

2015

Transcript for Episode 06: New Kids on the Block: Forrest Anderson Brings Baby Boomers into Montana Government

Frank Sennett

Gary Wicks

Mike Fitzgerald

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.mtech.edu/crucible_transcriptions

Recommended Citation

Sennett, Frank; Wicks, Gary; and Fitzgerald, Mike, "Transcript for Episode 06: New Kids on the Block: Forrest Anderson Brings Baby Boomers into Montana Government" (2015). *Crucible Written Transcripts*. 6.
http://digitalcommons.mtech.edu/crucible_transcriptions/6

This Transcript is brought to you for free and open access by the In the Crucible of Change at Digital Commons @ Montana Tech. It has been accepted for inclusion in Crucible Written Transcripts by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Montana Tech. For more information, please contact sjuskiewicz@mtech.edu.

[Begin New Kids on the Block-Forrest Anderson Brings Baby Boomers into Montana Government]

00:00:00

[Music]

00:00:03

Narrator: From the beginning of Montana's distinctive yet troubled history, the Treasure State was dominated both economically and politically by powerful outside interests who shipped in capital and bought control of the State.

00:00:14

Historians tell us that as the Anaconda Company and its friends ran Montana, economic and political power flowed out into the hands of distant capitalists and corporations.

00:00:26

Policy was determined in far off New York City and control of the press was rigid. Anaconda's corporate dominance in Montana's political affairs was unique in American history. For its first 75 years, Montana was a one-company State. But then big winds of change roared across the Treasure State; between 1965 and 1980 Montanans ripped off their copper collar, transforming Montana from a corporate colony into a free modern State.

00:00:55

The people finally controlled their own destiny. The pitched battle between the people and the established power structure was not easily won but fired In a Crucible of Change a new Montana was born. Join Evan Barrett and real history makers of the time as they shine the light on this remarkable era.

00:01:20

Evan Barrett: Welcome back to *In the Crucible of Change*. You know today we're going to have a program which we've entitled New Kids on the Block. And it's really about young people entering public service and what they've been able to accomplish or were able to accomplish and what it meant to them and to the public as they moved forward in their careers. And we do have a--an interesting and a group of people that I ran into way, way back in the 1969 to '71 period who came to work as young folks in--in Forrest Anderson's office and have since that time--all

three of them had very distinguished careers in public service. But the emergence of young people at that time was-- was a hallmark of the period of the *crucible of change*. And there may be questions why; perhaps it was the--just the emergence of the Baby Boomers, most of whom were born right after World War II. It could well be that it was the election of a Democratic Administration in Helena, Montana after 16 years of Republican rule and the opportunities presented with that. It could just be the times, the--the Vietnam Era, the 1960s, but for whatever reason there was an explosion of young people entering public service. And our three guests today entered public service at its highest level in Montana as assistance to Governor Forrest Anderson in those first few years of the *crucible of change*.

00:03:04

So I'm very happy to--that we have at the table with us some good friends of mine over many, many years but I would like to mention first the senior member of the Administration was Frank Sennett. Frank is from Lewistown and after graduating from the University of Montana ended up working for the Montana State Senate during the 1969 Session. And while he was doing that he was communicating well with the Governor's Office including Administrator, Executive Assistant Ron Richards who at the end of the Session gave Frank a shot to--to try to do some work and see if you could really perform and apparently you must have because a month later you got hired as one of the first Administrative Assistants that Forrest Anderson had.

00:03:53

Frank Sennett: That's right.

00:03:54

Evan Barrett: And Frank continued on and focused predominantly in the human resource--human services are but like everyone else who did this kind of work, we all answered letters and we answered constituent calls, we did whatever was necessary. But you were focused in the human services area. Later you left to become the Deputy Director of the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services. Frankly over this period of years including the time when you went back home to Lewistown, you'd been in the human service sector working in the nonprofit sector and the governmental sector, providing human services in Central Montana, a distinguished career and now distinguished retirement. Welcome to it.

00:04:40

Frank Sennett: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

00:04:42

Evan Barrett: Yeah; it's great to have Frank here. Frank was the first one in the door of these three and Frank had become acquainted at the University of Montana with our next guest which is Gary Wicks. Gary was at the University of Montana, the same time Frank was, the same time I was--in Graduate School. And Gary was the one of us who had served in the Military. You had been in the Vietnam Era Military and at--got your degrees in Political Science and History at UM, knew Frank there. At the time Frank started in at the Governor's Office you were looking for work as well and your acquaintance with him opened the door for discussions with Ron Richards, again a familiar name we all have--one of our mentors of all of us--who looked at you. You'd been pursuing an MBA. By the way I think you got that MBA didn't you?

00:05:35

Gary Wicks: No.

00:05:36

Evan Barrett: Okay; anyway in August of '69 Frank came on just a little bit earlier than that in April of '69 and in August of '69 you came onboard.

00:05:48

Gary Wicks: Right.

00:05:48

Evan Barrett: Governor Anderson's staff as a--and you were able to focus predominantly in the natural resource area, although again we all had to be multi-faceted.

00:05:57

Gary Wicks: Natural Resources, budget, sales tax, yeah.

00:06:00

Evan Barrett: Yeah; and Gary's distinguished career continued on with Governor Judge, then--then you went to the Federal government for a significant number of years with the Department of Interior, came back to the West and then ultimately back to Montana where you were eight years as the head of the Transportation Department under Governor Schwinden. You've had an amazing career in public service and it was fun to work together all--in those years way back when.

00:06:31

Gary Wicks: Absolutely; absolutely.

00:06:33

Evan Barrett: I'm glad you're able to be here. And the youngest--or the freshest of the three is Mike Fitzgerald. Mike--Mike unlike the UM boys here came out of Carroll College and--and he had--

00:06:46

Mike Fitzgerald: Outlier. *[Laughs]*

00:06:48

Evan Barrett: Yeah and you know he had gotten some recommendations that opened the door that came from a graduate of my alma mater. You know I graduated from St. John's University in Minnesota and Governor Dick **[Kneip]** of South Dakota graduated from there. And apparently he put a bee in the ear of Governor Anderson and said why don't you take a look at this guy? It was a family connection. And after an interview you were hired and you were right at it starting actually in September of '71.

00:07:20

Mike Fitzgerald: Right.

