INTERVIEW WITH RENO ODLIN
BY R. FRANKLIN THOMPSON
On October 5, 1977

T: Reno, when did you first come to Tacoma?

O: I think it was 1909. I came down to go to a boys' school called DeKoven Hall, which was located on Lake Steilacoom. It was run by a Mr. D. S. Pulford. It was a small military school and it lasted until the outbreak of the War in 1917 and things sort of collapsed and Mr. Pulford just had to get rid of the school.

T: Were you in World War 1?

O: Oh, yes. I got through at DeKoven Hall, graduated there in 1914, and my cousin, Abe Bingham of Sedro Wooley and I went to Princeton and he stayed there and I came out here. I wanted to study law and I found when I got back there they didn't have a law school at Princeton, so I came out to the University of Washington. Then in 1916, I joined the National Guard company that went to the Mexican border, so I had been down there through 1916. We came back the fall of that year and then the spring of 1917, the first war broke out and we went into the Army and went overseas. We went over in November, 1917, and I was over there until 1919, as a matter of fact, because after the end of the war, I got an opportunity through good fortune to be one of the guys who was selected to go down to the University of Toulouse, France, and I had a year down there. Then we came back over to this country and when we got back here I went to work for the telephone company, briefly--found a job. Then later on I joined my father in his bank up at Anacortes and I was up there until about 1927 when I went to Seattle.

T: Then you worked at the bank in Seattle and then you came to Tacoma in what year?

O: Yes, I had been in the Seattle bank until 1933 and then in 1933 we opened what was
later to become a branch of the First National Bank of Seattle, now the Seattle-First National Bank. There were no branches in this state, so it was then called the Washington National Bank of Olympia. I went down there from Seattle to run it. I was vice president of it and Mark Reed was president. He was my top senior.

T: It was Mark Reed’s family that was disastrously burned, is that right?

O: Well, that was his son, Frank, who had that tragedy over on Lake Washington. Incidentally, another son, Saul, had been shot by a drunken logger down in Olympia, so they had quite a tragic life. But Mark Reed was one of the great men of this State—he was speaker of the House. He was sort of the top lumberman of this area. You know, Simpson Timber Company; but Mark, unfortunately, during the World War—the next World War—was struck by some disease and died at that time.

T: When did you come to Tacoma, then?


T: What was the general feeling concerning the College of Puget Sound at that time?

O: Well, of course, the College of Puget Sound when I first knew of it was located right where Jason Lee school is—in an old frame building. It was just a little inconsequential sort of a Methodist college. It wasn’t until a short time after that, while I was still away at War, I think, that it moved over to the present campus and Jones Hall was built and then one or two other buildings. Then followed the growth that came along as the years went by.

T: One of the men in that growth, of course, was W. W. Kilworth.
O: Oh, yes, Will Kilworth. He was one of the directors of the Puget Sound National Bank when I was asked and invited to come down here and take the presidency of it, relieving F. B. Haskell who retired. Will was with us until his death. He was one of the most active men we had on the Board—he and Frost Snyder and I got in a lot of old friends from DeKoven Hall days—Cordy Wagner, for example, and Fred Karlen, later, and various other people—Fred Shanaman and others. Will was one of the senior men. Harry Brown, one of your staunch supporters, was the senior member of the Board. He was the oldest member of the Board of Directors and he is still living today!

T: He is 92 and still going strong.

I remember Will Kilworth and that his father died when he was very young.

O: He lived, I think, in Emporia, Kansas, and he carried papers for William Allen White. He was very proud of it.

T: Yes, he was and I remember he told me, I think, that he was nine years old when his father died and that he carried papers from then on.

O: That's right.

T: He used to sit down and talk to White every once in awhile and found him very interesting.

O: He had a brother, Howard, who was here and they had the Washington Broomstick Company or Washington Handle Company, I think it was called. Then he and Frost Snyder were associated together. Frost had the Clear Fir Lumber Company, or something out at Day Island and then they got interested in plywood and they bought
the Vancouver Plywood Company in Vancouver, Washington, and they were associated with that and other plywood companies for a long, long time.

T: I never saw two people with such different personalities who got along so well.

O: They were really quite a pair.

T: There is a legend, I don't know whether it is true or not, that Will Kilworth used to go to the lumber mills and he saw the slabs that were wasted and he decided that something had to be done with it, so then he decided that he would make broom handles, and he always said his handles were straight and true. You remember he had a motto.

O: Yes, I remember that story and I suspect it is absolutely true.

T: I think it probably was. He also told me one time that he sold 60% of all the broom handles in America.

O: They sold a tremendous number of them—a big percentage.

