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Robert A. Brunner

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA

AN INTERVIEW WITH: Robert A. Brunner

CONDUCTED BY: Jim Deeter

March 29, 1985

TRANSCRIBED BY: S. Yvonne Tumblin

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JD: This is, ah, an Oral History interview with Bob Brunner of WSAZ-TV in Huntington, West Virginia on March 29, 1985. This interview is being conducted as a part of, ah, the history, ah, research being conducted for, ah, Marshall University History Department in regards to Kanawha Valley Textbook Controversy in 1968-, 1974 and 75. Um, the interviewer is Jim Deeter, the interviewee is Bob Brunner of WSAZ. Bob, I appreciate you giving us, us the time to recall some of these experiences. If you would, just as a matter of record and just for the tape, ah, give us a little bit about your background, how you have come, came to be in Huntington and go in TV and journalism and that sort of thing.

BB: Okay. I, ah, (clears throat) graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1968 with a degree in broadcast journalism and came to work here, ah, in May of '68 as a general assignment reporter in, ah, fall of 1969 I was promoted to Charleston news director and, ah, worked, ah, operating the Charleston bureau of reporting and anchoring from there from '69 through '76 before I was transferred back to Huntington as news director, served in that role until 1982, ah, June 1982 I was appointed executive news editor, the position I currently hold.

JD: Ah huh, so you were in Charleston as the representative for WSAZ during the controversy? (Ah huh) You were there how long before, did you say?

BB: From, ah, '69, August of '69 through September of '76.

JD: So you feel, you feel like you, you were fairly well qualified to know a little bit about the community and reactions to people and so on, so forth. (Yeah) When did this, ah, when this controversy that we're talking about which is involves the textbooks which really began in the spring of 1974, ah, when did you first become aware of this and then how did you become aware of this so called controversy?

BB: My memory has the, the issue developing basically, ah, as a, ah, campaign issue. There was a crowded schoolboard race. A candidate, ah, from St. Albans, one of the smaller communities in the, ah, county, that did not have much of a political base realised, ah, the kind of textbooks in the schools as her major campaign issue. Her name was Alice Moore. She was the wife of a, ah, ah, fundamentalist minister in, ah, St. Albans, and she began to attract a following in her campaign, ah, ah, developing this as an issue. It, ah, was an issue that frankly did not exist before that campaign. When, ah, she was elected, ah, to the schoolboard, ah, the, ah, the issue moved to, ah, schoolboard meetings, large demonstrations began to, ah, occur outside schoolboard meetings, and at that point my sense of it as a reporter was that it had, ah, gotten beyond, ah, Mrs. Moore, beyond her control, ah, she was actually more frightened of the people who claimed to be

her "supporters" than, ah, ah, you know, she just had this attitude, oh what have I wrought. The people who then came to the floor, ah, three names, ah, immediately jump out at me because they are personalities that, ah, I'll never forget. Ah, Reverend Marvin Horan, ah, who was from up, ah, (Campbell's Creek) Campbell's Creek area, a Reverend Avis Hill who is down in the, the southern part of the county and a Reverend Ezra Graley who, ah, was I think from the, the Elkview area, the northern part of the county. Each one of these three people, umm, ah, I, I use the term Reverend because, ah, in this case, in these cases these were, I think, part time ministers. I think Ezra Graley was a roofer and Avis Hill was an odd job type person who, ah, subsequently ended up, ah, operating a Christian school down in the Allen Creek area for a while and, ah, I'm not sure what, what Marvin Horan did but they were basically voluntary (Marvin Horan went to prison.) yeah, Marvin Horan ultimately went to prison but I, I'm getting ahead of the story. But they basically took control of the demonstrations, ah, at, ah, as the summer wore on, ah, they began picketing, ah, at mine sites and ended up developing a wild cat coal mine strike out of the thing when the, ah, [clears throat] coal miners got involved it, ah, it really started getting ugly. (Ah huh.) Ah, coal miners traditionally will not cross any picket line, um, and when these mothers and Christian fundamentalists began picketing at mine sites they didn't go to work so you had a wildcat mine strike going and suddenly, ah, in addition to the

protestors and demonstrators you saw on a fairly regular basis, ah, you threw, ah, a couple of thousand, ah, fairly angry coal miners into the mix. Ah, and they were basically saying we can't go to work til you throw these textbooks away and there . . . cause these people are going to picket us and so they, in essence, were, were moved into the dispute and, ah, it was during that period of time that, that most of the incidents of violence began occurring.

JD: You first became aware of the, of the so-called controversy then during the, the campaigning of Alice Moore for schoolboard seat. (Yeah, that was the seed.) [both speaking at once:] Were you, [JD:] Were you cognizant of her before the controversy actually got started as a newsman?

BB: When she began campaigning for the schoolboard on that issue (Ah huh.) [clears throat] that's when we started to see, you know, some interest in that issue, it started to develop and, ah, she began, ah, during her campaign holding up, ah, and passing out items which were allegedly in the textbook that were of a sexual nature or an anti-religious nature, some of which ultimately had turned out, ah, was or parts of it were in proposed textbooks and some of it wasn't. Um, it didn't seem to matter to her at the time [noise in background, clears throat] exactly how accurate things were because the whole [clears throat] thing started building and, ah, then as I said my sense was from talking to her

that by the time she got elected to the board and summer came, ah, it was out of her control and she was more frightened by what she had done than, ah, than eager to, you know, continue, she sort of backed away from it.

JD: You actually got that feeling from her?

BB: Oh, definitely, yeah.

JD: You interviewed, did you interv, interview her prior to her election to the shcoolboard during her campaign?

BB: Oh yeah, ah huh.

JD: How did you find her personally, or is that the wrong question to ask a journalist?