00:07:20

Evan Barrett: So you came almost at the time Frank was ready to leave but you were the--I always looked at you three guys as fellows that epitomized what it meant to be young, energetic and have an opportunity to serve in the Governor's Office in the State of Montana--wow. What an opportunity.

00:07:38

Mike Fitzgerald: It was a big honor.

00:07:40

Evan Barrett: And you know we all knew each other then. We all learned from each other and we learned from mentors that we shared. In fact, in your time Mike, you worked on institutions, you worked on community affairs, you worked on labor; you did a lot of business and eventually Economic--the fledgling efforts of Economic Development.

00:08:03

Mike Fitzgerald: Right.

00:08:03

Evan Barrett: And you and I have become Economic Development players over the years ultimately but it was just formative at that time.

00:08:10

Mike Fitzgerald: It was; no States were doing really any economic development and we were inventing it out of thin air. *[Laughs]*

00:08:16

Evan Barrett: So you worked with--

00:08:16

Mike Fitzgerald: No blueprints.

00:08:17

Evan Barrett: --Governor Anderson and Governor Judge, ultimately ended up with the Montana Trade Commission. A lot of your work was with multistate organizations with the other States and then ultimately you've had a long career in Washington State and Florida and Hawaii and now in Denver in Economic Development.

00:08:36

Mike Fitzgerald: Correct; correct.

00:08:37

Evan Barrett: You guys have brought a lot to the table here. You've been very, very successful. It's always such a pleasure to--to--for us to get--we just had a great lunch and it was great to be able to recall a lot of things and tell some stories that we've now agreed will not be told on the air. *[Laughs]* But we'll tell the salient public sector stuff here--

00:08:57

Mike Fitzgerald: Highlights.

00:08:59

Evan Barrett: And get it on it because it is an interesting thing to--to get this opportunity. And I guess first and foremost I'd--I'd ask each one of you starting with Frank what your thoughts were walking in the door when you were--you were the youngest Administrative Assistant in the nation for a Governor at the time.

00:09:18

Frank Sennett: Yeah; it was--to me it was one of the most exciting times of my life. I had dropped out of Graduate School at the University and wanted to go to work. And in the middle of the winter there wasn't a lot of work and I had a father-in-law who knew State Senator John McKeon and he talked with Walter Marshall and I ended up being Assistant Secretary to the Senate, only because I was there. I went there and I went every day and sat around outside of Walter's office and let him know that I was ready to go to work whenever he wanted me. And basically I bugged Ron Richards that way after I found out who he was and--and what he did in government because at that point in my life, having graduated in History I was extremely inspired by John F. Kennedy and his words to come out and do service for the country. And that was how I came into State government, very naïve, very young, very green, but it was like I say probably the most exciting thing I've ever done in my life since even in the sense of just--it was such a heady time and I was there all kinds of hours and weekends and--and it was all worth it. It was all so exciting and--and so stimulating. And we accomplished so much.

00:10:39

Gary and I were talking earlier; we accomplished a lot because we were naïve. We didn't think that--about not being able to do it; it was like yeah we can do this. What do you want us to do? **[Laughs]** We're ready.

00:10:52

Evan Barrett: You know it's amazing if you carry that forward. I carried that forward into economic development because I would do things and people would say well why did you do that? No one ever did that before. I said I didn't know it couldn't be done. I mean it just--you know you just go at it and you--you give it a go. And that kind of thing will carry you not just through your first years, but the view, the perspective of when you're sitting in a Governor's Office and you've got all this government and trying to make it function for people--that perspective is unique. It is unique and it's--it really sets you up for your lifetime I think in a way.

00:11:29

Gary you came in and--now remember; we're talking Forrest Anderson here. We're talking about Forrest Anderson bringing the younger generation into government at the time. And he was a crafty, cadge, savvy guy that we're going to talk a lot about him but what did--when you got started here how did you feel about it and how did it get going?

00:11:50

Gary Wicks: I was glad as hell to get a job [*Laughs*] to start out with but you know I guess I never knew what-- what I was in for. But once I got in and started to be tutored under Ron Richards and got to know Forrest a little better it became obvious that this was a hell of a thing to be doing. And I learned so much from there that carried me onto different offices I've had in the public sector for the last 25 or 30 years. And I mean it was just an experience that ends up defining your life, your--your public life, and so--. I just look back on it like Frank with fondness of a time that we could do anything and our naivety actually helped us because a lot of people that had been in a lot of political experience and been around Montana a lot would have come in there and just said no; this is impossible. And--

00:12:45

Evan Barrett: Put in their time or be jaded about it.

00:12:47

Gary Wicks: Yeah; yeah exactly and every--there was enthusiasm I think that's--you cannot discount in terms of you know if it helps to be young and it helps to be energetic, it helps to be committed to try to make government better, and all those things were--were part of the Forrest Anderson office.

00:13:04

Evan Barrett: Uh-hm; you know you reminded me over lunch that you know we first got to know each other way over at UM in the anti-war effort that was going on. I was working for--I was with the McCarthy for President effort over there. I was a Graduate Student and you were there at the same meetings and stuff and because I think that if there had been maybe a different Administrator you know folks like us wouldn't have found a home.

00:13:30

Gary Wicks: Oh yeah; there's--that's I think the--the important thing for me and I think for everybody else around the table here is that when we were interviewed for the job by Ron Richards, he was the guy that ended up hiring us, I'm sure Forrest obviously gave his okay but Ron was the guy who interviewed us and made the decision that they

ought to go forward, but there was never any discussion of politics. I don't think Ron Richards knew that I was a Democrat, Republican, and I wasn't anything at that point in time in terms of political affiliation. And they hired us still. They hired us because of I think the things that Frank talked about, the energy, the enthusiasm, coming out of school, the willingness to work hard and try and make government a better place, yeah.

00:14:16

Evan Barrett: And you branched out upward in a sense to the Federal government but the--I--in all the work I've done over many, many years I look at the Governorship as being kind of a unique institution that you don't--it's hard--you get that experience and it's--it's unmatched.

00:14:35

Gary Wicks: Yes; I think that's right. I think that you know if you look at some of the best Presidents of the United States--have been previous Governors, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, a lot of them have been Governors and I think that's a training ground for the Governors and young people that go along with them as long as you have a Governor who is committed to actually running Government and making a difference.

00:14:58

Evan Barrett: Uh-hm.

