

## CWU LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

**Dale Comstock**

**Interviewer: Jake Jacobsen**  
**Technician: Bob Jones**

Jacobsen: It is January 29, 1997 and we are interviewing Dr. Dale Comstock, a professor emeritus of mathematics who has also been Dean of Faculty. Eldon Jacobsen is interviewing and Bob Jones is our cameraman. Dale, I wonder if you would start by giving some of your personal background in terms of birthplace, where you lived, and conditions in which you grew up?

Comstock: Right. I was born on a farm in northern Wisconsin. My father was a farmer. I was born in - on January 18, 1934 out on the farm. I was not born in a hospital. In fact, I've never been in a hospital in my entire life. In 1941, my father - our family relocated to the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Then shortly after when the war broke out we moved to Portland and my father worked in the shipyards during the war. He was a welder foreman. So my elementary years in school were all in Portland. Great place to live. I loved it and I learned a lot although in those days we went to school in shifts. I remember I went to elementary school in the morning shift and my sister went in the afternoon shift. My father worked graveyard shift as a welder reman. My mother worked swing shift. So both of them worked all through the war as welders in the shipyard. After the war and after I graduated from elementary school we moved to Kennewick, Washington in the Tri Cities area where I went through high school. Graduating from high school in 1951. In the fall of 1951 I came to Central as a student - came to Central as a student. In fact the first year at Central I had Professor Jacobsen as a professor in psychology in a psychology course and I had Ham Howard, professor of education for a course in audio visual. I had Marty Kaatz. I took quite a bit of work in geography. In fact, I got a minor in geography. I ended up graduating from Central in 1955 with a major in mathematics and a minor in physics and a minor in geography. After that I went into teaching and taught at Kennewick High School, my old high school where I had been a student and over at Columbia Basin College. During the day I taught math and physics at the high school and at night I taught math at Columbia Basin College over in Pasco. I continued doing that through 1957. Oh, by the way, during that time I was married to my wife, formerly Mary Jo Lien, in 1956. In 1957 I was drafted off of my job as a high school math and physics teacher, entered the army and my wife and I ended up spending a couple years in Germany coming home in June of 1959. I returned to Kennewick and taught one more year of high school math and physics. Then decided to go on to graduate school. I entered graduate school in 1960 at Oregon State University on a NSF fellowship. I stayed there for four years completing my master's degree in mathematics and my PhD in mathematics with an outside minor in computer science. In 1964, then, I started my professional career at Central Washington University as Assistant Professor of mathematics and Director of the computer center. First came here when Central obtained its first small computer, the IBM 1620 and we also had a lot of card handling equipment and other kinds of thing. Enos Underwood, the former registrar, he handled the administrative side of data processing at that time and I handled the academic side of the computer work. A couple years later I became acting chair of the department of mathematics just as the department was starting to expand. We added quite a lot of new faculty and I recruited a new senior department chair.

Jacobsen: Can I interrupt to ask what your salary was when you started as an assistant professor and how that might compare with what you got as a high school teacher?

Comstock: That's an interesting question. In 1964 I started at Central at \$9,400 was my academic year salary. My last year teaching high school my salary was \$4,500. So just about twice. Although I was at sort of the top end of the salary scale when I was hired here at Central because at that time PhD's in mathematics were very scarce and I had offers all over the country to go various places but I didn't want to leave the Northwest. So I came in at a fairly high salary. The year I got my PhD in mathematics there were only 300 PhD's in math in the United States. So I was rather a rare person at that time. I've had a great life - professional life at Central as a faculty member - well, at first a student and as a faculty member, as an

administrator. Then I went back to the faculty and now as a retired member of the faculty. I have had a lot of chances to opportunities - well, let me continue a little bit with my career at Central just to give you a chronology.

Jacobsen: Please do.

