



An Oral History of the OSU Press, March 26, 2014

Title

“Long May It Thrive: An Inside Look at the OSU Press”

Date

March 26, 2014

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Alexander and Grass discuss their arrivals at OSU and the state of the Press at those times. They also reflect upon the evolution of work at the Press, in particular the importance of computers to modernizing their processes, as well as changes in the mission of the Press. Grass recounts the administrative vision and strategies that he set into motion upon becoming Director of the OSU Press in 1984 and the tactical decision to greatly accelerate the growth of the Press as a survival strategy in the early 1990s. Alexander and Grass likewise share their memories of noteworthy colleagues, books and authors; their recollections of working in Waldo Hall; and their perspective on the establishment of the Press in the OSU Libraries in 2007.

Interviewees

Jo Alexander, Jeff Grass

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, so we are here today to talk about the OSU Press, principally, and we have two folks who have a long acquaintance with the OSU Press. Can I have you both introduce yourselves, give us your name and today's date and our location?

Jo Alexander: My name's Jo Alexander. It is March 26, 2014 and we're in the conference room in the third floor of the library.

Jeff Grass: And I'm Jeffrey Grass, it's March 26th, 2014 for me too.

CP: Great. So as I mentioned, we'll talk mostly about the Press and the history of the Press and your association with the Press, but I'd like to start, if we could, by having you both give us kind of a thumbnail sketch of your backgrounds before you knew anything about the OSU Press. So Jo, you want to start?

JA: Sure, I'm English and I had a couple of jobs in England before I came to the United States and moved to Corvallis because I wanted to live in Corvallis, and was lucky enough to get this job. And that is a long and interesting tale that you probably don't care about. You remember?

JG: Oh yeah.

CP: I actually—I am interested in knowing the story.

JA: Okay. I applied for two jobs on campus, one with Extension Publishing and this job. And first I heard that I had got the Extension job and I heard that I hadn't got Jeff's job. Oh well. Then—no, first I—no, I got neither job. Then I heard "oh the person who had got the Extension job decided she didn't want it, she didn't want to drive down from Salem," so I said "great!" And then I got a call from Jeff saying "the person I hired lasted three days, and I've talked to the person who was going to hire you and she says you can choose." And I chose.

JG: Yes, to my great relief.

CP: How—you said you came from England specifically to live in Corvallis?

JA: No, no I—no. I was living in Eugene for many years and just chose Corvallis because Eugene felt like it was getting big and Corvallis was a charming little town.

CP: Can you tell me a little bit about your education and also your first interest in publishing?

JA: Sure. My education was regular English school and I then went to Exeter University and got a degree in English, which as we know is worth nothing in the employment place. Went up to London, as everyone does in England, and went to a private employment agency, Lord knows why, and he immediately got me a job with an outfit that was publishing magazines for students learning English. And so I was writing and editing and inventing crossword puzzles for these students.

JG: I didn't know that.

JA: And from there I went to the University of London Press, which is not a university press, despite its name, and I'm not sure I ever told you that?

JG: Yeah, you didn't.

JA: But I was also doing English as foreign language stuff there. Had a great time there, and then came to America.

CP: What was that adjustment like, for you to come to the States?

JA: Well, I was not a professional person when I first came to the states. I was working in a hippy restaurant down in Eugene and then we moved to Corvallis and I got this job, I mean it was different; it was very different from where I had been. But it led me here, and I was glad.

CP: Jeff, how about you? Give us your background before the OSU Press.

JG: Okay, bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Oregon, after graduating there I was in Portland for a few years and my wife and I were both interested in getting back down this end of the valley if possible, and I saw a job, an editing job, announced at the University of Oregon, and eventually I was hired for that, and so I worked for four years at the University of Oregon for the Center for Educational Policy and Management, and I did a variety of [0:05:00] editing and writing things there. I wrote newsletters, I edited research reports, and in the course of my four years there, I also edited and produced—supervised the production of three books that were based on research programs that were located at the center. And that was part of the job I liked best, actually, was producing the books. So after four years at the U of O I saw there was a job announced at OSU for managing editor of the Oregon State University press and I didn't even know there was an Oregon State University Press. But I read a little bit and said "well, they publish books, that would be fun." So I applied for it and then I didn't hear anything and I was a little nervous, because my wife and I had been saving our vacation time and money, what little of either we had, for the four years we'd been in Eugene, planning a big trip to Europe for six weeks, was the longest you could take; vacation from a state job, in those days. And so I was hoping to hear about the job at OSU and it was a week before we were going to go to Europe for six weeks, so I called the person who was hiring, who turned out to be the same person who attempted to hire Jo, years later, at Ag Communications, because—it was Gwil Evans, who is acting director of University Publications and the OSU Press at that time, in addition to running what later became the Office of Agricultural Communications, which I think it was when you were offered the job there.

So I talked to Gwil and I said "I'm really interested in this job," and he said "well we're just getting around to setting up interviews," and I said "well, my problem is I'm here one more week and then I'm going to be out of the country for six weeks," and I said "so if there's any possibility that you would want to interview me, we need to do it in the next few days," and so he said "okay," and so I dashed up and interviewed the day before we got on the plane. And he said "well you know, how are we going to work this out?" And I said "well okay, I can give you the phone number of a friend in Eugene that will have a way to contact me for the first week that I'm in Europe, and after that, no." So I wrote up a letter accepting the position in case, and a letter resigning my other position in case, signed them both, left them with my friend and this trip, the only place we had prearranged to stay was the first week in London. And they had a phone and so I worked out with my friend that—I think 11:00 at night in Eugene was 7:00 in the morning in London, and so there was an hour window that we could talk on the phone if I needed to, and I said that I won't leave the—I'll hang around the hotel every morning until whatever it was, 7:30 or something. And the last morning before we left, he called and he said "well, I got a phone call from the guy and he offered you the job." And I said "great, call him and tell him yes, send him the letter, and the other letter to our boss, and I'll see you in five weeks." And I did.

JA: This whole thing was so tentative, wasn't it? You and me. Wow.

JG: It was very bizarre, yeah.

JA: I never knew your story.

CP: Must have been a fun trip.

JG: It was a fun trip, yeah. I love quitting jobs, so to start a vacation having just quit a job was great.

CP: And what year was this?

JG: That would have been 1978.

CP: And Jo, you joined the Press?

JA: '84.

CP: '84, okay. What were your first—for both of you—what were your first impressions of OSU and of Corvallis?

JA: Corvallis, my first impression was we were driving down from Portland where my husband had been accepted to OHSU for a nurse practitioner program, and we hated the univers—I mean OHSU, we just both went "Oh God, do we have to live here for four years?" and we got off the freeway and we came through Corvallis and it was an autumn afternoon and we went to Nearly Normals and that was when I said "can't we live here?" And so that was my first impression of Corvallis. Of OSU, I don't remember.

CP: How about you, Jeff? [0:10:00]

JG: I'd only been to Corvallis a couple of times, prior to taking the job up here. It felt distinctly different than Eugene, as Jo found, and that was fine. But I never did actually move here. I commuted for 25 years from Eugene. So I always kind of had one foot in one town and one in the other. I like them both; I think they both have their charms. Corvallis still feels more sort of relaxed and Eugene is not exactly a crazed big city, but it does, you know there's more traffic and things are more hectic in Eugene. So I guess the impression of the town was basically that. The university; the first thing that impressed me was the campus. The U of O campus is pretty, but OSU's much larger and I think more beautiful than the U of O campus was, so I loved the campus. And our offices then were in Waldo Hall, a great location right in the heart of campus, and my particular office that I inherited had a sweeping view of the baseball field, which was kind of fun in baseball season, and during cheerleader camp during the summer. So I loved it, it was great. The drive was not the highlight of my life, but both ends of the drive, I still like both Eugene and Corvallis very much.

CP: Yeah that's a lot of miles for twenty-five years.

JG: Yeah, yeah. About half a million.

CP: Oh geez.

JG: Yeah.

CP: Are you a native Oregonian, Jeff?

JG: No, I grew up in the Seattle area.

CP: Okay. Well for—I guess I'll ask Jeff first because he was—he arrived first. What was your impression of the state of the OSU Press when you arrived?

