



## Dick Weinman Oral History Interviews, January 28, 2015

### **Title**

“The Thin Edge of Dignity”

### **Date**

January 28, 2015

### **Location**

Weinman residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

### **Summary**

In his second interview, Weinman details the building of a new student broadcast facility in Snell Hall during the 1970s, the genesis of OSU's New Media Communications program, and his involvement with a variety of campus symposia focusing on social issues in the media, many of which resulted in visits to the OSU campus of high profile speakers. He also notes his involvement with the production of a video on sexual harassment, his professional travels in Russia and Eastern Europe, and his participation in a series of workshops sponsored by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

As the session nears its end, Weinman reflects on his wife's passing from Alzheimer's disease, and his production of a documentary film titled "You Gotta Start Somewhere." The interview concludes with a discussion of Weinman's current work on a blog and documentary film project titled "The Thin Edge of Dignity," which focuses on his life in assisted living.

### **Interviewee**

Dick Weinman

### **Interviewer**

Janice Dilg

### **Website**

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

## Transcript

**Janice Dilg:** Today is January 28th, 2015. My name is Janice Dilg. I'm the oral historian for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, and I'm here for a second interview with Dick Weinman, at his assisted-living facility in Corvallis, and we're going to continue our earlier interview about his years at OSU and the projects that he's working on currently. So, good afternoon.

**Dick Weinman:** Hi, Janice.

**JD:** One of the topics that you just briefly touched on last time was about the period of time when President MacVicar decided that the Broadcast Media program really needed better facilities, and created, at that time, a brand-new facility in Snell Hall, and wanted you to talk a bit more about that, if you would.

**DW:** Okay. There's not that much to talk about. It was a pretty fast activity. But I first met President MacVicar when he came to Shepard Hall. He was led there by Fred Scheidler, I believe his name is, and Fred was head of the Public Information Department, or the Press Department, at OSU at the time. And Fred was showing the president the facilities of the Broadcast Media Communication area, which was on the top floor of Shepard Hall, which is a post-100-year-old building on the campus. And I don't know why the president supported broadcasting as much as he did, but I think he had a vision of OSU being portrayed around the state, that people could recognize what OSU was. And he foresaw the fact that the electronic media, that television, would be a main instrument of communication. And I'm thinking that he realized that, and I'll tell you later one of the reasons why.

I think he realized that, and therefore worked with us in trying to improve our facilities, and our environment for producing quality work, and students who would eventually go out into the professional field, mostly in Oregon. And they would represent Oregon State University not only as persons, but in the kinds of programs that they would cover, and the news stories that they would investigate. And as it turned out, many of our students covered many of the events at Oregon State University, even the event when our department was terminated, and hearings were held by the Oregon Board of Higher Education at Monmouth, at Western Oregon University. It was covered by the media, and most of the media were former OSU students, and we were appealing to the committee to reinstate our program, so it was doubly ironic that way.

And I think President MacVicar saw that that was the way Oregon State could be known, by its presence on television. And many, most of the various communities throughout the country, minority communities, communities of special ethnicity, wanted a presence on television that would prove their reality, that they really did exist. And I think that was why—I think that was why he put his support behind our program. At the same time, we were able to integrate other aspects of the university. For example, our students produced a program once a month—excuse me, once a term, called *OSU Today*, and it was produced by broadcasting students, using equipment that President MacVicar had purchased, not only for us to use, but for the Department of Information to use as well. So we had a joint use of the equipment.

And these programs were broadcast on all of the commercial stations in Oregon, and that was one of my responsibilities I took upon myself, one of the tasks I took upon myself, was to market these programs to the individual stations in Portland and in Eugene, primarily. And they broadcast them on their air, usually on a Sunday [0:05:00], but they were there a half-hour a day, and this was *OSU Today*, and it featured the research that was happening at the university.

**JD:** And was there any particular reason that the facilities ended up in Snell at that point? Did you have a hand in what kind of equipment was needed to move the broadcast media program, and the productions that you were doing, both on TV and radio, in quality level?