BB: Ah, it's hard really to, to, to, ah, to say personally. She seemed to be, ah, totally fired up and committed to this textbook issue (Ah huh.) at that point. She believed in her heart that there was an element that in the school system that had been in control of the school, school system that was trying, they use the term secular humanism that was trying to force down children's throats, ah, ah, certain views of the world that did not coincide with her views of the world, ah, that were, that were wanting to expose children in the school system to what she regarded as smut and pornography and, ah, textbooks that did not recognize the, ah, the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And, ah, she was a singular issue person, I mean that was why she was running for the schoolboard was to get those filthy books out of the schools. (Ah huh) And, ah, schoolboard races,

ah, do not normally take on any of those kinds of overtones. They are normally conducted in a fairly, ah, civilized placet fashion and, ah, from, you know, board members or, or candidates representing various interest groups within the educational community and Alice Moore was a total outsider. And the educational community perceived her immediately as a severe threat and, ah, those who didn't hide went on the attack.

JD: Oh really? (Yeah.) The, the other members of the schoolboard and people in, within the educational administration saw her, you think, saw her as a threat?

BB: A definite threat. Yeah.

JD: To the stability of things or to a, or to, um, a things, business as usual type of approach?

BB: Well, both. Ah, obviously, ah, the only schoolboard member, and he is still on the board, who seemed to sense some political advantage if not philisophical kinship with Alice Moore at the time was a gentleman named Matthew Kinsawling. Um, he tended to sort of sidle up to her when she got on the board. Ah, the other board members pretty much kept their distance from her at the time, my memory tells me. (Ah huh.) They were, they were pretty fearful of, of what she was doing. As a matter of fact, ah, a couple of times that, where she, ah, and again this is memory, I can't, you know, yank a notebook out where she was actually, ah, requesting police escorts in the board meetings and the only people outside the board meeting were 2,000 people with placards ^{guards}

saying, you know, we love Alice Moore, get the filthy books out of the school, but she was afraid, more afraid of them than other people were.

JD: Um, that's interesting, first time I've heard that. I've heard it said of Alice Moore, and I don't even know her personally. I haven't interviewed her, I'd like to, but . . . I've heard it said of her that she was politically motivated. That she had some mys, mysterious reason, ah, mystical reason for wanting, ah, mysterious reason for wanting the books out. That was an issue just for her to get herself thrust forward.

BB: I think that her opponents, I think, wanted, ah, wanted that out, wanted people to believe that of her. Um, I don't think that was the case. Ah, if it had been she probably could have been elected to any office she wanted to get elected to. (Ah huh.) Ah, and, ah, she basically, ah, pulled back from the issue once she was on the schoolboard and got some of the resolutions she wanted. She, she became you know, more of a background person. Um, she could have run for any number of other offices and never did.

JD: Ah huh. Did you cover many of the schoolboard meetings after Alice came on the board? Ah, did you personally cover any of the schoolboard meetings? (Huh uh). Any of them that stick out in your mind particularly?

BB: No, it just, it really turned into a jumble. Um, very little was getting done that summer, ah, simply because of

the throngs of people that were at the schoolboard almost every day or every other day or any time there was a scheduled meeting. Um, and there was a, you know, tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife and there was really not, there was no sense of, ah, trying to get things moving. The school superintendent at the time who resigned pretty much in the middle of all this was a gentleman I think his name was Leonard I. Underwood. (Kenneth Underwood.) Kenneth Underwood, ah, he resigned in the middle of all this. He, ah, ah, was just totally frustrated in trying to do anything. The board was afraid to do anything. Everybody was afraid to do anything. It just was sort of this, oh my God, what's goin' on. Nobody really understood the, the battle, you know, was being portrayed in the national media as a battle between the hillers and the creekers. Ah, i.e., the, the quote the people we now call yuppies, ah, the upper middle class, ah, the gentry that were in the, in the urban areas thought this was all silly and why are we bein' bothered with it but the people who lived up the creeks and hollows, the, the, ah, ah, people who tended to come more from the laboring class, if you understand West Virginia's history, ah, were, ah, just mobilized into a united force for about the only time I can ever [clears throat] think of that happening, you know, under this issue, we got to get these books out of the schools and it, ah, it became a very long hot summer. (Was it a, was it a cultural issue, do you think, between the hillers and the creekers?) I think it. I think that was a

value in the other's perceptions, ah, and you have this, this incredible socio-economic barrier. It was not a matter where you had some people from various backgrounds on either side of the issue. It h...it, ah, the issue became pretty clear cut in terms of the, the various sides the, the, the, the establishment, the educated, the, ah, the people that they would call the, the rich snottoses, ah, all wanted things as they were. And the, ah, you know, the salt of the earth, ah, laboring classes by God wanted it changed. And there was very little communication between the groups. I, I also think from my perspective as a newsman that as the issue developed that some of the people who became identified as leaders of the group were in it for other reasons. Um, for example Marvin Horan who later went to jail tried to use that issue as a platform to run for political office, Ezra Graley tried to use the issue as a platform to run for political office, Avis Hill, ah, tried to use the issue as a platform for political office, subsequently made a record, ah, went around selling his record. Ah, started a, a Christian school which I believe folded after a couple of years. Um, my sense was that these guys saw there was a way to, ah, achieve some prominence in this deal and, ah, you know, were quick to, you know, say the right words in order to get to the front of the crowd, ah, that they were not, ah, you know, the, the kind of, ah, pure issue oriented people that you, you often see debating issues like this. These people were not on that level; they

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huh) You know, this is hot, I'm with 'em, let's go get 'em,
(Ah huh) kind of an attitude.

JD: Did you ever interview, speaking about these three men you mentioned of Graley, Horan, and Hill, did you ever interview them personally? (Oh yeah, yeah) How do you remember anything particularly about them? And you're convinced that, that they were politically motivated?

BB: Ah huh, well, that was at, at least a significant part of their motivation. Ah, I would, you know, there were three totally different kinds of personalities, um, Marvin Horan, ah, to me exhibited all of the characteristics of the classic demagogue. Ah, he was, ah, able to work a crowd into a fever pitch and had no compunction about doing it, didn't matter he said. He, he would say whatever it took to work that crowd up. Um, as you know he subsequently, ah, was convicted of, ah, making bombs, ah, as part of [inaudible], spent some time to, ah, I think they were using his church or his basement or something to make the bombs and subsequently spent a little time in federal prison. I've lost touch with him completely since then.

JD: He runs an Exxon station in Cambell's Creek.