Comstock: I was acting chair in '66-'67. Hired a new chair who at the time was in industry at Hanford. Bob Dean. He came in as chair. Then in 1968 and '69 I was gone for part of each of those years with the National Science Foundation on their India program. I lectured at universities and consulted with departments of mathematics at Indian universities all over the country. I was - I came back on full time in '69-'70. At the end of 1970 - in August of 1970 I was invited by Jim Brooks to become acting dean of graduate studies in summer session at that time. In fact, you were provost at that time. I came aboard about a month before Ed Harrington came aboard as the new Vice President for Academic Affairs in the fall of 1970. During that next year, Ed arranged for a study of the office and in '71 started a search for a permanent dean and at the same time reorganized the office so that summer session was no longer part of the dean's office. Instead, the research office was extended to my area of responsibility. So I became the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. When I was formally appointed to the permanent position after a six months search nationally for applicants. I was one of them. The faculty committee recommended me to the position. I served in that position then through 1990. Just 20 years of service through September of 1990 except I took two or three leaves during that time. Well, two leaves I guess. In 1976-'77 I was on leave for a year as a presidential interchange executive in Washington D.C. I served in the Department of Energy working on a joint project between the State Department, the Department of Energy and the CIA. Great experience. I have autographed pictures shaking hands with Jerry Ford, who was President when I started and Jimmy Carter, who was President when I left and met nearly all the cabinet secretaries on a friendly basis and really had a great experience that year. Then again in 1984-'85, I was gone for a year as Dean in Residence at the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington D.C. They bring in a dean each year to serve them- and to have contact with institutions and I played that role for one year. I've done a number of other interesting things as dean of the graduate school representing Central. I was on the board of directors at the Council of Graduate Schools for a year for three years, I'm sorry. I was on the GRE Board of the Educational Testing Service for a three year term. I served as President of the Western Association of Graduate Schools which included the four western Canadian provinces and the 13 western states. I've done work with UNESCO in Iran. I was back to India in 1986 with the USIA evaluating universities. I did some consulting work with the National Science Foundation in Saudi Arabia. Then after returning to the faculty in 1991, I did an exchange professorship at Herzen University in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1993.

Jacobsen: It seems to me you had a close call with that.

Comstock: Yes, I had a very interesting experience because I was there at the time Yeltsin, President Yeltsin, and the Parliament of Russia had a big conflict and there was a shoot out at the Russian White House. War tanks and guns and various things were used. It was a very tense time for Westerners to be there and I had a front row seat for that thing. In fact, I had just returned to my room at the guest house at the time, turned on the T.V. and was watching and there was a tank approaching the T.V. station and it came right up on the side walk and drove right into the glass doors to the front of the building and it plowed right through it and of course as soon as they got in a ways the T.V. went dead. The T.V. went off the air and a few minutes later it came back on but this time it was CNN live and they had cameramen on top on the building across the street and they were filming everything live and-during the entire crisis then you could see it live right on CNN. It was...

Jacobsen: (?)

Comstock: I Didn't get very close. Stayed back. But I've had a lot of interesting experiences through Central. It's been my family for most of my life.

Jacobsen: You formally retired in?

Comstock: I formally retired in March of 1996. A little less than a year ago. And so I'm now professor emeritus. I look at things from the outside in.

Jacobsen: For history sake, how would you compare your entering and leaving salaries so that we know something...?

Comstock: Well, my leaving salary - it was about the mid 60's I think. Maybe about \$65,000. I don't remember exactly, but it was about \$65,000. So that's quite a difference. Although I've got to say in the early years salaries, you know, kept up rather well. Every year or two there was pretty good increases that kept up with inflation. In the latter years, in the last seven or eight years at the time I was at Central there have been very, very few salary increases. I think my salary was about at 60 or 62 as early as maybe 1985. So the last few years salaries have really deteriorated.

Jacobsen: The only reason for asking this is that as we go through the years you see quite a disparity from say ten years before or 20 and we'll keep doing that.

Comstock: Very good point to make. I had a very interesting experience. I was here as a student under President McConnell. I was here as a faculty member under Jim Brooks and then later became an administrator. I also served as an administrator under Don Garitty and became a faculty member under Don Garitty, and then I served as a faculty member under President Nelson since he's been here.

Jacobsen: That's four presidents.

Comstock: Four presidents that I know something about. It's interesting the times between those four. There is quite a difference.

Jacobsen: Well, at this point, will you care to share your perceptions of what you feel the student body and faculty thought about - generally about these presidents?