JG: Well, when I came and I met with Gwil Evans and he said "well, it's going to take you a while to sort of figure out what's going on, I know that." My predecessor's managing editor had quit several months before and essentially nobody had been doing anything with the Press since, except shipping out books to the few people that ordered them in those days. And so I came into my office and there was—it was a very large office and there were all these tables and they were—one table about this size was stacked this high with book proofs. And there were a couple other tables like this around the office, and they were stacked with six months of mail, which consisted about 50%, I don't know Jo, when you came, we were still dealing with Baker & Taylor and we still had those awful printouts that came all the time? Or they phased those out?

JA: Oh, with the holes down the sides.

JG: Yeah.

JA: Yes, I remember that.

JG: Yeah, well I had two tables that were stacked with Baker & Taylor printouts, like this, and it took me months just to figure out what the heck was going on, and I had a major panic attack, I mean for the first six months I was just in a complete panic about "what the heck have I done?" Nobody knows what's going on around here and I don't really know what any of this is about. So it was pretty bewildering. Gwil Evans was great, he was very supportive, and he knew what a

mess I was coming into and would—said "call me anytime, I'll be as supportive as I can but I don't really know that much about the Press. You're pretty much on your own." So that was it. I was on my own.

CP: What kind of staffing did the Press have at that point?

JG: Well the Press, the Press was simply a part of the Office of University Publications, so in theory it had no staff. I was an editor, I did have the title of Managing Editor, but as far as the university was concerned, I was an editor too, for the Office of University Publications, and there were, I think, three editors. It was simply that the founder of the Press, Ken Munford, who had been director of University Publications for decades, had simply made the decision when he started the Press to have various Publications office staff spend some of their time working on OSU Press projects, and that had evolved a bit over the years. When he got ready to retire, my understanding is [0:15:00] that he created the—I don't think the job title came at that point, but he basically decided one person has to have more responsibility for the Press, 'cause I'm not going to be there. So Rita Miles, who was managing editor before I was, first person to have that title, she became the one who sort of had responsibility for press projects, but she still drew on other editors in the office to do particular projects and then, I don't know, somewhere three to six months before I was hired, Rita was unhappy with the situation and she left. A while later—Gwil Evans continued to be director, acting director of Publications, for about a year after I was hired. And at that point they did hire a new director, Tom Sanders, and at...what was I going to say? Oh well. This happens, sorry.

JA: I'm glad you did that first, 'cause I'm going to do it too.

JG: Okay. Yeah. But anyway, Gwil—oh, I know; one of the first things Tom did when he became director was—had what was a great idea, he said, well he asked—by then I'd figured out a fair amount of what was going on but I said "there's still a whole lot of things I don't know," and he said "well, does Rita Miles still exist?" And I said "well yeah, I guess," so he ended up Rita and said "how about if we pay you for a day as a consultant and we all go down to the Peacock and drink beer and talk about the Press," and she said "that's a great idea," so we paid her I think \$100 or \$150 and went down to the Peacock and drank beer and talked about the Press. And that was extraordinarily useful! I found out—"is that what's that's about?" "Well how did this happen?" Oh my God. So that was really useful. That was, and that was Tom Sanders' idea, bless his heart.

CP: Institutional knowledge.

JG: Yeah.

CP: What was the, sort of the mission of the Press in those early years for you? What was the kind of the driving reason for its existence?

JG: Well, the driving reasons for its existence was that Ken Munford really wanted to have a press. And so I'm not sure which came first, but at essentially the same time in 1961 the University of Oregon started what was called University of Oregon Books, and OSU started the OSU Press, and both those things had to be approved by the State Board of Higher Education, and I don't know any of the particulars of the U of O situation, but it was similar, and what happened at OSU was basically they told Ken Munford "well okay we'll do this, but you don't get any additional resources for this," and he said "that's fine, we've got people and money; if the Office of University Publications, just let us call ourselves a press and we'll be happy." So that's why there was a press.

There had been publishing going on at OSU through the Office of Publications for decades. There was a series of—multiple series called the Oregon State (originally Oregon State College) Monograph Series that were research reports written by OSU faculty in various departments, especially in the sciences. And the Office of Publications had been doing those for years. And there was a storeroom of stacks of them. So that was kind of the origin, there had been publishing going on, not formally books, and so that was what Ken built on.

And when I came they were publishing some books, they were still publishing some of the, at that point, Oregon State University monograph series, but there were occasional books. But the vast majority of books being published at OSU in those days were written by OSU faculty. Many of them were proceedings of conferences that were held at OSU or that one of the—an OSU faculty had been the organizer of proceedings. There were, the exception to that really, there were

occasional books that were published. Most of those were written by OSU faculty. There were a couple of exceptions, and the real foundation of the Press at the time I came in was the *Atlas of the Pacific Northwest*, which was [0:20:00] produced by the faculty in the Geography department. They were the authors, they organized the papers and all that, and then there were a few other books by non-OSU people, and the one that actually sold copies was a book that Jo knows and won't remember fondly, particularly because of the author. It was called *Retaliation: Japanese Attacks on the U.S. Mainland during World War II*. It was written by a very interesting character, an amateur historian named Burt Webber, and those two books were basically the real books that were selling at the time that I came in.

And then each year, generally, the Press published a different edition of the proceedings: what we call "Pinwitch," the Proceedings of the Pacific Northwest Conference on Higher Education; published the proceedings most years, but not every year, of the biology colloquium at OSU, and then yearly at sort of odd intervals the yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, and so most years there were like three books coming out of the Press, and then occasional other things. So that was basically the program when I came in.

CP: And was it sustaining itself financially at this point?

JG: Well it was in a way, because the Press, the Press—I was going to say it didn't have a budget—well no, the Press didn't have a budget. The press had a financial account that was essentially a revolving account that took in money from book sales, which was almost entirely revenue from the *Pacific Northwest Atlas* and *Retaliation*, and then used that money to pay printing bills. So it had a bank account but its staff and all the other expenses were Office of Publications. So it was sustaining itself in the sense that it was taking in enough money to pay its printing bills. And at the time I came in there was, oh I think there were 20 or \$30,000 in that account, but one of the things that Gwil Evans warned me about when I came in, he said "well, there's another edition of the *Pacific Northwest Atlas* coming in a year or two and the hope is we'll have enough money to pay for the printing bill by the time that happens."

And he said "and by the way, there is this sort of problem, which is"—it was another in the series of proceedings from the biological colloquium, but it had grown way, way beyond that and had become a political and financial nightmare. That eventually was published in 1979 or '80 as *Historical Biogeography, Plate Tectonics and the Changing Environment*. And when I came along, a lot of that stack of proofs was it. It ended up as a hardcover, 500 and some page book. At the time I came along I was at its third galley proofs, and we had a tab running at the Department of Printing, which did all our typesetting and all our book printing in those days. And the meter was up to about 35 or \$40,000 and the author—the editors and contributing authors—the editors there were two; the conference organizers. One was a senior faculty member from OSU, one was a senior faculty member from U of O, and they were the editors and there were dozens of contributing authors who were mostly very big name people from around the country, were basically rewriting the book in each stage of proofs. It was in its third rewrite and Gwil said "we have this problem," and that was one of the, I think the single biggest reason that Rita Miles quit, was because she was in the middle of that. And the editors liked each other but pretty much nobody else. [0:25:00] Rita got along with one of the editors. The other one wanted to kill her. Nobody got along with the director of the Department of Printing. It was just a quagmire, it was just a horrendous mess and Gwil says "you have to sort this out somehow."

So somehow I did. We got the book published and—but we did have, by the time Tom Sanders came around, it was just about to get printed. I had finally gotten everybody to turn loose the proofs and it was about to get printed but I said "well we have this problem, because we don't actually have enough money to pay the bills, and if we spend all the money on that, then we really will not have the money to print the *Pacific Northwest Atlas* in a year or two." And so Tom, with his usual optimism and sunny smile went off to talk to his good buddy, the—in those days the OSU administration was much simpler. There was President MacVicar and there was the Vice President for Administration, who at that time was Clifford Smith. And Tom reported, Tom was one of 28 department heads that directly reported to the president and for financial things, budget and stuff, he went directly to the VP for Administration, as everybody else did. So he got along quite well with Cliff, and so he went and talked to Cliff and he said "Cliff, you know I've only been here a couple of months and I've just learned this, da da da da, and we have this printing bill, or we're going to have this printing bill, and we don't have money to pay it, and by the way there's this big political history, these important senior faculty members from all over the country are involved in this thing, and one of our senior faculty members and a senior faculty member from the U of O are both threatening to drag the presidents into this, and it's a political nightmare and it's a

financial problem and I need you to pay the printing bill." Cliff said "okay, have"—Chuck Peckham, who is the director of the printing department, also reported to Cliff, and he said "tell Chuck to send the bill to me. I'll pay it." And so he did.