BB: I'll be darned. [laughs] Ezra Graley was a, ah, slick, he was pretty slick. Um, I think he, more than anybody else, sensed that there was some profit to be made out of this issue, ah, and he was again one of those guys who could get up and work up a crowd but was more of an organizer and I

had the sense was, ah, working this idea long term. You know, he wasn't just in it for the short term. Avis Hill, ah, little skinny guy and, ah, I stayed in touch with him for several years after the, after the textbook protest and you know, and several other kinds of things, seemed to be a genuine, had a genuinely inquiring mind, ah, did not seem to be, ah, ah, close-minded about various things and seemed to want to develop that issue and to developing Christian schools and things like that. But I think that was his long-range goal from the beginning. I don't think he jumped into this because he was just, you know, so angry about it but I think he's, he saw that this was something that maybe could galvanize people to set up an alternative educational system which I think was his primary interest.

JD: Ah huh. I, I interviewed Avis not too long ago.

BB: Is he still down around Alum Creek?

JD: Yeah.

BB: Is he still down there?

JD: Yeah. Still has his school going down there.

BB: Is it? I thought it folded.

JD: Oh yeah, yeah, it's still going. It may have folded and then opened back up, (Yeah) but it's going now.

BB: How many kids does he have?

JD: He didn't say. I didn't, I didn't even ask him. But, ah, Avis, ah, the thing that strikes me as you comment about Avis and Marvin and Ezra Graley, ah, and Avis is the only one I've talked to personally. I've talked to Marvin Horan

on the phone who would not submit to an interview. And I can understand probably there are some very deep and personal things that he wouldn't want to talk about but, ah, Avis, ah, I got the impression that Avis as I talked to him this is my, my impression again, not so much a man who got involved because he saw long-term benefits but because he kind of got caught up in a, in a vortex. He, he said at first he was not even interested in the issue, he was an evangelist, he called himself an evangelist and he wanted to promote his meetings and he wanted to have these tent meetings and go out into, you know, in the world and, and win the world to the Lord. (Ah huh) But, ah, he told me personally it just kind of caught him, it just kind of bellowed up in front of him and he got caught in his vortex and before he knew it he was involved in the thing, ah, and you c...

JD: It's interesting you comment on that, ah, he had some long term ideas perhaps (Ah huh). Um, I don't know. What did you base it on? Something he said, the way he acted or...?

BB: I just had the sense it was more, you know. I can't really recall any specific things at the time but I had the sense and perhaps I'm, I'm seeing the same thing but from a different perspective that Avis Hill wasn't there because he was just, you know, up in arms about the textbook issue but that Avis Hill saw this as a vehicle to get some other things going. Ah, that, that he wasn't, ah, [noise in background] you know, pure demagogue like the other guys. He seemed to want to ask questions rather than make

statements and, and think about down the road and, you know, nobody was talking about alternative schools, ah, ah, you know, ah, he was really the first one that kept bringing up this thing like we could start our own school system, you know. He was thinking, you know, one step past what everybody else was thinking, which is let's get rid of the damn books. (Ah huh). You know.

JD: Um, was, I had something else on my mind about Marvin, um, it's interesting that you mention that, that Graley and Horan were, struck you as classic demagogues and, ah, and what I was gonna ask you was, was there a, a point at which you, you were convinced that there was no way this thing could be resolved, it was a total impass, in other words Avis Hill told me one time on, on, on tape that, ah, I asked him was there any way this thing could have been resolved? What did you all, what would you have been happy with? And he said every one of the books had to go. (Ah huh) In other words there was no place in their mind for, for compromise. (Ah huh) They wouldn't have b...well, it was talked to me. How, how do you feel about that? Do you recall?

BB: I think that's pretty accurate because there were, ah, and, and this is why I brought up the Alice Moore thing earlier because there were a couple of efforts of compromise (Ah huh) where, you know, Alice who was in the school board meeting would come out and, and say well, we've worked out a

deal and essentially her, her people would, ah, say he, he, the hell with it Alice, you know, get back in there. You know, in other words and it was very frustrating for the, the, the establishment because they felt, well we can deal with Alice Moore and, (Ah huh) ah, you know, they would say what about this, what about that and she would, ah, supposedly agree to some kind of a compromise then she'd go out and, and tell her people well we've worked out this deal and they'd say crappy deal Alice and she'd say oh well, I don't like it either, you know [laughing] and she'd go back in and so there, there was that, that feeling that was just at a, at a total impasse.

JD: Huh. Ah, let me move on to another area. What about outside influences? Ah, I understand, I've been led to believe at least that there were, ah, people involved from John ^{Breck} Burke Society, Ku Klux Klan, ah, even some neo-Nazis perhaps, ah, groups that were perpetuating this thing for their own interest. Ah, do you have any...?

BB: There was some of that, ah, you know, coat tail type stuff but I, I never sensed that it became, oh, a significant part of the story. Ah, there were some people who were very close, ah, personally and campaign supporters of Alice Moore who I was aware of, you know, being involved with fringe, other kind of fringe elements. Ah, but I don't think they were a major part of the story. Ah, you know, I never sensed that they had control of anything or that they were

directing it. I think they were just trying to use the issue to, you know, maybe win some converts (Ah huh.) kind of thing and I don't think they were very successful with that. You know, most of the people who were involved in this thing were, you know, simple country folk who wanted the damn books out and that was it. You know, (Ah huh.) let's just get the books out and we'll all go home. (Ah huh.) And it was that simple of a, a ...

JD: That seems too simplistic to me. Although I'm sure it's, it's got a lot of truth in it. How could a st, could a person who lives in, let's say Campbell's Creek in a, in a, ... inarticulate, ah, coalminer, ah, get, be aware of the complexity of this issue? How could he deal with the fact, ah, in one textbook you might have these stories of a, of a Jack in the Beanstalk and, ah, some classical fairytales and some other literature, classic literature and then, ah, in another textbook it might have some of the newer more modern English and how, how do the coalminers get, become aware of that?

