



## Baseball National Champions, Back-to-Back, July 8, 2016

### Title

“The View from the Broadcast Booth”

### Date

July 8, 2016

### Location

Goss Stadium, Oregon State University.

### Summary

Parker's interview begins with a biographical sketch, including his earliest interests in sports broadcasting, his undergraduate years at the University of Oregon, and his memories of Oregon disbanding its baseball program. He then shares observations on former OSU baseball coach Jack Riley as well as current coach Pat Casey, and comments on the state of OSU baseball during the early 2000s.

Next, Parker provides a detailed review of the 2005 baseball season, noting in particular the impact of players Jacoby Ellsbury and Andy Jenkins, and recalling specific games during the regular season that were of particular importance. He likewise speaks to fan involvement in the program during that year; discusses the approach that the Beaver team took to participating in the College World Series for the first time since 1952; and analyzes the losses to Tulane and Baylor that led to Oregon State's elimination from the 2005 tournament.

Parker takes a similar approach to his recollections of the 2006 and 2007 seasons. Most notably, Parker shares his memories of crucial moments in the Beavers' 2006 World Series match-ups with Miami, Rice, and North Carolina. He also provides a detailed account of the conclusion of OSU's national championship-clinching Game 3 win, and the celebration that subsequently took place. With respect to the 2007 campaign, Parker places emphasis on the Beavers' regional and super-regional victories over Virginia and Michigan, and comments on the relative ease with which OSU marched through the World Series field in Omaha.

The interview concludes with Parker's thoughts on the continuing importance of collegiate athletics; expressions of gratitude for the experiences that he has had as the Voice of the Beavers; and notes on family life in Corvallis.

### Interviewee

Mike Parker

### Interviewers

Greg Garcia, Mike Dicianna

### Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/baseball/>

## Transcript

**Mike Dicianna:** OK, today we're at the historic OSU Goss baseball stadium in Corvallis, Oregon, to capture the story of the Voice of the Beavers, Mike Parker. Today is Friday, July 8th, 2016, my name is Mike Dicianna, I'm an oral historian for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. Also present and doing most of the interview is Greg Garcia, an OSU alumni and Beaver baseball historian. He will be conducting the bulk of this interview.

But before we launch into Beaver sports, we always like to capture our Beaver's story. How about a quick biographical sketch? Items like where were you born, early childhood memories, parents, family, that type of thing.

**Mike Parker:** I was born in Los Angeles in 1958; August 3rd, 1958. Adopted three months later, lived in Hacienda Heights, California; grew up there my first fourteen years. And then in 1973, moved to Cottage Grove, Oregon, where I went to high school. And proceeded to attend the University of Oregon because it was closer to Cottage Grove and an easier commute. And I lived at home for much of my education to save money, and driving back and forth. Finally graduated from the University of Oregon in 1982, and then began a career in sportscasting. In fact, I was doing play-by-play for Cottage Grove High School games going back to 1976, so I've been doing play-by-play professionally since 1976 in one form or another.

I moved to Portland in 1987 for Portland Beavers Pacific Coast League baseball, and then worked in the Portland radio market from that point, 1987 until 1999, when I got the Oregon State play-by-play job for baseball, basketball and football.

**MD:** So my big question is what did you want to be when you grow up?

**MP:** Well, I'm grateful to say what I wanted to be when I grow up, I hope, is what I'm considered to be now, namely a sportscaster. I grew up in southern California listening to the great Vin Scully when I was seven years old, and when I discovered Scully, I had not even known baseball was. But I walked into a neighbor's garage in Hacienda Heights, California when I was seven years old, and he was listening to something coming out of this box while he was cleaning his garage, and I said, "Mr. Holland, what are you listening to?" And he said, "oh, that's the Dodgers." And I said, "well, what are the Dodgers?" And he said, "well, they're our baseball team!" And I said, "yeah, but who is that talking?" And Mr. Holland said, "well, that's Vin Scully?"

"Vin Scully?" And I was just mesmerized at that moment, at seven; I can remember the day clearly in my mind. And my buddy Stuart was saying, "come on, Mike, let's go, let's go, let's go play." I just wanted to stay in the garage and keep listening to the radio, and I kind of knew right then that, "I hope I can be somebody doing that someday."

**MD:** Greg?

**Greg Garcia:** Certainly. Well, that answers my first question, thank you very much. In 1999, as you pointed out, you were named the voice of the Oregon State Beavers. Now in your capacity in Portland as a sportscaster, did you follow the Beavers before being named the official sportscaster?

**MP:** Well, having attended the University of Oregon, I certainly followed both schools closely. My allegiance, as I know many in Beaver Nation lamented when I was named the Voice of the Beavers in 1999 – there were a few who thought, "what are we hiring this Duck for?" because I had attended the University of Oregon. But because I was an ardent follower and fan of my own school, I was very well-versed with Oregon State sports – football and basketball in particular – and knew Pat Casey as the baseball coach from some time that we had spent together in 1987 when his professional career came to an end. So I would consider myself a knowledgeable Beaver fan, but not one who had followed them as a rooster, *per se*, up until the moment that I got the job.

**GG:** I can imagine. In your time at the University of Oregon during the 1980s, their baseball program had been discontinued, correct?

**MP:** Yes.

**GG:** How would you describe the atmosphere or the mood of the college for having lost their team?

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**MP:** I used to enjoy going when I was a student at Oregon. In those later days, I would go to Howe Field when – probably more often than I should have – and watch Civil War baseball, watch other northern division games, and really loved the feel of Howe Field and the ballpark and college baseball. And I was very disappointed when they dropped baseball. But while I was disappointed, it wasn't necessarily something that I was outraged about or there was certainly no groundswell around campus, like, "oh no, we're losing our baseball team." It just didn't feel like that big of a deal. It was disappointing on a personal level because I liked to going to baseball games on campus, but it didn't seem like, quote-unquote, a big deal at the time.

**GG:** You had mentioned knowing Pat Casey in the latter part of the 1980s, did you ever interact with or get to know Jack Riley, his predecessor?

**MP:** Not before I became the Voice of the Beavers, but I'm grateful to say that I've gotten to know Jack fairly well in the eighteen years that I've been at Oregon State. I refer to him frequently in the broadcasts and Jean, his wife, comes to virtually all of the Beaver games, and Jack's been coming back here the last couple of years. He's been on the air with me a couple of times, in the booth. And that was a big honor to me, when he came back and joined me up in the press box here in the ballpark, to talk about his days, to talk about some of his former players. I have said many times that this beautiful ballpark we're in, the national championships that the Beavers have won, would not have been possible without Jack Riley fighting the good fight, and not allowing what happened to baseball at Oregon happen here. Jack kept the program not only alive, but very successful and built a great foundation for Pat Casey to build this great program on.

**GG:** Absolutely. What was your opinion on the 1994 season where, having won the Pac North division, Jack Riley's Beavers get snubbed by the NCAA in favor of the University of Washington?

**MP:** Well, unfortunately, that sort of thing feels like it still happens, even after all that Oregon State has accomplished. It felt like in the past spring of 2016 that the Beavers were deserving of getting into the NCAA tournament and were left out, and I thought those days were over. And what happened to Jack and his team in '94, I thought that all that Pat Casey and his program had done in helping to create a unified conference – no more north-south demarcation, but a unified league – and the Beavers having been to Omaha four time and won two national championships, that if they had the kind of year that Jack Riley's team did in '94, that there would be no shot, no chance, that they would be left out of the NCAA tournament. So the fact that it still happens, even in the modern era, after all that the program has accomplished, brings back that disappointment and pain from '94, '97, '98 – those teams, in particular, come to mind, were NCAA tournament worthy and were left out. So I can't say that I remember the snub in '94 particularly well, but I feel it retroactively now in 2016.

**GG:** Certainly. Do you have a particular memory of Jack?

**MP:** An ultra-competitive person. When I would come to games – I would attend games here occasionally, Civil War games, other games in the northern division – when I was a student at Oregon, I would make my way up here with friends to see games. And one guy in particular named Jim Wilson, who I heard was this superstar home run hitter – and the first home run I ever saw hit here was a Jim Wilson grand slam against Washington State in 1982 – but that game stands out for me because Jack Riley was on the field, I think, as much as the players were, engaged in conversation with umpires. [laughs] He would not allow any sort of injustice, bad call, to just, "oh well, we're going to shrug that off and keep playing." No, if there was something that he felt was wrong, he was on this field fighting for his team. Competitive, fighting for what was right. So that's the image that I have of Jack: an ultra-competitive, feisty, great baseball man, and instilled that same kind of attitude in his players.

**GG:** How would you describe Pat Casey, in contrast to Jack?

[0:09:50]

**MP:** [laughs] Well, I think they're very similar in the competitive aspect. These guys both – and Jim Wilson has talked to me about playing for Jack Riley. I said, "tell me about Jack as a coach, what he taught you?" He said, "well, he knew the game inside and out, every aspect of the game." There was nothing about baseball he hadn't seen or couldn't teach when

it came to technique and philosophy and approach and all of that. Jim learned baseball stuff from Jack, as did all of Jack's players. But everybody that I've ever talked to about both Jack and Pat, they go away from that part of it fairly quickly and talk about how Jack and Pat both taught them how to be men and how to compete. And what it means to compete and give everything you have and more; when you think you've given everything else, there's more to give. Pat Casey and Jack are cut from the same cloth as far as that kind of approach with their players and student athletes are concerned. I've certainly been around Pat Casey a lot more than I've been around Jack Riley, but I've heard enough anecdotal evidence from players who've been around both men to really believe they're very similar in spirit. Great coaches, but beyond their coaching acumen and knowledge, their ability to inspire young men to greatness, to me, is their most important shared quality.