Comstock: Well, starting with McConnell. Of course the student body was a mixture that there were many young people, like myself that were just starting as freshmen or sophomores and then there were many older students that were returning G. I.'s that were returning from World War II and had the G.I. Bill, and they were pursuing their education. So you had this gap of a bunch of young people and some other people that were in their mid or late 20's and of course they operated on the G. I. Bill. Often times they were married and had children while many of the rest of us were single hadn't got to that stage in our life. At the time I recall McConnell, President McConnell, as being a very distinguished president. Very elegant. Spoke excellent. I remember going to - I was on the homecoming committee one year. Went to the homecoming banquet where he was the speaker. I was quite impressed with him. He ran - the impression I had was, he ran the student - the institution, with an awful lot of detail and hands on approach. I say this because when I was about, maybe a junior I sought a student employee job as a custodian in the dormitory I lived in. I lived in Munson Hall at the time and in order to get that job I had to go over to the President's office for an interview. I was really surprised to see the president was talking to people that were going to be student helpers in the custodial service. So that was really different. Jim Brooks' period struck me, at least the first half of the time I served under Jim Brooks, was a very exciting place here because there was so much growth going on. New buildings. When I came here in 1964 in mathematics, there were only three faculty members including myself. By 1970, we were up to ten or twelve faculty members so a lot was happening. We hired a new department chairman. New facilities. Buildings were being built. It was really a quite exciting place to be. Growth was going on. We were young. The year I came to Central, 1964 there were 100 new faculty that year. So it was quite a big group. Enrollment at that time was about 3,200. When I was a student here enrollment was about 1,000. The latter part of Jim Brooks' period became a little more difficult in that there was quite a bit of retrenchment. We had some faculty lay offs although no tenured faculty were laid off Don Garitty's period again at the beginning of it was exciting. New leadership. Everyone had high hopes. Lots of discussions, meetings, planning, reorganizing and so on. I think that went rather well the first several years of his administration. Morale was good, I think. In about 1982 or '81 we

had fairly large retrenchment. The state economy wasn't good. We had to reduce budgets and we went into a RIF period where about 40 faculty positions were eliminated including three or four tenured faculty positions. So that was a very difficult period. I can remember for three or four months we had almost continuous meetings - very long meetings. Planning, discussing, arguing about what we were going to Cut, what we were going to change and so on. Don Garitty presided over most of those meetings. The deans were present. The provost and faculty senate officers and so on were there. It was a pretty difficult time. In retrospect, I think we did it about as fair as you could do it. It was a pretty open thing. I don't think any decisions were made under the table. There were hard decisions made. There were compromises made which wouldn't have been done probably if you didn't have to. But it went about as smooth as it could. The last few years of Don Garitty's administration went rather sour. Trouble with athletics. When Ed Harrington, the provost, retired things went down hill pretty fast for Don Garitty. Ed was a very stable provost for a long time. He knew where everything was. He had a tremendous memory. He was very honest. People trusted him. When the new provost came in after him that was - that was a very bad situation. That undermined President Garitty as well because the new provost just wasn't working out. I think in recent years, the last five years since I've been back as a professor of mathematics, my perception is morale among the faculty about the administration is pretty low. The lowest I've ever seen it. I don't know much about the workings of the current president but my impression is the respect that he has from the faculty has gone way way down. He's been here about five years now and I don't hear that many faculty very fond of his leadership.

Jacobsen: You've basically covered the question that I was going to ask, but in your perception as a faculty member, particularly a new faculty member at first, do you remember particular problems that existed in the view of the faculty?

Comstock: Yes, well, one of the first episodes [remember very vividly, of course, it wasn't so much a problem of the faculty but it was a general uproar on the campus and that was when the Vietnam protests were occurring and Kent State thing occurring and we had the threats of strike here on campus. I remember that as being a very, very intense time. I remember a faculty senate - I was on the faculty senate at the time and I remember a faculty senate meeting very early in the morning, like seven in the morning, trying to stabilize things a bit and not have a general strike on campus which a lot of faculty were advocating and certain students were. That was a very tense period but we got through it. Things settled down and then progressed. Other things that I saw between the faculty and the administration, of course, was the big one in the middle '70's about the unilateral changing of the code by the board of trustees. That was sort of an, from my perspective, I was dean at the time so I was seeing both the administrative side and faculty side and I thought the,... it was an unfortunate argument that went on quite a long time. It must have been a year or two including a suit that went through the Superior Court. It was sort of provoked by the trustees. There was a conservative group of trustees that just felt that they were letting down the state's side of things. If they were required to work to a consensus agreement on changes in the code. The code, the entire code essentially required both the trustees and the faculty senate to adopt any changes so either one could theoretically veto the changes. The board saw that, and they were really thinking about the future of it because there was no specific problem right at that moment that was causing any trouble. They were looking toward the future and they pressed to change that and then unilaterally did change that over faculty senate protest. Then that drug out for an awful long time. It seems like that was sort of an unnecessary argument for the both. There were much more important things and I don't think since that time it's changed anything. You know the board and the administration and the faculty have got to work together. Anyone of them can subvert the other if they want to do that regardless of what rules you write.