BB: Well, again I think what you see as complex they saw as very simple. You know, it was just, it was as, as, as the day is long to them. Some left-wing liberals were trying to put filthy books in, in non, you know, unGod-like books in their schools - they wanted them out. (Ah huh) Real simple. And it's our school system, our taxes. We're the people that send the kids to those schools. Get those damn books out. What's so hard about that? To them it was a very simple

issue and when there was this initial resistance, you know, and the textbook committee said, well these are the books we selected and board initially said well we always go along with the textbook committee's recommendation. [sort of laughing] You know, to them it was just simple; hell, fire the textbook committee, get another one and get some decent books in the schools. (Ah huh) No complexity to it, simple as could be. And that, that's the way they saw it. There, there, you know, nobody had any real doubts or, you know, philosophical questions or anything like that or when I say nobody I, I didn't sense that among most of them it was just simplest thing in the world. Let's just get those books out and we'll all go home.

JD: When the violence began to, to really get started [coughs] in, in the fall of '74, September of school opening, I understand there was some real vicious things done. (Ah huh) Man was shot, schools were threatened, what the school board actually the building was bombed, (Ah huh) buses were fired at, and all that sort of thing, ah, did you personally get out in, in that, in that violent atmosphere? (Ah huh, yeah.) Tell me a little bit about, you said on the phone the other day about your feeling, your fears, and how you found the people.

BB: Well there, there, there were two time, ah, when I questioned what I was doing for a living. Ah, there was one morning where there had been some violence, ah, school buses fired upon, ah, some reports of scattered violence up

Campbell's Creek and I was, ah, got my photographer and we headed up Campbell's Creek in an unmarked news vehicle and, ah, ah, the road quickly peters out from concrete to, ah, sort of a rough gravel/rock type surface and, ah, we're heading up the road just looking for what's going on and all of a sudden [clears throat] the road just exploded in front of us and, ah, you know (Literally exploded?) yeah, we, and I just, buuuuu..., you know, we hit the brakes and the vehicle skidded to a halt. What had happened [clears throat] it took me a few seconds to figure out is that somebody had just emptied a load of buckshot into the road in front of us, you know, but when you're on a rocky, gravel road and all of a sudden - buuu... all you see is, is dust and hear an explosion, oh shit, you know, and, ah, and there were three or four guys, ah, a couple of which had shotguns, a couple of which had baseball bats and they just, ah, came up out and stood in the road and said we don't want you here, and I said yes sir [laughing] and I turned around and went right back down but, you know, there's th...that was, ah, that was one of those times when you, [takes deep breath] you had to check to see if your pants were still on because, ah, you know, it's a, it was a very frightening thing. But I suppose the most scared I ever was was right in the middle of the city of Charleston, ah, that fall, ah, there was a crowd which I think police estimated at 7 or 8 thousand, ah, hurling rocks, bombarding the schoolboard offices up there on Elizabeth Street and we were kind of in the middle of it covering it. And. ah. this is when the

out and they were also involved in it. And coalminers decided they didn't want their pictures taken because they were illegally on strike. And we had one of these [clears throat] vans with the side opened up, it's one of those step vans you open up the side of the van and we were standing, you know, next to the van and my photographer's got a camera on his shoulder and I got the mic in my hand and we're taking pictures of the crowd and everything that's going on and all the shouting and the chanting and everything that's going on and, ah, a bunch of coal miners came over with an American flag and just draped it over us so we couldn't see anything and, ah, you know, I just told my photographer, I said, you know, keep rolling, keep rolling, you know, some ... bunch more got around behind the van and started rocking it over us so the roof of the van was coming over the top and periodically we could see out from the flag. We saw some others approaching with the lead pipes and the baseball bats. And at that point the only thing^o I could think of, I had my arm around the photographer, I said, I'm with you, you know, we're together here, you just keep rolling. Whatever happens we'll at least have some record of it and, ah, ah, you know, it was one of those interminable periods of time that I could never actually put minutes or seconds to. It seemed like it went on forever and, ah, the focus of the crowd started to turn on us when the miners started after us and finally, ah, at some point, ah, ah, some Charleston police officers came in with drawn and cocked

(Huh.) but I legitimately felt that had the police not gotten there in the next minute or so that we would have been seriously injured. There was, there was no, ah, there was no playing around about this, these boys were serious. [laughing] [speaking simultaneously -- inaudible]

JD: What does that, that particular incident and the incident you related earlier about Campbell's Creek, what does that imply to you? Have you ever thought about it? (Well,) The implications of that incident. (Ah,) Why were they attacking you? You were trying to, I hope, be an objective news observer.

BB: The C, the Campbell's Creek incident, ah, is, is not as unusual as it might seem. Whenever there is, ah, some kind of trouble up some kinds of hollows in West Virginia they don't want any outsiders up that hollow. They want to take care of it themselves. And that, you know, essentially, you know, they knew that the state police were after them and that they'd done some bad things, you know. Well, they might, the state police might have weapons but the news media don't so by God they don't have to let us in. It's their hollow. You know, sort of that state of ^{Martial} ~~Marshall~~ Law (Ah huh.) sort of attitude. Ah, the thing downtown, ah, at that point it was that the whole thing was at its frenzy. There were a lot of violent acts going on and, and those coalminers had just decided they didn't want their pictures taken, by God, so, you know, since there was essentially a

state of ~~marshal~~^{marshal} law in the whole Kanawha Valley at the time there I felt their assumption was well, we'll beat the hell out of these guys and throw a flag over them and they can't take our picture. And, ah, you know, we's gonna do anything to us for, you know, doing that so we're just gonna do it. There was this, this sort of state of lawlessness this attitude, ah, (Perhaps anarchy?) no, a lot, a lot of people carrying loaded weapons in their cars and trucks, ah, you know, there was a, there was a lot of tension, ah, you know, and, ah, there was a significant amount of violence.

JD: Any sense as a newsman during this time of real violence, ah, that these people who were committing the violence, people you had contact with, really knew what they were, what they were fighting for? Or were they just caught up in some kind of war [inaudible]

BB: Yeah, yeah. I think, I think in, in, in the case, particularly, of the incident down at the schoolboard I think this was just more of a, a mob frenzy kind of thing. Ah, the Campb... (fever pitch) yeah, the, the Campbell's Creek thing was, ah, simply that those were those, were those, were Campbell's Creekers and they didn't want us up there, (Ah huh) and they were going to stop us. They did you know, we went away. And ...

JD: But, but, but did the average guy involved in the anti-textbook side really know why he was there [speaking simultaneously, inaudible] in that crowd?