00:14:59

Gary Wicks: In how people live and Forrest clearly was that. And just about--I think that's a shared commitment we all had; I mean I don't think there's anybody that I ever remembered working with in those years that--that wasn't dedicated to try and make government and the State of Montana a better place.

00:15:16

Evan Barrett: You know we're going to talk about that as a contrast to today a little bit later because there's often much about the way things function today that is contrary to that. I'm not sure we lived in a golden age but there

was a difference and we're going to discuss that. But Mike when you came out of Carroll College you weren't idealistic or anything were you or weren't naïve were you?

00:15:39

Mike Fitzgerald: *[Laughs]* All of that and--and just off the boat, just off the boat Evan, but full of energy and enthusiasm and like these guys. You know that was part of the time that we were born and came of age with this terrific movement throughout the United States and to be in Montana I think that was the best of all possible worlds. And to get these positions that we three got and have the opportunities that we had with very little coaching but always people standing behind us. Ron Richards screened us all before we actually got access to the system *[Laughs]* but then we had lots of running room, lots of running room, and basically he said go out and figure out how to do this. And we were doing lots of stuff there was no blueprint for because it hadn't been done before. So literally we were inventing it, inventing it, trying; some things didn't work, others did but we just kept going. It was a glorious time.

00:16:35

Evan Barrett: And part of it was that you were active in a period of an energized activist State government following years and maybe decades of maybe lethargy that in fact a--a lethargy that--and a confusion prior to reorganization an ineffective government that actually in its ineffectiveness served the powerful interests of the State. Part of the premise of this whole program that we're doing, this whole series we're doing is that the copper collar that was around Montana including everything up to and including the newspapers all the way to 1959 owned by the Anaconda Company, the copper collar that was--served the Anaconda Company and Montana Power, you know Burlington Northern, *[Inaudible]*, the--the Farm Bureau, the Stock Growers, the--those were the powerful economic interests of the State. And it was in their interest to have an ineffective Legislature, to have an ineffective Executive Branch; that allowed them to maintain their economic control.

00:17:38

So suddenly we're in a period of active and energized government where Forrest Anderson led a kind of a revolution of government to make it effective. He walked in the door so prepared to be Governor but he really wanted to govern. He didn't want to sit there and do nothing, so he wanted to make stuff happen. Now he--I think

when he came in the door I think you told me he had only a couple basic rules, but pretty much was go get it done and don't screw up, don't get me in trouble, and do whatever it takes.

00:18:09

Mike Fitzgerald: Yeah; right and if you need anything check with me. And that was it; go for it. We each had a list of what areas we were covering and go for it.

00:18:16

Evan Barrett: Now part of that seems to point to the fact that Forrest Anderson seemed to have had his eye on the ball. He didn't get tied up in all the excruciating details.

00:18:27

Mike Fitzgerald: No; Gary is right. He had a very defined--

00:18:28

Evan Barrett: He knew what he wanted to do. Is that right?

00:18:30

Gary Wicks: He had his priorities; he had four or five priorities that he wanted to get done and he didn't move off those at all. And he got them done; he got them all done? I mean it was a caretaker government before that; that's how I described it.

00:18:43

Evan Barrett: Yeah; I think that's a good word.

00:18:44

Gary Wicks: The--the government before Forrest took over and it was a very involved energetic government after he got there and after he got all the things that he wanted to get done--done. I think the other thing Forrest said in

terms of when you went to work for him was--that I carried on through all my administrative management career and that is no surprises. You don't have to tell me everything. I just don't want to be surprised by anything. And that's something that I always tried to have--people who worked for me do the same thing and I tried to do it and did do it for Forrest.

00:19:19

Evan Barrett: It's a good policy because you--

00:19:20

Gary Wicks: Exactly.

00:19:21

Evan Barrett: --can smell it coming and if you--if you attempt to avoid it, it's going to come out and bite you anyway.

00:19:25

Gary Wicks: Right.

00:19:27

Mike Fitzgerald: What was different with Forrest and we all went on to work for other people but nothing--nobody like him--is he didn't want surprises but he didn't want you to translate that as don't do bold things.

00:19:38

Gary Wicks: Oh yeah; right, right.

00:19:38

Mike Fitzgerald: Don't try things. Push, push, push but I don't want--I want to be--I want to know about it before the newspapers got it. *[Laughs]*

00:19:44

Gary Wicks: Yeah; I think you always knew with Forrest or at least I did and I know Frank did too is that--but that meant you could go in and talk to him or Ron for sure and say this is the thing I'm thinking of doing. And if he thought it needed to be done he'd let you go off and do it. I mean he--he didn't--he didn't stop you. He encouraged you to come up with things to--to try and make government work better. And--

00:20:07

Mike Fitzgerald: That was it right there.

00:20:09

Gary Wicks: Right; see and then you could go off and do it and just keep him informed and he was--he just turned you loose. I mean he didn't--I mean if you had done some crazy things I'm sure he would have--you wouldn't have been there very long because Forrest he wouldn't tolerate very much of a violation of those kinds of pretty basic ground rules--you wouldn't be there very long and everybody knew that. But he--he was a good guy to work for. He understood and he let you go.

00:20:35

Evan Barrett: Yeah; having--having your eye on the ball and having these four or five major items, with the experience he brought--came into government and wanted it to be effective, probably the first big item he had in his mind was Executive Reorganization. And that's where Frank you and I got together because you were the Administrative Assistant in the Governor's Office who was assigned to be coordinated with the Reorganization Commission where I worked.

00:20:59

Frank Sennett: Exactly.

00:21:01

Evan Barrett: And we traveled a lot of the State together.

00:21:02

Frank Sennett: You and I visited a lot. *[Laughs]*

00:21:04

Evan Barrett: Yeah; yeah we went around the State and gave talks about why we should reorganize. And you know no one wants to be reorganized. What is the rule? That reorganization is really good except not for us.

00:21:16

Frank Sennett: Not us.

00:21:17

Gary Wicks: We're special.

00:21:18

Evan Barrett: We're special right. Tell us about your sense of that whole thing of getting the Reorganization done and--

00:21:26

Frank Sennett: To me it was the most important thing that happened in State government under Forrest Anderson. There were a lot of other very important things but I mean that was the one that he brought to the table right off the bat and that was the one that I felt like he had the most success at was getting that Reorganization done. We had 160-some boards, bureaus, and agencies and we wound up with 19 and that way the Cabinet was manageable. People could be held accountable. And it was cost-effective. People weren't doing the same thing in parallel because they didn't know who one another were. Now they were all in the same agency together. And they were working together, so very, very positive. And I think it's changed the face of government in Montana ever since.