T: He used to go take a big long trip for a month or two and that's how, for instance, he finally gave us the chapel. He saw this white chapel on the top of a hill in New England and said to himself that's the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

O: He told me about that after he got back from that trip and he told me about his idea to give the chapel to the college. He had been making plans to give something and he told me about seeing this chapel back in New England and it had put him in mind of what he wanted to do.

T: You know he walked all over the campus and he wanted the key spot and the chapel is built on that spot. Howard was a very interesting person, too, wasn't he?

O: Howard was a delightful guy. Totally different than Bill. He was kind of an out-
going fellow. Bill was very quiet, not very talkative. Howard was just outgoing.

T: Again there is a legend, and I don't know whether it is true or not, that Howard was a cowboy and loved to ride horses.

O: I am sure for I have heard that story from Will and Howard.

T: And that one time when things were going awfully well for Bill, he said Howard ought to be in on this so he brought him in and gave him half of the assets of the handle company and they both prospered very very much.

O: That's the story as I heard it.

T: Will was in Kansas and he went to Princeton, too.

O: He went to the seminary, theological seminary. He didn't go to college there.

T: Is that right? I never knew that.

O: Yes, he went to Princeton Theological Seminary, which is right adjoining the University in Princeton.

T: He told me on several occasions he saw Woodrow Wilson. Do you know anything about that?

O: Yes, Wilson was president of Princeton and he became president of the United States after his presidency of the University and Will would have known him while he was President of the United States. Wasn't he elected in 1916?

T: I think so.

O: He had been governor of New Jersey before that. But Will probably knew him as a resident of Princeton and he may have known him while he was president of the University, I am not sure.

T: He said he had heard him speak two or three times and had talked to him. I also remember Will telling me that when Wilson came back from the League of Nations, he
was terribly heartbroken and dejected because it didn't carry, and Will said he looked at him when he was in a car and Wilson waved to the boys, but he looked like he was a very broken man.

O: He was at that time. Following that trip when he tried to sell the League of Nations idea and was turned down by the Senate, he was a broken man in spirit, definitely. Then he just broke down physically, from the trouble of that trip and everything else.

T: I am sorry I didn't sit down and get him on tape like this. He said, I think, that he went back to Kansas and he told me that he had the idea of coming West. This lady who painted the beautiful pictures of the trees and the mountains and the streams, etc., whose family gave us those pictures, she painted them for the railroads and they were called "immigrant" pictures. Will told me that he came on a train from Kansas City to Seattle on an immigrant ticket, I think it was something like $10 or $15.

O: That could have been. That was in the days when the railroads were expanding and offering land to people and there was a lot of homesteading and that sort of thing.

T: It was a little typical of Will to get a good deal like that.

O: Will didn't pass up a good deal, if possible, where money was involved.

T: He was very astute and very able. Then he came to Seattle and he lived in Seattle for awhile and it is kind of fuzzy and kind of hazy but I think in Seattle he did have some very good breaks with real estate. Do you know anything about that?

O: I never knew too much about Will's previous experiences out here until I came to Tacoma. I got to know him here in 1936.

T: There was some very unusual situations where he got some breaks on real estate and that really where he made most of his money, I think. I don't know.
O: Of course, I think he and Frost Snyder were tremendously successful in the plywood. That's where they made a great deal.

T: I used to talk to him about what he was going to do for the University and he would say, "Well, it all depends upon what plywood is worth when I die." Of course, it was worth a very nice amount and he had a very sizable estate, as you know. He had some very interesting characteristics. One was that he would never be late, do you remember that?

O: He was always on time for everything. He was meticulous about it.

T: I used to waste hours so that he could be there early. But it was all right and I appreciated him. He had a lot of vision. He was an outstanding person in so many, many ways.

O: He was a character in other ways, Frank. I remember he had a habit of when we got on a one-way street on A Street and when we had the bank parking lot where he used to park his car, he would come down 11th or 10th or whatever it was and swing right into A Street, right in the face of the on-coming traffic, and just drove over unconcerned right on the wrong side of the road. He was cautioned about it over and over again and he shook his head and said he must go the other way and go around and then the next day he would come right down the street.

T: That was in his latter years. I remember we always worried for fear he would get clobbered. Did you know the first Mrs. Kilworth?

O: Oh, yes, she was a very lovely person. And then when he was married later to the former Mrs. Eves, they were a delightful couple.
T: They were just precious people. We used to take them to dinner lots of times, and we would have the various trustees in and their wives. She was such a very very gracious person.

O: Just a charming person.

T: I think his wife had just died before we came and I don't know that I ever...

O: I forget the year you came.