BB: Well as I, as I said, as I said I think for most of them it was just a pretty simple thing.

JD: Just to get the books out.

BB: Get the books out.

JD: That's all we want, just get the books out, right?

BB: Ah huh, get rid of those damn books, we'll b, we'll go home.

JD: Ah huh. Ah, there was a meeting some time in the late summer of '74 at ^{Watt Powell} ~~Whitpat~~ Park, large meeting with, ah, several of the leaders on the platform and s, thousands of people, I guess, in the stands. Were you at that meeting?

BB: Ah huh, yeah. We covered it. Yeah.

JD: Ah huh. I understand, I, I heard it mentioned, it related to me by one of the participants in the meeting that, ah, some of the leaders, Ezra Graley, Avis Hill, and Marvin Horan were there and they were actually getting the people to cheer for who they wanted as their leader. (Ah huh.) Is that a true story? (Ah huh, yeah.) Does that imply anything to you? That ...

BB: Pretty much what I was

JD: ... supports what you said about ...

BB: Yeah, yeah. Pretty much what I was talking about earlier, you know. Who's got, who's got the most fans.

JD: I was told that story and it really, I, I just couldn't believe that (Yeah.) it, it, it got to that ebb, you know, that people would actually cheer for their favorite guy. (Ah huh, ah huh.) Umm, well, let's talk [end of side one,

begin side 21 ... Ah, I was saying, we've talked about, ah, a lot of the anti-textbook people and some of the violence that you, you saw personally [chuckles] and were, were involved in. Ah, what about some of the pro-textbook people, the people that you would call pro-textbook. Hopefully you were neutral and you tried to see both sides of the story. Ah, tell me something about some of the people you interviewed or had contact with on the other side.

BB: The biggest single memory that I had was a weakness in ^{vaccination?} vassalation. Ah, we had a state school superintendent at the time, Dr. Daniel Taylor, who I had an immense amount of respect for as a, you know, very intelligent, ah, committed, dedicated educator. Ah, Dan Taylor did everything humanly possible to avoid that issue. You know, just kept saying it's the county schoolboard problem, it's the county schoolboard's problem, not a state problem, the state board has nothin' to do with it. Ah, I felt all along that if, if Dan Taylor had, you know, had come out and, and done his job, ah, and when I say done his job I'm talking about in the, in the greater context of being the top education official in the state and had taken an active role that, ah, this issue could have been resolved a lot more quickly. Ah, I move up a step, Arch Moore, ah, Jim really conceded to have, to have been, ah, the most pro-active innovative, ah, extremely involved governor in the history of the State of West Virginia. During the textbook dispute Arch Moore

practically disappeared. (Huh!) You know, did you know spoke out against the violence, the traditional stuff, but again, ah, you know, there was a vacuum there and nobody was stepping forward to fill it. I think that those on the county level who were looking up for leadership, ah, from the, the county superintendent to the, the existing board members, ah, essentially sensed that they were, they were all, they were out there on their own. That they was, you know, it was tuff titty and, ah, and they basically went into the bunker and, ah, you know, screwed the top down and, and you know, tried not to raise their head above the, ah, ah, above the line. And, ah, just tried to hunker it out and that, I think, enraged and frustrated the anti-textbook side even more. (Ah huh.) But it, it got to the point where you couldn't, you couldn't have a reasonable discussion on the issue; you couldn't have a debate on the issue because there, there was this immediate boosh sound, clash there, there nobody wanted to hear anything, nobody wanted to listen. They just wanted the damn books out. You know, and if you're not ready to take the damn books out then don't talk to us (Ah huh) 'cause we know what's in those damn books and we want 'em out and, you know, it was just, it was, it was a no-talk kind of issue and I think they, they perceived that. Ah, Leonard Underwood, ah, (Kenneth) Kenneth Underwood, ah, the, ah, the then, you know, school superintendent, you know, sensed, I think immediately, that, you know, hey, ah, schoolboard is not gonna be out front on this one and, ah, after initially trying to take a

leadership position, he pretty much faded into the woodwork as well. And it, it just became one of those things where I can't remember any strong pro-active individual coming forward and saying, you know, these people are wrong and I'm gonna stand here and tell you that. (Ah huh.) It, they just pretty much scurried for their cubbyholes and figured after a while they'd get tired and go away. (Ah huh) And, ah, you know, there were, ah, I would say, ah, Dan Taylor probably had a great career as West Virginia Superintendent of Schools. This was the major blemish. Arch Moore probably had a great record of Governor of West Virginia. This was his major blemish. Ah, at least before his, his subsequent indictment .

JD: The fact that they, they would not take hold and get involved?

BB: Right, yeah.

JD: Ah, did you interview any of the teachers during this time? There was a, there was a group called Coa, The Kanawha County Coalition for Better Education - Quality Education (Ah huh) who were basically pro-textbook people. (Ah huh) Did you interview, talk to any of those people?

BB: Early on in the thing. Ah, they did some interviews. But as, as the, ah, as the summer wore on they started disappearing as well. It was, it was very, very difficult at, at that point it stopped becoming one of those things, let's talk about what's right or wrong about this textbook selection process. You know, those were out the window.

You know, by the time the summer was in, in full swing it was just, it was, ah, ah, you know, just a flat out war. And, you know, it was let's get those books out and the people who wanted the books in recognized that the people who wanted the books out weren't about to talk about it so they just essentially went into hiding.

JD: Ah huh, and just hoped that it would all blow over and, and go away.

BB: Yeah, ah huh.

JD: Ah, any, ah, evidence in your recollection of this being an ethnic issue in any, any regard? Blacks against whites, whites against blacks?

BB: No. No, there weren't enough blacks involved, ah, you know, I didn't sense any, any racial overtones to it at all.

JD: Well, one, one of the issues I understand was the inclusion of, ah, certain black authors in suggested reading lists such as Eldridge Clever, Malcolm X, a problem with that. Also, there was some black, ah, stories of black children in the, some of the textbooks. There was one textbook that had a black child, I remember seeing a black child with a white girl, ah, standing together.