**DW:** No. [Laughs] Unlike what's going on now, with the current building of the Student Involvement Center, which also contains all of the electronic and print media that is student-centered. No, we just took what we were given.

**JD:** [Laughs] And put it to good use.

**DW:** Well, most of the design was done through Student Activities, and the head of the Memorial Union at that point. It was George Stevens. And that's when the Broadcasting Department began its rather delicate relationship with Student

Activities, part academic and part activities. And that's been varied throughout the years of its beginning, back in '77, 1977.

**JD:** Right. [Laughs] You just briefly touched on going to the hearings at Western Oregon University about getting funding reinstated for the Broadcast Media program, and I know that that pitch at that time was unsuccessful, and at some point, there was kind of a new media idea that came about. I was hoping you would talk about that new media.

**DW:** Oh, yeah, of course. Well, President Byrne terminated broadcasting, as well as journalism and some other things, because of the pressures on him, because of the budget cuts of Ballot Measure 5 back then. And soon after that, ah, perhaps—not perhaps, from what I understand, for the same reason that President MacVicar might have been very supportive of broadcasting, OSU was not being covered in the Oregon media. There were no longer journalism students out there at *The Oregonian*. There were no longer broadcasting majors at the stations in Portland and Eugene. And when there were university affairs to be covered, the available reporters were from the University of Oregon.

So as I understand it, this was a dismaying factor, or a positive factor, in the establishment of a new media curriculum. And the president was very clear that it was not to be a replication of broadcasting, nor a replication of journalism, but something that was replicating what was occurring in the media in society at that time, with the media revolution, that it be a new media. So a committee was set up, interdisciplinary committee. I was on that committee, as were the Student Activity personnel: the advisor to *The Barometer* and all student media, Frank Ragulsky, and Anne Robinson, who was the advisor to KBVR, and some of the faculty at Oregon State that were professional media people in the School of Forestry, for example. And there were other departments, as well. There was the Multimedia Department, which George Beekman represented, coming out of Computer Science. The English Department was part of the group. And the Art Department, particularly, played a strong role. So this was the interdisciplinary committee that created a new media curriculum, which at that time became a minor in the College of Liberal Arts, one of the liberal studies choices.

**JD:** Okay, okay. And that's continuing today.

**DW:** New Media is a big major, major now, at Oregon State University, and it maybe going on to a graduate degree. I'm not sure.

**JD:** Mm-hm. So as you talk about being on that committee, which was central to the work that you had done at OSU for many years, as a faculty member you also had other committee responsibilities that you engaged in over time. [0:10:00] And there were two that we wanted to touch on, and one was between '95 and '98, your involvement in the Interactive Multimedia Development Group.

**DW:** No, so soon after the new media curriculum was created, we wanted to find out if it was satisfactory, not only academically but also to the people who would be hiring new media students from the university. I don't know where the idea came from, but we approached—we being Anne Robinson and myself, and probably Frank Ragulsky; the three of us were most active in developing the new media curriculum—and talked to President Risser about it, and acquired some funds to put on what was called "The New Media Summit." And to the summit were invited members of both the new media and the old media.

So for example, there were general managers of broadcast stations in Portland, there were people who were involved with web communication, who were involved with the Internet, and who were involved with other forms of non-broadcast communication. And these executives and managers came to OSU, and we presented the curriculum to them, and then asked them various questions about how this curriculum related to their field, and how our students would fare. And we had a facilitator for this, who was Lou Fredrick. Lou was a friend of mine from my dealings with KGW Television, and he facilitated the discussion that went on. And as a result of this summit, we got the—whatever it's worth—imprimatur of the professionals in the new media industry that was just burgeoning at the time, just beginning and growing, who thought, as a group and individually, that this program would adequately prepare students to enter their field, which it did. That was "The New Media Summit."

