HANS BOWKER. Born 1952

TRANSCRIPT of OH 1429V

This interview was recorded on April 3, 2006, for the Maria Rogers Oral History Program. The interviewer is Joyce Gordon. The interview also is available in video format, filmed by Joyce Gordon. The interview was transcribed by Joan Podgorski.

NOTE: The interviewer's questions and comments appear in parentheses. Added material appears in brackets.

ABSTRACT: Hans Bowker recounts his life in Colorado, from being a CU student during the Vietnam War, to working on a farm, and starting his business, Event Construction, which provided the infrastructure for such local events as the Coors Classic bicycle race, the Kinetics Conveyance Challenge and the Bolder Boulder. He also rehabbed property in Erie, is involved in local politics, and is on the airport board. He was the campaign manager for Jake the Booner Dog, who infamously ran for mayor of Erie in 1994. He discusses how growth has affected Erie and talks about the upcoming election, which will determine if Erie approves a bond issue for a new recreation center.

00:00 (My name is Joyce Gordon and I’m a volunteer with the Maria Rogers Oral History Program of the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History. Today, April 3, 2006, I’m talking with Hans Bowker, a resident of this area since the early seventies and owner of Event Construction and former campaign manager of Jake the Booner, a dog who ran for mayor of Erie in [the] 1994 election.

(Good morning, Hans. I’d like to begin by asking you where and when you were born.)

I was born in Syracuse, New York, September 26, 1952.

(What brought you to Colorado?)

I’ve got quite a bit of Colorado history. I used to come out here for summer camp and what have you and then my father went to CU—left CU in 1937 and so when it was time for me to go to college, I went hi ho hi ho—good enough for my dad, good enough for me, so I showed up here in 1970.

I started out as a mechanical engineer and in the Naval Reserve here and working as a cook in the dorms, and it was interesting.

(What dorm did you live in?)

Nichols Hall. Nichols Hall was the one that they put all the ROTC types in because if you will recall at the time, there was a lot of unrest on campus—anti-war unrest. So this university was halfway smart and put all us types in one dorm, ran our own security perimeter, and never ever had a whiff of problems.
(What kind of security?)

Well just kept an eye on things. No big deal.

(Did you feel that there was a lot of prejudice against the ROTC fellows at that time?)

[laughs heartily] Wearing a uniform on campus was going to get you at least a lot of odd looks if not very rude ones. But you know it was gonna pay for part of my schooling and I had a military and naval background so it was an obvious thing for me to do at the time. It was— Oh, we used to drill outside Folsom Field on the east side. There were twenty-three of us in the Naval Reserve unit and we ran a little pool as to how many hecklers we would turn out every Thursday, and it was always at least a hundred.

(A hundred hecklers.)

A hundred hecklers.

(What was the heckling like?)

Well, they were just making rude remarks about our supporting the war, and they were being anti-war, but we never, never were physically threatened in any way. You know, there is a very, very small percentage of the folks that actually got carried away and vandalized things and blew things up and what have you, but I never, never felt threatened in any way other than lack of— There’s always peer pressure of course, and when you see all the other students in the university giving you a hard time, it does— You sort of wonder if you’re on the right track, but I have— I do not regret my experience there.

(How many ROTC people were there at that time?)

Total on campus between the Navy, Air Force, Marines, Army—I would guess probably just over a hundred total. And now of course, the military is an honorable profession again, so I’m sure that the units over there are much better subscribed.

(How did you handle that heckling?)

You just ignore it. You know I’ve got a very thick skin, always have.

(Were the campus police around to handle anything there?)

There was— It was never that serious. It was more of a heckle-type thing. As I said, I never felt threatened in any way, shape or form.

04:25 (What was dorm life like back then?)
Well, there were two of us in each dorm room. The old single beds, a desk, and a little dresser and a little closet type thing. Ate at the dorm and studied and no big deal. Close, tight, you know, and I had a roommate who was Air Force ROTC, and his dad was a pilot for TWA headquartered out of Mexico City. So Johnny could go down to Mexico City every weekend by paying the $6 airline tax, and he would bring us back 35-cent liters of White Horse Tequila. Well it said tequila but it could have been used as paint thinner [laughs]. So our drink of choice at the time was White Horse Tequila and Sprite. I don’t want to go there again [laughs].