BB: Yeah, there was, there was some of that, ah, you know, on the anti side that, you know, they would hold this up, look what they're trying to do, they're trying to force mesegination and stuff like that. But, I don't think that was ever, you know, a major factor. Blacks did not become

involved really on either side of that issue. (Ah huh.)

They just kind of hid as well.

JD: Ah huh. As you look at this issue ten years down the road, ah, what, what kind of an issue do you think, we've talked about culture, we've talked, we've talked about ethnics, ah, ethnic background, cultural background and we've talked about, you know, coal miners and, ah, that sort of thing, what kind of an issue was this really?

BB: [pauses] I, I think it, it started as a, ah, political campaign issue and it became a clash of cultures.

JD: So is it safe to say that, ah, on one side of the fence you have, ah, basically inarticulate, ah, ah, lower social strata people opposing, ah, articulate, ah, upper strata people? Is that, is that a safe assumption?

BB: I think that if you were drawing a profile of a typical person on either side of that spectrum that would not be an inaccurate profile although the leaders of the anti-textbook thing, the, the, who I refer to as demagogic in personality, were anything but inarticulate. They could whip crowds into absolute frenzies and Alice Moore herself who never raised her voice, ah, you know, who never whipped a crowd into a frenzy, ah, was herself an extremely articulate woman. You know, very well spoken. [noise on tape, indistinguishable, sounds like tape was shut off and turned back on]

JD: Ah, continuing our discussion with Bob Brunner, ah, on the Kanawha Valley Textbook Controversy, as you were, we

interrupted there something came to my mind, Bob, about, we were talking about the, ah, the division between the two groups. I think it's, ah, mine is on a personal observation, maybe artificial, ah, to say on the one side you have inarticulate masses, on the other side you have articulate people. You have already indicated to me that, that the leaders of the anti-textbook people were far from being inarticulate. Alice Moore was a very articulate, very, ah, (Ah huh) polished lady, that's been my understanding. Marvin Horan, Avis Hill, ah, Ezra Graley and others could take and could articulate well. (Ah huh.) I think that speaks highly of the group. Well, were there people in the anti-textbook area I, I've been hint, it's been hinted at that there were people who were anti-textbook people who were under, underneath all of this. They weren't out front people yet they were, ah, executives, ah, ah, engineers, people who were, ah, carbide type people. It's been hinted that ...

BB: There were a few, ah, who were involved in that, ah, I, I, one fellow I recall who subsequently ran for congress, I think against John Slack, who was a Carbide engineer, who I did see, ah, involved in the anti, anti-textbook, ah, side and, and a few people that I would, you know, consider minor political figures who were at least sympathetic or allowed themselves to be identified with it, Darryl Holmes who is now state senator up there, my memory tells me, ah, I would see periodically at, at some of these rallies, ah, working the crowds (Ah huh.) that, that so there, there was some of

that (What nixed that?) Ah, yeah, well let's put it this way, I never really saw Staton directly involved in any of the protests but a lot of the people who were involved in the initial stages of Alice Moore's campaign, ah, subsequently were involved with Nick Staton.

JD: Ah huh. So there were people who were, ah, we might call, ah, a little above the, the lower social strata of the Campbell's Creek coalminer. (Yeah.) Who maybe weren't quite as out front, maybe not quite as visible, but they were involved? Would that be a safe ... ?

BB: Yeah, well you mentioned the other organizations who were playing what I perceive to be a marginal or tertiary role. Ah, and I think Nick Staton has been involved with, ah, what you might call some, you know, right winged political flirtations and, ah, you know, a lot of those people saw this as a, an issue that, you know, kind of get their groups involved and everything like that. So there was, there was, there was some of that bleed off but, ah, I don't think that played a central role.

JD: Did you ever get any calls as a newsman from people who wanted to be interviewed, who wanted to have their story told and

BB: You mean on the pro-textbook side?

JD: Well, either side.

BB: Ah, well the anti-textbook people were on the phone everyday, you know, they were just, they bombarded the

media, ah, the pro-textbook people spent most of the time hiding.

JD: Oh really?

BB: Yeah.

JD: That's interesting. When in the national news media first got involved I think it was late summer of '74 they began to come in, Sixty Minutes did a program, (Ah huh) ah, they sent in a team, there were some other national, did you have contact with these people as they came into the area, ah?

BB: Yeah, some. Ah, they, like any story what, they, you're doing for a national audience, they were basically interested in, you know, get in, get your footage, enunciate the issues and get out. They weren't there for the long haul. (Ah huh) Ah, they were just there to do what we in this, in this business call, you know, your quick hitter. You know, come in say this is the Kanawha Valley, these people are protesting. Ah, they want the textbooks out of the schools. These people want the textbooks in the schools and say they're not bad and here I'm standing up in front of the crowd saying it might get worse before it gets better and then let's get on the plane and leave. You know, that kind of thing.

JD: Ah, and so that was basically their attitude when they came in?

BB: Yeah, yeah. Well, I mean there, there was one incident, ah, which I was not there personally for, ah, where I, I believe it was Jedd Duvall at CBS who, ah, was in and, you know,

these guys come in real quick and try to pick your brains what the heck's going on and, and we told 'em,, well the only thing going on tonight there was there was some meeting up, ah, Campbell's Creek and, ah, ah, Jedd said well we'll take the crew along and go up there. And the local media tended to avoid those meetings up on Campbell's Creek 'cause they tended to be pretty, ah, ah, you know, there was a potential that you'd get punched out. And so we tended to just stay pretty much with the open air mass demonstration kind of things 'cause, ah, it was our perception at the time that when they, when those boys got together up on Campbell's Creek what they were planning was not exactly legal and they didn't exactly want us there anyway. But Duvall took his crew and went on up there and somebody had told him, ah, during the, ah, when he was trying to find out what was going on that it was essentially a battle between the hillers and the creekers. And, ah, went up Campbell's Creek and he in entering the room apparently in, in an effort to ingratiate himself said well I've been talking with the hillers, I guess you guys are the creekers. Well, calling a Campbell's Creeker, creeker, a creeker from the outside, you know, is something akin to calling a black person a nigger. And, ah, so some big dude who heard that just [slapping of hands together] punched Jedd right out and punched his light out right there and, ah, Jedd went down, the crew shot a little footage [laughing] and they backed right out of there. So, ah, ah, the next day Jedd asked another story. [laughing]

JD: Wow, I hadn't heard that, that's interesting. Ah, another thing came to my mind as you were talking about that particular incident. Ah, I completely lost it now but, ah, we were talking about national news interest and so forth, ah, man I've lost that thought. Let me, let me move on to, to the decline of the controversy as things begin to cool off. As things begin to kind of fade away. As, as you lost interest in it as a newsman or did you ever? Maybe you never lost interest. Tell me how it began to cool off and why you think it began to cool off.

