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WEBB SCHOOL IN CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Thompson Webb

Interviewed by James V. Mink

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

Photograph courtesy of Thompson Webb, Jr.

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: October 24, 1887, in Bell Buckle, Tennessee.

Education: Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee; A.B., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Spouse: Vivian Howell; four children.

CAREER HISTORY:

Teacher, Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, 1918-22.

Founder and head of Webb School in Claremont, California, 1922-1962.

AFFILIATIONS:

Boys Republic, board of trustees

California Association of Independent Secondary Schools, board of directors.

California Educational Aid Foundation, board of directors.

California Junior Republic, board of directors.

Pilgrim Place, president, board of directors.

Scripps College, board of directors.

Webb School, Bell Buckle, Tennessee, board of directors.

AWARDS:

Honorary Doctor of Pedagogy, College of the Pacific.

Honorary LL.D., Occidental College.

Honorary LL.D., Pomona College.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: James V. Mink, university archivist and director, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., M.A., history, UCLA; B.L.S., University of California, Berkeley; certificate in archival administration and preservation, American University, Washington, D.C.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Webb School in Claremont, California.

Dates: August 3, September 9, 1969.

Time of day, length of sessions, total number of recording hours: The sessions went from late morning to early afternoon with a break for lunch. Each session included about three hours of conversation; a total of six hours was recorded.

Persons present during the interview: Webb and Mink; Vivian Webb, Webb's wife, was also present during the last session.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

The Webb interview is one of several interviews Mr. Mink has conducted with directors of private schools in California. Mink's questions were intended to give a picture of the Webb School and to provide information about other important schools. Tape I begins with a discussion of Webb's father, William R. Webb, founder of the well-known Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, and then moves chronologically through Thompson Webb's career. Tape II is organized by subject. The tape focuses on the school Webb founded in Claremont, California, but also includes information on the California Association of Independent Secondary Schools and a discussion of Webb's visit to private schools in England in the 1930s.

EDITING:

In July 1971, an edited transcript was sent to Webb for verifications and review. He decided that he did not want to complete the interview. After his death, however, his son, Thompson Webb, Jr., agreed to allow the Oral History Program to release the transcript.

Virginia Carew, assistant editor, edited the transcript. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings and edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Teresa Barnett, editor, prepared the index and front matter.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 3, 1969

MINK: You were born at Bell Buckle, Tennessee, on October 24, 1887, and I wonder, Mr. Webb, if you could tell me something about your family background first of all; and what it was like to grow up in a small town in Tennessee.

WEBB: You see, after the Civil War-- I just thought that will bring the story I'm telling you now up to date. Father [William R. Webb] finished the Bingham School. Amazing education those men gave even then. Southerners used to send their children to the public schools of England, you know. The Binghams were very educated people, and Father studied under them.

MINK: Where was the Bingham School located?

WEBB: It ended up at Asheville, North Carolina. But it was at what's known as The Oaks, ten miles from Chapel Hill. It's where my grandfather moved so his children could go to Bingham and then go to Chapel Hill. And Father was a sophomore at Chapel Hill when North Carolina seceded from the Union. Every student that day joined General Lee's army, just like that, wasn't a thing left. Father fought for four years and was wounded several times and captured, finally, put in a prison in the harbor of New York, in a prison on an island. In March, '65, of this year [1965], the **New Yorker** wrote a story of Father's escape from that prison by swimming the harbor of New York.

MINK: Do you remember what issue of the **New Yorker** that appeared in?

WEBB: March, I think, '65.

MINK: March of, that's 1965?

WEBB: Yes. It was a history of that prison; it's an old federal prison there. And the last paragraph (about that long) said, "Towards the end of the Civil War, the War of the States (whatever they call it), a Southern prisoner, by the name of William R. Webb, had been placed in this prison and escaped by swimming the harbor of New York. He later became United States Senator from Tennessee." That's all it says in that paragraph. But a hundred years later they recorded it. [laughter]

Now then, when Father got back to North Carolina, he was fortunate in getting a position to teach for Mr. Horner at Oxford, North Carolina. Horner had the only school going in North Carolina at the time.

MINK: What was this called?

WEBB: Horner School.

MINK: Horner School.

WEBB: And he had the children of the carpetbaggers. Southerners didn't have a penny after the war was over. The South was stripped. They couldn't send anybody there to school. But these Northern people came down there and they called them carpetbaggers in the South, you know. And

they had all the government positions and everything of that kind. And they had the money and their children were sent to Horner and Father taught for Horner for a year. During that time he was going over to [University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill--that wasn't far from Chapel Hill--and he continued his studies there until he got his A.B. and M.A. Then he wanted to start a school of his own, but he didn't want to compete with Mr. Horner, so he went over to Tennessee, about five hundred miles.

MINK: When did he decide to go to the Bell Buckle area in Tennessee?

WEBB: He went to Culleoka first.

MINK: Culleoka?

WEBB: Culleoka. He was offered the position of running the public schools of Culleoka. They had money for five weeks of school.

MINK: This would be about, what? Eighteen seventy, then?

WEBB: Eighteen seventy. And he couldn't charge money, nobody had money. They paid him in butter and eggs and chickens and pigs. The people lived that way and they boarded Father in their homes so their children could go to school. And the school was the basement of the church. Finally, this is an awfully fascinating story about that: how Father attracted attention and got brilliant students to come to him.

MINK: How did he do that?

WEBB: Well, it's a long story.

MINK: Go ahead.

WEBB: I'd like to come back to that. He began to have applications for boarders and no dormitories, but some big old Southern houses were in the town and there was a woman named Knott who had her son in Father's school. She either owned this home or she rented it so she could be there and put her son, Eldridge Knott, in Father's school. And she said she'd take the boarders. So they began to come there and what arrangements they made with her about paying for their board and all, I don't know. But this son of hers became a Methodist minister and was sent to California as a missionary to build churches. He built one in Pomona; it's not there now, but he built them all over Southern California.

MINK: What was his name?

WEBB: Eldridge Knott. There was a window in the church there dedicated to him when I came here, but the church was an old shack and disappeared. But he had a son by the name of Walter; you know the history there. Amazing place, I was over there last week, had lunch with Walter Knott. It's funny how these things tie up, isn't it?

MINK: Yes, it is.

WEBB: Well, Father kept going, and you wanted to know how he got the attention.

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: Well, Father was a great student at the University of North Carolina, and the president of the university taught mathematics and Father was his top student. Never failed to make a hundred on any examination. And Father called him Fatty Phillips behind his back, Dr. Phillips.

But after Father came home-- No, I'm on another story, but I'll go on and give it to you. After he came home, he said he got there with his uniform on, no shoes, no hat, no underclothes, just his Confederate uniform of homespun, and his mother put him to bed for a few days and worked on that suit until she cleaned it up, and that's all he had to wear. They had no stock on the plantation, they had nothing except the house. His sisters would go in the woods and gather roots and things to eat. And he was out there picking on the ground with a stick and dropping corn seeds in the ground, to make a crop. And a messenger came from the Horner School with a letter asking Father if he'd come and teach for him. Father went in and told his mother good-bye and struck out afoot, fifty or sixty miles afoot, to get to that school, and woke up Mr. Horner and told him he would like to do that; he was afraid somebody would beat him to that job.

So then he had that arrangement, but that Fatty Phillips plays again: After Father got over into Tennessee and began to teach over there, with no salary, no planning, just had a room somewhere, he was still interested in mathematics and he'd get ahold of books, and he said he'd start in and he'd work every example. If he hit a stumper, he'd stay with it until he worked it. He said he'd worked every example in a number of these books, until finally he ran across a surveying problem that stumped him; he said it took him four or five weeks to solve that. He'd sit up late at night and work at it and sometimes he'd be thinking, "I almost got it, but can't quite." One night he made up his mind that he was going to do it. He set up until four o'clock that morning just almost getting it, and then realizing he had to teach the next day, must get a nap, got on the bed, and suddenly he dreamed it. He just saw in his dream that if he drew a certain line he could divide it up into two figures that he understood. He jumped up, lit his candle, took his map, drew the line, and went back and got some sleep, went on next day teaching school.

Well, the mail was brought in two or three times a week by horseback to the grocery store, and when the night came for that mail to be there, all the neighbors would gather. It was pouring down rain, and there were a dozen

or so of them gathered in there waiting for the mail to come in. Out of the dark came a man, soaking wet, muddy all over, and he asked if Father was there. Father stepped forward. He gave Father his name. Father had heard of him all of his life as the greatest surveyor in the world. I'd say he was the greatest mathematician. All the country people would talk about this man who was a consultant to county surveyors.

MINK: What was his name?

WEBB: I can't remember; it may be in this book [**The Schoolmaker: Sawney Webb and The Bell Buckle Story**] that [Laurence] McMillin dug it up. Everybody he'd known all his life, talking about this great mathematician and what he could do. He said that was his fame. Father was stunned, just so glad to see that man. He said that he'd been working down in Mississippi on a surveying job and he'd found one that stumped him. Said first time he'd ever been stumped in his life. He worked on it and worked on it, and he couldn't get it. He said that this one fellow there from University of North Carolina said, "I bet you if you could find 'Sawney' Webb (that's his nickname), I bet he'd solve it. He's the greatest mathematician I ever knew." So he wrote to the university to get Sawney Webb's address and found out he was over there in Tennessee. He got on his horse and rode all the way from Mississippi up

to middle Tennessee, came in out of the rain and told Father that he'd been stumped and he'd heard he could do those sort of things. Father said he wanted to go through the floor. If this greatest mathematician in the world couldn't solve that problem, he knew he couldn't.

Well, the surveyor got out a rural map and spread it on the counter of the store like that, and there was Father's figure. This merchant had calico and things for sale and a yardstick, [so] Father reached for a yardstick, put it on the map and drew a line. "Of course," he said, "of course, I can work it now, I just never saw it." In only five minutes, just like that.

He asked Father, "What do I owe you?" Father said, "You don't owe me anything." But he said, "I get a nice figure for my work, and I think you're entitled to a good fee for this." Father said, "Oh, no, [if it had] taken any time I might charge you for it." [laughter]

The surveyor went back to Mississippi. And immediately, here came boys to board. They came from Georgia, they came from Louisiana, they came from Alabama, and North Carolina itself. From all over the South they came, because this surveyor who was thought of as the greatest mathematician of the world would tell all these local people he knew someone who could beat him. [laughter] Isn't that a funny story?

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: They began to come and crowd him, and so after a while he began to charge something if they could pay it, and if they couldn't, he wouldn't. I was his eighth child, born after eighteen years of marriage. He was charging three hundred dollars a year for board, tuition, and the laundry. He never charged more than that. I've known him to turn away seven hundred boys a year; he would only take two hundred. Many of them had become somewhat wealthy and prosperous in the South in those years when I was a young man, a student in his school. Well, if they didn't have the money, he took them anyhow and let them work on the farm--they had a farm in connection with the school--and milk cows.

MINK: May I interrupt just a minute, Mr. Webb? You said first of all, he didn't go to Bell Buckle--

WEBB: He went to Culleoka.

MINK: When did he go from Culleoka to Bell Buckle?

WEBB: Eighteen eighty-six or seven. He had seven children born in Culleoka and I was born shortly after he'd moved to Bell Buckle.

MINK: What made him decide to leave and go to Bell Buckle?

WEBB: Well, you'll have to read that book; it's a long story about that. He objected very much to people selling

liquor to his students. He fought the liquor interests, and they fought him and tried to kill him a number of times. And that made Culleoka a pretty unhappy place to be in, and this McMillin has gone into all of that.

And then Bell Buckle, where and how they got it, I don't know, in a town of about a thousand people, but they raised $13,000 for a school. They came to Father and they told him they had that and they'd like to build a plant if he'd move his school there; there weren't no other schools around. Things were unhappy at Culleoka in this fight with the liquor interests. So he told them that he'd come under one condition, and that would be that if they allowed him to spend the $13,000, that he would say how it should go: it's all going to the school. He made them sign the contract. He put $3,000 into buildings, $10,000 into the books in the library. An amazing thing. Made the town perfectly furious; they wanted some gorgeous school building to show off to the people that came, but he had the finest school library in the South for many years. And he made his boys study. Now one thing, he required four years of Latin and two of Greek. He thought that's the basis of learning. Mathematics, of course. You had to know your lesson, there wasn't any foolishness about it. If you didn't, look what's coming. [tape recorder off] The Latin and Greek were going to kill me, but that's what I'm teaching.

MINK: Were there many that did object?

WEBB: I don't know. There were some, of course. He was always full, always had two hundred boys. That's all he wanted. If we didn't know our lesson in the morning, we didn't go to the dormitory for lunch, or home for lunch. You didn't get your lunch; you stayed there and studied. If you didn't know it that afternoon, then you missed supper. Sometimes you had to come to night school.

MINK: That's the way it was when you were going to school there?

WEBB: Oh, yes. If he thought a boy was just trifling, he took a switch to him. Sometimes he'd get them just stubborn, you know, and trifling, and he'd wear them out. They'd come around.

Mrs. Elliott came down one time to talk about her boy, said to Father, "I understand, Mr. Webb, you use corporal punishment." He said, "Sometimes, Mrs. Elliott." She said, "Well, I don't believe in corporal punishment. I think that a switch is a relic of barbarism." He said, "Why, indeed it is and I only use it on the barbarians." [laughter]

We will have had the fifteenth Elliott in this school this fall. That conversation happened before I was born. That first boy was William Y[andell] Elliott, and then there were three brothers followed him and then they had

children and they've been coming to Bell Buckle and my school. William Y., Jr., became the professor of international law at Harvard University for forty years. He's just retired, has been the advisor on international law to four different presidents of the United States, very famous man in his field.

MINK: When you were going to the Bell Buckle school, besides the Greek and the Latin and the math, what else was on the basic core curriculum?

WEBB: Oh, we had English, composition, things of that kind, and we had opportunities at foreign languages, but the essential thing that classified you was where you were in Latin. You had to have four years of it before you left.

MINK: In other words, your standing in the class was where you were in Latin?

WEBB: Yes. He never promoted them unless you passed the subject, and if you were a beginner--he called it a ninth grader--you didn't pass your Latin, then you were a ninth grader next year. You had to get that. Everybody tried to pass, I can tell you, and most of them did.

MINK: Could you tell me what texts were used in Latin?

WEBB: Bingham's Latin grammar. Written by the Bingham that Father studied under.

MINK: This was for the first year?

WEBB: Yes. We had to learn that grammar by heart and the next year we were reading Caesar.

MINK: For that you had no text, you simply read the **Gallic Wars**?

WEBB: Oh yes, we had a little reader called **Gradatim**, little short fairy story things, you know, Mother Goose stories written in Latin. It was adapted to Bingham's Latin grammar. We'd have to parse it, tell what case it was, and decline the words and conjugate the verbs. We had to know it.

Oh, there are so many cute stories about Father. About the little boy who came in tears one day and said he just couldn't learn the Latin. Father said, "Why, son, the babies and children in Rome spoke Latin. When a boy would call his dog, he wouldn't say, 'Here, here, here.' He'd say, 'Sic, sic, sic.' And the dog understood Latin." [laughter] He built that thing up. He was an amazing person. I just wonder how much McMillin is going to get in this book of all these things.

MINK: Well, you were there, then, for four years in the school. What kind of an education did you have before you went into the school? When you were in a primary school.

WEBB: There was a woman in the community that trained children. Nobody knew anything much about it, but she would work with us, and we learned to read and write a few things.

MINK: How was it that your father didn't teach you; didn't he have time?

WEBB: Oh, he had two hundred secondary school boys that he was running, and he didn't have time to take care of the children. I was in very poor health personally. They took me out of school three different years on account of my health. Never was diagnosed. I think it was stomach ulcers. Nobody ever heard of that word "stomach ulcer" when I was a child. Well, I just couldn't hold my food and I suffered and was uncomfortable. They'd take me out, let me ram around, hunt, ride horses and things, and next year try it again. Finally I got through my junior year of school in fine shape and my work was all A. I was going to be twenty in October, twenty years old. I begged Father to let me go to college without waiting for the senior year. He said, "Well, if you can get in, go to it." So I went to the University of North Carolina and they took me on the "condition," what they called it. I had to carry the full load of every freshman plus three subjects that they required I hadn't had. And I had three years in which to do it. I had to carry a heavier load and I got to the university that way, but I often wish I'd had that senior year at home.

MINK: What was Chapel Hill like at that time? This would have been around 1910, 1908, '09, in there.

WEBB: I was there from '07 to '11.

MINK: 'Seven to '11?

WEBB: Well, I didn't really want to go to Chapel Hill. My friends were going to Vanderbilt and Sewanee [now known as University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee], nearby, or Princeton. I never heard of one of them going to North Carolina from Tennessee.

MINK: But your father had gone there?

WEBB: My father had gone there, and he wanted me to go there. I thought, oh, he's just nostalgic about his old college. I want to go somewhere where my friends are, a place that's known. Nobody'd ever heard of Chapel Hill.

My father had for the commencement speaker that year that I was finishing the junior year, a man by the name of Woodrow Wilson, who was president of Princeton. At the table after his morning address at commencement--Mother entertained him at lunch--he told Father, "I'm a graduate of the University of Virginia. And I tell you we in Virginia didn't think it was anything in North Carolina; we just paid no attention to it." And he said, "Well, it never occurred to me that the University of North Carolina was any good. But on this trip I gave lectures for one week at North Carolina and then one week at Virginia, and came here on my way home." He said, "I'm perfectly astounded. The University of North Carolina is head and

shoulders above all Southern institutions. I'd classify it as the only one in the South equal to Princeton." Well, when I heard him say that, that was different, that wasn't Father's prejudice. That was fine and I went to the University of North Carolina. When I graduated there in 1911, Governor Woodrow Wilson gave the address, so I heard him twice.

MINK: What was the commencement address at your father's school? What did he talk about? Do you remember?

WEBB: No.

MINK: I guess a boy doesn't remember a commencement address.

MINK: No. He was a very inspiring speaker and I cannot remember the one he made at Chapel Hill; I've got a copy of it in here and I've read it occasionally since. He was a great speaker. But Father brought that type of people to us. He brought the great thinkers.

MINK: You said that at one point your father was elected unanimously to the Senate of the United States. Could you say something about how this came about?

WEBB: Well, as I was saying to you, Father was a great speaker and very popular. He was continually being invited here, there, and yon to speak. He'd hold any audience wherever he went; if he got on a train, in fifteen minutes the people would just be crowded over talking to him. If

he went to a hotel and sat down in the lobby, somebody would spy him and come over there and everybody in the lobby would be-- Just one of those magnetic speakers, always interesting and quick. Now, let's see what I was trying to get--

He was so well known and he'd graduated so many great students that had gone all over the South. Well, one day, I believe he was seventy years of age, a senator from Tennessee, Senator Bob [Robert] Taylor, had died, leaving a couple years' expired term, I mean unfilled term. They couldn't have an election, but it was up to the state legislature to select a successor to fill that period. There were two popular politicians running for it, out canvassing, and begging the legislators to elect them, and so forth and so on. Everybody expected one of them to be elected. I don't remember whether Father was interested in one or the other or not. But anyhow they met and took the vote and it was a tie. And one of Father's students sitting there jumped up and nominated him by his nickname, Sawney Webb (his name was William Robert). You know, sure, they gave him the unanimous election. Settled it. The governor called Father up, said, "Mr. Webb, you've been elected to the Senate of the United States." [laughter]

Father said, "Don't try to joke me, what are you trying to get at?"

"No, you're a senator."

Father sat down, "I wonder what that governor's up to; you know I'm not a senator." That night headlines in big letters: "Sawney Webb in Senate." [laughter] He went up to Washington and filled out that term (have his picture here) and served his time. By that time I was out here.

MINK: You were out in California?

WEBB: Trying to start a school. I was trying to start a school, or was that my farming days? Those were my farming days. That was 1913. I came in 1911 to the desert and was there until 1918.

MINK: Well, when you graduated from Chapel Hill, what made you decide to come to California?

WEBB: Doctors.

MINK: Doctors?

WEBB: Doctors sent me for my health. They told Father to send me out West and make me live outdoors. I wanted to study medicine, but I was in such poor health. I'd worked too hard; was a terrific worker trying to get ahead with my studies.

MINK: What did you major in at the university, pre-medical?