00:22:14

Evan Barrett: It--no question that it has changed the face of it and in fact I think that if you look at the outline of government in Montana, at the conclusion of Executive Reorganization with Forrest that 90-percent of that structure is still in place.

00:22:33

Frank Sennett: Yeah; it's--

00:22:33

Evan Barrett: I mean it has stood the test of time. very interestingly now you're--you actually then got to experience the implementation of it in a department because--

00:22:45

Frank Sennett: Gary and I both did.

00:22:46

Evan Barrett: Both of you did and you--you got it with SRS which had to be a very complicated, Social and Rehabilitative Services which was a gathering of most of the human service functions.

00:22:59

Frank Sennett: Right other than the Health Department.

00:23:01

Evan Barrett: And you went over and became a Deputy Director over there?

00:23:05

Frank Sennett: Yeah and helped get everything off the ground. Like you say, we started from scratch and we had to find buildings to be in, we had to do--deal with leases that needed to be broken or changed in some manner, and

we had to get people together and we had to get people starting to communicate with one another. And everybody had their own agendas, so it was an effort to bring everybody together and--and to make that work. But it was an effort that was well worth the while. I saw a lot of very positive changes in human services in the time that I was at SRS and--and a lot of that was because of the collaboration and the cooperation.

00:23:46

Evan Barrett: Now Executive Reorganization which was masterfully put together politically by Forrest and we'll talk about that in a second, actually ended up happening at the--by passage of I believe it was Senate Bill 274 in the 1971 Legislature and at the end of that Session come July 1st is the time to start rolling the implementation in. So here we are late in '71; a year later Forrest Anderson is not running for reelection. So he didn't get to experience the benefits of the consolidated restructured government so much as those that seceded him. But you went over to SRS and got it kind of going; later on in the '70s the issue of institutional--deinstitutionalization of the kind of services for the mentally ill and the--the developmentally disabled and the children in the orphanages of the State, those kinds of--it really happened big-time in the mid-'70s but it started--

00:24:56

Frank Sennett: It started under Forrest Anderson's--

00:24:58

Evan Barrett: --when you were there working with Forrest. Tell us about that.

00:25:00

Frank Sennett: Well you know it was--again I think it's part of what we were talking about earlier is that there was a huge momentum nationally for change to happen and for people to look at new ways to do things and that certainly influenced all of us I think, I mean young and green out of school and--and having a lot of idealism. It--it was very exciting again; I mean to me to pull all of those things together and to make them work together was--was one of the big accomplishments that I felt like I had made in my life, one that affected things on down the road into the future. And that's not to negate other things I've done because I ended up becoming a teacher and I ended up

touching a lot of people's lives individually as opposed to globally and I made that change on purpose. I had done what I--as far as time went and as far as energy went what I wanted to do with larger groups by the time I went back to school and got a teaching certificate. My goal at that point was to influence and--and affect individuals and individual lives. But those first few years with Anderson affected people's lives for generations to come. And it affected the entire State of Montana, so a very heady experience.

00:26:26

Evan Barrett: To this day without question. Now in the natural resource field there's a lot of--there was a lot of very dramatic things going on in the State at the time because of the--the concept that we were going to be a sacrifice zone to new energy development though although it didn't develop to the degree it did, it set a stage for really getting after things and doing things differently. One of those things in your sector was the--with working with Forrest Anderson was the water laws of Montana. If we were going to have our water sucked up by--in slurry pipelines it was going to take it all out of State and move in coal through pipelines and leave no jobs in Montana and take all the water in the process did we have tools to stop that and the answer was pretty much--

00:27:12

Gary Wicks: No.

00:27:11

Evan Barrett: --maybe no, huh?

00:27:12

Gary Wicks: Yeah; no and so you know the Department of Natural Resources like you said I think the other thing about Reorganization it was put into effect pretty rapidly so when the Bill became law in July of 1971 I became Director of Montana Department of Natural Resources in December of 1971 and so--

00:27:33

Evan Barrett: You were the youngest Department Director amongst all of them.

00:27:36

Gary Wicks: Yeah; at that point in time.

00:27:36

Evan Barrett: Hard to think of it in those terms but it's really--

00:27:39

Gary Wicks: Yeah; 50 years later what the hell, yeah. [*Laughs*] So but yeah and so you know there at that point in time I think you can't escape what else was going on in the rest of the country and it was clearly in the direction of trying to get some control over the natural resources in Montana, control over the environment, some of the things-- the *Silent Spring* book that was--a lot of people were energized by that.

00:28:03

Evan Barrett: The first Earth Day--

00:28:05

Gary Wicks: The first Earth Day exactly right yeah and--

00:28:05

Evan Barrett: There was an-awareness.

00:28:07

Gary Wicks: It was an-awareness.

00:28:08

Evan Barrett: And it was shared by political Parties by the way.

00:28:09

Gary Wicks: That's exactly right.

00:28:11

Evan Barrett: And this thing about denial of--things like climate change and denial of science, not participating in environmental things which exist today in the modern Republican Party that wasn't the way it was.

00:28:20

Gary Wicks: There was no--there was some of the--

00:28:2

Mike Fitzgerald: Didn't exist.

00:28:23

Gary Wicks: Yeah; well--

00:28:24

Mike Fitzgerald: Nixon supported the Environmental Movement.

00:28:25

Evan Barrett: Yeah; he created it.

00:28:26

Gary Wicks: NEPA. Yeah; he did NEPA.

00:28:29

Evan Barrett: NEPA and EPA too.

00:28:31

Gary Wicks: Yeah; so you know this--the reference to the Water Reclamation or the--pardon me, the Bureau Recommendation, they came out with a big study in the 19--I think in 1970 estimating that the--the development of coal gasification and coal power development in Eastern Montana was going to be massive. And--and that scared a lot of people including a lot of ranchers in Eastern Montana who were wanting to continue to ranch.