**GG:** How would you describe the state of the Oregon State baseball team in the early 2000s?

**MP:** A team that was getting closer and closer every year to what eventually did happen with the national titles. I remember, one of the first conversations that I had with Pat Casey – and I felt a little bit like Darwin Barney felt. When Darwin Barney was being recruited by Pat Casey, Pat said to Darwin, "if you come to Oregon State, you can help us win a Pac-10 championship." And the Beavers hadn't won one and they had just gone 7-17 in 1999 in conference, and hadn't had a winning season yet in conference play, when Pat made that pitch to Darwin, "come and you can help us win a championship." Darwin has said, somewhat laughingly, but he has said, "I thought he was just blowing smoke. I was probably going to go there anyway; he didn't need to tell me that. I was probably going to go!" But he's talking about Pac-10 championships and Darwin thought that was, "nah," very little shot at that.

But I remember Pat, one of the things he said to me when we first started working together in 2000 – the season of '99-2000, when I called games in '99 and then most of the season in 2000 – Pat said, "we've got to get lights in this ballpark." I said, "why are lights so important?" He said, "well, if you're going to host a regional, you've got to have lights." And I felt like Darwin Barney felt a couple years later, "host a regional? What are you thinking? Just go out and compete, play hard, try and get as many wins as you can. But how do you expect that you're ever going to host a regional at Oregon State?" is sort of how I took that. I was so wrong, so dead wrong, that in 2000, when he was talking earlier in that year about hosting a regional someday and the need to get lights, in 2000 I saw the Beavers win a series at Cal. And I called those games and I thought, "well, maybe someday they could host a regional." And then in the following, in 2001, right here in this ballpark, the Beavers came down to the final weekend. If they would have won the final series against USC, which had Mark Prior on the mound right here – some great pitchers for the Trojans – the Beavers lost the last game of the year 1-0. And Seth Pietsch hit a ball to left field for the final out that almost went out of the park, it would have been a walk-off 2-1 win, and the Beavers would have walked into the NCAA tournament that year. They wouldn't have been hosting.

And then in the following year, 2002, Bert Babb, a great Beaver, made a tremendous contribution to get the lights in this ballpark. And the first night game in Corvallis was that spring of 2002, and the Beavers defeated mighty national power Stanford in the first night game here, that I had the privilege of calling. They beat Stanford 4-3 and won that series in 2002. And I remember thinking then, "well ok, lights, host a regional, we've got the lights, we beat Stanford, almost beat SC to go to a regional. Maybe what Casey was talking about could actually come to pass."

So in the early 2000s, you could see they were an arm or two away, a shortstop away here, a pitcher away there. They were beating teams, they were competing against great programs – beating Arizona State, Stanford, UCLA, USC, Cal – but didn't quite have enough depth until they ran into that great class with Darwin and Gunderson, Jenkins, Buck, etc. in the mid-2000s.

[0:14:59]

**GG:** And as you pointed out, in 2005, the Oregon State Beavers made their second appearance in the College World Series, the first under Casey's management. In their opening game of that season, the Beavers defeated New Mexico State by a score of 19-0. [laughs] How would you describe the expectations for the Beavers that year?

**MP:** Well, I remember in '04, again, a team that was close. In 2004, we went to USC with Buck and Gunderson and Nickerson and those guys, freshmen, and they won the series at USC. And this is the USC, more national championships than any other team ever. I remember calling that final couple of innings – Dallas Buck was on the mound – I was pretty

excited at Ron Dedeaux Field to convey a game back to our one radio station in Corvallis. Now there's a network of many stations around the state, thanks to what Pat has built. But I remember calling that one game back to Corvallis and feeling that it was a significant moment.

The Beavers missed a regional that year, not by much, came up a little bit short, but that series at SC in 2004 gave me a feeling that '05 could be a special year. You had Jacoby Ellsbury, who had been on the '03 and '04 teams, the best team in the Pac-12 Conference. Pat Murphy at Arizona State said – when Jacoby was a freshman, he and Casey were talking here, and Murphy said, "Jacoby's not only the best freshman in our league, he's the best player in our league." And that's when Jacoby was a freshman. So by 2005, as he entered his junior year, he was, without question, the best player in this league. Having Jacoby in his prime, so to speak, as a Beaver; and then Andy Jenkins rising up to become one of the great leaders this program has ever seen; to get Mitch Canham installed in back of the plate; and to bring those arms of Gunderson, Nickerson, Buck, Kunz and company to the hill – Anton Maxwell, "The Alaskan Assassin," went 11-1 that year.

So I would say that, going into the year, I don't think anybody knew the Beavers would go to Omaha and win forty-six games, but I did feel that 2005 would be the year that they would break through and get to a regional, mainly because they had a shortstop – this kid named Darwin Barney – who had been recruited by Pat. And Pat said "we can win a Pac-10 title if you come," and doggonit if they did with Barney as a freshman in '05.

**GG:** You mentioned USC earlier, in my research of the 110 years of the team, I've noticed that there's been a historic bias in Pacific Conference baseball for the southern teams in the conference. During the 2005 season, do you feel like the Beavers were fighting that favoritism?

**MP:** Not quite as much because of some of the other wins – I think they were fighting it for a long time and the resistance of the southern schools to a unified conference. That occurred in 1999. There were people that told Pat Casey, from the south, who were saying, "boy, you have no idea what you're getting into." I've been amused by that because it kind of has flipped the other way – "you guys have no idea what you're about to deal with up here at Oregon State." But I thought that clearly the south had tremendous advantages from a climate standpoint, from a schedule standpoint. They played more games – quite a few more games – because the season was not balanced from a schedule. The NCAA allowed the warmer weather schools to start earlier, so there were years at Oregon State – for example, the '97 team that probably should have gone to the NCAA tournament, went 35-14. That's far, far fewer games than what the southern schools were playing in '97.

But I think by '05, the field wasn't fully level yet. I think the Beavers helped create that by running roughshod over the league; they went 19-5 that year and only lost one series, and that was to Arizona. They won every other series they played. So I think they did that fair and square on the field, and if there was a bias in some people's minds, it had to be expunged on that basis alone. Because the Beavers on the field, head to head, with a balanced schedule now – everybody playing the same number of games – took on these southern schools and beat them. People may still have thought it was a mirage or miraculous or flukeish, but there could be no bias against the scoreboard that showed the Beavers beating Stanford, USC, UCLA, etc.

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**GG:** In the 2005 season, was there a particular point in time where you thought the team got its chemistry going?

**MP:** Yes. I did not get to see the 19-0 win over New Mexico State, I was still involved with basketball then. I don't get to do all the Beaver baseball games – football transitions into men's basketball, so I miss, every year, I miss the early part of the season. But I was intrigued by the 19-0 and by other wins, I went, "ok, this team is pretty good and this Ellsbury's very good and the pitching's good," so I was excited to get with the team in '05. And one of the first road trips I took with the team that year was down to Stanford. The first night we were in we got rained out, so that meant a doubleheader the next day, on Saturday. Rained out on Friday, doubleheader on Saturday, and the Beavers swept the doubleheader at Stanford. And I remember thinking, "oh my goodness, we're at Sunken Diamond in Palo Alto, the legendary Stanford program, the great coach in Mark Marquess, and the Beavers just won a series in one night here." They lost the next day on a walk-off homer in the bottom of the ninth by a Stanford player to win a one-run game, but the Beavers left Palo Alto 6-3 in the league, and that was the moment. To sweep Stanford in their ballpark, the Beavers ended up going 19-5, they left Palo Alto at 6-3, and obviously that series win at Stanford was the key moment, I think, in that season and for everything else

that's happened. Because the guys then believed that, "we are good. We just took a doubleheader from Stanford in their ballpark, look out." And they went 19-5 in the league.

**GG:** Do you have a particular memory of Jacoby Ellsbury, now that you mentioned him?

**MP:** [laughs] Yes I do. And because he's gone on to such greatness, he doesn't remember this; I try to remind him occasionally. But I remember sitting with him at Safeco Field in the season of 2005, we had played the Huskies at Husky Ballpark. Theo Epstein, the Red Sox general manager, had been at Husky Ballpark and the Beaver game ended and a bunch of us were going to go see the Red Sox – that's why Theo was in town – the Red Sox and the Mariners that night at Safeco. And so as it turned out, my wife, my kids, my family had a van that we had driven up there, we piled Jacoby and his brother Spencer and some of the other guys from the team, and we all went over to the ballpark. And we got what tickets were available and sat up in the center field bleachers with Johnny Damon right down below us, patrolling center field for the Red Sox. And I said to Jacoby, "that's going to be you soon, right out there." And he kind of laughed and said, "well, we'll see," and two years later, he's helping the Red Sox win a World Series as their center fielder. I remember thinking, to see Theo – clearly Theo was interested in Jacoby or he wouldn't have been at Husky Ballpark watching Oregon State and Washington play. And the Red Sox, we knew, were very interested in Jacoby and made him their first round pick that year, and two years later he helped them win a World Series.

