

Paul Jacobson - Interview #14

1:11:42

6/11/13

Note

The archival original of this interview is in two parts. For ease of use by researchers, the two parts have been edited into one video file and subsequently one audio file and one transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited by TCC Archivist A. Demeter to remedy name spelling, misheard/missing words, and other minor corrections, 4/2024.

Content Warning

This interview includes a brief mention of suicide at 47:45.

Summary

In this interview with the former instructor and administrator Paul Jacobson discusses his long history at TCC. He discusses the climate of TCC during the 1960s and 70s, the infamous Teacher's Strike, how TCC has changed since 1967, and also gives us some personal history. Other topics covered by Jacobson include class size, rising cost of tuition, the increase in the need for childcare, why he was drawn to teaching, and family life.

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Interview

INTERVIEWER SHAWN JENNISON: So, I'm just going to go through and do a fact check of some of the information that I have now, just to make sure it's right. So you started here June 1st of '67?

PAUL JACOBSON: Okay, that's what I was trying to remember... '67? [pauses] I'm going to have to think that one through, if you're looking for verification. Now it should be my personnel file.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and that's where we got this. Yeah, okay. And then you retired in '97.

PAUL: The College started in '65?

INTERVIEWER: Mhmm.

PAUL: Okay '67 is right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's see. You were the Dean of Instruction?

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: From '68 to '76? And then also... How come I have two different...?

PAUL: Well, I was hired as the Dean of Instruction.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

PAUL: And I think that you probably have an accurate figure on when I returned to the classroom, that's probably in my personnel file.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, yes, so from '68 to '89 you were the Dean of Instruction. And then you returned to the classroom later in '89 as the department chair for Physical Science?

PAUL: Some of this detail... I took a short-- After I had been the Dean of Instruction I was a chemistry instructor, and then I departed from that for a couple of years to be the organizer of the Advising Center. So there were actually two trips into administration. But I can't come up with the dates on that.

INTERVIEWER: That's fine, don't worry about it. So you hold a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois?

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: And then also a PhD from Northwestern?

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a Master's degree?

PAUL: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you've also taught at some other institutions. In the fifties, you taught at another community college? Is it, Ketchikan? Ketchikan Community College?

PAUL: I was a part time instructor in Ketchikan for a couple of years while I worked at a pulp mill. And then I was... When I first joined the community college movement, I was at Highline. And I was there I believe four years, five years, something along that order. Mostly as a teacher, but department chair and Associate Dean.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And then it also says Director of Curriculum at Highline, is that correct?

PAUL: Well that's with the job was called.

INTERVIEWER: And then you were also a Chief Chemist in Industry for the Ketchikan Pulp Company.

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: And then it says you were a research chemist, what is known now as Lockheed Martin, but then it was American...

PAUL: American Marietta.

INTERVIEWER: Marietta. Okay. And that was from '58 to '62?

PAUL: Probably right.

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs] okay, great, alright. So do you have three children?

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great. And then your wife is Anne?

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great. Okay, so we're going to go ahead and get started. So let's start from the way back. What led you having an interest in chemistry, in the field of chemistry?

PAUL: Well, ran into it in high school; that was my first class. And I was not a highly ambitious kind of person, it just seemed I was more interested in that than much of anything else. That and math. And I had quite a bit of time deciding which way to bounce, quite a bit of a time. Finally decided on chemistry. Don't think I had any real good reasons. My brother was a chemical engineer; that probably had something to do with it.

INTERVIEWER: Was he an older brother?

PAUL: Yes. Quite a bit older.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. It's amazing how family, especially older siblings have an influence on the decisions we make, isn't it?

5:08

PAUL: He was my hero. I'm not sure the reasons were very good, but he was [laughs]. And I was just kind of following in his footsteps. Went to the same university he'd gone to, and tried to live up to the tradition.

INTERVIEWER: Now where are you originally from?

PAUL: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and lived there till I was about 12. My family moved to Evanston, Illinois, and until I went to the University of Illinois, that's where I spent my life.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What brought you out to Washington state?

PAUL: This may seem kind of strange, but as a child I was highly allergic to ragweed pollen, and each fall was just a disaster. And one morning I woke up and I decided I have to do something about this, and found out that there was no ragweed pollen on the west coast, especially north of San Francisco. So that's what I set my mind on doing, moving in this direction. Not exactly conducive to my career because most of chemical industry is located in the east. Much more so then than now. But I wanted to get away from the annual illness, and with one or two exceptions, was very successful. And I've been grateful ever since.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. That is very interesting, you don't hear about that very much.