00:28:55

And so that was part of the background of the--the need to do something about Montana's water law because before 1973 before the law got passed, there was no administrative procedure for water rights in Montana. If you wanted to use water you just went out and started using it. Unless somebody challenged it there was no permit required, no analysis of what the impact would be on other water users, and so it was a very--we were behind every other State in--in terms of how we administered water. And Forrest understood that; allowed me to go ahead and try and change it and gave me a lot of advice on how to structure that. And one of the reasons we ultimately were successful is just what you mentioned, a lot of the people that we brought into the process were Republican Senators and Legislators who had the same shared concern about Montana that all the rest of us did in the face of all this massive development and the--the supposed building of Allentown down on the Yellowstone River. I mean all those things were--were being laid out and everybody, Republican or Democrat was concerned about that if we went forward with that kind of stuff we needed to have some controls over it that would make sure the people of Montana benefitted from that kind of development. And so the water use because obviously that was central to every single thing that happened with coal development and power development and--and that became a really central place where we had to do something or else we were not going to be able to do what I think the people of Montana wanted to get done.

00:30:34

And so that was a very difficult process to get that law passed through the Legislature and--and it wouldn't have gotten done without Senators like Bill [Birchy] and Bill Groff and Bill--Bill Lowell from--a Republican from Billings and a whole bunch of other people that I can't remember the names of who got involved and were concerned and--and helped us get that legislation passed. And so it--it went through the 1973; it was all--we had hearings, starting in '72, and got the Bill ready after a lot of changes and stuff and introduced it in '73 and Tom Judge and Bill Christiansen both supported--Lieutenant Governor both supported the Bill and it went through the

Legislature, passed the House I think by one vote and we got it through. And that set the framework for a whole bunch of other stuff that--that it was necessary to have that administrative framework in place before we could do the Yellowstone Moratorium, before we could do the--the compacts with the Tribes and the Federal government that--the most recent one with the--the Flathead Tribe and so that Bill was critical to what was going to happen to the future of Montana.

00:31:46

Evan Barrett: Makes me think of two things. One is that we always kind of laugh with that phrase that in the West or in Montana that *whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting* but it kind of was.

00:31:56

Gary Wicks: Yeah; absolutely.

00:31:58

Evan Barrett: And unless you had Marquis of Queensbury rules so to speak to govern the fight you know who is going to win but the toughest, meanest man in town? And so the rules were what this was all about. The other thing that strikes me is that it was another example of something that Forrest started but because he was--did it all in one term and then left--it was passed in the next Legislative Session, supported by Governor Judge and the benefits of it accrued to future generations.

00:32:29

Gary Wicks: Right.

00:32:30

Evan Barrett: What he was doing.

00:32:31

Gary Wicks: Yeah.

00:32:31

Evan Barrett: I think we see so much of what he did--

00:32:33

Mike Fitzgerald: His leadership.

00:32:34

Evan Barrett: --it didn't benefit him as a Governor; it benefitted the future.

00:32:38

Gary Wicks: He just knew it needed to be done and understood that and supported it and you know he was the kind of guy that for all of us in terms of a mentor, he gave me some ideas about management and dealing with people and politics and all that--that carried forward for the rest of my career in government. And I never lost it.

00:32:59

Evan Barrett: You know we just suck it up like sponges.

00:33:03

Gary Wicks: When you're young.

00:33:05

Evan Barrett: When we're like that. When--when we're empty vessels so to speak and we're just ready for the right input and--

00:33:12

Gary Wicks: Opportunity.

00:33:13

Evan Barrett: Yeah; and I want to come back in a second and ask about our--our mentor Ron Richards, but I want maybe Mike if you could reflect because what--when you came in, what Governor Anderson was--one of the things he did and he kind of slid it under the--under the door of Executive Reorganization was to--was to reorganize the--and create the Board of Investments and take this free flow of money to all the banks. And I mean there was so much back-scratching and log-rolling going on with the bankers and where the money was kept and the--the citizens were being robbed of the interest rate for the monies while the banks had the monies. This was a great big thing. There had to be very powerful interests that didn't want to have that happen. And I think in your position all the sudden--

00:34:03

Mike Fitzgerald: Oh my.

00:34:04

Evan Barrett: --you were made aware of that kind of thing and how he dealt with that because big folks were not looking for the change Forrest was looking for.

00:34:10

Mike Fitzgerald: No, no; and it's a place--you know where the powers that be are powers that be because they've mastered the system that is and this system they were seeing was about ready to be changed and dramatically. There was a constant stream of business people, bankers, contractors, lawyers into Forrest's office for the entire time that I was there. And this was--these guys had maybe just one but they saw this too because it was--these people were desperate not to have these changes made because they were benefitting so overwhelmingly from the situation the way it was. And Forrest was right at the epicenter of that. Had he not been strong, had he not had the vision, had he not cared as deeply about this State and its future as he did he wouldn't have had to do anything and these things wouldn't have happened. You wouldn't have had to take any action. He just could have let the overwhelming powers that be get away with it their way.

00:35:08

Evan Barrett: Have it their way and--

00:35:08

Mike Fitzgerald: He just sat down with these people and I think he always had one of us in his office when he was meeting with these people. Most of them would come more than once and he would basically just say to them gentlemen--and it was almost always men, you better get ready because change is here--period. Now they didn't like that and they would bob and weave yes but Forrest, yes but Forrest, and how about this **[Laughs]** and--but he was firm. And by the time they left his office there was no doubt that he was not going to change his mind about this. He was pushing; he had a vision of the future of Montana. He understood as Gary just said what those tools were going to need to be done to empower Montanans to invent whatever future they needed to do in the--in coming months and coming years that were not predictable at that point. And he stood firm on that. That was an amazing observance and lesson in political fortitude, political will but realizing this guy was the master of the political game. He held every single office already in the State; he was committed to this State and the people and the future and he stood firm on all of this.

00:36:21

Evan Barrett: Uh-hm.

00:36:21

Gary Wicks: He was--Forrest as everybody knows and he gets a lot of credit for rightfully so being a shrewd politician and he was that. But he also was a guy that would do stuff that did not make--if he thought it was the right thing to do it just--it did not have to necessarily make sense politically. And he--

00:36:41

Mike Fitzgerald: He didn't go with the winds.

00:36:43

Gary Wicks: Yeah; no he didn't. The Wind was not of much interest to him. *[Laughs]* It just was a force.