**GG:** Amazing. Do you have any particular memories of Andy Jenkins?

**MP:** [laughs] Well, yeah. The primary memory is an image, and that's of him holding the baseball aloft after he received a chopper hit by a guy who went on to the big leagues from USC, Lucas Duda. Dallas Buck had come in from out of the bullpen in the final game of that super-regional with USC. It had been a crazy series and it was a 10-8 game in the top of the ninth inning, and Duda hits a chopper to Andy Jenkins at first, who runs it to the bag, steps on the bag, holds the baseball aloft. And Andy will tell you, one of his deep regrets is that after he held it high – and one of the photographers here got a great shot of that, before the dogpile – but before the dogpile, Andy said he just threw the baseball and threw it. And he says he wishes he had that precious baseball back, he doesn't know where it ended up. But he threw it high in the sky and somebody else got it as he dogpiled with his teammates, as they were going to Omaha for the first time since '52. So that image itself endures forever, indelibly etched in my mind.

But when I go back a little further, that game – Pat Casey all year was talking to me about Andy Jenkins' leadership this year, he just put us on his back and said, "we're going to win this game, we're not going to lose, I'll carry you there, let's go." Andy had been kind of a journeyman kind of player in his first couple of years and hadn't really – junior college to Oregon State – and wasn't an everyday player the previous season. But in '05, he made a conscious choice: "this is going to be my team and I am going to lead this team." He made a decision. And Pat Casey has always held Andy as an example of somebody who clearly had leadership qualities in him but made a conscious choice to let those come to the fore, and act on them, and not just talk about being a leader. And in that game, before it was appropriate that he held the ball when he stepped on first, he hit for the cycle in that game and went 5-5 to lead the Beavers to Omaha. And I've gotten to know Andy pretty well, he's a coach for Pat Casey now. I love the young man, but that example of leadership is one of the great ones in the history of Oregon State athletics.

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**GG:** Now you mentioned the Stanford game as the pivotal point where the Beavers started getting their chemistry, was that also the point where you believed, potentially, that these players could be national contenders?

**MP:** Yes, because to win a series at Stanford – the Beavers had not won a game, let alone a series, they had not won a game at Stanford since 1970. And so they swept a doubleheader. Now they hadn't had a lot of meetings because of the north-south division, they hadn't played the Cardinal a lot, but when they did play them, the results usually were not pretty. I remember even in those early years of the unification, losing games to Stanford 22-5, 17-3. There was a clear division at that point, as Pat Casey was building the thing. To see then, a team go in there and take two on day on that great team and program, then I believed, "yeah, this team has a chance to be special," and they were.

**GG:** What was going through your mind as the Voice of the Beavers, with the Beavers rising through the national ranks?

**MP:** Well I was grateful, just from a professional standpoint, to suddenly be in the middle of this incredible rise and have the privilege of being on the radio calling those games. My first events with Oregon State were baseball games. I filled in for Darrell Aune and Kip Carlson, neither could make a trip to Northridge in the spring of '99, before I actually was the Voice of the Beavers, and it turned out to be a bit of an audition in a sense. I was asked to go to Los Angeles and do a four-game series with Cal State-Northridge, and I was grateful to do it, went down and did those four games. Mitch Barnhart, the director of athletics at the time, asked after that series if I would be available to do more games and I said, "absolutely." So I did some more games the rest of that year; probably ended up doing about sixteen or seventeen games in the spring of '99 and didn't get the job until late May of '99 when it came open. I got it then. So baseball, I think, gave me an opportunity. Mitch said he liked what he heard on those broadcasts and felt comfortable with me. So I was grateful to Oregon State baseball, in a sense, for giving me an opportunity to get to become the full-time Voice of the Beavers. That series in Northridge is an important weekend in my life, professionally.

So then to see the rise of the program, steadily, as I talked about the getting close in 2001, getting the lights in '02, knocking on the door in '04. To then, in '05, know that people had been travelling, we'd all been travelling along together in this journey of the new Pac-10 world of no more divisions, it's a unified conference, and I felt like it was building to something really special. To get to be calling these games and having been there, in a sense, from when it all got started, for me, professionally, those were some of the happiest days of my life, knowing that I was calling games that Beaver Nation, now they were on to baseball. There's always been a great baseball core and fan base here, always, but with what the Beavers began to do in '05, that base grew, the fan base exploded. And I knew, professionally, that I was calling games that meant a lot to people and that was a real thrill.

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**GG:** Certainly. And you mentioned Beaver Nation, in what ways would you say that Beaver Nation rallied behind the team during the '05 season?

**MP:** Well, this ballpark that we're sitting in, it's greatly expanded now from what it was then. But as that season went along, those Pac-10 games down the stretch, this place was packed. And bleachers, people were erecting scaffolding out there behind center field. It felt kind of like an old knothole gang kind of feel. People in parking lots – there's a parking lot over there – people would drive their cars to the parking lot to try to get a view of what was happening. A train would go by on the tracks out beyond right field and blow his horn going through; I don't know if he was listening to the game or knew it, but when something good would happen, the train would go by and blow his horn after a Jacoby Ellsbury double or triple. The whole atmosphere here, it just became electric. This ballpark became the place to be in that spring of '05; just a special time, to be sure.

**GG:** Definitely. By the end of the 2005 season, the Beavers were ranked third in the country. The last team that they needed to play was USC. How would you describe the mood of the team, and Beaver Nation as a whole, at this time?

**MP:** Well, I think because the Beavers had had such a great year, they had swept the regional, Shea McFeeley had a walk-off home run that I can still see in my mind's eye, to beat Ohio State in the first game of the regional. McFeeley's beaming countenance when he had his helmet off and stomped on home plate with both his feet, one of the great moments I've seen in this ballpark. And I think the Beavers felt, being at home, USC or not, the Beavers felt they would win and should win. And they did, but it wasn't easy, it was a crazy series. To get into the Monday game, they lost on Sunday when they were just six outs away from going to Omaha the night before and coughed up a lead late. I think they led 8-3 and ended up losing the ballgame. That could shatter some team's morale, because they were this close to Omaha and let it get away. And then they came back the next day though and got it done. So I expected the Beavers to win that series and they did.

I will say though, on the Monday game – one of my favorite moments with Pat Casey ever, in his office down below, I was getting ready to interview him for the pre-game show. And I was pacing back and forth. We were talking before the interview began just as we always would, talking shop about different things, but I don't think I slept the night before, this was the game to Omaha. And I'm pacing back and forth. Pat finally looked at me and said, "hey, you're a lot more nervous than I am and the players are. Relax, it's going to be ok." And I said, "ok, coach, ok. I believe you." And we sat down and did the interview and he was right, the players were ok, Jenkins hit for the cycle, Buck came out of the bullpen, Eddie Kunz struck out Jeff Clement with the bases loaded and the Beavers went to Omaha.

**GG:** The 2005 Beavers became the second team in the school's history to attend the College World Series, the first being 1952. Was there any attempt to unite the 2005 team with the '52 team?

**MP:** I know that there were stories written. I don't remember interacting on the air with anyone, to be honest with you, during the course of the year. I know that I was referencing the '52 team a lot during the super-regional. And members of the team, if memory serves, some of them were invited to come out and be part of the regional and the super-regional, waving to the crowd, if memory serves. But I can't remember, quite honestly, a concerted effort to bring them together. But I know that many of us brushed up on our '52 history during that time. The great Paul Valenti was an assistant coach on that team and I know I interviewed Paul on our local radio show in Corvallis, and on the air here in the ballpark, about what he remembered about being an assistant to Ralph Coleman on that team. So we were very well aware of this fifty-three-year gap and how special it was in '52. I'd like to have seen maybe a little bit more integration of the events, but I remember we were very well aware of it though.

**GG:** What had to be done between the end of the USC series and the College World Series? Were there any celebrations by Beaver Nation? Any preparations for the team?

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**MP:** It was pretty quick, because we played on Monday – had to go an extra day on that super-regional – so we played on a Monday and I don't remember exactly when we took off, I think it might have been Wednesday, for ceremonies on Thursday and starting to play Friday. So there wasn't a whole lot of time to bask in it or to have any sort of a gathering with Beaver Nation. I know that we had one afterwards here, in this ballpark, but it was a pretty whirlwind affair. We were excited to go to Omaha.

I remember when – this is not a good thing, but it enabled me to have a special moment with my family. The final out when Andy Jenkins took the baseball, stepped on first, held the baseball aloft, threw the baseball in the air, I don't know if my shouting into the microphone that, "the Beavers are going to Omaha!" short-circuited the equipment, I don't know, but it went out. I just went out in that moment. We'd been having some issues with it anyway, off and on, it needed some tweaking and some fixing. So it went out and I knew to get it restored, it would happen on another end, and it would take about a minute, minute-and-a-half. So I ran from the booth down to my family during that sixty to ninety seconds to hug my daughters and my wife. "We're going to Omaha! We're going to Omaha!" And I said, "I better get back up there, the problem's probably been fixed." So I got to celebrate ninety seconds worth of my own because the Beavers were going to Omaha and the equipment couldn't quite handle that phenomenon. We got back on the air and did a full post-game show.

**GG:** Amazing. What was going through your mind when you attended the opening ceremonies at Rosenblatt?

**MP:** [laughs] I'd never been to the College World Series, Pat Casey hadn't either. Pat had never been to the College World Series. He had been invited a number of times and he told me that he'd thought about going just because he's a Pac-10 college baseball coach, and this is college baseball's grand event, and he'd watched it for many years. But he told people that invited him, "I don't want to go unless I'm taking a team of my own." So he hadn't gone, I'd never been. And the moment when they introduce all the teams – they walk out, every team gets introduced in the opening night ceremonies – and when the Beavers walked on to the field, tears came to my eyes, just sitting there in the stands. Watching the Beavers come out, taking the field at Rosenblatt in Omaha, was one of the great moments I've had. The games hadn't started, but just to see the team there – and I knew all that had gone on in the process to get there – it was special to see those guys walk out onto the field. One of the great moments I've had. It wasn't on the air but it was just a moment that I got to savor for Oregon State, for Pat Casey, for all these young men who had done something so profound.

