



Warner Strausbaugh Oral History Interview, May 12, 2014

Title

“Inside the Barometer Newsroom”

Date

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Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Strausbaugh discusses his upbringing and the path that he took to OSU, which included studying for one year at the University of Oregon. From there he provides detailed insight into the workflow and culture of the *Daily Barometer* student newspaper, speaking from his vantage point as Editor-in-Chief of the publication. In this, Strausbaugh notes the significant time commitment required of those filling his position as well as the responsibilities that the position bears. He illustrates a discussion of the newsroom's response to breaking news by recounting the *Barometer's* reaction to the firing of OSU head basketball coach Craig Robinson in May 2014. He likewise discusses the newspaper's forthcoming move to a new facility in the Student Experience Center and the murky future of the journalism profession.

From there, Strausbaugh answers several questions about contemporary student attitudes and culture at OSU. In doing so, he lends his thoughts on issues of importance to current students as well as social dynamics, technologies, athletics rivalries and perceptions of OSU, both from within and outside of the school.

Interviewee

Warner Strausbaugh

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: All right, Warner, if you could please introduce yourself; give us your name and today's date, and our location?

Warner Strausbaugh: My name is Warner Strausbaugh. I am Editor in Chief of the *Barometer*, and today's date is Monday, May 12th, 2014, and we are in the Valley Library, 5th Floor.

CP: So we are principally going to talk about your role as editor of the *Barometer*, and I will also ask you to talk a little about your sense of the student body here at OSU in 2014. But the first thing I would like you to do is just give us a quick little overview of your life before OSU.

WS: My life? Oh, man.

CP: Your background.

WS: Okay, sum it up in a minute? Let's see; I was born in Bradenton, Florida, and then we lived in California, in Pleasanton, just out of the Bay area. And that's why I have the A's hat on. And then I moved to Oregon in 1999, and lived in Eugene, actually, for most of my life. And then came to Oregon State—actually, I will say I took a year at the University of Oregon before I went to Oregon State. So that's something I don't tell a lot of people, but I guess whoever sees this will know that.

Came to Oregon State, and I had always been interested in sports writing. I ended up being kind of a sucker, following Bill Simmons around, his writing, and just applied for the *Barometer*, and got a job as a sports writer, and worked my way up. And now I'm Editor in Chief. I'm a Political Science major with a minor in New Media Communications. And I have no idea what I'm doing after this, but I think I have a couple of things potentially lined up, so we'll see.

CP: So your first journalism experience was at the *Barometer*?

WS: Mm-hm.

CP: Okay. What—?

WS: Oh, unless you count middle school newspaper, published once a month. I think I wrote a review for *Lost* in that.

CP: [Laughs] What made you decide to come to OSU? What made you decide to transfer from U of O?

WS: It was a lot of things. I went to U of O; actually, what I initially thought I wanted to do was a business sports marketing program. They have the Warsaw Program, which is one that, when *ESPN The Magazine* needs analytics or anything like that, they go through U of O's Warsaw Sports Marketing program. So I was really interested in that. To do that, you have to go through a BA for Business Administration, and I just hated business. I didn't like the classes that I was taking. I wasn't interested.

It's not always the best reason to go, but my really close friends, every single one of them came here, and I was the only one down there. And I had been in Eugene for about ten years at that point. I wanted a change; wanted to do something different, so I decided to come up here and give it a try. And it was more just a feeling than anything, but it paid off.

CP: Did the two campuses feel dramatically different to you?

WS: No, that's one thing that I think—I had never really been a fan of their athletic programs. I mean, I was to a point, but then I got older and didn't really care for their fans, I guess, as much, would be the problem. But no, that's something that a lot of people say, and a lot of people have dead-set that U of O and OSU are different, and they're not. And I'm actually here for Political Science, which the Political Science program of U of O is, by most accounts, better. But, you know, the campuses are similar.

I think the people are a little different. I think that's just more a product of Eugene versus Corvallis, not necessarily what the people were like when they came to school. But Eugene is a lot different from Corvallis. But I mean, they're both pretty similar schools. It's just one's focused on one thing, one's focused on another, but as far as the people and the quality of the classes, it's about the same.

CP: Mm-hm. So, tell me a little bit about life as a beat reporter. What sports did you cover?

WS: So, I've covered football, baseball, gymnastics, softball, women's golf when I first started, and I guess that's it. But I've done football for three years, and this is my second year doing baseball. And it's a lot of fun. I think there's a lot to it. To be in the beat, I mean, you have to know everything. You have to know, especially football. You have to know the fourth-string quarterback. You have to know who's on the scout team. You have to know who the incoming freshmen are. You have to know what scenario's going to happen. I mean, not necessarily in that detail, but you have to know the whole team, and you have to cover what's unique about it. Here, when I was covering women's golf, I was the only one doing anything. [0:04:58]

But when you cover football, you have Paul Buker from the *Oregonian*, you have Cliff Kirkpatrick from the *Gazette-Times*. You have KEZI, KMTR, KVAL. So, everyone in the state is covering them - the *Register-Guard*, the *Salem Statesman Journal*. So everyone's covering them. And so it's unique, in that this is something where we don't allow training. I mean, the editors of the *Barometer* are the closest thing we have to journalism professors, because we don't have a journalism school. And so when you're out there, you're learning from them, but you're also competing with them in a way, although I think our audiences are a little different, as far as what kind of readership we get and what kind of readership the *Oregonian* gets. But it's still in that mindset of: we're trying to get these stories out there first, and we're trying to get a better take on the story, and whatnot.