WEBB: No, I didn't, I majored in English. I had some of every science--chemistry and physics and biology--and had a good deal of mathematics. I did not take foreign languages, except Latin and Greek; I just pursued them.

Could do that at home, but it was easier to do it there. But the doctor said, "Go West and live outdoors."

MINK: Do you remember any of the distinguished faculty at the university at that time? Do any of them stick in your mind?

WEBB: My English professors were Edwin Mims, and Ed [Edward Kidder] Graham (he became president of the university subsequently), and Alphonso Smith. We considered those the three giants in English in the South at the time and they were inspiring people.

MINK: What did Alphonso Smith look like?

WEBB: Rather a fat sort of a man.

MINK: Were they good lecturers?

WEBB: Oh yes. Very inspiring people. Ed Graham was the greatest of teachers of editorial writing; that's what we tried to do. He tried to have us do a lot of writing, and I wanted that course and I took it. He subsequently became the president of the university. One of the funniest things happened while he was president. I don't know whether you want me to go into it. He invited President [William Howard] Taft down to lecture to the college and take an honorary degree, and of course he had to, for the occasion, invite all the senators and congressmen and governors and so forth [laughter] of North Carolina to hear the president of the United States. And after the talk,

his wife gave a dinner to these distinguished people at the president's home.

They had a little son there about seven, Sonny they called him, and his mother said to Sonny that he could come in and meet the president of the United States, but he would have to eat in the kitchen, there wasn't any room at the table. So Sonny came in and met Mr. Taft and Taft took a liking to him, patted him on the back, and then, "Sonny, I want you to sit right next to me at the table."

"No," he says, "I have to sit in the kitchen."

Taft turned to Mrs. Graham, "Can't you just work a chair in here close to me? I'd like Sonny with me."

So Sonny won. Then they all went in and took their places at the table, and about that time this black waiter in a white uniform came in with a steaming turkey, you know, through the door and everybody was quiet, looking at this beautiful turkey. Sonny spoke up and said, "Lize says that's the lousiest turkey she ever picked." [laughter] Everybody just howled and it broke the ice and they had a wonderful dinner, everybody had a good time from then on. Formalities were broken. I've never forgotten that story about Sonny.

MINK: Well, after you graduated from the University of North Carolina, you went back to Tennessee, before you came out to California, right?

WEBB: No. Of course I went on a visit, but I was sent out here right away for my health. So I came out to the Salton Sea business. They had struck water in wells. The Southern Pacific dug a well down there at Mecca that flowed.

MINK: Artesian well.

WEBB: The farmers began to come and take up the land, and they could homestead. I thought I was going to homestead. And I got there, all the land in reach of water had been homesteaded, except the Southern Pacific owned every other section, you know, when they built the railroad. There was a strip ten miles wide, and every other section belonged to the railroad and they were selling that land very cheaply, at 10 percent a year. You'd start in, if it was five dollars an acre, you'd pay them fifty cents a year for ten years. But I couldn't get a homestead, so I rented a house and cooked for myself and lived there in the desert, pretty primitive. No roads, no electricity, no telephone, except maybe one in the village. And hot, boy, you couldn't have ice. I cooked for myself, and pretty soon I got to feeling [so] much better, I'd hire out, make a little money. When the farmers needed help they hired Mexicans and Indians, and sometimes I'd get a job. Finally I sat down on some of that land. I got interested in learning how to irrigate

it; we didn't irrigate in Tennessee, you know. Felt I could make more money with my own crop than I could hired out.

MINK: What was the major crop, alfalfa?

WEBB: Oh, they raised vegetables. Some alfalfa, but that didn't pay like cantaloupes and onions and things of that kind. I farmed there seven years, I guess it was. Made some money each year and I put it down on land. I acquired several hundred acres of that land that I was paying on. In the summertime after my crops were sold, it would be pretty hot. I'd go up to Los Angeles, stay at the YMCA and rest up, cool off a little, vacation--

MINK: Where approximately, where was your spread?

WEBB: Thermal.

MINK: Was it in Thermal?

WEBB: Yes, that's sort of central. I had got a dollar and bought at the time what I thought was the best buy.

MINK: All your land wasn't in one spot then?

WEBB: No. I'd been brought up a Methodist, so on Sundays I went to the Methodist church. The preacher and his wife were awfully nice to me a couple of years. This is a poor country boy coming in, lonesome in the city, and they were nice to me. I never heard him mention anything about having any children, but a couple years later, I got there and their daughter had come home from college. You've just

met her. We've been married fifty-four years. She didn't know much about going down to that farm, but we went. And I became strong and healthy, I felt. But when the First World War came, everybody was leaving, and you couldn't sell land, nobody would give you a dollar for the land in the excitement of war. All that was going on, but I had these obligations to keep paying the money or I'd lose all that I'd already put in. So I borrowed some money, five thousand dollars, from the bank and put in a big crop. The government refused to take me. I offered myself. The draft board turned me down on my record. So I put in a big crop; I was really going to do something.

MINK: Vegetables?

WEBB: Onions, mainly. They were the best-paying things. A disease hit my crop, a complete failure. I lost everything.

MINK: Including the five thousand dollars.

WEBB: You bet. I owed fifteen thousand dollars, counting what I owed on that land and this five thousand at the bank, and I couldn't pay a penny of it. I went back to the banker. The bank was at Banning, fifty miles away, the only one near us, and told him what had happened. He said, "What [are] you going to do?"

I said, "What are you going to do?" [laughter]

He said, "You're worried about me and I'm worried about you."

By that time I'd married and had two children. He said, "You've got those two babies down there and a wife to support. You haven't any money in the bank and I can't lend you any more; this is a fifty thousand dollar bank and we can't lend more than five thousand to anybody." [laughter]

And I said, "I'm going up to Los Angeles and get a job."

"Got anything in sight?"

And I said, "No."

"Well, boy, what are you going to do if you need a little money for those children?"

And I said, "I don't know. I think I'll work it out."

He said, "I can't lend you any more money, but you just check on your account and I'll take your checks up personally." Now I never heard of a banker like that before. Anyway, it did something to me; it made me just go out; I felt so thrilled that anybody had that kind of faith in me. I never drew on him and in several years I had him paid off. But that's quite a story about the paying off of those things. I got a job in the shipyards.

MINK: In San Pedro?

WEBB: Uh-huh. Go down there in the early morning, work as a bolter up, and the union began to tell me I was working too hard.

And I said, "I intend to turn out these bolts, we're in war."

"Oh well, don't work so hard, take it easy."

And I'd just go on bolting up, bolting up, and the straw boss would come and say, "Let up, don't do so much."

And I'd say, "No, I'm going to work conscientiously."

Finally he took me down under the ship, drew a chalk line around a dozen holes that needed bolting up and he said, "Now that's your day's work, don't you get out of there."

And I had it done in twenty minutes and I sat down in the sand under the boat. He came down after an hour or so, "What are you doing sitting there? Don't you know that the inspector would give me hell if he caught you sitting down."

I said, "He ought to."

"Get up and go to work."

And I said, "I've done my day's work and I'm resting. What do you want me to do?"

"Take them off and do them again."

I said, "I won't do it."

Then he said, "You're fired."

So I took my tools and checked them in and went home, nothing in sight. Didn't know what I was going to do. Got there, here was a telegram from Rayford W. Alley in Washington, D. C., the head of the War Trade Board [assistant director, Bureau of Imports, War Trade Board], offering me a position in the War Trade Board for a three thousand dollar salary.

MINK: How did that happen to come to you, do you know?

WEBB: Well, he and I were schoolmates.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: He lived at the farm next to us, and we grew up together.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: He plays quite a part in the founding of this school, too. So I wrote Father that I had this offer and was going to do this. I hadn't told Father about losing anything, my troubles. I didn't mention that to him.

MINK: Not even your trouble down on the farm?

WEBB: Oh, no. No, I knew that he had enough troubles, never had any money much.

MINK: Yeah.

WEBB: I wasn't going to worry him.

MINK: Sure.

WEBB: But when we decided to come back to Washington, I wrote him about this and that I was going to stop in Bell

Buckle to see him, bring the family with me. He hadn't seen the children. He wired me at once and said, "All my men teachers have gone to war, I can get women; I've got two hundred boys and I need some man help. You stop with me, and you can't live on three thousand in Washington; I've just been there. It's not cheap. Couldn't get a house for that." So that's where I went and began teaching for him. I was with him for a year.

MINK: Now you said when he was elected to the Senate, he was seventy years old, right?

WEBB: I was guessing.

MINK: Yeah. When did he retire or did he ever retire? Did he just keep on with his school?

WEBB: Well, my oldest brother came there and began to take over the business of the school and run it, and just gradually Father sort of stepped back. He would always come up every morning to chapel and have prayers with us. School started with a fifteen-minute prayer, sometimes. Sometime if he was excited, he'd talk for a few hours. [laughter] He'd come up, get the Bible, read something to the boys, talk to them for a few minutes, have a prayer and they went to work. He always did that. He died at eighty-four. But he kept that up. Now the last year I was with him, the young teachers would come up and sit at the back of the stage and then Father would go out to the buckboard

and get the Bible and read this thing and start the school. Well, I'd taken my seat in the back but Carl and my older brother were coming in talking about something, and Father went over towards the buckboard and I looked up and there was a great big horned owl about that high sitting on the Bible. I thought he was a pet, I mean, a stuffed owl, but then he kind of jerked his head. [laughter] Then I realized that some kid had played a joke on Father. He probably had this pet owl and he thought he'd see what he could do with it. But I couldn't get to him; I'd have knocked him off. Father was turning to the owl and he was talking to Will and he wasn't looking and he put his hand out and put it on the owl. "Why, boys, the bird of wisdom's in the right place this morning." [laughter] He turned to that chapter in Proverbs, "Get wisdom, get understanding." He read that and talked to the boys on wisdom. Told them about the goddess of wisdom. The Romans thought it was Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, and the owl was sacred to her. You could have heard a pin drop. He was like that. He just took it; I'd have had a fit if some kid played a joke on me like that, but he just turned it to his advantage. [laughter]

MINK: I was wondering, to introduce a question here, which is perhaps a little out of the stream of what we're talking about but I wondered, as you describe him, he reminds me so

much of what I would have thought Paul Jordan-Smith would have been like when he was teaching and had his school in Missouri. Did your father know him?

WEBB: I don't know, but I did. I knew him out here. In fact, I've had dinner with him in his home.

MINK: He lived of course in Claremont.

WEBB: Yes. They had the rock house down there.

MINK: And he again, of course, like your father, was a very dynamic speaker--

WEBB: Oh, he was.

MINK: --a very magnetic personality. Is, I should say.

WEBB: I never thought of him as in any way comparable, but they would have loved each other. They would have had a great time together.

MINK: Well, you decided then to not take the job in Washington, but to remain--

WEBB: To help Father out. He said, "You've got to help me save the family enterprise, I can't get men teachers." I didn't want to teach, I'd grown up in this thing and it was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do.

MINK: This would then be your first teaching experience, actually, wouldn't it?

WEBB: Well, no, not exactly. Now that summer that Woodrow Wilson gave the commencement address and I had finished my junior year in Father's school and was twenty years old,

there were ten boys who wanted summer work in Latin, to make up their Latin. If they could get ahead a year in Latin, they'd be ahead a year in school, graduate sooner. And Father always had some teachers that would tutor them during the summer. Not one wanted to tutor them. Father was so worried, he didn't know where he could get a teacher to help those boys and I said, "Father, I can teach them."

"All right, he said, "we'll see if that's satisfactory to them." And it was.

It's very hot in Bell Buckle. Thirty miles from us were the Cumberland Mountains where it was lovely. So Father let me take a farm wagon and a couple of mules, bought some tents and some cots and took a colored man that cooked. We had a day's trip up into the mountains and then sent the wagon home. Put up our tents on the Kingapaw River up there. We'd tutor all morning long and then in the afternoon we'd swim and fish, boat, whatever we'd want to do. I tutored those boys every summer from then on, I tutored. That was before I went to college. And I tutored the summer after I went to college; it made five summers. I ran that summer camp and got it up to where I had ninety boys and I had several teachers helping me, too.

MINK: You really, you were the one that had the idea to start the summer camp?

WEBB: Well, yes, more or less. There'd been some other teachers that had made an attempt sometime.

MINK: Oh, before this, on a regular basis?

WEBB: No, not a regular basis. They'd cook up something quickly and do it like that for the summer. So after my experiences out here in farming and I went back to help Father, I started the camp again. I ran that camp for that five summers and the four summers I taught for Father. But I hadn't wanted to be a teacher with school problems, but when I got there as his assistant and being a teacher, not a tutor, it was a very different thing and I became quite inspired and I loved to see these little boys wake up and get going.

MINK: What were you teaching, Latin and Greek?

WEBB: Well, the Greek didn't come until the junior year. Latin, yes. I taught Latin and mathematics and English and history.

MINK: How many students were there then, about two hundred as before?

WEBB: No, he held it to two hundred, didn't have accommodations for more.

MINK: So you taught then for how many years?

WEBB: Taught for four years for Father.

MINK: What made you decide to come out to California again, to return to California?

WEBB: Well, you'll find it all in that tape. Well, when I went back there, I wasn't going to tell Father I owed fifteen thousand dollars and had nothing to show for it. Father had brought us up not to borrow money. Oh, boy, he was serious about that.

MINK: He probably would have been sore if he'd known that you had borrowed the five thousand.

WEBB: Oh, I bet he would. He'd talk to us all the time in the family, "Now, children, don't borrow money; don't borrow money. Now look at this note: It says, 'I promise to pay so many dollars at such a rate of interest in such a time.' Three promises. Time is just as much a promise as the money. A man of honor keeps his promises. I'm always afraid I can't meet it on time. I just don't borrow money if I can get out of it. Now don't go borrowing money." And he was stern; when he said those things he meant it. I wasn't going back there and tell him that I owed fifteen thousand dollars. [laughter] I was scared to death of Father. Adored him, but [when] I was a young child, I knew how stern he could be. So he paid me the best salary he could; he couldn't pay much at that little tuition he was charging.

MINK: But he did pay you more than the three thousand you would have gotten in Washington?

WEBB: Well, he gave me a house to live in and paid me a hundred dollars a month. Now that's just it exactly. It wasn't as much as three thousand, but then--

MINK: But there you could live on that.

WEBB: We could live on that and I could pay my interest on these debts out here sometimes. And when I couldn't pay it all, then I went to the bank in Bell Buckle and borrowed a little money and I sent the money on time. He'd always said a man of honor kept his promises. I kept mine.

MINK: Did he know that you borrowed the money out here?

WEBB: Oh, no.

MINK: He didn't?

WEBB: No, sir. I wouldn't dare tell him, and I didn't know what in the dickens I was going to do.

MINK: The way you think of a small town, like that was, that if you went and borrowed money everybody in town would know about it.

WEBB: I don't know what everybody knew; I didn't tell Father. Well, in three and a half years, I guess it was, Father's teachers were coming back and I wasn't needed. My fifteen thousand dollars had gone to twenty thousand. I was borrowing money to pay interest. That was a very desperate situation. Then I got a letter from Mr. [Sherman] Thacher of the Thacher School up here in Ojai. Do you know that school?

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: This was the old gentleman that founded it and owned it. He and Father belonged to the Headmasters Association. They were both classicists and believed in that kind of thing, admired each other. But there was this difference: Father had the cheapest boarding school in America and Thacher had the highest-priced one. Everybody knew Thacher School, top-price school of America, at least that's what we thought and heard about always, because they had about sixty boys, charged them a whole lot of money.

MINK: Was Thacher thought to be more expensive than, oh, Groton, Kent?

WEBB: Oh, yes.

MINK: All those New England--Exeter, Andover?

WEBB: Thacher's was the top-price school in America.

MINK: Were they considered so in terms of the education that you got for your investment?

WEBB: I can't tell you that, but I'd often heard the talk about the high prices that Thacher charged. So I got a letter from Mr. Thacher.

MINK: Through your father's connection, then?

WEBB: I had met him when I was out here in California, friends had taken me to him and he knew my father. A very delightful man. I don't know why he thought of me. I guess I do, too. I wrote Mr. Thacher before I left Bell

Buckle and asked him for a position to teach for him out here in California.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: And he accepted it and said that he would like to have a personal interview before school started, so when I got to California to get in touch with him. I brought my wife and children to Long Beach where her father was a minister at that time and made my appointment to see Mr. Thacher. We were expecting our third son any minute. I went up on the night train and when I came to Mr. Thacher's door, knocked, he came to the door and handed me a telegram. "Mr. Webb, I didn't know you were a married man, this is a telegram from your wife." I had the telegram, she's telephoned, that would mean she was all right. "I didn't know you were a married man, and I haven't any place for a married man."

MINK: Oh.

WEBB: And I begged him. I said, "Mr. Thacher, I'm authorized to teach."

But he said, "The only thing I have open is a dormitory for boys and there was one room there for a teacher and that's where I'd have to put you."

I said, "If I have to, I'd be willing to do that for five days of the week if I might spend the weekend with my family."

"No, Mr. Webb, it isn't practical. I'm very much embarrassed about this. I'm sorry, but I can't take you."

Well, I just wanted to go off and cry.

MINK: Considering what you were up against.

WEBB: I was in trouble and I tried to get away from him and he said, "There's not another train until tonight. Have you ever seen the university?"

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: This was at Berkeley. That's what he asked me.

MINK: Oh, oh, yes, I see.

WEBB: "Have you ever seen the university?"

And I said, "No."

"Well," he said, "I'm going to show you the University of California. I insist on entertaining you today. This is the least I ought to do. I'm not going to let you just go down to the depot and wait for the train. Now you come on with me." We went over there and one of the first things he took me to was the library. And I'm trying to think of the librarian's name.

MINK: Leupp. It would be either Powell or [Harold L.] Leupp.

WEBB: Leupp. He introduced me to Leupp and they took me through this great library. It never occurred to me that I'd teach Leupp's sons, but I did. [laughter]

MINK: Very difficult man, Mr. Leupp.

WEBB: Some of the kids were, too. Then we got to that little stone bridge on the campus, that has a Latin inscription, something about "This bridge--"

MINK: Yes, that's down in the Faculty Glade there, across Strawberry Creek.

WEBB: And there was a little funny thing; one letter was messed up. Mr. Thacher had me look at it. He said, "Can you see that a mistake was made in Latin and they had to correct it?" And I did. They'd said, "hoc pontem" for "this bridge," and **pontem** was masculine by exception; it should have been "hunc pontem."

I told him, and gave him the rule from Bingham's Latin grammar on **pontem** being masculine by exception. I think that's what won him [over], because I knew some Latin. Anyhow--

MINK: Mr. Webb, it never occurred to me that the Thacher School was located in Berkeley.

WEBB: It wasn't.

MINK: Well, how is it that you--did you go up from Thacher School with Mr. Thacher?

WEBB: When I got to California and took it up with Mr. Thacher, he wrote me that "I'm here staying in my sister's home in Berkeley."

MINK: Oh, he was up in Berkeley, not at the school.

WEBB: No.

MINK: Oh, I see.

WEBB: And he said, "I'll be leaving for Honolulu on such and such a date; I'd like you to come the day before."

MINK: I see. Well, go on with your story about the bridge.

WEBB: Anyhow, I pointed it out to him that I knew what that mistake was so that impressed him; he thought I knew some Latin.

So I was back there, in the spring of the year, and here came a letter from Mr. Thacher saying that he was turning away dozens and dozens of boys, just couldn't even begin to take care of them. There was a need of another school of his type in California with enough to see me started.

MINK: Meanwhile, what had you done? Had you gone back to Long Beach?

WEBB: Oh, I went home.

MINK: You went back to--

WEBB: I went back to Bell Buckle and taught another year.

MINK: Oh, you went back and taught another year. I see.

WEBB: Now, the reason I wanted to teach for Thacher-- Father had said to me, "Son, if something should happen to your older brother, I'm too old to run the school; I want you to carry it on." My brother said to me next day, "Father's getting pretty old and if something should happen to him, I want you to be my partner."

Well, I was just teaching little kids. I didn't admit people, I knew nothing about administration and I knew I never would learn it at home in the family. So I applied to Mr. Thacher to get out of my family where I could learn something about running a school if I was going to have to run one. That was all in the back of my mind.