PAUL: It's unusual.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that is very unusual. Wow. So you made your way out here, looks like after college, completely?

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Um, okay. And so you took a job as a part time instructor while working in industry, so you would go to work in industry doing what you learned in school to do, and then you also took a job as a part time instructor. What made you want to teach?

PAUL: Well, I had done some teaching before, when I graduated from the University of Illinois. I had a sister and brother-in-law who were employed at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa. The chemistry-- I went to visit them one summer, and the chemistry instructor was ill, and they were looking for a teaching assistant, so I worked there during the summer in one class. I had done some teaching as a graduate student, in fact, teaching was something I even got into at high school, where I was a tutor, and I knew I liked to do it. So that's what happened at Cornell. And then I went on to Northwestern where I was a teaching assistant. Went into industry-- Oh you asked about Ketchikan. Ketchikan started a community college about the third year I was there, and they were really scraping around for instructors, and I was the logical one for chemistry, and decided I'd like to do it. I met Tom Ford there, Tom was the president of the college.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. So you must've really enjoyed yourself, starting off teaching at that community college.

PAUL: I have liked teaching from the very beginning. For some reason, derive some pleasure in helping other people where they were having difficulty.

INTERVIEWER: But I mean you're working a full-time job and teaching, that's a lot to take on.

PAUL: Well, Ketchikan's pretty small. And the job didn't require that much after hours, and the part-time job didn't require a whole lot. Unfortunately there weren't many chemistry students, in Ketchikan when I lived there, there were are only 6000 people in the whole area, and a lot of them were lumber, fishing. But if you wanted to move on to a local college, and that was a happy time. I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds great. So you met Tom Ford there?

PAUL: Yes. He was not the original president, but he became president. He was a teacher in the community college. He was actually a teacher and a counselor, I think, in the public school district. But they were running through presidents pretty fast in those days, and he applied for it and got the job. And so he asked me to come in and see if there was something that I could teach because we already knew each other. And he was a great teacher, incidentally. I learned a lot from him.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So going from there to here, then, how did that work? What did you do?

PAUL: Well my main thrust was in industry, in Ketchikan for a pulp mill, in Seattle for a resin manufacturer. But a community college opened about two miles away from where I lived, and I heard they were looking for instructors. And it seemed like something I wanted to do.

INTERVIEWER: Boy, it seems like wherever you landed these teaching jobs kept popping up [laughs].

PAUL: They did. Now the Highline College, which was when I was in Seattle, that happened when the legislative bill went through that created a number of new community colleges. Before there was some kind of legal prohibition, or something that prevented community colleges from being established near four-year schools. Of course Seattle was full of them. And so this college opened up a couple of miles from where I lived, my current job in Seattle wasn't all that exciting, I decided I was going to get back into teaching. It was a wonderful experience.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. So you were at Highline then for about five years.

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Why transition from Highline down to Tacoma?

PAUL: Tom Ford asked me to apply for the Dean's job. We had known each other a long time. I had quite a successful time at Highline, and people were telling me I would do a good job as an administrator. Actually it turned out to be more of a challenge than I expected [laughs].

13:19

INTERVIEWER: Oh really [laughs]. How so?

PAUL: Well there's a big political aspect in administration that you don't encounter when you're in the classroom, and the state system was just getting established. Politics at that level, politics at the local level. I do not recollect a time at which I was known as an outstanding politician. What I liked about teaching was, you had an issue, you got in, you argued for what you thought was right, you walked out, and you forgot about it [laughs]. Doesn't work that way in the real world [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Isn't that the truth, yeah. So that was a transition for you, I can see. But you fared well, I mean you had a long career as an administrator, before you went back to the classroom, again.

PAUL: I think when you get into administration you think, or at least I thought, well, this is a lifelong direction. And when you find out that it isn't, it's kind of a shock. And you do miss some of it. On the other hand, it's not all that exciting. Once you've done it five or six times, because the colleges are on a cycle, it begins to get old. You begin to look around at what else life has in store.

INTERVIEWER: So it seems like you're kind of, in one sense, you've been kind of an opportunist.

PAUL: Could be.

INTERVIEWER: And on the other hand you've really had sort of a passion for teaching.

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I see that you don't want to get bored.

PAUL: I think that one of the facts of my life was, after five or six years, I was starting to look around [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. It's interesting because generationally, you were kind of counter to your generation.

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I think about folks who are in your generation, and I would say, the folks at least that I've had interaction with, a large majority have done one thing or stayed with one company for a large part of their life.