**JD:** And generally this was in the mid- to late '90s?

**DW:** Oh, you've got me on dates! I can't tell.

**JD:** Okay. Well, that's the date I have here from the record, so we'll assume that's pretty close.

**DW:** Well, whenever President Risser was president is in the vicinity.

**JD:** Fair enough, fair enough.

**DW:** I mentioned the Visioning Committee, and I don't know where in the history of media this goes, or in the history of the—

**JD:** It was kind of the same time period.

**DW:** —media curriculum. I guess it would have to be. But I think this was the brainchild of—I don't know what her title was—Dean Kuypers?

**JD:** I'm sorry. I can't help you there.

**DW:** Okay. Well anyhow, it came from central administration, and I thought it was from her office, and the idea was to bring together various people on campus to vision what OSU would be like in the era of new media, with the new technological explosion. And I was part of that committee, representing, I believe, the Liberal Arts College. George Beekman was on the committee, representing the interactive multimedia, which was also part of Computer Science. I believe the head of the Computer Science Department was also on the committee. I don't remember all the committee members, but we met not very many times to try to come up with a profile of what OSU could do, in terms of its curriculum, to meet the changes that were going on in education and the use of new media. That's as far as I remember.

**JD:** [Laughs] That's fine. So, as we've been talking about multimedia projects, you had a wide range of them, and you also worked on several national symposia that I wanted to make sure you had some time to talk about. And I don't know whether you want to talk about them individually. There's a couple here, titles—or whether you want to just talk through them?

**DW:** Oh, I could talk through them, talk about them in a row, perhaps, if I remember the year. These were symposia that I was more than involved with; I created them. [0:15:00] And they involved other parts of the university with help in funding them. I think the first one was called "Dingbats, Dolls and Domestics," and the purpose of this symposia, which included several days of presentations in Milam Auditorium by the presenters that we brought down here, as well as breakaway conferences, where the audience would be able to confer with the presenters on a more personal level. And the purpose of "Dingbats, Dolls and Domestics" was to bring to the attention of the academic community, and perhaps to remedy—which it did do—to remedy the image of women in media, in television. Hence the "Dingbats, Dolls and Domestics."

So coming for this presentation were the head of research for one of the Madison Avenue advertising agencies, the head of television programming for another one of the Madison Avenue advertising agencies, and my inclination—he had been a fellow student of mine, as an undergraduate at Indiana University, so I wanted to reconnect again, and I knew of his reputation as an executive and as a program producer. So he came. His name was Robert Shanks. He came with his wife, who was also a television producer. They both had produced a program for PBS called *American Dream Machine*, which some people may remember. So those were two people among the presenters.

Another person was the man who would eventually be the executive producer of *Family Ties*, Gary Goldberg. That's right. Gary was a member of the Mary Tyler Moore family. He was a writer for Mary Tyler Moore. And I just remember everybody being dressed up for this very important academic event. Gary wore a T-shirt and torn jeans, and that was Hollywood. And Gary's wife also came. She was a researcher on women's issues at Stanford University. So these were our presenters, and they addressed themselves to the issues of women's—the perception and imagery of women in television. That was one of them. Another one—

**JD:** Before you move past that one, you talked about that it was a symposia to help creates some changes, and that changes were made.

**DW:** Oh, yeah. Okay. Yes, changes were made.

**JD:** I'd love for you to elaborate on that.

**DW:** Yes, well, let me think for a moment about the exact event. But one of the participants who had a responsibility in programming—it must have been Shanks; I don't know who—said they had planned a certain program to be developed in the near future, and they were going to change the script of that program on the basis of what they heard at the symposium. Names I can't remember, but that was a very positive outcome, and the students who were there were very excited about it. Oh, I should say that this was a joint program between, I guess, Broadcasting Department, which wasn't really a department, but the broadcasting curriculum, and the Women's Studies Department, under Vida Krantz.

