Date: May 18, 2016

Transcribed by Carolee Harrison, June 1-3, 2016

Edited by Judith A. Ramaley, August 30, 2016

Total time: 01:11:38

0:00:00 Clarence Hein: This is May 18 of 2016... which seems absolutely ridiculous to me... [laughter] My name is Clarence Hein, and I worked at Portland State University for a number of years in various capacities. One of the most interesting was several years with the person across the table, with Judith Ramaley, who was President of Portland State University from August of 1990 until June of 1997. Judith, we are here at the Millar Library to talk a little bit about Judith's memories, and discuss her presidency. Thank you for coming in this morning, Judith.

Judith Ramaley: Thank you, Clarence, you're back in role—I appreciate it.

CH: Good. So, tell us a bit to begin with about your academic and administrative background prior to coming to Portland State, and how you actually thought *Wow, this could be a place I'd want to go.*

0:01:13 JR: Well, do you want the short version, the middle version, or the long version?

CH: Probably... middle to short.

JR: I would say short. OK.

CH: OK.

JR: My background: I actually hold a Ph.D. in anatomy. My research was on a topic that turns out to be related to how my career unfolded, but it will seem a bit of a stretch. I studied puberty in the female rat.

CH: [laughing]

JR: And I could tell from very early that this was not going to be a particularly wonderful way to make friends and influence people, because there were only probably a dozen people around the entire Earth who actually *cared* about puberty in the female rat. Not too long after my then-husband and I, with our two (at that point) toddler-aged kids, moved to Nebraska, I got nominated to serve on the graduate

council at that institution, which at that point had four campuses and a number of little other outposts of one sort or another. I ended up on just the right committee. There were three committees, and like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, one of them was too big—it was [in a grandiose tone] “Long Range Planning.” [laughter] One was much too small; it was individual complaints from students and faculty about something to do with their status or progress. and the third one was just right. It was reviewing the credentials of people who wanted to work with graduate students. That committee also reviewed academic programs and the quality of graduate study.

CH: And this was the University of Nebraska?

JR: University of Nebraska. It was in the late 1970s. I discovered, to my surprise, but actually, eventually my delight, that I liked policymaking and administration a lot better than studying puberty in the female rat. So I went to see Steven Sample, who at that point was the Executive Vice President of the university, to confess that I had a social problem. In those days, faculty thought that if you were really good, you did research. If you weren't terribly good at that, you taught and if you couldn't do either of those things very well, you became an administrator!

CH: [laughing]

JR: I had to tell him that I actually loved what I was doing, and—*Was it OK?* Assured by Steve that I should explore the world of academic administration, I became an American Council on Education fellow in Academic Administration and discovered the professional love of my life. Everything after that is a story of moving from that opportunity to an associate dean in the College of Medicine, to Assistant Vice President in the central administration at the University of Nebraska; then to Provost at SUNY Albany; then to the University of Kansas, three presidencies; a stint at the National Science Foundation, and in 2012, I (quote) “retired” (close quotes). Fortunately for me, the whole concept of what these later years of a person's life mean have changed, and I hope we'll have a chance to explore that a bit since those I am now at that stage of inventing an approach to the next phase of my life. That's my story.

0:04:56 JR [continuing]: Why Portland State? Well, I was at the University of Kansas in Lawrence as the Executive Vice-Chancellor. The Chancellor asked me to establish a “Regent's Center,” in the Kansas City area to provide instruction for undergraduates, graduates, and the people who lived in both Johnson County and in the other counties in the eastern part of Kansas. and, where appropriate, on the Missouri side. I learned something about *How do you bring the resources of the university to a place—to a community—in such a way that both benefit?* So when I was ready to move on to a presidency, Portland State was the place where I thought it would be possible to take everything I had learned about serving a very complex metropolitan region and apply it in a new place that had all the qualities I loved of environment and

people, of direction, of innovation—it just felt good.

0:06:21 CH: You said when you were appointed—you were quoted saying that “this place captured my imagination because Portland has a chance to create in its midst a comprehensive urban university that could be a model for the country.” I don’t know if you were really serious then, but actually, that’s kind of what turned out.

JR: [smiling] I was serious! I just said the same thing to you, but in ordinary language.

CH: [laughing]

JR: I talk differently when I’m in Presidential... Let me sit up straight. [laughter in the room] OK. Yes, I saw—[laughing]—it’s the same thing! [becoming serious] It was a sense of incredible promise and opportunity, and a chance to serve in a way that’s very rare.

CH: So when you got here, did you think: *By golly, I was right!... or: What?!*

JR: More... *what?* Not because I wasn’t right; I *was* right but because shortly after my arrival, I was greeted with something called Measure Five.

CH: Oh yes.

JR: This required me to think about how can I be right and survive at the same time? [laughing] because of that ballot measure, which I’d been assured would never pass...

CH: Yeah. Well...