T: It was '42.

O: I knew it was about five years or so after I came here because we always sort of called ourselves pioneers of that time.

T: That's right. As I said in my letter to you, you took a small institution and made it great and big, and I was fortunate to do the same thing in my life.

O: It was funny thing, actually, that little bank had about $4 million in deposits and one of these local scandal sheets printed an article one day and said that Tacoma had two and half banks and we were the half bank. They made some slurring remark about the colleges, both colleges. When I first came, we used to play the University of Puget Sound in football and baseball and at that time, Pacific Lutheran, your neighbors down in the south, was a little one-story building which was called originally Pacific Lutheran Academy, I think it was. We played baseball with them on a rock lot that they called an athletic park, out there. But the two of them were very small. As you recall, of course, the University of Puget Sound was what when you took over?

T: About 350 to 400.

O: Somewhere around 400, wasn't it?

T: There are just a little over 3,000 on the campus now and about 2,000 in the branches
so it has really grown.

O: Oh, the growth and the academic quality that has been built into it and recognized all over the United States has been something that you can take a lot of pride in.

T: It has been a great experience.

O: A great satisfaction.

T: Of course, I appreciated so much being able to sit down and talk with you from time to time. Talk to you about people who might be interested; about programs we might put in. Then I also remember with great joy the coming of the Hugh Wallace Memorial Swimming Pool. You did that and, by George, that was one of the great days. Tell me about Hugh Wallace.

O: Hugh Wallace was quite a character around here. The reason he was identified with our bank was because Mr. Haskell had been his private secretary and when he came into the bank, Mr. Wallace made an investment in it and was interested in it and then when Mr. Wallace died he founded this little Hugh C. Wallace Trust for charitable use, recommending that the income from it be used for good things for the city of Tacoma with particular favor to the Community Chest, and the trustees were three: Reverend Bell, and you remember him, undoubtedly.

T: Oh, yes, he was a precious.

O: Another was Mr. Haskell and the third was Alexander Bailey. When I came into the bank, Mr. Haskell got me to take his post on that Board of Trustees.

T: Bailey was the man who started the country club and Bell was the man who moved the church.

O: St. Lukes, wasn't it.

T: Yes.
O: Alexander Bailey, of course, with Balfour Guthrie and Company. He came over from Scotland and was quite a character. A wonderful old guy.

T: How much money was left in the trust?

O: It was kind of funny, actually. The trustees when Mr. Wallace died, I think it was in 1931, were left this little fund of $25,000, to be awarded as the three trustees decided. Those were days when you could be wrong about securities pretty easily—in the thirties—and they selected some railway bonds, some Missouri Pacific bonds, some intramural rapid transit New York City subway bonds and others; those were the securities. By the time that I got hold of this thing in 1936, they weren't worth anything approaching $25,000 but were worth about $10,000 or $11,000. I felt something should be done about it. Reverend Bell wasn't very experienced in this sort of thing but Mr. Bailey was and he was smart, so I talked to Mr. Bailey about it and finally he said, "What do you think we ought to do?" I said, "I think we ought to sell those things before they drop completely off the board. They are all turning sour, these railways and the New York subway system are lemons, and we should buy something else." He said, "What do you have in mind?" I said, "Well, Mr. Bailey, let's put the money in stocks that promise some good return—some growth." He said, "Do you have any in mind?" I said, "I have two in particular. Why don't we buy some Weyerhaeuser Timber and some General Insurance Company." Well, both of them, starting about 1936, we bought right at the bottom and they just skyrocketed. You remember; we were just lucky. It was a combination of a good guess and a change in the times. That's where we began to accumulate far more than Mr. Wallace
ever expected to have in the trust. So Mr. Bailey died and I got Clint Reynolds, you may remember him, of the transit company to replace him and then Reverend Bell died and we got Harold Long to replace him. When Mr. Reynolds died, we got another replacement in Dutton Hayward, and when Dr. Long died, Rich Odlin, my son, replaced him to sort of keep the accounts and keep track of things, and then when I retired from the bank, Bill Philip took my place, so they are now the trustees--Dutton, Richie and Bill.

T: They couldn't be finer. Wasn't Wallace an ambassador to France?

O: He was ambassador to France under the Harding administration. He was a good friend of Mr. Harding--President Harding; and his wife had been Mildred Fuller Wallace whose husband had been chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. So they were quite a prominent family.

T: I remember one time you were president of the United Way and I was making a report and I went to you and I said, "Reno, I have another meeting. Can I report early and leave early?" You said fine and just as we started, you said, "Frank, wait awhile; wait awhile." Do you remember that?