And Vida and I worked together to bring this project to fulfillment. And a number of staff members in English—names I can't get out, but who were involved in some of the teaching of courses that had to do with women's issues—we all formed a group that was responsible for putting it together, and of seeing that it was affected. But the Women's Studies-Broadcasting-Speech Department relationship was very important. And just as a side note, Vida and I are still friends, and meet in Corvallis every now and again, figuring we really did something of importance. Oh, there was another project, called "Television News: Myth or Reality?"

**JD:** "Reflection of Reality or Creation of Myth?" [0:20:02]

**DW:** Okay, something to that effect. And I created that program, and that was fairly extensive. It occurred during the summer. And part of the grant for this program was for the Oregon Commission on Humanities. I think they have a new name now, and I think the "Dingbats, Dolls and Domesticities" also, so you can see part of the involvement, my involvement, was finding the funding for it. And I do believe that there was a department in the administration that funded that, too, or at least funded something [laughs] that we're going to go into. So this was a symposium that featured two people as presenters, one, Michael Novak, who, at the time, was a media critic, and as the years went on, has become known as an arch-conservative media critic, along with the other arch-conservatives who have talk shows nowadays. And the other presenter was the president of ABC News, whose name I don't remember, at the time—I don't remember now. And I don't know the year, so that's something that you would probably know better than I do. I'm sure it was all covered in *The Barometer*, and such.

**JD:** Right. Well, there were—some of the dates were a little sketchy. They were all kind of within in the '70s, but I—

**DW:** Probably.

**JD:** —can't give you a more pinpoint year that that for now. Sure.

**DW:** Yeah, I think the first one was "The American Film Image," which we didn't talk about yet, but which I'd like to. So these two people made public addresses, and that was all they did. In the meantime, during the first four weeks of the summer term I picked a number of faculty members who were considered humanists, who taught courses in English and history and philosophy, and brought them together for a four-week crash course in the making of a television news story.

And in order for the crash course to be effective, I brought in some friends from college days, who were working in the television news industry. There was a producer from ABC television, and there was a reporter from CBS television. They came in and joined the workshops that I created, along with other people who taught camera techniques, and how to shoot, and the members of the Journalism Department that taught writing skills. So all of these projects that were interdisciplinary—and I'm thinking now of another one that was also openly interdisciplinary. But anyhow, we went for four weeks, and noted among the humanists in the class were Michael Oriard, who is now with the College of Liberal Arts, well known author of sports literature; Bill Robbins, famous as a historian of Oregon; Ron Manuto, who was in the Speech Department at the time; and maybe that was about it. Oh, no, that wasn't about it, because there was a woman who was the Affirmative Action director at the time.

**JD:** Would that have been Pearl Spears Gray?

**DW:** Pearl Spears, yes. So she was part of the humanists' group, as well. So these four or five people taught classes led by me, the other media people, and the professional people, for four weeks. Then I arranged for each of the people to be an intern in the News Department of a station in Portland. And the participating stations included KGW, with which we had

a very good relationship over the years; maybe KOYN—probably, I'm not sure; *The Oregonian* newspaper; and I can't think of names now, but broadcast and print media.

And their job was to intern for another four weeks with the news departments of these stations and newspapers [0:25:05], and then at the end of the period, to produce their own—I guess it was television; it wasn't newspapers—to present their own television news story on subjects that perhaps the commercial television news stations wouldn't or didn't cover, points of view that they didn't realize, or didn't want to realize. And so we had all these humanistic television news stories. And in order to show them, we, I—I guess it's I—brought together the news media of Portland, most of the television personnel, the news directors, the general managers and all the program people, all those involved with making news in Portland. And our interns showed their stories and made a speech, or a did a presentation, and there was a give and take, back and forth. And I think we were all considered very stupid; it would never come about.

But that was the experience, and I think the purpose was to educate the news media, and also to educate the academics, who had no idea of what went into what they were critical of in our culture, or what they were absorbing in our culture, and for the most part critical of. So they had a chance to do it themselves, with all the deadlines, and the time allowed, and equipment use, and all that kind of thing. I do remember two particular presentations. Bill Robbins might not have made a video, and Michael Oriard might not have, because they made speeches instead. But they did the internship. I think Bill was at KGW. So that was that project. So again, it was multidisciplinary, brought together the academic community and the professional—I guess I would say professional community. Prompt me on another one.