Jacobsen: You don't recall any particular component of that? Not bargaining powers? Not salary?

Comstock: No, that wasn't really,... one of the issues that probably was in the back of the minds of the board, and that was adopting a RIF policy. There was nothing specific about how you could lay off faculty prior to that code change. After that code change then they adopted the RIF policy. It's current. It was pretty much developed by Ed Harrington. I don't recall any specific thing that provoked the board. Let's see, other issues. There were some individual faculty issues I was involved with that were quite sensitive to me as an administrator but weren't known generally perhaps by other faculty.

Jacobsen: Wasn't a general faculty issue then?

Comstock: No, although some faculty rallied around the person that was after me. I had a faculty wife who had filed a civil rights case against me that drug on for an awful long time. The issue that provoked it was my unwillingness as an administrator to allow her husband who was on the faculty to play a role in supervising and hiring her on a project that he wanted to hire her. Determining salary, etc., etc. it was a conflict of interest situation. But when I blocked it, the faculty member and wife turned it into, you know, I was anti this, and I was anti that. I had her on a black list. This went on for many months. It took a Jot of time. It was very controversial.

Jacobsen: One of the uncomfortable issues as an administrator. Do you remember any other that were general faculty issues that administration seemed to be concerned about the faculty point of view'?

Comstock: Well, I think the RIF in '81 -'82. The faculty were very very concerned about that. That was a hard period and the faculty were very resistive to the administration doing any kinds of things that they had to do under the RIF policy. For example, identifying seniority within the departments. A lot of time they didn't like that idea and it didn't exist back then, but it was required as a part of the RIF policy that the last in, was the first out when there had to be reductions in faculty. So a lot of the attempts to administer to that policy in 1981 or '82, the early '80's, faculty grievances were brought a great deal. That was the first time that that policy was used, so you can expect there were a lot of disagreements.

Jacobsen: You have been complimentary about Ed Harrington as an administrator. Are there others that you feel were strong in those particular roles?

Comstock: Well, I thought, you know, Jim Brooks was a good president - a strong president. Perhaps in his latter years he was a little burned out being president for 16, 17 years is an awful long time the way things were changing in those years. I thought Don Garitty was a strong president. He had some short comings as we all do. Who else? Don Schliesrnan was a long time faculty administrator here that I worked with an awful long time. Known him very well and felt that he was a very good colleague and very open to changes and suggestions and criticisms and so on. The hardest thing about being a good administrator, I think, is having enough confidence in yourself that you can be very open to listening to people who really go after you and your ideas. I think you've got to have that as an administrator. If you're going to have any kind of dialogue which these kinds of setting ought to have, you ought to have a lot of open dialogue where you can say I don't like your idea and I think it stinks, and you ought to do this and, you've got to be able to accept that, and not take it personal, and not go after people because of their ideas. That's a hard thing to find in people. People get very frightened when they are criticized, and I think that's a trait of good administrator and hard to come by.

Jacobsen: In order to cover a number of topics, you've had a note on areas and I want hit some of these topical ones. Can you reflect on your perception of the salary schedule?

Comstock: Well, I've never been very strong - in the early years I've always done, I guess I learned this when I was in public schools, where you are really in a locked step on salaries and you go up a year of longevity, you get another step on the salary scale. I have never been very keen on that. I always felt that salary ought to progress more on a merit case and a good long time that I was here, there was some merit that went on in the good years at least, but much of your salary increase were based on longevity, another year of service, what they call professional growth. As long as there wasn't something negative you would get it. I'm not sure that's a very good way to handle salaries in a professional setting like faculty. I'd like to see salaries almost entirely based on merit. On the other hand, I realize the pit falls of that and that the people then that are administrators, they've got to be fair and objective, and if they play favorites and perceive things differently, you now, you really can wreck morale on a merit based system. But many of your great universities in the country, that's entirely how salary is determined. Longevity doesn't mean much. So in that sense I would like to see the thing be more merit based, but on the other hand I recognize you've got to really go in and have an objective evaluation of people's contributions. More faculty

participation I think. That means vice presidents and presidents don't have a special insight on what a faculty member is doing scholarly, for instance, or teaching whereas faculty colleagues, I think, often do. So maybe we could use a colleague, a school wide faculty meeting; maybe a promotion committee. Something like that maybe would work better than puffing so much of the load on administrators.