O: Yes. Is that when we built the pool?

T: Yes. Tell me about it?

O: Well, I got to thinking about it. We had decided to build a swimming pool out at our home, and in those days they didn't cost a fortune. They were expensive but not too, and we planned this thing and I got very intrigued with it and the way in which it was built--these steel frames and the spraying on concrete and all that sort of thing. I was just thinking about it one day, and we had accumulated considerable
amount in excess of what we had any reason to keep for the Wallace Trust and we decided that what should be done with the increase in the value of this thing would be to make some prominent gifts of some substantial value in the community that Mr. Wallace wanted to benefit by his Trust. Therefore, we ought to look around and see what we might possibly do. In connection with the swimming pool, I just got to thinking, after visiting with you one day, I wonder if Dr. Thompson would like to have a swimming pool. I believed we could finance it. So we got ahold of the fellow who built our pool and got some specifications and plans and prices and it ran into quite a bit of money, but nevertheless, we planned on doing as nearly as we could figure was an Olympic size pool, and you recall we went over the whole thing, and you had a little problem because we financed the pool but we didn't have a building to put it in--you had to get that.

T: I remember that as really great and I was perfectly willing to do it. You know, Reno, we would never have built that pool if it hadn't come to us the way you gave it to us.

O: That's right.

T: I mean...

O: You had so many other things in your plans--dormitories and additional classrooms, and everything, that this was just a plus.

T: Absolutely. It came at just the right time and we needed it so desperately, and I'll bet you that we have taught 15,000 youngsters to swim in that pool.

O: I think you have, and as a matter of fact, your swimming activity became quite an item in the college sports curriculum.

T: Yes, we have had two or three national championship teams and it has worked out so beautifully.
O: I have been delighted the way it went. And the beauty of it is that in those days they really built things—that pool is just as good as the day it was built.

T: Absolutely. And you people were kind enough, after 25 years, to redo the lighting.

O: Yes, we redid the lighting and some other things. As a matter of fact, we were getting kind of rich in those days and we had quite a bit of extra money that could be given to perpetuate Mr. Wallace's memory in the proper way here in Tacoma. We kept on being generous with the Community Chest. You may recall we also gave the University a big Steinway grand piano for your concert hall.

T: I remember how beautiful that was and we had a lot of fun on that one. Harold Long was involved in that, too.

O: That's right.

T: We discussed how much would a Steinway cost. Well, a Steinway would cost $8,000 and I remember you fellows, when we were talking about it, said, "Well, I think the President can get it for less than that." You set a target on it and I remember I went to Sherman Clay. There was also a man by the name of Sherman as a last name, and he had a piano, so we finally got it. He said he would contribute $900 toward it and we finally got it for $6,100. Do you know we still use that and it is the main piano for the recitals and for other things.

O: It was a beautiful instrument. They made wonderful instruments.

We had some other things that we were able to give. Dr. Long, for example, wanted to have a chapel built at the YMCA, so we put quite a bit of money in and built the chapel there for many years. I remember when my very good friend who was so
active in the boy scouts wanted to get a fleet of boats for the sea scouts--Bob Lloyd--
and we gave that to Bob Lloyd. We contributed a little hospital to Camp Seymour and
we did a lot of things like that.

T: I was very much interested in going through the new YMCA to see the little
chapel there given by the Hugh Wallace Trust.

O: Yes, there is. We gave Annie Wright some money; we gave Bellarmine some money
for Father Snearinger, who was a great guy.

T: He still is.

O: He is, indeed.

T: He has suffered with cancer, you know, but he is coming along fine. I took him to
lunch the other day and he said, "The Lord has given me a few extra years. I don't
know why or how but he has."

O: He had a broken thigh, one time, skiing, too, which was a bad accident.

T: He is a lot of fun and I would see him downtown and he would say, "Now, Franklin,
I'm working this side of the street today; you go over on the other side."

O: He was quite a fellow and he still is. I saw him out at a funeral the other day
and had a chance to say hello. I always called him John, and he is quite a fellow.
I wanted to talk to you about another man whom we held in highest regard and
affection--Roe Shaub.

O: Roe was a great fellow.

T: Roe was a man who had wide experience and at the same time awfully good
judgment. Roe was chairman of our Board, you know, after Will Kilworth. Will
in his last years was diabetic and he would doze off. I don't know whether he did
in your meetings.
O: He did very frequently. We had to rap on the table just to wake Will up every once in awhile.

