

**INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT SPRUNG
CONDUCTED BY TOM SCOTT
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TS: Rob, let's begin by talking about what you were doing out at Pomona High School and your background before you came to Tennessee. I know you were a pretty good pole vaulter out there in high school. Why don't you talk about your high school career?

RS: Okay. I was doing a little above average and fairly successful, but I started breaking poles. I was six feet, 142 pounds, using a 14-foot, 140 pole. When I broke the third one, the coach said, "You're going to get a 15-foot, 150." I said, "Okay." So the pole was stronger than my body weight. I couldn't get the pole to bend enough to get into the pit. After about four days of going up, down, up, down, and up, down, I said, "You know what? I've got to put my handhold up higher, so the pole will at least bend." I just worked it through my head that I need to push the pole out front, push it into the air as high as I can, and jump off the ground as high as I can before I get upside down, then crank it into the pole. After about two days, my father got my handhold up high enough for the pole to work. I started landing in the pit, and my senior year just took off like a rocket. I was CIF Champion, California Interscholastic Federation. At the state meet, I was a knucklehead and finished second.

TS: Knucklehead? What did you do?

RS: I needed a bigger pole.

TS: Bigger than the 15-foot, 150?

RS: Oh, yes. By the time this was happening, I was on a 16-foot, 150, so my handhold was really high. It was up there.

TS: Well, if you were getting up 15 or 16 feet in the air, you needed a big pole.

RS: Yes. The coach was really good about it. Something happened, and I

needed another pole. After the state meet, he got me a bigger pole. I went to Golden West [Invitational Track and Field Meet], and it was a night meet. I won the Golden West [in 1967], which is the National High School Championship Meet [with a vault of 14-8].

TS: Wow. That's a big meet.

RS: Yes, that was a nice one, so I redeemed myself from the state meet, knucklehead act. Then they had the National Junior Qualifying the next weekend down at Long Beach. The pole that I won with at the Golden West, I broke it.

TS: Oh, no. When you say broke, you were up in the air, and it just splits off and splits in two? What happens to you when the pole breaks?

RS: Well, it doesn't split in two. It just explodes into pieces. You usually end up doing a back flip and landing in the pit.

TS: That's dangerous.

RS: Well, if it was sawdust, yes, it's super-dangerous. But they didn't have fiberglass with the sawdust very much together. Thank goodness, I had that next pole for the next jump. They let me take one warmup jump on it. I'd made 15-1 on the other one before I broke it, so we were jumping at 15-6. By the third jump I almost made it. I said, "This is the pole. This is the pole." Two days later we left for Mexico City. They had what they called pre-Olympic Development Meets. I'd gone-

TS: This was the year before the Mexico City Olympics?

RS: The two summers before because I was there in 1966 and got like fifth or sixth place. Then when I returned [in 1967], before I had to put a pad on my right hand because my arm would hit the pole. But because I had changed my takeoff technique and was putting the pole way out up in front, pushing as high as I could with both hands, jumping as high as I could, and then just laying back into it....

TS: Right hand would be the top hand, wouldn't it?

RS: I was a left-hander. The two Mexican jumpers said, "Aren't you the guy who had the pad?" I said, "Yes." They said, "What did you do?" I said, "I got stronger, got smarter, and changed my technique, and it's working." I jumped 15-6 ½ and won the meet. I had the highest jump ever in Mexico until the Olympic Games the next year. I got to have dinner with the Vice President of Mexico, Juan Figueroa Palato. He said, "If you'll go

to school here, we'll make you a Mexican citizen, and you can jump for Mexico."

TS: Make the Olympics on the Mexican team?

RS: I'm going, "I took French in high school, living next to Mexico."

TS: That had to be tempting, right?

RS: Go to college and taking Spanish? Oh, no, there was no chance.

TS: Wasn't tempting at all?

RS: No chance. No chance. After the meet was over, I did stay in Mexico City a couple of more weeks before I caught the train. Big adventure going down there by bus and coming back by train. Back in California, the colleges already had the best vaulters from the years before, so there was no financial aid. When I went to the National Championships for the Junior Championship?

TS: Right, which is 18 and younger, or how did they do that?

RS: Well, it's just out of high school and younger. That's where I met Coach Rohe. He approached me and talked to me. I didn't have a very good day that day. I had to go to work when school got out. My parents, eventually, lost their house for lack of payments, and it was only \$98 a month. I had to have some financial help, or college wasn't going to work. I didn't have the grades for an academic scholarship.

TS: Okay, and you were saying earlier, was it Southern Cal that couldn't give you a scholarship, and UCLA was going to give you a half-scholarship?

RS: A half, yes.

TS: You know there are other colleges out in California.

RS: Well, I went to junior college for one day.

TS: One day?

RS: I had a buddy three years older than me, really straitlaced. He went off, and then he came back the first summer. When he came back, he said, "You've got to go to college. It's the best time you're ever going to have in your life." I go, "Wait a minute. This guy that went to church three times a week is telling me he's having fun."

TS: Church three times a week, but he's having fun in college?

RS: I don't think he went to church in college [laughs]?

TS: I understand. I understand. Well, now this is 1967. Did you have long hair and all that back then? Were you a hippie?

RS: Off and on. I'd get a haircut and three months later, I'd get a haircut. You know? So I went to the junior college. The track program wanted me. The coach, their staff, put together my schedule. It was all PE classes. I understood what they were doing. They wanted me to have straight A's, so that when I finished junior college, I'd ... boom. They'd take me right in. But then when I would get to the university, I'd have nothing but academic classes all day long every week for two years. Once I saw my schedule, I went to the classes that day. The next day I went in and withdrew. A couple of weeks later, [the University of Florida called me and offered me a full scholarship. Then the Mt. SAC [Mt. San Antonio College] coach found out that I was offered a scholarship. He called Florida and threatened to turn them in to the NCAA for recruiting me out of junior college, which was a lie because I was already out on my own.

TS: You had already dropped out of school?

RS: Yes, I only went two days, one day of class, one day checking out.

TS: But Florida was scared off at that point?

RS: Yes. It was a couple of weeks when they got a hold of me, and he scared them off. A couple of weeks later, Coach Rohe called me. I said, "Is Florida in your conference?" He says, "Yes." I said, "Send me a plane ticket. I'm on my way."

TS: Rohe wasn't worried about being scared off?

RS: Well, he couldn't because if Florida recruited me out of Mt. SAC, then the contact with Tennessee was ...

TS: Would be later. But you said you had met Coach Rohe.

RS: In Des Moines, Iowa, at the Junior Championship.

TS: Okay, so you knew who he was, and he knew who you were, but he hadn't offered you anything at that point?