00:36:50

Evan Barrett: Let me ask you guys to reflect on our--what I consider one of our great mentors--well certainly was in my life--Ron Richards. And by the way we did do a special program of *In the Crucible of Change* about Ron. We call it *Consiglieri* because he was so important to Lee Metcalf and Forrest Anderson and Tom Judge. But if he was important to them boy was he important to people like us who walked in the door, empty vessels ready to be filled with wisdom. Talk a little bit about Ron.

00:37:25

Frank Sennett: Oh I--you know like I say I bugged the man and he didn't throw me out and--. And he was very patient because I probably was down in his office visiting with him once a week during the Session because I really wanted a job, like Gary. I was looking at it--it would be really nice to have a permanent position somewhere. And he was always very encouraging, very kind, very patient; I almost never remember him getting very upset with me about any--any dumb thing I did.

00:37:55

Evan Barrett: He was a level-headed guy if there ever was one. He kept his cool.

00:37:59

Frank Sennett: And I had taken a lot of writing classes in college and discovered under Ron's tutorship that I really didn't know how to write. And--

00:38:10

Evan Barrett: We need to remind folks that Ron was a Journalism Professor before--at UM before he came over here or before he went to Washington, DC; yeah.

00:38:19

Frank Sennett: Person telegraphic were two words that he burned into my mind when it came to writing. And that has stayed with me all my life. I tend to be very wordy when I write and so I have to go back and edit everything that I write. And I think Ron's looking over my shoulder at that point. Person telegraphic you know; you want to get it out there. You want it to get the attention but you don't want to bore people. And--and so he really taught me that--probably was one of the more important things that I learned from him but his just gentle kindness was always there and if I thought I was in trouble I could go in and talk with him and--and figure out a way out of the trouble and then find a solution to whatever I was dealing with. And sometimes he'd tell me I needed to go back and think about it some more. He was very much about empowering me and the other people that he worked with to stand on our own two feet, to use our brains, and--and like I say, he was just one of the most important mentors in my life.

00:39:25

Evan Barrett: Well you know he didn't--there was no fear imposed upon you or put upon you. It was more about freedom than fear and it seemed to me and--and teamwork that you were on a team and the team wasn't going to bend on you if you did your job on the team. So let's go out and do this. That's kind of how I sensed it but Gary what is your reflection on Ron?

00:39:47

Gary Wicks: Well first of all I think you know if--if Forrest was rightfully the captain of the ship, Ron was the navigator, the engineer, the purser, the communications officer that got the ship into the port where Forrest wanted it to go. And he was a guy that was smart, one of the smartest guys I ever met and you know outside of this table I've met some other smart guys *[Laughs]*--

00:40:11

Mike Fitzgerald: Hard to believe. *[Laughs]*

00:40:12

Gary Wicks: Yeah; hard to believe, yeah. The level--the bar is pretty high right around the table, but--but Forrest--or Forrest, but Ron was a--I don't know. I mean for a guy's first real serious job you know after the Military and

stuff like that to--to be able to work with Ron Richards, and you never saw Forrest--rarely. I mean Ron was the day-to-day guy in that office and he had a great sense of humor. We were always laughing. I remember that; always laughing. As a matter of fact to this day that's my memory of Ron Richards--laughing. And you--any problem you could go and see Ron at some point in time. He'd always see you and talk to you and provide guidance. And just an all-around great that deserves almost as much credit as Forrest for what got done in that four-year period.

00:40:58

Frank Sennett: I agree.

00:41:00

Mike Fitzgerald: Yeah. No; there's no question he--he was--my hindsight was this guy was like the [Cardinal Saint] of Montana. [Laughs] He had done so much and knew so many people, had been involved in so many campaigns, had already orchestrated so many amazing successes that we were learning at the foot of the master there really. He was amazing. And he had no tolerance for sloppy work but he wouldn't castigate you on it. And pretty soon after about the third time that you would bring something to him and he'd say, is this your best work that you made damn sure it was because you didn't want to be embarrassed that it wasn't anymore because he was very conscientious about what came out of that office--very conscientious. But not rigid; it wasn't a rigidity. It was a standard of excellence that he insisted upon. And I'm sure that's why Forrest felt comfortable just letting him run things from day-to-day-to-day.

00:41:56

Evan Barrett: The combination of those--maybe it was a unique combination.

00:42:01

Gary Wicks: Between Forrest and Ron?

00:42:02

Evan Barrett: Right.

00:42:02

Gary Wicks: Oh absolutely. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

00:42:05

Mike Fitzgerald: No doubt about it.

00:42:05

Frank Sennett: Yeah; there is--it worked.

00:42:08

Gary Wicks: Yeah; there--Ron knew when he had to get a hold of Forrest and he didn't bother him if he didn't need to and I--and I know Forrest had the absolute confidence in Ron and knew that Ron knew politics enough to keep him out of trouble and yeah it was a great--

00:42:22

Mike Fitzgerald: And get things done; I mean that's--as we all learned through the heats of fire is it's getting--staying out of trouble and getting things done. *[Laughs]*

00:42:32

Evan Barrett: Move the ball forward.

00:42:33

Mike Fitzgerald: It's a tricky combination.

00:42:35

Evan Barrett: And you're right about that; you know I always said the easiest way to have everybody love you is don't do anything.

00:42:40

Gary Wicks: Never say no.

00:42:43

Mike Fitzgerald: Actually Evan that just reminds me; you taught me early on, very early on in this--I've learned a lot from all of you--but you said you had a phrase that you used often and you said you know a lot can get done if you don't care who gets the credit. And that was a spirit that really existed inside that office. I mean people covered each other and helped each other and I could go to any of these guys and what the hell should I do with this? You know and I was brand new; I didn't know anything about anything once I got inside there. I had a new suit, a new briefcase, and a new fountain pen [*Laughs*], ready to go.

00:43:16

Evan Barrett: Well you know partisanship didn't exist. Well there was partisanship and we used to fight over things but there was a difference between then and now and I want to have us address that a little bit because you're bringing the perspective of still being active today and knowledgeable of what is going on today yet being at those formative stages back then when things were getting done and they required you to work across the aisle, they required the word compromise--

00:43:47

Frank Sennett: Yeah; and working in the '69 Session of the Legislature I saw very clearly in that process how important it was to find a place to compromise and for both Parties to work together and I saw a lot of cordiality amongst the members, the Republicans and the Democrats were--were respectful of one another. There was--they were respectful to agree to disagree. And then is there someplace here that we can agree on? We might not agree out here but maybe we're going to agree here in the middle somewhere. And it got a lot of things accomplished through the legislative system.