Anyhow, he wrote me this letter saying there was need of another school in California and he'd love to see me start it. He said, "I will refer my overflow to you if you will."

That was exciting. It never occurred to me I could ever pay this twenty thousand dollars as a schoolteacher. I'd been writing to all kinds of people trying to get a job that'd pay me well, and I couldn't get one. Then this comes in. Then he said he'd been to Pomona College and they had taken him three miles out in the orange groves and showed him a deserted school that was for sale, said, "They are pretty good buildings, bad shape right now, but I understand that they're eager to sell it and will sell it at a bargain. And I'd suggest to you that you write to a Mr. Bockman, an agent in Pomona, and see if you could get the use of that school, and if you can then maybe I can send you some pupils." Well, it seemed that a Dr. Winifred Garrison, University of Chicago, had come out here, a preacher teaching theology back there, and thought he'd

start a boys school. And he borrowed a whole lot of money, bought twenty acres of land, just sagebrush, and put up three buildings, and then he couldn't get the boys.

MINK: Do you have any idea when that was, approximately?

WEBB: Before '22, it must have been--

MINK: Right after World War I?

WEBB: Yes, I was back at Bell Buckle. When he couldn't pay his debts and so on, he just said to the bankers that lent him the money, "I'm going back to Chicago," and left it, "take it over." And they wanted to sell it. So it hit me as funny: how could I buy land when I owed twenty thousand dollars and didn't have a hundred dollars in the bank, but I wrote Mr. Bockman to know--

MINK: Had you by this time managed to pay off?

WEBB: No, I was just getting more and more in debt.

MINK: Still getting more and more--

WEBB: I borrowed fifteen thousand and owed twenty thousand. Now this thing comes up. I wrote Mr. Bockman and he came back saying the place had cost a great deal of money, he didn't say how much, but he said, "We want to close it up and get done with it and we're offering it at a fraction of what it cost us. You may have it for forty thousand dollars, half cash."

MINK: Half cash?

WEBB: Yes. [laughter] As I tell my story I'm afraid to say it, but when my wife and I read that we had what Uncle Remus called the dry grins. [laughter] You know that Uncle Remus story? It was so silly. We didn't even talk about it. Then one morning I got an inspiration and I sat down and wrote to Mr. Bockman and told him the honest truth: that I had no money in the world, in fact, I was in debt. But I was born and reared in a boys school, had been teaching in one, thought I know how to run it and Mr. Thacher said he'd help me. I said if there's any way in the world that I could get hold of that property on ten years' terms, for instance, with no stated payments, I can get the school on its feet, I think I can make it pay for itself principal and interest. If you will give me a contract like that, but don't say any stated payment, because I can't tell you when I'm going to pay it. I didn't expect to hear from him anymore. After we had been here two years and cleaned up the property, there it is. Those are the buildings.

MINK: Now this was taken in 1924?

WEBB: I didn't take them when I first came, I was ashamed of the place; it was just sagebrush and windows and doors knocked out. I wish I had a picture of it as I saw it, but after we had cleaned it up and felt pretty proud about that, I let the photographer take that picture. From that we went on.

Well, I refinanced at the end of three years and paid off the whole thing. But I still owed money, and the first year, that first summer, I visited all sort of prospects trying to find boys. I ran an advertisement in the **Los Angeles Times**, got lots of letters. Finally, nobody would come until they find out how many pupils I had, how many boys had enrolled. Well, I hadn't any but expect to have twenty. Well, when you get the rest of them, come back. Now this fellow Rayford W. Alley that I spoke of that had offered me a job in Washington, that last year I was at Bell Buckle, came home on a visit and he was all dressed up in his fine clothes; he [was] practicing law in New York. I hadn't seen him in fourteen years. I went to the University of North Carolina, he went to Washington and Lee [University, Lexington, Virginia], and then I came to California and he went to Columbia Law [School], graduated top man in his class in Columbia, with law firms grabbing for him. He got into a big firm. He came back to see the old people at Bell Buckle. He just walked with that air of success. I was awfully glad to see old Rayford and invited him to come around and have supper with us and meet my wife and children and he did. He sat there talking to me and he told me about his practice in New York, how he had a case for J. P. Morgan against Hetty Green. [laughter] The Vanderbilts, another one of the big names. He just spieled

all these big financial names I'd heard of all my life. He knew them all by heart; it was fascinating. Talked to nearly midnight and he finally said, "I don't want to seem immodest, but we've been friends so long, I think you'd be interested to know that I'm netting over $75,000 a year on my law practice." Oh, my, that sounded pretty nice. Talked on a little while and then he said, "I'm looking for good investments." That struck me, too. But I said nothing about this fool letter I had written Mr. Bockman. Took him five weeks to answer that letter, but he finally came back saying that there were nineteen people interested in that debt up here and that they'd pooled it into one, and he'd had to see every one of them, some of them on vacation and things, but finally they all agreed that, "Well, we can't sell it anyhow, nobody buys a school; let's see what that fellow can do with it." So he says, "We're ready to execute our contract."

Rayford had gone back to New York when I got that letter. I told my wife, "I'm going up to New York and get Rayford to back me; he's looking for good investments." [laughter]

She said, "Can't you write him? It costs so much money to go to New York."

I said, "But Sweetheart, he would come back with a lot of questions and I'd have to write him again, then it'd be

a lot more questions. This thing could go on all summer. I got to get out there and start this thing. I can't fool around that way." So I went to the bank in Bell Buckle and borrowed the money and went to New York. It took me several days to convince him, but he finally agreed that he'd back me for thirty thousand dollars, ten thousand a year for three years. That was fine. I could see my way, I thought. Then he said that J. P. Morgan was sending him out here on a law case and he'd take a look at the property, see if he could work out a contract.

In July of '22, he wired me, Western Union, "Come at once; we've closed the deal." From Claremont. I was up at the summer camp and arranged with my brother-in-law to carry it on and leaving. Father had gone, my brother had gone on vacation, no Webbs in Bell Buckle. I didn't dare tell the bank in Bell Buckle I was leaving town, [laughter] I owed them so much money. We put on a sale and sold our stove and beds and refrigerators and so forth and got enough money to bring my wife and three children to Claremont by train. She had written a friend who came and met us, and she knew where Mr. Bockman lived and took me down there, introduced me to him, and he said, "Yes, Mr. Webb, here's the contract signed by Mr. Alley, your agent. Here are the keys, take over. You know where it is and this lady said she knew."

I said, "Where's Mr. Alley?"

"Well, I don't know."

I said, "Didn't he give you any address while he was in California?"

"No, he didn't leave me any address."

I said, "Did he leave you any money for me?"

"No, I haven't seen any money."

So we went to Western Union, wired Alley at his office, figured his secretary would know where he was, to send us ten thousand at once, we needed it, we were here. Then we drove up here and this place just looked like sin. It was all sagebrush, wasn't a tree growing here.

MINK: Rocks and sagebrush.

WEBB: Yeah, they'd farmed it in beans or something, plowed it over on the big old hillside and the rains had made gullies in it. The buildings, vandals had knocked out windows and doors, and this and that and the other. One of my teachers once told me, he'd heard me tell his story, "Mr. Webb, I guess I ought to confess that when I was a little boy, I was one of those vandals." [laughter] Anyhow, we didn't have any money to go to the hotel; we camped out here. There was a tree on the border here that we camped under. And my neighbor, still lives down there, gave me water, lent me buckets and I'd tote it up here. We had no facilities for water, electricity, anything. I was

hoping I'd get this money from Alley. Well, I went to work cleaning up one of the apartments so I could move my wife and children in there.

I scrubbed and worked on it a couple days and then here came a telegram from Alley's secretary in New York. She didn't know where he was and had no authority to send me any money. Well, that was embarrassing. I expected Mr. Thacher's big customers would show up here and see what a mess it was. I wanted to get the place in order, the best I could. So I walked three miles to Claremont, dropped in on the only bank there, the First National in those days, and met Mr. Belcher, the cashier. Had a nice talk with him about the school, what we were going to do, and told him I wanted to do my banking with him. He was delighted to have my account, he said. [laughter] So then I explained to him about Mr. Alley and the ten thousand and I said, "Right now I'm just so short of money I don't know what to do and I've got to get the place cleaned up before Mr. Thacher's people begin to come here and I need some money badly. Could you lend me five hundred dollars for a few days?" He seemed sort of surprised.

He said, "How long [will] you need it?"

I said, "Well, it depends on when we locate Alley, he's on a train; he's been out here and on his way back. He may send it to me any day."

"Well," he said, "you have to put the time down on a note."

I said, "Well, make it payable on or before September the fifteenth when school opens."

So he did and lent me the five hundred and I wrote a check on his money. Hired a couple to help my wife clean those buildings and repair windows. I ran this advertisement in the **Los Angeles Times.** The first letter that came in wanted a catalog, it was from Long Beach. I didn't have any catalogs. So I struck out the next morning and walked to Claremont, got a Red Car into Los Angeles, got a Red Car to Long Beach, walked two or three miles out to his house and nobody there. I sat out on the porch and waited a couple of hours. Finally, father and mother and boy came, nice boy. I had a nice talk with him and they seemed interested and I'd typewritten a contract proposing to charge a thousand dollars a year, five hundred a session. I pulled it out and asked him to sign that.

"Oh, no, no, " he says, "I've got to think about this awhile; I'm not going to sign anything. I'll come to see you later."

So at midnight when I got home, my wife was all excited, here was a letter from Van Nuys, a lady wanted a catalog. Next day the same thing. She lived on a farm; I had to walk five miles out in the country, I couldn't

afford a taxi. Got there, it was so hot, dry. Nicest lady received me and introduced me to her five little daughters, she was looking for a girls school. Well, she gave me some ice water and drove me back to the car. [laughter]

It went like that for days. Then my wife's father got back from some conference where he and some others had been in connection with the church. They drove over to see how the children were doing. I told him all my struggles and problems. He said, "Well, Tom, you need a little car. You can't get along this way, walking to town, riding in streetcars. You come in tomorrow and I'll sign your note at Security Bank for five hundred dollars and you get a little car." So we fixed that one up to be paid on the fifteenth. When I had worn out all my money for gasoline and what not, I drove the little car over to Banning to see my old friend over there, the man I'd borrowed from and paid back, and he lent me five hundred dollars running money. That made three of them. Still we hadn't heard from Alley.

Well, I kept going to see these people. Great loads of advertisements were being answered, but to get them, nearly all of them wanted to work their way through, didn't have any money, working people. I made a list of all of them, but occasionally I met some very prosperous-looking people. And they would want to think about it. Well, I

think I must have visited a couple hundred. Then towards the end of August--

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MINK: Well, to continue this afternoon, you said that you would be talking some more about the difficulties of getting boys for the first year, and I think this morning you had told me that you had a number of different places you went to see people, over a hundred in fact.

WEBB: I'm sure I must have seen one or two hundred people on these visits. Most of them received me very graciously but none of them would commit themselves or sign my contract, and all asked, "How many boys have you?" Finally I tried to nail down about twenty and I picked out my best prospects and went to see number one.

"How many boys have you?"

"Well, I haven't any, but I expect to have twenty."

"When you get to nineteen, come back to see me."

I couldn't get him to sign the contract. I went to my next one. I spent several days in seeing these twenty and putting all the pressure on them I could to get a contract. All of them asked that question, "How many boys have you?" Then they didn't want to be the number one boy. So then I looked up seven of the boys who wanted to work their way through, boys that looked to be of fine character and able to do schoolwork. I agreed to take those seven, provided they would do certain work in return,

such as janitor or dishwasher or yard man. We signed the complete contract that I'd give them the schooling and they would do this particular work for me.

MINK: I was going to ask you at this point, there was then an aspect of the self-help idea there in the beginning, similar to Midland and also to Kent. Has this continued, or was that just in the beginning?

WEBB: That's continued.

MINK: To a certain extent do you still take--

WEBB: Oh, we always have. There was only one year we didn't have a scholarship boy. That was the second year.

Then I went back to see my first of my twenty good prospects.

"How many boys have you?"

"Seven."

"It's not enough for a ball team."

I couldn't sell him to be the number one to sign up. So I went to the next, and went all the way down. Not one of them would sign my contract and it was getting near the first of September, when school was to open on the fifteenth. I came back from my last trip. I stopped for the mail and there was a letter from Rayford Alley. When I opened it, Rayford said he'd been hunting in Mexico for several weeks and that when he got back to New York, he found that his wife had filed divorce proceedings against

him and attached everything he had in the world. He was sorry he couldn't help me. Well, I almost fainted in my tracks, I just was shaken to pieces. I came on home, found my wife dressing the baby in the bedroom. I went in and I asked her to listen to this, and I read her that letter. Then I said, "Sweetheart, we owed twenty thousand dollars in Bell Buckle when we left. We had changed all of our California debts back to Bell Buckle. The contract is to buy this place for forty thousand dollars. We've borrowed five hundred dollars from each of three banks to be paid back by the fifteenth of this month. We have seven boys enrolled for nothing and not anybody for anything."

She looked at me with that queer expression and said, "Tom, it looks like a crisis. Don't you think we'd better pray?"

I asked her what she'd been doing all summer. I said, "I've been praying, haven't you?"

"Yes, but let's pray together and let's kneel down here by the bed."

So we did, and that was not ordinary praying. We really reasoned with the Lord. We didn't hear any great voice from heaven telling us what to do, but somehow we had conviction that we should stick to it and not go into bankruptcy. Doubtless somebody else would put us there, but we're not going jumping in it. Stick to it until the

opening day of school and see where we stood. The opening day of school came. We had fourteen boys, seven for a thousand dollars apiece and seven for nothing. We paid the three banks the five hundred dollars due them and we paid our grocery bills and some interest bills, not all, but it took all the thirty-five hundred we had to do that. Then I wondered what we were going to do the first of November. I anticipated eight or nine hundred dollars in bills coming in from grocerymen and other accounts, and I wondered where I was going to get the money. I hunted for it all that month, teaching the best I could, my wife teaching five subjects and I was teaching eight subjects a day.

MINK: Were there just the two of you teaching? There were no other faculty at that time?

WEBB: Yes, I employed two men to help me. One had come out from Tennessee, he had been helping me in my summer camp, and another one was Brooks Blaisdell, the son of the president [James A. Blaisdell] of Pomona [College, 1910-1928]. And we spread out this work among the four of us.

MINK: What was your wife teaching?

WEBB: English.

MINK: She taught English, you were teaching, of course, mathematics and Latin, and the other two took care of--

WEBB: Whatever the rest was.

MINK: What were you offering, the basic offering, in the beginning, besides Latin, math, English?

WEBB: Had one science, I believe it was physics, my wife [inaudible] chemistry.

MINK: Did your wife teach that?

WEBB: No, she just taught English, but John, the son, one of the others picked it up. We covered everything we agreed to teach and we signed up these boys. I thought we were going to do it with three men, but I couldn't. The math and some Spanish and that's where Blaisdell came in.

MINK: Who did the history?

WEBB: Oh, I don't know; I can't go into that with you. My memory won't go back sixty years on every detail. Well, we were satisfying our patrons and giving them what we were being paid to give them.

When we came up to the first of November, these bills came in, they were merchants' bills this time, over nine hundred dollars worth of them, and I didn't have the money, and I felt I had to do it. I hunted everywhere to try to get some money. Couldn't find it and when the tenth of the month came, I moved my classes into the front classroom where I could watch the road leading to the school in case some new boy might come up to join the school. Nobody came all day long, the last class was out.

An old dilapidated Ford came chugging up the drive; the man that was driving it was in overalls, unshaven. I presumed he wanted a job and went out to see what he wanted.

He said, "Hello, Thompson." When he spoke, I recognized his voice. It was old Bill Davis from down in the desert where I'd farmed. He was my neighbor and good friend and he'd heard I was up there, just wanted to see what I was doing. He was on his way to Los Angeles to buy a plow. I asked him if he wouldn't stay and have supper with us, and he said, no, he couldn't come in the house looking like he did. He cranked his Ford, pushed it up around the flagpole where he could turn around and came back by me, threw on his brakes and stuck his head out and says, "Thompson, do you know anybody that wants to borrow a thousand dollars?"

"Well," I said, "Bill, what are you talking about?"

"Well," he said, "I had a good crop this year and I've got a thousand dollars I want to put out at interest."

And I said, "Yes, Bill, I'd love to borrow that money, but the banks have turned me down and I don't know whether it's right for me to take it from you or not. I'm not a good risk at present; I'm running a losing business."

"Well," he says, "you can have it. That's all right."

I said, "Let me get the note."

"No, I don't want a note. I'll let you know when I want my money back."

So he saved us and we paid our bills that evening in the mail. I began to worry about what I was going to do in December. I had to find another thousand dollars. I tried to sell an interest in the school. I'd go to see teachers, see if they wouldn't buy in and help me finance it and get it on its feet. Friends, people I'd think about here and yonder. I tried to get some of my personal friends to lend me money; I just didn't have any luck. All my personal friends felt I was certain to go broke. We came up to the first week in December and more bills were in again and here came a letter from Rayford Alley in New York in which was a thousand dollar check, saying his wife's attorney had overlooked a good account and he'd collected two thousand dollars and he was dividing it with me. He said, "Don't call on me anymore, this is all I'll be able to lend you. I'll let you know when I want it back."

Couple of years later he wanted it back; I sent him a thousand dollars with interest; he returned the interest, thanked me for the thousand dollars. When the Depression of '29 came a few years later, he wrote me to know if I could lend him a thousand dollars and I did, which he subsequently paid back with interest and I returned the interest. And those [were] our transactions. But getting

that money in December, we were able to pay our bills and go through until after Christmas when the boys returned and paid in their five hundred each.

During that vacation I got acquainted with our neighbors and they were all talking with interest about this man Bockman that had handled the deal for us in the purchase of the school. They said that he was the richest man in this valley and he was a dealer in citrus fruits. He would buy and sell orchards, that he was one of the shrewdest traders that ever lived, that he could buy a place for less than anybody else could and then turn around and sell it for more than anybody else could. He just made lots of money. But they nearly all observed that it was just a pride with him on making a close deal, that he wasn't a stingy man, but he'd make the money. He'd turn around and give it to the YMCA and the churches and the colleges, that he was the greatest philanthropist of this valley, even though he was such a hard dealer. That was an interesting picture of the man and I didn't forget it.

We ran along until April on the money we'd gotten at our second payment, and then we were out of money and I needed a thousand dollars the worst way. I went down to see Mr. Bockman. He'd almost forgotten about me. I had to tell him who I was and I gave him an accounting of the school, how we'd gotten along and we only lacked two months

of finishing the year, that I'd run out of money and I had to have a thousand dollars right away and I wanted him to lend it to me. He stiffened up like a poker. No, he wouldn't consider lending me any, that he'd put a lot of money behind that preacher that had let the school fail, lost every penny of it and he was just trying to redeem a little bit when he let me have this, but he wasn't going to get caught in that kind of thing again.

Well, I told Mr. Bockman that he'd failed once on the other man, and if I didn't finish this year, he'd fail a second time on me, but if he could get me through this first year, I felt next year, I'd have it full and be able to begin payment. Well, he didn't like the idea, but we sat there and talked for over two hours. I had to get the money and finally he said, "Well, I know I ought not to do it, but get in the car. I'll endorse your note at the bank for a thousand dollars."

So I got up and sat him in the car, not knowing where we were going. He drove me up to the First National Bank, escorted me in and introduced me to Mr. Stone. Mr. Stone looked over his glasses. "Yes, I know Mr. Webb."

"Well, Mr. Stone, Mr. Webb wants to borrow a thousand dollars."

Mr. Stone said, "Yes, I know."

He said, "Mr. Stone, I'll be willing to endorse his note for a thousand dollars."

Mr. Stone brightened up, "Why, certainly, Mr. Bockman. Mr. Webb, what a pleasure it is to let you have it."

MINK: I'm not sure that on tape this morning you told about your previous encounter with Mr. Stone. I'm not sure that you didn't stop, we didn't stop before you--

WEBB: I told you that I'd gone to Mr. Stone and he'd asked me what was my gross income, what were my expected expenses, and it wasn't bankable. I'm sure I told you that.

MINK: That's right, but I thought it might have been after we turned the recorder off.

WEBB: No, I don't think so. Anyhow, you're going to get it all on that other tape that I'm going to give you.

MINK: Okay.

WEBB: And maybe so a little better.