15:56

PAUL: My father was a cabinetmaker; he was an immigrant to this country in 1914 from Germany. He did not have an easy time of it, in America, during his first years. And I don't know that he ever attempted to lead me in the direction of his career. I think there was more an emphasis in my family, go to college, get a college degree, do something based on that.

INTERVIEWER: And you imparted that your children as well?

PAUL: [Laughs] No, hardly. Well, yes and no. When they were growing up I said look, I don't care what you do. Learn to fix something. America needs people who know how to repair things. Because America was headstrong in the direction of buy it, use it, throw it out. None of them listened to me [laughs]. I've never been the type of person to try to direct them. I felt I didn't know enough to direct them. Too many things had changed in my lifetime. And one of them went into, studied Russian, and I'm thinking, what are you going to do with Russian? Well it has turned out that she is using an amazing amount of it, all of her career. One of them went into dance. What are you going to do with dance? Well, she's now the arts editor of the Seattle Times. And the other one wanted to be a lawyer. That's it.

INTERVIEWER: I think you've done well [laughs].

PAUL: They all abandoned Tacoma to the four winds. One went to New York. One went to the Aleutian Islands. Where'd the third one go? One went to Michigan, then to New York. Then they all came back to Seattle. So in a way my patience was vindicated, it wasn't such a bad place after all.

INTERVIEWER: Isn't that great [laughs]? So let's talk about your chemistry career a little bit. What was your research and teaching focus, when you were in the classroom?

PAUL: The teaching and the research never went together. In college and graduate school I was doing a physical chemistry project for a fella who referred to himself as a "magneto chemist." Interaction of various substances with magnetic fields. The teaching was always in organic, pretty much beginners, and I felt attracted to that. Although when I first got my job with Highline, it was small, I taught everything. I could've done worse. I had a job opportunity in Montana, and they wanted me to teach everything I taught at Highline plus a few other courses at the same time. It was a different cry from what you have now. One job, you did it all.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it sounds like it. Let's talk more about what made you decide on choosing your career in academia. You mentioned earlier that you liked teaching, but that being an administrator was a challenge. Just from our brief conversation so far, I get that you like a challenge. And you like variety.

PAUL: I guess so [laughs]. But some challenges work out better than other challenges, and everything gets old in the end. So, those were the factors that moved me along.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned your close relationship with Tom Ford. Was he, do you think that the friendship that you had and the professional relationship that you had, do you think he a factor too, in wanting to work together?

PAUL: Well, I think it was a factor. I don't think I owed the job to his awareness that I was there. But it got an interview. And I don't think he felt it was a mistake, or anything like that. When we parted in Ketchikan I don't think either one of us expected to see the other in an employment situation again. But we had been friends, and in Ketchikan, everyone was pretty well aware of everybody else.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah definitely, I can see that happening. Okay. So let's talk about the climate when you first started TCC. So the college was formed in 1965. You joined in '67. I mean, I would say between '60 and '75 there was a lot of activity happening in the world [laughs].

21:53

PAUL: It was, it was a very interesting time. I think, as I've already mentioned, the transition from Highline to Tacoma was quite an event. This school was completely academic. It was the only one in the state that was completely academic. And the faculty, among others, took great pride in that. It occurred because we had Bates Technical institution here in the city. And I think

that was the thinking back with the public school board, they didn't want conflict between the two organizations. They wanted an academic side, and an occupational side. But it didn't take too much looking around to see that we were kind of out on a limb. And we were going east in the land of the aardvarks, but the aardvarks were going west. On the other hand, there were a number of people who are absolutely dedicated to that concept. And that was quite a challenge.

INTERVIEWER: There were also other challenges--

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: The sixties and the early seventies were filled with a lot of different challenges--

PAUL: A lot of turmoil. We had a revolt by the Black students. I still remember one meeting when Tom Ford and I were trying to figure out how we would get through that incident. And the spokesperson for the Black students, who later became quite a prominent political force, I remember him slamming his fist down on the table. He wanted to know why we weren't hiring Black people. We hadn't, with one or two exceptions. Nobody on the faculty was Black, and minorities were in the minority. Minority minority. And I said, he said in the language of the day, "show spade." Now the language between the Black students and the white was quite different. And it was okay for him to use the word "spade." I knew better than to do that, [laughs]. "Show spade." Well, but we only hire faculty in the fall. We can't just disrupt the whole institution. And he wanted to know why not. And you know in a moral sense – that was the problem – in a moral sense he was right. It was the practical sense coming up against the moral sense, and Tom Ford recognized that, and said we've simply got to get some Black people on the faculty. And we did it by hiring some part-time local people. That created a lot of difficulty because these people were not trained be teachers, they were trained to be leaders in the Black society. Or emerged as such. And that's quite a different path, than our academic people had gone through. It wasn't exactly a wildly popular move. We had a faculty upset, not necessarily directed at that. But we had a faculty strike. So those were really exciting times.