- RS:** No, but he kind of picked my brain. He was noticing I was doing something different, but I just didn't get to work out that six weeks before very much. It was a nice meeting. We got along well. He's very personable and a great recruiter. I've learned from him [about recruiting]. So that's how I ended up at Tennessee. I had several of the Southern California coaches go, "No kid from California has made it on the East Coast." They didn't know that they just fueled the fire. I said, "You know, I'll be dead or I'll be good."
- TS:** Well, you know, back then we did look at California as the promised land when it came to track and field, compared to Southeastern Conference.
- RS:** Yes, that's been changed.
- TS:** That has changed big time, hasn't it? Now, when you were at the junior college, was that like a summer quarter, or did you start the fall there?
- RS:** I started the fall there.
- TS:** You started in the winter at Tennessee?
- RS:** I started, yes, the first week of January. It was a shocker. It was 68 degrees at 1:00 o'clock in the morning when I left Los Angeles Airport. I arrived in Knoxville, and I think it was like 22 degrees. I'd been flirting with the flight attendants the whole flight, because it was the red-eye that just goes right straight to Knoxville. They wrapped me up in three blankets and helped me hustle over into the airport.
- TS:** You didn't have an overcoat I gather?
- RS:** I brought the heaviest clothes I had, and everybody in Tennessee said, "Man, that's summer clothes. " I got there a few days before school was open, and I stayed with Steve Nelson. His family was just great to me. The mom gave me some nice, heavy shirts and pants and said, "Well, this is from Steve's older brother that don't fit anymore." One of them I had to take the tag off of it. I just said, "Well, thank you very much. I'm not going to die." But I have no idea how I passed my first quarter.
- TS:** Really?
- RS:** Oh, yes. I had to go in for the physical and the EKG and all of that stuff, and then they gave me a flu shot. Four days later I had the flu. Between being in the cold that I was absolutely unprepared for, and receiving

- that flu shot, I was a cave dweller the entire first quarter there. I was sick. I would get up, go to class, come back, and go to bed. I have no idea how I passed all my classes. It was ugly.
- TS: Or how many people you gave the flu to.
- RS: Well, yes. Tom Carmichael was my roommate that first quarter that I was there. Nice guy. He's the one who named me the cave dweller because he would open the door, and I had all the windows and blinds closed, in the dark, no lights on, and just sleeping.
- TS: So it took you a whole quarter to acclimate?
- RS: By the end of the quarter, I was coming back because I think it was the weekend of the Pomona drag races. Of course, with all the moonshiners in Tennessee, they're into that car racing stuff.
- TS: That's supposedly where drag racing starts.
- RS: Yeah, well, they were into stock cars, too. But I remember that because we were on a bus going to a track meet in Chattanooga. All the guys were going, "Hey, have you been to the drag races? Have you been there?" It was interesting.
- TS: Did you ever see Robert Mitchum's *Thunder Road* [1958 movie]? It was a Hollywood movie where Robert Mitchum's character is a moonshine runner who ends up getting killed [in a crash] out on Kingston Pike.
- RS: Oh, no. I must have missed that one. At Chattanooga, I think I jumped 15 feet, so I was getting back on the road to recovery. Then by the outdoor season, the last meet of the year, I made 16 feet.
- TS: Now were freshmen eligible when you started?
- RS: Yes, but I wasn't eligible because I went to junior college one day.
- TS: Really? You had to sit out a whole year?
- RS: I had to sit out a whole year.
- TS: Oh, I thought you could transfer from junior colleges to senior colleges and compete immediately.
- RS: Not in 1967. I competed against them for the Knoxville Track Club.

TS: Okay. But you were on full scholarship?

RS: Yes. Then, the next track season I was healthy, spent the fall getting ready, and had a pretty good indoor season, I think.

TS: Didn't you win the SEC indoor that year [1969]?

RS: Yes, well, we had Steve Owens and myself. Steve was there before me [and won the pole vault at the 1968 indoor and outdoor SEC meets]. Everywhere we went in the SEC, we were one-two, one-two. At the [1969] indoor championships I won [with a vault of 16-6, with teammate David Mason third. Then I finished fifth at the NCAA indoor meet]. Outdoor season, [I won the SEC with a vault of 16-6 3/4, with David Mason tied for second].

My freshman year, in terms of eligibility [1969], was a really good year. Rohe had good influences at the indoor meets, and I really liked indoor jumping. My first time to do it was when I came to Tennessee. He got me into an indoor meet in Washington, DC. I think I got second. Then the next night we flew into Madison Square Garden for the US Olympic Indoor Invitational. They tried to recruit as many of the '68 Olympians to come to the meet. I made 16-4, which was my lifetime best. Bob Seagren, the world record holder [at 17-8 3/4 set 12 September 1968] and 1968 Olympic champion, won. John Pennel, former and future world record holder [at 17-10 set 21 June 1969] was second, and this country boy from Tennessee was third.

TS: You were the country boy from Tennessee?

RS: I was the country boy from Tennessee. My warmup jumps were ugly. I just can't get that excited. When the competition starts, then I'm dialed-in. I'm doing my warmup jumps with my handhold where I want it to be just to check to see where my foot is. I don't land in the pit. I'm all over the place. They're all like, "Whoa, whoa." Then when the competition starts, all of a sudden I'm a different guy. I'm in the pit, and I had a very good night. There were some good jumpers there besides the other two guys. I beat some [fine athletes].

TS: Now Seagren was three years ahead of you in high school, right?

RS: Yes.

TS: Did you know him in high school or was he too far ahead of you?

RS: Well, we were in junior high school, and it was the first year of the junior high school. We didn't have a track. We were about a quarter of a mile away from the high school. We would walk over there and practice, using their facility.

TS: Oh, so you worked out with him then?

RS: No. They had the varsity pit, and they had the junior high pit. They wanted to get the other guys out of the way, so they could get their stuff in. My mom knew his mom.

TS: Oh, really? Did he talk to you at all about pole vaulting?

RS: He was a busy guy. He was working hard. He was serious. I was in junior high. We were in two different worlds, so I never really met him on the field at Pomona High School. When we started competing against each other, it was a real relaxed, very comfortable relationship. He was a nice guy. He was a good guy. On a night in Cleveland, Ohio, I caught him on an off night. We jumped in New York City on Friday night in Madison Square Garden. Saturday night we were in Cleveland, Ohio. I said, "Bob, what are you going to start at?" He said, "16-6." I said, "If I'm going to jump with you big boys, I better start there." The night before, I'd made 16-4, which was my lifetime best [at the time]. I was the first jumper up. I was all pumped up and ready to go. They started lowering the lights to do the National Anthem. I said, "I'm ready," and I just took off. Boy, it was a good jump. It was the best jump I ever had in my life, because I made it by probably like 16-10, so it was a perfect jump for me. Another guy made 16-6 on his second attempt. Seagren didn't make it until his third attempt. They raised the bar to 17-0. If Seagren wanted to win, he had to make it.