**JD:** The other one that you mentioned, which you said might have been the first one, was "The American Film Images."

**DW:** Oh, "American Film Images," yes. I guess the one thing I learned in all of these projects was it doesn't hurt at all to ask the most senior person in these organizations that you wanted to approach to come here and be a guest of the university. I found out that we had several things going for us. One, there was a great respect for universities, and this is the day before e-mail, so all of these letters that I wrote went out on our departmental letterhead, which was very formal-looking, had the name of the university, the university slogan, the department, and whatever else OSU stationary represented. I would write these people and tell them what the idea was, and ask if they would like to participate.

And I really never got turned down. Norman Lear I wrote to and called, for one. I don't remember; maybe that was the "Dolls, Dingbats and Domesticities." I'm not sure—I think not—but he couldn't come. But he sent his executive vice president of Norman Lear Industries, and she came to participate. I remember also—it must have been the same one. Yeah, I think I'm—

**JD:** Well, wasn't Edith the dingbat?

**DW:** Yeah, she was the dingbat.

**JD:** In *All in the Family*? So that would kind of fit.

**DW:** Yeah. Hence the Norman Lear, yes. And his executive director, or secretary, was Barbara Something; I don't remember. But then also—and it must have been the same project—I wanted to get the woman who played Bob Newhart's secretary on *The Bob Newhart Show*. Not secretary—

**JD:** His wife?

**DW:** Yeah, well, and I forget the—

**JD:** Suzanne Pleshette?

**DW:** No, no. No, before that, probably. [0:30:00] I don't remember. But she was doing some looping of a film, and couldn't—it was Suzanne, yeah. That might have been her.

**JD:** I know she was in—I mean, he did have a series of shows. I know she was his wife in one of them.

**DW:** Okay, that might have been it. Because I know Bob—not Bob. Gary Goldberg made one comment during his presentation, as he was writer for the Mary Tyler Moore series, which included *The Bob Newhart Show*, so I must have been writing her to come down. And Gary said, "You've got to remember that it's called *The Bob Newhart Show*, and that's it." So we remembered.

So "American Film Images" was a project that I conceived of with the English Department's cooperation, or we blended classes together, and there were two faculty members in particular. There was Roy Carlson of the English Department, and he and I had worked together on the American Studies committee, another interdisciplinary committee. And I don't know why Sydney Pollack was chosen, but he was chosen. I do know why Sydney Pollack was chosen. It's a little twisty, but I was friends with Charles Cormack, who at the time was an anthropology professor, and in charge of what was the beginning internship program at OSU. And through some conversation, I guess, Charles said that his cousin, or some kind of relation, was the script editor for Sydney Pollack. And the script editor, or continuity editor, is the one who determines if you're holding the cigarette in one hand in one scene, that you're holding it in the same hand in the next scene, in the next cut. So she had an in with Sydney Pollack.

So he talked to her, and I got in touch with Sydney Pollack, and lo and behold, he said sure, he'd come. And what I envisioned was a—oh, what do you call it?—retrospect of Sydney Pollack's work, and in showing those films, to make a point of what American film was like, and what it was doing, and what its themes were, and what its concerns and issues were. And Sydney, who you may know from all of his works, is very culturally and socially connected with what's happening in America and elsewhere, and that was inculcated into his films. So we got Sydney to come to show—to talk about his films, and then I thought that it would be nice—he'd just finished making *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, so I said it would really be nice for OSU to have Jane Fonda come down with him. And so we tried. [Laughs] But Jane Fonda didn't come with him.