INTERVIEWER: Talk more about the strike. What happened, and why did it happen, and what was the outcome? Do you remember?

26:00

PAUL: To be honest with you, I'm not sure that I remember the issues. But I know when people draw up sides like that, anything you do or say has a high probability of being misconstrued. Tom was like a father to the faculty, that was his dying ambition, to be the big papa, and yet he was accused of taking anti-faculty positions that I know were not in his heart. And it was into my eighth year, I think, I had applied for a quarter sabbatical at Evergreen, I was off on sabbatical. People wanted to know why I wasn't there to be the faculty spokesperson. Completely circumstantial. Those things happen. What it teaches you is there are some pretty good people on both sides of every issue.

INTERVIEWER: So you've seen quite a bit of passion. Both on the student side, on the faculty side, on the administrative side. People care about things and issues.

PAUL: I'll tell you, I've never met people like teachers and faculty, that are so involved in philosophical issues that pertain to their work. Now, maybe that's because I've not talked to people like Admiral Rick over the so-called father of the nuclear fleet. But the passions ran high. Still do I'm sure.

28:05

INTERVIEWER: They do. So, okay... Controversy, new challenges as an administrator. You're having to deal with, I'm sure raising a family by then.

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You're having to deal with a lot of different things during that time.

PAUL: Well I think it's a normal lifetime. And I think maybe today it's even worse. So much has changed. Whole generations have been wiped out in the workforce. Retraining. My wife kind of ran into that. When she was about 50-ish, she had been working in the court, and the criteria for the job changed, and she didn't fit anymore. And so she was out of work. She had started working again. She trained in chemistry, but it didn't last. She liked the law, and the courts, politics. So she kind of drifted into that. And then she found herself in a job, where in effect she got gerrymandered out of the job. So she's looking for work at about age 50, and all the young beautiful girls are getting the jobs [laughs]. And she's over trained, and there's this, and there's that. And people are... she was really lucky. But people today, many of them are faced with that. Of course, in many ways the community college is their salvation.

INTERVIEWER: How so? Let's talk more about that. The mission of the community college and open access.

PAUL: Open access. Two years to a technical degree. Study while you work, if you're lucky enough to have a job. Just a lot of opportunities, and much more occupational work now than there was in the past. And more openness. I think they're still up against trouble in the job market, but if you come out with the technical degree it's a little bit different, because the technical jobs are being sought after. A little bit different from having a liberal arts degree.

INTERVIEWER: So today, almost 50% of our students earn a transfer degree to go to a four-year university. The other 50% are getting certificates, they're retraining for specific industry workforce training programs. I mean, TCC today is a tad different than it was as an all-academic institution when you first started, correct?

PAUL: I'm not sure I understood your point. It is different, is that what you were saying? Oh, it's quite different. It's quite different. It's much more accepted now. You can't believe some of the academic... I don't even know what to call it, some of the dedication to the academics. Which of course we all had, but that wasn't the way the country was going.

INTERVIEWER: But in some ways we're still the same too... Right?

PAUL: Well, of course I'm not intimately connected with it anymore. So I can't judge that very well, but I suspect everybody has allegiance to their own training. [Laughs] I was thinking on the way over here, one of my early administrators in community college said to me one time, "You know our thoughts about education are strongly rooted in what happened to us. What worked for us. And it's pretty hard to get away from that." I didn't realize the truth of it at the time.

INTERVIEWER: Boy, what a great piece of wisdom that was.

PAUL: I thought so. You know this wasn't one of my favorite administrators, but... I think she was right.

32:48

INTERVIEWER: [to camera operator] Can you tell me the time code on that one? Do you know it?

CAMERA: I'll make a note.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thanks. You want a drink of water?

PAUL: It wouldn't be a bad idea.

[Water break]

INTERVIEWER: So, do you have grandchildren?

PAUL: Yes, three.

INTERVIEWER: In the Seattle area?

PAUL: Yes, they're all in Seattle.

33:39

PAUL: Sometimes, now that I'm an old man, I think boy, I'd like to share my wisdom. The problem is two-fold [laughs]. Nobody goes to old people for wisdom. Secondly, there's a good reason for it [laughs]. Because what the old people think is wisdom frequently is not regarded

as wisdom by the young people and frequently isn't wisdom. Especially in times of change. Fifty, a hundred years ago, it was probably quite different, but it's a real new ballgame now. Staying up with iPads and tablet computers. Everybody makes his own movies. Medicine has changed, everything.