Jacobsen: You mentioned significantly about the faculty code. Do you have other ruminations about it?

Comstock: No, I've never been uncomfortable with the faculty code. I think its evolution, and where it is today, I think it has quite a few safeguards. I think there is a little tendency, and I've seen this in the faculty, there is a little tendency in the faculty sometimes to get too detailed in the code setting up rules that are almost impossible to pursue in a given instance. For instance, setting deadlines. You know, if a deadline has got to be December, you've got to apply for a sabbatical. Well, that's a pretty rigid detail to have in the faculty code, and it turns out that December 5 works better and then you become in violation of the code. So I think there are some things in the code that are a little too detailed to be in that kind of a code. It ought to be a more general framework and then expect the administration to administer them. I think there is a little tendency to have too much detail. I don't have any specific ideas in mind.

Jacobsen: Do you have any reflections on academic freedom?

Comstock: Academic freedom. Very important subject. I think academic freedom is the reason for tenure, not job security. Academic freedom, I remember reading in detail the reason that Central got put on the AAUP censure list. I don't remember when it was. Mid 40's?

Jacobsen: Just a wee bit before you became a freshman.

Comstock: Yes, okay. That was really an academic freedom issue. It wasn't a job security issue and yet in recent years it seems too often faculty, both faculty and administration, think of it in terms of job security. Academic freedom is not all, but academic freedom is central. If you are going to have scholarly activity and good teaching, discussion of controversial issues, you've got to have very strong allegiance to academic freedom. I think also in recent years it's been protected by (?), not just the professional organizations. I don't like the idea that is set forth representing job security (?) tenure, even if you perform for them. There ought to be a way when you perform for them, tenure doesn't mean anything (?). Central has terminated some people for performance that held tenure. I think that's very significant. There aren't many universities that can make that claim. Tenure at Central is sort of unique in that respect.

Jacobsen: With that kind of statement, the next topic that appears on my list is interesting, I think, faculty and administration collegiality. What is your perception of how that should be or has been?

Comstock: When I was a faculty member prior to becoming dean, I thought it was quite good. Wes Crum was the Dean of Faculty when I first came here and then Charles McCann was Dean of Faculty. During that period I thought it was quite good. You know, there were differences of opinion and arguments and so on. I can remember some with McCann myself when I was chair of the Mathematics Department, but I thought the relationship was good and you could always talk to the dean. I thought it was reasonably good when we had...the long period that Ed Flarrington was here. Of course, then the long time when I was dean, I was on the other side. I wasn't on the faculty side. I felt I always had good relations with the faculty. I always could talk to the faculty and even people that I disagreed with and didn't like what I was doing either. We always had a pretty good collegial relationship, I think. Since I've returned to the faculty it doesn't seem to be there at all. There is very little contact between the faculty and the administration - especially the top administration. Very little. There is an impression that the faculty know very little about the top administration.

Jacobsen: It just occurred to me to ask you this question, do you feel that has something to do with growth to administration from within the institution, or do you think it's a personality factor?

Comstock: I think it could be a little bit of that. In my early years the growth in the administration, much of it did come from the faculty, deans, and others, did come out of the faculty although Jim Brooks came, though he had been just a little bit on the faculty, but he was not a regular faculty member. Ed Harrington, of course, was not. They came from the outside. Although under both of those gentlemen, most of the deans, from time to time, were from out of the faculty so that might have been some of it. Since Don Garitty left, and under Don Garitty nearly all deans were from the faculty. Since Don Garitty left that's really changed drastically. Many of the administrators now come in from the outside. Some have only been here a short time so that might be part of it. But I think it's also tied up with the morale. The morale of the faculty. Morale is not good. (?) willing to go for extended discussions about points of view and so on.

Jacobsen: Since you've seen the Faculty Senate from both sides, what perceptions do you have of the Faculty Senate?