And so...we ended up printing what I thought was way, way, way too many of these things, but because of the politics of the whole deal, we printed 2,000 copies and we priced—in those days most OSU Press books were priced at under \$10, and we priced it at \$59.95, and that was based on, well, if we—there's no way this is financially feasible, this book should be priced at over 100 bucks, but okay. So we printed it—anyway, eventually, it took many years—well within six months we'd sold a thousand of them and taken in \$60,000, and that went into the Press revolving account, and that was the financial foundation of the Press. We had enough money to print the atlas and then atlas money started coming in. And so during Tom Sanders' five years at the Press, the Press actually accumulated some money in its revolving fund and we had a basis for doing things.

So one of my intentions from the start was to stop doing things that weren't really books, basically to ease our way out of the OSU Monograph things, to stop doing the conference proceedings for the Pacific Northwest Conference on Higher Ed, and to stop doing some of those things and focus what energy and resources we had on doing real books. And so now we had some money to do real books, and Tom Sanders was pretty enthused about that. He didn't know anything about book publishing, but he thought having a university press was cool and he really liked to go to meetings of the western university presses and the American Association of University Presses, and so the two of us would go to those meetings and we both learned a lot, most of what I came to know about university press publishing I learned from those meetings, in the sessions at those meetings. And so by the time that Tom Sanders left after five or six years, the Press was in pretty good shape. We were—weren't publishing very many books, we were publishing about four to five books a year, but at least they were actual books. [0:30:00] And we had some money to do some stuff, so that was a huge transition from the Ken Munford regime, which was building on what had been done at OSU for many decades and sort of making gradual transition into becoming a very tiny, but a university press that at least had some claim to calling itself a university press.

JA: So it sounds like, Jo, that's the environment that you entered into more or less, or?

JA: Yes, I would say it was. We didn't publish in seasons, as I recall, we just—if something was ready we published it. Right?

JG: That's true.

JA: I don't know that we did any publicity of any kind.

JG: Our marketing was almost entirely through Baker & Taylor.

JA: Oh, okay.

JG: And our catalog in those days didn't look anything like this. It was a very pedestrian thing. It was specifically published to meet the requirements to be bound into *Publishers' Trade List Annual*, which Baker & Taylor produced, and that essentially was our marketing, except on the more trade-oriented, less scholarly titles that we did, we would produce a little direct mail flyer on them and we did some direct mail. We would buy—we would rent mailing lists from professional associations or magazines or whatever and we'd send out some of our, but yeah, our marketing was practically nil.

JA: I had—I mean my previous book publishing experience was with a large press in London. So it was pretty different.

JG: Yeah, in every way!

JA: But at the same time, it was fun. We—there was not much pressure, because books just published when they were ready. And I was just getting to know the people who worked there and how things were working then and slowly over time, largely because of Jeff's vision, I think; I don't think I had a vision, I think I was just doing what needed to be done, and I think that's been true of me right the way through my 30 years. Just doing what needing to be done. Jeff was the one with the vision, he was the one who saw where we could make progress in various directions, and of course when I came in Jeff was director. So that had been a change and Jeff was then able to be the person with the vision who moved things along, slowly but surely.

JG: Yeah.

CP: So you were made director around 1983 or so?

JG: 1984 I became director, yeah. Tom Sanders left, went to Washington State University where he was in charge of university publications, the printing plant, and immediately started the Washington State University Press, because he thought they were so much fun. And they did a search for the position. I had no desire at all to be in administration of any kind, and I really liked being managing editor of the Presses, best job I'd ever had. I thought it was a lot of fun, and as Jo said, those days there wasn't a whole lot of pressure. But our assistant director and other people on the staff begged me to apply, and I said "no, I don't want to be director, and I'm not really qualified anyway." What the university wanted was—really focused was on the University Publications side. The Press - President MacVicar really didn't care about the Press one way or the other. You know, "it's fine as long as you don't cause any trouble and you pay your bills, but I care about student recruiting publications and the university catalog" and the other things that the office did. So he went out to hire a director for that. And I knew that and that was fine, that made sense.

But he insisted that he was the chair of the search committee, he was going to handle it personally. Well, he had 28 departments where he'd be, he was running the university, I mean it was apparent to several of us this was a search where it probably wasn't going to go very well. And at [0:35:00] the last minute, shortly before the application deadline, our assistant director who was on the search committee, came to me and he said "we've just gotten two OSU applicants for this position, you have got to apply," and he told me who they were and I knew I couldn't work for either of them, and so I applied and I said "Tom, you're on the committee, you've got to—this is the deal: I am only, what I want is a good, well qualified outside candidate to be hired for this position," I said, "But if that's not going to happen, I think we'd all agree that I'd rather be the director than either of these other two people."

And he said "no, that's the deal. I got that." So the search floundered around along for months and months and months, and finally President MacVicar hired somebody, and it was somebody who had come in and interviewed and I'd met with him and I felt "well this is okay." It was kind of like Tom Sanders, sort of the same kind of deal; the guy didn't know anything about university press publishing, but he said "well you know, this is fine. This sounds kind of fun." And I thought "this could be okay," and so he took the position and we got all ready for him to come and two days before he was supposed to be on campus he called and said "I'm not coming." And they had already formally terminated the search. They had notified all the candidates that we've hired for this position, and again we had a problem.

So President MacVicar called me in and with his usual candor, if not charm, he said "well I guess you know that our director has backed out," and I said "yeah," and he said "I don't really want to do this but I don't see any other solution. I'm going to offer you the job." And I said—he said "so there is some precedent for this and I can do it. You were part of the pool," and he said "so I'll give you a ten percent raise and you'll become director." And I said "well I don't really want to be director, I just applied in case something like this happened, and no, the raise you offered me is actually less than I'm making now, your information is out of date, and it's not really about the money, but I need to make at least ten percent more than the assistant director does, and what you've just offered me is thirty percent less than what he makes." And he said "Oh. Hmm. Okay." And so we both sort of held our noses and I became director. He didn't want to hire me and I didn't want to be director.

JA: I didn't know so much of this, Jeff, so many ways in which everything that happened couldn't not have happened.

JG: Yeah.

JA: Wow.

JG: It was very bizarre. One other thing that Tom Sanders had done that was very, very crucial for the future of the Press before he left, and it was right before he left; as I said when I came there, there was a new edition of the *Pacific Northwest Atlas* due, and Tom Sanders decided, based on what we'd learned by going to university press meetings, that we were paying way, way too much for typesetting and printing our books, and he was right, we were. We were paying two to three times as much as other university presses were, because we were captive of the university printing department, who wasn't set up to print books. And so with the atlas coming, he used that, and it was a good reason, he used that as his

excuse and his club to go to war with the state purchasing department and win the right for the OSU Press to deal with outside printers and binders on books. And—

JA: --though we had to do it through the state.

JG: We did, but that was a war. Tom really did yeoman's service, and the Press would not exist if he hadn't done that. And I was right in the middle of that, but Tom was the one really leading the charge. And it drug on for a long time, but eventually—and he used that—they really [0:40:00] did not want to let that happen, but it was a person called "the state printer" who was located in Salem, who was—officially had purview over the printing plants at OSU and of U of O in addition to the big state printing plant in Salem. And she, at that point, had the right to say "thou shalt do this" or "thou shall not do this," and so we used the atlas as an example and she allowed us—oh God, what a struggle. Anyway, she eventually allowed us to put it out for bid, with the understanding that all the bids could be cancelled. And the bids came in and they were less than a third of what the university printing department was going to charge us. And she said "okay."

And that was the start, and from then on OSU had—the OSU Press has had the right to go through—it had to go through normal bids. We weren't able to just walk down the street to any printer we wanted, but that opened the door and we were able to start having our books printed and bound by the same people that other university presses around the country were, and our costs went down dramatically.