INTERVIEWER: You are right. Alright.

PAUL: But I think in my own life... Of course, it just wouldn't have worked. Sometimes I think, I should've talked more to the older people. But I was brought up by older people, and they were in the same boat that I find myself in. It's just hard to be knowledgeable enough in a changing society to know what to say. That's sad. On the other hand, if birds didn't learn to fly they'd stay in the nest forever.

INTERVIEWER: That's true. And I think you were talking about earlier about your kids, you wanted them initially to be able to fix something, but they made their own way for themselves. As a parent that has to be one of the hardest things. My kids are all real young, but I know when they get older and start to make their own decisions, it's going to be really hard for me to let go. Because you want to help them as much as you can, but you don't want to overdo it, you know.

PAUL: And of course it's different for every different family. Some father and son, father and daughter successions have been made in heaven. You just have to play everybody the way they are.

INTERVIEWER: I agree. Well let's switch gears a little bit and talk about facilities. So you came here in 1967, and now you're sitting here in 2013. What's changed over the years in terms of facilities, what was then and what is now?

36:23

PAUL: Geez, everything. This building wasn't there. You know [laughs], I thought of this a little bit the other day for some, no good reason. At one stage we were doing some planning that was going to move the bookstore. The bookstore started out pretty small, and I can't remember the building number now but it was going to a new building, and it was going to be larger. And one of the faculty members came in, and this was obviously a faculty member who loved bookstores. Well he was dreaming all over the lot, trying to advise. And I'm thinking, there's no money for that, there's no money for that, you know, we just can't do that. In the end, what we've got for a bookstore is very much like what he was dreaming about. So that's kind of interesting, in my head anyway.

INTERVIEWER: That is surprising, because that doesn't happen very often [laughs].

PAUL: He was just ahead of his time.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting.

PAUL: Anyway, I can't remember how many buildings we had in the beginning, but there was one big expansion, and then this latest... enlargement. And the campus is no longer, practically no longer recognizable to some of the old-timers, including me.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a good thing? Does that make you sad in a way?

PAUL: One of my biases is for smallness. I like small classes, I always believed in them. One of the first things I had the opportunity to do, when I came here, was preside over a reduction in class sizes. I felt very good about that. But in the end the economics work against you, both on the class size, maybe not so much there, but certainly on the campus size. Make it bigger, handle more-- make the administration go further so that you have more classroom work. And so that part I kind of regret a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: It's interesting that you talk about small class sizes, because that's a topic, especially within the K-12 system, that can push some buttons with folks. And there's all kinds of studies about what the right amount of students are in a classroom. But you look at large universities, where you have a 500-person English 101 class. And you come to Tacoma Community College...

PAUL: It looks small.

INTERVIEWER: It does.

PAUL: I think I've recognized in my own thinking, that there isn't any really good answer, because you're always as a teacher – as I was anyway – pushing for smaller, smaller. Where's the limit? You know, what is the right size? And I never had an answer for that, I only had the idea they're too big [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Got you. What about buildings—

PAUL: And the universities, that's crazy. The whole thing that's happened in universities is crazy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it is, the class sizes are huge, with some universities.

PAUL: And the tuitions, I might add.

INTERVIEWER: Well yeah, we can talk about that too. In '67, tuition look a lot different than it does today.

40:23

PAUL: When I started in college, my tuition was \$40 a semester.

INTERVIEWER: And that was when you were a student?

PAUL: As a freshman. \$40 a semester. By the time I got done it was only up to \$80.

INTERVIEWER: So it doubled in four years?

PAUL: Yeah. Of course if you think of exponential progressions, it probably is what's happened, [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's true. So with facilities, you've seen, kind of small, cheaply constructed buildings I would say? Or maybe economical back in the day, kind of buildings that were thrown together. And now you've seen what we're constructing now, we're in the middle of a forty million dollar Harned Health Center Building, that's going to be 80,000 square feet, three floors...

PAUL: You can't do that on the small campus, it's the only way to do it. I don't fault the people who are leading the charge, they've good logic on their part. It's just with regret. Once you and your student are off that log, it's all downhill. You don't get to know the students as well. Of course, I wasn't an occupational instructor, where the classes tend to be smaller I think. Or at least, within my knowledge. And I'm really out of it. I've been out of this place for, what, 15 years, something like that. So I don't have the grasp on what's really going on. The way it is going on.