(Even back then there was drinking going on in the dorms.)

My father, who left here in 1937, has told me drinking stories and smoking marijuana stories. My conclusion is college students have not changed in the last millennia.

(Did you cook for the dorm?)

Yeah, I was a cook in the dorms. When I signed up for school I was looking for part-time work and they have a list of student help and most folks go down the list and look for the outside jobs and what have you. I went down the list and looked for the highest paid, and the highest paid was $2.10 an hour. And then I read sideways and it said cook. Pick me, I’m a cook [chuckles].

(So I’m imagining that in those days there weren’t any salad bars at the dorm.)

No, it was basically meat and potatoes right down the line. No organic chow to be found, but there was plenty of it, and the quality was good and one of the advantages of course, being a cook I could rummage around and get all the best stuff for myself [laughs].

(People didn’t have refrigerators in their dorm rooms or any of those luxuries.)

No, none of the amenities. We didn’t even have a computer in there and at that time you still had maids who would come in once a week and change your bed linens and what have you. That has changed quite a bit. But I think we had a stereo. That was it. And my roommate, for whatever reason, liked the rock opera “Tommy”—The Who—at high volume. I finally got him a set of headphones and said, “You plug in. I’m sick of it” [chuckles], and that worked quite well.

(What kind of music were you listening to in those days?)

Oh, [breathes out] I’ve never been much of a music junky and I’ll listen to anything to this very day, whether it be classical, rock, bluegrass, doesn’t matter. In my world there’s always a radio on, though, so [I] enjoy music.

(Do you recall what hangouts you were going to on the Hill?)

I do. My dad had spoken very highly of the Sunken Gardens on the Hill, which is [what]
you would know as The Sink. So I went to the Sink and then there was a place across the street called the Leaning Tower. Both of them 3.2 bars that at that time of course, you could drink 3.2 beer at eighteen and now of course you have to be twenty-one. So we drank a lot of 3.2 beer.

There were other places around but you know, the Hill was the easiest accessibility. Of course, [I] did not have a car or a bicycle, so anything I got to I walked. Toward the end I did acquire a motorcycle and that gave me considerably more mobility. And I rode that—It was a little 305 Honda Super Hawk, and I rode that all over the country and all up through Canada and out to seeing my sister in Cape Newagen, Maine. It’s a lot of miles on a 305 Honda Super Hawk but vast amount of mobility.

(And during your time at the dorm, you acquired the name—the nickname—“rags.” Can you tell us the story behind that?)

Right. Well, in spite of going—You know, working in the dorms and ROTC and what have you, I had no money. So I ran a floating blackjack game in the dorms. And knowing full well that this was an illegal, immoral or fattening opportunity, I used the nickname “Ragnar” as a dealer name, and I picked Ragnar out of “Atlas Shrugged,” a book by Ayn Rand, and Ragnar was the pirate. And that immediately got shortened to Rags, and thirty-five years later, there’s still a fair number of folks who know me as Rags.

10:03 (And what did you do after you left CU?)

I went to—Some friends of mine had a farm, and they needed help on the farm so I basically went to the farm for ten years, until I think it was in eighty-two or eighty-three the accountant sat us down and basically said, “What part of stupid don’t you people understand?” Because there’s no money in farming, so we got out of the farming business.

(Where was the farm located?)

Just east of Longmont by Union Reservoir, and actually those folks had another farm east of Denver and one in St. George, Utah, and one in Eureka, Nevada. So it was a large, well financed, well run—You know, we’re all college-educated, what have you—We still couldn’t make a living. So—

(Why is that?)

At that time, interest rates were running up around 18 percent for production credit, real estate prices were not escalating like they are now, world crop prices were down. They were just a number of factors that came into it that just did not make it economically sound. So those folks started selling off the land, and I started looking around for another job [laughs].