00:44:27

Deinstitutionalization, one of the main people behind that was Republican Legislator Gary Marbut the elder I'd have to say because there was another younger Gary Marbut out there but he was one of the chief people that was an ally to those folks that were trying to get the money moved from the State institutions out into the communities and ironically or however you want to look at it--coincidentally I ended up the last 15 years of my career working in a program that was funded through deinstitutionalization money. And--and you know I'm so glad that those people are no longer in institutions.

00:45:10

Evan Barrett: I'm so glad that the people--

00:45:10

Frank Sennett: They didn't need to be in institutions.

00:45:11

Evan Barrett: And so glad that the people were willing to work to compromise to bring that about.

00:45:15

Frank Sennett: To make that happen.

00:45:15

Evan Barrett: You know you had that same compromise you talked about with the water law but it applied to many, many things.

00:45:19

Gary Wicks: Across the board; yeah.

00:45:22

Evan Barrett: Think of the--your awareness and knowledge of Senators at the time that you know they fought on the Floor but--

00:45:29

Gary Wicks: Yeah; they--they worked together but they also played together. I mean you could--they would go out and have a drink together and--and I mean there was--they were--a lot of them were from rural districts. They understood each other. They understood each other's problems. And they had been there long enough in government to understand how things worked and what you needed to do to get it done. And I think that part is gone today and these guys were well-read, intelligent people who understood Montana's problems real well and understood what needed to be done to get them fixed. And they would work together--not always on--everybody wasn't on the same page but if you look at--we just talked about the water law but there's the Utilities Facilities Siting Act. There was a whole bunch of legislation that came out of the--the Montana Legislature and the Governor's Office that made Montana one of the leading States in the country in terms of the most forward-thinking Constitution or forward-looking Constitution, the environmental laws, everything else, and the administration structure, the organization of government, all that took place because there was bipartisanship and a willingness on the part of both Republicans and Democrats to solve problems and work together.

00:46:41

Evan Barrett: I don't--you know and I don't want people to look at us and think well there's a bunch of old guys looking back with nostalgia saying boy wasn't it great in the old days. But the truth is there's a--there is a--a really strong difference between the way government is approached today than it was approached back in that time in terms of compromise. When I was on one of our programs with Jim Lucas who was the king of the sales tax, the biggest divisive issue of the time, he said we recognized that we'd reached an impasse and we had to find a compromise. And we did.

00:47:18

Gary Wicks: And resolve it.

00:47:19

Evan Barrett: And they found a way through--

00:47:21

Mike Fitzgerald: As opposed to closing down the government--

00:47:22

Evan Barrett: And opposed to today what are you saying?

Mike Fitzgerald: Yeah.

00:47:26

Evan Barrett: Today if it's going to burn the government down so be it, huh? Who cares?

00:47:30

Mike Fitzgerald: See there was just none of that; Gary is right. These people were well-read, they knew Montana history, they lived a lot of it themselves and their families, they knew US history, they knew how we had gotten to that point. And they knew that big deals only get done in the middle.

00:47:48

Evan Barrett: Let me--

00:47:50

Mike Fitzgerald: And these were all big complex deals. Every one that we dealt with--

00:47:53

Evan Barrett: Since they all got along together and maybe had a drink or played some poker--we did have a few poker clubs--

00:47:59

Frank Sennett: Smoked some cigars; yeah.

00:48:00

Evan Barrett: --let me pose the question of the words *term limits*. Has that served Montana well?

00:48:13

Frank Sennett: Mixed bag.

00:48:14

Gary Wicks: I think it depends who we're talking about. There's some current Legislators that I think term limits should have been two years. **[Laughs]** And I hate to name one and I think you could agree on at least one of them. But I think in general it took away that continuity and understanding of problems that all these guys shared. Some of them, I think Francis Bardanouve was there for 25 or 30 years and I mean these guys understood not just the general idea of what government was. Francis Bardanouve knew what was in your budget down to the last typewriter. And so these guys were very good about understanding, knowing the problems, and working together to solve them. I mean the--like on the water law, I mean Bill Groff was from the Bitter Root which is one of the most complicated you know water use areas of the State and Bill could stand up in the Senate and talk about the water law and what was needed and the other people, Democrats and Republicans gave him the respect of that knowledge and would listen to him and pay attention to what he was saying because of that background and that friendship and that--and that long-term getting together and solving problems. I mean they--it was a different era. I don't think we'll ever see it again. I don't think we'll ever see it again.

00:49:33

Frank Sennett: We lost his historical wisdom is what we lost.

00:49:37

Gary Wicks: Yeah; yeah.

00:49:38

Evan Barrett: But like anything, everything is a double-edged sword.

00:49:40

Gary Wicks: That's exactly right.

00:49:41

Evan Barrett: There's some good and then some bad and the balancing act, the question is, did we by losing the institutional wisdom, did we--was that worth it to throw some bums out?

00:49:54

Gary Wicks: We threw some very good people out with the bums and those very good people are what made government better--it worked.

00:50:01

Evan Barrett: Mike you had some reflections about the fact that at that time the folks and as we entered the government we were not a product of the Depression but our parents were and the people who were the senior members of the government at the time were the products of the Depression and had a perspective about government that--activist government. Tell us about--.

00:50:18

Mike Fitzgerald: Very, very much so; I mean most of the people other than our generation that was in there, so a lot of the Legislators, most--and most of the citizens of the State had direct experience in that time. And they saw government not as something to be avoided and not as an enemy but as a vital piece of the society. It had helped them survive a desperate time and they were committed to helping make that work for others. Now you just don't

even hear that discussion anymore. But they would talk about what is best and then that automatically included government, not just business or not just the environment or not just one thing or other. It was part of a whole and they articulated that very thoroughly. And you don't hear it discussed at all now.

00:51:05

Gary Wicks: They saw government as necessary, not necessarily good but necessary.

00:51:09

Mike Fitzgerald: Necessary.

00:51:11

Gary Wicks: And they were willing to try and make it as workable as you could make it within that framework.

00:51:16

Mike Fitzgerald: It's a vital part of the society.

00:51:18

Gary Wicks: Exactly right.

00:51:19

Evan Barrett: Well colored additionally with the fact that we uniquely in Montana were a one-company State for 75 years.