BB: This is, this is gonna sound awful strange to you, ah, I think cold weather.

JD: Someone else said they just got tired.

BB: Yeah. [laughing] I think everybody just got tired of it. The weather got cold. They didn't want to march around any more so it finally just faded away. Ah, it was one of those issues that we were real tired of covering. Ah, you know, there wasn't anything new in terms of news. You know, the positions were well established. The, ah, there wasn't, wasn't any real news developments coming out of it except here's today's demonstration folks, and, (Ah huh) ah, you know, those got kind of boring and alum. You hate to keep doing what you call numerological stories while there were six thousand today, there were eight thousand last week there were ten thousand the week before that. You know, that's, you don't really show viewers anything about it at

that point. And I think that with the onset of cold weather, ah, you know, ah, coal miners all went back to work once school got rolling again and things started fading away and once, I guess, Marvin got arrested and, you know, the issue just sort of quietly faded into the cold weather and nobody could get it rolling again.

JD: One, one other issue I wanted to ask you about. The incident I wanted to ask you about, there was a school board meeting some time in the early fall at which Douglas Stump was beat up, actually physically attacked by some of the demonstrators. Did you happen to be in, in, were you, did ...

BB: I heard about that. I never saw it. Ah, I didn't know that he was beaten up.

JD: Well, he said he was pushed into a table, he was at, at a table at the school board wherever the schoolboard was meeting, perhaps the board of education, I don't know.

BB: Yeah, it would have been.

JD: And, and he was at a table, a long table with other members of the school board and somebody came forward, ah, the crowd pressed the board and actually got a hold of him physically and pushed his face into the table. I mean he was actually beat up. I, I say beat up now ...

BB: I don't, ah, I remember hearing about it but for, for some reason or whatever I don't think we actually were filming then.

JD: Did you interview Doug Stump?

BB: Yeah.

JD: Ah, he's been accused of being, ah, hypocritical in his approach. Ah, ...

BB: I meet, I've met very few politicians that aren't.

[laughing]

JD: Okay, remember that this will be on, ah, deposit at the Marshall Library. (Yeah.) But that okay, that's fine. that's kind of observation.

BB: I don't, I don't pull punches like that.

JD: Well, that's great. I appreciate your candor. Ah, so the thing really started winding down as school got back in session and, and, ah, ah, let's, let's talk a little bit about the end of this thing, ah, in retrospect. What, what about this issue? Wh, why was it so violent and so, and I'm asking for, again, your opinion, so violent, so upfront, so visible during August and September and October. And then by November and December things were really starting to cool down and it just seems ironic that such an issue would die out so quickly.

BB: Other than that simplistic answer I gave you, the cold weather, I think there was also a sense that began to develop amongst some of the people who were out front on the issue. Ah, and I, as I said, Alice Moore turned faint hearted early and, ah, Marvin got arrested and, ah, I got, had the sense that Avis and Ezra and people like that, had

kind of stared, you know, an outright riot in the face a few times and they were a little worried that they were, it was out of their control. There were, at this point, ah, some of the, the fringe elements that you had mentioned who were trying to, to get more into the mainstream of the thing and I think, ah, ah, you know, when it started out, you know, there's a meeting up on, ah, you know, up at, ah, Alan Creek tonight and by God we're gonna, you know, talk about these textbooks and then they'd show up and start looking around and seeing people other than their friends and neighbors there. Ah, I think that tended to make some of the average citizens kind of back away from it saying well this isn't just us anymore. This, these are, you know, these are some people who have bigger ideas than textbooks. And I think that was a part of it too. They, they, they maybe stared some problems in the face a couple of times and, and realized that this was, you know, real explosive and were kind of backing away from everybody, just kind of backed down a little bit who was locally involved and then when the outsiders, you know, who at this point were getting all pumped up were trying to get people pumped up they were finding that the people were kind of turning their backs on them because, you know, to them, as I said, it was a simple issue. It was get the damn books out. You know, that was the whole thing. And then when other people started introducing other things; you mentioned the klan. We had a

couple of visits from, you know, klan, ah, you know muckety mucks and secret meetings and all that kind of stuff and there was some John ^[Birch]Burke society, you know, very quiet activity by them. I think when people looked around and saw those kinds of people trying to become a significant element and then most people said I don't want anything to do with them and they left.

JD: Just backed off.

BB: Yeah.

JD: Yeah. Ah, was there ever a sense as a newsman that you felt like if we could just, this thing could be resolved if, if a couple of things would come to pass? This thing could be resolved or was it, was there, was it unresolvable?

BB: I thought it was unresolvable. You know, the board was either gonna take the books out or they weren't. You know, and if they were gonna take the books out the, the people, ah, who were against 'em won and if they weren't gonna take the books out, they're gonna stick to their guns. The, the people were gonna, you know, at the very least the people were gonna beat them in the next election (Ah huh) and, ah, that was it.

JD: It's also ironic to remember that, ah, during those controversial days in the fall, summer and fall of '74, ah, people were, were wan screaming for their rights, ah, to know what their kids are being taught and, and have an input into that and yet today, even, even, even a year or two after the incident it's difficult if not impossible to get

parents involved in that process. (Ah huh.) And they're tempting, I was told by the schoolboard people in Kanawha County they, they, they're open to any parent getting involved in the selection process, or having input into the schoolboard (Ah huh.) but yet they just can't get parents involved. I find that ironic. (Yeah.) Especially as volatile as this situation was.

BB: Yeah, it's amazing, it really is.

JD: I just can not understand that. It's, it's beyond my comprehension. But, ah, that may or may not be significant to this issue. Ah, did this issue as you see it now, ten years later, in, in Huntington, ah, viewing this thing in Kanawha County, did it have any positive benefit?