(How did you get from mechanical engineering to farming?)
Well, they just needed a hand [laughs], and I never got my degree, so I never really pursued a career in engineering, although I’ve got an engineering turn of mind and have still to this day enjoy designing and building things. I’ve got a large shop here that—yeah, a lot of interesting stuff’s come out of, been fixed in and what have you.

(When did you establish Event Construction? How did that come about?)

Well, Event Construction came about in—Starting in 1986, I had a roommate that was a bicycle race official, and he asked me to come along on the Coors Classic, which was a bike race that ran from San Francisco to Boulder, and they needed just a construction hand, truck driver, whatever. And I had a look at how they were setting up bicycle races and moving them and what have you, and said this is stupid, it’s too much like work, and came up with a better way of doing the fencing and what have you—the physical setup, and I’ve been doing that ever since.

(And Coors Classic is still one of your clients.)

Coors Classic ended I think in 1987 was their—Eighty-seven or eighty-eight would have been the last Coors Classic. Well, it just got too bloody big and it was not sustainable financially, so it went away. But there’s been—I don’t know how many events I’ve worked on over the years. I’m heading out to Sea Otter, which is a bicycle race at Laguna Cycle Raceway in California tomorrow.

(Locally, which events are you still working with?)

The Kinetic Conveyance Challenge is the one that I’ve been with the longest. I believe the first one was in 1979 and it is still going, so this will be my twenty-seventh year on staff of that event. And that’s at Boulder Reservoir, first weekend in May every year, and it’s been an interesting learning experience.

(Can you talk a little bit about how Kinetics has changed over these twenty-seven years? How did it begin?)

Oh God. Kinetics started with a sculptor out of Arcadia, California, by name of Howard Brown, and he runs a kinetic sculpture race. A couple of folks at KBCO, the local radio station, heard about this and wanted to do a local event similar to it, and they started it in seventy-nine. I got roped into doing the construction end, and it got to the point—I think the most people we ever had out there was like fifty-five thousand people, and it was totally unmanageable from a police and infrastructure standpoint, you know, just physically getting people in and out, getting emergency services, port-a-potties, trash, what have you. So we started re-engineering the event and now it’s a very family-oriented event that draws twelve to fourteen thousand every year. Still a lot of fun, though.

15:00 (Kinetics and what other events?)
Bolder Boulder is one that when we first started with it, I think we were delivering six-hundred feet of fencing for their start line or finish line or something. Now those folks will take literally every stick we’ve got and I think last year we provided them somewhere between twelve and thirteen thousand feet of temporary fencing.

(So everything has really grown. What was it like to start your own business back—When did Event Construction begin?)

In 1986, and then it was finally incorporated in eighty-nine and as far as growing the business or what have you, it’s just a matter of you know—folks call, they need something done—I’d do it and [makes noise]. End of story. And I’m still doing that [laughs].

(Uh huh. Would you say the community was very supportive of the small business owner?)

Community couldn’t care less [chuckles]. Now of course, they realize I’m a resource here, so like this coming weekend we’ll fence off the Easter Egg Hunt for them for free and then any event here in Erie we do for free. There’s the Eerie Erie, there’s the town fair, there’s the Easter Egg Hunt, and there’s a couple of other little things, and we just go out and give them their fence in exchange for which they put up with me. I think it’s a fair trade.

(When did you move to Erie and where did you first live when you moved to Erie?)

OK. I was living in Boulder on University Hill with a family—He was a senior scientist up at NCAR, she was a bus driver. We were sitting around one evening and she spotted an ad in the newspaper that said—oh, it was probably in the Daily Camera—that said “handyman’s dream” in Erie. OK, for dream read nightmare, and what it was was the old Agnew[?] Hotel that was built in 1874—nine bedrooms, trashed. The only reason I was interested in it, it had a thousand-square-foot cinderblock building with it that I could use for a shop. And the family I was living with was willing to loan me the money to buy it if I came up with a down payment. It was $27,000 and I came up with $3,000 and ended up with the Agnew Hotel which I promptly renamed the “Ashpit Flophouse and Grill.” I had the first month’s mortgage payment. It was $236.35 a month and had no idea where the second one was coming from, but with nine bedrooms what do you do? You start taking in inmates. And I paid for that silly place by taking in roommates for the next fourteen years.