So, it's a lot of fun. And I've been lucky enough that the football team went to the Alamo Bowl, and the baseball team went to the College World Series in my time here. Those are probably two of my favorite things I've done in my life, especially the College World Series, because that was ten days. When they weren't playing they were practicing. Me and Andrew Kilstrom, who's our sports editor now, we were covering—probably writing about two or three stories a day. We were taking our own photos, which was new for us. And a shout out to myself: my photo actually won a regional and a state award from Omaha. [Laughs] So, I give myself a pat on the back, because photographers always think they know better. [Laughs] But, yeah, no, it's a lot of fun, and, I mean, I'm a huge baseball fan, so covering the baseball team's great.

CP: Uh-huh. Do you sit in the press box for both baseball and football?

WS: Yeah. Football, every time. Baseball, it's kind of different because we only print Monday through Friday, so we don't necessarily—for bigger games, for post-season, we'll cover every game, but for the UCLA series we're not putting out a game recap for Friday and Saturday's games. So if I go Friday and Saturday, I usually do sit in the stands, but Sunday I'll sit in the press box.

CP: What is it like to sit in the press box for a football game? You're next to some pretty well-known journalists.

WS: Yeah. At first, it was very intimidating, but like I said, I've done it three years now, so I'm actually the person who's covered the Beavers the longest of anyone who's covering them currently, so that's kind of cool. But at first it was intimidating, but I don't really think anything of it. I'm used to it.

CP: No cheering in the press box, right?

WS: Of course, unless the University of Washington's coming; they're terrible.

CP: Really?

WS: Yeah. There's this guy [laughs], a radio personality that's somewhat famous; he's syndicated on Comcast Sportsnet. He doesn't listen to that. And they don't kick him out. Like they say—they say, "If you do, we'll kick you out." But yeah, U-Dub's not very neutral.

CP: The other thing I wanted to ask you about in terms of being a beat reporter was, athletes themselves and coaches become celebrities of sorts. In fact, they can become national-level celebrities.

WS: Mm-hm.

CP: And also, the intimidation factor I would assume is there for a young reporter as well?

WS: Yeah, it was at first. My first year covering it was James Rodgers' senior year, and he definitely—you know, he had national notoriety, not quite as much as his brother, but yeah, it was still there. And he would big-time the reporters, and not talk to them at certain times, or pretend he was stretching for 45 minutes until we all left, if some requested him. But yeah. No, I mean, again, it's just like the press box thing; it's something I'm used to.

And you know, to be honest, the first year I covered the team was the year they went 3-and-9. They didn't really have anyone that was at that level, and I think in my time covering football at least, the coach was the only guy that's ever really gotten to that level. I mean, I guess Jordan Poyer, too, not so much with his pro career, but with his college career. He was a first-team All-American.

But yeah, it is kind of nice being the student reporter, because I think they're more willing to trust you, and that's something I try really hard to build up. I mean, that's another thing, going back to your question on being a beat reporter, is you have to build up those relationships, because there are times when you want something or you need something, and having someone you can count on is a huge plus.

CP: How about your interactions with coaches? Coach Riley and Pat Casey?

WS: Yeah. Andrew and I, we've covered the team together for two years, and we always joke because Riley will—he'll remember our name for a while, and then all of the sudden he'll—because somebody answers questions, he'll use the name. So he'll say, he'll be like, "You know, one thing about that, Chris, is that—." And so he'd do that with us, and then there would be some point where he would stop doing it and so he'd forget. So, no, Coach Riley's great. He's great with the media. I mean, he totally just embraces that this is the job, dealing with the media is part of it. [0:10:01] He knows he's going to be asked tough questions, but he also is really honest. I mean, I remember the Washington game this last year, and I've never seen him like that. I mean, he was shell-shocked, but he was very honest.

And then Coach Casey, on the other hand, he keeps it short and brief. He'll be even more honest, but he makes it clear that he doesn't like talking to the media, so. But yeah, I mean, both of them are—they're both good. They're obviously great coaches. I enjoy both of them.

CP: As somebody who's been around the department for a while, what is your sense of OSU athletics, where it's been, and where it's heading? It's been a little tumultuous lately.

WS: Yeah. I think [laughs], I'm trying to think if I need to keep my mouth shut here. Let me get a drink here. [Pauses]

CP: You can speak in general terms if you'd like.

WS: I think one thing that's definitely apparent at OSU is they're striving to be an elite program. And I think a lot of that, to be honest, has to do with the U of O and their success on the field, excuse me, and off the field, just with all of the buildings they've got, all of the national attention they have. I think it is kind of a lot of little-man syndrome, maybe.

But I think one thing I really do like about the Athletic Department is they do hold integrity higher than a lot do. And I can say that without feeling that there might be doubts, that I might be naïve in saying that. I really do believe that. And yeah, I think sometimes the difference between a 12-win football team and an 8-win football team is maybe those guys were willing to do a little extra [laughs], to get to the 12 wins. But you know, we hold them very high, and they do; they do a lot of things well.

But I think that it's still not anywhere near an elite program, and that takes time to build up. But I think if you compare where it is now to where it was 20 years ago, that leap would be getting into that elite program in the next 20 years. So it could be done.

CP: Well, tell me a little bit more about the process by which you became an Editor in Chief of the *Barometer*.