MINK: So Mr. Stone knew you but now he was willing to lend you the money.

WEBB: Yes. So that thousand dollars put us over until May and in May I needed another thousand. Well, after Mr. Bockman bought that note, he'd come up to the school every day, drove around looking to see if we were still here. Surprised me the first day or two, and then I realized he

thought we were going to slip away in the night and leave the burden on him. He looked worried, as though he was losing sleep, and I worried about him, too, because I was hoping I could go back to him once more in May for that last thousand dollars. I didn't know how I'd approach him.

And before I got to approach him, up drove a taxi and out stepped my father and mother from Tennessee, a dear old couple over eighty years of age. They had not told us they were coming; I had never written them of my trouble, but they stepped out of the taxi. They said they'd just decided they wanted to see how we were getting along and bought a ticket and got to Claremont and here they were. Well, of course, I was tremendously happy to see Father and Mother, nobody in the world I would rather have seen, but something gripped my heart and I thought well, maybe I'll have to tell him about my borrowing some money and I didn't want to tell him that. Well, they stayed with us until the weekend came when the boys all went home and then we were just together alone. Father said he'd like to talk to me in my office. We went in there and he said, "Son, how are you doing financially?"

"Well," I said, "Father, I've had to borrow money and you don't like me to do that, but I've had to borrow a good deal of money at times, but I've always paid every penny of it back the day it was due, principal and interest. I

never failed to meet my promise, just like you brought me up."

"Well," he said, "Son, that sounds all right, but how are you doing it? This outfit won't pay it."

Well, I tried to change the subject, I didn't want to face up to it. But he'd come out here from Tennessee to find out about it and when Father made up his mind there wasn't any stopping him. I wasn't going to lie to him. So I had to open up and tell him the story I've told you about borrowing all this money and the situation I was in and this even [included] Mr. Bockman. I thought Father was going to be humiliated and embarrassed that a son of his would have done anything like that. He had such a horror of getting into debt that he just couldn't take it and I thought he'd be very, very angry, but to my amazement, he began to laugh. I've never seen Father laugh so hard in my life. He said, "Son, this is the funniest thing I've ever heard of in my life. I didn't know anybody could get in a predicament like that." He laughed and laughed and wiped the tears out of his eyes and finally he said, "Son, how much money would it take to finish the year?"

I said, "Father, I think I could do it on a thousand dollars."

He said, "Well, your mother's got a little money, I'll lend it to you. You make a note to her for a thousand

dollars at 6 percent. Now, Son, as long as I live you don't have to pay that back or the interest, but when I'm gone, I know you'll take care of your mother. But, Son, make that fifteen hundred just to be sure you have enough to finish the year." And then he said, "No, Son, you make it twenty-five hundred to your mother and you take a thousand dollars and pay off that note at the bank that has Mr. Bockman's name on it. You make them stamp it 'paid' and then you take it and give it to the old gentleman and let him get some sleep." So we finished the year.

I had arranged to start a summer school up at Lake Arrowhead that summer, we had about forty little boys. We operated that all summer up there and made about eighteen hundred dollars on the operation.

MINK: How did this come about, this decision to start a summer school? Was this something that occurred to you--

WEBB: I'd always been doing it every summer.

MINK: And where were you getting, where did you get your pupils from? From around the Claremont area here?

WEBB: Oh, no, no. I wrote to various schools and places. It was good advertising but I took it up with a good many schools. I'd offer a teacher a job to run it, if he'd bring me ten boys, and that kind of thing, to help me run it, I mean. We got forty boys and we cleared about eighteen hundred dollars, and when we'd packed all our

tents and put away all our goods and I got back home the first of September--the tiredest man you can imagine, just worked to a frazzle--we didn't have a boy enrolled for the second year. I was proposing to open in two weeks. I told my wife I was too tired to go out that day and I was going to rest a day and then I said, "Tomorrow I'll start, and I'll find these boys because I've got to find them."

She said, "Well, you sleep as late as you can," and she brought me a tray and let me have breakfast in bed. Before I'd finished it, somebody at the front door ringing the bell. My wife came running in and said, there's a lady and a boy wanting to see me. So I came out to see her, and she wanted to enroll that boy for my school and she signed up my application and gave me a check for five hundred dollars. Somebody else showed up on the porch. I could hear my wife talking to them and when the lady said good-bye I went out, and here was a man and a boy and he signed up and gave us five hundred dollars. The telephone rang and somebody wanted to come that afternoon, and I think I enrolled for four or five boys that first day without leaving the campus. The next day it went on. By the opening of school we had our capacity of twenty-eight boys enrolled; they paid full price and we had three on a waiting list.

MINK: How do you account for that change over just one year? What do you think the factors were that brought in more enrollees the second year?

WEBB: Well, I'd proved I had a school.

MINK: Word was getting around?

WEBB: Yes, we were giving satisfaction and I had a school. I hadn't broken in the middle of the year. People needed the school. I guess Mr. Thacher helped, too. I did not employ any teachers until I had my enrollment. Then I called up the Boynton Teachers' Agency in Los Angeles and told him I wanted two teachers. He said, "You're awfully late calling. I only have two left that I can send you and all the schools have picked them over. I can't tell you how good these are, not recommending them, just saying I have them."

And I said, "Mr. Boynton, send them out, I've got to have a couple of men." So he sent them out and we opened up with a full school and two teachers. Immediately I began to have trouble with some of these boys. Some of them had pretty hard records I guess; I hadn't looked into their characters. I was just taking boys, because I had to have boys. I'd say in about ten days I realized that I had twelve of the meanest boys I ever saw and the teachers were just as mean as the boys. They ganged up on me and came in and said they were just not going to have these rules; they were going to do so and so, and so and so."

And I said, "No, you're not."

"Well, we're going to do it anyhow."

I said, "Well, you're going home, every one of you."

And I sent home twelve boys out of my twenty-eight, almost half of my school, and I sent home my whole faculty. I brought on a pretty big tempest in a mighty little teapot. Oh, they were mad! The parents came out. They were furious and said I'd broken up the school already and they were going to help kick it outdoors. They'd see that there wouldn't be anybody else coming to this school. I thought they were right; I thought we'd earned it and we couldn't go on. We hadn't collected some of the money and we had to return some that we had already collected and I had to pay these teachers for some time they didn't earn. I said if the thing had gone full, we could have met our obligations; as it was now, again we were having financial trouble.

But within the next three weeks, it was full again, and Boynton had sent me two teachers that arrived in California later that turned out to be two of the very best I've ever known. I asked the first man that showed up with his boy how he heard about us. He said, "I know three of those boys you sent home. I've been looking for a school that wouldn't put up with them. I like the idea of discipline." It was that that brought me the rest of the

boys. Never had a happier year in my life than we did throughout that entire second year, with the new boys and the new teachers. They got the spirit, "We're going to build a great school out here," and they were pulling for it and I wasn't discouraging them with it, either. We just had a very, very happy experience.

At commencement President Blaisdell made us a sweet little talk and we had a benediction. When it was over I looked around and there wasn't a dry eye in our little auditorium. Everybody realized we'd been through a great experience and it was just emotional. Never seen such a thing before or since.

Well, Mr. Chandler in the group, Leo Chandler was the trust officer of the California Bank, came up to me in his gentle way and said, "Webb, I'm so pleased with what you've done for my son, Dan, and I know you need some help out here, and I'd like to help you. I think we ought to paint these buildings, make them look a little better. I'd like to lend you some money."

I said, "Mr. Chandler, I don't own them and I have no security; I don't know how a bank could lend me money."

"Oh," he said, "I'm not talking about my bank, no, they can't lend you money. I'm talking about just a little personal loan between you and me. Now you come into the University Club tomorrow in Los Angeles and have lunch with me and we'll talk it over."

Right behind him was a Colonel Sutton. He was just back from overseas, and had on a big belt and his eagles on his uniform. He spoke in a great big heavy bass voice, "Webb, I'm so pleased with what you've done with my son, Joe, I never could get him to read a book and now he's got his nose in a book all the time. Didn't know anybody could do that. I want to bring my friends out here, show them this school but," he said, "Webb, it looks like hell. Let me lend you some money."

And I said, "Well Colonel, Mr. Chandler offered to lend me some money."

So he went off looking for Mr. Chandler and when I got to the University Club at noon the next day, both these men were there together. They'd been talking ever since breakfast, making their plans about this school. They told me they were going to lend me the money. They wanted me to paint the buildings inside and out, make them look fine, get some gardeners and knock down that sagebrush, plant grass and trees.

They said, "There's a scare about polio these days. Build yourself a little infirmary out there so you can isolate a case if you got it."

The colonel said, "Build yourself a cottage and get your brats out of that dormitory." Talking about **my** little boys!

I said, "How are we financing this?"

"Well, we'll get you the money; now you go on get your contracts on all this and just send the bills in to us and we'll pay 'em. When we get through we'll give you a note."

So we were very busy fixing up the place the best we could. Enrollments came in early and I looked over possible teachers. I kept my two I had and I had to employ two more. I got two good men and then the colonel and Mr. Chandler came out and said, "Add twelve rooms to that dormitory so you can take some more boys; we've got more wanting to come here than you have room for."

So we did that, built our number up to forty. During the year there were three parents came out to see me. They said they'd been appointed by the Webb School Parents' Association.

MINK: Had you ever heard of that?

WEBB: No. I said I didn't know we had one.

"Yeah, we organized one last night. They have sent us out here as a committee to tell you we were kicking on your price."

"Oh," I said, "gentlemen, if you knew how much money I owed, you'd know I can't run it for less."

"Well, we unanimously agreed and you'll have to accept the verdict whether you like it or not." They looked so mean. One of them said to the other, "You tell him." And

he said, "You tell him." And finally they began to chuckle. They said, "Your price is thirteen hundred dollars a year."

I said, "You mean, you've gone up?"

"Yes, we have forty checks for three hundred dollars apiece; we chipped in. We are not giving this to you; we want a better school. We want you to have a nurse in that infirmary; we want you to have a physical director, and clean up that sagebrush out there and make that field playable. We know you're doing all you can with what you have; we want a better school and we're willing to pay for it."

During the year they came back and said, "Now build twenty more rooms."

I said, "You think you can get more boys at that big price?"

"Yep, we'll get them; we'll lend you the money, build those rooms." So we put up twenty rooms. The following year we had sixty boys, and then one day, unknown to me, they came out and said that they'd had another meeting of the parents' association and that the price had gone to sixteen hundred.

Well, we'd gotten so many more boys our kitchen couldn't handle it. We had to have new equipment; new range, lots of dishes, things, and we needed to enlarge the

kitchen. I went into a hotel supply company in the summertime. My wife picked out what she thought we needed, about fifteen hundred dollars' worth of goods. After we'd picked them out, I said to the salesman, "Now could you send these out right away, so we can get them installed, and let me pay you after school opens in about sixty days."

"Well," he said, "you'll have to see the credit manager; I have nothing to do with that."

So he took me in and introduced me to the credit manager; I'd never heard of one before. He said, "Mr. Webb, what are your assets?"

I said, "I don't know; I haven't got my books here."

"Well, can't you estimate them?"

I began to count up on my fingers what I consider my assets. Finally I was amazed; I swelled up and said, "Why, I think our assets are about a hundred thousand dollars." It sounded so big.

Then he said, "Well, what are your liabilities?"

"Well," I said, "I can tell you that." I said, "I watch the dates on my notes. I don't know what the few grocery bills in the town might be, little things like that, but I know what notes I've signed."

"Well, how much does that amount to?"

I checked it up. I said, "One hundred and twenty thousand dollars in notes."

He said, "You mean your liabilities are greater than your assets?"

And I said, "Oh, yes."

Well, he sort of thumped his desk and looked out the window and he said, "If there are enough people in California to lend you one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, I'll take a fifteen hundred dollar chance; send the goods out."

I said as I came home, I was thinking about that. I wasn't much of a bookkeeper. I had a ledger account for everybody but I never thought of putting down what assets and liabilities were. They weren't in a book anywhere. I needed some help. I knew my friend, the controller of Pomona College, Dr. Sumner, would advise me. I went to see him and he told me to get a man by the name of Ira Frisbee, a CPA, to audit my books. So I came home, making up my mind that I would go to see Ira Frisbee as soon as I could.

Here waiting for me was Mr. Chandler and Colonel Sutton! They'd been sitting out here waiting for me to get home. They had a big roll of blueprints, and they said they'd decided that we ought to have a great library out here at the school and that ought to be the central thing around which the school was formed. They had had an architect make the plans for a beautiful library, and here were the plans, and they were going to lend me the money to build it.

I said, "Gentlemen, do you realize that my liabilities are already greater than my assets now?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right; we believe in you; we'll lend you the money."

I said, "Gentlemen, please quit." I said, "I owe too much now and maybe we'll get caught in the Depression and I'll be broke. I can borrow books from the Pomona library and I can borrow them from Pomona College Library and from the city of Claremont library and I do that every day or two, take back the old ones and bring in the new ones; my boys are not lacking for books. It's a darn nuisance to me to get them, but let's wait on that library until I get some of these debts paid." I had to really argue with them to keep them from lending me that money.

Right away, with this larger group and this larger price, I began to reduce my indebtedness pretty rapidly. Each year there was less interest and more principal to be paid. We got up to 1929; the Great Depression came and I didn't know how in the world we would get through. Nobody enrolled a boy until about two weeks before school opened; then they all came in and filled me up. And the next year they filled me up and I went down to the bank and I paid off the last of that indebtedness, everything I owed, principal and interest. I wish Father could have lived until then. I would have loved to have looked him in the

eye and said, "Father, I paid every debt the day it was due, just like you brought me up."

I know that he would have said, "Son, how did you do it?"

Well, I would have said, "Father, you taught me to watch the time on the notes and I was always watching them, and when this one was coming due, I went over here and borrowed it and paid it when it was due, and then when this one was coming due, I went back and reversed it, and I did tightrope-walking for nineteen years by watching the date. It's built me a credit."

MINK: Could you tell me at the time when all the debts were paid off, how many people were you then enrolling in the school?

WEBB: I think about sixty. Somewhere between sixty to seventy-five. We did occasionally grow a little. Well, I wish I'd had enough sense to have stopped right there when I had it all, but the boys needled me for a gymnasium and they wanted me to build a gymnasium. They got out and begged their parents and they got about six thousand dollars subscribed. They came and said they had this much and could they have a gymnasium. Talking with my builder, I knew he couldn't build a gymnasium for that. I thought, well, I'll try to do the best I can; the boys raised six thousand dollars; I'll see how much I can raise.

So I went down to see Mr. Stone. I told Mr. Stone I wanted to build a gymnasium and I'd have to borrow money to do it and I said, "Do you think you could finance me on it?"

"Well, how much money do you want, Mr. Webb?"

I said, "The size of that gymnasium depends on how much you can lend me." [laughter] I had hoped he'd maybe lend me ten thousand dollars.

MINK: That would be, what, around 1931, '32?

WEBB: I expect.

MINK: You could build a sizeable building for ten thousand dollars in that period.

WEBB: He said, "Mr. Webb, you may have anything you want up to fifty thousand dollars. Don't ask me for more than that."

I'd never given him security; he knew I had no security to give him. Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather; I just couldn't believe my ears. But that's what I'd accomplished, I'd built credit. I knew years when he lent me up to seventy thousand dollars without security. When that dear old gentleman died, a man named Raymond Smith came in as president and he used to let me have what I wanted. He insisted on me buying stock in that bank and I said, "Raymond, you're lending me lots of money while I'm building these dormitories and buying land; I haven't any money to invest like that."

He said, "Here's some stock you can have for eighteen hundred dollars and I want you to buy it, right here."

I said, "You know I don't have the money to do it."

"Here's a note, sign it, for eighteen hundred dollars."

He sort of just made me do it.

Well, I took it and the bank would pay its dividend, about enough to pay the interest on the note for a few years. Raymond Smith died and then they sold the bank to the Bank of California and various shares [inaudible]. I think they gave me nine and then the Bank of California sold it out to the Western Bank Corporation. They gave me a lot more shares; out of that I got thirteen hundred and thirty shares in Western Bank Corporation. They pay me my eighteen hundred every year in dividends; that's what my banker did. Helps me to live now that I'm not on salary.

MINK: Well, maybe this would be a good place to stop.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 9, 1969

MINK: I listened with a great deal of interest to the tape which you gave me to take back to the university, the tape of your address to the Mid-South Association of Secondary Schools. You stated in that talk that it would relate purely to its financial matters, but that you wished that sometime you might talk about the school without discussing the financial side, and that when you did, you would certainly have a great deal to say about the contributions of your wife. So I wondered this morning if you could for just a minute or so detail some of these contributions of your wife.

WEBB: Well, my wife had taken postgraduate courses at the University of California in Los Angeles when it was known as [the Los Angeles State] Normal School. She has a teacher's certificate, the only one in the whole school that I ever knew of [who] had a California teacher's certificate; I didn't, but she did. But anyhow, we came out here with this lease to start this school and we started out with fourteen boys, scattered over the curriculum. I taught eight classes and she taught five that first year. We had three small children; before the year was over we had four. She had to run the dining room, hire the servants, look after the domestic type of life,

see how the boys' rooms were and that everything was cleaned up and in proper shape. She was a very busy girl. After that first year, she did not have to carry classes again; the next year we had a larger school and more help. But she always looked after the domestic side, the happy side of living in a home like this. She gave the boys birthday parties on their birthdays, let them come down after study hall with their intimate friends, not to exceed ten, and she'd serve them ice cream and cake and they'd have a happy birthday in the evening. She frequently would have parties for them in our home. If we had some interesting speaker coming in, the boys would gather in our living room and hear him, such as Sir John Adams.

MINK: Oh, from UCLA.

WEBB: Yeah.

MINK: How did the boys like Sir John?

WEBB: They liked him very much. As he started out to speak--he was going to talk on Sherlock Holmes and the way he reasoned out things--he said, "Now, if I should come home in the evening after my day's work and on the hatrack would be the derby hat, a cane, and gloves, I would naturally say that Johnny is home from the school." And all our boys roared with laughter. He looked stunned and he turned to me and said, "What are they laughing at?" [laughter]

One of my little sons had been told that he was a knight, being Sir John. He'd heard stories of knighthood and he asked Sir John, "Where is your sword?" We had lots of fun with him. We had many speakers like that. Will Rogers used to come out and talk to us.

MINK: I imagine he made quite a hit.

WEBB: Oh, yes. His youngest son, Jimmy, was here for three years. And Will would come out very frequently to see Jimmy and if he wasn't in a hurry he'd stay over, talk to the boys after dinner, show them rope tricks. They loved him. My wife was continually busy with these social functions and keeping the home and the home atmosphere and watching the infirmary and the care the nurses gave the students. That was the nice side of the school that we looked after. [tape recorder off]

Then subsequently my wife offered to teach the boys woodcarving, if they would like to carve a panel in the library. Our new library has panels in the oak work. So she would teach them how to carve and then let each one carve a panel of some design of his choosing and put on it his name and the date of his class and that way we filled all the panels in the library.

MINK: One other thing that I noticed when we visited the chapel, you talked about her--I think this was a joint

effort--study of the California missions and how all this preceded, really, the finishing of the chapel and how it had a big influence on its style and construction.

WEBB: Yes, we were very eager to have a chapel: we always required a little prayer service at the beginning of the day as my father did in his school and we required them all to go to church on Sunday, all students. In the beginning we had those services, first year at the Claremont church. There was only one church, we could take them in our cars. After that the school was too big and we would invite ministers here on Sunday and have it in our living room. Then later when the library was built, it was larger, we held it there. But we wanted a chapel very much. She and I had visited all of the missions of California and loved them; we thought that it would be a nice idea to have something of a mission. We knew that we would never have enough money to hire something to be built that would be as nice as we wanted, [and] concluded the only thing that we could do was to build it ourselves. We had a very artistic builder doing work for us around who helped us with the designs, taking this idea from that mission and another one here, there and yonder and putting it into blueprints. My wife was very much interested in that design. I built the chapel myself. With the help of some Mexicans we made the adobe brick.

MINK: Did you get the soil right here on the premises?

WEBB: Yes.

MINK: Is it a good adobe soil or did you have to mix that emulsion? There's an emulsion that sometimes is mixed with it.

WEBB: We used that oil emulsion.