JA: And then, do you remember when it was that we got the right to do a multi-year contract for printing? Because that was another huge step.

JG: Yeah, that was some years later.

JA: Yeah, it was a lot of years later.

JG: Yeah, it was.

JA: And so we were able to go through the purchasing process not just for one book but to set up an OSU Press printer. The contract had to go through Contracts, I mean that again was a huge deal, but that allowed us to talk to the printer before—to know who the printer was from the beginning and that is a huge plus when you're—you have someone you can ask questions of.

JG: Well and you can set things up to work better with their plant and the way they did things, where the way before, after Tom won us the right to put things out for bid, it was on a project-by-project basis and so even though we got to say who we would send the bids out to—well, the state sent them out to all their regular people within the state of Oregon and then we'd give up six names in Michigan and say "send some to these people too," and it would all be, always be one of those six people. But it was, it would be Thomson Shore this time, and it would be somebody else the next time, and they would say "oh, gee, if we'd known we were going to get this one, we'd have told you to do the ba ba ba bop" and it would have gone a little bit easier. And so that was the genesis of what then later happened. We did eventually win the right. That was not nearly as bloody a war. It was a bureaucratic mess that we had to fight through, but the war had already been won by Tom Sanders.

JA: Yeah, okay.

JG: It was one additional step. Well, okay, by then there was a different person who was the state printer, and he or she, I don't remember at that point, really didn't like the—"yeah, how did you guys ever get into this, I really don't like this." So it sort of reopened that whole thing and I said "well we won it because we wouldn't exist if we didn't." "Oh, well, hmm." So it was—but that was a worthwhile additional step. It did make life easier, and especially Jo's life as the production manager, because she was able to know these people are going to do it and this is the way that works best.

JA: And then of course we got into doing more books in color and the contract that we had multiyear with a printer in the states was still going to be charging more than if we could do it over seas, so the contract would say "we'll do all our books with you unless we think we can do better somewhere else." Increasingly, which has been a struggle since very few of us knew that much about color printing. But we've done some good books.

JG: Yeah.

CP: Jo, you mentioned that you basically did what needed to be done over the course of your career. What did that entail? Give me a sense of—

JG: What didn't it?

JA: Well it changed, obviously, over the years. When I first came, what was Wes's last name? [0:45:00]

JG: Wes Patterson.

JA: Wes Patterson was—now I'm thinking it was hot metal, was it?

JG: It was.

JA: It was hot metal, wasn't it? It was—

JG: When you came you were—you came right before they changed it to cold type.

JA: Yeah. Wes Patterson, a grumpy old devil down at printing—

JG: He was a jewel.

JA: He was, but he was also a grump.

JG: Oh yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

JA: Was doing typesetting.

JG: Sitting at a Linotype machine.

JA: Yeah. And what did I know about book design? Nothing at that point. So I would just have to go "oh, well let's do this in whatever type, and whatever leading." I didn't know until the galleys came back "oh, well that was not a very good choice, was it?" But too expensive to change my mind at that point.

JG: Right, right.

JA: So I'm probab—I don't remember those early books, but I probably wouldn't be all that proud of them now. Then I would proofread those galleys. I imagine a set went out to the author then, as well.

JG: Yes.

JA: And make corrections, but also cut them up into pages, put paste on the back—not paste, what was it, the roller.

JG: Yeah, oh, a rubber cement.

JA: And paste-up how the page proofs should look. And then tell him where to put the head and the foot and send that back to him and then he would send me corrected—I imagine at that point that would have been page proofs, since I'd done the paste-up, then.

JG: Yeah.

JA: Proof them again and that would be it, except somebody was simultaneously doing a cover design and at first that was somebody in—almost always, I believe, somebody in the Publications department.

JG: Right.

JA: Some of whom are still there, Amy Charron, who's now the, isn't she the head of that now, I think? And she did some lovely designs for us and off it went to the printer. And then of course came the computer age. And how I loved being able to actually see what the book would look like if I chose this font, and this leading, and this size. What a joy, I absolutely loved that. So my—and my editing started—of course I edited back in the day when it was all going through Wes. I think I really changed as an editor when I was able to do it on screen because what—I think people work differently and I think many people are more tentative than I was. But when I could edit on screen, I could change it. I could say "I think this would work better here," which is a huge deal when you're working with a type script. You go "hmm, and how would that work?" you can't see it. Now you can see what you're doing. So I became a pretty assertive editor, honestly, and every time I sent those first edit manuscripts off to the author, I would go "ohhh, he or she is not going to like it," but they kind of did. I don't recall too many people that I had fights with. And I always backed off if they said "no, I like what I had better," I would back off.

JG: Well I just want to say that that's—that was a tribute to your skill as an editor. I mean I considered myself a very good editor, and I think I was a very good editor, but Jo was better and Jo was also incredibly fast, especially once we moved into the computer. Even before that you were a very fast copy editor, but once we moved into the computer age and she could do things almost in one stage, she became so productive, and so I think part of the reason that your authors put up with as much as they did was they recognized how much better it was. I mean you were so skilled at it, and the other thing, which I know you've been told many times, especially in the early days; you were getting them their proofs so much faster [0:50:00] than other publishers that they had worked with, that they were mighty darn happy about that.

And so here it would come in two months before they were expecting, based on their previous—and although it might have been a bit of a shock, the great majority of the time they'd look at it and say "oh, that isn't how I wanted to do it, but it really is better." So...

JA: Thank you Jeff.

JG: No, that's true.

JA: Thank you.

JG: Extraordinary, extraordinarily good editor.

CP: Do you have more to...?

JA: Oh, I'm thinking about how much fun I had designing and laying out books. I also, I loved the editing too, but the new fun that I was able to have laying books out was wonderful too. The computer age—I mean talk of productivity, compared to what was happening before, I was doing it all. I was doing Wes's job and somebody, the whole thing, but I loved it.

CP: Tell me about the process of appraising and selecting manuscripts, because I assume you were receiving quite a few more than you could handle in terms of publishing them, certainly.

JA: Well, I stopped doing that how long ago, God, well certainly when we hired Ma—

JG: When we hired Slesinger.

JA: Oh yes, yes. We were still back in Waldo Hall, so that was back a while, but we hired an acquisitions editor and the acquisitions editor's job is not only to receive manuscripts that come in and decide "is this worth working with or not?" but also to go out and beat the bushes; go to conferences, follow things up, keep abreast of what's happening in different fields and contact people who might be writing something. Yes, the first acquisitions editor was Warren Slesinger, about whom I remember not a whole lot, except I liked him, and...

JG: He was very good at his job. Warren had been an acquisitions editor for another university press for a number of years and he was basically retirement age, but he—I don't know exactly what happened at his previous press, but he had left there unhappily and he sort of wanted one more shot before he went into retirement, to leave—he didn't want to go into retirement feeling bad. He wanted to go out on a high. And this was when we were attempting to grow very rapidly,

as a result of the whole Ballot Measure 5 thing, and it had always been my intention to eventually have an acquisitions editor, but not so soon. But we were forced into it because we had to grow really fast and I was amazed. We did a national search.

Hiring people for the Press gradually got easier as the decades went on. Originally they had to be classified people hired through the system. After many wars, repeatedly, basically I got things changed to where they acknowledged that university press employees didn't fit in the state system. There wasn't an acquisitions editor, there wasn't a marketing manager, there weren't these things, and the university and the state human resources people eventually decided that I could have basically no rank fixed term faculty for those and then they didn't look at me funny when I said "I'm going to do a national search for the position," because you did that stuff for faculty, where the first time I insisted on nationally advertising a classified job, it was like I'd insulted somebody's baby. They acted like I was crazy and dangerous.

So anyway, we were able to attract some good candidates but Warren Slesinger was by far the best candidate. It was like "why does this guy want to come to OSU?" Well, he had his own agenda. He came and he stayed about two years and he just did—I mean we went from publishing whatever we were doing, six or seven books, to twenty books. Eighteen books, I think the first year he was here. [0:55:00] He had all of these contacts from over the years and he wasn't sleeping; no he was absolutely obsessed with it and totally committed and he proved his point and was burned out and went back off into retirement, and then we were able to hire Mary, partly on the basis of what Warren had done. He had sort of—people around the university press world were looking around and saying "God, stuff's really happening at OSU, what got into those people?" And so we were able to attract Mary.