T: Imagine, he was chairman of the Board and we'd discuss a thing; and he was as sincere as the day is long but his head would go down, down, down and all of sudden it would come up, and Roe would say, "Will, we have a motion and a second. I wonder if you would like to put it." Mrs. Kilworth came to me and said, "You know, Will can't really be your chairman any more because he is not able and not as mentally alert as he was because of his diabetic condition." I said, "We love him so much that we can't tell him that." She said, "Well, I can." So she did and I was awfully sorry because Will was so dedicated to the University. Then I sat down and talked with him and said, "Now, who do you think would be a good chairman?" He said, "I think Roe Shaub would." So Roe was chairman for a good many years.

Roe was also on your Board.

O: He was on our bank board. I selected him, one day, and asked him to serve. He added a great deal of character to anything he was associated with. He was a very fine man.

T: He had gone through Stanford, you know, and then he had been a fraternity man at Stanford, and then his three youngsters had gone through school and they had all been in the fraternity system.

O: Roe, for years, was one of our very active members. He was thoroughly interested in everything he ever had anything to do with, like he was with the University and like he was with the Bank, and he just wanted to know; he kept himself abreast of everything that was going on. Then, finally, when he retired
at the age of 72 to this little advisory board of directors that we had for retired
directors, he kept coming and finally he was stricken with that Parkinson's Disease,
you will recall, and he got that trembling, shakiness, and everybody loved Roe
Shaub so much it didn't make any difference but he was very self-conscious about it,
as you recall, and he just had to quit coming to meetings because he was so conscious
of that trouble.

T: He told me, "Franklin, it's hell when your mind is sharp but your body is gone."
O: Yet, he used to come down to the shop and sit around there and spend the day
helping people out, and Bea went down over and over again to have her winterized
tires put on and Roe would be there, and he'd say, "We'll take care of it for you."
T: I would go up to that little upper office he had, kind of dusty and plain, but he
would always be there and he'd say, "Now, Franklin, I'm going to give some money
to the University; I can't give very much." The last two or three times, he said,
"I can't sign this but I can make my X." God bless him, he was very, very sensitive
about...

O: It was very frustrating to him.

T: He had such a good spirit. He could sense things. I remember one time when
all universities were having their tensions, you know. We didn't have it too bad but
we had some. He called me about eight o'clock in the morning and said, "Are you
going to be in your office?" I told him yes and he said, "I'll be up about 9:30." I
wondered why my chairman of the board was coming to the office. So he sat down
and we visited and he said finally, "I have a little gift for you, Franklin." It was
all wrapped up and when I opened it, he said, "I want you to put that in that long
drawer right in front so you can just open the drawer and see this." Here it was:
Non Corburundim Bastardos--"don't let the bastards get you down!"

O: I remember that. That was one of the things he showed me and he told me about giving it to you.

T: I still have it and it is a very precious thing. He was, of course, a very steadying influence and I loved him very much. One of the other trustees that you knew very well, of course, was Harold Long.

O: Oh, yes, he was a very wonderful guy.

T: I always said when the Lord made him, he broke the mold and there was never another like him. Harold was a real great influence in the community and he was one of those fellows whose right hand never knew what the left hand was doing and visa versa.

O: That's right.

T: He did more honest-to-God good for people, Catholics, Protestant and everybody else than we could possibly ever know. You were identified with him on this Wallace Foundation, weren't you.

O: Oh, yes, he was one of the trustees for quite awhile.

T: He gave outstanding leadership?

O: Oh, yes, and he was always on the lookout for something that was worthy of a gift in memory of Mr. Wallace--that's the thing that a man like Mr. Wallace would have liked to have in the home town where he lived, dedicated to his memory. So we have done that. For instance, not too long ago, this Luvera book on the carving of totem poles. We had the Wallace Trust donate a totem pole carved by Paul Luvera to put in the native garden down at Point Defiance. It has a little plaque on it, given
in memory of Hugh C. Wallace, like the pool has. So we have kept his name before
the community in the way that I think he would have wanted.

T: It is a wonderful thing and it can go on and on and on.

O: Oh, sure.

T: One of the other trustees that you know so very well and I would like to talk to
you a little bit about is Gerrit Vander Ende. Gerrit has been one of the community
leaders and he has been on your Board, too.

O: Yes, he was, and he is still on our advisory board. And I've been on his board
at Pacific First for many years. We have had a long association and he is a remarkable
fellow. When he came up here, you may recall, he had been City Manager of Berkeley,
California, and he had been President of the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco,
which was then the bank of the Pacific Coast, a well known bank, and he was brought
up here by the committee who had charge of finding a replacement for Burt Buckmaster
who was not able to carry on. They got Gerrit up here and the growth of that insti-
tution has been kind of like ours. It has been tremendous.