**GG:** When I interviewed the players from the 1952 team, they commented about the weather and the climate being so overpowering. What was your impression of the climate in Omaha and how was it different from Corvallis?

**MP:** Quite a bit different. [laughs] It was hot and humid and different. Certainly far different from anything the guys had played in that season. I think they'd played some games in Arizona, but that's a dry heat. Omaha, the thing that I remember most about Omaha – beyond the heat and the humidity – my family and I had never seen a firefly before. So walking in and out of the ballpark, my daughters, who were pretty young at the time, they thought it was better than Disneyland, because they got jars and nets and they'd be catching fireflies. Outside the ballpark, outside our hotel, all over parks that



we visited in Omaha, chasing fireflies, looking at them in a jar and then turning them loose. So just to see fireflies was different.

I remember sitting with Dan Spencer, who was the pitching coach on the '05 team, and his sons were chasing fireflies with my daughters, and Spencer said to me the profound thing, "did you ever think we'd be laying on grass in Omaha with our kids chasing fireflies?" And that kind of put it in perspective for me. The answer was "no, I really didn't. So this is really cool."

**GG:** In the 2005 College World Series, the Beavers were put up against Tulane for the first round. How would you describe the mood of the team and Beaver Nation for that first game?

**MP:** [laughs] There was a sense of – and I remember talking to Pat about this later – it had been fifty-three years. Not for Darwin Barney and Kevin Gunderson, those guys hadn't waited fifty-three, they were pretty young themselves, so they might have had a sense of "hey, we belong here, we won this." But I think for a lot of people, just being there, just to get to Omaha, was so great that everything else after that was gravy. But Pat Casey never thinks like that. "Hey, as long as we're here, let's go win! We can win this!"

[0:40:22]

And both games were very close and heartbreaking in nature. There was a poor call made on a double play ball, Micah Owens slid high and into – now he'd be automatically out, back then there was a little less of an emphasis on the illegal slide – but Owens clearly disrupted, with his hands in the air and sliding out of the baseline, what would have been an inning-ending double play, and the Beavers would have won that opening game. They would have won it. Now it wasn't in the ninth inning that that happened, but they had a lead at the time, that led to a couple of runs and Tulane taking the lead. Yeah, I remember thinking, "this isn't right. It's too bad that the Beavers may lose this game because an umpire missed a call that should have been made."

So once we got there and the games got going, it felt like, "hey, the Beavers belong here, certainly." And I think they might have been, from a talent standpoint, as good as anybody in that field and could have one it. Instead, they went two and 'cue, but I could tell that motivated the team because once they got there and played, they knew they belonged.

**GG:** After that loss to Tulane, do you have any particular memories of Coach Casey? Did he say anything after that game?

**MP:** Well, he talked a little bit about the double play ball that wasn't [laughs] and that should have been called. The other thing too that happened is, unfortunately, after hitting the ball so well in the regional and super-regional to get there, the team went collectively cold at the plate. They just kind of hit a funk. Nobody was really locked in, hitting the ball well or consistently. So runs were difficult to come by, the pitching was good in Omaha, but it needed to be nigh unto perfect because the offense had gone into a collective slump, as can happen. Now, Tulane and Baylor's pitching had something to do with that. But that's baseball; it can happen that way. So I remember Pat thinking he felt they should have won that opening game and certainly thinking that they could go in and beat Baylor in the next one.

**GG:** Certainly. After losing to Tulane they lost to Baylor as well, do you have a particular memory of that game?

**MP:** Well again, not particularly, other than to know that the Beavers had the tying run on base and a batter in the ninth inning. I remember Chris Campos made the final out, I know that. He popped one up, if he gets a base hit, the Beavers tie and would have been able to keep the thing going. But they lost and were done. So if you have another question go ahead, but I just know that a very important moment occurred in the airport as we were getting to go home the next day. So I don't know, is there anything else you wanted to ask me about the Baylor or that whole thing?

**GG:** Slightly after Baylor. After the elimination game, Kevin Gunderson almost prophetically promised that the Beavers would return to Omaha. Was that the particular thing that happened at the airport?

**MP:** Well, no. Gunderson made his historic prediction, "the Beavers will be back, I guarantee it," essentially, going Joe Willie Namath on the nation in saying that, in a sense. But I knew Gundy believed it and would do everything humanly possible to make sure that prediction didn't fall flat. He believed it because he'd been there and had competed. The thing I

remember about the Baylor game was the game-winning hit that Baylor got was a bloop single to right off of Gunderson, and Gunderson burned because he'd made a great pitcher's pitch and the ball just, the hitter fisted it and it fell into no man's land in right field, and that led to Baylor getting the win. So Gundy was mad that he made great pitches and had nothing to show for it. That's baseball. But he also knew that the team had a lot of same players coming back and most of the pitching. And that's why he could say, with full conviction, "we'll be back here." I guarantee it, I assure you, I don't remember the exact words, but it didn't feel like it was braggadocious or in any way arrogant or cocky, it was just confident. We're gonna come back here.

[0:44:47]

And then the moment that I had where I believed it, I was standing with Pat Casey in the Omaha airport, we were getting ready to go on a charter and all come home. And Pat and I were just standing there talking, and he was watching Jacoby and Andy and Dallas Buck and Jonah and all the guys from the team, Ryan Gipson and everybody else, starting to file onto the plane. And Pat said to me, "these guys don't understand it. They were good enough to win it all here. They were good enough to win the championship," but they didn't fully believe that and there was that element of maybe, "hey, we made it to Omaha. Wow, what a great thing." And he said, "if they would have just seized the idea that they not only belong here but they're the best team here, they could have won it." And that Pat Casey attitude, combined with what Gundy said, made me very excited about the following year.

**GG:** How would you describe the mood of Beaver Nation after the Baylor loss?

**MP:** Well, we were all somber. But I was told on the flight back that there was going to be, either later that day upon our arriving back or the next day, I can't remember when, but a reception for the team in this ballpark. And there was. A lot of fans came out to salute a team that had just gone two and 'cue in Omaha, had lost, but I do think there was that sense of "hey, we're proud of what you guys have done." That's a good thing on one level, that we were celebrating a championship in the Pac-10 and an incredible year, and fifty-three years of gap between the College World Series experiences. But even having a gathering and a celebration for a non-title year, based on what Pat Casey had told me and what Kevin Gunderson had said, I knew that there was something still more out there. So it was a great experience to be here and to get to introduce all the guys to the fans here, and let them take a bow one more time. But there was a little hollow feeling in it too, because I knew, everybody knew, those players knew, they could have won both of those games. They didn't win either. And they came back, I think they were motivated and they were determined to have a different kind of celebration the next year.

**GG:** Definitely. The Beavers opened the 2006 season in the top ten with pre-season polls putting them as high as number three by *Collegiate Baseball*. What were some of your impressions at the beginning of that season?

**MP:** Well, the pitching was the key. I mean, Pat Casey's built this thing on pitching and defense and the pitching in '06, I just thought was off the charts good. In adding Mike Stutes to the mix, who had not been there in '05, but you've got Stutes and Gunderson, Nickerson, Buck, Maxwell. I knew that the pitching would enable them to win a lot of games, a lot of series, and make a run at the Pac-10 title again. So I fully expected a great season and even expected them, quite frankly, to win the Pac-10. And they did, but it wasn't without some bumps in the road along the way.

**GG:** How quickly would you say the team recuperated after losing players like Ellsbury and the like?

**MP:** Well, Ellsbury's a once in a lifetime player, there's no doubt about that. There was no one that could do all the things that he could. He's one of the great players, obviously, in the history of this state and certainly maybe the most gifted baseball player that Oregon State's ever had. So not one guy is going to be able to come in and do all the things Ellsbury could. That being said, the '06 team turned out to be even better, obviously, by the final result in winning the title. But they didn't lose much defensively with Tyler Graham playing center field – great speed, tremendous defender, great competitor offensively.

So whatever losses the Beavers sustained after the '05 season, they made up for it with guys emerging, Cole Gillespie being the key guy. Cole, after Jacoby Ellsbury had been the Pac-10 co-player of the year in '05, Cole Gillespie out of West Linn kind of rises up out of nowhere. He hadn't done a lot in his career, he'd had some moments in flashes, but Cole Gillespie becomes the Pac-10 player of the year in 2006, taking the conference by storm, ended up playing in the major

leagues. But he too took kind of an Andy Jenkins kind of jump like, "this is my year and I'm going to go hard and play hard." So whatever losses the team had from '05, there were people who, I think because of that example from the '05 team, were ready to step up and compete at that same level.

[0:50:05]

**GG:** The best way of describing the end of the '06 season is to say that the Beavers were on a hot streak, winning nine of their ten final games. Do you have any particular memories of those games?