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: Our soil was too rich in clay, so we had to bring in sand to mix with it, to thin it down. But we got the sand right here in the wash from our own campus and the clay from our own campus. Bought the oil and it took a team to work. We had a concrete mixer that we used to mix this dirt with the water and the oil and the sand and then we'd pour it out in a wheelbarrow and roll it out on the field and pour it into the molds. So I had some Mexican laborers that helped me on that; got the bricks made. I dug the foundations, took me a year to dig them in my spare time. Got the concrete poured into the ditches, some of them as deep as twelve feet. I always had to go through fills down to solid earth. We finally got the concrete foundations laid with steel in them, and then I started laying bricks. Do you want any more about that one or you want me to go on with the chapel deal?

MINK: You might as well.

WEBB: I'd never laid brick before, but I figured if the

Mexicans I knew could do it, maybe I could learn it. We'd been told by the Standard Oil Company how to make the mix that would produce a waterproof brick. The old missions were made out of mud and water and oil and would wash away if water got on them, but we had a brick that was impervious to water. I tested them by leaving them in fish ponds for over a year and taking them out. Crack them open and they'd be dry as a bone, so it's good brick. It took a good many years to get this building up; I think in all we must have been twelve years on it, but in six years we had the roof on it and we began to use it as our chapel. So many funny things happened along the line; I don't know if you want me to throw them into this thing.

MINK: Throw it all in.

WEBB: I have so much trouble remembering names; we had a very attractive minister that came out from the Presbyterian church in Pasadena.

MINK: Could that have been Robert Freeman?

WEBB: No, it was after Freeman.

MINK: It was after Freeman?

WEBB: Yes. The man's there right now [Ganse Little]. I've forgotten. I used to know. We could check that. [tape recorder off] Had one of Robert Freeman's grandsons here. Anyhow, we invited that man to come and give the dedication service at the chapel when we had it practically

completed. We held it on a Sunday afternoon near the first of the year. The weather was warm and we invited all the parents and a large crowd came and drove their cars up behind the chapel and parked them up there in the brush. We hadn't cleaned things up as well as we might. Our boys choir had worked hard and they had good music and we were doing our best to put on a very fine service. Just as I started to introduce the minister, one of the teachers yelled, "Fire outside, fire outside. Come get these cars out of here!" We all broke out and the brush was all on fire: These handsome cars were getting scarred up with it and everybody jumped in their cars and roared down the hill with them. We got them out of the fire and then the boys took their coats and beat the blazes; tried to keep it from getting up into the mountains. We called the fire departments and they were slow coming. Finally it was all out and we rang the bell and gathered back in the chapel.

I introduced, can't think of his name, I know him so well. His first remark was to say that he was so thankful that I had published a program for the day because he was sure that if they didn't have it in their hands [to] look at, that they wouldn't believe him but he'd chosen his text from the passage where God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. [laughter] I doubt if I'll ever forget that. Well, the chapel's been a great service to us all these years.

MINK: I wonder if you could put on tape a few remarks about the floor of the chapel as you explained it to me when we were up there the other day.

WEBB: Want me to put it here?

MINK: Sure.

WEBB: We had made all of our adobe brick, but when it came to tile that had to be burned in kilns, we had no facilities. We bought our tile for the roof and then we got to the floor; we wanted tile there. I went in to Gladding McBean's, manufacturers of tile in Los Angeles, to pick out a tile. The war was on. They laughed at me and said they weren't making tile anymore, that they were doing things for the government in connection with the war. I asked if they didn't have some left over from before the war. No, it had all been sold.

Then he said, "I don't think you could find a tile in the United States, all over; we contacted all the tile companies for our big customers. Oh," he said, "you could get one tile or two tiles or something like that from our scrap pile. Sometimes right at the end of a certain type of tile we just throw away a few good ones to clean it up."

I asked to see the scrap pile, so we went out there and it was a huge pile, as big as the whole chapel we intended to build, just scrap and thrown out there for

years. He said he wanted to get that moved and he would make me a great bargain if I'd buy the pile and guarantee to clean it up.

MINK: The whole pile?

WEBB: The whole pile. I looked it over and I could see a lot of good tile in there, but you couldn't make a pattern, because you couldn't get any definite number of tile of a side; they were all mixed up. A great many broken things and seconds but there was some good tile in it. So we made a deal and I bought the pile and hired a truck company to moved the whole thing out here in a corner of the campus. We sorted it out; all the good tile in sizes so we could count them. We knew just how many we had of this and how many of that and the useless things we threw off to the side. Then we took the drawing board and we laid out a floor; the biggest tiles of all, there were just enough to go the length of the room, and we made that the middle row. Then we got other rows to match it when we got a certain number. We took the squarish tiles, and there mightn't be enough of any particular square, but there's lots of squares, and we put them under the spot where the pews would go. Didn't have enough to go the entire length, so we used a diamond-shaped tile as a crosswalk between the two doors and the middle and we adapted those tiles in that way until we got this pretty fancy pattern of a floor.

Hadn't occurred to me how beautiful it would be, but after we got it in, got it waxed, we were so thankful we hadn't had it all one size tile. It's an interesting floor.

MINK: I know I remarked that if you hadn't told me the story, I would have thought that it was purposeful.

WEBB: Guess everybody thought that was designed.

[laughter]

MINK: We were talking about the contributions of your wife and you spoke of some of this. There was one other point in your address that interested me. You said that you had been advised--and I would be interested to know by whom, if you can recall--not to go to California to start a school, because people here didn't believe in private schools. I think you said that California and Iowa were two places where people didn't believe in private schools.

WEBB: I spoke of that man yesterday. [I] know his name perfectly well; think it will come to me in a minute.

MINK: That's all right, you can fill it in later.

WEBB: He was a graduate of my father's school who lived in Memphis, Tennessee, and he made quite a fortune. He'd come back to see Father a good deal and in some way he had control of an old private school in Memphis that wasn't doing too well. He wanted me to come down there and take over that school, to see if I could build up something like Father had, in Memphis. I told him that we had been

negotiating for this property in California. He put up a great argument not to go to California. Lem Banks is his name. He said that there were practically no private schools in California or Iowa, that people were very much down on private schools out there, while there was a great demand for them in the South.

MINK: Did he give you any reason for this? Why people here were down on private education?

WEBB: I don't remember him ever doing that, but after I got here, I don't think I told you that the first person I went to see was Dr. Blaisdell, president of Pomona College. I told him I had come to start this school, to take over this empty property up on the hill. He said that he was entertaining the new faculty of Pomona College who were coming in and their wives. He was going to have a reception that night so that the village could meet the new faculty and invited my wife and me to come to this reception. When we went there he introduced us to Mrs. Blaisdell and then she introduced us to a professor's wife (don't know if I can recall her name or not; doesn't hurt a bit). She asked me what department I was teaching in, thinking I was one of the new faculty. I told here that I was starting a school here of my own. She said, "A private school?"

I said, "Yes."

"Well, I don't believe in private schools," she said.

The first person I met in Claremont didn't believe it. As I traveled that summer, I think two out of every three people I'd meet would make that remark: "I don't believe in private schools." They seemed to think that a private school was a place for morons or delinquents; they'd never heard of a private school that liked to get good material.

One of the most interesting incidents was [when] I met a Dr. Roberts, M.D., at a Rotary Club in Pomona that first year and he asked me if my school was a private school and I told him yes. And he said, "Well, I'm going to be honest with you, I don't believe in private schools."

I listened to him a while, then I said to him, "Dr. Roberts, how do you feel about this socialized medicine you see so much about in the papers?" He hit the ceiling, terrible thing, he just raved over it and finally I said, "Well, Dr. Roberts, a hundred years ago there were practically no public schools in America. If you got an education you had to go to a private school." I said, "There were lots of bright little children that didn't have the money to go, pay the tuition, and people felt so sorry for them they decided to socialize education and so they taxed everybody and made the schools free." I said, "They've done a pretty good job with it and now people are

getting so miserable by seeing all these poor, little crippled boys and sick children that don't have the money to go to the M.D.'s and they're just getting ready to do the same thing to the medical profession that they did to the teaching profession. You better look out." [laughter] Well, he had no reply to that, but two weeks later he came up and enrolled his son, said I'd sold him. He had never thought of public school being socialism. And that boy was an excellent student, he graduated with us, he made a distinguished record at Stanford and then through the Stanford medical school. He's a practicing physician today and he was the M.D. that was chosen by our men who climbed Everest two or three years ago; when the Americans reached the top of Everest, that boy was there with them as the M.D. that looked after them.

MINK: That's an interesting incident. I wonder if you have any opinion as to why there was opposition to private schools in California. You sort of indicated one idea that you had about it.

WEBB: There were lots of these schools for delinquents, there still are; and there's schools for cripples and for morons.

MINK: Are you talking about military academies in some instances?

WEBB: Yes. And Boys Republic over here--I'm a trustee of

it--is a sample; it's built for all the delinquent boys. The courts, the judges put them there after their first offense; they don't put hardened criminals. But they try to have a penalty and we try to correct them, get them on their feet.

There are private schools for hard of hearing and the blind. There should be public schools for them, but for a long time there hasn't been enough money to do all these things and the public school people took the attitude that private schools were hurting them. A great many public schools are very bitter towards private schools.

MINK: How do they feel that they're hurt?

WEBB: Well, we claim to do better work than they do and we get a good many boys that they'd like to have, bright children.

MINK: I wonder if you would think--this is just a theory--that in California as, say, in Iowa and the Midwest, which is where a great deal of the migration to California was from in the twenties, a frontier folk in a sense, farming people, if they, this class, viewed private education in the way that you said because they felt that, well, patriotism, what was good enough for my father is good enough for me. Do you hold any credence with this? I suppose you might call it chauvinism, frontier chauvinism.

WEBB: Well, their fathers didn't go to private schools. I

don't know how to discuss that exactly. A great many people think it's snobbish. I can give you an illustration of that.

MINK: Would you?

WEBB: There was a widow living in Altadena some years ago. She put her son in our school and she was very ambitious for him. He was a very hardworking, conscientious student; he made a splendid record. During his senior year, the Westinghouse Science Talent Search examinations were given and we entered a number of our boys. One of our boys from Altadena came out the number one in the United States. Some twenty thousand twelfth-grade students competed and when Westinghouse graded the papers, our boy, Dwight Taylor, was the top boy of all. The son of this widow did very well, too, but he wasn't top. The widow came to see me a couple days after it all came out, said she just had to tell me something [that] had given her such satisfaction. She said she belonged to a bridge club in Altadena, a group of a dozen ladies that met once a week and played bridge, and all of them had made fun of her for sending her boy to a private school and said she thought she was better than anybody else and she wanted to be snooty. They just poked it to her, made fun of her all the time, until it was really a touchy subject with her; she was very unhappy about it. But she told them she

wanted her son to have the best education; she thought that was the best. "Oh, no, we have the finest high school in the world right here in Altadena." She said as soon as Dwight Taylor won the number one place in the United States, it came out in the Altadena evening paper, and said they began to call, "Ah-ha, now you have to send your boy to a private school, but look what an Altadena boy has done. Number one in the United States." And she said she'd let them rave a while. "Well, where did Dwight Taylor go to school?" "Oh, to Altadena High School." She said, "Oh, no, no, no, he went to Webb where my boy goes," and they'd hang up the telephone. In a minute there'd be another one. Said, "They're all trying to rub it in me, and when I'd hit 'em with that they'd hang up." She said, "It's just given me so much satisfaction." [laughter]

MINK: This is a question I had asked you before, something that Paul Squibb and I had speculated together about in the interviews that I had with him month before last, in July in Cambria, and I know that he said, "When I thought about founding Midland, I was faced with the fearsome reality that Californians were down on private education."

WEBB: Can I give you an illustration? The night they served the first dinner in the Athenaeum club at Caltech, Dr. William B[ennett] Munro, who was chairman of faculty of Caltech, invited me to have dinner with him in the

Athenaeum. The table was set for four people each. Dr. Munro had Superintendent [Vierling] Kersey, the Superintendent of [Public Instruction] of the state, and me as his guests. Dr. Millikan and Dr. Munro sat at the same table. At this dinner, Superintendent Kersey said to Dr. Millikan, "I have a crow to pick with you."

MINK: Rob [Robert Andrews] Millikan [chairman of the executive council]?

WEBB: Yes. "What is that, Mr. Kersey?"

"Why in the world do you send your boy to Phillips Academy, Andover, way back in Massachusetts, a private institution that charges you a big tuition, when there's the finest high school in the world right here in Pasadena at your elbow? You could send your boy over there perfectly free and yet you spend a fortune and send him back to Andover."

Dr. Millikan said, "Well, Kersey, I'll tell you why. My oldest son was a bookworm and I sent him to the Pasadena High School; he didn't know there was anybody else there. He was just down in the library with his nose in a book. You have a fine faculty there and they guided his reading and they made a great student of him. But," he said, "my next boy came along who was an extrovert. He just loved every boy and girl in the world; he just couldn't see enough of social life and he didn't have time to ever go to

the library, he was just so busy with all these nice boys and girls and not paying any attention to his school. My wife and I couldn't make him study, so we just took him out and sent him back to Phillips Academy where they don't do those things, and there are no girls. He got down to business and he's made a great student. You're not to blame for it, Kersey, you can't help it. These children are different, but if you don't have control over them, you can't make a student out of my second boy. That's why I sent him."

And Kersey said, "Well, all the private schools in California are on their last legs. I don't think in ten years there'll be one left."

MINK: What year was this, Thompson?

WEBB: It was the year they dedicated. I don't remember.

MINK: Well, we could find out. [1930]

WEBB: He said, "I don't think that there'll be one in California in ten years." And Millikan said, "Why, Kersey, you don't know what you're talking about. Webb, there, has got a successful school, booming school, all the boys he can take."

Kersey looked at me and kind of blushed and said, "Why, I didn't know about his school."

I said, "Mr. Kersey, come out and see us some time and talk to my student body."

He said, "Be glad to." And he did.

When he came into the assembly room which was my study hall, there was some writing on the blackboard, and he took a look at it and he said to the boys, "Is that Latin?" And they all [said], "Yes, yes." And he said, "Well, I don't know any Latin except 'Socit tuum.'" And that was the superintendent of the state, talking to boys who were learning Latin. [laughter] By the way I didn't tell you that when we were building this-- [tape recorder off]

MINK: I wonder if for a few minutes now you could talk about the struggle you had to get Webb accredited.

WEBB: Our first, our very first year here, everybody that had asked to put a boy in school, "Are you accredited?" Well, we weren't.

MINK: That, and, "Where's your catalog?" [laughter]

WEBB: I felt that I didn't want to be accredited; I was going to have the boys take college board examinations, which were acceptable at any institution.

MINK: Was this the procedure your father followed in Tennessee?

WEBB: I don't know if it was.

MINK: Take the college boards, but--

WEBB: He had boys taking college boards who wanted to go to colleges that required college boards.

MINK: But he, was he accredited?

WEBB: I don't suppose he ever was. It was the top school in the United States.

MINK: In other words the boys stood on their own; they took the boards and if they passed them they got into the institution that they wanted to.

WEBB: I didn't tell you about how Father's school stood, did I? Do you want to know about that?

MINK: Might as well while we talking about this whole matter.

WEBB: Well, I'll put it this way: Woodrow Wilson, president of Princeton, wrote in a book that he published that the best trained boys that came to Princeton were from the Webb School at Bell Buckle, Tennessee. They had by far the finest record of any school in the United States. William Y. Elliott, who was a Rhodes Scholar, became a professor at Harvard, told me that he entertained Dr. [Henry] Pennypacker a few weeks before the doctor died. He'd been admissions officer at Harvard for forty years, and he asked Dr. Pennypacker, "Which school in America sends you the best prepared students?"

He said, "Well, Mr. Elliott, you wouldn't believe me, you've never heard of it. It's a little school called Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee."

And he said, "Well, that's where I graduated."

Then when Wilson Lyon was made the president of Pomona College twenty-eight years ago, they had Dr. [Frank] Aydelotte from Swarthmore [former president of Swarthmore and secretary to the Rhodes scholarships in the United States] come and give the inaugural address. Afterwards they gave him a reception and when I met him, "Webb? Webb? You any kin to Sawney Webb? Bell Buckle?"

I said, "He's my father."

He said, "Did you know that your father prepared more than twice as many Rhodes scholars as any other American teacher?"

I said, "I knew it, but didn't know anybody else knew it."

And he said, "I'm the president of the Rhodes Foundation. I've checked every student that went over as a Rhodes scholar from America." He said, "It's a phenomenal record."

Father never bothered; they took them, a chance to get his students. Graduates were top in his lifetime. I don't remember exactly whether you had anything in the way of credit and don't think they accredited anybody in Tennessee in those days.

MINK: Didn't your father believe that the boy stood on his education; he didn't need, the school didn't need, to be accredited by any institution?

WEBB: Probably. You see, they hadn't heard of accrediting when Father started, in the autumn of '70 [1870], and I don't know when all that came in. Father made his reputation before anybody ever got accredited. When I came out here, the only way to be accredited was to get it done by the University of California, and that's only been changed in the last five years. So I wrote in and applied to be accredited. They sent a German professor down here to see the school. He walked up from Claremont, came, and knocked at the school door. I opened it; he bowed to me, "I'm Dr. So-and-So, from the University of California; I've come to inspect your school."

"Well, Doctor, I'm Thompson Webb," and held out my hand. He about jerked back; he wouldn't shake hands with me.

"I've come to inspect the school." So he came in and said, "I'll see this class and I'll see that one." He visited about all of them that morning and when lunchtime came, I invited him in to lunch. "No, indeed, I never eat with the school, never accept any courtesies from a school I'm inspecting." So he walked all the way to Claremont; he refused to let me drop him there. He turned us down by saying that we didn't have enough books in the library; in fact, I only had about as many as I've got over here, personal books. I hadn't started a library, first year.

My wife's father was just retiring from the ministry; he had a great career as a minister and he said, "Well, Thompson, I'll give you my library, five or six thousand volumes." All religious stuff. [laughter] So we moved it out.

MINK: Ah, you--

WEBB: Los Angeles Investment Company.

MINK: You were showing me a picture of your father's church.

WEBB: That's my wife's father's church.

MINK: Your wife's father's church, pardon me, and you said that when he retired from it, he offered you his library.

WEBB: Yes. So we moved out his library, somewhere from five to six thousand volumes. I wrote the University of California that we had made a correction; now we had over five thousand volumes in our library, which the professor had said we would have to have, and I would like to renew my appeal to be accredited. Then they sent down a young professor that brought with him a guitar. He looked around the school and wanted to see the science equipment; we were proposing to teach physics, and were teaching it. Then he said he'd have to let me know when he got back to Berkeley about the accrediting, but he had a contract to play in San Bernardino on his guitar that night and would I drive him over there. So I drove him to San Bernardino and left him

there with his guitar. When he got home, we were turned down because we didn't have enough physics equipment. At that time, somebody'd given the Pomona College a new physics building with all new equipment and they said I could have what I wanted of their old stuff. So I moved it up into a basement and then I wrote the University of California and applied to be accredited, that we had now a library and we had now a physics laboratory. They sent down Dean [Thomas M.] Putnam, the dean of men--did you ever know him?--and he was very jovial and pleasant and had lunch with us in the dining room. He came down here and sat by the fire--it was wintertime--he was sitting in this chair by the fire and I gave him a cigar and he and I were smoking cigars (I quit smoking), we smoked that together. It was a very different thing from the way the German professor refused to shake hands with me. He said something about William Elliott, and I said, "What William Elliott?"

"Oh, the distinguished Rhodes scholar that we have; he's the assistant, my assistant, assistant dean of men; one of the most famous scholars in America."

I said, "I didn't know he was out here."

"You know him?"

I said, "I taught him when he was in my father's school; I was a teacher there."

Next day I got a telegram from William Elliott, "The school is accredited." Now, William was one of those Rhodes scholars that Father prepared.

MINK: So he knew that you were running a top-rate school because you were carrying on in your father's tradition?

WEBB: He didn't even know I was in California and I didn't know he was, see?

MINK: Uh-huh.