Comstock: Well, I was Vice-chair of the Faculty Senate just before I became the dean. In fact, I was slated to become Chair of the Faculty Senate at the time. I think even in those days, even when the faculty was perhaps nearly as large as it is now there was more dialogue going on in the faculty across disciplines then. So more faculty knew each other. You knew not only the people in your own discipline, but you knew people in a lot of other disciplines. I think that's a lot less now. The Faculty Senate officers at the time I was a faculty member, that was a very prominent position in the faculty. I think in recent years that's become a position that no one in the faculty really wants. Good faculty leadership avoids the position. I think there is a lot less communication between various disciplines. Faculty members don't know each other in the various disciplines. Some of that's due to size perhaps, but I think some of it is due to morale, to leadership of Chairs, Deans. In order to have good communication in a large organization everybody has got to work at it all the time. It doesn't happen by itself and when morale is bad people don't do that.

Jacobsen: So that might be despite being in more isolated buildings maybe curriculum and programs and things like that.

Comstock: A lot of things could be done. Colloquium programs. I remember the colloquium in the 60's. The young faculty members here and that was, those were, an exciting three days. They really were. That kind of thing is sort of, absent now.

Jacobsen: When I throw out the term long term planning, what does that do to you?

Comstock: The last ten years or so that is a dirty word around here. We have had so many long range plans that mean almost nothing. I think it's a sign of a weak administration. When they talk about creating another plan, they are playing games with us. It's a technique to occupy our time, but it doesn't occupy our time very productively. Planning has gotten to be a bad word. Of course it's very hard to find an organization like this given that we are state, we are so much dependent on annual legislative action. We have so many experts outside the institution that would like to run the institution but know almost nothing about it. Whether it's the governor, or our legislators, or our board members. Planning is a difficult thing. You need to be well informed about the organization. You need to be well informed about what some of the forecasts are about the future and try to plan in that, but to lay a detailed plan on, clear down to the Department level, takes hundreds and hundreds of pieces of paper together and produce something called a plan, but the result from the faculty's perspective doesn't sync. It doesn't give you much guidance. I'm not very impressed with the planning, and we've (?).

Jacobsen: Just another thing that gets filed.

Comstock: Another thing that gets filed, but worse than that it uses up a tremendous amount of time and resources which is in short supply anyway.

Jacobsen: What does town/gown relationships bring to your mind?

Comstock: Well, they bring to my mind some wonderful relationships that I've had over the years in the town. I... there's a few that really stand out to me and I have always, my automobiles that I have I always tinkered with keeping them running a little bit myself, but many times I've got to have a mechanic, and for two generations now I've been going to Seth Motors down on South Main. The first owner Seth, and Jack Seth is the current owner's father, and I remember things like, you know, having my car break down in the morning when I get up and start it, and that afternoon I'm supposed to go to Seattle to take my wife to the doctor or something. Rushing down there telling him my problem and he says, "Well, leave your car here and take mine." So he gives me his car to go to Seattle and do my business. You know, that kind of town/gown relationship has been wonderful, I think. The business people in town as far as I'm concerned, I've never had a problem, and I've always found that, you know, their services have been good:, their prices have been fair. I've had some very good experience with people and relationships have been good. I think you get a certain amount of criticism of the university out of the town. As a small town the small businessman has a hard time making it sometimes. You know there isn't a large pool of customers so it's a real struggle for some of these small businesses to make it, and sometimes it can be very easy to be resentful and put a lot of blame - sometimes uninformed blame on the university for something they've done (?). But I think generally the town/gown relationship has been pretty good.

Jacobsen: Do you think maybe the press has escalated it?

Comstock: Press has escalated it sometimes. That's true. Get's carried away sometimes. Of course that's the business they're in, is selling something that people are going to read, and if it isn't titillating people don't read it. So we are getting sort of what we ask for.

Jacobsen: Do you have a point of view about building naming policies?

Comstock: I really think buildings ought not to be named until people have passed on from their relationship to the university. On that, I've not, in the 32 years that I've been at Central professionally, I've not been bothered by the name of any building. There hasn't been any named in the last quite a few years. I'm aware of that.

Jacobsen: Part of that might be a function of the changing point of view about naming for living persons.

Comstock: Yes, yes. I don't know if you ought to deny naming something after a living person. I would just say that you probably shouldn't name a building after somebody that is currently still on the faculty or administration. But people that are in retirement shouldn't be waiting until they pass on. Maybe current administration is not always the best group to be naming. I don't know how you could work it out. There ought to be some kind of more historical knowledge going into the naming of buildings. People that get charged with responsibility ought to have pretty long connections with the university, so they know the history. It's very hard for new people to do a good job. (?) heavily involved in that, although they may do that.