**MP:** I do remember losing – Pat Casey and Darwin Barney have talked about this, I've talked to both of them about it. In '06, we made a non-conference road trip and when I allude to bumps in the road I remember going to play Pacific in Stockton and then the University of San Francisco, a two-game little northern California swing. It might have been on the heels of a conference series that we'd played at Cal and then stayed down and played a couple of more games. But the point is, the Pacific game, the Beavers trailed going into the ninth, rallied to win – but they had to really work hard to beat Pacific in Stockton – then the next day we went over to San Francisco and lost to the Dons in their ballpark. And not playing particularly well in either of those games. And I remember thinking, "this is a great and talented team, but they haven't hit their stride yet."

But it was after that game that Coach Casey has talked about some of the players came to him – Darwin Barney and others – and said, "coach, we're all in. Trust us." Pat doesn't take losing well and particularly if he doesn't feel that everybody is truly committed to winning and paying attention to detail and doing everything they can. And that's up to Pat to tell you or Darwin to tell you that story, but I've heard enough anecdotal evidence that there was a meeting in which Darwin essentially said to Pat, "we've got this. Trust us. We may carry ourselves a little differently than you, coach, sometimes when we lose a game. Maybe we don't wear it as much as you do. We hate losing, we're going to be ok."

There was a game here later after that, the University of Portland. The game went extra innings and then Portland broke through and scored like seven runs in the top of the fourteenth or whatever, and they beat the Beavers 20-13; the eventual national champions, the Portland Pilots won in this ballpark. And the Pilot dugout was chirping away and Mitch Canham didn't take too kindly to it, and that also created a "not in our house. We can't let anybody do that to us in our house," and the Beavers went on to beat Portland twenty-five consecutive times after that. But the whole point being that those losses – the loss to San Francisco, the loss to Portland – these non-conference losses stand out almost as much to me as turning points of attitudinal adjustment, of guys saying, "hey, we are better than this. We're going to get this done." And so the San Francisco loss kind of created some momentum after that, the Portland loss did the same thing down the stretch, and they were a pretty fearsome team coming down the wire.

**GG:** How did it feel to come back to Rosenblatt this time, especially after being the only one of eight teams that attended the year before?

**MP:** Well, I think the team came back with the full expectation that they belonged there. The year before they were kind of wide-eyed and "oh my gosh, Omaha, this is unbelievable," chasing fireflies [laughs] and all the things that none of us and the kids had ever done before. But in '06, there was a sense of "we belong here and we're as good as anybody here and we can beat anybody here." So it felt great to go back again. I remember thinking that I might never see Omaha as the Voice of the Beavers in the Pacific Northwest; just to make the College World Series the year before was unbelievably special and unique. But then when we went back in '06, I remember kind of going back and thinking, "with the Beavers' pitching, they can hold up against anybody." And I think they all felt the same way.

**GG:** Did Coach Casey have anything to say before the series started?

**MP:** I don't remember anything specifically. I do know that after we lost to Miami 11-1, I think, in the first game, a pretty miserable experience, and going up against Georgia in the next game, if you lose you're done and you become the first team to lose that many games in a row ever in Omaha – because they were two and out in '52, two and out in '05, and would have been two and out and thus 0-6, and no team had ever done that in the history of the College World Series. So Pat pretty much said, "guys, we're not going to let that happen. I don't know what else is going to happen, but we're not going to be the first team to lose six in a row in Omaha."

[0:55:20]

That's what I remember the attitude being after the Miami loss which, that was a drubbing. Miami beat the Beavers in every way. There was a long rain delay during the game, Miami was starting to take control of the game, we had to sit and wait for two or three hours to go back to continue getting our rear ends beat and lose 11-1. I remember walking out of the ballpark that night pretty miserable and wondering, "well, maybe they're going to be two and 'cue again," that's kind of the fear that some of us had going into the elimination game against Georgia.

**GG:** Definitely, I remember watching that on television myself. The Beavers eventually had a rematch against Miami after beating Georgia 5-3. How would you describe the mood of the team going back against Miami?

**MP:** Well, Miami had been – because they had won so big and Miami was a national power and a perennial national power, I think they thought, "ah ok, we'll just go beat these guys again." Our guys came with a different attitude and mindset after surviving. They relished a second chance against the Hurricanes and beat them pretty soundly.

**GG:** And the Beavers went on to play number one seeded Rice University, do you have any particular memories of that game against Rice?

**MP:** Well, they had to beat Rice twice. And when I thought about the Beavers depth of pitching going into Omaha and even during course of the year in winning the Pac-10 title again – and people who think about the '06 team will think about guys like Gunderson, Nickerson, Buck and Stutes – but to win a World Series and particularly to do it coming through the losers' bracket, as the Beavers had to do, you're going to have to find somebody else to pitch of his life. And Daniel Turpen, bless his heart, pitched seven or eight innings of shutout ball against Rice to help the Beavers get into the national championship series. So for me, those Rice games are special, but Daniel Turpen etches his name forever into Beaver lore. He hadn't started that many – maybe one or two other games all year, if memory serves. And gets the baseball in Omaha and goes out there and dominates a great team. I remember thinking, "ok, maybe there is something really special taking place if Daniel Turpen, from virtually out of nowhere, can come in and win a game on this stage in Omaha." That's what I remember the most about those games with Rice.

**GG:** And the Beavers did go on to sweep Rice University, making it to the national championship round against North Carolina. What was it like to play against the Tar Heels for the national championship?

**MP:** Well, that first game, I remember Cole Gillespie hit a home run, I think it might have been a two-run homer to give the Beavers a 3-2 lead or something in Game 1. And when he did, sports photographer Gary Beck, who was working back there shooting the games for KOIN television in Portland, Gary Beck is on – cellphones weren't quite as ubiquitous as they are now – but he said he was getting messages from people watching the game. This is when I began to get a feel of, "wow, this is pretty cool." Because Gary said after the Gillespie homer, he was getting an onslaught of messages, "we're watching it in so and so sports bar, northeast Portland." "We're watching the game in southeast in so and so," and people are going crazy in these sports bars all over the city of Portland and, I would imagine, all over the state. I hadn't really thought a whole lot about that until Gary Beck conveyed to me, "they're dancing in the isles at Claudia's right now," or whatever the case may be.

People were caught up in it; not just Oregon State fans, but people all over the state. It became a, Cole Gillespie's an Oregon kid, he hit's a two-run homer. Dallas Buck's on the mound, Kevin Gunderson's out of the bullpen, Mike Stutes – these are all Oregonians. And so I think there was a real sense of the state getting caught up and excited in this event. So when the Beavers took the lead and I hear that people all over the state are partying and having a good time, I thought, "hmm, this is even bigger than I thought," what it meant to people back home.

[1:00:05]

Then North Carolina ended up coming back. There was a rain delay and they came back and took advantage of the delay, I felt we were a little flatter after that. They came back and won that opener, 4-3, and I was a little nervous after that because the Beavers didn't lose many leads late in games that year.

**GG:** Definitely not. But in the second game of the series the Beavers edged the Tar Heels 11-7, do you have a particular memory of that game?

**MP:** [laughs] Well, yes. Not that any of us have anything to do with these outcomes, but I remember my own competitive juices – for however the flow, however the miniscule that flow may be, a trickle or whatever – but whatever was there, we were down 5-0 in the fourth inning. North Carolina is starting to print and sell t-shirts. They shouldn't have, but some of their fans already had "North Carolina national champion" t-shirts that were being sold around the ballpark and outside the park, because they'd won Game 1 and now they're up 5-0 in Game 2. And somebody in our booth, a videographer for Oregon State, after North Carolina had scored three or four runs to go up 5-0, he says to me, "well Mike, it was a pretty good run." I turned around and took the headset off – it was during a break, I didn't do this on the air, this was during a break after North Carolina had gone up 5-0 – my friend Jeff says, "well Mike it was a pretty good run." Headset off, turn around, "what do you mean was? This thing isn't over! What are you talking about? It's the fourth inning! What do you mean was? This ain't over, watch what happens!"

Well, that inning the Beavers scored seven runs. Billy Rowe hits a three-run homer – the Beavers are down 5-0 going into the inning, scored seven runs in the fifth – Billy Rowe, as great a home run as I've ever had the privilege to call. They'd already come back, down 5-4, Rowe got a pitch and hit it way back up in the right field bleachers. As far as the pure joy of getting to call a home run, nothing's topped that because that three-run homer gave the Beavers the 7-5 lead and Kevin Gunderson had already come into the game out of the bullpen to kind of end the misery of North Carolina's previous inning, where the Tar Heels had gone up 5-0. So we have our best pitcher in a sense, the closer bulldog guy in Kevin Gunderson, in the game from the fifth inning on. And I felt like, once he got the lead, he ain't giving it up.

So when Rowe hit the three-run homer in the fifth, sheer joy in that booth. And even a turnaround, "see, I told you!" [laughs] Not that I necessarily expected seven runs, but I knew it wasn't over and I think there was a sense of Pat Casey's spirit in all those guys. Nobody in the Beaver dugout was thinking it was over; obviously they didn't. They started to string some hits together and pitched beautifully from that point on and won that game 11-7 to force the finale.

**GG:** And what was your mindset as Voice of the Beavers, going into the finale?

**MP:** [laughs] Well, the nervousness that I had shown the previous year with Pat Casey returned, because that whole day – the game wasn't until late in the evening – I remember I took our family, to try to pass the time, went to the great Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha. In fact, we ended up buying a membership, a family year-long membership, because it was cheaper. We were going every day, our kids loved it – it's a magnificent zoo, the best I've ever been in – so we were passing the time. But I just remember being so keyed up and nervous about what was about to unfold, knowing that I was going to get to call a game that meant a lot to me on a personal level. I knew, based on the Gary Beck anecdotes and just the feeling that I was getting from friends back home about how the state was caught up in it, that people would be watching ESPN certainly, but a lot of people were telling me that they didn't have it or that they were driving around. I was getting reports about how there was a sense of the state, beyond the usual numbers in Beaver Nation, that again our whole state was caught up in it. So I felt like, going into that game, I was getting to be involved with a major event in the sport's history and I was nervous and excited about what the next few hours would hold in store.