WEBB: When I taught him he was a little boy; he went through Father's school and became a Rhodes scholar and had gotten his doctor's degree and was up there teaching at Berkeley and he was assistant dean of men. Then he went from there to Harvard and he took Dr. Munro's place at Harvard when Caltech told Munro to come out and help run Caltech while Millikan raised money. Munro picked Elliott to take his chair there, which was in international law, and William Y. Elliott taught international law for forty years at Harvard and is now retired and living in Washington, or in Virginia, right next to Washington. He was advisor on international law to four different presidents. That's the kid I taught. Well, we got accredited that way.

MINK: Meanwhile, you had the library, your father-in-law's library, but I wonder if you could tell me about the acquisition of that perfectly splendid library that you

have. It's such a beautiful building.

WEBB: We had a boy named Tom Jackson here in school from Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. He was a delicate boy and had trouble with pneumonia in the wintertime. The doctors advised the parents to bring him west. So he came to us for four years, one of the sweetest, finest boys I ever knew and a great student. He went to Caltech. Before Christmas that first year, he dropped dead. It was a terrible upset to us and to his parents; he was an only child. His body was shipped back east and seven years had passed, no correspondence between me and his parents. Then one day, Mr. Jackson called me up from Pasadena, said, "We have come out to Pasadena and we are staying at the Vista del Arroyo Hotel. Will you and Mrs. Webb come and have lunch with us tomorrow?" We would. At that luncheon, he said, "Dr. Millikan brought us out here; he's begging us to put up a building in the name of Tom here at Caltech." He said, "We've listened to him and talked about it, but Tom didn't love Caltech, he loved Webb School where he was for four years." He said, "He hadn't been at Caltech long enough to love it. We've decided we'd rather give the building to Webb School than to Caltech." Dr. Millikan backed off.

We were delighted, but I told him that this school belongs to me; it isn't an institution. You don't get any

tax reduction on it. He said, "I understand that, but we want to do the thing Tom would like. We think he'd like a library and he would like it at Webb School, if you'll accept it. And we hope you would like our architect; we'd like to have Myron Hunt."

We said, "Well, he was the one we'd like to have; he built our home." And that was fine. So he called in Myron Hunt and we all had conferences about this library. You've seen it. Those panels were left in there and my wife didn't want them hacked up so she [inaudible] [tape recorder off]

MINK: Now you said you would say something about the formation of the headmasters' association which then ran into the California Association of Independent Secondary Schools.

WEBB: Well, I was decided that if we could get these schools together, the headmasters, get them to know each other and be friends, we could stop this cat and dog fighting.

MINK: Could you give me an example of what this cat and dog fighting was like? I mean, what were they saying about one another?

WEBB: Well, the head of the San Diego Naval Academy told me that his football team came up to play Oneonta Military Academy and Oneonta just beat them all to pieces. Then he

found out that at the Oneonta Academy, not one of the students played. They had gotten fire companies of men to act as the players with their sweaters on--what a dirty bunch they were--and then they advertised that Oneonta had a great football team, and that kind of thing. Telling about how the catalog would say there's no smoking and yet they didn't stop it. On each other, they just told all the bad tales they could think of about each other and tried to get the boy to come to them, they were pure. They were using that system of trying to get patronage by abusing the other people.

MINK: I suppose you might say it was cutthroat competition?

WEBB: Oh, it was. They'd run all kinds of crazy ads in the papers. The papers were full of them; you don't see them anymore, really. Well, I talked to one or two of the headmasters and we decided to call them all together and see what we could do. It was a pretty stiff bunch at first. But they began to know each other, other human beings, and I talked to them; I said, "We want to boost this private education, that it's better than the average, so our schools will fill up."

MINK: Did you call this meeting here, or where was it called, in Los Angeles? Or was it just sort of an informal thing where just a couple of you got together over dinner?

WEBB: We got together and decided we'd meet at such and such a school. I think it was the Glendora School, the first meeting, long since burned up and gone. Well, we decided on that and then wrote to all these other schools, that we'd like to have a meeting of all the school people--

MINK: Come down to Glendora School?

WEBB: --on such and such an evening, and have dinner.

MINK: Were these people from Southern California?

WEBB: Oh, yes.

MINK: Did anybody [come] from up further north at all?

WEBB: We didn't get that far to start with.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: We started with our neighbors here in Southern California. There were dozens of little old schools around fighting each other. Black Fox prep is a military school in Pasadena, and--

MINK: I was noticing about Black Fox prep that they still advertise in the private school directory as having the finest preparatory program of any school in California and they advertise as the oldest school.

WEBB: Well, they're not operating. How can they do that?

MINK: Oh, excuse me, maybe I am talking about Cal Poly? Yeah, Cal Poly [California Polytechnic Institute].

WEBB: That's a state institution.

MINK: Well, which one is the one in Pasadena? The one that I'm referring to?

WEBB: Name of it is, across the arroyo there, name of that town over there.

MINK: Flintridge?

WEBB: Flintridge [Preparatory School for Boys], yeah.

MINK: Well, I'm talking about the one that is out there on California Street, I believe, near Lake, but very close to Caltech.

WEBB: Oh, that's Polytechnic Institute [School].

MINK: Poly Tech, yes.

WEBB: Well, that is a fine institution.

MINK: I see. They were one of the group that was called up?

WEBB: Yes. They were an elementary school in that day.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: They got a very fine headmaster that came and got the trustees to buy, and have gifts, got a great plant and now they have a big school, running from kindergarten to college. I used to get a lot of Pasadena boys out here, never get them any more, they can go to Poly. But we don't need them; we'd turn them away anyhow.

MINK: You organized this meeting, then, at the Glendora School?

WEBB: Yes, Mrs. Dalzell was running the school there and we had, I think, the first meeting of six, seven, or eight of them came. We talked this over, that we had to quit fighting each other and boost for what private schools could do, and help each other along. We got a pretty good friendship, and organized what we called the headmasters' association. We had two or three annual meetings and the military people [were] so different from the rest of us, I don't know; they finally, we got friendly and just dropped it and quit meeting. Then I felt that we ought to start over again, and there were certain shady people just to leave out. Some of us got together, there was Thacher, and the Cate School, Catalina [Island School], and Webb, oh, I don't know how many more, about six or seven of us got together and decided to start the California Association of Independent Schools, and take in the good ones up north and all. We did a lot of talking about it, and finally we had some meetings and we wrote our constitution. We decided that we didn't want the low-class schools in there, but if we said they were "low class," [there] would be war again. We got [Hiram] Edwards, from the University of California at Los Angeles, to help us and he was on the accrediting commission [agency], which was done out of Berkeley, but he was the Los Angeles representative. He met with us and we talked it over. We finally decided that

we could not judge other schools; they'd be mad. But we would ask five colleges to appoint a professor from their faculties, ask the president to pick out someone to be a committeeman for this independent association. We had five best colleges we could pick out, and we paid their expenses and furnished them a secretary. I don't know whether we gave them any income beyond that or not, but we raised enough money to do that. And Mrs. [Katherine] Walker, who was an admissions officer over there [at UCLA],* was secretary to Edwards and they were to judge the schools to enter. We said that if the product that went to college didn't average, the school couldn't be there. Their first year's grades had to be averaged, when massed. One could fail and another'd be all A's, but if Webb had five boys in colleges over the United States, this secretary got the grades. She gave Webb a grade for its average and the others a grade for their averages. If we didn't make that C average, we were out. A lot of schools couldn't make it. Those that did make it became the association.

We rotated the presidency around. One year when I was president, a man named Brown, a preacher named Brown who

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* Mrs. Walker never was an admissions officer at UCLA. Rather, she was associate director, Office of Relations with Schools. --Ed.

had bought the San Diego Military Academy, came to me and said he wanted his school in this association, found it'd be of great value to him. Many people said that they wouldn't send their boys unless it belonged to the association. And he said, "That committee has turned us down. You're president and I think you can get us in and I want you to do that."

I said, "Mr. Brown, according to our constitution, the only way anybody can get in is to be approved by this committee. Now you just work on them; work on your students that they get up this grade."

"Oh, no, Webb, you know you can get me in if you wanted to; I want you to do that." He says, "You know, I have a school back in Arkansas that's called Brown University, and if you go back with me in June, I'll give you a doctor's degree, and you can say you have one from Brown University."

That's the first offer I ever had of a doctor's degree; I refused it. [laughter]

Brown never did get in; his schools never came up; he had one over here in Glendora.

MINK: What's the problem with military academies generally? They don't stress the scholastic side of things?

WEBB: Oh, I don't know. Some people are good teachers and some are not; and some have character and some don't. Why, some of the military schools are fine and I understand Culver [Military Academy]'s a great institution, things like that, but this one's not.

Well, now I got you off on that doctor's degree. Subsequently, some several years later, what was then the College of the Pacific, known as the University of the Pacific, that's the oldest college in California--that's at Stockton--invited me to come up and have a doctor's degree. Well, that was legitimate and I accepted it. I presumed that they'd give me an LL.D., what they usually do with these complimentary degrees. So I went up and [was] entertained by the president of the university and the chancellor who was then retiring--I can't think of his name at the moment--and governor, just retired as the Supreme Court justice--

MINK: [Earl] Warren.

WEBB: Governor Warren was at the dinner and Bishop Somebody of the Baptist church. Governor Warren had already had a doctor's degree from them, so he sat by me when I got mine and mine wasn't an LL.D.; it was a doctor of pedagogy. Did you ever hear of one? Neither did I. I thought that was the darndest fool thing I ever heard of; I don't know why they did that. Anyhow, when I got home the

secretary at the office was making out the calendar for the following year; we always put in the names of the new teachers and their degrees, and they put behind my name D.P., doctor of pedagogy. I looked at it, D.P., displaced person. [laughter] You got it! But I made them spell it out, doctor of pedagogy. [laughter] Never had pedagogy in my life. It was sometime later that I picked up a couple of LL.D. degrees: one from Occidental [College] and one from Pomona [College].

MINK: Now you've always, you made reference to that and maybe you would like to put on tape the story about that conflict and how you made it with two offers you had for doctor's degrees from Occidental and Pomona.

WEBB: Well, I didn't intend to tell that. The crazy thing was the way it happened; got a letter from [Arthur G.] Coons over at Occidental saying their board had voted to give me a doctor's degree at their commencement; could I be there on June 5 [1962] at seven o'clock in the evening, commencement in the Bowl, or whatever they had.

MINK: The Greek Theater, there, I suppose.

WEBB: And I was pleased and accepted it. I had hardly been finished when I got a letter from Wilson Lyon down here saying the Pomona trustees had voted me an LL.D. degree and they'd like for me to be there on June 5 at five o'clock. Five Pomona, seven Occidental. It didn't look

possible. I may have told you this before, I don't know.

MINK: Not on the tape, I don't think.

WEBB: Bob [Robert O.] Reynolds had two boys in my school and [was] on my board of trustees. [He] heard about this thing that I couldn't make both, so he said he'd send his helicopter out. He had a helicopter that rode the freeways; he owned one of those radio [stations, KMPC] and he kept this for advertising, covering traffic to keep this Captain Schumacher riding the roads, the highways. [He] said Schumacher will be on the athletic field right behind the Pomona auditorium and you get out of that first one, you'd go at five and get the degree, come out and get on the helicopter and be at Occidental by seven. And we did.

MINK: Did you enjoy the ride?

WEBB: No.

MINK: You didn't?

WEBB: I don't like flying anyhow and this thing was an open bubble; you could see everything but what had you. You were just floating up there in a cloud and I could see Schumacher and he had a broken leg propped up like this in a cast and he was operating with one foot and two hands. I asked him how long he'd been running one of these things. He said about twenty-two years. I said, "Well, I guess if you can take twenty years of it, maybe I can take twenty

minutes." We landed over there and got our degree. Six weeks later [actually 1967] he fell with his passenger and they were killed. It'd take two doctor's degrees to get me on one. [laughter]

MINK: Well, I wonder, after you got the association organized, through the years, what have been some of its major problems, what have been some of its major accomplishments?

WEBB: Well, we got going, well, to put this requirement of satisfactory production in college as the basis of the whole thing. We got the good schools together and they have several little short meetings during the winter, but in June they have a longer [all-]day, several-day [meeting] somewhere. It's become a very friendly thing, we've all learned to be very fond of each other and admire each other. It's very helpful and they have a reputation with some of the best institutions, that if you belong to that association, the school's all right. It helps us that way. But at the time I was president of the association, I got a letter from someone in New England saying that several of the New England schools had gotten together to organize a national association. They had written to all of the local associations for their constitutions and they said ours was the best constitution. The little committee of them had gotten together and felt that the California

association was the leading local association in the nation, and they were going to have a meeting of about a dozen of them in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that summer to join in the matter of the national association and could I come and represent ours and tell them about how we did it. They had me come back three or four different summers and we'd sit and discuss these things; oh, they were tip-top men that I was talking with and it meant a great deal to me. We organized this national association. Now there are some thousand schools in it and they have a great meeting every summer, [to] talk over their problems, and even introduce legislation.

MINK: Paul Squibb told me that I should ask you particularly to tell about the question of dues and how you found, when you went there, that there was a disparity among the various headmasters as to how much they were going to pay to support this association.

WEBB: Well, we had to fight the president of the California association. A lot of people didn't want it to cost them anything. They wanted to give twenty-five dollars, a flat fee a year. But we felt that we had to have somebody to represent us, a paid secretary who would visit the public schools and tell them about the private schools and the requirements they had, so they'd know that a membership in that meant something. And it did. Many

high school principals that never paid attention to private schools began to send problem kids that would come up. I mean "problem," I should say where the parents had died and the child had no home, and where can we put them? In a boarding school that's a good boarding school. They got to being able to say, "Well, if they belong to that California association, it's a good one." That meant a lot to us, and didn't mean that they made enemies by doing that. So we put up our dues to where we were giving one percent of our gross income.

MINK: Whose idea was this in the beginning, if you can recall, that it should be one percent of the gross?

WEBB: I don't know.

MINK: Was that your idea?

WEBB: I don't know; happened too long ago. We sat around and we came to that agreement this would be perfect; that would give us enough to pay Pattee's salary.

MINK: Now this was, could you give his first name?

WEBB: Howard Pattee.

MINK: Howard Pattee. And he was the man that you hired?

WEBB: We hired him as our secretary, to give us our full time. We paid him a reasonable salary and expenses.

MINK: And his job was to [do] what?

WEBB: Visit the high schools, colleges, and so on, and tell them about this association and its standards and if

anybody's in this book, you can depend on them. The rest of them we don't know; we don't say they're not good, but we don't know. Might not be able to get in. We did give all of the educational people something to go by, and Edwards and Mrs. Walker over there at the university thought they knew the schools that were doing good work.

MINK: Well, now, have you generally been satisfied with Webb's performance in rank within the association over the years?

WEBB: Yes.

MINK: How are you ranked?

WEBB: I don't know, but we've never been questioned as to our eligibility. Our boys have always been above the average.

MINK: Now, Paul Squibb said that the way in which the reports were made by Mrs. Walker, it was possible for anybody in the association to see exactly where they ranked, one, two, three, four, or whatever. But over the years, Midland has tended to rank three, maybe, once in a while, one, but how have you ranked?

WEBB: I don't know. I don't ever remember seeing that. I do know at one time, one of the big foundations, Carnegie or something of the kind, put out a team to study the private schools of America and it came from schools of education. Asked eighteeen private schools to participate

and the rest were public schools; they studied a total of one hundred. The first week of school they had a committee of three people here and they gave all our boys aptitude and achievement tests and then during the year the committee came back and studied and qualified our equipment. How many toilets we had--everything was that kind--the number of books in our library, what we had. A very detailed study, and put it all down and gave us thermometers on everything they studied. Then when the year was over, towards the end of the year they came back and gave achievement tests again, so they had the beginning and how much the boys achieved at the end. They studied our faculty and if you were an A.B. you were nothing; if you had an M.A. you got so much; Ph.D, you got a lot. So many hours of education, the more education you had, the more you could get. Well, I was a member of that study [and] was a zero; I just had an A.B. degree. When the whole thing was finished they gave each school a book. Now, I think this is what Paul Squibb is talking about, showing exactly how you rated in comparison with a hundred schools. [tape recorder off] Now when we got our letter, I mean our numbers, we were number one in shopwork and our shop was under a tent out in the yard. We were number six on IQ of the hundred; on achievement we were number three; on our faculty we were number one hundred. We had the

bottom faculty of any, a hundred schools, and yet we got the achievement for third place.

MINK: How do you account for that?

WEBB: Well, they rated faculty on the number of degrees they had.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: We didn't have a lot of Ph.D's and most of them hadn't had any education. I never brought a man and asked him whether he's got any background in the field of education, I never believed in them.

MINK: What do you believe in?

WEBB: Being a scholar. I got that from Father. Pick out scholars for your teachers, Phi Beta Kappas, they don't have to be trained in method, they're smart enough to do it. He never cared a fig for what degrees you had if you could teach, if you were a scholar and knew your stuff. I always picked top scholars.

MINK: Well, then you would be looking at the grades; would you ask a faculty member, a prospective faculty member, for his transcript, or would you get the transcript from the college?

WEBB: You always got it and looked at it, his dossier or whatever you call it.

MINK: Including a transcript of his academic record wherever he went to school?

WEBB: Yes, yes, and how he did in them and if he seemed to be the type of person that could put it over. I have had top faculty out here, no doubt about that. Now for instance, one year down here at Pomona College, we had four boys in the senior class--had others in lower classes, but they only appoint seniors to Phi Beta Kappa--all four of ours were Phi Beta Kappa. Out of only ten men that made it, four of them were Webb men. In 1965, just four years ago at Harvard, we had four boys in the senior class, all graduated **cum laude** and one of them is the top boy. We've done that kind of thing over and over. And yet we got our failures, too. The most brilliant boy I ever had flunked Stanford the first quarter. He never attended a class, did a thing.

MINK: Thompson, what would be your philosophy about study? Now I remember that at Midland we were always told that when you go to college nobody's going to be sitting right in back of you--your mother or your father--and telling you you have to study, but that the thing is to develop good study habits during the time that you're in high school, and this is one thing, I guess, that is not easy to do. What's your philosophy about study?

WEBB: I have the same feeling. If they come here, they got to study; if they don't study they can go anywhere, that's all right. That's why we had study hall.

MINK: You put them in a study hall?

WEBB: If they didn't work themselves out of it.

MINK: Well, now, when do you let them out?

WEBB: First month, if they come out all A's and B's, right then they're out. If they get a C during the next month, they're back.

MINK: In other words, anybody that maintains an A or B average throughout the school year doesn't have to study in study hall, right?

WEBB: That's right. He mustn't have a C in anything. Then the seniors we're not so severe on; we want them to get used to not having somebody holding a ruler over them. But these younger boys, we come right down on them; they never had to do that in the schools that they'd been in before.

MINK: You let the boys out of study hall in their junior year?

WEBB: Not unless they earned it. No, they keep up that B average, and our B wasn't easy to get.

MINK: You always graded on a letter system, never on a numerical system?

WEBB: Yes, and I told them to measure by what that boy would do on a college board. Don't you give a B if he wouldn't get better than sixty on a college board, sixty was admission at Princeton, Yale, and Harvard.

MINK: Most of your semester examinations and your final examination, and maybe throughout the four years, but at least in the eleventh and twelfth years, they've been questions taken from older college board examinations?
WEBB: I don't know. Each teacher made his own exam. I didn't look on; I never told a teacher what to do. I just got a man that was very smart and a whole lot better student than I was and turned him loose.

I have a remarkable faculty. Now you take this man [Raymond M.] Alf, that museum boy, he was offered the head of the department of geography at Pomona College; he was offered a professorship at Princeton, and one at Yale. And others who've been here. Why, I had a much better faculty than Pomona College, not a larger one, but-- And I, all those first twenty years, I was paying better wages than Pomona, Occidental, Whittier, USC. I don't know what, what Berkeley and UCLA or Caltech did, I never knew how to compare that, but I was getting top men.
MINK: What were you paying then, in the thirties? During the Depression.
WEBB: I'll have to look back in the books; I don't know, because the whole family got their board and room and lights, food.
MINK: Could you guess at approximately what, what it was in the thirties?