T: Under Buckmaster, it had been pretty much of a family institution, hadn't it?

O: Well, there was a fellow named Lyle who had been president for quite a number
of years, and Buckmaster had been a director and one of the leading businessmen.
It wasn't a family-held thing in this sense, Frank, it was a mutual association.

T: Charlie Buckley was in it, too, wasn't he?

O: Yes, he was in it and one of the Tollefson boys was one of the officers in the
savings and loan, Ernie Messinger, whom you knew well and who died the other
day, was one of the top officers; Paul Reeves is still around. He was one of the
ones Van brought in. When he retired and became chairman of the executive
committee, he got Dewayne Kreager who is now president of the Association and
Chairman and it has become a billion dollar institution and it's a tremendous place.
T: Now, Vander Ende was from Holland. He was a self-educated man and had come
up through the ranks in the bank and I was tremendously interested in his breadth of
interest, for instance; everything from photography, opera, books, classical tradition,
and banking and history and political science.
O: That's right. And of course, he had been invited to serve in various countries
as adviser on home building and financing of homes, etc. I remember in particular
Ecuador. He spent quite a bit of time down there. I think he also went to Mexico a
number of times and I know that he went for the Building Society in England, Scotland
and Wales a great many times, and also to the Far East.
T: And particularly, too, in Holland, which is unusual.
O: Yes, he went back to Holland on numerous occasions. And his wife is a tremendously
interesting person. She galloped around the world with him on these trips—they went
through the Krueger National Park and all that sort of thing. I will never forget
his pictures. He just had hundreds of them.
T: I never shall forget when we were invited to the book club Christmas party and
he showed his pictures and one of the guests there had just been on this trip to Russia.
Poor Van would show pictures and the guest would say, "Oh, that's so and so," and Van didn't get a chance to tell about it.

O: He took one of those family-to-family tours, or something or other, to Russia.
T: He has been very much interested in the University, of course, and been very helpful, as Vice Chairman of the Board. I really count him as one of the outstanding trustees we have had.

O: He still is one of the really great guys and he's still very active. He and Mrs. Vander Ende go down South every year. They spend some time in their home in Santa Rosa and then they used to go up in the Sierras. They had a little camp up there and he used to love to go up there for a couple of weeks. He is a great naturalist.

T: I told him one time, "I understand that when you get up there in your camp the only way anyone can get to you is with the state patrol." He said, "Don't say that—say 'naturalist'".

O: I'm not sure it wasn't the state patrol, either, perhaps with a helicopter. It was way up there in the mountains.

T: That's what he said—they go up a long way. It has been wonderful having this association through the years while the bank was growing and the University of Puget Sound, too. Of course, both of us are now retired but it is fun to look back and contemplate the relationship and how precious it was. I always have had such great admiration for your leadership; not only were you president of the bank but you were president of the American Banking Association; you were leader of the savings bond drive for the whole nation a time or two.

O: Yes, I was chairman of it for 20 odd years.
T: This is only the beginning. There must be a dozen organizations to which you belong.

O: Yes. I was active and commander once of the American Legion, and I had been active in the early days of the USO when the second War broke out, and then I got into this treasury work and was chairman of the savings bond executive committee of the Treasury for 22 years—25 as a matter of fact as I have a little momento which you can see standing there. There haven't been very many given out—it is called the Distinguished Service Award, U. S. Treasury Department, which I got after 25 years.

T: As I recall, you once had political aspirations.

O: I had for a very short time. I didn't want to, either; that's the interesting thing about it. I had no ambition in that direction at all, but several of my friends in Seattle—Mr. Reed among others who was quite a political power in this State in his earlier days—he was Speaker of the House and all that sort of thing), Mr. Butler of Everett who was one of the people who was very important in the bank in Seattle, Mr. M. A. Arnold and some of the others—felt that somebody had to go out and be sort of a "burnt offering" in the 1934 campaign because poor Mr. Hoover, whom I greatly admired and always loved and got to know very well down in the Bohemian Club in San Francisco in later years... I ran against Louie Swellback who had been classmate of mine in college and as a matter of fact I had appointed him judge advocate of the American Legion when I was commander. We ran against each other and of course in those days the Republicans didn't get very many votes, so Louie gave me a beautiful trouncing but we both knew it was coming so it was no great disappointment. I told Mr. Arnold,
Mr. Butler, and Mr. Reed, "I'll go out and make the campaign and try to talk what I think is sense to the people and talk the right kind of story but I have no ambition to go on with this. I don't intend to make a life out of politics--I want to get back into banking and so I'll take it on and take the licking and be the 'burnt offering'. That's all right with me but I don't want to do anything beyond that."