(How come the hotel hadn’t been occupied before that?)

It had been occupied. The family that lived there were the type of people that emptied their ashtray behind the couch and then they left the couch too. I took twenty-three twelve-yard dump truck loads of trash out of that place, including—Well some of it was so bad I just took a front-end loader to it, but I was on the farm and I had access to dump
trucks and front-end loaders and what have you, so I just went after it.

(What was Erie like in those days?)

In seventy-eight, Erie was all dirt streets. They had four bars, a post office, and a convenience store on the corner, and they’re mostly all blue collar. You know, all the places pretty rundown. It was—You know, the coal mines were shutting down at that time. Some farming activity around here but generally really low budget, slow paced. You know the bars definitely had a better clientele than the churches and at that time there was one police officer here in town, and now I think we’re up to twenty-six officers, something like that. And at the time I moved here I had better walkie-talkies than the police department did.

(How come the coal mines had been shut down?)

Coal mines were shutting down because of economics. These were tunnel mines and it costs more to run tunnel mines than it does to run like the big strip mines up in Hanna, Wyoming. So, slowly but surely, one after the other they shut down. And the last one would have shut down somewhere around—before 1980, somewhere right in that area. The last one shut down I think was the Eagle Mine out by I-25—I-25 and Road 8.

20:22  (Was the town small enough in those days that everyone knew everyone?)

No, not really. The town was sort of fragmented. We had a high population of Hispanic-speaking folks that’d been here for generations, and then there was another group of—you know, just blue collar folks that had been here for quite a while, and then the third group was the young-uns, you know, the outsiders like myself coming in from Boulder looking for a cheap place to live. And that’s definitely what brought me to Erie.

(And the population was back then?)

Probably about nine hundred.

(Nine hundred?)

And right now we’re sitting between thirteen and fourteen thousand. Course, they’re tearing up all the wheat fields around here and planting half-million dollar houses. So property values have gone up considerably.

(When did you sell the hotel, and why?)

OK. I sold the hotel in June of ninety-two. Some folks came pounding on my door one day and asked me if I wanted to sell it. and I said well, make me an offer. And they offered me $62,000 and I did not bother to counter their offer. I said I’ll take it [laughs]. At that time it took them six months to get their financing together to buy the place at $62,000. And I think it was the first part of June of ninety-two that the deal finally went
through and I bought another shack in Erie, also for $27,000, that was two blocks closer to downtown. My mother of course, had asked me why I sold the old hotel and bought the new place, and I said well, quite frankly, it’s two blocks closer to the bars. My mother was not impressed [laughs heartily].

(Had you made a lot of improvements to the hotel during the time you were there?)

I had, mostly cleanup. You know, I stripped all the tarpaper off the outside of it and repainted it, got the lawn in and just a lot of labor-intensive type tidy-up, not money intensive, because quite frankly I didn’t have the money, but I did have the time. So, it had a nice lawn and a nice paint job and some of the interior stuff had been done too. Just cosmetic stuff, not the major structural work that the place built in 1874 really needed. And that was a witching-cold old place, cause you couldn’t afford to heat it.

(Oh.)

No insulation.

(Did your tenants complain?)

At $60 a month? No [laughs heartily], although the lowest temperature that I ever recorded in my bedroom in that house was eight below zero. In other words, if you left a partial beer next to the bed, it froze solid overnight.

(Uh huh, no house plants during the winter.)

Uh, house plants in the living room and in the kitchen, because both of those were kept at least above freezing. But you know, to heat a place like that, the equivalent utility bill would be probably on the order of $650 a month now. And of course none of us had any money to speak of, and if we did have extra money it usually got spent on beer [laughs].

24:14  (Were you involved in politics in those early days in Erie?)

Not at all. I didn’t get involved in politics for quite a while. I would guess in the early nineties is when I started— You know, I’d been here long enough, I was entrenched and you know they asked me to be on the airport board and I’ve been on the airport board ever since. Although I’m up for election so maybe I’ll get lucky and they’ll frog march me off [chuckles].