JA: And Mary Braun, who is still the acquisitions editor, when we were hiring for that position, yes we were surprised at the quality of people who applied, and the two—I just wanted to tell the story of the hiring because it tells you a lot. I must have been on the hiring committee.

JG: You were.

JA: And it came basically down to two people, and one of them was Mary, who had been at the University of Wisconsin Press, but boy had she done her homework about the Pacific Northwest. She came in here knowing more about the Pacific Northwest than I did, and who the potential authors were and what the ways we could go were. And the other person who was right up there had worked for Oxford University Press, and he had done no homework and we had a person on the search committee who was not a press employee and when we went into our decision making meeting we—the people who worked at the Press said "well it's obviously Mary," and he said "oh, but he's from Oxford! He has to be better 'cause he's from Oxford." No, he hadn't done his homework; he would have perhaps been like the person that you almost hired instead of me.

JG: No, no not at all, but yeah, he was not as well suited for our job. He was a very skilled editor, he'd been very successful, but our situation was so different than what he dealt with, I think he would have had a terrible, terrible situation, yeah. I need—I wanted to talk very briefly about not hiring you the first time.

JA: Okay.

JG: Just to...yep. So I was able to, after a war, even though the position at that point was a classified position—there's another story behind that but I won't go into that—anyway I was able to advertise it nationally and most of the—it was a mix of in-state people that weren't even slightly qualified, and people that were from out of state, except Jo, who actually was qualified and actually was here. So we very quickly we came down to two people, this young guy from Michigan and Jo. And it was a classified position, so we didn't have to have a committee and all this, so basically the interviews were done by myself and Tom France, who is the assistant director of Publications at that time. And we talked about it afterwards and I was hiring for the position with future growth of the Press in mind. At that point, I had just become director and I was shuffling stuff around. When I was managing editor, when I first started, I did that half-time, and the other half-time I compiled the Oregon State University telephone book. I did the graduate catalog; I had several other nasty little chores. And so I spent half of my time in university publication stuff, and when I became director and shuffled things around, I did it so that Jo could spend full-time on the Press, and so I had this vision of where I wanted the Press to be and I knew that we needed to start doing something more about marketing and we needed to do something more about acquisitions, eventually, but not right then.

So we had these two people, and they were very, very different people; this young guy he was, I don't know, in his late twenties, maybe, he was very young, and Jo. And they both had editing experience and were very well qualified, but they were totally different candidates. And I remember talking to Tom and I said "well in the end, okay, I think I'm going to go [1:00:00] for the young guy, because a couple reasons." I said "I think Jo Alexander's a great editor, and I think her strengths are the same as my strengths. The young guy, I think, will be better at outside stuff; at schmoozing at meetings and acquisitions related stuff, and at marketing stuff. I can see him much better working a professional meeting than I could do, and probably than Jo could do." But mainly I wanted someone whose skills were different than mine, not similar. And the other was, I said "the other thing is if this goes the way I want, within a few years I'm going to need a different kind of person in this position. This guy's young, he's ambitious, he's going to be here a few years and he's going to leave." And Tom said "yeah, I think Jo's the kind of person that's going to be here for a long time," and so on that basis I went for the young guy who came and literally spent two days in the office and left in an absolute panic. And I didn't even say anything nasty to him or anything, he just left town! It was just—it was kind of odd. But so that was the reason. It was be—I picked, I did not pick you specifically because I thought our strengths were very similar.

JA: Sure, okay.

JG: And that was underselling her. Our strengths are similar but she's way stronger in most of those areas than I was, and—but our perception that you'd stay awhile turned out to be accurate.

JA: Yes, you're absolutely right.

JG: That was in 1984, and so—so that was the story.

JA: Thank you. I never heard all that. We went on, with my getting a job that had a salary attached to it, we went on and built our house, which we now—using the name of the person who walked out after two years, we called "The Scott Mahler Memorial Home."

JG: God, I didn't even remember his name.

JA: Scott Mahler.

JG: That's right, that's very good.

JA: He went on to be poetry editor at *California*.

JG: Did he really?

JA: Yeah.

JG: Oh, okay.

JA: Which sort of made me realize why he didn't work here—work out. You know, it's a very, that's a very, very different job.

JG: A very different environment, yeah. He was better suited for a bigger press environment.

JA: Yeah, I think he was.

CP: So after the hire of Jo and before the hire of Warren Slesinger, was it essentially just the two of you? Or was there more staff than that for the Press?

JG: Originally, yes. Originally it was half of me and Jo.

JA: Except there was a receptionist—

JG: Yes, well that was—

JA: And we were using designers for the book covers, from Publications.

JG: Well the rest of the staff were Office of Publications. Well everybody was, Jo and I were too. But other than—Jo spent full time on the Press, I spent about half time on the Press, and we had a business manager; an office manager if you will, and she spent about half, if anything slightly more on the Press, because it generated a bit more business activity than Office of Publications did. So she was probably two-thirds press. And then yeah, there was a receptionist, but she was receptionist for the whole office, so it wasn't specifically for the Press. So as far as the Press went, it start—it was half of me, Jo, and about two-thirds of our office manager. And then there was also—well by the time you came along it would have just been...we had a shipping clerk and way back when that had been a regular university employee and at some point we transitioned basically to using student workers for that.

JA: That happened during my time there, because I worked with him also.

JG: Oh, okay. I didn't remember quite when we made that change.

CP: Tell me a little bit about working in Waldo Hall. It's an old building that used to be a women's dorm, it's a beautiful building.

JG: Yeah, in fact one of the University Publications editors, who was in the office when I was hired, and worked there many years, Shirley Hill, had been a student and had lived in Waldo Hall when it was a women's dormitory. And then years later worked in what had been the kitchen, our offices, what had been the kitchens for the dorm.

JA: I, we, everybody who's worked in Waldo [1:05:00] and is still at the Press, which is actually now just me and Mary and I no longer work there, so just Mary, oh we loved Waldo and we were so sad to get moved out of there.

JG: Yeah, it was great.

JA: I mean really sad. I don't recall whether we went—did we go straight from Waldo to the administration building?

JG: Don't ask me.

JA: Or—no, but I suspect what we did was went, for not terribly long, but oh man how we hated it, to the same little building on the far side of the tracks where Parking Services is, or was. And we all felt ugh, just sort of weighed down. It was a horrid place. It just—in fact Mary was told by a woman who did security that she hesitated to go in there at night because it had such bad vibes.

JG: My God.

JA: And I guess it was then we went to the administration building, which was nice except I was put in a closet, because by then I was half time, so I wasn't there as often. Literally a closet with no window. And then here. So we've moved around a lot, for various reasons.

JG: But all that moving has been in the years since I left. I retired in 2003. From whenever Waldo Hall stopped being a women's dorm until after I left, the Press and Publications were in the same offices in Waldo, and then, in the eleven years since then, the Press has been a bit of a nomad.

JA: A tennis ball.

JG: Yeah, a tennis ball's probably better than nomad. It wasn't volitional.

JA: No, it was not.

CP: What did you love about Waldo?

JA: Huge office, thick walls, it had character. The—my office was at the top of the slope that then went down because it was the kitchen originally, so they needed to trundle things up and down that slope. Far away from my boss Jeff, who was down at the other end.

JG: Down at the bottom, yeah, it's true.

JA: But mostly just the character of it. It was a beautiful old building.

JG: And it was right in center of campus. The location was just great, I mean a three minute walk you could be to the library, to the administration building, to the book store; a minute and a half I could go out the back door and I'd be in the locker room for the physical education department, and since I was a runner and one of the ways I maintained what little sanity I had over the years was by running everyday on my lunch hour with a group of people. So everything about Waldo was great. It was everything but the plumbing and the wiring, I guess. But we were in the basement, so even in the summer, obviously Waldo didn't have air conditioning or any of that. It had big windows you could open, but in the basement even when it got hot, we were very comfortable. Up on second or third floor where we went to use the restrooms, it would get really warm in there in the summer. But all of it was just great; the location and, like Jo said, it had charm. Big windows.

CP: So it sounds like after Jo was hired for that period of time where it's still a pretty small operation, the kind of motivating idea is slow, steady growth.

JG: Yes.

CP: But that changed, and you reached a crucial moment in the history of the Press, you want to talk about what happened?