Instead, he brought—he did it himself. He brought his editor, Fritz Steinkamp, and the writer of *They Shoot Horses*, whose name is Robert Thompson, and then the fourth person was a man named Charles Champlin, who eventually became the *Los Angeles Times* media critic. At the time, he was the film critic of *The Los Angeles Times*. So these four gentlemen came down, and they held public lectures, and panel discussions amongst themselves, took questions and answers from the audience, and visited our classes, in film through the English Department, and in television through my Department of Broadcasting. And then we had little private sessions around town, where Sydney would come and talk to a woman named Jan Barrows, who at the time was a filmmaker in Corvallis—has since become a filmmaker in Portland. She opened her house to Sydney, myself, and some students in my "Advanced Directing" class, and we just sat around and had drinks [0:35:00]—I mean, coffee drinks, and talked shop, as it were. And Sydney also visited with my full class of Advanced Aesthetic Production Direction as well, and also sat in on some of the classes of the English Department, talking about films.

So that lasted four days, and we also went out for—I think it was a place called the Old Mattress Factory, which some people might remember, and so we had a nice beer evening out there one time, with these big Hollywood stars—or not stars. They were not stars; that's the point. They were people who had influence, in terms of what they wrote, and what they produced and directed. And then there was one day set aside for the retrospective of Sydney's films, which was done at what is now the Majestic Theater in Corvallis, which used to be the Varsity Theater, which was a movie house which showed the foreign films of the day.

And they showed all of Sydney's early films, his black-and-white films from—oh, they were not on television; they were actual films that he made, up into the latest film that was shown. It was not a film proper; it was the reel that theaters get in order to see if they want to carry the film. So it lasts about a half-an-hour, 40 minutes, and that was *The Way We Were*, with Barbra Streisand and Robert Redford. So that was the last film that was shown that day. And then Sydney was there to answer questions and everything. So that was the "American Film Images." And I think I wrote a wonderful program, but I don't remember where it is. [Laughs] But I thought it was good.

**JD:** [Laughs] So when you would start brainstorming, and coming up with the plan for these, and you would determine that Sydney Pollack would really be the best person to have for this, you were just not intimidated by writing him, and saying, "Wouldn't you love to come to Oregon State University and participate?"

**DW:** I was. [Laughs] But I did it anyhow, and made phone calls. These were the days of telephone, not text. No email—letters and phone calls. So we spoke, yeah.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And did you have any sense of what students' reactions—whether some of the more intimate involvement that you were talking about at Jan Barrows' home, or in the other venues, where students, local people, and university could interact with him—what they took from that?

**DW:** Yeah, that, as well as the fact that as students they're getting "education" and learning that they couldn't get at the university, because it came from these people who had honed themselves as professionals in the field that most of these people wanted to become part of. So there was a different kind of learning that went on. And as a professor, I was glad to share whatever place I taught from with someone of that ilk.

**JD:** In 1989, I'm not sure how it came about, and I'd like you to explain how it came about, that you did a video documentary on sexual harassment for the Affirmative Action office in the Women's Center at OSU.

**DW:** Well, I join you in that I don't know how it came about. I know I was asked to make it, and I asked a colleague of mine named—whose name is Wayne Baysden, to work with me on doing it. Wayne was our first African American teacher in Broadcast Media Communication. He was also one of my students, both in the media, "Mass Media for Minority" programs that I set up over the years, and he also had gone out into the professional world of broadcasting, and was a producer for KATU in Portland [0:40:00], and KBAL in Eugene. And so he was part of our faculty at this particular point. And so we were asked to create this program that would be used for orientation purposes, so that the new faculty coming to OSU would have some understanding of what sexual harassment was. And so as a team of producers, we interviewed various personages on the campus and incorporated that into the program, and I narrated it, and it was shown around to new faculty as they came in, as part of an orientation program. I didn't follow it up, so I don't know what the follow-up was.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And it was shown just to faculty?

**DW:** I think so.

**JD:** Uh-huh. And were there particular issues at that time that spurred them to focus on the topic of sexual harassment, or how did you go about framing it?