(You have to be elected to the board?)

Well, you’re actually appointed by the town board but I did re-file for another term, and the only reason I’m on there is because I’m not a pilot and I do understand economics well, and airports are very expensive to run.

(Where is the nearest airport?)
Erie has a municipal airport on the south side of town here. It’s right along Highway 7.

(What’s it used for?)

It’s a reliever airport for DIA and Jeffco. We can take a 737 there if we have to. So if for some reason DIA and Jeffco are shut down we can start taking some of that traffic and get it out of the air. So, we’ve got a good runway. You know, it’s a small airport. It was originally a—one of these fly-in communities and it went bankrupt and the town bought it out of bankruptcy some time, I think, in the late eighties, and now the town owns Erie-Tri-County Municipal Airport and we’re trying to make—at least make it at least a break even. So—

(What are the struggles in having it break even?)

Well, there is a fair amount of federal support for things like runway repair and what have you, but you still have to pay for your own infrastructure, the FBO and just an airport manager, the daily operating expenses. And we generate money by leasing out spots for people to park planes and we also get access fees from the old homeowners that can literally park at their house and come down to the airport and use the airport. We also have some commercial operations there that generate some revenue for the town, so—But it’s always a very fine line.

(Is it possible that there would be commuter flights from—)

No, DIA is just too close. So we are never going to have more than, you know, light twins aircraft there. I’m hoping that we get some more based aircraft because a lot of our income come from fuel sales and we get a rake-off on the fuel sales, so the more aircraft you get using the area the better off we’re at.

(Is there a flight school there?)

Yes, there is an FBO [fixed base operator] and a flight school and there is also service facilities for aircraft, including the propeller shop and airframe shop and another outfit that will modify your plane to whatever you want to do with it.

(What sorts of issues does the airport board tackle?)

Right now we’re trying to reopen our cross-wind runway and we’re— We just trying to find the money to do that, and we also make sure that the new housing developments around us are appraised of the location of the airport, getting abrogation easements in place so we don’t get complaints from the new homeowners saying, well I didn’t know there was an airport around here, you know? Well, lots of issues dealing with the fuel sales and we’ve got underground fuel tanks so we’ve got to deal with the EPA. Of course, we’re dealing with the FAA all the time to make sure that we’re in compliance with all the local regulations. Any new building around us gets reviewed to make sure that they’re
building outside of the flight lines. You know, there’s very strict parameters of what sort of obstacles can be anywhere around an airport so we review any new developments to make sure that they meet those. We’ve got—right now we’re putting in an AWA system, which is an automated weather reporting system for pilots. There is always issues on the table. And we have a meeting once a month, and I would be very surprised if there was nothing on the agenda.

29:35  (When you first moved here, were these boards in existence?)

No.

(How did things get settled and decided?)

There was a town board and that was it. If you had any complaints or any issues you went up and spoke your piece at the town board and the town board meetings used to last until 3:30 in the morning and some times there’d be fistfights.

(Really?)

Oh yeah.

(Over what kinds of issues?)

Oh, zoning, whatever. You know, someone mad at someone else, but it was a very free-wheeling environment. You could bring anything to the town board because there weren’t any— There wasn’t an airport board, there wasn’t any other of these miscellaneous boards that you could go through first and there was basically no town staff. Erie was a little dirt-poor town and most of the staff—you know the town board, is all volunteers to this very day and paid staff— Most of the paid staff was just to maintain the roads and what have you. There was no city manager, there was one police officer, etc.

(So, who was the first city manager here?)

Oh I think he was a part-timer by the name of Mr. Epstein and then after that it was Dennis Drum. The town started growing and you know Erie has been going through a lot of growing pains since I got here and then I don’t remember exactly when, but the town finally broke down and hired a top-notch pro by the name of Leon Wurl. He used to be the city manager I think for Louisville, and I think he was the city manager for Aspen too, at one point. And his salary at that time was $55,000 which I thought was totally outrageous, you know, but he definitely knew how to handle a growing town, and he did an amazing job for Erie and I think he was worth every penny in retrospect.