TS: You went from 16-6 to 17-0?

RS: Yes. We went in 6-inch increments back then. Now they are going odd numbers because they do it in metric. I had two nice jumps at 17-0, got close. The other guy wasn't even close to it. He made 16-6, and it was like it must have been his first time. Seagren didn't make it on his third attempt. This guy starts running around the indoor track screaming, "I beat Seagren. I beat Seagren." Well, Seagren was undefeated for three years and two times *Sports Illustrated* Man of the Year. He had a great career. Bob comes over to me. He says, "Hey, you made 16-6 on your first jump." I said, "Yes." He says, "That's your PR, right?" I said, "Yes." He says, "We'll be jumping against each other for a while [laughs]." It

- was a very nice compliment. He goes, "You are the ones who will be scored as beating me." The other guy was still running around the track yelling.
- TS:** Did he know that he was actually second?
- RS:** No. He thought if he beat Seagren, he was first. He didn't pay any attention to me. But then when the announcer gave the results, he kind of just disappeared. Seagren was very kind to me when he returned to Southern California. The *Los Angeles Times* interviewed him. The reporter said, "Hey, what happened?" He goes, "Hey, I couldn't lose to a nicer guy than Robert Sprung."
- TS:** Is that right?
- RS:** Yes. The article is in my scrapbook if I can find that box [laughs]. That was my first at the indoor track that put me on the board. There was another meet later in New York City, the New York Knights of Columbus, and I won that meet. The people were very receptive to me, very nice. Then we had the outdoor season. Nothing as exciting as that happened for me. The team did extremely well. I did what I could to help. Then what would be my sophomore year [1970], my indoor season went well. I went to New York, Madison Square Garden twice. I think I finished second in one, and the Knights of Columbus meet I won.
- TS:** And you won the SEC again, your third SEC Championship at that point, two indoors and one outdoor.
- RS:** Yes. In New York they had an article on half of the back page of the sports magazine. It said, "Outside snow was falling, inside Sprung was springing."
- TS:** How about that [laughs]?
- RS:** With a nice picture, so that was fun.
- TS:** That's great. Well, let's see, in the '69 SEC outdoor meet, you went 16-6 3/4. How did they get to a three-quarters? Were they doing metrics?
- RS:** I guess or they just miss-set the bar, and then when they measured it after I made, it was like, "Okay."
- TS:** Was that your best ever 16-6 and 3/4? Or did you go higher than that? And was 1969 your best year?

- RS:** College-wise, yes.
- TS:** I know you were in the Olympic Trials in '72, so you kept jumping at least that long.
- RS:** Oh, yes. Here's what happened [in 1970]. I made the 16 feet when I was attempting to make 16-6. I had a bad jump, landed in the pan, and bruised my heel extremely bad. I'd qualified to go to the indoor NCAA meet, but I couldn't take off. I'd hurt the heel on my takeoff foot. I couldn't even go to the meet.
- TS:** That knocked you out of the outdoor '70 season then, I guess.
- RS:** Well, it puts me out. In the [1970] indoor meet, I was first at 16-0, and Steve Owens finished second at 15-6. He went on to the indoor NCAA Championship, and he finished third [with a vault of 16-0]. He got All American. I said, "He represented us well." It was a good break for him and just a big mistake by me.
- TS:** Did you just go to UT for those three years and then go into the Marines before you graduated? Or how did that work out?
- RS:** Well, here's what happened. Because I didn't go to school in the fall semester of '67, the draft board sent me a draft notice. "You're drafted because you're not in college." I put in for an appeal and got the appeal, so they changed it. In '70 when I got hurt, I didn't go to school the spring quarter. So I was in trouble again.
- TS:** Why didn't you go to school that quarter?
- RS:** My foot was really, really in bad shape. I couldn't go up and down those hills and stairs and steps. I said, "I'll just let myself heal."
- TS:** Because you're incapacitated, you get drafted.
- RS:** Then the draft board was really after me. Now, I was two quarters behind. The lottery system had come in. I remember I had a bunch of guys sitting in my room, and they were drawing numbers [to correspond with your birthday], and I drew a bad number. It was like somewhere between 40 and 50. They say if you're 120 or higher you're okay. I'm going, "They've been after me."
- TS:** We have 365 days in a year and so there were 365 possible numbers you could have gotten. If you were between 40 and 50, which means ...

RS: I was going. I made the decision that I would get an inter-service transfer to the Marine Corps, because I said, "I don't want to go to Vietnam with a bunch of guys that were drafted and don't want to be there. I'm going there with a bunch of guys that want to save me and get me out of there."

TS: So you weren't drafted. You joined the Marines, and started, I believe, in January of '71.

RS: Yes.

TS: It sounds like you were going through basic training in the wintertime.

RS: Yes, in San Diego.

TS: In San Diego? Okay. That's not bad.

RS: Yes. It's not on Parris Island. I'd be back into that winter stuff.

TS: I guess we were by that time beginning to reduce our effort in Vietnam.

RS: Yes, I got really lucky because I was 21-years-old when I was drafted, and I was in the best shape of my life getting ready for the indoor '71 season. So boot camp physically was nothing. I was older than one of the instructors. The mental part was no problem. I was the top marksman in our platoon. Everything for me was just easy. I'd been writing letters to headquarters of the Marine Corps. Our team manager's brother was a major at Quantico, Virginia. I was writing letters to him letting him know that I went to the University of Tennessee on the track team as a pole vaulter and that I would really like to be a pole vaulter for the Marine Corps track team. Finally, after a while he wrote back.

This is funny because they get this letter. It's from the headquarters of the Marine Corps. For the first time ever, the lieutenant, the captain, the staff sergeant, the sergeant, and the corporal are in one place at the same time. They never do that, okay? They go, "Open this letter," because they can't open it. I open the envelope. They snatched that baby from me like a cobra. They open it up. They read it and see that it already says when I finish boot camp and ITR, that they will transfer me to Quantico. They looked at that, and they were like, "Ah, okay." Then they told me they were afraid that I had written about beating people up, being mean. That's what they worry about because they get a little physical. After that, they were just like ...

TS: Special treatment?

RS: The first thing they ask, "Are you a six-month, blank, blank, blank reservist?" I say, "No. I'm in for two years." After that I was gold. They treated me very well.