WS: Yeah. So yeah, it's been more than three and a half years now I've been with the *Barometer*. So yeah, I started as a sports reporter. The first article I ever did was on the men's rowing team, and covered, did a couple on them. And then I kind of slowly built my way up in the hierarchy, I guess, of sports reporters. And then after my first year, that summer, there was kind of a mass exodus, and it just left me and the sports editor. So then, that's when I got kind of thrown into the fire to do football. That was after I'd done softball.

And I actually—this is an interesting thing, but when he asked me to do football, there was a Tuesday press conference that they don't do anymore, because they're trying to become an elite program and not give media as much access as they used to. And it was Tuesday, and I had to have a block from 11 am to 3 pm ready. And I had a class from 10 to 12 and 12 to 2, or something. So I completely rearranged my schedule for football. And he was like, "I can't believe you did that." [Laughs] I just wanted to do it! We reprioritize things at the *Barometer* sometimes to a point that's not good for us, but. And now I'm just starting to worry: how is this going to look? Oh, jeez!

CP: [Laughs]

WS: But yeah, so I covered football and kept sports writing. And then eventually, after we had a change in leadership, I was the sports editor. And I interviewed for it and I got it. And then I was the sports editor from Fall 2012 until February 2013, and then I became the managing editor, which is the *de facto* number two in the newsroom. And then after that, I applied to be editor in chief, and went in front of the student media committee to interview. I was given the position.

CP: So what are your duties now? How do they differ from when you were a managing editor?

WS: [Laughs] I hate that you asked that. Well, I actually got rid of the managing editor position, because I think there wasn't enough responsibility for the two. But essentially, oh man! [Laughs] But the editor in chief is in charge. I think the biggest difference, I would say, is the managing editor is strictly in the newsroom [0:15:00], just dealing with production, with content, and with copy editing, and stuff like that, whereas the editor in chief has to do things like this—not that I was forced to do this.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: And deal with complaints, deal with kind of big-picture student media-wide things. I have handfuls of meetings that I have to go to every week—stuff like that. Stuff that goes outside of the production, I think, is where the difference is.

CP: Is there a faculty advisor that you have to lean on?

WS: We had a print advisor. Her name is Kate Wilson. She was there from November or October, excuse me, 2012, until February? But she's at *Willamette Week* now, and so we've been in a kind of transitional phase, but they're in the process of hiring someone for fall term.

CP: Uh-huh. So there's a lot of responsibility?

WS: Yeah.

CP: What sort of hours are you working?

WS: Well, let's see. Well, it depends, because I also really like covering the beat of football and baseball, so. When I'm doing—one thing I decided to do this term was take two online classes, which is getting bad, because sometimes I forget they exist. But when I was covering football it was, I had class from 12 to 4, Monday and Wednesday, and from 12 to 2, and then 4 to 6, Tuesday-Thursday. So that was my class schedule. Football practice ran from 11 to 1, or no, from, is it 11 to 1? Yeah, 11 to 1. So, as you can tell, that kind of overlapped with my classes, but I'll leave it at that.

So I would do that. I would go at least once between once or twice a week this last year. Friday is pretty much all meetings, so I never schedule class for Fridays. And then production depends. If I'm writing, I'll get in there as soon as I'm done with class. And if I don't have class, I'll get in there around 3, probably, if I'm writing. If not, then probably 4. And

we're there until between, at the earliest—I think the earliest we ever got done was 9, and the latest I've ever been there was 2:30. So, anywhere between there. I would say spring, this term, we've actually been going really fast, but I'd say on average in my years being, working on the editorial staff, I'm probably averaging about 11 to 11:30. So.

CP: Are the Friday meetings planning for next week? Is that how you typically—?

WS: No, we have different meetings for that. [Laughs] We have a news meeting that's Monday, and then we have a sports meeting that's Friday, although I don't usually go to the sports meeting. But so those two, and then we have meetings that consist of all the student leaders, the student media, so *Prism*, TV, FM and Yearbook. And then I'm currently on the student media search committee to find the new editorial advisor for the *Barometer*. And then the sports meeting's also on Friday, so anywhere between two and three meetings on Fridays.

CP: Give me a sense of the culture of the newsroom, sort of what a typical day might look like.

WS: Yeah. It's interesting. I mean, I spend more time with them than I do with anyone else in my life. You know, it's a fun group. We get along well, but the newsroom is a tough place to work. I've had to be disciplinary when I've needed to, and say that we can't do this for these reasons. But a typical day? I mean, do you want kind of like just the breakdown of, like, the workflow?

CP: Sure.

WS: Yeah. So, we start, and I kind of designed our staff this year based on who we had, so it's a little atypical for a professional newsroom, I would say. But so we start; we have three section editors. We have Sports, News and Forum. And so things start with them, on working with the writers, and checking their stories into our system. And then from there we have our online editor, and she copy edits everything. Me and her are the only two that actually copy edit the entire paper every day. So she copy edits everything, and then when she's done we have a spreadsheet system, so we know who's all done whatever responsibilities. And then once a section editor and online editor have read everything, then I will go through and copy edit everything that's been read. [0:19:58]

And then once I copy edit it, then we start doing the workflow for the online, for the website. So basically, once it's passed those three checkmarks, the online editor will start putting stories up online. And then from there, we also have our photographers coming in, checking photos, and we have the section editors picking out which photos we want to run. And then our only adult—I guess we're all adults, technically, but the only non-student that works there, she's our paginator, and she's the one who puts together the pages and designs them.