00:51:30

Gary Wicks: Oh yeah a long time; yeah.

00:51:30

Evan Barrett: I mean this copper collar sounds like a colorful phrase but that was pretty darned real. And again the premise of this whole series is that emerging from being a corporate colony to becoming a real State with empowered citizenry, part of that of course was the New Constitution, which Forrest also helped shepherd although very quietly because he understood that if he became overt it might get in the way.

00:52:00

Mike Fitzgerald: Right; he may harm it more than help it.

00:52:01

Evan Barrett: You first wanted to go to work for the Con-Con Planning--

00:52:04

Mike Fitzgerald: Yeah.

00:52:05

Evan Barrett: You got lucky. You got to go to the Executive--

00:52:07

Mike Fitzgerald: Week later I'm hired by the Governor and I'm in the Governor's Office. I have a ringside seat for all of this and a way to participate. It was--it was a blessing. It was--it was like Gary and Frank have both said, there's no question that was the most formative part of my life from there on in terms of work and how to judge person, what organization--or organization design, leadership--what does all that mean? We had--we learned at the feet of the masters there literally.

00:52:39

Evan Barrett: Now I want to raise one more question here about young people getting into it and just very quickly that it was more than just in the Governor's Office that suddenly the doors were opened in departments--

00:52:51

Frank Sennett: Throughout the State government.

00:52:52

Gary Wicks: That's exactly right.

00:52:53

Evan Barrett: And we're benefitting from that to this day I think.

00:52:54

Mike Fitzgerald: It was statewide. It wasn't even--I mean the people--young people joining nonprofits, young people just signing up for environmental organizations, young people signing up for humanitarian things, it was pervasive, not just--but the government was probably the largest beneficiary of that at the time.

00:53:10

Gary Wicks: A lot of the laws that were passed and you know obviously had the State doing things it never did before, you needed people to do it and--and we were lucky, fortunate enough that we had a lot of talented people that came out of--mostly out of Montana universities to draw on and bring into State government that I think started a lot of them on--on careers that I presume they think were as useful as ours--we think ours was.

00:53:38

Mike Fitzgerald: I would offer that the enthusiasm and involved--to participate in government then was like to become a tech entrepreneur now. That's what people most--people our age that's mostly where they wanted to be. And I suppose that was coming out of the John/Bob Kennedy era, you know and everything that happened.

00:53:56

Evan Barrett: Well one of the challenges today for young people is they've been raised on a diet of post-Reagan governmental negativity that government is not what do you say--government--

00:54:09

Gary Wicks: Government is the enemy in a lot of ways.

00:54:11

Evan Barrett: Yeah; it's--it's not--the government is the problem.

00:54:14

Mike Fitzgerald: And so much of the manipulative [inaudible] politics that happened has made government not able to work. So it's a self-fulfilling kind of wish by the people that are running that agenda--that government can't help and do as much as they could or should now as they could then and were expected to.

00:54:34

Evan Barrett: You know it's interesting that we started out--we call this *New Kids on the Block* and by the way when I say new kids on the block I include me in it because--

00:54:47

Gary Wicks: You're looking pretty old now. [*Laughs*] We all look great--

00:54:51

Mike Fitzgerald: We're all young whippersnappers.

00:54:53

Evan Barrett: Mike and I are still working. [*Laughs*]

00:54:57

Mike Fitzgerald: Yeah; we still show up.

00:54:58

Evan Barrett: But you know it's--the reflections of this period it's important that these things be passed on. Part of what this series is about and your presence here today is to be able to pass on to young people today who--that things weren't always exactly as they are today. We--Santayana said you know you *if you don't learn from history you're condemned to repeat it*. Well you know there's been changes that have not been good; we have to rebound from that. We really need to hold up a mirror on ourselves in Montana and this is kind of a period that when we look in the mirror at ourselves looks pretty good.

00:55:43

Quick reflections; we're about to wrap up and come out of time. Your final thoughts on Forrest, the times--

00:55:50

Frank Sennett: I feel very lucky to have stumbled into the job that I did and be there at the time that I was there. It was just a wonderful combination of forces of change in society, a Governor who wanted things done to improve the lives of the citizens of the State of Montana, Executive Assistant who knew how to make those things happen, and a whole bunch of young people who were ready to make it happen and would put in the energy and the time to do it. And it was just a very fortuitous time.

00:56:30

Evan Barrett: Yeah; served Montana well. Gary?

00:56:31

Gary Wicks: So you know the neat thing would be if today we had Forrest and Ron sitting here.

00:56:37

Evan Barrett: Wouldn't that be great?

00:56:39

Gary Wicks: Sitting here listening to this; yeah it would be because you know as you go through your--those periods in your life you never have the reflection or--or the time or opportunity to tell those people what they meant to you in terms of your own career. And for me that period was just--I just have a real great sense of pride of what we got done and everything that we were involved in--in that time period and that includes going up through the Judge Administration and carrying on what Forrest did in that time period. I mean I--it's just a great sense of pride of having the opportunity to participate and--and have the kind of history we're talking about today.

00:57:17

Evan Barrett: And have an impact like you had--

00:57:19

Mike Fitzgerald: No; I certainly agree with my colleagues here that this--it was--it was a special time that we were very fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in, to learn and participate and take action in the way we were able to, to have the support from these incredible people that were really at the helm of the ship and a broad, broad ability to go, do, fix it, make it work better, help people--it was--I've never experienced anything like it since Evan. And I've been in this for 40 years. I've worked for--with or either with or for or around close with 10 Governors; no time like that one.

00:58:02

Evan Barrett: I think your reflections earlier all of you was that and you particularly have--these multiple Governors you worked for that Forrest Anderson was unique and the combination with--with Ron Richards was unique as well. I guess we were all blessed to have that opportunity and that's why I wanted you to come on and share your thoughts on--on that with *In the Crucible of Change* here. As I said, we were all new kids on the block. Now we're the old hands on the--on the deck of the ship still--

00:58:33

Mike Fitzgerald: Reflecting back.

00:58:35

Evan Barrett: --and I hope we can pass through this program and the others some wisdom onto younger generations. So with that we'll wrap it up; look forward to seeing you on the next episode.

00:58:48

[Music]

00:59:46

[End New Kids on the Block-Forrest Anderson Brings Baby Boomers into Montana Government]