TS: But they didn't like reservists?

RS: Oh, they hated them—college guys that did the six months in reservists, and went back to school.

TS: Did you go to Quantico then?

RS: Yes, out of boot camp. I made a lot of money from my sergeants and the people on my team, because we went to the obstacle course. I was never big on pushing weights, but I'd go into the gymnastic room and climb the rope six times, regular, and six times upside down. I would be doing all kinds of stuff on the high bar, on the parallel bars. My whole workout was with my body weight doing gymnastic stuff. They had the obstacle course. I went through the obstacle course the first time. I was all the way through. I came back and went through again, and only four guys were ahead of me.

TS: That's good.

RS: Oh, the sergeant snatches me up, pulls me behind the bleachers. He says, "You never do this course again." I nod, "Oh, okay." Well, I found out at the end they have a big competition between the four different platoons that are in the brigade. They bet a lot of money on who has got the best person for the obstacle course. They had fights breaking out. The other people were so mad that they kept this guy hidden.

TS: Yes, I understand. They didn't want anybody else to know.

RS: They called me in the office that night and gave me a beer.

TS: You spent the rest of your military service at Quantico?

RS: I get assigned to Quantico after ITR.

TS: Then I guess the highlight was to go to the Olympic Trials in '72?

RS: That was Plan A.

- TS:** You did pretty good there.
- RS:** I finished 12th, but I got into the finals, jumped 16-8. That was my best ever. I think there were only maybe five or six college guys ahead of me, so I still had a shot. Nineteen seventy-two came around, and all of a sudden Bob Seagren was not jumping the way he had been jumping. He had been studying films on me, and he changed his takeoff to my takeoff. His world record went from 17-8 $\frac{3}{4}$ [in 1968] to 18-5 $\frac{1}{2}$ [in 1972].
- TS:** By using your technique?
- RS:** Right, I gave him that.
- TS:** Now did you develop that on your own?
- RS:** That was the survival thing I did in high school because the coach made me go a stiffer pole. I just somehow, by luck or happenstance, figured out the best way to use the fiberglass pole. All the people before '64 that were pole vaulting were on bamboo or steel. On steel, you want to get upside down as fast as you can, and then pull and turn as hard as you can. With the fiberglass pole you want to push energy into it and jump high off the ground, so that your center of gravity is not down here, but up here. Then when you pull and turn, you get more energy back from the pole. It worked for me. Then Jan Johnson [1972 Olympic bronze medalist] was doing the same technique. The whole world went by me.
- TS:** You needed to have a patent on it.
- RS:** Well, Jan Johnson is the one who gave me credit, because he runs a Sky Jumpers pole-vaulting camp up in Atascadero [California]. He's got a [master's degree in biomechanics], and so he's got all the devices and things to help develop the right muscles and things. I had some pretty good pole vaulters, and we'd go up there to his camp. He was very gracious because when I'd walk in there, he'd stop what he was doing and say, "This is the guy who showed us how to do it."
- TS:** Wow, that's great.
- RS:** I can't complain.
- TS:** No, I guess not. Okay, so you get out of the Marines in November of '72. Did you go back to college then?

RS: In January.

TS: Did you have some eligibility there?

RS: Yes, I had two outdoor and one indoor.

TS: That's right because you missed an outdoor season. Did you go back to Tennessee?

RS: Yes.

TS: This would be under Coach Stan Huntsman by that time?

RS: Stan, yes. Coach Rohe got a hold of me and said, "Why don't you come here in Blacksburg with me?"

TS: Virginia Tech.

RS: Yes. I said, "No, I'd like to finish where I started. I made a commitment to Tennessee, and I'm going to keep it."

TS: Right. Did Tennessee have an assistant coach that specialized in pole-vaulting back then?

RS: I was the pole vault coach. One of the guys I worked with made 17 feet the year after I left. He was Mark Malone. He was taking off on the wrong foot, and I wouldn't let him do it. I said, "You're going to go through heck. But once you get it smoothed out, you are going to jump a lot better than you did in high school."

TS: I didn't check to see how you did from '73 on. Did you win any other SEC Championships after you came back?

RS: Jan Johnson transferred from Kansas to Alabama.

TS: Oh, so you were not going to win the SEC championship?

RS: He was a good vaulter.

TS: Did you get a second place? Do you remember what you did in the SEC?

RS: My last outdoor season I tried to do the decathlon and the vault, and it wasn't the smartest thing to do. But I'd always wanted to do the decathlon, and that was the first year they had it [in the SEC]. I said, "You know what? I've just got to do it."

TS: Well, worth a try I guess. When did you graduate from Tennessee?

RS: December of '74. Friday the 13th.

TS: What was your major?

RS: Physical education and health.

TS: Okay. Now you were telling the story before we were on tape about being offered a job in Tennessee.

RS: I did my student teaching at Rule High School [Knoxville]. The advisor had about eight or nine of us. All the others went, "Hey, you're going to have a hard time. That's a tough place." I went there and had the best time of my life.

TS: A tough place because of the students?

RS: It's an inner city, black school. I had two PE classes and a health class. The PE teacher was the basketball coach. He'd just sit in his office and throw the basketball out. The kids didn't dress out, and just played basketball. Now I've had all this training. I've got all of my lesson plans. I'm like, "This, this and this." The principal and assistant principal were tough guys, both former football players at Tennessee, and so I went in there. He turns over the class. I tell them what we're going to do. "You're going to dress out." I got a, "Yeah, right, yeah." I said, "Well, I don't know how you're going to pass the class if you don't dress out. If you don't know how to change clothes, I guess you're too dumb for me. I can't help you."

I make a deal with them. I said, "Okay, you dress out, and you can play basketball on Friday." Three fourths of the class dressed out, and I had them up there meeting me on the soccer field, because we were going to start with soccer. The kids that didn't dress out had to just sit on the sidelines and watch. I was teaching the game to the other kids and some kid goes, "This is a sissy game." They hadn't been exposed to anything. I said, "Okay. Stand over there. You're the goalie. Stop the ball." I bounced it off his head. "Does that feel like a sissy game?" He was like ... So the other kids decided, "Well, okay. We'll just go along. We'll do his things." When it came to Friday, the tough guy that thinks he's the leader, he's harassing the kids that are playing basketball. Finally, one of the kids stops and said, "Hey, I'm playing basketball. You're sitting in the stands. Who's the fool?" The next Monday,

everybody was dressed.

TS: I bet.

RS: We went to volleyball after that. I organized an assembly for the men's volleyball team at Tennessee to come in and do a demonstration game against the faculty from the school. They were all for it. They were like, "All right." We had all the kids there. A kid was coming in with a knife and pulled a knife. The assistant principal smashed it out of his hands, turned him over, spanked him with it, and put him in his seat. I said, "I don't want to mess with that guy."