(What year did he come onboard?)

I don’t remember, but he has since died and they’ve named one of the new streets outside
Erie Leon Wurl Parkway, and I think he deserves the honor. He was a character but he definitely knew how to get things done with a growing town, so it was a good thing.

32:14 (And your involvement in politics also included your being the campaign manager for Jake the Booner Dog.)

[laughs]

(Tell us that story.)

Oh, that was back in March of ninety-four, I think. We were all sitting around and reading the local paper and seeing that there was an election coming up, and we looked at the dog and looked at each other and said well, it would be sort of fun to run the dog, cause the dog is well known in Erie. And I had some time on my hands so I went up to the town hall and got a full set of election papers and got ten signatures on the petition which is what’s required and then got the dog’s paw print notarized at the bank on the papers and what have you, and—

One time when I was up at the town hall there was a reporter from the Longmont Times-Call there and they thought that was a good story, so they took a picture of us and you know, they wrote up a little article and published it in the Longmont Times-Call. It must have been a slow day at the Associated Press because the Associated Press picked it up, and the whole thing just snowballed. I did interviews with radio stations as far away as Guam and Japan and we went ahead and had campaign posters made up and one of the gals made up some dog biscuits that said “Jake for Mayor,” and we had a— We turned the local bar into a campaign headquarters.

We just had an awful lot of fun with it. You know, Channel 2, 4, 7 and 9 all sent reporters over and did interviews. Just a real good, fun time. Obviously a dog can’t be mayor, but Jake got thirty-four write-in votes, and he came in second in the election [laughs], and a good time was had by all.

(And back in ninety-four everybody kind of went along with it, and allowed his paw print to be notarized and—)

Yeah. Everybody had a good time with it, took it in the spirit that it was intended. Just having fun.

(And the person that was running—opposing Jake—was the incumbent?)

Was the incumbent and he was reelected.

(And what did he think of all this?)

He didn’t think very much of that. He actually was a little bit annoyed with me [laughs], but not so annoyed that we were no longer on speaking terms. He won his reelection,
and then I think he served another two years and then has since moved from Erie.

So we’ve had a number of different mayors, especially as the town’s grown we’ve had a lot of newcomers that have come in. They’re really dedicated and really wanting to get things done, but what you run into, it’s sort of like molasses. You know, you can come in with an agenda, but actually trying to get things done is tough, because there all the rules and regulations that a municipality has got to abide by and of course, TABOR [Taxpayer’s Bill Of Rights] has been a large influence on the amount of money a town can raise and spend. It’s a very, very complex issue. And folks come in all fired up and then they sort of get discouraged with how slowly things move.

You know, I’ve been on that airport board for eleven years now, and I’m the only one that’s lasted the entire time because I know how slow things go, and you just have to be persistent, have a vision, and keep nudging every now and again. You’re not going to push and get anywhere. So we’ve had a lot of people come and go through the local political—

36:28 (What do you see is the future of Erie and how will growth impact this little town?)

Well, there are a lot of folks who are very, very concerned about trying to keep Erie rural—keeping its character rural, but the price of real estate is so high right now and the demand for infrastructure is quite high. You know, they’ve got a $16 million dollar bond issue coming up on this election for a new rec center, and $16 million is a good chunk of change for this town, and we don’t have any commercial development yet in Erie to generate the tax revenue it takes to pay off things like that, cause a town— It boils down to money—you know, whether you’re going to have enough money to meet your obligations, cause towns can go bankrupt too. So as Erie’s has grown—it’s grown quite rapidly—there’s been a lot of this type of growing pain. But I think in time it’ll sort itself out and we will stabilize and everybody will get on the program but it will be fine, but it’ll take a while.

(What kinds of commercial developments or endeavors are possible to get the town really financially stable?)