So we'll have a layout meeting for news where me and Megan, our news editor, and Markie, who's our paginator—I guess that's not the title they use here, but that's the title they use in the real world, so that's what I would say—where we'll get through and go over every story, what photos we have. We also have someone who's just dedicated to graphics, so if you want a graphic for something, but we usually plan that out more in advance than that. But just page design: what do we want on top? What do we want running down the side? The rail, it's called, and there's a lot of newspaper lingo I'll try not to use, because no one knows what I'm talking about. [Laughs]

And so then once I've copy edited everything, online editors copy edit everything, section editors have checked all of the stories, all of the photos are in, the pages are laid out. We also have to have wire stories to fill out the page, because we still print five days a week and can't conceivably fill it out every single day. At that point, we go through; we have all of the pages on our program. We go through the photo captions, subheads, headlines, making—it's kind of one big puzzle, one exhilarating puzzle every night, to make it work, make it good, make it interesting, so.

CP: And then where is it printed?

WS: It's actually printed in Albany. I can't remember the actual.

CP: At the *Democrat-Herald*?

WS: Yeah, I think that's where, and I think the GT prints there, too. What is it called? Something really boring like Newspaper Print, or something. But yeah, it prints in Albany, where—I'm not sure it's at the *Democrat-Herald*, but.

CP: And then do students pick it up from Albany?

WS: Oh, Web Press, it's called.

CP: Do students pick it up from Albany and deliver it?

WS: Yeah. Yeah, so we have a distribution manager, and then we have, I think, just two people who will take them out. They get up at 3 or 4 in the morning, sometimes just two hours after we finished [laughs], and yeah. And our distribution is 7,000, and I don't know how many different ones there are, but it's more than 50 here in town.

CP: So you print 7,000 copies?

WS: Daily, yeah.

CP: And what kind of readership are you seeing online?

WS: Online is not great. On a big story, we'll have a couple thousand hits. But I mean, there have been days where the entire paper has been less than a thousand. Our social media presence isn't where it needs to be, but it's not nonexistent, either. But now it is kind of a unique scenario, in that we have more readership in print than—a lot of that's probably because it's free.

CP: I want to go from a typical day to an atypical day, and that was a week ago.

WS: [Laughs]

CP: When it was announced early, it was really early in the morning, that Craig Robinson the basketball coach was going to be fired.

WS: Yeah.

CP: What was that day like for you? How did you react to it? How did the paper react to it?

WS: Yeah. It was funny, I actually—me and our guy who cover the basketball team, Grady Garrett, he's actually the only person who's been here longer than I have. [Pauses] You could get Dr. Pepper to pay for this product placement.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: I woke up from, like, a bad dream. But what I'm saying is Grady and I were notorious for sleeping, well, later than we needed to be sleeping. So yeah, I woke up from, like, a bad dream or something, at 7:30, and I had two texts on my phone. Oh my God, Robinson's fired! So that was probably the only instance where I'd ever call him at 7:30 in the morning, and call two times, and texted him. "Wake the F up! Robinson was fired!" So from that point on, I immediately went to our web, our back end for the web, and just put out a brief. And I hate, I really hate reporting on other people reporting, but in that instance the judgment call was that it's necessary. So did that, kept it short, and from that point then I reached out to the sports information directors. One of them was at Disneyland, so he didn't know what was going on. [0:25:00] And one of them didn't get back to me. And Grady's roommate screamed at him; he said he thought his house was on fire or something.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: So he was up. So we were communicating back and forth, but at that point it was just kind of a waiting game, to get a confirmation to find out exactly what was going on, because in the modern world of journalism, all we had to go on was *Sports Illustrated* saying a source with knowledge of the situation had said that Craig Robinson was fired. You know, 10 years ago, no one would have done anything with that. But so, we had that. Then about 10 am, we finally got the press release that they issued, and the sports information director texted me right after that, "Sorry! Yup, he's fired." I was like, "Damn, if he had only texted me 20 minutes earlier!"

But, so we got the press release; updated the story. Then from that point we wanted to meet, because we knew this was going to be the page one story. We knew we were going to have a ton to cover in sports. We knew we wanted a graphic, and we knew we wanted to make it really good. And so then we found out there was going to be a press conference that afternoon at 1:30. So four of us met. It was me, it was Grady, it was Josh Warden, who also covered basketball, and it was Andrew Kilstrom, our sports editor.

And the four of us met and game-planned what we wanted to do. So I was going to take the news story, just a straight news story. Grady was going to write a column for page one, which we've only done twice in my time here, so. But that was something where I thought it was important enough to have opinion on the front. And he's been writing basketball columns for years, so I think he also earned it. And then Josh was going to do the team aspect, breaking down what it meant to the team, what the players are saying.

Going back to being a good beat reporter, Grady has really good ties to a lot of the players, so we got interviews scheduled with Roberto Nelson with Joe Burton. We surprisingly were allowed to interview Langston Morris-Walker, and then there were quite a few who told us no, but that always happens.

And so from there, yeah, we went to the press conference; got all of the quotes. Came back. All three of us started writing immediately, putting stuff on the web as soon as we got it. And then from there, it was what do we want to do with the print version? And kind of our vision initially was what ended up happening. And then the graphic that our graphics editor made was phenomenal, so.

CP: It was. It made a big, a very big impression, I thought. I really enjoyed how you guys illustrated the timeline of his career, using sort of the rhetoric that he and the Athletic Department were using—

WS: Mm-hm. Yeah.

CP: —from year to year.

WS: Yeah.

CP: It was very effective.

WS: Thanks.

CP: So that was your idea from the get-go? I mean, the group's idea?