JR: I actually knew it was on the ballot because, well, people at Portland State told me this, and then Charles Whitesweetly had said, “This is a hardy perennial. Every now and again the citizens of Oregon complain about their taxes, and it never passes.” Wrong!

CH: Wrong.

JR: Wrong.

CH: It did.

JR: So, as that began to unfold, I realized that I had to come up with a very different way of thinking about the university, about its relationship to the community, and about what a budget is and how you approach a budget. The first two we’ll get at later, because it did create an urban institution that is, even today, a model for many others in a variety of places. First, the budget issue—there are two ways to think

about a budget. First of all, let's start with the assumption that budget is an instrument of intention and policy. So, if we start there, there are two ways to approach it: either by trying to maintain and protect something or by thinking of budget as an investment. Each approach leads to a series of expectations. One expectation is if the budget is simply the means to something, and you have to protect it, then there's very little risk allowed, very little experimentation. If you think of it as an investment, it's a calculated risk. If you think of it as simply a reflection of what it costs to operate, if you have to cut that budget, you start thinking about what you have to stop doing. If you think of it as how best to invest what's left after those cuts, you can create the momentum behind the capacity for building models that will sustain the intentions of the institution, will give people some hope and motivation as well, and will allow you to grow out of the hole that you were put in by the action of the legislature, or the voters, etc.

The pivot that allowed us to make all the changes you want to talk about today, I think, was my working very hard to convince people—faculty leadership, administrative leadership, staff leadership—that we should be thinking about how to invest properly what we had in a way that would promote the growth we would need to get ourselves out of the mess we would otherwise be in if all we did was slash programs.

0:11:07 CH: I was particularly taken by what you told, I think it was the City Club, talking about Measure 5. You said we were faced with a situation which required us to cut budget, but what we really are going to do is reshape the university.

JR: Correct.

CH: Did you have in your mind then the whole concept of what we started calling “the urban university”? Changing Portland State, which, up until then, was basically organized along traditional lines.

JR: I was helped immeasurably by the fact that there was active at the time I arrived a Governor's Commission on Higher Education in Portland which was not friendly to Portland State; in fact—this was something that was unexpected and an unwelcomed surprise, because I had not learned much about this during the courting ritual that candidates for senior positions go through—

CH: [laughing]

JR: So it was a surprise. The thought at the time that I remember was, *Well, let's make Portland State basically a glorified two-year institution and give all the upper-division and graduate parts to other places.* Fortunately, the staff who were supporting us, and the Faculty Senate leadership and I, were able to build from what was then Title XI of the federal Higher Education Act, which created an urban grant institution

comparable in intent to the land grant tradition. The land grant tradition set up places like Oregon State originally, and later the 1890 that set up a number of minority-serving institutions. The urban grant concept did not lead naturally or easily to what Portland State became, but it was a great platform to start with. Using that and creating a much more interesting conceptual framework, we were able to convince the governor's commission that what Oregon needed, not just Portland, but what all of Oregon needed, was an institution of this kind—an urban-serving university. At that time, Senator Hatfield was a very important national figure—head of the Appropriations Committee—he was the kind of moderate, boundary-spanning Republican that I wish we still had today. I won't go there...

CH: Let's not go into that. [amusement, murmurs of agreement]

JR: I won't. But for a moment, I just want to pause and remember what a remarkable opportunity that opened up for Oregon to play a role in shaping how that legislation was enacted, as well as positioning Portland State as an exemplar of the qualities of an institution like that. I didn't arrive with that as my idea; it's something that all through my career I have called improvisational theater—someone comes along with an idea that creates a good starting point to do something creative and important, that'll have meaning way beyond that initial moment, and that happened here—and the result is Portland State: "Let knowledge serve the city."

0:15:17 CH: I did want to ask you about that slogan, by the way.

JR: Did you?

CH: Because one of the first things you did prior to your inauguration, which I guess was in August [1990], I don't remember for sure—

JR: No, it was in October.

CH: --was commissioning a new seal and motto, which I believe Rob Diman kind of helped you translate or something.

JR: *Helped* me translate? I had four years of Latin in high school, but I could not have translated *Let Knowledge Serve the City* into Latin. Rod did that.

CH: Oh.

JR: What happened was, as a newcomer, there were certain things I had learned to ask. *Tell me something about the history of this place...*

CH: Right.

JR: ...*Have you some books I could read by local authors...* to get a feel for how that place translates into story... Just stuff I'd learned to do, some two or three jobs ago.

CH: Right.

JR: And I discovered that our seal, at that point, was simply the seal of the state of Oregon, wrapped...

CH: Yes, with oxen...

JR: With oxen, and I think with buffalo, and a pine tree, I don't remember. It was very bucolic. Anyway—with, of course, a ribbon around it with a date that was not actually our founding date-- 1955. This only actually came together in my mind when I started working with the committee that was going to design the inauguration. Of course, my first question was, *How many living former presidents do we have?* And they started from 1955, and I said, *But wait a minute...* so, Steve [Stephen] Epler, who was the founding Executive Director of Vanport Extension Center was simply left out of the picture.