42:23

INTERVIEWER: So, did-- One of the benefits too, of community college, is that we're able to sort of respond to the needs of industry. I mean, obviously healthcare. There are 77 million baby boomers that are in America today that are looking at retirement, they're staring it in the face. The demand for healthcare – just picking one industry to focus on – the demand for healthcare is huge.

PAUL: It's going to be even more so.

INTERVIEWER: So that's one of the areas TCC is focusing on with the construction of this new facility. It's going to allow us to not only have state-of-the-art equipment, and space for students, but it's also going to be able to open up doors with other programs besides the traditional nursing program, and that kind of thing. I mean, what's your take on responding to industry? I mean is that something community colleges-- you said it was pretty much all academic then. When did community colleges start responding to industry more, TCC in particular?

PAUL: When did it start? I don't think I can answer that. If I remember correctly, the first movement in those directions were in Allied Health. The world has just exploded. And I think

this response to industry can't be avoided. I appreciate the academics, but I don't know how long you can keep confining your effort to academic training. Too much technical detail. It's just exploded fantastically.

INTERVIEWER: And when you think about, not only has certain industries exploded, and the demands for educating and getting technical training to certain, to people to work in those industries, but it takes money to do all this [laughs]. I mean, gosh, students now are facing humongous tuition payments. The good thing about community college is, even in spite of all this, we're still one of the lowest, most affordable options in the state.

PAUL: That's right. And you have your best chance of knowing your instructor, and having him or her know you, at the community college level. Which everybody really needs except, well I shouldn't say everybody, there's always an exception, but most people really need.

INTERVIEWER: What are your thoughts about how students are paying for college? I know in the news, more than a trillion dollars in student loan, I mean it's exceeded credit card debt now.

PAUL: How typical of an old person to say the world has gone to hell [laughs]. What happened to the good old days? I think the challenges for my children raising their children are much more complicated. And for those kids growing up. And the way the news moves so fast, what's going on. And they're looking at four, eight years of training, trying to make sense out of it, presents some enormous difficulties. I've probably wandered off your question, but just thinking about that is depressing for me.

INTERVIEWER: There's something to be said about instilling principles, though, that have been used for years, right? I mean, the golden rule, don't go into too much debt, do right for others, pay it forward, those kinds of things. Things that you may have taught your kids over the years. Do you think that that's something that we need to do as a generation?

46:59

PAUL: You're pretty good at asking questions [laughs]. Boy, I think the raising kids now is much more difficult now than it was. It was easier to generalize, we didn't have as much information. We didn't have as many examples staring us right in the face that were contrary to what we were trying to do. I think for a parent, you try to live the most instructive life you can. But you have to recognize that what happens to your kids is out of your control. Even I knew that when I was raising my three. I recognized at one time that if I came home and found out that one of my kids had committed suicide, I knew just which one it was gonna be. All I can think of is you get in there, and you do the very best you can, and you try to keep them on the straight and narrow, and you try to have them value themselves and what the potentials are. But if you're saying, it's all that way, it's a mistake.

INTERVIEWER: So demographically, in 1967, I would imagine students were younger, then?

PAUL: Not at the very beginning. Because at the very beginning the community colleges had just been cut loose. We're now going to have one in Pierce County, we're now gonna have one in the Highline area, [makes scattering sound] all over the place. And we had a lot of adults that wanted all of those opportunities, and the average age, if I remember correctly, was about 29. And they were highly motivated. And you know, if you got into the system at about that time... Well let me put it this way, I have felt in later years, that that was kind of a golden age. Because later on when that surplus of adult students had been satisfied, then the student age got younger, and their attitudes were different. And the challenges were different. And in my later teaching years, I taught some night classes, because we had need for that, and I found a great deal of difference between the day students and the evening students. The evening students I thought had a very high regard for what they were trying to do, and students in the daytime, at least in my classes, were still trying to figure out what the heck they were doing there and why they had to study chemistry in the first place [laughs]. But you know, education is rife with all those problems, and every time you think you come up with an answer, you're only answering part of the question [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: That is true. Do you see-- because right now 33% of our students have kids, so our childcare center, our child development center is a huge asset for this college. In the beginning there wasn't childcare on campus I assume.

PAUL: Nope.

INTERVIEWER: When did childcare on campus become a priority?

PAUL: It was after I was in administration. I don't think I can answer your question because that push had come from other people, and I never had to cope with it. I was still back there coping with academic versus occupational. That's as far as I got. I do think it is essential that you have that. I mean the people who don't start out on the track that they end up on, can get into a really bad position with regard to improving themselves. And I think we have to do that, as a society, is keep trying to figure out how to give people the biggest, maximum opportunity to improve their standing.