**GG:** What was your first reaction after the last out was made and the Beavers were named national champions?

[1:04:58]

**MP:** Well, I called it emotionally; I was very emotional in the call. And somebody asked me afterwards, they said, "were you laughing or crying?" And I said, "yes." [laughs] Because I honestly feel like I did both in the moment. When I saw the ball go in the air and Tyler Graham come in and make the catch, I knew the Beavers were the national champions and that I got to see it, I got to call it, I was overwhelmed by the joy of the moment.

**GG:** How did Beaver Nation celebrate this unprecedented accomplishment in their history?

**MP:** [laughs] It was funny, we got on the team bus, long after the dogpile and the presentation of the trophy and all of the things that happened there in Omaha in '06 in the on-field celebration, long after that, we get on the team bus to head back to the hotel. Pat Casey was the last guy on, talking to reporters, and everybody on the bus, which has been as loud and as boisterous and exuberant as any bus – in fact, at times they were rocking it; it felt like it was going over – well, Pat's out talking to reporters. Somebody said, "hey, when Casey gets on, everybody shut up. Be dead silent like we just lost to San Francisco." [laughs] So that's exactly what happened. Casey gets on the bus and it's stone cold quiet. And Pat, after a

while, sits down and I'm not ever sure it hit him, the quietness, but when the bus starts to pull away out of Rosenblatt and Pat turns around and says, "did we just lose that game?" [laughs] And everybody, just this barbaric yawp and yell and the celebration continued and the bus rocked all the way back down to our hotel.

And the team hotel, the party and celebration with Beaver Nation, were there by the thousands that came to the hotel. And I remember getting to pose the championship trophy like the Stanley Cup is being passed around. And my family, I got to take a picture with my wife and daughters, kind of hugging the trophy, hugging each other in front of the team hotel. People who wanted to pose that way could. We took pictures with players and coaches, and it was an incredible moment in Omaha. Then the next day, we're on a charter to come back, and on the flight back I'm being handed a script by OSU administrators and people, they say, "Mike, when we get back, there's going to be a little gathering at Pioneer Square in downtown Portland and you're going to MC it."

"Oh, I am? Ok."

"And here's who you're going to introduce and in this order." And as the bus pulled into Pioneer Square downtown, we were overwhelmed in those moments by what we saw. Because again, that sense of, this is an event. This is a state event. There were 10,000 people, by estimate, in Pioneer Square to greet the Beavers back. I got up and took the microphone, it was my privilege to get to introduce every player of that team, because I'd seen all the games down the stretch – not every game of the season – I didn't need a script. That was one of my favorite moments in a non-broadcast situation *per se*, because I got to look down the line and I could give a credit to, "here's a guy who helped the Beavers win a game against USC with a base hit in the fourth inning," and introduce him. Or talk about Ryan Gipson putting the ball in play on a 97 mile an hour fastball against Andrew Miller. And I threw those things in and I remember Dan Spencer, again the pitching coach and my roommate on the road in those years, Spencer at one point, as I was introducing people, Spence says, "this is the easiest thing you've ever done, isn't it." I said, "yeah," because these guys had done it and all I was simply doing was getting to introduce them before people that were there to love them. That's an easy job. And so I had a great time that day, the multitudes were out there cheering the Beavers.

My wife said she didn't – it hit her that we'd won the national championship even before that celebration. Coming through PDX – the charter flight, we land – and coming through PDX there were people clapping for the team. Strangers who knew that the Beavers were coming, and just kind of this walking from the gate all the way down through the concourse and down to the baggage claim and so on, all along the way, there were people clapping their hands in impromptu celebrations. And then at one point, there was an official announcement over the whole – you know, instead of "please pick up the white courtesy phone," there was an announcement that said, "ladies and gentlemen, the national champion Oregon State baseball team is walking through the airport," and that led to more people clapping and cheering. It was a special moment. And that's when my wife said she teared up because, wow, they're recognizing us at PDX! That makes it official, somehow and someday; that all these strangers were clapping made it more real.

[1:10:34]

**GG:** Amazing. After the celebrations, after the parades, after all that, was there ever an inkling or a feeling that this could happen again?

**MP:** [laughs] Well, in coming down I-5 – now, there was going to be another celebration here at Parker Plaza in front of Reser Stadium. The thing that I remember the most about that is coming down, getting off I-5, and then coming down 34 into town, heading west on 34, people holding signs up out in front of their farms, their places of business, "Way to go Beavs!" "Congratulations Beavers!" and people just clapping along the way. Again, you think about how special that kind of thing is, but how genuine that response by fans – they loved it. They loved that team and that group. And again, there was another warm celebration here in Corvallis.

And to think that, "ok and we'll see you all again next year, everybody!" I mean, it didn't even cross my mind. I didn't even think about, "again" really, because it felt like a once in a lifetime kind of event. To go to Omaha the year before, to build into a team that could go back and win more elimination games than any team had done in the history of the College World Series – six of them – no team had ever done that. They won six elimination games to win the title. So I thought, "that can't be topped and they may never get to Omaha again." I mean, I didn't know anything; I didn't know. So the idea

of doing it again and having these kinds of celebrations again didn't cross my mind during those incredible celebratory moments in '06.

**GG:** In 2007, the Beavers experienced difficulties in the Pac-10 by losing repeatedly to Arizona, Stanford, Washington and UCLA. When would you say was the particular turning point of that season?

**MP:** Well, the thing that had happened in '07 is the Beavers coming back as defending national champions, I remember I would open every broadcast, "hi everybody and welcome back to Goss Stadium at Coleman Field, as the defending champion Oregon State Beavers take on the UCLA Bruins" or whatever, USC Trojans, "and great to have you with us, we'll be back with the lineups and Pat Casey after this message." The whole thing was built into every broadcast, "your defending national champion Beavers today host Arizona State," you know, and that type of thing.

In '07, the team got out to a great start. It felt like they were just living in the great momentum of the previous year, because they were 23-3 going into conference play, and number two in the country, and were beating teams easily. 23-3. And then went down to Tucson to open league play as the number two team in the country and defending champions, and got swept. And I remember thinking, "ok, 0-3, twenty-four game league season, you're going to be kind of playing from behind most of this year." And I remember just a team struggling to get back to .500. I think they did get to 8-7 at one point. From 0-3 they worked and worked and got to 8-7. But then – it wasn't quite as bad as 8-7 because I know they struggled to get to .500 and only got there once during the course of the conference season.

And going to UCLA, the last weekend, I almost had one of those moments that I got so mad about with my friend in Omaha the year before, because the Beavers got swept here against Arizona State, got swept to go to 8-13 in league. And we had gone into that series at 8-10, feeling like, "well the Beavers need to win this series. They certainly can't get swept or they're probably not even going to make the tournament." And they got swept and they were 8-13. And after the Sunday game, on the air, I was almost giving it the "well, boy, it's been an incredible run," [laughs] almost giving up, but then I said, "however, as bleak as this looks now, the Beavers do go to UCLA next weekend. And if they can win that series, maybe they need to sweep it, but if they can win that series, given their high RPI, they may still get into the tournament. But folks, it doesn't look good right now. And we'll see you next week in Los Angeles. So long, everybody."

[1:15:39]

That was how I felt walking out of this ballpark and all of Beaver Nation kind of had that same, "wow, we were 23-3, it looked like we'd go back to Omaha again, and now we may not make the tournament" after getting swept by a great Arizona State team. Pat Casey will tell you, he thinks that's the best team that he's seen in all the years, up and down the line-up, five or six future major leaguers on that team. They were great and they beat the Beavers three straight games here, and it looked like it was over, felt like it was over.

But Coach Casey, he didn't make up the term, but as he said many times, "we were down and about out, but we bowed our necks and went down to UCLA and won the series." And I started called the Beavers the Oregon State Bowneckers rather than the Beavers, because they bowed their necks, and Pat kept saying, "we bowed our necks and we went down and we had to win a series and we did." Pat felt like – he'd had, not people on the committee, but just through the grapevine and whatever else, a sense of, "if you win the series, you've got a shot to get in." And so the Beavers won the first two games down there, lost the last game, and finished 10-14 in the league. And I still was not – I remember waking up the next morning to watch the selection show, not necessarily hopefully. And then I see – there wasn't a gathering of people because there wasn't an assurance that you might get in.

So there wasn't an official gathering, as there had been in the '05 and '06 selection shows, where fans and people came together knowing you were going to be a high seed and host a regional and all of that. In '07, we didn't have an official gathering. And I turned on my television in my home on Monday morning, Memorial Day, and the field starts to get announced and I see, "as a three seed, Oregon State to Charlottesville, Virginia." And I thought [claps hands] "at least we're in. At least we're in." That's all that team wanted: to get in. And I remember, heck, Charlottesville; I knew nothing about Charlottesville, I'd never been to Virginia. But I was just glad that we were going anywhere, somewhere, and Charlottesville turned out to be an incredible experience. But just to get in – I felt the team had the wherewithal, if they could get in, they could get hot like they were earlier in the year and maybe make a run at it. So they just needed to have that chance.