CH: Director [of Vanport Extension Center], yeah.

JR: Right after World War II. So I thought, *Well. Harumph.* A: This seal doesn't capture the essence of an urban environment at all; secondly, we don't have a motto other than the state's; and third, the date's wrong! Being always a perfectionist...

CH: [laughing]

JR:I commissioned the Art Department to come up with something, and they came up with a representation of a rose window for the City of Roses. I came up with "Let knowledge serve the city," and Rob Diman who taught Latin to translate that phrase into Latin—*Doctrina urbi serviat*, and we put the right date on the thing.

CH: Yes.

JR: I have been fascinated by the representation of an image and what it meant at the time. To have our own representation, to have our own phrase that captured where we were headed, and "city" didn't mean Portland. It never actually meant Portland. It meant any urban environment.

CH: The citizens.

JR: The citizens. But I didn't want to say "the citizens," because this was already a time when people were coming who had not yet achieved citizenship. Words are so tricky. You know that as a communications guy.

CH: Indeed.

0:18:48 JR: So, saying it in Latin helped, because nobody knew what we meant!

CH: [laughing] But it sounded impressive.

JR: It sounded very good, yes. [smiling] And, I had a medallion made, because there wasn't one, and—hey, this was my first presidency, I wanted some pomp and circumstance.

CH: Well, it won't surprise you to learn that every succeeding president has worn that medallion every chance they get in public—I mean, at the commencements...

JR: Well, it's big enough that you can put the name and dates of service of every president for quite a while.

CH: Oh. That's good.

JR: So my name was engraved on it, I hope! I would think so anyway.

CH: When the Measure 5 changes came along, one of the opportunities that you seized was the opportunity to take a look at general education, which was a desire of several people on this campus long before that, but had never had a way to focus it. Those folks—Mike Reardon and some others—all have said what you provided was an opportunity, a way to focus on that question. And whether the initial idea was what eventually became University Studies or not, the important thing was the way you managed the change. Tell us about how—

JR: [with amusement] You want to know my secrets?

CH: Your secrets! Sure. Besides *Get a bunch of people together and throw money at it*, which we didn't have.

JR: Well, A: we didn't have it, and B: I couldn't do that, because C: I've learned that's stupid. But moving right along...

CH: [laughing]

JR: Several things come first. A lot of this story we're talking about today involved the convergence of elements. One of my strengths is that I can see connections that other people often don't focus on or may not even notice. I can't quite see behind me, and I can't quite see around corners, but I still sometimes am considered to be a bit of a seer or wise person for this reason. Several things converged in this case as well. One,

I had to figure out how to buy time to invent some new strategies we wanted to put in place that would start to pay off in giving us a deeper sense of identity as an urban university. Secondly, I had, as any incoming president probably would, asked the simple question early in my tenure, *What's our graduation rate?* said I, sweetly. It was eighteen, nineteen percent at the time.

CH: It wasn't very good.

JR: To make it worse, those figures were over a six-year period. Very few people graduated in a quick four years. So I, of course, asked the next question: *Why?* and I was told, *Because we're an urban institution.* Which led me to say, *Might we compare ourselves to other similar urban institutions to see if they have perhaps a different story or a different strategy?* Well, it turned out we were the worst in I think twenty different institutions. At that point I was on the board of AACU [Association of American Colleges and Universities], and we were thinking about different approaches to education, particularly general education, moving from the "pick one from Column A and another one from Column B" kind of model to a more integrated model. We put those two things together—how do I buy time, how do I improve our graduation rates—with a major potential national focus on general education, because it's the common pathway every student takes whether they start their college education here or transfer here. They will experience something on that road. So putting that all together, the following things happened. The then-Provost, and I added one line to the faculty development fund which was a small grant to experiment with different pedagogies in the classroom and we got quite a nice response, which was how I discovered the truth of what you said when we started this part of the conversation: there were people ready to move if there were any opportunity to do so. We found out who the non-usual suspects were. From that, I went to the Chancellor and said, *Will you allow me to delay our contribution to the budget cuts that are about to ensue, so that we can reshape our general education curriculum to make it more effective as a core part of every student's experience and let us begin to increase our retention, which in turn will build more revenue to float our boat—I can now say that there is capacity at the institution to undertake that measure.* Now of course I was crossing my fingers, because I wasn't altogether sure what I was saying was true, [laughter] but there were times when it was true enough for the purpose, and the Chancellor agreed. At that point, serendipitously, what was then AAC (it hadn't added the "University" to its title yet) held their annual meeting in Seattle. Using a university van that seated about sixteen people, we sent some faculty and I think one or two staff up to the meeting. They came back and I met with them—I, and the Provost—to say, *What did you learn?* Well, [they replied] *we learned to be successful, you must be a liberal arts college, with very high application standards, and you must have residential life.* And here's where that ability to think otherwise proved helpful, and I said, *Can we sort out what about those conditions we could create here?* Because we had ten percent of our students living in campus-related housing at that time, offered by an external entity, because we weren't allowed by