JG: Yeah. Ballot Measure 5 was a real near-death experience that turned out to spur press growth, or at least accelerate it. I had a sort of long term plan, or aspiration, for the Press to become bigger and gradually more professional, which meant more staff, specialized staff; a marketing person, an acquisitions person, an editing and design person, rather than one person doing everything. And publishing more books in targeted areas, and we were slowly moving in that area, in that direction, and we were gradually accumulating money to do this, because we had no overhead. We were, our staff [1:05:00] and our facilities were provided by the Office of Publications, and all we had to do was basically the direct costs involved with producing and marketing and distributing our books. So we were gradually, and as our publishing program got better and we marketed more and we priced our books more realistically and we started paying a third as much to produce them, we started actually accumulating some money in our revolving fund. So that was my plan, was at some point we were going start tapping this money to add additional staff. I knew the university wasn't going to pay for additional staff, but if I had the money to do it, I thought they'd agree. So we were moving in that direction. I think we had even—I think before Ballot Measure 5 we had hired Tom Booth as our marketing person. Maybe half time?

JA: Or on contract? Wasn't it?

JG: On contract, yeah he was on contract, yeah. Anyway, so we were starting in that direction. Oh, and I had put together an OSU Press task force in, I think, 1988, which was a pretty illustrious committee, including several deans and prominent faculty that had some interest in the Press and were willing to be badgered into being in this group, to sort of look at the future of the Press and how we could grow up, become better. And as a part of that, we hired a consultant, a recently retired university press director, Dave Gilbert, who had basically made University of Nebraska Press from nothing into a very well respected press, and then had ended his career at Cornell. He had recently retired. I knew Dave very well through university press things, and he had a particular interest in OSU because before he got into university presses he had taught composition at OSU in the early 60's, when Bernie Malamud was here. He and Bernie were pals, as much as anybody was a pal with Bernie, apparently, but—and so Dave had a particular—he knew something about OSU as an institution and had a real interest in our press, and was certainly one of the more knowledgeable and well respected people in university publishing, so brought him in as a consultant and he worked with the task force, and we have his report, this sort of vision for the future of the Press, that we gave to the president and anybody else who cared, and this is where we want to go.

And like I say, the first step of that was hiring probably part time, on a contract basis, our first marketing person, Tom Booth, and then Ballot Measure 5 passed and the university had to make major cuts and anything that wasn't directly related to the core academic mission of the university was to go. And so, well that puts the OSU Press on the cut list. Well, so I talked to people; "well, you're not really going to save any money by doing this."

"Well why?"

"Well, because we don't have a staff."

"Oh."

Well they saw through that pretty quickly and then said "well how about we just cut the staff of the Office of Publications and stop publishing?" but: "well yeah, you could save some money if you did that."

But fortunately we had started to grow, we had started to get a bit of a reputation, and we'd gone through this exercise with a consultant and a committee and President Byrne, who was president of the university at that time, thought rather kindly towards the Press. Back before we had an editorial board, way, way back, there was a thing called the OSU Press Board of Governors, and he had been on it once upon a time. When he was Dean of Oceanography he would occasionally—gave the Press a little bit of money to help us publish books that he thought had something to do with his areas of expertise and that he thought were worthy books. So he had a history of being supportive of the Press, and he didn't especially want to cut it, but things were dire.

So on the cut list with us was the Horner Museum and I had the benefit of sort of watching what the director at that time tried to do to keep them alive and seeing that it didn't work, which was like [1:15:00] "but we're good and we're useful and we help university outreach, and without this money we'll die." And that didn't work and they did. And so I had to try a different strategy and the different strategy was "okay, you've got to cut us, I understand that, but don't do it all at once. Do it gradually over a period of years and give us time to transition to becoming self-sustaining."

"Well how are you going to do that?"

I said "well"—I didn't use I didn't invoke Amazon, but that was basically what the strategy was, "well we're just, we're going to do it by growth."

"Oh, okay."

Well nobody really knew very much about university press publishing, so that worked to some extent, and then the other thing I said, which was very tacked into what was going on on campus, as they were cutting people, they were saying "well go out and raise money. We want everybody to go on to fundraising."

I said "Okay, so we're going to do two things. We're going to grow and increase our cash flow, and in order to do that, I need you not to cut all our money all at once, but to taper it off over a number of years. And the other thing is we're going to raise money. We're going to hire a development officer and again, I need money to get—I need some time to make that happen." So that was basically the pitch, and...

CP: So did you hire somebody through the Foundation?

JG: Yes, yes. So we had a halftime development officer for one year, because the basis on that—we had a great person, she was very well qualified and worked very, very hard. But I was very doubtful from the start that she was going to be able to raise enough money, basically to pay her own salary. And that was the way we went into it, with the Foundation and everybody. And they said "well, okay." Everybody said "sure, a development officer has to at least be able to raise their own salary."

And I said "okay, so we're going to pay for this for a year, and it's a one year position, it's fixed term at this point, and if, with her help, we're successful, then we'll continue it. But if not, it's going to be a one year deal," which is what it turned out to be. But she was very—she played an important role in helping us survive the immediate crisis, because she was very visible. She was out there beating the bushes, and among other things, she befriended the wife of the president, the new president by that time, Paul Risser. His wife Les, and so Roxanne cultivated Les and got her involved in a committee that Roxanne invented, to basically get us connected with various people that she thought could help keep the Press alive. So even though Roxanne didn't raise very much money and was with us for about a year, she really did help keep us alive in other ways. She increased our visibility.

So my basic strategy was, even if this isn't sustainable on an ongoing basis, we have to grow, we have to become much more visible and we have to really look like a growing concern. We've got to really be out there, we got to publish some good books, we got to publish more books, and we've got to get—we have to create the perception that we are too big and too important to kill. And we did it. We were bleeding the entire time, and the question is "do we have enough money to stay alive long enough to pull this off?" and the answer was "well yeah, just barely." But that was what we had to do; it was either we were going to die today or I could stall it for a few years and hope that with those few years we could, and we did, dramatically improve our cash flow. But we were still bleeding. But we were bleeding fairly slowly and after a few years, yeah, there was no more talk about killing the Press.

JA: I don't know how much it actually helped, but one of the things that happened when we were threatened with death was the formation of the Oregon Literary Coalition.

JG: It was very important.

JA: Which, whereby people in the publishing and writing and literary community came together to pressure the university to keep us alive. I think it was Peter Sears who started it? [1:20:00]

JG: Yes.

JA: And I'd like to give credit there.

JG: Absolutely.

JA: Because as I say, I don't know how important it was but it was visible and it felt good to have broad support for us.

JG: I think it was very important, and another thing that was very important to that, because it gave direct rise to the Oregon Literary Coalition, was a project that we were involved with at the time, the Oregon Literature Series, which turned out to be very important books; six volume series on—collections of anthologies, basically. Short fiction, poetry, you know the story—

JA: Folk tales

JG: You had them all, I didn't, but anyway, we were involved, this—it was a multi-year project and we were in the midst of it. I don't think any of them had actually—no I think the first volume was published in '91. But they were on the verge of being published and there were a lot of people, important academics and literary people in Oregon involved in this project. My God, you kill the Press, it's going to kill the series. So that was really the genesis for the Oregon Literary Coalition, which did help, because all the—that was one thing we had that Horner Museum did not have going. It was—its outreach was all local, so they had a few people from the Corvallis area and they're saying "my God, you can't kill our museum," and we had people, we put on a meeting, and Roxanne who was the one who helped organize that and put it together, we put on a meeting at the Portland downtown center for the Oregon Literary Coalition. We got the president and a bunch of other important OSU people there, basically to have important people from around the state tell them "you can't kill the Press, it matters too much." That was absolutely critical. And then I just had to come up with some sort of an excuse that would justify them saying "okay, we won't kill it for now," and I did that. I said "we're going to grow our way out of this. We're going to grow our way and fund-raise our way out of this. And they said "ah, that sounds great, let's go."

CP: So the growth strategy then was basically taking the reserves of money that you had, hiring a few more people, acquiring more books and hoping that you sold, basically?

JA: Yes.

JG: Right, right. It was basically doing, except for the development officer; it was doing what I planned to do, but doing it all at once, instead of gradually in stages as we could afford it. It was like "I've got this money that is supposed to gradually tide us over x years and we're going to pretty much spend it all at once, because we've got to."