Well, the things that bring in the most money are the big box retail stores like Home Depot, Wal Mart, etc. and that’s where most of the revenue would be generated, would be in sales tax revenue. But you know there’s a big push to get commercial in here, but there’s also a lot of resistance to the big box stores, but they’re the ones that generate the most revenue, so it’s a balancing act. And right now the population in Erie is not large enough to attract much in the way of commercial at all yet, so— But as the population base increases, then the demographics become more in favor of folks building here in Erie.

Now, the largest tax revenue generator I think we have right now is the Safeway store, and there’s a new shopping—relatively new, it’s like four years old. It was built at the
corner of 287 and Arapahoe, and that’s the far southwest corner of Erie. And Erie is annexed to—basically from 287 to I-25 and then on the south from Highway 7 to Highway 52.

39:22 (Where is the closest rec center currently?)

Closest one would be Leon Burger in Lafayette, and I don’t know if Erie has an intergovernmental agreement with them or not. I don’t use the rec center, so— I get plenty of exercise as it is [laughs].

(Do you think that Erie needs this rec center?)

I think spending $16 million right now is a little bit premature, but I think in time it will be a good thing. But I’m hoping it doesn’t pass right now.

(Do you think it will?)

I think the folks that are buying the new houses very much want a rec center, but they’re under enough financial pressure as it is that they may not be willing to pay the mill levies that it will take to retire that bond, so— I think there’s a 50-50 chance it’ll pass. You know, April 5 will tell. Our election is April 4.

(Which is tomorrow.) [Construction of the recreation center was approved]

Ah, which is tomorrow, indeed. And this is the first year that Erie is doing mail-in ballots. First time ever, so it’d be interesting to see how that transpires. The mayor is running unopposed so we will have the mayor back and we have four council—or board of trustees seats available—we have eight people running. Two, either two or three are incumbents, so we’ll see.

40:59 (Before we leave the issue of local politics, I’d like to get some footage on the Jake for Mayor—)

OK. Yup, we had the campaign posters made up that we put all over town. You know, obviously we just made them up ourselves. Nobody professionally printed them or anything. You know our campaign budget was zero. Everybody volunteered.

This is one of the dog biscuits that one of the gals made up that we passed around as campaign souvenirs or what have you.

But even the town got on board. This was a letter that was sent to Jake the Booner Dog from the town of Erie inviting Jake to the Meet the Candidates Night [chuckles]. So as you can see, just everybody was on board as far as the spirit of the whole event. I don’t know if I’d do it again, because Erie has become much more sophisticated than it used to be [laughs].
(And they changed the regulations to prevent canines from running.)

Right, and even write-in candidates I guess have to register these days, so I would not be able to pull campaign stuff this time [chuckles].

(Uh huh. Did he go to Meet the Candidates Night?)

I don’t know. Jake wasn’t my dog. It was a friend of mine’s dog, and I don’t know if Jake went or not, but we certainly had many a campaign meeting at the local bar [laughs].

(And as your participation in event construction kind of gears down a bit, what sorts of activities do you anticipate participating in?)

Well, I’ve been running event construction for twenty years, and it’s been you know, a seven day a week job, and I’m trying to downsize that and spend a little bit more time doing some of the things that I’ve always wanted to do. So one of the things that I’m planning on doing is buying a canoe, and there’s a stream that runs through Erie, it’s called Coal Creek. It has barely enough water to float a canoe, but rumor has it that that Coal Creek, if I followed it long enough, would eventually take me to the Gulf of Mexico. And I figure there’s only one way to find out. So I don’t know if I’ll be able to get that organized, but I figure a canoe, a mountain bike, a tent, a cell phone and a case of beer—we’ll give it a shot [chuckles].

(And maybe who knows, maybe it will become the event of the future—the canoe ride from Erie to the Gulf of Mexico.)

I think it’s going to take like three or four months [laughs], and your average event participant doesn’t have that sort of attention to detail and that much time. But you know it’s a dream, and if it happens, great. If it doesn’t, oh well.

44:35 (Anything else that you would like to add?)

Uh, not particularly.

(Thank you so much for your donation of your time and telling us the stories that you have.)

My pleasure, and if you come up with anything more you want info on, just give me a whistle.

(We’ll give a holler.)

Thanks.

44:57 [End of tape. End of interview.]