state law to have residential life as such. It turned out that yes, we could... meanwhile, Professor [Charles] White took on the responsibility with a team that consisted of some of the people who had responded to that faculty development opportunity, as well as a few of the loyal opposition who were responsibly skeptical, to rethink the curriculum with—already by this time, the rough draft of our new mission statement as a starting point—for saying *How would we interpret that in the core of the curriculum that every student will encounter?* The result was University Studies. It didn't look like anything I could have imagined or that our Provost Michael Reardon could imagine, but it was *so* compelling. The thing that surprised me was we got that thing approved by 1993, and it was launched in 1994.

CH: Still going on...

JR: And it's still going on. It has from time to time been adjusted to both the changing environment in which it is provided, the changing nature of the students that we serve, the changing interactions we have with the broader community as a vehicle for educating and contributing to the solution of community problems at the same time, and we're about to enter a new stage of reinterpreting it. With all that, the core logic and the core curricularthe patterns not only still hold very well, but they have been taken on by institutions all over the world, including a couple recently that have announced this wonderful new model, and they never mentioned *By the way, we stole it from Portland State!*

[laughter in the room]

JR: [continuing] Stealing is always the best sign of admiration, but it is gracious to mention where you got the idea! [laughing]

CH: I talked with Charles White some time ago about his service on that committee, and it's funny, because he said his department nominated him... He said, "I had zero interest in general education,"...

JR: [laughing] I didn't know that.

CH: He said, "But they..."

JR: He got over it!

CH: He did! He said, "They appointed me because they wanted me to keep an eye on things and make sure nothing bad happened." And once he got into it, he just... changed.

0:29:09 JR: Well, what that story illustrates, I think, at least from my point of view—there was a lot of that capacity at Portland State that was as yet unrealized. That derives from

the fact that the kind of people who were attracted to our faculty actually were capable of seeing things differently, but in the absence of some focus for that, in the absence of some attention from both faculty and administrative leadership, their individual insights and the challenges they addressed didn't add up. As we moved from general education to something called University Studies—and think a minute (as I'm sure you have) about how significant that name change is—it created a vehicle for imagination to turn into very concrete and important action. I think that's true at many institutions, but without that strange combination of a new leader who tends to think differently, a financial—potential crisis, and a real problem with the image and interest of the community in Portland State, which in those days was not well-developed, shall we say?

CH: [laughing]

JR: ...I don't know if it would have happened. I've read many articles on change and what creates conditions that support it, and generally people come out on the side that it has to be an external factor. I don't think that's true. I've never tried to study it in scholarly way, I've just lived it, which...

CH: Probably better.

JR: It's probably, in my opinion, at least instructive. But it was the magical intersection of external change with internal capacity that made this possible.

CH: I think one of the—in terms of public information, anyway—one of the most important parts of that was the senior capstone, which every year, even in this media-poor city in which we currently live, where there is no newspaper of record...

JR: Oh, let's not go there. [smiling]

CH: ...you hear about one or two projects that basically is a senior capstone project. Would you say that kind of illustrates your engagement desire?

JR: My approach to engagement involves everything about a university and its community, but there are certainly things that capture the essence of it more accurately or faithfully than others. The capstone has a number of those qualities. Every student participates; this is not for a select few. That's still rare, and it creates the potential for some enormously important work on how to adapt those experiences for a changing world, that I believe we'll probably see undertaken here in the next few years. But there are other parts to it. Everything from how we interact with our neighbors around the footprint of the main functioning of Portland State, how we seek through collaborative ways to operate the campus in an environmentally responsible way, to connect that to other efforts throughout the region to do the same, and how we become not only a model, but a participant in a

much broader approach to building healthy communities[...]. What individual faculty do, how faculty start connecting with each other, collaborative effort, that's all engagement. Some of it's internal, some of it's external, and some of it's this fascinating combination of both.

CH: Shifting gears just slightly...

JR: [smiling] OK.

CH: I remember one of the biggest things that happened that had very little to do with the University was President Clinton coming here for the Pacific Rim economic conference—which I still don't understand how that happened. Do you know how that happened?

JR: Yeah!

CH: Good! How did that come about?

JR: I don't know all the nitty-gritty details. I know, however, that Debbie Murdoch, who was then our Government Affairs person, working with Senator Hatfield's office, and with a few other federal contacts, was able to convince the White House that the perfect place for a Pacific Rim conference—for a variety of reasons having to do not just with the location but with Portland State as a vehicle—could not be bested by any other choice.

CH: [laughing] Well, I guess she was right.

JR: Yeah, she was right! It was a fascinating opportunity. Of course, it was the source of one of my most embarrassing moments, which I will allow on film.

CH: Oh, good.