CP: What do you remember from that time, Jo? Very uncertain circumstances to be working in.

JA: Well it's not the only time that I've worked in uncertain circumstances at the Press. I remember, and I remember being really angry, honestly, that the work we had done, that we thought was important, was not important enough at the university; that we had to spend our precious time fighting against the closure. And I'm not sure that I knew everything that was being done on our behalf. I was grateful for that support we did get and I probably put energy into helping pull that support up.

JG: Oh you did, definitely.

JA: Okay. This is a long time ago, Jeff.

JG: It was, it was.

JA: You have a great memory and I do not. But I definitely remember how one felt. I've been doing good work and I'm not appreciated. And Jeff was not here the next time I felt that, when another—oh well, the director after him, which we—I mean I'm getting out of phase here, but when Karen Orchard, who replaced Jeff as director, when she left, it felt much the same. They thought "oh well, the Press is not imp—" and you know, who knows what they thought. It felt to me that once again we were being undervalued and had to fight for our survival. Another task force was put into place [1:25:00] and we have to thank the prior director of the library, Karyle Butcher, for stepping right up in that task force, supporting us powerfully and bringing us into the library. I don't know for a fact, but I assume that had she not done that, the Press would have died that time. Being in the library has its issues, but we're still here and we're—I say we—they are still here and still putting out great books, and thank you Karyle.

CP: So tell me, I guess after the Press sort of goes all-in here, with Ballot Measure 5, it comes out the other end, the budget, I assume, has improved somewhat, but you're producing a lot more, you have more expenses than you used to. Is it this constant kind of budgetary struggle all the way through?

JG: Yeah, at the time I left we still had some money. Not a huge amount, and we weren't bleeding very fast, but we were producing a lot more books, we were producing some great books. I really felt good about the nature of our publishing program at the time that I retired. I felt really good about our staff. I thought we had top-notch staff. All of our people were just the best, and other people involved in university press publishing around the country would have agreed that—they would have looked at Jo and Mary and Tom and saying "these are as good as there is anywhere. You guys are doing a great job" So I felt really good about where the Press was. I was really concerned about the future of the Press and what was going to happen when I retired. I had to retire for my mental and physical health. There was no option. I had to. And I knew, and I had struggled with it for years, 'cause I'd seen it coming, and especially then on the heels of Ballot Measure 5, that whenever—that if I retired there was a real threat that the Press wouldn't continue, and I couldn't have that. So the first thing I had to do was I had to separate the OSU Press from the Office of Publications, so that before I retired there had to be someone that was just director of the Press, not of Publications, or else there wasn't going to be another Press director. So I managed to pull that off, and I did that in the course of the whole Measure 5 thing. I said "you know, our budgets are so intertwined it's just"—anyhow, I'll skip a whole bunch of steps, but I did manage to get us separated. And so for the last—I don't know what it was—year or two that I was still working, I was full time OSU Press director and the Office of Publications had its own director. We were still located together, but now officially we were organizationally separate. And I used the whole Measure 5 thing to accomplish that.

So I had that part done but it was still—there was still the threat that if I retired—this was happening all over campus anytime the head of a sort of subsidiary unit of the university retired, it was like "well, do we kill 'em or not?" and sometimes the answer was yes. So I was concerned about that. And I was especially concerned about it because my direct boss at that time was the vice president for whatever they were calling it that week, "University Advancement," I think...didn't give a rip about the Press, and I guess the polite thing would be to say that she and I did not have a relationship of mutual respect. And so I was very concerned. Even more so that if I retired she'd just dump the Press, without a thought. And I'm getting up to the point, it's within a year of when I can retire, and how am I going to deal with this? And I won't go into the circumstances, but she ended [1:30:00] up being essentially on medical leave for a month and I said "this is it," and I went the president and I said "sorry to do the—but Orcilia's out," and he said "yes, it's a very awkward situation, so, so sorry, but that's why I'm doing this. I need to talk to you about this." And so I talked to him about the situation and I said "I really need to retire, and I can't and I won't unless I know that the position will be filled." And Roxanne, bless her heart, and her relationship with Les Risser did not hurt a bit—

CP: This is Paul Risser we're talking about?

JG: This is Paul Risser I'm talking to. And he said "I agree completely, we'll start a search committee right away." And I said "yeah, right away would be really good," because I didn't know when Orcilia was coming back. And so he said "yeah, that's fine," and we talked about who would be good members and he said "I want the provost on the search committee, and which team do you want?" And I got to pick my dean and "okay, this is great." And so as Orcilia came back a few weeks later, and this is *fait accompli*; there's a search committee and "by the way, I'm retiring a year from now," and she said "well, part of that's good," and then, thank God—so that was in about June and we—things grind slowly but they got the job announcement out in, I think, October and sometime in November Paul Risser announced he was leaving, but it was just too far along to stop, and they didn't stop it. And we got an amazing pool of candidates. That was—I felt so good for everybody that was involved in the Press, when I saw the pool of candidates we got. One of the unhappy candidates that I talked to later, I said "I'm not on the committee, I didn't have anything to do with it, but I can tell you that we had eight candidates that were either current or former university press directors. We had eight of them. You're not the only one that didn't get an interview."

JA: Wow.

JG: And the top two I thought were just fabulous candidates. Things don't always turn out the way you think they will, but I think anybody would have agreed, anybody in university press publishing, would have agreed that you've got two really, really outstand—how did a little press like you attract candidates like this?" So that felt really good, and that allowed me to flee out the door at the first moment I could, knowing that at least the Press is going to exist for a while, and had what I thought was the best director that they could ever possibly have. So I felt really good about that. And I tried to use the whole process of the hiring to leverage some additional support for the Press while I had access to the president, which wasn't for very long before he left. I said "this is—now that we've got this pool of candidates, with not very much additional resources, the university, Oregon State University can really have a major university press. I know times are tight, but if you guys can just put a few more bucks into this after I'm out of the way and you've got a competent director, wow. Just stand back." It was a good try. Didn't work. Soon as I went out the door they started cutting the budget more and Jo could tell you what happened there, I fortunately don't know much about it, but I left feeling really good, because they had hired a really big name director that I thought was really going to do an outstanding job, and in the whole course of things I had managed to generate a lot of positive visibility on campus and to try to convey to people that "you know the OSU Press is really a going concern here, and it really does contribute to the wider reputation and visibility of the university." That's what I thought when I went out the door.

JA: Yes. You had done a great job, Jeff. And I think we all felt the same way. The [1:35:00] new director had been director of Georgia University Press—or is that?

JG: That's right.

JA: And...which is a very, very well-respected press in the South. And I think we were sort of amazed. The problem that I saw, and I don't know how other people saw it, was she probably wasn't a good fit for the challenges that were facing her. She had been at a large, successful press with a bigger—much bigger stuff. She came in and there were Jo and Mary and Tom up in Portland doing marketing and she found herself doing what you can only describe as scut work. Trying desperately to catch up with stuff that she was used to having other people do for her and never getting to do what she really needed to do. And how long did she last? Two years, I think. She just told us "I'm not renewing my contract," and in hindsight I don't blame her, but at the time there were a lot of hard feelings that she was just leaving us in the lurch.

CP: Is that—oh, go on.

JA: No, go on, ask the question.

CP: I was going say, is that when the library entered the scene?

JA: Yes, though not—we were just in limbo; without a director for a very long time, just...I think Mary Braun, the acquisitions editor, had the hardest time, because how do you—

JG: How do you attract authors?

JA: Suggest "come to us, we're doing great," when you're, we are, we were in limbo. There was no decision to hire a replacement, there was a group deciding whether we'd get killed or what would happen, and—I mean it was fine for me, I just kept on doing what I was doing, and...yeah, we were all pretty depressed. Again. I mean this whole press has been up and down, up and down. And then we were told that we would move into the library.

CP: Why do you think that there was that kind of lack of support during that time period? I mean the Press had raised its profile to the point where it was kind of a different operation than it had been in the past, was it just part of the kind of larger sweep of the university presses having a hard time?

JA: It may have been that, I don't know. Like I said, for a lot of my time at the Press I just kept my head down and did my job and didn't stress as much as some.

CP: It sounds like connections make a pretty big difference, is what I hear from Jeff.

JA: Mhmm.