Jacobsen: We've had a few different academic organizational plans during your tenure. Do you have a point of view about how things are organized? How they've been organized?

Comstock: Well, I think early on when I was Dean during the first half of the '70's we perhaps, had a few too many Deans. The school was divided a little too much. I think the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences together with the School of Professional Studies and the School of Business was about the split that would probably work the best in my mind. Now just recently they split the College of Arts and Sciences again. Well, we'll have to see. I don't know if it changes things that much. I think organizationally since about the early '70's we've had a fairly reasonable organization. I think we've got a few too many vice-presidents. Some of these vice-presidents, you know, have very little responsibility and have very small areas. I think it's a little unreasonable to have any other than the Vice-president of Business and the Vice-president for Academic Affairs. It seems like that's all we ought to have. The rest of



them are really directors of their areas that don't take on the status of being Vice-president. So in that sense our organization is a little top heavy.

Jacobsen: (?) what is your perception of publish or perish in an institution like this?

Comstock: Well, I think it can never really exist here. It's frequently stated that, you know, that this is a teaching institution, and it is, but at the same time I find that a little bit of a negative connotation in that, you know, if you want to call this just a teaching institution well, okay, you're just an extension of high school or an extension of community college. What are you scholarly if you just teach? So I think there's got to be more to it than that, and I think the institution, in the long time that I've been here has never been in danger of over-emphasizing scholarship, publishing, research. At various times there's been a little more emphasis than at other times but I think it's never,... I think it could benefit a great deal if we'd emphasize it a bit more. You know, a university professor we honor. Holding a Doctorate Degree is terminal in our discipline. We are scholars in our disciplines. We're more than teachers, and I think we ought to recognize that and I think we could benefit the university a great deal if there was more activity in that area. That is it develops a reputation for it. You know as I send my children away to school I want them to go to places where there are people that are experts. I don't want them to go to places that they just go through the motions of being good teachers. I think being a good teacher is more than what you do in the classroom. I think it's being a scholar in your field, engaging in communication, presenting papers, doing some research if you can, if you have the ability, and doing some publication. I would want my children in a university where they do that. Those are the places that have the reputation, and gain their resources, and gain the libraries, and other kinds of things that make a strong teaching institution. So I think we've got to be careful about that. I hear that so many times said, that we are just a teaching institution. To some faculty that means you don't do anything else. You prepare your class, you go in and do it, and you go home. You don't engage students in scholarly activities. You don't engage with other colleagues in scholarly activities. You don't attend professional meetings. You just come teach your class and go home. That's what a teaching institution means. Well that does us a terrible disservice. I don't think we've ever had a publish or perish situation here. I know of no one that has ever moved out because they didn't publish.

Jacobsen: Maybe up or down?

Comstock: Well, possibly but often times there're other factors in there too. Maybe he's not a good teacher. I think you've got to be a good teacher in the classroom, and you've got to do a lot of other things, too, to move up and too often, mediocre teachers that don't do anything else, also move up. That really throws the philosophy. Of course, that's perhaps my background. My background as being with graduate students and being in research, too. That comes in that feeling about scholarship.

Jacobsen: With our time diminishing you probably wanted to say something by having looked over the questions that I haven't asked you. Please feel free to comment on any area that you would like to.

Comstock: Well, I think I've covered, pretty much everything that I've jotted down. I would just say again both as a student and professional as being my professional life, Central and Ellensburg have been very good to me. I think I couldn't have chosen a better place for my children to be raised and they've gone off and both have become very very successful. My professional life at the University although it's had some ups and downs, it has generally been up. I was very, . . .felt very strongly about my colleagues here. It was a great place. I had a lot of opportunity over the years to, . . .in evaluation committees, consulting work that I did and accreditation committees, to evaluate many other universities. Very, very frequently I came back and realized again, how much better it was here than at many other universities including some major universities. At home we sometimes sell ourselves short in that respect. We are a lot better than we sometimes credit ourselves. The University deserves a better position in the hierarchy of education than it currently has. We have good faculty, good student body, a lot of good things go on here that many of us are unaware of that makes it good.

Jacobsen: I thank you for that last part because there are very few who are able to speak from the evaluation standpoint and that gives it an additional perception that we don't often get. Thank you very much.

Comstock: You're welcome. I enjoyed doing it. Thank you.