WS: Yeah, because we were talking first—oh, and then in addition to all of that, I also wrote the editorial for the Forum page, as well. But yeah, we were talking, because we've always talked about how Robinson is the master of excuses, and that you can leave a post-game—well, not me. Our reporters can leave a post-game press conference, and without having looked at the box score, they would have thought the Beavers won every game. And he would unload a lot of the blame onto his players, too. And so we had talked about that.

Grady and I were deciding where we wanted the—because we were going to have two opinion pieces, and one that could have been opinion. And so we were kind of deciding where we wanted all of the angles to go, and then yeah, it was at an early point when we kind of wanted to look at a timeline. And then, yeah, one of us said, "You know, hey! We could go through and find quotes." Most of the stories would come from us anyway, so that would be easy for us to find, and just kind of go through.

That graphic is a lot of conversations outside of the newsroom we've had for more than a year, two years now. That was something that we knew right away, well, we know what this is going to look like and we know it's going to be pretty telling, so.

CP: Well, I'm sure that that was a memory you will hold onto from the *Barometer*. I'm wondering about other favorite memories or stories that you're proud of, from your time at the *Barometer*?

WS: Yeah. Memories: definitely the two times I travelled, the Alamo Bowl and the College World Series. Just the College World Series, especially, because it had a great mix of it being a lot of fun, but also being a great work opportunity, because for the Alamo Bowl we ended up only being there for 40 hours total. [0:29:59] So we didn't do any coverage outside of the game; it was pretty quick. We did photo and video and all of that, but it was just for the game, for after the game; nothing before the game.

But with the College World Series it was just a ton of, every day, you're waking up at 9 and you're immediately starting something—going to practice, taking photos at practice, taking photos of practice, taking photos of games, and coming up with different stories, different notebook ideas. We even wrote three or four features while we were there, too. So that, just the mix of it, being a really fun time and being a great work experience, is I think why it's my favorite, and because I've always wanted to go to the College World Series anyway.

Favorite stories? My favorite story is definitely one I wrote Fall Term, 2012. It was on Michael Beaton. He was an Oregon State football player. He quit the team, and I had an acting class with him. [Laughs] I took it just for fun. Brandin Cooks was actually in that class for a day, then he dropped out. But that would have been highly entertaining. And yeah, at a certain point I was just wondering, what's this guy's story? And so eventually after class one day, I went up to him and asked, "Hey, I've covered the football team. I remember you. I was just wondering why you quit." Because there was nothing online. It was just for personal reasons was the only thing given.

And he just came out right, and said, like, "I have depression, and football was a big part of that, a big detriment on my mental health." And he loved acting, and his major was Theatre Arts, and he had to quit a bunch of shows because of football. And so it was just this big struggle for him, really, his whole time at OSU, and then he quit. And that was a story I worked on for a long time, and I ended up getting a national award for that, too. So that's definitely my favorite story I've done.

CP: Well, the *Barometer* is located in Snell Hall, which is sort of an infamous location at this point. The Student Experience Center is being built right next door to this library right now.

WS: Yeah.

CP: I wonder what your thoughts are on the impact it's going to be moving into that space?

WS: I think as far as interest goes, I think it will be a lot better. I think there will be a lot more interest in working in Student Media in general, because it will be a big new building. And I'm sure plenty of people involved will brag about the new building, and want to show it off and everything. And as far as impact within the *Barometer* itself, it will be interesting because actually every medium is going to be on the same floor, in the same space. So that's going to be—it's going to be tough. I think it'll pay off, but I think it could be a steep learning curve [laughs] for everyone to work together.

CP: Just because they're not used to being around each other?

WS: Right, yeah. We've had collaboration efforts with TV and radio, and it's hard to get everyone on the same page. It's hard for everyone to know what their responsibilities are, but also what everyone else's responsibilities are, and try to put out a package that—that we want, that's actually something we can use to say, "Look, this could have just been print, but we enhanced it." But that goes with everything, too. Collaboration is a hard thing to do.

CP: Well, journalism is a field that's changed drastically in the last 10 or 20 years. I wonder what your thoughts are on the future that lies ahead for the *Barometer*?

WS: For the *Barometer*? Yeah. One thing that's unique about the *Barometer* is that we're not predicated on ad sales to survive. You know, a lot of our revenue does come from advertising and from the money that comes from there, but we also are a student fee-funded organization as well. So I think that the panic going on, layoffs, and the *Oregonian*—they're not broadsheet anymore. They're going four days a week. They just have an O; they don't have a masthead. It's kind of sad to watch. And actually, when I was in Omaha, one of the guys got fired right when I was there, so that was tough to see. But [laughs] yeah.

No, I think with the *Barometer*, and I think with college journalism, I think there's a tendency to lump us in with the professional ranks, but I don't think it's the same situation. I think that a student newspaper is going to be sustainable. I mean, right off the bat, we're producing a product that's free. [0:35:00] So if we're concerned about money, and we're looking at all of these other ones saying they're tanking with money, then I think there's a little too much confusion with that. Because, I don't know; I think it's all just becoming a trend to overreact [laughs] to what's going on with everyone else. But the fact that we're not so reliant on getting a profit—in fact, I think we're supposed to break even [laughs]—is something that a lot of people miss. So I think the future of professional journalism is not in a good place, but I think college journalism and the *Barometer*, it'll be fine for a while.

CP: Are you considering pursuing a career in journalism, as murky as it is?

WS: Mm-hm. Yeah. No, I love it. I think it's the best job in the world. Yeah. No, I mean, it'll be interesting. I think one thing that people miss is that it's become kind of the death of journalism; there's just these phrases that people love to say about it. And I think the difference is that print journalism may be going away, but there will always be a demand for good quality journalism.