WEBB: I really couldn't.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: Now I know this, that I was paying better than the public schools all along after the first year or two. I employed Dr. Blaisdell's youngest son for my first year at an absurdly low salary; I paid him one hundred dollars a month and took care of his wife, gave him food and housing. During the spring he told me he just had to have more money than that the following year. I told him I'd love to have him back the following year, but I didn't see any way of promising him more unless I had the students and I didn't have them yet. But I said, "If you want to go to another school, I'll try to get you a job." I got him one at the Harvard Military Academy in Los Angeles at eighteen hundred, just twice what I was paying him. I did that over and over for different teachers then. After we got up to where we were having forty or fifty boys and most of them paying, I could pick up salaries and I did. When the Great Depression came, '29, people would come to see the school, but they wouldn't sign the contract and when we came to the first of September, I didn't have a reservation. We were opening the middle. I told all the teachers, "Go get a job, for heaven's sakes. I can't promise you a thing; I can't pay you unless I get it out of these boys. If you can find any kind of a job that you're willing to take,

take it." Not one of them took it, but on the fifteenth of September, that school was full. These people that had been here didn't want to sign something until they knew it; well they have to settle it now, they came and--

MINK: I suppose many of them wanted to go home, talk it over with the boy, try to convince him that he would want to come, too.

WEBB: I don't know anything about that, but they paid, and I was able to pay every teacher on time the full amount of the salary. As we went along we'd increase it, we never had a written contract with any teacher.

MINK: Never had contracts?

WEBB: No, I wasn't giving a contract.

MINK: Why?

WEBB: What good would it do? It protected him but it didn't protect me.

MINK: If you didn't like the way he was teaching, he had a contract you couldn't say--

WEBB: Then I couldn't get rid of him. And if he decided he'd quit, as two or three of them did, they would just walk off.

MINK: You had some that quit in the middle of the year?

WEBB: Oh, sure, I've had that happen. Unless you have a good man, takes a man with character, you know. I've had them come in and say, "Well, such and such a school offered

me a hundred dollars a month more than you are paying me. Will you beat it?" And I said, "No, we've had the agreement." "I'm quitting." "All right, if you're that kind, I don't want you. You don't keep your word; I want a man that is honest and I'll keep my word and I want you to keep yours." You're always tied. I guess these big public school systems have to have-- But what could you do, this fellow with nothing in the world just said, "Well, I'm done; I'm quitting." You can't sue him. But if he wasn't satisfactory and I said, "You've got to go," he'd say, "Well, I'll sue you." And I had property.

MINK: Sue you for the rest of the year's salary?

WEBB: Yeah, anything he saw fit. Damn it, he might sue for a million dollars for damaging his character; you don't know what they could do.

MINK: Well, I'm going to turn the tape over.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 9, 1969

MINK: I wonder if you could speak just for a few minutes about Paul and Louise [Squibb] and their decision to leave Webb and strike out on their own, right at the depths of the [Depression], and perhaps you could introduce that by saying how it was that Paul happened to come to you and to start teaching here at Webb.

WEBB: Well, I don't remember how he happened to come, do you, Vivian?

MINK: You might as well come and sit down, Mrs. Webb, so you could get close enough to the microphone, there next to your husband.

WEBB: I don't remember what brought him here. He came and we liked him. He wasn't married and he agreed to come to me the following year, that was in the spring. He didn't want to start then and I didn't need him right at the spring. I arranged that he was going to come to me in the fall. Then, the next thing I knew, he'd gone up to Thacher's school and found out somebody'd gotten sick and he supplied [applied] and worked for Thacher, about half a year. Now he probably would have rather stayed with Thacher; that was a famous school and ours was little and struggling. But he was an honorable man; he'd agreed to come and he came, and he stayed with us eight years. He

went abroad one summer and on his way back on the ship he met Louise, and it wasn't long until they were married. We were simply devoted to those people and had great respect for his wisdom, his abilities as a teacher, and for the things he'd do for the boys on the side. He'd teach them how to make miniature sailboats and sail them on the swimming pool and he was head of horses for us, he knew horses and how to handle them. I didn't realize that he was thinking of leaving me; I didn't realize he was having a soul-searching about it, but finally he came in and told me that he'd decided he would not be back the next year, that he wanted to start a school of his own. Said his mother died and left him some money and he and Louise had enough to live on the rest of their lives and they would run this school, his school, on the basis of cost.

MINK: What did you think about that?

WEBB: Well, a socialistic move's all right if you want to do it that way, and I know he started out by charging, asking five hundred dollars for the year. He made a little extra; when he got through, figured up, he returned to each boy something like seven dollars and a half. Then [when] he came out short he'd send him a bill for twelve dollars. That was his principle of operating; whether he does that still or not, I don't know. He was always terribly interesting and I have tremendous confidence in

him. Did I tell you about his not saying the blessing at first?

MINK: Go ahead, tell me.

WEBB: You want that told, too?

I asked him if I could call on him in the dining room to say the blessing and he thought a minute and he said, "Well, if I don't have to say for Christ's sake or Jesus' name, I'd be glad to say it." I said, "Well, I'm not describing what you're going to say; I'd like to call on you for the blessing." From then on when we'd call on him, he'd say, "Make us aware of others' needs. Amen." Something like that. So, I was so surprised when he set up this chapel with an Episcopal service and he read the Apostles' Creed; I was just surprised he'd gotten over that business of "For Jesus' sake."

MINK: Did you here at Webb, as was done at Midland, ask the seniors, or should I put it this way, require the seniors to read from the Bible in the chapel services in rotation?

WEBB: No, I invited them to and anyone that didn't want to didn't have to. Most of them did.

MINK: I wonder now if you'd-- I have a number of other points here that I'd like to ask you about. One of the things that always, I suppose, plagues the headmaster of a private school is the question of selection of boys, and if

you can select good ones, you'll pride yourself in this. You can only take so many after all now--not right in the beginning when you were crying for students. What was your philosophy of selection?

WEBB: Well, the first year, I just had to take anybody I could get and they were pretty good boys, no trouble. So I went on the same way, as they'd apply, I'd take them if they'd fit into our program. I got these twelve boys that were rascals, out of twenty-eight. The rest of them were good boys. I didn't select any teachers until the last minute when I knew I had boys, got them all in the last two weeks. Then I hired two teachers. When they got here they were terrible. Went off for a weekend north. They'd ask for a certain amount of time off and every other weekend one of them get off and get drunk and couldn't get back for two or three days and get back bleary-eyed. I saw what they were doing. And the boys, they sided with these tough boys that weren't going to chapel and they weren't going to do this and they weren't going to do that. They were going to tell me how to run this school and so I said, you won't either. Just go on home, get out, you're done.

I learned my lesson. Get a good boy. I quit questioning their IQ or achievement. I didn't say what they had to be academically, but I would look up their character, what their teachers and their ministers and

their neighbors said about them as to whether they were mean kids, or whether they were gentlemen in their conduct. I picked only good ones and sometimes I'd turn away a dozen boys before I'd get one but I'd get the class of boy I wanted in behavior. Then as we went along I began to add to that, academic achievement. I didn't give them tests in the beginning. I got to the point later when I began to give IQ and achievement tests, but I wouldn't believe much in the IQ; don't still. If he can achieve, that's what I want. And I watched that very carefully, and we still do.

MINK: In the matter of parental relations, have these tended in the main to be pretty good, or have there been problems?

WEBB: Oh, of course you had problems. If you are running a boarding school you have all kinds of problems. I remember one nice boy, he was going along very nicely. One night his mother called me up and she began to curse me, the most profane woman, she called me a horrible son of a bitch, on and on. Just raving and I, I hung up the telephone on her. Her husband was an officer in the navy in charge of the Redlands naval group in Redlands College. I called him up in his office and told him what had happened, and I said, "I want you to come get your boy; I won't work for anybody that talks to me like that."

He said, "Well, Webb, you know what the matter is, don't you?"

And I said, "No."

He says, "She's dead drunk. When she gets drunk, nobody can do anything with her; don't pay any attention to her."

And I said, "Well, I'm not going to have her calling me up and talking to me like that."

He said, "Well, I'll tell you what you do. Now, you keep that boy. You look after the boy and I'll take care of the old lady." I never had any more trouble. Never heard from the "old lady" again.

MINK: I suppose this sort of thing is bound to happen. I suppose the problem of, in some instances, of overconcern for the children can be a problem.

WEBB: Of course there's lots of problems of that kind. I remember one of the funniest deals. One time I had two of the nicest ladies with two boys, each had a son, came in and enrolled them and they told me that they had grown up as neighbors when they were little girls and they had had a double wedding, married brothers, I think, or something of the kind, and had always lived next door. The children had played together all their lives, and they wanted them to come to the school. So I liked them, I took them. Then, a day or two later one of them came back and she said, "Now

we told you the truth about our lives and children growing up together but I don't think Sam's influence on Charles is too good; I don't want them to room together, I want you to separate them as much as you can. But don't you give me away, you'll break up the family relationship and it'd just be too important. You just handle it smoothly; just some way to arrange it so that they're in different buildings." She'd hardly been off the campus when the other one arrived and the same story, "Now, don't you give me away, but you see that these two boys are not together." So, we had some double rooms in those days and I put these two boys in different single rooms, one upstairs in this dorm and one over there. Opening day of school they arrived in a big way and they want to see their rooms and move in. I assigned a teacher to take this one and another teacher to take that one and they came running back, "We were to room together."

And I said, "You hadn't told me so."

"Oh, yes, of course, we were going to room together, we, we can't be separated this way."

And I said, "Why, boys, I've got everybody spotted now, I can't change you; I'm sorry. You'll just have to take it as it is."

So they ran off and they brought their mothers in and the four of them, "Why, Mr. Webb, we understood that they

would room together, we told you we'd been friends all of our lives, they'd always grown right up together, why of course we expected you to make them roommates."

And I said, "It's too late now; I'm very sorry."

So they were mad and they went out. In a minute one of them slipped back, "Thank you for being so tactful." An hour or so the other one came back, "Thank you for handling that like you did." [laughter]

MINK: That certainly is a good illustration of over-concern.

WEBB: Well, there's a play outfit that sells you plays, [Samuel] French, that sells lots of plays for amateurs; that's in one of those plays. The woman who wrote the play heard my story, and she made a very comical little one-act play out of that thing. [laughter]

MINK: I can see the point. I think it would be-- It has a real gimmick.

I know that in the archives of the Midland School, if you can call it archives, over the years Paul has preserved letters, you know, from parents, frequently there would be letters that-- I know that in preparing for the interview with him, I had access to those letters and I read them over in the motel, and I think the first thing I said to him when I got to Cambria--I picked these up at the Midland School, from the librarian before I went up to Cambria--

"Gosh, I hope my parents never gave you as much trouble as some of the people who wrote long, long letters of concern over the problems of scholastic achievement, health, all this sort of thing." Do you have any anecdotes to add in that area?

WEBB: Well, I don't know. I had a world of dealings with parents who were difficult. I had one father that was just so typical. He was supposed to be a minister, he had a doctor's degree from USC and taught over there. His boy roomed with somebody in the old dormitory, the dormitory had some double rooms. We put them in a room together, these two boys, and pretty soon the monitor committee found that one of these boys had a bunch of pictures of nude women in his room. It was not this preacher's son, it was the other one. So we took them away from him and then separated them and said, "You can't room with anybody if that's the kind of thing you want." But the father of the other boy got mad at me for taking his son's roommate away from him, and I explained to him why. "No, but that reflects on my son, that my son isn't good enough to room with him." He just raised cain with me. When he went to renew the contract the following year, I told him, "I don't want to take your boy; you've been so ugly yourself this year. The boy's all right but I won't take him. I'm not going to deal with you anymore."

MINK: Well, that is the way frequently you have to deal with these problems.

WEBB: I know.

MINK: You have to show--

WEBB: When you spoke, you asked me if Dr. [Robert] Freeman was the one that-- In 1911 when I first came to California I lived at the Vista del Arroyo Hotel; I went to Freeman's church. It was the year he came to that church. He was a powerful preacher.

MINK: Inspiring.

WEBB: I was just devoted to him. Well, then later I come here and start this school--ten or fifteen years later, I guess--and we had an arrangement with the Claremont church. That first year we went to church down there, sat on the front bench and I asked them that for the commencement sermon, could I invite Freeman and pay for his coming, would they accept him in their pulpit? The whole town would be there, you know, it's the only church in town and a big church. They agreed to that. So I wrote Freeman in February and made this arrangement, inviting him to be in the pulpit come June 5 or something like that at eleven o'clock in the morning. I said it won't just be my little school; it'll be the whole town of Claremont and many students, and I hope you can come. He wrote back and said that he appreciated the invitation, but on that particular

day, he'd be on a ship at sea on his way to Israel and he was sorry he couldn't come, and if he'd stopped right there, that's good. But he stuck on another paragraph, "Of course if I was in California, I'd feel that my duty would be for me to be in my own pulpit at eleven o'clock on Sunday, because I never leave that except when I address the student body of Stanford University." I thought that was a boner, because he's telling me that, telling me how little we were, compared to Stanford University. [laughter] I thought that was the darndest boner for a smart man to make, and I was kind of tickled when his own son later, Edward Hicks, his grandson in the school, graduated here.

MINK: At Mrs. Webb's suggestion, I wish that you would for a few moments recall the trip that you took to England and your visit to some of the boarding schools there in 1937, I believe it was.

WEBB: It was in 1936.

MINK: 'Thirty-six?

WEBB: Christmas sometime. I retired and put Mr. Price in charge of the school, and we took our two youngest sons, Bill and Jack, with us and drove East and we visited a number of schools that I had always wanted to see, like Andover and Exeter and Choate and Groton, and I met Dr. [Endicott] Peabody, who was a very old man by that time,

head of Groton. When I got there, they invited us in and I asked to see Dr. Peabody.

"He's out coaching the crew. When he gets through coaching, why, he'll be delighted to see you, he always comes in to have tea. You stay and have tea; in the meantime one of the teachers will show you the school."

So they showed me around and finally the teacher looked up and said, "There comes Dr. Peabody riding a horse." He was eighty-five years old, riding a horse, he'd been up there coaching. We all went in to tea and I was introduced to him. [He] said, "Are you Sawney Webb's son?"

I said, "Yes."

"I've known your father for years in the Headmasters Association."

We had a nice talk and had tea and then two weeks later I went to Millbrook School. [Edward] Pulling was headmaster there, it was in Millbrook, New York. I asked to see Mr. Pulling and they said, "Well, he's just finishing dinner; he had some guests today; his board met today, this morning, and then he entertained them for lunch; they're in the dining room, they're on their dessert now. You sit down out here and they'll be through shortly." And when Pulling came out, here was Dr. Peabody. He was one of their trustees. Peabody looked across the room and said to Pulling, "Why, there's Webb."

Never occurred to me he'd recognize me. He came over and said to Pulling, "This, this is Webb of California." He says, "He's the son of my old friend Sawney Webb."

I thought that was amazing that he'd remember that. And that was in probably April, May, something like that.

We went on visiting these schools and then went to Princeton and picked up our two boys that were in the freshman class, our two oldest sons. We all took a ship, the **Georgie**, to England and took our Buick car with us and we got off at Southampton and had a chauffeur meet us there to drive us until we got used to it. [He] took us up to Winchester. I went to Winchester [College] with a letter of introduction from one of the former Winchester teachers, an old man who had retired to Claremont, a good friend of mine, taught in the school. He said, "Now I want you to see Spencer Leeson, he's one of my old pupils. I want you to take this letter to him and he'll show you the school."

Well, we got to Winchester and put up in the oldest hotel in England, The God Begot Hotel; it's plenty old. I sent my letter of introduction over to Mr. Leeson by messenger with my little note in there that I'd like to see him if there's any time convenient. The messenger came back and just said, "Well, he says come on over."

So I went on over to the school and got to his door and rang the bell. He came out, "Mr. Webb, I'm very

sorry. I'm quite busy today, I can't see you." I thought that was pretty rude.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

And I said, "Well, I wanted to see the Winchester school."

"Oh, just go up to the gate; the porter will show it to you for a price."

So I paid the price and the porter showed me the school. You know, that's the school that has a motto that's been there-- It's the oldest school, they claim, in England and the motto is, "Manners maketh the man." And I saw that. The porter showed me everything he could, but I was bristling pretty hard at what that darn headmaster had done; I thought that was pretty rude.

So we had our chauffeur then drive us on up to London; by that time I'd learned the rules and from then on we didn't use the chauffeur. We put up at a hotel where I found my former English teacher, Dr. [Edwin] Mims, who had been sent over to England to be the American representative for the colleges of America that year, and he was lecturing. He'd been to my father's school and then I'd studied under him at the University of North Carolina and he was like an old friend. He took us in hand to show us London and he said, "I want you to go around to the English Speaking Union. They have an American representative, a

former Harvard professor there and his secretary. I want you to meet him."

Took me around and introduced him to me and when I sat down this professor said to me, "I hear you got snubbed at Winchester yesterday."

"Well," I said, "I hadn't told a soul."

MINK: News travels fast.

WEBB: "How did you know it?"

He said, "I was sitting there and heard it." [laughter] He said, "Well, I tell you, these English headmasters are peculiar. They get tremendous salaries and it turns their heads. If you ask to see them any time within two weeks, you've insulted them. They think they're so important that you have to have a long-time engagement with them." Said, "You just sent your letter too soon and tried to see him too soon, and he didn't explain that to you, he just snubbed you." Now he said, "Let me make you an itinerary." He said, "I'll call Rugby and Eton and Harrow, and they'll all invite you to come from fourteen, fifteen, sixteen days later and they'll be courteous to you." So he did it and they were courteous to me. But isn't that peculiar?

MINK: Yes, it is! Especially because we think of you, who probably is available to visitors twenty-four hours a day, as Paul and Louise were, as Mr. Thacher and Mr. Cate were.

WEBB: We've been that way all our lives. Well, this old professor here had taught Greek at Winchester for forty years, had taught Spencer Leeson as a student, writes him and tells him that he's delighted with my school and would like for him to show me courtesies. That's the kind of courtesy he showed me; I think it's a pretty scrubby place myself.

MINK: Manners maketh the man!

WEBB: He didn't live very long after that, either.

MINK: Well, can you give me some of the impressions you had of Eton, Harrow--

WEBB: Well, at Rugby, I was invited to come to lunch on a certain day, as a guest of the headmaster. He had a dining room about so big with a platform at one end of a long table and we sat at that long table and these seniors all were eating in this dining room, not much bigger than this.

MINK: The rest of the school ate elsewhere?

WEBB: Yeah, I don't know where they were. Then after-- He had a don from, not Oxford, but--

MINK: Cambridge?

WEBB: Cambridge. Cambridge don was the other guest who had a son who was going to attend Rugby the following year. He'd come down to make his final arrangements. So we chatted together, and afterwards he said, "Now I think

maybe you'd like to see our playing fields." So he took us out; there was just acres of grass where they played cricket; all the teams could play cricket. He goes around and shows us a sign on one wall where it said, "Here was where William Webb carried the first football." Something; in other words they kicked before that, but William Webb had picked it up and run with it, and that was the beginning of that kind of football, couple hundred years before. I have a son named William Webb [and] a father named William Webb, so it was sort of funny when we saw that.

Then he took us on to where there was [a] great mound, several times higher than this room, with trees that big growing on top of it. He said that was supposed to have been a burial mound that was here from prehistoric days, but in seventeen hundred and something, the students rioted, and they got mad at the headmaster and intended to kill him and they came after him and set his house on fire. Some of his servants had run out and brought in some of the country shareholders, or whatever you call them, to come in with their pitchforks, and they joined the faculty with the pitchforks and fought the students and finally drove them up on top of this mound and they had to surrender.

I said, "After they surrendered, what did he do with them, do you suppose?"

"Well," he said, "I guess he sent some home and some must have been beaten." That's the way he put it, "Must have been beaten."

And this don from Cambridge said, "You said, 'He sent some home and the others were sent to Eton'?" [laughter] The don had a sense of humor; but we had a good laugh about it.

My invitation to Eton was to come on a Sunday to afternoon tea. So we went kind of early and it was to me to come; I hadn't said anything about my wife and children being in England. When I got there, I was taken into a room where they were serving tea and cake; it was put out there on the table and these English people could go and get what they want; nobody offered you anything. I didn't know what to do. I hated to just go up and take a piece of cake; not used to having it served, you know. But anyhow, Lord Dunglas came over and talked to me and Lady Mary, that's the class of people we were talking to, and Lord Dunglas said, "How are you traveling in England?"

So I said, "I brought my automobile with me on the ship."

"Why did you do that?" He said, "You can get motorcars over here." They use the word, "motorcar."