**GG:** Do you have a particular memory of Charlottesville?

**MP:** [laughs] Yeah, many. Darwin Barney made one of the great catches ever, to help the Beavers win a game. Chris Hopkins – our center fielder replacing Tyler Graham – Hopkins lost a ball in the lights and two or three runs would have scored on the play. It was the final out of the inning in a game where the Beavers had to win; if they lose, they're done. Double elimination, they're done, they're going home. Virginia had already beaten them once and they were about to beat them again. Hopkins loses the ball, and Darwin went from normal shortstop position to halfway out into center field, bailing Hopkins out. And on this long run, this over the shoulder incredible catch, caught it, inning over. Instead of three runs scoring and falling behind, inning over thanks to Darwin's almost miraculous catch. Pat Casey will tell you that's one of the great catches he's ever seen. And Pat said, in his mind – he's told me – he said, right then and there in his mind, "we're going to win the whole thing." Not just this game, not just this regional or a super-regional. When Darwin made that catch, in his mind, "we're going to win the whole thing again." Now, I didn't have quite that feeling. I just thought, "well, we got out an inning and still have the lead."

But I also remember a competitive moment on my part. The booth at Charlottesville was pretty cozy, and I'm on the air at the far left of the booth, and down at the far right, the Virginia announcer for the Cavaliers in Charlottesville. And we could kind of hear each other at times during the game, we weren't separated by much. And at one point there was a batter for Virginia, a pitch came up near the helmet area and he had his bat up, and we didn't know, I thought – and Pat still feels – that it was a foul ball first and then it kind of glanced off the helmet and the player fell down. So the player is immediately being attended to, as it should be, and Pat didn't say anything or do anything for a while, as the kid is being tended to. But now that it looks like the kid is going to be ok, we're all grateful for that, Pat comes to the umpire to say, "you know what? That really was a foul ball, you know, not a hit batter," because they awarded the kid the base. And the announcer, I could hear say, "what kind of a classless person is going to argue a call after a kid has just been hit in the head like that?" I heard that and I leaned back into the microphone, ostensibly calling my own game, but I heard that and I just kind of leaned back and said on the air, "and for anyone to question the character and the integrity of the great Pat Casey, one of the finest men I've ever known, is unbelievable to me!" And I come back forward.

[1:21:04]

So that whole Charlottesville thing, great memories of how the team pitched and played. Joe Patterson became a guy that was just a hero down the stretch from a pitching standpoint. But we got word, going into the next day, the final game, we got a rain out. And the rain helped. You get an extra day, that gave Joe Patterson and other arms a little chance to rest up. So now we're down to a winner take all for the regional in Charlottesville, and I liked our chances with the extra day of rest with the rain. The word also came in, with our extra day, Todd Stansbury – who was then an associate director of athletics, now the director of athletics – but Todd kind of came into a group of us who were sitting there after a game, smiling, and said, "hey, Michigan just upset Vanderbilt." Because we thought we were going right from Charlottesville to Nashville, and play David Price and the Vanderbilt team to go to the super-regional to go to Omaha. We weren't even going to come home, because why would you go Charlottesville back to Corvallis, when Nashville's on the way? And we'd had this extra day. So we thought we were just going to go from Charlottesville to Nashville.

Well Michigan, bless their hearts, upsets Vanderbilt and Price and company. Michigan was a higher seed but their athletic director and their administration had chosen to begin renovation on their ballpark when their regular season ended, and they didn't have a field that could host a super-regional. So suddenly, as Todd Stansbury put it – I'll never forget it – he says, "when we go back to Corvallis this weekend, it's going to be like Lazarus coming back from the dead." Because the last anybody had seen of the Beavers at home, Arizona State, the Beavers did look dead quite frankly. It didn't even look like we were going to make the tournament. Now, not only did we make the tournament, we're going to play a super-regional right back here in this ballpark because Michigan wasn't so sure it was going to make a deep run, so they started renovations on their ballpark, didn't have a field that could accommodate a super-regional, so we're back home again.

And when we came back home again to play Michigan, as hard as those games were, I knew we'd win a super-regional here and go back to Omaha again. We got one hit in Game 1 against Michigan. So, I don't know if you have other lines of questioning about that, go ahead.

**GG:** In terms of that super-regional, was there any particular player or anything like that, that stood out to you?



**MP:** [laughs] Well, Jorge Reyes became a phenomenon down the stretch of that season, and he pitched Game 1 of that super-regional and was lights out great. However, Michigan's right hander, the opponent, Zack Putnam, no-hit the Beavers into the ninth inning. But the game was scoreless, it was nothing-nothing, because Jorge Reyes had been equally good. He gave up a couple of more hits, but the Beavers hadn't gotten a hit. But I remember the Beavers were the visiting team in that Game 1 of the super-regional, so in the top of the ninth inning – memory should serve better here – but somebody drew a walk, Braden Wells became a pinch runner, Pat Casey bunted Wells over to second, and Joey Wong at the plate.

Wong hits a ground ball into left field. The scouting reports and watching pre-game warm-ups had shown that the left fielder's arm was weak at best. So even though he's getting the ball and Braden Wells hasn't even hit third base, Mary Lees is waving. This is our chance to get a run; one chance to get a run, in the top of the ninth inning. One hit in the game. Wong grounds a single that barely got through, but it got through, and Wells come wheeling around third and I'm thinking, "oh, this isn't going to be good." But I hadn't studied enough, but they had, and the ball just kind of came trickling in. Still close but Braden Wells scores, Beavers up 1-0, and then go out and finish it in the bottom of the ninth to win the opener, 1-0 on one hit, and then took care of business in a big way in Game 2 to go back to Omaha.

[1:25:41]

**GG:** You talked about Omaha, the first time it was wide-eyed, chasing fireflies; the second time, "we are going to win the whole thing." What was the mood of the team going in for the third time?

**MP:** Well, at that point they did feel like destiny had taken a hand a little bit, by the way that they had rallied in Charlottesville, the great catch that Darwin Barney made. And a sense of confidence had come back. "We're the defending national champions, we're back, and we're going to go get another one." I do think Pat Casey's feeling that he had in Charlottesville began to permeate the whole team: "we're back and we're going to do it again."

And those games are kind of a blur of memories because the Beavers so dominated every one of those games, save for the opener. They beat Cal State-Fullerton, I think – George Horton – 3-2 in Game 1. And then everybody else they played – including Arizona State, that had swept them here – the Beavers beat Mike Leake and company back there, scored a bunch of runs and beat them handily. And after being the team that had won more elimination games than any other team in '06, the following year they became the first team to win as many games by six runs, the following year, as any team – six runs or more – in running the table. They only trailed in one inning of that World Series; one inning the whole time. They beat people soundly. The high drama that had attended '06 was not there in '07, just because of how well the Beavers played, the kind of groove they were in. They dominated those games in Omaha in '07.

**GG:** They got hot.

**MP:** Yeah.

**GG:** Do you have a particular memory of that '07 series, the championship series?

**MP:** Well, yes. As much as the Beaver players were memorable – Scott Santschi had a great tournament, Jordan Lennerton hit some big home runs, Mitch Canham and Darwin Barney were magnificent, Joey Wong making a turn against Cal State-Fullerton that was amazing – but the image that I have most of all is of the Beavers laying bunts down against North Carolina and their closer, who was yelling at our team for all the bunting. And he said, "you guys are..." and he used a term very derogatory, "you guys play weak baseball." And Marty Lees said, "well, we'll just bunt on you again and see what you do," and he picked it up and threw it into right field. So I just remember thinking you had teams frustrated back there, that were playing Oregon State.

And the image that comes to mind is actually of the head coach for North Carolina, when he tried to send a runner, and John Wallace chased a ball down in the left field corner, threw to Darwin Barney, and Barney relayed to Canham perfectly. And the runner was out at the plate and the inning was over, or close to being over, and the head coach for North Carolina in the third base box just [drops head], like that. He dropped to his knees, his head, so the body language was just so diametrically opposed that I knew in that moment that North Carolina is not going to beat Oregon State. Just based on that play and that execution, but also the head coach's reaction, like, "what can we do? We can't beat this team

this year." So that was a different kind of feeling; much different from the previous two years in Omaha. But obviously very special in its own way.

**GG:** What was your reaction to them winning the whole thing again?

**MP:** Well, they had won those games in dominating fashion, and even the final game they led, I think, 9-3. The final score was 9-3, is that correct? Do you have that in front of you?

**GG:** Yeah, yeah.

**MP:** It was? So a six-run lead in the ninth with Joe Patterson on the mound, I know going into the inning that this thing's over. We just need to get the three outs and dogpile again and celebrate again. The high drama that had existed the previous year was not present. It was over and everybody knew that it was over and the Beavers had done it again. So in that sense, that sense of nervousness and excitement and all of that that had existed in '06, it was a much different kind of feel. It was a foregone conclusion as that played out. The Beavers were going to win the thing and they were beating teams in a big way. So there was just a great sense of pride and accomplishment that the guys had done it again and had done it in such dominating fashion after grinding out every win the year before. So I had plenty of time to think about what it's going to be like to see this team celebrate again, whereas we didn't have that luxury the previous year.

[1:30:39]

**GG:** As Oregon State University approaches its 150th year anniversary, do you have any thoughts or hopes for all teams – baseball, football, etc.?