BB: [pause] I can't think of a single positive to come out of that. But then again I'm a synical newsman. [laughing] You know, I saw demogogic leadership on one side and weakness and vassalation and leadership on the other side. Ah, I saw no real, ah, resolution to the problem. The problem just essentially, you know, died for lack of impetus really more than anything else. And, ah, a lot of people showed their neighbors the ugly side of themselves and, ah, there is probably still some of that schism, ah, in the Kanawha valley but there was no effort made or, ah, s..., or certainly no successful effort made to ever bring people together to start thinking as a community. It was a totally devisive, totally negative, totally bitter, ah, you know, lot of animosity. There was just nothing that, that

appeared, you know, after that which said well at least we learned this or, you know, at least we accomplished this. And it was just, ah, to me it was a totally negative experience.

JD: Ah huh. Ah, did, did, did the anti-textbook people have any legitimate arguments at all?

BB: Sure. Sure, there's always a brand of legitimacy in, I mean you know, as I said before I hate to, I hate to keep repeating myself (That's alright) they were the taxpayers. These were **their** schools and **their** kids and **they** wanted those textbooks out. It was very simple. And shouldn't they have the right to say what their kids' gonna be taught in school? Well, obviously starting to talk constitutional issues now, but there was no question in their mind that they should. And, and the other side was saying you may have a right to say what your kids can learn and what your kids can read, but you can't tell me what my children can learn and read and write. And that was, ah, that became a bone of contention. (Ah huh.) That, that's where they began to call them sensors, bookburners, and that sort of thing. (Ah huh.) And I think there was, well that's speculation but I'm sure both sides had legitimate arguments. So you see nothing positive out of this whole thing at all? (Huh uh)

JD: Well then my next question was how could, could it have been handled differently? Could it have been handled differently? How do you feel in retrospect, the, the, the

people who were legitimately concerned about this issue?

How could they have handled it differently?

BB: [pause] It was such an ugly episode and I, I render part of the blame for the depth of the ugliness on the total lack of leadership on the, the state level. Ah, Arch Moore, Dan Taylor, ah, you know, had they become proactively involved in this early on, ah, had they, you know, used the state police more efficiently, you know, and be able to crack down on some of this violence and some of these protests. Had they established that they were charge and then said okay, let's talk, you know, if we're doing a wishbook, ah, my perception was that the, the anger and the frustration and the vituperation continued to build as the anti-textbook forces sensed, hey, they're all afraid of us. They're all running scared. Nobody's standing up. Well, it's like anything else, you're, if you, you know, you walk into someplace and say I can whip any man in the joint and everybody starts heading for the back door, well by God I'm pretty tough. You know, if you walk into a place and say I can whip any man in the joint and some dude stands up and says how about me, well then you have tendencies, well maybe I can't whip anybody in the joint [laughing] you know. (Yeah, I understand.) But nobody really stood up to him and said, you know, you know, let's, first of all, let's sit down and be reasonable but when we're not gonna stand for any of this rock throwing and beating people up and stuff

like that. But, you know, first of all we're gonna establish order. Now we're gonna talk about it. If that had been done early on, ah, if Dan Taylor hadn't run scared, if Arch Moore hadn't run scared, ah, you know, I think there had, there would have been, you know, there might have been a chance to get the issue resolved on a more productive level. (Ah huh.) Well, as we said before there, there were reasons things were done and, and underlying reasons that we're not aware of but, ah, I, I have the, the feeling as I think about this issue and the things I've learned about it already, it, it was a highly complex, high volatile issue, and I'm talking to myself now, I think this rehearses things in my mind, ah, someone told me, it might have been Avis Hill, that, ah, he felt, whoever it was said this, felt that this issue would have happened no matter what. It was times, it was an era when things were being protested, ah, the establishment was in trouble, Watergate had just happened, Vietnam was just winding down, it was just over. Ah, people were tired, they were frustrated, they were angry and they were venting their frustrations and anger on the establishment. And, ah, this was an issue, whose time had come. This was just a vehicle (Ah huh) to allow people to just vent their frustrations on it. How do you feel about that?

BB: I think there's a lot of truth in that. Yeah, I really do.

JD: Especially people, ah, ah, who, ah, who in Kanawha County, from my, eh, historical understanding, who have been traditonally, ah, hard working, down trodden, ah, people who always felt kind of, ah, pushed around by the big guys. (Ah huh.) Ah, is that a, do you think that's a fair assumption?

BB: Yeah. I think there's a lot of truth in that. Yeah.

JD: That may be the direction my thesis takes. Ah, I don't know, ah, this is preliminary, the interviewing I'm doing now and, ah, but I just, I can't help but think a coalminer in Campbell's Creek, ah, standing up and doing valance or even, even carrying a placard in front of the board of education and maybe he can't even read the book that he's protesting against. And if you tried to talk to him about language arts and, and all those complex issues that are involved in the different areas and levels that, and I've talked to th, th, the lady who was the chairman of the textbook selection committee and she showed the the grafts and the charts and the rationale and philosophy behind it and it's very complex. I just can't unerstand how a coalminer from Campbell's Creek should get himself worked up. I mean get into an issue and say this, I want all the books out and understand why you wanted them out.

BB: Because somebody handed him one-page excerpts, you know, some of which contained scatological references, some of which, as you pointed out, contained racial, ah, references, some of which, ah, you know, contained what we consider

profanity. And said this is what they're putting in your schools for your kid to learn. [noise in background] I don't want those in my schools. You know (He believed that then?) yeah, it's that simple. Yeah.

JD: Yeah. Well, ah, again I, ah, I appreciate your time Bob. And, ah, I don't, you have anything in, in, in closing you'd like to mention? Anything that sticks out in your mind about this?

BB: No, I think we, we covered the letters fine. [laughing]

JD: Well I, I appreciate your time and, ah, this is, ah, this tape, ah, will be used for, ah, historical research and will be on deposit at the Marshall University library for further reference if you have need of it. And, ah, this will conclude my interview with Bob Brunner of WSAZ TV in Huntington regarding the Kanawha Valley Textbook Controversy. And, again, I thank you Bob.

BB: Okay.

[end of interview]