JR: [setting the scene] The Presidential cavalcade arrives on campus. I'm standing at the door of the Smith Center, waiting for the Presidential party to come in. And I've got buttons showing I've got the proper security clearance on my lapel, I'm standing straight—I'm wearing heels, which I can't do anymore—I could sort of totter there. The President comes toward me, and—let's see if I can get this right—I said, "Welcome..." oh, how did I put it? I got President... Oh, "Welcome, Portland Clinton," [laughing] "I am President..." I got it backwards.

CH: [laughing]

JR: And he looked at me...

CH: He's a funny guy.

JR: ...and he grabbed my hand warmly, and smiled and said, "I understand." And then walked on. [laughing] "Welcome... Portland... I'm..." I've never forgotten it. My grand, golden moment of glory, welcoming the President of the United States to my campus, with all these people in the background watching that moment and several Cabinet Secretaries in the next car behind the President's... And I blew it! [laughing]

CH: Ah, well. I'm sure...

JR: We all have those moments!

CH: We do. Some of us more often than others! Before we go too deeply, I do want to talk about a year that I know is not among your favorites, the year of the—I've always called it the attempted takeover of this university.

JR: Well, that's what it was.

CH: When you first heard about this—and reading back through, it was a complete surprise, even though supposedly you had been involved in these discussions for some time. But that was not true.

JR: The Board [the Oregon State Board of Higher Education] was meeting in Southern Oregon—they were meeting at Southern Oregon (then) State College.

0:37:38 CH: Right.

JR: ...and the Chancellor summoned me out of the room about half an hour before the Board met, and said, "You will remain silent when I announce our decisions." *What?* That was to transfer our School of Engineering to OSU and to transfer our graduate programs in business to U of O. What had basically happened, I think, is from 1990 to that point, we had emerged as a contender, and those two sets of programs were like our air hose. They were feeding energy and imagination and community support in a very consistent and important way into our programs, and helping us prepare our graduates for not only the thriving environment that then existed in the workplace, but for opportunities everywhere. Both institutions were watching Portland, which had more than half of the state's citizenry, and saying *We're the wrong place; this is a long throw—we need more of a presence in Portland. Oh! Let's just carve up Portland State! Oh, what fun!* So... the announcement was made that the Chancellor was intending to move in this direction. That was not a good day for me. I got back here and—and this is a lemons-lemonade story, because it led to a rallying of our alumni, of the leadership in Portland, and of the campus to recognize that this was indeed a hostile takeover that would cripple Portland State, but also introduced into those critical programs a model, a mindset, that was not urban-serving, which would be a

very serious problem, both for the Oregon economy and for the future of that economy as it went forward. As a result, we were able to push back and prevent it.

CH: I do want to ask—you mentioned the support. Was that somewhat of a surprise to you, that—actually, many aspects of this community rallied up and said *Whoa. Let's talk about this; this does not seem to make sense.* Did that give you courage?

JR: [in French] Courage, mon ami!

CH: Oui.

JR: Yes. There are times, in a leadership role, where whether you have courage or not, you have to show it; you have to act as though you do. I went from acting as though I was courageous to actually feeling hopeful! It was quite nice.

CH: The alumni advocates played a big role in that.

JR: Very important. It was a coming-of-age kind of phenomenon, even though we were already celebrating our fiftieth anniversary by then, getting close. I think this assault occurred almost exactly at that time.

CH: Right.

JR: Since our first offerings were in 1946, it was interesting that at that point we were facing this problem. But I found it fascinating that when faced with a potential takeover, not only did people resist it because they were starting to see Portland State as “our university,” but there was an opportunity to look at just how far we’d come since our earliest days, in an extension site in an old shipyard that then flooded—with all the stories that were still circulating when I got here in 1990, because a lot of the people who had been part of that enterprise were still either telling their stories or could be persuaded to do so. It was a very interesting time. I think about it occasionally when some challenge arises, because you can turn a difficult situation into a positive direction if you can act with integrity and honesty, and fight fair.

CH: Right.

JR: We fought fairly.

CH: But the state system did not always reciprocate in that sense.

JR: Well, some of that was intentional, coming from bias. Some of it was a problem we always have in organizations. The way you did things then continues to be the way you do things now, and yet they’re not well-attuned, so, for example, the model that

OSSHE (as it was called, Oregon State System of Higher Ed, in those days) used to distribute state general fund money was based on the parameters of a residential university with traditional-aged students studying full-time. That never worked with us. For example, that formula showed us as being over—definitely over the space we needed. Why? Because the measures stopped at four P.M.

CH: [laughing]

JR: ...and, as a largely—at that point—commuter campus, and still, to a large extent that way today, our buildings, our spaces were utilized in a different pattern. In addition, we needed at least as much student support as our sister institutions, because part-time students juggling their education with a number of other life commitments need at least as much assistance and guidance and help as a full-time student. Yet the calculation was made on FTE rather than head count, and it often took two or three PSU students to create one full-time equivalent.