T: I remember I was driving up to Ferndale one day to give a speech and up in a big tree there was a sign which read, "Vote for Reno Odlin."

O: It was made by one of the plywood companies, maybe it was Kilworth and Snyder's Plywood Company. They made some out of plywood.

T: I came back and saw you in the next day or two and I said, "Well, I'm going to vote for you. I saw the sign up in the tree near Ferndale."

Do you remember, Reno, any of the important people who visited the University?

O: Well, I remember when Lord Halifax was here and he got his degree and had given his speech and Mrs. Todd said, "I do think the ladies would like to hear from Mrs. Halifax." I thought it was awful funny.

T: I tell you it really threw me a curve. The story back of that was that I had had such a good time at Oxford that when I met the ambassador at a reception in Seattle I said, "Mrs. 'T' and I just loved every day in England and if we can ever do anything for England let us know." It wasn't too long before he invited me to lunch and said, "There is an anti-British feeling in this area and we would like to bring Lord and Lady Halifax here and can you set up a convocation?" Of course, we did and you remember Lord Halifax spoke to 27,000 ship workers and his son was sitting there with his legs both gone in the African campaign, and we had said that we could have this luncheon and get
him here, and of course Dr. and Mrs. Todd were very wonderful people but you never knew what was going to happen next. We were just ready to dismiss and she took that cane and hit it on the table—bang, bang—and said we want to hear from Mrs. Halifax. Finally, I said, "Mrs. Todd, bless you. We promised Lady Halifax that if she came we wouldn't ask her to speak." The old Doctor was a very dedicated person and a very wonderful person.

O: He was a great guy and of course, you know, we had another college here, Whitworth College. It was located right down where I used to live on Alki Street, right by the old Weyerhaeuser house. That was the campus of Whitworth. So we had the University of Puget Sound and the little Pacific Lutheran Academy and Whitworth College all here at the same time. Then Whitworth went over to Spokane.

T: Then, as you say, PLU developed and so did we. There was a time in our history when they wanted to have us unite with the University of Portland, then once with Willamette University; then, of course, there was one time at Port Townsend that they wanted us to go over there. It is an interesting history.

O: Of course, Portland, wasn't that a Jesuit school?

T: In the early days it wasn't, but it is now. I'm not sure about the details.

O: Well, you came here from Willamette, which incidently has done very well, too, hasn't it.

T: Yes, it has. It isn't as large numerically, but it has a good solid foundation and George Atkinson has given $8 million to Willamette. He had a chunk of real estate which was an island where the Willamette and the Columbia come together. He gave it to Willamette and they sold it and then he completely resigned from the Board because
he was getting along in years and felt he shouldn't be on anymore, but he told me,
"Franklin, I have given $8\frac{1}{2}$ million to Willamette and I think it is off to a good start
now." It is a good strong school.

O: Well, you have things to look back to. You had an awful lot of people around
here in Tacoma, to whom over a period of years you've quietly (and not so quietly
sometimes) suggested that maybe it would good idea for them to dig in a little bit
and they have been quite generous and you have built up kind of a nice endowment.
I've always been quite proud of the University as an institution here in this town
because you were one institution that stayed with a budget and kept within it and
made your books balance. It's been a fantastically good job.

T: That's right. In the 31 years, there was only one time when we didn't balance
and that was when the students went into the service all at once, but we had kind
of an unwritten formula that Kilworth and I worked out that the money we got by
bequest, and we got quite a bit of that, went into the endowment fund and the money
that we needed for buildings we raised in open solicitation. It's been a great ex­
perience and I'm on my 32 million now.

O: This is a rough job, of course, and people are so uncertain about the future,
right now, and so kind of puzzled about where we are going that they are pretty
careful.

T: One of the other people I wanted to talk to you about was Fred Karlen. Tell me
about him.

O: Fred is just fine. He is enjoying good health. As you know, Ann died a great
many years ago and Fred lived as a single man and two or three years ago he married Ruth who is a lovely person. He had known her down around Palm Springs where he had a home, as you know, and spent about half the year. They were together a great deal and just gradually decided that it made sense to be married. They live a good part of the year in Eldorado in Palm Springs. He comes back here and still has that apartment, same building that Van is in.

T: As a matter of fact, he told me he has to keep track of the number of nights he stays here...

O: He has to because otherwise he would be subject to California income tax.

T: Didn't he once own the Eatonville Lumber Company?

O: At one time, Eatonville was pretty much in the hands of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco who had to take it over when things went rather bad.

T: Had the Galbraiths' had it up till then?