And people concerned that blogs are going to overtake journalism are dead wrong, because once, hypothetically, we end up in a world 30 years from now where there's the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* and nothing else, except for the *East Oregonian* in Pendleton, or something. And then everything else is just a bunch of crap on the internet. Well eventually, there's going to be backlash against that, and then credible journalism will once again come back into the fold.

I don't think that'll happen, but I think there is a demand for good journalism, good reporting, and finding our news the best way. I think it's become easier to take the most credible sources seriously. I think the real journalists have been a cause for that too, because everyone is giving into what's going on, so I think everyone's to blame for it. [Laughs] I don't think you can just blame blogs or the internet on it. I think it's how you react to it that's ultimately most important, and I don't think people have been reacting logically as much. Yeah. I mean, I love the job.

I was in Pendleton for an internship and I covered a ton of news, because the city reporter quit my second week and so I ended up being the city reporter for my ten weeks there. And I only did a couple of sports things, but I loved it. I thought it was super interesting, and I never thought so much news could happen in Pendleton! [Laughs] But I love sports too. So, I don't know, I just, I love the job, and I think it's one of the most important things, even though it might be one of the most thankless jobs there are. [Laughs] So, I'm going to try.

CP: I'm going to ask you a little bit more about your OSU experience, and then we'll talk about the student body a little bit. How has your academic experience been here?

WS: It's been good. You know, I'll be honest in saying that the *Barometer* kind of takes precedence when I'm doing it so much, but the College of Liberal Arts has been good to me, and I like Political Science. A lot of people ask, "What are you going to do with that?" And I say, "I got educated with it. The only thing practical right away, if I end up covering city hall or something, then I guess it might be practical. But I don't think my degree would have made any difference in my getting that gig." [Laughs] But you know, it's enjoyable.

The reason I do it is because—or the reason I'm in Political Science is just because I think it's interesting, and I like to learn about those things. And I'm not going to get a gig without a degree probably, so. Or maybe, who knows? Maybe I just wasted a bunch of money. We'll see. But, yeah. No, it's been enjoyable. I like OSU. I really like the campus, and I've had good experiences with most of my professors. And, yeah.

CP: Do you think that your perspective or your future would be appreciably different if you had gone to a journalism program?

WS: Yeah, mostly because I don't know if I would have gotten into it. I was at U of O for a year, and I never was interested in doing that, or going to *The Emerald*. I heard right off the bat - it was just from one person that could have been totally wrong; I don't know. But they said you had to go through two years of journalism school before you could

even apply to work at *The Emerald* [0:40:00], which baffles me now that I've seen *The Emerald* and worked with them. [Laughs]

But yeah, so I don't know. I was never into it for journalism. It honestly started as a hobby, and I just, I like sports, and I liked writing, so I thought I'd put the two together, and yeah. So I definitely think it would have been a very different scenario. I don't know if I would have been having anything comparable to this happen.

CP: Yeah. How about your social experience at OSU?

WS: Yeah. No, it's been great. I have met a lot of people, and I was a shy dude in high school, so I guess fill in the cliché, but I broke out of my shell. But yeah, I still have a pretty close group of friends, but I've met a lot of people. I've met a ton of people working at the *Barometer*, obviously. And yeah, I mean, it's not something I brag about, about how great my social experience was, but it was good, and I'm happy with the relationships I've formed.

CP: Yeah. What is your sense of where OSU is heading as a university? Things have certainly changed an awful lot in the time you've been here.

WS: Yeah. It's interesting. I mean, I think it does kind of correlate to what we were talking about with the athletic program, that I think the university is trying to distance itself, as something that can be considered elite. I mean, obviously as far as our grant money goes, we are elite. As far as our Engineering program, and Forestry, and Agriculture, we are too. But you know, we're still just a state school in Oregon, and it's still lumped in more with Washington State than it is with UCLA. I think the university is trying to distance itself from kind of just that run-of-the-mill state school mindset, and I think that still, once again, has a lot to do with what the U of O does. But yeah, no, there's a ton of construction, a ton of new buildings. I think campus will look beautiful. I think it's a little overwhelming and kind of exhausting right now, but I'm sure it will pay off, as far as getting new students, more diverse students, whatever quota they want to meet.

CP: Yeah. Well, this project is being oriented towards the sesquicentennial of OSU in 2018, so we've been talking to alumni from all different generations from the 1930s on, and asking them kind of to give us a sense of their experience, and their perception of what life was like at the time. And now I'm talking to current students, including you, and asking them to give us a sense of what life is like right now.

WS: Hm.

CP: As sort of a time capsule. So I'm going to ask you to try to put yourself in the position of the student body, as unfair as that is.

WS: Okay.

CP: To generalize about some of this stuff. The first thing I would ask you is, what issues do you think are important to OSU students these days?

WS: I don't know. OSU students these days, or students these days. I won't just say OSU students, but I think students just like to whine.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: I think people in this time are—I think a lot of people have enabled us to be allowed, and able, and willing to whine. I think generally what students are concerned about right now? Parking.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: It's all selfish concerns, you know. "Well I can't find a parking spot, so I'm going to have to complain about the parking problem." There's been a lot of stuff about race, and hate speech. That's not something I'm saying they're whiny or selfish about, but that's been a big issue recently. I don't know. I don't think there's anything really dramatic going on. I mean, there are things that are made dramatic, but I don't think there's anything meaningfully dramatic going on. Construction? It's been troublesome for people.