CH: We were never going to win that fight.

0:45:06 JR: Well, we couldn't, and I spent a lot of time (even though budgets are not my favorite subject on Earth, I recognize their importance as measures of so many other things), I worked very hard to get some recognition that the physical environment, the social environment, the academic and administrative structure of an urban institution should be somehow accommodated in the distribution formula. That's one of my best examples of failure. I never managed to get that idea to get any traction whatsoever.

CH: I'm not sure it had gained traction fully to this day, and it's almost—it's becoming less and less consequential, since the state support...

JR: It doesn't give us much anyway! [laughing]

CH: ...doesn't give us anything anyway.

JR: Well, we're still on an interesting shakedown cruise, because going from OSSHE to OUS [Oregon University System] to now with our own governing board, a very different system of governance; there's still a lot to be learned about how to make that work. I don't really know how it's going to turn out, but it's interesting to watch.

CH: I was going to ask what you think the chances are of—I wouldn't say success, but of this working. I mean, it is totally different.

JR: Well, the difference is not absolute. The model we have now depends on a couple of elements that were less critical in the past, although they were important. It is more important than ever to recognize that the campuses need to work together in

approaching the political leadership of the state. If individual campuses go rogue and are concerned only with their own self interests—like the tragedy of the “commons” idea from nineteenth-century England—and start grazing too heavily on a limited pasture, it won’t work. Secondly, increasingly, no matter what the topic is, institutions and communities have to collaborate. They have to develop approaches to problem-solving and to capacity creation that bring together the resources and the capabilities of multiple entities. In the past five to ten years, various names have been attached to different models of collaboration—collective impact or collective action, social networks—but that is as true for higher education as a key player in the state in so many different ways. Without some coordination or way for people to match up their interests and resources, we’ll gradually drift apart. We still have some of that connections across campuses. I think the provosts of the campuses still meet, for instance, and perhaps other officers too. I’ve not paid as much attention in the last couple of years because I’ve gotten on to what I consider more productive work!

CH: [laughing]

JR: But I follow it somewhat, and with some fascination.

CH: What brought you back to Portland State after all these years?

JR: [smiling] Yeah, I was gone for fifteen years. What brought me back was a mixture of simply loving the Northwest—I love Portland, I love the life here, I love the spirit of the place. Part of it is my older son lives in Seattle and who would want to live in Seattle?! [laughter in the room] But being here is good! Part of it actually was, interestingly enough, that my oldest grandson had just graduated from high school and was going to come here for his college education. In fact, as we speak, he is getting ready to graduate in June. So...

CH: Are you going to go to commencement?

JR: [sighing] Probably.

CH: [laughing]

JR: And watch the glitter of that medallion on Wim [Wiewel]’s chest, right! If I see him I’ll turn it over and see if the other names are on there. But anyway... [laughing] [although] it would be fun to enjoy, the pageantry of going there does not appeal to me greatly when I am no longer part of the show. But anyway, the other point was, Portland State is a perfect place for me personally to work on the things I’m most passionate about. Because as my generation has begun to rethink the stage of life that I have entered, it’s a matter of engaging your mind, your spirit, your interests, your time in things that you can contribute to because of your experience, because of your social connections, because of what you know that can help mentor and

encourage other people. I'm familiar with the region, I know the university even though I am gradually discovering how it has changed since I left, which I find helpful. It's just the perfect place for me to feel useful.

CH: Did the extent of the campus impress you when you came back? I mean, when I come back to campus now, I think *Holy cow. This used to just be the Park Blocks, basically.*

JR: Well, that was already on the books when I left. We had had a major set of planning exercises with the City of Portland to develop the next-level beyond the strip along the South Park Blocks. It creates a fascinating physical metaphor, because you have two repurposed buildings, the old elementary school Shattuck, which is now a building for architects that's basically had its skin peeled off inside so you can see all the workings and everything, I just love it—and then you have a considerably repurposed old high school, Lincoln Hall, providing the edges of the strip. But then we'd already begun to expand beyond that and there was a plan in place to develop the urban plaza. The only part that had not been anticipated by the time I left in 1997 was the next row out, the acquisition of the building that now has a lot of the administrative functions of the campus [Market Center Building on SW Fourth Avenue]. Part of that's because we've continued to grow. We have almost twice as many students today as we had when I left here. When I left, I think we were at something like 16,000 students total, plus or minus a few. We now hover just below 30,000. Where do you put all these people? No matter how much you expand into cyberspace, the reality is that effective education increasingly and clearly is a blend of in-person engagement with the opportunities afforded by cyberspace; in other words, hybrid or blended courses are very effective for today's students. Students we thought would surf cyberspace like veterans crave contact with each other and with faculty. Talk to them anytime, whether they're undergraduate or graduate, and they appreciate the value of what is available to them on the internet and on the learning platforms that we use but they also want time with real people talking about real things in a way that draws on who they are more fully than they generally can in cyberspace. So you put that all together, and we've had to take a lot of space that used to be administrative and make it educational. And we're still like the old woman that lived in a shoe!