JG: Yeah, and that was one of the reasons I felt pretty good about the new director they hired, because from talking to people that knew her from other situations and how things had been at Georgia, I said "you know, that was something I never felt I was good at." I'm a very shy person and I'm not very good at schmoozing and interpersonal connections and political kinds of things, and as I ask people about Karen, I said "how do you think—I think this person needs to be really good at this, because this is a difficult situation." And when I talked to people, I didn't lie about the situation, I mean I didn't paint it as dire, right then it wasn't dire.

JA: It wasn't, no.

JG: But I was honest about what we had gone through and some of the challenges I faced, and what I had done to try to use the hiring process to build a little bit of a platform that someone that was good at stuff that I couldn't do might be able to build on. And I talked to people about both our finalists and they said "you know, I think they—yeah." The people I talked to about Karen, including Dave Gilbert who knew Karen, he said "I think Karen can do that really well."

JA: Yes, yes.

JG: He said "yeah, I know that part of the job has been really hard for you, Jeff, and I think she's a natural at that. I think—and I can see why you're saying that's really important," and he said "I think she'll do great at it."

JA: And you know, I think she did, but I don't know anything [1:40:00] about administration politics. My sense, though, is that there was more of a focus on student retention and working with the students and not being so keen on peripheral things. And that may have been a problem. And yeah, she was clearly so frustrated by the lack of support she had even in the office, doing the work, and my guess is she wasn't getting it from above either...What was the question? Did we answer it? We don't—Jeff doesn't know 'cause he wasn't there and I don't know 'cause I wasn't...I don't know enough people in higher positions to answer.

CP: But enter Karyle Butcher to save the day.

JA: Enter Karyle Butcher, yeah.

CP: Tell me about working with Karyle and then with Faye Chadwell a little bit later, here in the library.

JA: Personally I like them both a lot and personally I have enjoyed working with them both. I think they are both supporters of the Press. Clearly Karyle was a strong supporter of the Press. But you have to face facts that neither of them knew anything about publishing, and so I think Tom's job has had to morph. He became associate director or assistant—I don't know. He's doing a bunch of work that a director would normally do, and...I have not felt this personally, and that is partly because I keep my head down and do my job and have had enough to do that I just sort of went and did it. I know that there are feelings within the Press that being part of a library is not...has provided some tangents that press people are not that happy about. And I'm thinking about things like digital publishing, which, well obviously we need to do e-books

and digital publishing, but free access and things like that, which we as book publishers view content and getting it out to the public in a different way than libraries do. And that probably will go on rubbing a little.

CP: Yeah, just a couple different worlds.

JA: Mhmm, yeah.

JG: Yeah. Yeah, I hadn't thought about that, but yeah when I heard about the Press going to the library, of course I thought well, in the grand scheme of things this is too bad, but knowing that Karyle was the person—I did know Karyle, I'd worked with Karyle on committees in the past and I had a lot of respect for her and I thought "well, at least as long as Karyle's there that this will be good," because she really does care about the Press. She'll see that the Press survives somehow, whatever it takes, and it sounds like that was true, but I hadn't really thought about some of the other sort of cultural differences between—even though we're all people of the book—

JA: —decreasingly so.

JG: Well yeah. People of the word?

JA: People of the content.

JG: Whatever, yeah. Yeah there is a different culture. I hadn't thought about that.

JA: Yes. And one more thing I do want to say, positive about being in the library, is the visibility that both Karyle and Faye have on campus; that they're—in terms of fund raising and keeping profile high on campus, they're doing a great job for the Press. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you.

JG: Yeah, which was something that I never was good at, never would have been good at. So yeah.

JA: Yeah, there's pluses and minuses.

JG: Yeah.

CP: Well I want to sort of conclude by asking you both about some of the projects that you've enjoyed over the years. The books or the authors that have been memorable for you.

JA: For better or worse? [1:45:00]

JG: Yeah.

JA: I have to go to my catalog to think about it, because...

CP: Well one thing you mentioned to me earlier, Jo, was *Fool's Hill*.

JA: Yes, I did.

JG: Yeah, that would be, for just sort of personal experience that would probably be the top of my list, too. Both Jo and I were, I think in the final version you ended up more or less writing, I forget, one of us kind of did the first chapter and one of us did the last chapter, but we were both involved in that. And the author was such a character.

CP: So this was the first memoir that the Press published?

JA: Was it? I don't know.

CP: I believe so.

JG: Yeah, I think so.

JA: But it doesn't, it's not your classic memoir. It's—

JG: No it's not, it's very idiosyncratic.

JA: That's the word. Quirky, yeah.

JG: Well when it first arrived, I saw it before you did.

JA: Did you? Okay.

JG: Yeah, I don't quite remember how that happened, but it came in this enormous box with one of these very wacky letters. I still have a few of his wacky letters that the author wrote. And the working title was *When Whales Throw Up*, and I opened this box and I said "how descriptive," because what was in there was just total chaos, but just brilliant little bits. It was just this, oh what a mess. But I just loved some of this stuff, and both Jo and I got pretty involved in that.

JA: Yeah, he was just such a wonderful character, and the book could not have been written by anybody else. And it was just something to love. There are books that I can respect and admire all the way through the catalog, but that one was a heart book.

Jeff mentioned the Oregon Literature Series, and that was a real, a really major thing that we worked on, that involved a general editor of the series of six books and an editor for each book, and various authors. It was a hugely complex project, and in fact when it was over I got interviewed on the phone by someone for the *Oregonian* who wanted to do an article on it and he said "what was it like working with so many people?" And I said "it was a nightmare!" And I went "Oh God, don't print that." But it was! He did not print it, bless him.

Somebody else I've really enjoyed working with is Brian Doyle. We've published two or—

JG: That was after me.

JA: That was after your time. The first one of his books we did was, he spent a year following around a person at a vineyard and winery, making pinot noir, and that was a fabulous book, but the next one we did with him was of—that was another big step for the Press.

JG: Yeah it was, it was.

JA: Our first novel.

JG: Original novel.

JA: Yes, our first original novel.

CP: This was *Mink River*?

JA: This is *Mink River*, which as you probably know has sold and sold and sold and was a wonderful book for the Press and just working with Brian was a wonderful thing. He's a very—another idiosyncratic writer, tough to edit, but he was happy with what I did and I loved working with him, and then we reprinted one of his books about his son, who was born with a heart defect. That is a heartbreaking little book, I mean his kid made it but Brian—yeah, he's another heart author and I guess those are the people I remember the best.

CP: What was that like for you, editing a piece of fiction versus all the nonfiction you'd worked with?

JA: Scary. I had worked with him before, which was good, so I knew that he was—I mean, have you read any Doyle? He is the master of the long, long, long sentence with very little punctuation in it. And—

JG: An editor's dream.

JA: Yes. And obviously I needed to leave his voice. I guess a lot of what I did was call him up for little errors and question [1:50:00] things. For instance, he had "water sitting in a foxglove." Well, excuse me Brian, but foxgloves sit downwards. That wouldn't have, you know. It was scary and there's actually another novel going to—the second is being

edited as we speak and I'm glad I'm not doing it, because it's a lot easier to edit nonfiction and not have to deal with that voice.

JG: One of the things I agree with—well I didn't get to work with Brian Doyle, I certainly agree with Jo on *Fool's Hill* and the Oregon Literary Series, but another series that I would mention would be the Northwest Reprint Series that the Press did, because I think, personally, it made me way more knowledgeable about Northwest literature and history than I was before, reading things that we did publish in that and others that we didn't publish in that. I'm actually fairly well-read in Northwest stuff these days and I wouldn't have been other than that. And I think it also helped the Press survive when the crunch came, because we had started doing that and those were deliberately seen as trade books; try to broaden the Press's reach and do a certain amount of regional education, and it's a really, really varied bunch of books. But I think it's some of the more important things that the Press has done.

JA: Yeah, I think you're right.

JG: So I think it's been important in a lot of ways and like I say, it helped me become a lot more knowledgeable about the Northwest. I hope it's helped some of the readers out there that way.

JA: Yes, I agree.

CP: Well this has been terrifically illuminating for me. I want to thank you both for your time and generosity. I'm glad that we were able to do this and capture the history of a colorful little corner of the university.

JA: Long may it thrive.

JG: Thank you.

[1:52:23]