I said, "I brought my wife and four sons; they are six of us."

"Ah, large family; you must have a large motorcar."

And I said, "Yes, it's what you call a seven-passenger, about the biggest made."

"Well," he said, "how in the world can you get along on our little narrow English lanes with a big American car?"

And I said, "I get along fine until I come to a bunch of bicycles and they get up in front of me and I can't get by." And I said, "Somebody told me there was a law that required only two to ride abreast and the others to be following back."

"Ah, yes, yes, there's that law," he says, "you have to protect the two; you can kill the rest of them." [laughter]

Then I asked to go to chapel; they said that the chapel service was shortly. The headmaster arranged for one boy to drop out and make room for me to sit in the chapel. I saw the service, beautiful, High Church Episcopal service, and when that was over the headmaster said to me, "Now I have an appointment, I have to leave, but if there's anything else we can do for you, my friend here will be glad to help you."

And I said, "Well, could I see the library?"

"Yes," he said, "you can." Now he said to the young man, "You go up to my room, up into my apartment, and in the bedroom in the chiffonier in the left-hand drawer you'll find the key to the chapel--"

MINK: To the library?

WEBB: "--to the library." So I waited and the young man went up and brought a key about that big, a whale of a thing, and he took me upstairs and unlocked the door and we went into this huge room, great vaulted ceiling and rows and rows of these old books, bound in leather, and things and then exhibits, tables on the end and right in front of me was the exhibit of the Gutenberg Bible, under glass, and over here was the manuscript of Gray's **Elegy** written in longhand, and I was just seeing that when in came an old fellow with white hair hanging down this way, in academic robes, "What are you doing in here? What are you doing in here?"

I was startled and the young man stepped up to him and said, "Sir, Mr. So-and-So (the headmaster) told me to show this library to Mr. Webb."

"He can't do that. I'm the librarian. He can't do that. You get out of here; you get right out of here. Both of you. Just as fast as you can get." Out we went. Not a soul was in the library.

Then the invitation to Harrow was to come out to a cricket game, and the headmaster took me out, sat in the bleachers, the stupidest thing I ever saw and I got awful bored. As soon as I could we got away, not much to that. There was one thing that interested me, though, at Harrow. Years ago I had acquired a picture in a very peculiar way of an English painter by the name of--

MINK: You said the painting was by Copley Fielding.

WEBB: Copley Fielding. Now, there was an Irishman, I'll think of his name directly. Anyhow, when my family was staying down at the beach one summer, I'd go and come every day. Leave there early in the morning, get back in the afternoon, have a swim, supper, come back to my office the next day. When people would come in, I'd enroll them; if they didn't come, I'd read. I got a new **Atlantic Monthly** and I was reading an article headed "The Fighting Parson," by Alexander Irvine, that's the name. I read that chapter, it was continued; the whole book was to be printed in there. He told about being raised in poverty in Ireland. He was twenty-six or -eight years old before he could read and write and had never known what it was to not be hungry. Never had enough to eat. But at that point he could get away from home and he wanted to learn to read and write and found if he joined the marines of England, they'd teach him to read and write. So he joined the marines; he

took the schooling and learned to read and write and then they were asked what battleships they were to go out on, what were their choices. He put down the flagship, because it had a library on it. When the assignments were read out, he didn't get it, he didn't get the library. And he wanted to read. He went to the man and said, "There's been a mistake about this. I was to go on that." "No, you weren't [inaudible]." And he said, "I talked to God about it and I told Him I wanted to go on the battleship." Well, it's a fascinating story. He got on that battleship. He became a professor at Yale, not reading until twenty-eight years of age!

I supposed he was still in Ireland or at Yale, I didn't know. But I went up to Santa Barbara to play a game with my team, shortly after school started, and the headmaster of the other school took me over to meet a friend of his, a Dr. Alexander Irvine. I said to him, "This is strange. I've been reading the life of a man by that [name] in **Atlantic Monthly.**" He said, "That's my article." Wasn't that a strange thing that I should have met him like that? Anyhow, I read it to my family that night, to Vivian, and the children listening, everybody was excited about it; fascinating story.

Well, from then on I'd have Dr. Alexander Irvine come and preach on Sundays and he just charmed everybody;

magnificent person. But he never could keep any money. When he got some money, why he'd give it to somebody that needed it worse than he did, sort of like [Oliver] Goldsmith. He was always broke and he came out one time and told me, he said, "I got to have sixty dollars today." He said, "A friend of mine got into all sorts of trouble and I gave him the last penny I had. The way I got the money was I pawned my collection of books and I had a wonderful collection of books. I pawned it for sixty dollars to give him the money. I've tried to find it and I haven't found it. I want you to lend me sixty dollars. I'll bring it back to you shortly." I was borrowing money pretty heavily then myself. I hated to do it, but I hated to turn him down, so I lent him the sixty dollars. He didn't say anything about it again for several years. One day he came out and gave me this. He said, "I'll never be able to save sixty dollars to pay you, but this is worth many, many times sixty dollars. I want you to take it."

And I said, "Let's put this up and sell it and then give me the sixty and then you have the rest."

"No, no; I want you to have that." He said, "That is the best there is."

Well, I began to ask these art people down here at Claremont about Copley Fielding. Nobody ever heard of him. I went to the Huntington Library one day, went to

hear the curator speak and after it was over, I went up and I asked him, I said, "Tell me something about the English painter by the name of Copley Fielding."

"Oh, he's not an Englishman, he's an American, just a lesser-known American."

I said, "I beg your pardon, I'm talking about Copley Fielding; I have just read his life in the **Encyclopedia Britannica**; he's an Englishman."

"I know what I'm talking about." And went off and left me.

MINK: Where was this, the Huntington?

WEBB: At the Huntington, the curator; just as rude as he could be. I couldn't find anybody that had ever heard of Copley Fielding and I just felt that I had paid sixty dollars for that. Well, Dr. Mims, as soon as we got to London, took us around to the British Museum. We were [within] two or three blocks of it. As we entered the first room to sign up, there were a number of pictures in the big display of Copley Fielding. Now that interested me; if he got into the British Museum maybe he was somebody. Then on this trip to Harrow, I saw a signboard saying, "Exhibit of Copley Fielding," for such and such days, at Harrow on the Hill. When I got there they had a whole building, must have been a hundred of these paintings by Copley Fielding. I guess I've got something; nobody in America knows anything about him.

MINK: Did this conclude your visit of the private schools, after Harrow?

WEBB: Yes. Then we came back, got in our car, and drove across [the country] and started the next year. Those two sons of mine were in the same class at Princeton, went there in '35; they graduated in '39, both Phi Beta Kappa at Princeton. Pretty good score, two sons in the same grade. [laughter]

MINK: Certainly is.

I wonder if we might move on now. I have noted two things, distinguished faculty and distinguished alumni; I think they go together. You have spoken about some of the alums, but I wonder if for a few minutes you might mention some of those who have really done this school proud, in what their achievements have been.

WEBB: Well, I don't know how much I can remember. [tape recorder off] About the third year of the school, as I remember it, had a boy brought to me by the name Paul Brandigee, from Connecticut; he was related to Senator Brandigee of Connecticut. He had one year to do in high school and he wanted to go to Williams.

MINK: Good choice.

WEBB: After Christmas that year--the boy was a splendid student--I wrote to Williams, saying I had this boy that would like to enter Williams. I had a letter from the

admissions officer, a man by the name of Eggard, stating he'd never heard of our school and the only possible way he could admit this boy would be by College Entrance Board examinations. I wrote back that was the only way I admitted boys was by college board examinations.

MINK: You weren't accredited at this time?

WEBB: I was accredited, but I said the only way I'll send them to college is on the college board, and I would be very happy for him to take them. So he took the boards when school was out and was admitted.

MINK: By the way, were--just to interrupt you for a minute--boards ever given here? Or did the boys have to go to the city?

WEBB: Oh, no, they give them right here; they send people out here to administer them.

MINK: So he took the boards here?

WEBB: Sure, right here at our school. They come from all over the valley and take it here. Until the board sent its people here no one had ever heard of college boards until we started them. Well, Paul agreed to it. Right after midterms I got a letter from Mr. Eggard, "If you've got any more of those boys like Paul Brandigee send them to us." [laughter] He made it, a junior Phi Beta Kappa. His senior year he was in an automobile accident and killed. Several years later, I had a boy named George Whitney who wanted to

go to Williams. So he took the college boards, was admitted, and he made senior Phi Beta Kappa. So my first two boys to ever go there were Phi Beta Kappas. I've had a good many go since; I don't think they ever made Phi Beta Kappa, but I'm pretty proud of those. That was a good score on Paul Brandigee. Then I've had many, many Phi Beta Kappas; my wife has always put their names up in the dining room; she's kept a list of them, all their names. We've had one Rhodes scholar; not many applied for that. But Dwight Taylor took the Westinghouse Science Talent Search and came out the number one boy for that year. **Time** magazine gave him [a] two-page write-up, all there was about him except the school that prepared him; that wasn't mentioned. Twice since then we've had winners on the Westinghouse Science Talent Search. We don't always have anybody to enter it, but when they do we've done well.

David Fleishhacker made it. And I can't think--Mussler, a boy named Mussler made it. I can't think of his name right off the bat; should get it right. Pat Mussler. Those three had won the Westinghouse prizes.

Malcolm McKenna got so interested in paleontology here on these trips with Mr. [Raymond M.] Alf; of course we don't teach paleontology, we just play it and go on trips. But he specialized in the field, got a Ph.D. degree, and became a professor at Berkeley. He then was

called to be the head of the department of paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York where he is now.

MINK: While we're talking about paleontology, I wonder if you would say some more about Mr. Alf. I believe the other day you told me that when he came to teach biology at Webb --and I understood that's what he first taught--

WEBB: That's what I hired him for.

MINK: --he didn't know anything about geology or paleontology.

WEBB: That's right.

MINK: Could you tell me something about how this interest developed and what it's meant to the school?

WEBB: Well, I had the habit of taking my boys on camping trips, especially my children at times. I promised my son Bill to take him on a certain weekend when the boys would be home, out on the desert, camping. Something important came up and I couldn't leave and I had to tell Bill I couldn't go. Then he asked me if one of the teachers would take him, could he go. And I said he certainly could. So we asked Mr. Alf, and Alf was glad to take him. When they got out there on the desert, Bill was sliding down a mud bank and tore the seat out of his pants, and he got around to see what had snagged him and there was a tooth sticking out. He called Mr. Alf and they looked at that thing and

they got a chisel and something out of the car and chiseled out a head; they didn't know what they had. They brought it home and Mr. Alf was curious enough, he took it over to Caltech to Dr. Stock who was professor of paleontology. Dr. Stock told him it was the head of a peccary, the ancestor of the pigs, and that it was from the upper Miocene period. He said paleontologists had been hunting for fifty years for a peccary from the upper Miocene and never had one, a missing link. They had peccaries before and after and they never found one in California. This one's in California and is the missing link. Says this fossil's worth $10,000 and that excited Bill and Mr. Alf.

Mr. Alf began to read paleontology and got more and more excited and finally, when he'd been here about seven years, he took a year off and he went to the University of Colorado and stayed two summers and one whole year and got a master's degree in geology and paleontology. Since then, he's taken many trips to many universities for courses but never put them together to get his doctor's degree out of it. But he's become a famous paleontologist and he writes for the technical journals until everybody knows him in the technical field.

MINK: I know that when I was chatting with Benedict Rich last Saturday night, he paid Mr. Alf a very high compliment. He said, "He's an amazing man." I wonder if

you could tell me something about the trips, and about the museum which we looked at and which certainly impressed me. I've never seen anything like that. And his work, particularly in the Grand Canyon, and his interest in tracks. I see that animal tracks seem to be the one thing that he's most interested in. Could you speak about that for a while?

WEBB: Well, when you said track, I thought you meant track meet.

MINK: I mean animal tracks.

WEBB: This came from being on an Olympic team as the fastest 220 runner in America [laughter] and that's the way I got him. He was in the Los Angeles Athletic Club and I heard about him; he had to have a job. I went in and employed him. He was about twenty, just graduated from Doane College.

MINK: From where?

WEBB: Doane. It's up in [Crete] Nebraska.

MINK: I see.

WEBB: He came to teach this one thing he said he could teach, biology. Well, he had an amazing amount of curiosity and he never gives up, he [was] just hunting, hunting, hunting. He's taken the boys down into the Grand Canyon. I asked him the other day, "How many times have you been to the bottom of the Grand Canyon?" And he said,

"Probably eight times." And he wasn't a jackrabbit. [laughter] Well, he taught them geology according to the textbooks of the different geologic periods as you went down. It told him that according to the textbooks the bottom of the canyon was the oldest stone man had ever seen and was laid down a billion years before there was life. Every time he'd go down he'd peck around in it and see what he could find and he began to find some funny little circular things in the stone that was supposed to have been made by dripping water on mud. He got curious about them and he took them out and they took them to Berkeley and sawed them into fine sheets so that he could see through it. There were the organs of the jellyfish, revealing there'd been life in this world a billion years before the scientists knew it; and actually were mistaken about the age of that rock in the bottom of that canyon. He's upset the textbooks and they've got to settle that, just what it is.

MINK: He has been, as I could see, interested in animal tracks, and I gather that he's traveled all over the western United States.

WEBB: They're going all the time all summer; he has six of these wagons, station wagons, four-wheel traction, great big things, you know, take about eight or nine boys each. He has a teacher drive them, the boys in there and he takes

about thirty of them, older boys and they camp for five weeks. They go through Utah and Colorado and South Dakota and Nebraska, Wyoming, wherever they can find fossils. They camp out and dig these things and bring them back, clean them up, put them on display.

He's very much interested in tracks, got interested in the dinosaur tracks. He began to find these three-toed things in the mud where the animal had stepped and then occasionally he'd find one that looked, that was like the animal had left his foot. It was positive, it wasn't negative. He wondered if nature made casts, although at Seligman, Arizona, they had flagstones, mines, or quarries, whatever you call them. He went over there. He began to split these things, and here he'd find the negatives where a lizard or something had run through the mud. Then on the other side would be the positive print; just identical with this. That first layer of mud after it got the tracks in it hardened into stone, subsequently a new layer of mud ran over it and filled those little holes and made the positive print. He looks along now, he finds rows of negatives and positives showing that nature has through the years made casts of the tracks in the mud.

MINK: Wonder if you could tell me a little of the background of how the new museum was built, where the wherewithal came for the science complex, too. I was most impressed by that area.

WEBB: Well, I had stated back some twelve or fifteen years ago that we were going to turn the school over to a board, a nonprofit institution which could receive gifts, and we had gone into the organization of it. The attorneys were drawing up the papers for the incorporation and Mr. Dwight Taylor, whose son had been the first, the Westinghouse, came out to see me and he said, "I'm very eager to contribute towards a museum for Ray Alf and I want it named for him. And I want to give you $10,000."

MINK: I suppose it's because Mr. Alf had a great influence on his son.

WEBB: He had. He said, "In appreciation for what Mr. Alf has done for my son, I want to put up $10,000 and start a fund to build the Alf Museum and name it Alf Museum."

And I said, "Well, I'm going to be incorporated very shortly, better hold the check back until we're incorporated so you can get your reduction." So he did. So when we got all in shape he sent the $10,000 and we put it in building and loan, and I announced it and began to ask for money and I just didn't get responses. Occasionally somebody would give me a thousand dollars, occasionally five thousand; and over a period of some years this built up to be about $75,000 and the trustees said, "Well, why don't we put up a Quonset hut and get the museum started?"

Well, that didn't suit Alf and it didn't suit me; we wanted a good building. So we held back. Then this boy from Louisiana came out and gave us $50,000.

MINK: How did that happen?

WEBB: He knew Alf well. He'd gone on all these camping trips with Alf when he was here in school; he'd go to every one they'd let him on on the weekends and then he'd go every summer. He went the summer after his first year and after he'd graduated for that summer he went. So he gave us $50,000 and then George Getty said, "Well, gee, we're getting enough to do something now; I'll give you $100,000." Then others piled in and Millard Sheets said, "Well, I'll make the plans for the building as my gift, draw you the blueprints and everything, about $12,000 worth of work."

MINK: Did Millard Sheets send his sons to Webb?

WEBB: Three of them. When we got through, the thing had cost nearly $400,000; we were short about $6,000 paying the last bill. George Getty said, "Well, my horse came in yesterday. I'll pay that." So it was paid up. And did I tell you about how we got the equipment?

MINK: I wish you would.

WEBB: Well, George suggested that we send a list of equipment that each teacher wanted and he said to the teachers, "Now you put down everything you can think of

that you want in your laboratory; don't leave out anything. Curtains and carpets and benches and chairs and microscopes and everything you want. Put it down and put a price list behind each item, and somebody will come along and say, 'I can give you this one,' and somebody'll come along, 'I'll give you that one.'" Well, Mr. Alf's list when tabulated ran over $45,000 with all the expensive microscopes he wanted and that kind of thing. Physics and chemistry each ran over $25,000. We sent them out and in the course of a very few weeks it had all been subscribed. Mr. Taylor, who gave the first $10,000, brought a check of $50,000 to Mr. Alf and told him he wanted him to have everything he could get, everything he wanted. Mr. [Charles B.] Thornton, known as Tex Thornton, contributed $25,000 for the physics laboratory, saying that unquestionably Webb had prepared his boy for Harvard and had graduated the top of his class. Mr. McKenna gave $25,000 for chemistry and that's the way we got this handsome establishment.

MINK: That certainly is a fine building.

WEBB: Beautiful job.

MINK: Beautiful job.

I wonder if you could talk now as we come to the end about the work of your son at Catalina and at Dunn School or as much of it as you know and as you wish to talk about.

WEBB: At the beginning of the last world war, immediately after Pearl Harbor, the Navy put the Catalina Island School off the island and took over the equipment for the training of naval officers. Mr. [Keith] Vosburg told me that he supposed his school was done for when that happened. I invited him to bring his school here and live in my gymnasium, that we could feed him. We'd just line up cots in the gymnasium for them to sleep in.

MINK: Faculty and all?

WEBB: Faculty and all. And that we would give him the library for his schoolhouse and he could get along for a little while until he could find a proper place. Well, they stayed with us about five weeks and then he was able to rent a vacant school in Santa Barbara.

MINK: Reynolds School?

WEBB: It belonged to Mr. Reynolds, but--

MINK: Dean's.

WEBB: Dean's School, vacant Dean's School. Rented that and took his school up there. In the course of time, he combined with Mr. Cate at Carpinteria and after a year or two Mr. Vosburg retired from the school entirely. Some years after the war was over, some of the alumni of the former Catalina [Island] School got together and decided that they would like to start the school again on Catalina. They subscribed money for the purpose and they

asked my son William, who was admissions officer here at this school, to be the headmaster. They told him they'd put him on salary immediately and he could get busy fixing up the old plant the way he wanted it, arranging, of course, teachers and his pupils to start a year from September next, this was at Eastertime. Bill said, "If I'm coming I want to start [in] September and not a year later." Well, they said that didn't give them time to get the students lined up. He said, "If I could get twenty students, may I start?" They agreed. Bill started in September with forty-seven students and an excellent faculty. He was there the next year with sixty-odd and the next year with seventy-odd students. During that year Mr. Dunn dropped dead.

MINK: Dunn of the Dunn School?

WEBB: Dunn School.

MINK: In Santa Barbara?

WEBB: Los Olivos.

MINK: Yes.

WEBB: Suddenly died and Bill was asked by their trustees before Dunn was buried if he wouldn't come to head it. Bill said he would like to come, but he couldn't leave Catalina just suddenly like that, but he'd get a substitute. He did get Mack Fish, who had taught for us a number of years, to come and carry the Dunn School on to

the end of the year. There were no proper schools for girls on Catalina Island and Bill had four girls. The situation was awkward. Too expensive to send them to boarding schools and what to do with them was a problem. So by going to Dunn, his daughters could drive over to Santa Barbara every day to school and college. I believe this is the third year, isn't it, at Dunn since Bill's been there?

MINK: I believe so.

WEBB: Told me on the telephone that he had some of the finest faculty he'd ever seen. He had some men that were teachers here and some that were pupils. He had young Thacher and an excellent staff and he expected to have about eighty boys. You ought to call him up and find out how he started with them.

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