CH: [laughing] That's true. We do have a lot of children...

0:54:35 JR: Well, we do have every generation here. This is one of the incredible strengths of a place like this. Every generation is represented, from those little tykes that are rolled around in that mobile unit with all the little seats like a baby bus, to people my age and older who come back to take classes through the senior center or to participate in other campus activities.

CH: I would like to know, you've mentioned that you had things that you were—

would like to talk about, or you were particularly pleased with or proud of in terms of academic service or programs.

JR: Mm-hmm.

CH: What do you look back on and say *By golly, when I was President...?*

JR: [smiling] I don't look back; I look forward. That's always been a quality of mine. I do a lot of writing still, and so I use examples from here. I do a lot of consulting, and the things that I have found most stimulating are things like the Institute for Sustainable Solutions and their newer ways of interacting over a projected long period of time with the community. They have four neighborhoods they interact with now and I'm sure that will expand. The consequence of that, in terms of serving the city in a new collaborative kind of way, I think will grow over the next few years. That's one example. The things that are going on in bringing different colleges together in new working relationships. The College of Arts and Sciences that are creating a path into the business school for many of their students; the remarkable advances going on in the College of Urban and Public Affairs; the social entrepreneurship, the so-called impact entrepreneurship and the connections that are forming between the School of Business and other parts of the campus; the way in which the campus as a whole has embraced sustainability as a core theme, all the way from water fountains to curricular opportunities both in University Studies and elsewhere; the way in which individual faculty or groups of faculty are partnering with community in critical areas—a recent example is Linda George [PSU Professor of Environmental Science] working with the county and the city on the problem of heavy metal contamination in parts of the Portland area, but that's just one that was recently in the news; I could name many many others I've heard of, and I wonder about others I haven't heard of. There's a receptivity and a responsiveness to what's happening in the community as a source of knowledge, as a source of inspiration for scholarly work, as a learning opportunity for students. All of that is certainly the next generation of what we spent a lot of our time on in the 1990s. It's fascinating to come back and be able to reengage at a different angle, but with a little bit of the *gravitas* left over from when I was more prominent in the life of the institution. So I have easier access to things than the typical adjunct might not; I have a lovely title—Distinguished Professor of Public Service—it looks great on my business card! [smiling] There's an openness and opportunity here, a willingness to think in new ways about things, combined with the old hesitations and limitations that all institutions carry. It's kind of like the dust bunnies under the bed, there are these issues. But there is so much hope and possibility and opportunity here that I'm delighted to be part of although in a much more limited way than before. I find there is remarkable energy here and progress.

0:59:41 CH: Well, there are two things—one, our architecture program *finally...*

JR: I know. [smiling]

CH: After twenty-five years, became legit!

JR: It was legitimate before, it's just we didn't have the recognition to prove it! Our undergraduate students were winning national prizes, snatching them out of the hands of master's-prepared students—I loved that!

CH: [laughing] I think one of the more interesting combinations now is our participation in the public health school down on the waterfront. It's an amazing facility.

JR: Yes. That's going to be very interesting, because the challenge of bringing together two such different cultures, even with a new space to do it in, which helps—

CH: The med school and... the university.

JR: Right. Not just the med school, the entire OHSU [Oregon Health & Science University] culture is so different from Portland State's, and the interactions are so unpracticed. The opportunity created for not only the students in both institutions, but for the state and the region, by bringing together these different capabilities, make this a wonderful opportunity in other ways as well but it's going to take a lot of effort to pull off. There are so many points like this. I know about some because my attention goes there; I'm unfamiliar with others because it doesn't. My grandson who is about to graduate from Portland State is in the music education program and is currently president of the chamber choir, so I know that the chamber choir is a representative of everything bright and beautiful about Portland State. It's a way to express in sound the spirit of this place. There are other examples—our design programs. I wish I knew more. If I were still President, I would know more, because, as we were talking briefly here earlier, I view the job of a leader to tell the story of an institution. But sometimes that story isn't quite as true as you tell it—so you spend a lot of your time making it true. And that's what I did! I got here and said, *This is an urban institution*. By the time I left, it was.

CH: Well, I think that your connection to this campus certainly was shown in June of, I guess, 1997, when there was basically a big thank-you party.

JR: That was amazing.

CH: People just... thanked you for your leadership and dedication to this place. And I know that it was a very moving experience.

JR: It was. It was one of those times when I had trouble not crying in public. Partly, I got to contribute because I sang with the then-head of the opera program. I still had a

voice in those days. [in Marlon Brando voice] *I once coulda been a contender!*

CH: You sang at your inauguration, too.