CP: It seems that your generation of student is facing a much more difficult economic situation than even mine did, though.

WS: Okay.

CP: That's one sense that I have.

WS: This is true. Yeah, I mean—

CP: The cost of education is high.

WS: Yeah.

CP: And the job market is perhaps getting a little better, but it was pretty grim for a while.

WS: Sure. Sure, that's a good point. Thank you for making me not sound too much like an ass on this thing.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: Yeah. Financial—definitely. Financial issues, I'm sure, and jobs, just because—I think with the finances [0:45:00] it's all relative to the time. It goes up every year, so if you're talking about going up from 1200 to 1300 back in, I don't know, the '60s, or whenever tuition cost 1200 dollars, that was just as dramatic as going from 8200 to 8600, or whatever it's going to now. So I think it's all relative, but I mean, certainly finding a job is hard. My cousin went to Rochester Institute of Technology. It's a big school and he's working at Target right now. He can't find a job. So, no, I certainly know that exists. But I don't know! [Laughs]

CP: I prefaced all of this by saying these questions are completely unfair.

WS: [Laughs]

CP: The next question is unfair. What do students do for fun? The answer to this has probably been the same from generation to generation, but what do OSU students do for fun these days?

WS: Drink, smoke pot, go to the bars, go to sporting events.

CP: Where do they hang out?

WS: Where do they hang out? Let's see, the weekend at midnight, Impulse or Peacock. On a sunny day, the river or they'll lay in the grass in the MU quad. On a rainy day, they'll sit at home and do homework, or go to the library. By the way, the library's a terrible place to study; I'll tell you that right now. It's great for finding books. No one—I don't think people know that books are here. Yeah, just wandering around for 30 minutes trying to find a table.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: But, yeah. No, a lot of students come to the library to study or to find a table. Let's see, what else? I'd say as far as sports go, it's only really football. Goss is pretty weak for students; it really bugs me. Not a lot of students go to baseball games unless it's like 85 degrees out. I've been told I'm cynical, by the way.

CP: [Laughs]

WS: I wonder if that's telling.

CP: Are there events outside of sporting events that you feel are important to the student body? Or is that pretty much the main unifying?

WS: Yeah, not really.

CP: Once upon a time, student government was a really big deal, but it's nowhere near that anymore.

WS: Yeah. [Laughs]

CP: How would you characterize the importance of the Greek system these days?

WS: That's a little loaded. Importance to whom?

CP: Well, the status of the Greek system on campus. I didn't mean it to be a loaded question.

WS: Oh, the importance to me? The importance to the students? The importance to administration?

CP: Once upon a time it was very much a dominant piece of student culture. I wonder if it's still that way?

WS: I think it can be. It certainly can be for us at the paper. We wrote an editorial last year saying the Greeks shouldn't have an exception to the first-year experience, and set a still-standing record for page views in a day. And we got like 19 letters to the editor the next day. So, the Greek system certainly is very good at being unified. We talked about if there's anything students are unified in, and I don't think there's anything besides going to Reser Stadium and getting drunk. I do admire how unified the Greeks can be, even though my only personal examples are when it's unified in attacking me and the paper I work at. [Laughs]

But yeah, it's certainly large enough to be relevant. It is relevant. I think it's sort of—maybe compared to when you were a student, it might be a little more isolated than it is now. I mean, not as dominant for everyone else. But it's also different for me, because it was a lot more prevalent when I was younger, when my friends wanted to go to parties at Greek houses, or I would be walking through the quad as a young kid that they were trying to recruit, or whatever. So I mean, maybe for me now it's not as important, but maybe for the younger, the freshmen and sophomores now, it is. I'm not sure.

CP: One thing that's changed dramatically from generation to generation on this campus, and probably every campus, is technology. I wonder if you could talk a bit about what kinds of technologies are important to students these days.

WS: Cell phones. Everyone's on their cell phone. Yeah, I mean, everyone—the person on the phone is more important than the person in front of you these days. [0:50:00] It's interesting. You walk through campus, and can count probably 30 percent of the people are mindlessly walking. I mean, I think, certainly school is all based on the internet and computers, and the programs that they design for you to do, so that's obviously important. But I mean, as far as which technology is important? It's your cell phone; it's your Facebook. It's your Twitter; it's your texting. It's just everyone is wired, plugged into their phones. [Laughs]

CP: But not actually talking into them.

WS: No, just texting. It's easier. It's lazy. It's just a way to—I mean, it is interesting, because it allows us to talk to people that we wouldn't normally talk to. But we're also only doing it because we can just go, type in a couple of buttons, and make it easy. If you're actually going to call your grandma, then who would take the time to do that? But if you text, and your grandma texts like mine does, then yeah, you can text your grandma.

CP: [Laughs] Well, this sort of segues a little bit into the next question, and that's the role of social media for students.

WS: Yeah. It's really interesting, and I mean, I think it's especially relevant at the *Barometer*. Sorry, that's one thing. I know you're asking non-work questions.

CP: That's fine.

WS: But that's the problem with working here, is that it consumes me and so I end up talking about it in some capacity. But, yeah. No, it is very interesting. Yesterday, Ben Wetzler—we found out Ben Wetzler got arrested, put it on Twitter, and within minutes we had seven retweets, one of which was Comcast Sportsnet Northwest. Then that got us a bunch of other stuff, and six followers and all of that, when if we had just put the story online, and didn't put it on Facebook, didn't put it on Twitter, then a lot of people wouldn't [laughs] have even seen it, from us at least. Twitter, especially in the news, it's just—that is how I think more people get their news than anything. And I know there have been surveys and studies done that actually say that.