51:55

INTERVIEWER: Community colleges do that.

PAUL: They do, they do.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. We've talked about a lot of stuff. Let me just take a look at my questions here.

PAUL: We have, you've done an excellent job in my view. If you'd have asked me if I'd have a lot to say walking in here, I would've said I don't have anything to say.

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs] I love it. [Pauses] I think what we should touch on is, kind of you coming full circle in your career. So starting as an instructor, moving into administration, and then going back to being an instructor. Would that be okay to talk about?

PAUL: As the man said, it's your nickel.

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs] So let's talk about that. You mentioned early on that when you were in high school, you would do some tutoring, right? Or was it college?

PAUL: Yes, tutoring.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, high school tutoring. That you really at the time, as a young man, thought that you would enjoy teaching.

PAUL: Well I enjoyed it, I never thought of it much as a career. The advice I was getting from home, my older brother, was to lead me into a scientific career, and do the kinds of things that he was doing. So, and teaching, at least in my youth was not, and I don't want to imply that it is adequately paid at the present time, but it was worse then. And considering our circumstances, it was an important factor. Get into something where you could earn some money. And teaching did not influence my brother and his advice. My parents, of course, had great faith in a college degree, maybe too much. The growing up I did was that the-- my folks came from Germany, and the people who were Herr Professor, they were very highly regarded in society. Teachers don't enjoy that status anymore. But it was like anything else, you look around you see where the opportunities are, and you shoot for that. In the meantime the opportunities move on. Although I've never regretted going into teaching, and I think it was a noble career.

INTERVIEWER: So you spent some time teaching, which you definitely loved, it sounds like. And then you moved into a role of an administrator with some challenges.

55:22

PAUL: It's funny how you get into those jobs. At least it was for me. Again, I'm not trying to tell you the way the world works, but at Highline we were re-creating the whole world. It was a new college, the college faculty was picked from all walks of life. That was very unique, for me at that time, to be with people who had been in industry, people who'd been in teaching, people who'd been in the service industries, all thrown together. And we were thrown together in an unusual way, in that we got started on a high school campus that wasn't prepared for us. So we were thrown into portable buildings, jammed in there. The fellow across from me was an English instructor. There were some science instructors in my building, but not very many of them. Of course they weren't very many. Here you have a number of people in chemistry or physics or what have you. But we had one person, one person does it all, and we were constantly communicating with each other, falling all over each other, and it was a wonderful experience. I can't tell you how wonderful that experience was. And we were improving on

what had happened to us. "Well here's what we've got to do different, we've gotta do this, we've gotta do that." I remember one instructor who thought an awful lot of us were a pain in the neck. When the first people came around to accredit us, he was so excited. "Look we're doing this, we're doing this, we're doing this." And it was a wonderful kind of thing. Now it's much more the bureaucracy, or it was when I left, and that changes the complexion of things. And in the meantime I wandered off question, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Oh boy you've done a great job. It's these kind of things I want to hear anyway. So your career came full circle, I mean, in the end, you taught some more.

PAUL: Back in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

PAUL: Well it was a mutual decision at the time. We'd had the faculty strike. There was a lot of faculty-administrative conflict. We had a new president who was going to straighten the matter out, and everybody was voicing their complaints about the system. And I think when I was reassigned to the classroom, within a year or so, almost all the administrators were. On the academic side at least. And you know if I had been a trustee, I probably would've said yeah that's probably what we gotta do. And the only-- it gave me some tenure problems. My kids were in high school, I'm like any other high school, upper grade father: I don't want to have to move out of town. I want to stay here, I like this school. I like doing what I'm doing, and teaching presented a brighter side. But that in fact is how it happened.

INTERVIEWER: So was that fulfilling for you, we talked earlier about the six-year rule for you, [laughs]. Every six years you had to do something different.

PAUL: Well I probably, you know, it's never one-sided. There's always some truth on both sides. Of every issue. And I think maybe having to leave administration, was in part my doing, in part was my fault for having lost some of the enthusiasm for it, and partly it was just the way things happen.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah I can understand that. So, let's talk just briefly – we're almost done – let's talk just briefly about some relationships that we as an institution had with other entities in our area. So, the city of Tacoma. What was the college's relationship like with the city of Tacoma? When you came on and throughout your career here at the college?