O: They had had it and then the Federal Reserve was hooked with it and I was down on the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the Board authorized me to come up here and find somebody to make some kind of deal with and I got ahold of Karlen and finally managed to interest him in this. He had a good business, the Karlen-Davis Company, but I got him interested in taking over the management of Eatonville and just about that time the war came along and gave it a tremendous boost. Well, the Federal Reserve Bank had a bad loan which was made, thank heavens, by another bank and had had to charge it off and the Federal Reserve Bank had a loan which they set up 100% reserve for, over $500,000, and we made this arrangement whereby if Karlen could find some way to pay off that half million that was owing
the Federal Reserve, which became owner of the property, that he would then be able to buy or acquire the Eatonville Lumber Company for himself and his associates, which he did. The Eatonville Lumber Company during the war, of course, was a very profitable thing. They paid off every cent that was owing the Federal Reserve Bank--got every dime of it back--but it was too late to save the previous owners and the bank which had gotten into difficulties--and it was just in time to save the Federal Reserve Bank. Of course, the Federal Reserve Bank was a federal institution and they didn't pay the income tax, which made a tremendous difference in the days when income tax went up to 90%. So everything that was earned by the Company was free and clear of income tax so it was kind of easy to pay back that debt to the Federal Reserve. Then, Fred became the owner of it and he ran it until they just ran out of timber and there wasn't any more timber to be had.

T: Was the Karlen-Davis Company a lumber company?

O: It was a sales company but lumber brokerage in the Tacoma Building and it was an extremely successful business. Karlen was a very successful guy. There was a time when they think they sold more railway car material than any outfit in the country.

T: He has a wonderful personality.

O: He is a delightful guy.

T: He is one of the most precious people. He has a good sense of humor and one of the most handsome men you ever saw.

O: He is--still good-looking.

T: He must be 83.
O: I think he is about 83, maybe 84.

T: I got a birthday card for him--his birthday is either the 11th or the 12th--

O: He was a member of a distinguished group that you were also a member of--well he was associated with one of them --Fritz Metzger who was associated with him as his attorney--and a partner and one of those interested in Eatonville with Fred was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.

T: We used to have a lot of fun. Metzger would say, "Now, Doc, we will have those Canadian Rhodes Scholars down--I'll provide the drinks--you provide the program."  (laughter)

O: Metzger would not only provide the drinks but he'd have his share of them.

T: He could do it beautifully.

O: He did. Yes.

T: When Fred Karlen became 80, Nat Penrose who is kind of like a son to him...

O: Yes, Fred and Joshua Green had been very good friends in later years, as Mr. Green was mine.

T: I remember when you got that bill for $102...

O: Yes, we got the Treasury to give us the $102 bill for Joshua.

T: When Fred Karlen got to be 80, I said to Nat Penrose, let's do something for this fellow. He said, "What do you recommend?" I said, "Why don't we get some red roses and a five pound box of candy and go up and serenade him." It was on a Saturday, I remember, and I called his housekeeper the day before and told her we wanted to do this and she said he was going to be all that day in Seattle. I asked what time he was leaving and found out he was leaving about 8:00 or 8:30 so I told
her we would be there a little before that. So here was Penrose with the dozen red roses and I had the five pounds of candy and we buzzed and the housekeeper asked who it was and I said, "You know, we talked about this," but she said, "I have orders--I can't let anybody up until you identify yourself," so we identified ourselves and went up and Fred answered the door, and we sang Happy Birthday, and he said, "Come on in, you bastards. I never heard two people more off key in my life." (laughter)

O: He was and still is quite a guy. We were together the other night. We used to have a little group that played bridge together every Thursday night, years ago--Dr. Beech who was at Northern Pacific Hospital and Fred Karlen, Fritz Metzger and I and it was quite a little fun. We used meet at each other's homes and we always played until about 11:00 o'clock and then had a little crackers and cheese and broke up. We didn't play for high stakes--this was just a fun game. But we had a lot of fun playing bridge together, and Metzger was one of the characters--a real great guy. We had two other fellows whom we used to play with, both of whom were great lawyers, one of whom was an Oxford fellow who was there with Metzger, Frank Holman and the other was Al Schwppe who was also a great lawyer. Schwppe and I wrote the liquor bill. Martin appointed seven. Two of us are living. Martin appointed a commission of seven of us. Bob Evans who was a judge here in Tacoma was one of the three--Schwppe, Evans and I wrote the darn bill. The others were from around the State and they sat in but they didn't work on it much. We wrote it and it was copied and adopted by seventeen or eighteen other states as a model bill at that time. We had a lot of fun.

T: Thank you very much, Reno. This has been wonderful.

- End -

R. Franklin Thompson