But yeah, I think everyone stays connected through Facebook. I mean, that's more on a personal level as far as family, and friends that are distances away, and organizing stuff. I mean, everything's organized on Facebook now. Social movements organize on Facebook now. We had that whole long editorial about slacktivism. I'm not a fan of that, but I'm kind of old-school, I guess is what is all coming out of this.

So Facebook's how you stay connected, and Twitter is how you get your news. And I think both those two are incredibly important. And I think Instagram is just for fun. I think people get over it in a couple of months.

CP: [Laughs] Well, you're particularly well poised to comment on this. How would you characterize the nature of rivalry with the University of Oregon?

WS: [Laughs] Oh, boy. What do I want to say? I don't want people to hate me. Not that I'm going to say that I like the Ducks more, because I don't. But I think—all right, let me give you an analogy. You like baseball?

CP: Yeah.

WS: So you know what Yankees and Red Sox is like. Do you know what it was like before 2004?

CP: Yeah.

WS: Before they won it? It was the Yankees; they beat up on the Red Sox, and the Red Sox are these—

CP: Had never won for a long time.

WS: Yeah, true. Yeah, they won three in a row, '04, '05. But especially the Red Sox, 2003 they had game seven and they lost. In 2001, they went to the—or no, it was 1999 ALCS; Yankees won. And the Red Sox always had this long history. Anyways, point being, the Red Sox fans—they ended up hating the Yankees more than they liked their own team. They ended up hating anything to do with the Yankees, because the Yankees always beat them. And you know, the Yankees fans, I'm sure, are total jerks, but still it got to a point where it went too far. The hate had gone too far, and then the Red Sox fans were just kind of these fledgling sort of pathetic group that always lost to the Yankees. And they could never beat them, and then they would always—they had more fun rooting for the Marlins in the World Series than they did for the Red Sox throughout the playoffs. And that's kind of my analogy for Ducks and Beavers. [0:55:00] I think the Ducks got so good so fast, and Beavers fans resented that. And so I think that while the Ducks fans were ass—can I say asshole? They were assholes.

CP: Say whatever you want.

WS: And I experienced that first-hand living in Eugene. That's actually what—I wasn't even a Beaver fan. I just wasn't a fan of either team for a while, until I came here. Well, I guess I'm technically not a fan, because I'm a sports reporter and I stay neutral, but yeah. And then the hate got [laughs]—the hate just got too far, and the Ducks fans, being jerks, started it, but then it became so bad, and Beaver fans became so consumed with it, that I think the Beavers fans almost look worse. [Laughs]

CP: Do you feel like this is what's going on with the student body at this point? That's how it kind of manifests itself?

WS: Yeah, I definitely think it's diminished. I think when the Ducks went to the national championship that year, especially, was when it hit its peak. Because that was the year they came here, and the Beavers had a team that could have potentially beat them, and they had the lead at the end of the first quarter, and by the end of it they ended up losing by 17. But I think it hit its peak. I think people are kind of over it. But I also don't know that many people. But for the amount of people I know, I feel educated saying that's the case.

CP: [Laughs] Well, an issue that OSU has struggled with for most of its history is diversity. I know that's something that the administration has certainly made an effort to try to improve. I wonder what your sense is of the climate for students of color these days, and just kind of the approach to diversity that OSU is taking?

WS: Yeah. I don't want to comment too much on that. I don't feel as comfortable commenting on that, just because I don't want to speak for administration. I think speaking for the students is somewhat manageable. But it's very clear that that's something that's on the forefront. It's something that I would say is well-marketed as something that they want to pursue. I'm sure they're following up with that.

Obviously, one area in particular they've done well in is getting international students. So, I think that's something that they said they were going to do five or six years ago, and they did it. The number of international students has increased, I think, by like 400 percent, or something like that. That's probably not accurate, but from something like a few hundred to like 2,500. So that's been impressive. I think it's clear that there's a conscious effort to do that. Oh, man, I've got to sneeze. But I don't necessarily know what it's going to look like in the future.

CP: Yeah. Well, my last question is one about perception. I am wondering what you might say about how OSU students perceive their school, and how people from the outside are perceiving OSU these days?

WS: Yeah. I think, I think those two are definitely different. I mean, I think OSU students are generally happy with the school. I think it's a solid school. It's never going to be like Berkeley or UCLA, or anything like that, but it's also one that's rising in its prominence. And I think the outside perception is still—I mean, it's still, as weird as it sounds, it's still, "Oh, a bunch of farmers and lumberjacks." And it baffles me that people still think that, but they do. And it's probably done in joking, but I really think a lot of people think that.

I think a lot of people outside of Oregon don't know anything about OSU. But I think people that went to U of O, or are from Portland or something, still kind of think this is the most blue-collar school the world's ever seen [laughs], and it's really not. There are focuses in that, but I guess that's like OSU students saying U of O is a bunch of hippies. I guess it's the same thing, because that's not really the case either. [Laughs] But no, I think the perception right now with the school is that there's a lot going on. I think construction and parking, and all of these things that are getting in the way of peoples' day-to-day life is bothering them, but I think overall the school has made pretty big strides, I'd say, in the last ten years.

CP: Well, Warner, I want to thank you for giving us a little peek at certainly the culture of the *Barometer*, and doing our best to try to get a sense of where OSU students are these days. I appreciate it.

WS: Cool. Yeah, thank you. [1:00:04]