PAUL: Oh I think it's always been very good. Nothing to my knowledge was ever a conflict. The academic versus occupational thing was pretty well ingrained in both locations, and some of the legislators were a little reluctant to see us move in the occupational direction, but I never felt there was a lack of cooperation. TCC was always highly regarded as an institution. You know, if there was something else I didn't know about it.

1:01:27

INTERVIEWER: How do you think TCC and the city have evolved since you got here in 1967? I'm imagining the landscape of this area was quite different than it is today.

PAUL: I think people have, as they have almost everywhere, have grown much more broad-minded. Much more accepting of change. Remember, the Chinese were run out of Tacoma at one stage of our existence, the Japanese were all interned, Black people all lived on Hilltop. I'm not saying we're out of the woods, that would be a mistake I think, but I think there's more acceptance now. That we really are all in this together one way or another, and when you deprive one group of opportunity, you deprive everybody. The occupations were different in the beginning. They were much more traditional. Lumber was bigger. Fishing was bigger. I think that's about all I know how to comment on.

INTERVIEWER: How about the physical landscape as well? I know James Center across the street wasn't built in '67, I assume anyway.

PAUL: Oh, that's quite a memory. We came to the northwest in, I guess that would've been '53. And so much of the area was just woods. And grassy land, and hills. None of South Center had been built. What's the name of the Smith Towers in Seattle? That was the tallest building in Seattle [laughs]. Pardon me, I know an old joke. My mind seems to have run more to jokes in my lifetime, than other things. This old-timer was celebrating his hundredth birthday, and reporters were saying, you've seen a lot of changes haven't you? Which you just asked. And he said yes, he said, I have. And I've been against every one of them [both laugh]. Now I don't want to characterize myself that way because I think I've tried hard not to let that happen. But it does happen. Time moves on, and you got to keep moving with it. Or it doesn't work.

INTERVIEWER: I would agree. Last question.

PAUL: I think I'm going to have to ask for a timeout, or maybe you're done I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: I just have number question then I'm done, but if you want to take a break.

[Break; begins with discussion about video production]

INTERVIEWER: So the last question that I have for you is the future. So we've talked a lot about the past and your experience as an instructor, as an administrator for the college. That's taken the last fifty years, the college is turning 50 in 2015. What about the next fifty years? Where should the college go in your opinion? And we're talking broadly here. What should the college do, what should be the focus, what does the future look like?

PAUL: Well I'm hardly an authority on that subject. It's hard enough just to predict what I'll be doing fifty years from now. No, I think that's easier to predict. Much as it has been maligned, I think... some kind of automation is going to play a big future. I just can't see with everybody needing as much education as they will need for the job market, being able to sustain the

system the way it is. I think the high tuitions that are being forced on students is an indicator that it's going to get out of control. So when I read about things being offered on television, and I know that's not held in high regard among teachers, I think it's inevitable. Now, it may be well improved. But I think it will happen. I think we've got a lot more-- and in fact for most people these days, you're already getting a lot of education simply by watching television. But it will be more directed. Now beyond that, I don't know, I just regret being an old-timer, that I won't be around to see it. Because I think it will be very interesting. And I think there will be the opposition, as there always is to change. But I think it's inevitable.

INTERVIEWER: So you talked a lot about change, and what would be your advice to the young generation right now? Or even speaking to the 50-some-year-olds, you mentioned your wife being let go at 50. What would be your advice regarding change?

PAUL: Accept it [laughs]. You can't fight it. I suppose I've said that a time or two already today. We've got what, 6 billion people on the earth? 7 billion, something like that? And they all want the same thing, and they all can't have it, the earth won't be able to handle it. So somehow there's going to have to be something to allow it to get along. You know we don't think about these things very much. But they're going on lickety-split.

INTERVIEWER: So change is inevitable?

PAUL: It's inevitable. Most of it, most of it. A lot of it we won't like. A lot of it will fly in the face of conventional wisdom. But it's, you know, it's going to happen.

INTERVIEWER: Anything that you would like to add or elaborate on that we didn't touch on already?

PAUL: [Pauses] I don't think so. In retrospect it was a very interesting career. I'm glad I showed up here at the time I did, and I'm glad the good things happened, and I'm sorry the bad things happened [laughs]. It's been an interesting experience. Been quite a trip, as they say.

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful. And for the record Paul Jacobson spelled, J-A-C-O-B-S-O-N.

PAUL: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: And can you tell me the year that you were born?

PAUL: Tell me again?

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me the year that you were born?

PAUL: Yes, 1927.

INTERVIEWER: Great. I'm done, it's a wrap. Thank you.

PAUL: Well, thank you.