TS: No.

RS: The kids loved it. They had a great time. Of course, the Tennessee team won. They bounced a lot of balls off of the teachers. The teachers took it all in great spirit. My experience there was good. The kids really just turned around. I said, "Okay, next we're going to do wrestling." "All right, wrestling!" We did all the things I had on the lesson plans, and it went well. They offered me a job for \$6,000 a year at Rule High School. I'd got along great there. Then the next night, President Nixon announced if you make \$6,200 or less, you qualify for food stamps and welfare. I said, "I cannot take that job. I'm guaranteeing myself poverty [laughs]." I said, "Go West young man."

TS: Go back home?

RS: Yes.

TS: Where was your first job in California?

RS: Well, in the fall of '75 I got all my paperwork done to do substitute teaching. I was subbing at like six or seven different high schools, and I ended up with a two-week assignment in Chino doing second grade. That was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that. One of the high schools where I was doing substituting in '76 had a teacher, a health specialist, who was going out on maternity leave. I guess they liked the way I handled the kids in what I was doing, and so they hired me to finish the second half of the school year in her position. They hired me on to coach, so that was the first high school where I was assistant coach. They had some real talent there, but they just weren't working. I did little things like if you ran on the 4x4 team, you got this special hat that had like "Claremont: A 4x4 Man."

- I was doing the hurdles and the pole vault and the high jump, and I just took over the 4x4 team. Then eventually I worked my way over to the 4x1 team, so I was doing about a third of the team there. They were doing well. They were looking good. The head coach was retiring, so I put in to be a head coach. Then another guy that was on campus who had been the assistant coach there for several years put in, and they gave it to him. I said, "Okay. I understand that."
- RS: We finish '76, and in '76 I was subbing again. Then I interviewed for a job at Pomona High School, which is where I went. I graduated from Pomona High. At the end of the interview, the principal came up and said, "This is a woman's PE job, so we can't hire you for that." She said, "But in two weeks is a new semester, and our numbers are up. If you don't mind teaching math, history, English, and two PE classes, we've got you." I said, "I'm in."
- TS: Okay, so when they say a women's PE class, they had separate classes for boys and girls?
- RS: No, I think they were mixed by then, but you had to do women's locker room supervision.
- TS: Okay, sure.
- RS: I haven't thought about this stuff in a long time. It was a Meals on Wheels program. They didn't have a room for me, so when the bell rang, just like the kids, I had to go to another room where the teacher was on his break.
- TS: You were still in shape.
- RS: Oh, yes. I stayed in shape for a long time.
- TS: Did you continue to pole vault in competition after you graduated?
- RS: No.
- TS: Okay, so you were just teaching and coaching now?
- RS: Teaching and coaching. I did some jumping with the kids in the track program, but nothing serious. It worked into a full-time job. Jerry Brown [Edmund Jerry Brown Jr.] was the governor [1975-1983], and he was just destroying the state, like he's doing today [in his third and fourth terms as governor, 2011-present]. The young people in

California got duped.

TS: He was destroying the state back then?

RS: Oh, yes, I believe so. Anybody who was hired that year and the year before got pink-slipped, which means you were not guaranteed a job. They pink-slipped you two months before school was out. But then by the end of July they called us all back. In the fall of '77, I had a room.

TS: Why would they do that?

RS: If they don't work out the state budget ...

TS: They didn't have the money to pay for it?

RS: Yes. If it didn't work out the right way, they would pink-it. Then if they didn't get the money, they didn't have to pay us because they warned us that they were doing this. It's a legal thing. But the budget worked out, so they were able to bring us all back.

TS: So you were on a one-year contract, and they haven't approved a budget, so they let everybody go?

RS: Yes or they temporarily let you go.

TS: How long did you have to stay before you had tenure? Or did they have tenure?

RS: Two years. But the principal liked me. I interview very well, because I could read the people as I was talking to them, and I could switch gears real quick.

TS: Well, you look like you'd be a fabulous teacher. I can see why the students would relate to you.

RS: I had fun. I taught for 34 years, but I only worked three.

TS: Okay, which three did you work?

RS: From '94 through '97 I had a superintendent, assistant superintendent, and principal that wanted to fire me. I said, "Well, you can't fire me for telling the truth." He said, "Well, perception is reality." I said, "You want to fight this on the front page of the paper?" I was very popular in the community. In my coaching career, we only had five losses. I had undefeated teams five years in a row from when I started at Upland

High School. I was at Pomona High School seven years.

TS: Were you ever head coach at Pomona?

RS: I was and we got a new principal. He called all head coaches in, one at a time, and he told me, "You're working these kids too hard, and you're making their expectations too high."

TS: Oh, my goodness. Make their expectations too high?

RS: Pomona High School is predominantly a black high school.

TS: Was this a black principal?

RS: No, he was a curly-haired white guy.

TS: It sounds very racist if he didn't want the kids to have high expectations. Did he think you were setting them up for failure?

RS: What he was doing was finding out if he could control me. I was the first head coach to be replaced in the middle of a season, and we were undefeated and had beat two schools that he said we couldn't beat.

TS: I'll bet that caused a protest.

RS: Oh, yes. They shut down the school board the next three school board meetings. When he was telling me this right before Christmas, he says, "The best they could do is third, so you need to coach them like that."

TS: Oh, my goodness.

RS: I said, "Am I not the head coach?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Good. Sit in the stands and watch these young people be successful." He was just monitoring me. We beat Ganesha [Pomona, California], we beat Claremont, and then we beat Upland, which is where I ended up going to for 25 years. The top team was Garey High School [also in Pomona], and we were looking good. We were 4-0, and he said, "We're relieving him of his coaching duties due to a continual lack of communication."

TS: Lack of communication? It sounds like you over-communicated to me.

RS: Well, I explained it this way. I said, "He told me what to do, and I told him where to go [laughs]." But he was weird. Before it was all over, he had replaced every head coach. He was bringing in his people from the last high school where he worked.