JR: Well, but not solo. I started a pattern, singing with the choir. I did it at all three of my presidential inaugurations and every time, people went *Huh? Where'd she go?!* But, yes, that was a special time because I suspect most people would acknowledge that when they do something wonderful, it hardly ever gets acknowledged. And to have an event, in the new facility filled with very state-of-the-art technology and foreshadowing the academic technology that was rapidly being introduced into higher education and crowded with kind and generous people, was something I'll never forget.

CH: I also will always be grateful for the opportunity you gave me to come into the Presidential office and take up space for all that time.

JR: [laughing] Well, you didn't just take up space; you did a fine job, if I may say so.

CH: Yes, I tried to keep Debbie Murdock [PSU advocate and assistant to the President] under control, but that...

JR: Well, that's impossible! [laughing]

Cris Paschild: Can I ask just because—your passion for Portland State, and your commitment to Portland State is still so alive, can we, just for the historical record, talk a little bit about the transition out of the presidency? You've come back and you've reengaged, but can you talk a little bit about the process of leaving the first time?

1:05:00 JR: The process of leaving differs depending on what you're leaving, of course. In this case, I left before I had intended to because after the events of 1996, it was very clear that my continued presence here would potentially damage the institution's prospects, because the Board was very angry. And the Chancellor was very angry as well, as far as I could tell. That was exhibited by the fact that actually, when the time came to leave, the farewell for me associated with the system consisted of giving me a Pendleton blanket at a lunch. For everybody else, it was a catered dinner with testimonials and a little roasting here and there, and much fanfare and appreciation. For me, it was *Bye! And here's a blanket*. So it sort of...

CH: Wear it in good health.

JR: [laughing] Wear it in good health! Exactly. Actually, it's on my bed now. But fortunately, although I fell on my sword, if you will, I didn't hit any vital organs! Because the University of Vermont opened up, and that's actually an interesting story

because when I was a candidate at Portland State I was also a candidate at the University of Vermont, but they were about four weeks behind. I sat in my living room in Lawrence, Kansas one evening with two sets of tickets on my lap, staring at them and deciding what to do. And my younger son Andrew came home early that night—he was a senior in high school, so he never came home early—but he did that night. I was sitting in the living room listening to Bach to try to calm my mind—*do I want to go probably get a presidency at a flagship, or do I want to take this institution that I think fits my dreams and hopes, but is a little more problematic than I thought?* Andrew comes in, and I explain what I'm pondering, and he says, "Let me tell you a story, Mom." He said, "You know, I'm going to attend University of Kansas next year." And I said, "Yes, I know that." He said, "You know, I was accepted to Juilliard." Which he was, he was first-chair trombone in Kansas that year. And I said, "Yes, I know that." My thought balloon was, *But I know that you don't want to leave your girlfriend.* But I didn't say that. He said, "You know why I made that choice?" And I said, innocently, being a good mother, "No, dear." And he said, "Well, if I went to Juilliard, I'd get a lot out of it, but they wouldn't, because they have their pick of top high-school musicians. If I come to KU, they're just building their brass program, and I can help with that." Well, that did it. I picked up the phone the next morning, called the chair of the search committee at University of Vermont, and said, "I withdraw from the search," because it was very clear to me at that point that I was going to be able to get the presidency at PSU. Which I did, on Earth Day that year. So I always celebrate Earth Day with some enjoyment. But my younger son's always been like that. He made up that story but the parable worked like a charm! He has always had that effect on me.

CH: Well, he knew.

JR: But he knew! [laughing]

CH: And eventually you did end up in Vermont.

JR: I did!

CH: With the hockey team...

JR: [laughing] Oh, let's not talk about that! I emerged with my dignity intact, but not my presidency! That's a long story. I did a lot better at Winona State. I was appreciated better there.

CH: I remember reading about that, and I thought *Oh... Judith, Judith!*

JR: [speaking simultaneously] Life is filled with challenges...

CH: [simultaneously] ...*You did it again!*

JR: [laughing] I know! Well, it wasn't my fault, darn it! Anyway.

CH: You never could tolerate people lying to you.

JR: This is true.

CH: Not that I ever tried it, but I saw other people try it.

JR: It didn't work, did it?

CH: No.

JR: Not as soon as I figured it out. Part of that has to do with my upbringing and past experiences. I'm an only child; my father worked for an oil company. And in those days, when I was growing up, we moved frequently. My parents, to protect me, would not tell me until Friday that we were moving on Monday. That kind of influenced my... wanting honesty. [laughing]

CH: I'd think so.

JR: It took me many years to figure out why I have so much trouble with people who deliberately try to manipulate the truth in some way.

CH: That's a very academic way of saying... they're lying.

JR: Oh, well, one learns by the time you've been in administration for a while how to say what you mean without saying it. [laughing] And when I slip, I'm embarrassed by it, but I don't slip too often. But it's a pleasure to have this conversation with you.

CH: It was a pleasure for me, as well. Is there anything else?

CP: Oh, we could keep you here for hours!

CH: Well, let's not...

CH: Thank you, Judith.

JR: Thank you.

CP: Thank you so much.