**MP:** Well, athletics has clearly been a very important part of the Oregon State story. Books, novels, movies – there are things that have come out of the experience, either directly from Oregon State, that to me underscore the importance of athletics in the university mission. I realize that there are some who feel that it has too big of a position in a place, and that's an argument that certainly has merit, and educators may look askance some of the priority and monetary value attached to and commitment to athletics at the intercollegiate level. I understand those philosophical objections and how some people feel like it has really separated from the overall mission of the university; I can see how people feel that, believe that, argue that, and not have maybe a lot of reason to celebrate athletics as part of the 150-year anniversary.

But the coaches that I've been around at Oregon State and the experiences that we've talked about, to me, they're profound in nature. And the coaches that I've been around have a true commitment to the young student athletes, and place a high priority on the student part of that term. I travel with teams and see the study halls, I see the requirement, and I see people working and studying and, at the same time, getting to put on a uniform and compete in games and thousands of people come to those games. As Keith Jackson said, "football games are the weekly festivals in our country," they happen all over the country and they're a weekly festival. They're events. And I'm grateful – I've always loved sports – and I'm grateful to be a part of it, in a small way, of getting to call these games. And I think Oregon State has, generally speaking, through its athletic history, distinguished itself for doing things in the right way, with a blue collar, hardworking approach. And winning a lot of these events and games with people from the region and the area, in baseball in particular.

So I just hope that that same commitment on the part of the coaches to the student athlete experience in its totality will continue; I believe it will. And I think there are great moments ahead and maybe some national championships ahead, maybe in other sports, possibly. And I'm excited and grateful that I've been able to be a small part of it by calling some of these great games and hope I get to for a few more years, because they've really been special experiences.

**MD:** There's just a couple things that I wanted to add to this, because you now are going to be a permanent part of OSU history and part of our archives, and now the story of these World Series victories is codified and we've got it.

**MP:** Good.

**MD:** I wanted to catch a couple of other things. Don Essig is a Beaver in Autzen and here you are in a Duck in Gill and Goss Stadium. Who got the better end of the deal?

**MP:** [laughs] Well, I love Don Essig's work and I like Don personally too. I've known him and liked him for many, many years. But I know I got the better part of the deal because I'm getting to call games at Oregon State on the radio and do play-by-play which, as much as Don is a fabric and part of the oral background of many of our lives – and he's done a terrific job, I think he's great – but for me to get to experience... I don't know what Don's childhood dreams were; I'll personalize and it say, I don't know if Don ever grew up thinking, "I want to be a public address announcer for somebody someday." Maybe he did and he does a great job of it. But I'm telling you, I got the better end of the deal because I'm getting to live out a childhood dream every day at Oregon State. So Don, I hope you can live with that.

[1:35:26]

**MD:** The OSU Alumni Association, in April 2010, made you an honorary alumni, so you're a Duck come Beaver. And you've actually lived up to that honor, I think. What's your reflections on being an honorary alumni of OSU?

**MP:** Well, the Civil War athletic events are incredible, spirited competitions. And I have, from the moment that I was honored to become the Voice of the Beavers, whatever – and I mean whatever – shred, whatever tincture of affiliation that there had been with my alma mater down the road – can't even say Eugene sometimes – down the road, whatever affiliation there had been [snaps fingers] vanished from the standpoint of wanting to beat Oregon in particular in every athletic competition. There was never any division of loyalty from the moment the Beavers gave me an opportunity that I'd sought for much of my life, and I'm so indebted and grateful to Oregon State for that.

Having said that, I'm grateful for the years I had at Oregon. I appreciated my education there. I got to experience in one professor in particular – and sometimes it feels to me like, if you can end up in life and come across one author, one teacher, a coach, a personality, somebody that affects you in a profound way, just one in those various fields, you're blessed and grateful. And I had a professor at Oregon, the late Dominic A. LaRusso, that affected my life and changed my life. So I'm grateful to have gone to Oregon if, for no other reason, than I got to sit at Dominic LaRusso's feet. He was a professor of speech and rhetoric at Oregon, and he taught me many things. He taught me the value of research and education and communication and trying to speak the language well. And I feel really indebted to Dominic LaRusso for being able to carve out a career in a communicative endeavor. So I'm grateful for all of that.

And I had good times going to games too, back in those days, going to the games when another Beaver, Rich Brooks, was coaching down there. That's a whole other story too. That's why they call it the Civil War; there's a lot of intertwining of personalities and people and families, and it makes it special to have experienced a lot of life down the road. But I'm really grateful for the life I get to experience at Oregon State every day.

**MD:** One of the things that we always like to do with these – we capture a whole life story – is catch up a little bit with our Beavers, like yourself. Your family, who you got married to, your children, hobbies, that type of thing.

**MP:** And as far as being an honorary alum, I consider that one of the great honors of my life. That Oregon State would, by doing that in the spring of 2010 – and it's funny to me, it was appropriate, I was trying to call a game here the night of the official ceremony in Portland. The Beavers were playing UCLA, and the feeling was the game will end, the ninth inning will come, and I'll be able to get in my car and drive north. That game ended up going sixteen innings. So I actually had to call in – we had to go to the bullpen and I called in a relief broadcaster for the last four innings or so of the game. At the twelfth I said, "if I'm going to make this, I'm being honored tonight in Portland, I've got to go. I can't miss this." So we called in a pinch broadcaster, Jon Warren, who called the last four innings of that game. And I drove to Portland listening.

The Beavers ended up losing. I get up to the event, "how did the Beavers do?" And then we're all going out, sneaking to the car to listen. The game was still going on when I got to Portland! And the game ended and we lose a heartbreaker in 2010 to UCLA. But that was a great night for me because I felt like there was a sense of acceptance, and that all the years that I'd spent in the other world – and was a pretty vocal proponent, when I was working in radio in Portland – in the city of Portland now, to be honored as alum for Oregon State was kind of surreal in the sense that I'd spent quite a few years talking about the other school, as a bit of a cheerleader, in the '90s when I was working in radio in Portland. To come back in 2010 and to be made an honorary alum at Oregon State, for me it was just almost unbelievable and I'm deeply grateful for that kind of acceptance on the part of the Beaver family and Beaver Nation. So I wanted to say that to your question too.

[1:40:27]

I'm married thirty-two years, have two daughters that are twenty-one and twenty, Lydia and Ellie, my wife Missy. And Jim Wilson told me – my football broadcast partner, before he became my football broadcast partner but when I first got the job – he called me in '99. He told me, "Mike, let me just tell you, you're going to the best town in America to raise kids." And Jim could say that because he was born here, he grew up here, he went to Crescent Valley High School, went to Oregon State. His whole life was here, growing up. So he could speak as one having authority to that, and he's right. To be in Corvallis these past eighteen years, it's all my kids know. We talk to them, we show them pictures of our little house in Portland and some of the things we did, but they grew up in this great town, and I hope I have a little bit too. It's been a great experience.

I love the town; I think it's a great running town. I like to go for runs in every town in the Pac-10/Pac-12, and there are some good running trails. I'm not a great runner, I don't run marathons, but I like to get out and run. And this town, with hills, with the Willamette River, this town is as good as it gets in the league, just to run in and to be out in. Exercising, hiking, running, bicycling, it's a great town for that. Beautiful. You can be in one part of the town or the other in ten minutes. I get frustrated if I'm behind three or four cars at a red signal. You know, "what's going on? Heavy traffic today." So that's been a wonderful experience to be in this town that Jim Wilson said was the best place. And I agree with him. I mean, I know we're biased, but it's been a wonderful experience to grow up here.

I love to read, go for runs. In the nice warm summertime, float the river with family and friends is a great pastime. It's been a great town to be in and get to experience so many wonderful things. The Community Church we've been involved with for a long time. And beautiful places to read and sit and enjoy coffee and visit with people. I think our family's been blessed to be here all these years.

**MD:** Now, your daughters are Beavers right?

**MP:** Well, they are. One is going to school here. Because of the profound baseball experiences – we went to Omaha three straight years and we went back in 2013, we've been to Omaha as a family four times. And I was grateful to say that, even in 2013, six years later, the kids still wanted to chase fireflies. They still thought it was pretty cool. When the Beavers go back here soon, and they will, I don't know if they'll be chasing fireflies then or not.

**GG:** Your grandkids will.

**MP:** Maybe they will, exactly. So my daughters, one is not going to school. Lydia, my oldest, is and she wants to become a sportscaster herself. So we broadcast Corvallis Knights summer league baseball games together in this ballpark, and she does some play-by-play, and those are wonderful shared experiences. And my other daughter Ellie is working full-time and is looking forward to getting married and raising a family. She is less sports-oriented than Lydia, who wants to make a career out of it, but Ellie – one of my favorite sights is I'll be broadcasting a game and Ellie shows up. "Dad, I heard you on the radio. I got in the car, I heard you, I wanted to come by and see you." So she'll give me a hug and move on, she won't stay for the rest of the game necessarily. But it blesses me every time she does that. She grew up climbing through the railings of Goss Stadium at Coleman Field and we have pictures of her, in one of the media guides, hanging through from railing back before it was so crowded, around 2002 and so on. So everyone in our family, they're all Beavers in some way, shape or form.

**MD:** Well Mike, it has been a pleasure and an honor to capture your story and the story of the World Series Beavers.

**MP:** Thank you.

**MD:** This is a great addition to the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project and we thank you from the bottom of the Beavers' hearts.

**MP:** You're very welcome. Thanks for having me.

[1:45:07]