- TS:** Wow. Had Pomona High School become majority black since you graduated?
- RS:** No, at Pomona High the black population was large all the time. Here's the thing I never understood. I started kindergarten and knew seven or eight black people. My father was in the Navy during the Korean conflict. We were living in Quonset huts in LA [Los Angeles] on Exposition Boulevard. You had all mixed families in there all the time, so from the time I'm growing up, I'm in a mixed community.
- TS:** It was a shock coming to Knoxville then, wasn't it?
- RS:** I get to Knoxville, and I never knew that Audry Hardy and James Craig were the first black [track] athletes in the SEC [along with James Green of the University of Kentucky] when they enrolled at the University of Tennessee in 1967.
- TS:** You didn't?
- RS:** To me it was just normal. It is like, "Okay. Hey, guys. How you doing?" I got along well with them and everything. But I do remember in Georgia one time. We went into a place, and all of a sudden they weren't with us. I said, "Hey, guys, where's James? Where's Audry?" It turns out, as we were coming in the door, they just filtered them around back. I told coach, "I'm not eating here." I didn't realize the impact of what it was.
- TS:** There is a story where Rohe took the whole team out of a restaurant.
- RS:** That's the one.
- TS:** You all got back on the bus and ...
- RS:** We went somewhere else where we could eat together. It's so funny to me because it's like, "Why didn't somebody tell us?" I had no clue. I was in Des Moines, Iowa, which is more racist than the South in my eyes. I was walking with Edsel Garrison, the number one 400-meter runner—440 yards back then. We were walking down the sidewalk talking. This little kid comes running after us, "You guys got to get off the sidewalk. You can't walk on the sidewalk." We didn't realize. We started looking around, and people were standing on the porches gawking at us, because this black man was walking on the sidewalk.
- TS:** My goodness.

RS: Some white guy was with him. It was an eerie feeling. I was happy to leave Des Moines.

TS: I'll bet.

RS: Then I started getting these things on Facebook, and I sit there going, "Boy, sometimes I'm clueless." I treated them like just one of the guys.

TS: Yes. Okay, you got fired from your coaching job at Pomona High School.

RS: But they couldn't touch my teaching job, because I was tenured and I was doing a great job. I got real active with the union. We got the superintendent eliminated. We got somebody else elected. He lost his election. We were getting the information out that this superintendent was telling this principal to do this, and he was really screwing up the school. My coaching situation just put more fire on it about what they're doing. They knew I was doing a good job with their kids. Their kids were being successful. They weren't misbehaving. When I was there, a teacher would call me and say, "Lawrence is acting up in my class." I would come over there and open the door and say, "Lawrence, come here." I always had a baton in my back pocket. He comes outside. "Coach, coach, I'll never do it again. I'll never do it again."

TS: The baton is in your back pocket to ...

RS: Swat them. That kid really ran well for me. At the state meet on the 4x4 [4 x 440 yards], he was our lead off leg, and we were five yards in the lead when he handed the baton off. We had three out of four that ran great. One guy had a hard time.

TS: Now what year did you go to Upland High School?

RS: In Pomona in December 1983, we got a new principal.

TS: After you got the superintendent out, you got a new principal?

RS: We got the school board out of there and got them straightened out. Yes, we got a new principal. He was there a couple of years, and he liked what I was doing. The head job came open again, myself and another guy, a proctor, a good guy.

TS: Proctor?

RS: Yes, that's like a soft policeman, no guns or anything like that. We both

applied, and they had indicated to me that they were going to give it to me. Then they hired him. I already had the kids getting ready. We had a girl named Janeene Vickers who could run fast. She was a 300-meter hurdler. She was a freshman [in 1983-1984], and the girl was pure speed. She was talented [and won the state championship in the 100-meter hurdles and 300-meter hurdles in 1986 and 1987 and the flat 100-meter dash in 1987, later won three straight NCAA championships in the 400-meter hurdles and was a bronze medalist in the 400-meter hurdles in the 1992 Olympic Games].

It was a head girls' job. I had a whole bunch of different kids that I knew that I started organizing and letting them know what they should be doing. Then they gave it him, and so I gave him my list of the girls. I said, "Hey, this is your talent squad. Now have them start bringing their friends in that they know have talent that could help out." He put together a pretty good group. Finally, clueless like before, I said, "Man, I'm not going to coach here. I've been being the assistant and a walk on coach."

The head coach at Upland had been trying to talk me into coming up there, but I really liked the kids where I was. But that fall, I became the assistant coach at Upland. The head coach at Pomona came in for a competition, and he asks, "Who do I put where?" I said, "Okay, put this person here, here, and here." Okay, so it comes down to the second to the last meet of the season. He's undefeated. My teams undefeated. He comes in and goes, "You're not going to tell me, are you?" I said, "No." He says, "Can I win?" I said, "Yes." We were going to his place. He says, "I can win." I said, "You say the right things and have them in the right place." He was funny, and the meet was close. Anyway, there was this very talented young lady. She eventually went full scholarship to Georgetown in Washington, DC, for volleyball. She was our two-miler and triple jumper. That's a weird combination.

She was pretty smart, too. She won the two-mile, and she had one jump left and the triple jump. His girl had one jump. The triple jump had kind of stopped waiting for this girl to run. I showed her the things to do to get all loosened up and recovered from the two-mile, and to put some springs back in the legs. She hit a nice jump and put it out there. Now his girl knew what she needed to do. They were the home team. We had chalk back in those days. She scratched like by that much [a very small distance]. Now, if I hadn't been standing there, we would have lost, and his team would have won, because when she scratched, he immediately looked at me. I said, "You've got to call it." He said,

"Scratch." It hurt him, but I think I treated him so well he knew he couldn't just destroy our relationship. You know? He measured it anyway, and they would have won if she hadn't scratched.

TS: That's too bad.

RS: We're talking about measuring from the board to where she landed. He would have won. It was an exciting day. Then I turned in my resignation. I told them at the end of the school year, "I'm not coming back." I went and got an interview at Upland, and Mr. Robert [James] Loney was well respected. He'd been the coach ever since 1966 [head coach, 1966-2000]. Very, very respected in the community. He coached so many years. He coached Steve Scott [in the early 1970s], the American record holder in the mile [with a best time of 3:47.69 on July 7, 1982].

TS: Did you replace Loney?

RS: No. Here's what he did. I go into the interview. Principal says, "Math teacher, the history department chair, they'll tell you what to do. You're hired." I walked out, end of the interview. I was a head football freshman coach in the fall, and then I did the track and field in the spring just as an assistant. Mr. Loney had told me, "When you come to Upland, after your first year, you can let me know if you want to be the head boys' coach or head girls' coach." I said, "Okay." The boys' team finished second. The girls' teach team finished like fifth. But we had a meet against a school that he hated to lose to, so I sat all the girls down. I said, "You guys love Mr. Loney?" They said, "Yeah." I said, "You know what he hates most in the world?" "No." "Losing to Claremont. If you girls will just add one more race to what you do, you can beat this team."

I followed all the stats in the papers, like a bean counter. You know? I had everything on everybody. We ended up with the girls doing it. After the 4x1 team's first race, two of the girls went home. I got them to come back and run the 200, which means they had to stay almost the whole meet, which is good morale. Everybody did what I asked, and they shocked the heck out of them because they thought they would just run over us. At the end of the season, I said, "Mr. Loney, I'd like to be the head boys' coach." He said, "Nope. I lied. But what I'm going to do is I'm going to get you out of football. You're going to be the head girls' coach for cross country and the head girls' coach for track and field. I was like, "Boy, I do a lot of yelling when you're doing the football." Now I could just sit down and talk to the girls instead of screaming and

hollering at them.

TS: This would be back 1986?

RS: In '84. I said, "Well, I don't know that much about cross country." He said, "You know how to work with the kids. I'll teach you about the workouts and what you need to do." He was good. I was just logging everything. In '84 I bought my first computer, so I started just keeping a log of the workouts. Then, was there improvement in the next race? Or did I screw them up? It went well. We finished third in the league. We had eleven girls, and the good two-miler was the number one runner in cross country. A guy I had never met, the volleyball coach, Mr. Mooney, great guy. I got his trust when I told Amy, "When you run cross country, the volleyball team hates you. When you play volleyball on the same day that the cross country team runs, they hate you." I said, "You can't win. You can't win. You're going to have to choose. When you come to me in the spring, I expect you to be really fast." She was like, "God bless you."

TS: So she went to volleyball?

RS: Oh, yes. She was good. I mean, full scholarship. That was the kid I was talking about. Took all the pressure off her. Nobody hated her. I just told the cross country girls, "That's her number one sport. We'll get this worked out." We finished third without her. We might have finished second with her, but then she's all screwed up. On the faculty at Upland, they went, "He cares more about the kids than winning, so he's going to be all right." We had a great time.

TS: Good.

RS: The next year we had twenty-three runners. I recruited like a madman. My best season I had forty-six cross country girls.

TS: When you said you were recruiting, you mean from the student body? You were not going outside.

RS: Yes, I'm not going off campus. I got to school at 6:30 in the morning and didn't get home until 7:00 at night. I didn't have time to go out. I announced that I was going to be the head coach and that if you run the 200, you're running on the 4x4 team, and if you run the 800, you're running on it. Of course, if you do the 400, you're on it. Everybody was going to run one race longer than they'd like, because that'll make you better for your race. Then they find out that the other one is not so bad.

I had one girl, a pretty good 400-runner. She said, "No, I'm not going to do that." I said, "Well, do you want to run track somewhere?" She said, "I don't like what I'm hearing from you." I said, "I'll sign the transfer papers so you'll be eligible wherever you go. All you have to do is get in, and I'll sign the stuff for the CIF [California Interscholastic Federation] , and you're good to go." She went to another school. When we competed against her school, she came over to me and said, "I really screwed up leaving." I said, "It's okay. You're going to run fast. It's just that if you had been a freshman coming in, you would have loved how our program was run. But to have a change, you weren't ready for it. You've got to do what you think is best, and the next time you've got to make a tough decision, you're going to be a little smarter. That's how you get better." But that first year we had a freshman group of twelve with incredible talent. We had a girl that was in volleyball who didn't run cross country who ran 5:01 in the mile as a freshman in high school and set the school record.

TS: Wow.

RS: She did very well in the two-mile, and so the volleyball coach was good about telling her, "You're never going to be varsity."

TS: So go to cross country?

RS: She came to cross country, was league champion, and fifth at CIF. She was quite amazed.

TS: It sounded like you had a good working relationship with the other coaches.

RS: Oh, yes, we ended up in an ideal situation. You had two head coaches, and each one had got four [assistant] coaches. I recruited coaches as well as I did athletes. On our staff of ten coaches, six were head coaches or former head coaches. I ended up stealing the sprint coach from China from the Sichuan Province who holds the 200-meter record in China. I've known the sprint coaches from '72 through '96. She's better than all of them that I met. We started our first day of practice when she started with us in 2001. The very first day of practice when CIF said you can start working out together as a team. I started to do our American stretching. She didn't speak very much English. "No, good. No good. We do Chinese." I just got out of the way, and let her go. The kids loved her. They did the walking and standing, moving, and stretching stuff. She was good. I recruited the throw coach from another school, who was

this guy in the Valley for the shot put and the discus. The best guy in the area for the long jump and triple jump was the head coach over at Rowland High School [Rowland Heights, California], about fifteen miles away. He came over to us. His daughter went to Upland High School, so it was easy to recruit him.

TS: Okay, so you had a lot of good assistant coaches it seems.

RS: Oh, yes. What they liked was a) they didn't have to do any paperwork, and b) they didn't have to deal with any parents or administration. All they had to do was give me a copy of what their workouts were. I would log it into my book of what they were doing. I was doing the pole-vaulters. Then I found a young guy to do the hurdles. He was good at coaching the hurdles, and we ended up with some very good hurdlers.

TS: Are these people from the community that are just doing this part-time? Or are they teaching faculty that you recruited?

RS: I had a bunch of off-campus people. We were part of a joint-unit high school district. Then a vote came through to make Upland its own unified school district. We had two PE spots open, and I got the head coach from Glendora High School to leave there and come to Upland and be my assistant coach. She came over and she coached with us. But in around 2001 or so, I found this guy that knew what he was talking about in the pole vault. I was able to turn the pole vault over to him, because we were having trouble in the high jump, and so I could spend a little more time over there. Everybody got to work in his or her field of expertise. These kids were getting a lot of attention from ten coaches. But, yes, when I had 145 girls, the boys' team had 92. We took four buses to go to a meet. In cross country we were two buses. You could see the look on the kids' faces when they saw our buses pulling up in cross country. You could just see that look, "Well, maybe we'll get second."

TS: How big was the high school?

RS: Thirty-five hundred.

TS: Then to have over a hundred on the track team was pretty good.

RS: Yes. I got to hang around with [Olympians] like John Carlos, Lee Evans, and Ralph Boston [who was also Coordinator of Minority Affairs and Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Tennessee, 1968-1975]. I got to watch these athletes in their different events. I would watch the

way they walked. I watched the lift in their step. Little things just stuck in my head. I'd be walking across campus, and I'd go over [to a student] and say, "Hey, you ever thought about coming out for track and field?" "No, I don't know how to do anything." "That's perfect because now we can teach you. We don't have to unteach something bad. You get to start with good." I said, "Tell you what. Just come on three weeks. If it doesn't work out, we'll part friends. I'll buy you dinner. We're done." They would go, "Okay." I only had one walk off of all the kids I recruited.

TS: How about that? Did any of your girls when state championships?

RS: I had a girl that finished 4th in cross country and qualified to go to the National Championships, which happened to be in San Diego, where she finished 8th. Tough kid. She was full scholarship to Nebraska, with a five-year guarantee. She was fighting anorexia. I worked with her parents. I had a kid a few years before that got into trouble with it by the time she got into college. The parents got doctors, psychiatrists, and nutritionists. They knew them all, so I just went to them, and I said, "I need those names. I've got a girl going into it, and we want to try to cut it off." They were more than willing to help. They gave us everything. They sat down with the girl's parents and walked them through it.

TS: You retired in 2009 I understand, after thirty-four years, which is quite a career.

RS: It was a good run, since I only worked three. The assistant superintendent retired, the superintendent retired, and the principal went to another school. When they got the new superintendent, new principal, and new assistant, I was on a cruise with the new superintendent. It turned out we both were in the Marine Corps, and he had been stationed at Quantico. I doubt we were there at the same time, but we might have been because we're about the same age. On the cruise, every evening, I'd go down to the bar and have a drink. He'd be sitting there, so we'd sit there and talk about things.

He said, "I'm not hearing much good stuff about you down there in the district office." I said, "Well, I guess they liked the people I got rid of, but they weren't doing their job. They were really screwing up the school." We just kind of talked about this, that, and the other. We just got off on a good foot. Then, when they were going to put in a new track, I sat down with him. I said, "Listen, when you get the architect and the engineer, you need to get me with them because you have some serious drainage problems that have to be resolved, or that track is going to be

under mud every time it rains." He was like, "Okay." So I became his go-to guy. It was pretty neat.

TS: Just to wind things up, is there anything from your Tennessee years that you think influenced your career?

RS: Coach Rohe's recruiting ability. I know I stole a lot of that. The athletic director, Bob Woodruff—my introduction to him was that he called me down to his office. He goes, "Boy, you are going to go to class. If you need help, you are going to come see me. I'll get you a tutor. You are going to graduate. You are going to tell everybody what a great school this is." I've been doing it ever since I graduated. I've been telling everybody. In English I wasn't totally up to where I should have been. I didn't like my English teachers in high school, so I was an idiot, and I shortchanged myself. But the athletic department stepped up and paid the bill.

TS: So you had tutors, you're saying?

RS: Oh, yes, every Tuesdays and Thursdays for the two years of English. But I got the clue. When I got my master's, they said, "You have to write a 65-page thesis." Mine ended up being 92. I was going, "How can I even get 65 pages?" By the time I finished doing all the research, all the every thing you're supposed to do, it ended up being 92 pages.

TS: Where did you get your master's?

RS: I got my master's in special education through National University [California]. I do a results sheet after every track meet. I put stars on them and I put down if it's a lifetime best or PR [personal record] or a season best. In cross country, because there's not so many [runners], I make comments. "This is why [so-and-so] ran really well." "Here's what you need to think about." "Let's look at this." The teachers would come to me and complain, because the kids would come to get the comments in the morning, and then would sit in class reading my stuff to see what they were doing. The teachers would complain to me, "Don't give them out in the morning. The kids are reading your stuff. Can you put them in my [mail] box?" I was well liked by the staff. We got along well. We had some serious issues about a big pay raise. They were supposed to get 10 1/4 percent, set by the state to go straight to the teachers. Our district offered 8 percent. One of our negotiators was out on maternity leave, so the high school wasn't fully represented. I got all hot about what they were doing. I stayed up one night and just wrote this blistering letter that said, "I'm taking that spot. Anything you

need to know, whatever, come to me."

I'm out at like 5:30 in the morning. I'm at every school giving them to somebody to put in the teachers' boxes. I ended up on the negotiating team. No training. Everybody else had been trained all summer. The assistant superintendent, the new one, comes in and says, "Well, you've got to go tell your people." I said, "This is not my job. You want to give bad news to them? You go tell them. I'm not telling them. I'm telling you this is what we want, and this is the only thing acceptable, 10 ½ percent. You go back and tell your people that you've got somebody who is not going to be your leash dog."

We have a state representative, a union guy, and so when the meeting broke up, he took us to lunch. He said, "Good job." The others were afraid to offend them. I got a little worried, because I was tough on that guy, every single time. We got offered finally 10 1/8 percent in May. School let out the first week of June. "If you accept it, you get the check within a month of all that back pay." Okay? I told them, "Look, 10 1/8? You take all that money right now, or we'll be sitting here next year and maybe have 10 1/2. In the meantime, the district's sitting on that money, making money. So you lose an eighth of a point." The teachers listened to me. It passed resoundingly.

Then the vice president of the union comes over, "Oh, you really lost out. You really crumbled." I said, "All these people got a lot of money for summer, brother. Okay? You're the only one that don't like it." It was after that when somebody got in trouble, they'd come over and say, "Hey, I need to talk to you. What do I do?" Our state guy was awesome. A month later, I was sitting at a bar, and the assistant superintendent walked in and sat down next to me. I was like, "Ah, are we okay?" He says, "Hey, at that table, I had the hat on to represent the school board." He said, "You had the hat for the teachers." He said, "It's all done." I said, "You're a good guy. I like the way you think." It was very enjoyable there.

TS: It sounds like you had a great career.

RS: I liked it. I planned on thirty-five, but I got the last [salary] raise I could in September of 2008.

TS: Oh, and then the recession set in.

RS: It was the last raise, and it was the furthest you could go. I had a master's. The next month they announced no more raises. It was all

- frozen. Then in December, they announced it was going paperless, so I said, "Okay, fill out my retirement papers." In January they offer a golden handshake. I said, "I'm really done. Where are those papers?" I was the first one to sign.
- TS:** You called it a golden handshake?
- RS:** See what they do is when money is running out, they get you to retire, but they don't hire another teacher. They just spread the students out to the other classes.
- TS:** Right, right. I was thinking golden parachute, but this a golden handshake.
- RS:** No, that's the bad people stealing all of the money on the way out.
- TS:** I understand.
- RS:** This is to motivate us old guys.
- TS:** You started drawing from the State Teacher Retirement System at that point?
- RS:** I'm with STRS. Mr. Loney introduced me to Mr. Wolfe, who was a counselor at the high school but also a financial guy. Thank you, Mr. Wolfe. He set me up in five personal retirements. I ran a boat business in the summer up at Lake Powell. I made more money in the three months of summer than in nine months of teaching. My teaching salary was being paid maxed to these programs, and I'm good to go.
- TS:** Well, this has been a great interview, I think. I've enjoyed it.
- RS:** I hope you can make sense of it.
- TS:** Well, we'll try. Thank you very much.
- RS:** All right. Thanks for taking me down Memory Lane.