**DW:** I don't know if there were, but I know the people we spoke with were very highly engaged in women's issues on the campus, and I can't relate it to anything that was actually going on.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And was that kind of a unique project, where someone within the university would come and have you produce a documentary that was for use internally by the university? Did you do other examples of that?

**DW:** No, that was the only one. But I think it was an area that I really wanted to explore, not only for me but for the students in our program, to give them an experience outside of their classroom experience. so I could very well have said, after a while, that a student or two could produce such a program, if there was a need from other areas of the university for that. Apparently, nothing came of it. But it's very conceivable.

**JD:** And around the same time period, in the 1990s, you had a couple of professional opportunities to go and either visit with, or be part of, workshops at a couple of international, as well as national, professional organizations. Do you want to just talk about each one separately?

**DW:** Sure. I could do that, but I can't give you the stimulus for how it began. But the one that was most memorable was a visitation to Russia, which had just become Russia, rather than the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia, which is now the Czech Republic. And the mission of this program was to bring together people who were academics in the field of television and film, as well as professionals in the fields of television and film, to go to these countries in eastern Europe and to exchange, as it were, concepts and ideas and points of view—learn some history, learn some contemporary methodologies between the countries. And so there was a large group of Americans. Most were people who were in the professional field, and there were, I would say, just three academics in the program. I was one of the three.

**JD:** And do you recall what some of the issues that they were dealing with in Russia and the Czech Republic, with some relatively newfound freedoms of the press?

**DW:** Well, the biggest issue in Russia was the freedom to do what one wanted to do, and not be told what to do. The downside of that was the opportunity to raise the money to do what one wanted to do. And the big issue that most of these producers were talking about was: how do you get private capital to finance a film? That's not quite what the Americans had in mind when they went over. [0:45:03] And I found it very interesting, because I got close to a man who is one of the television—in the television industry, and taught television, as well. And I had thought of trying to arrange a—not an exchange of faculty, but to bring him over to teach in our curriculum. That didn't work out, anyhow.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And aside from—?

**DW:** Oh, one other thing. We did meet with students of cinema in Russia, and that was very—that was most interesting. There was a great admiration for the work of American film professionals, and a big discussion of the films that they had seen, and what they wanted to know about. And we did not have that kind of questioning of their industry, because we did not really know what the film industry in Russia was like.

**JD:** Mm-hm. Did they have any particular genres or directors that they were enamored of, or impressed with?

**DW:** Mostly the so-called grade-B films of Hollywood, and I can't think of a specific name. No. But I know—I mean, Russia is the home of Sergei Eisenstein, a central figure in the development of film as an art, and he was in high regard. We had high regard for him, and for his work, and so we communicated—we talked about his films, as well as our films. No, I don't remember what American directors that they watched.

**JD:** I realize it was a while ago. I was intrigued. And did you get a chance to look at their facilities, and have some sense of what technologies they were working with?

**DW:** Oh yeah, we did, and it was rather old. Went to television studios, and we went to the famous Moscow Film Studio, which was pretty much empty, not being used, except for some American films that were being made there instead of being made in Hollywood, because it was cheaper to be made in Russia. And the studio, because of the need for funding, private funding, was for the most part left vacant. So they had freedom of speech, but they didn't have a way of having the money to make that speech.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And did you have the opportunity to be kind of out in the locations that your visits were occurring, to just get a sense of these cities, and these cultures?

**DW:** Oh yeah, we were sightseers and tourists, in a way. I mean, just being in Prague, which is a wonderful city, and being in Moscow and seeing what the people in Moscow were like—I mean, that was an education of itself. And there was one anecdote, if you want personal anecdotes there. I got a call from my wife while I was in Moscow that my daughter had just given birth to her first child, and this was our first grandchild, and so I went out—as I was going out of my hotel, the Metropol Hotel in Moscow, there were—one of the cultural—one of the typical scenes were people selling on the streets, so I bought a pair of baby booties from an old grandmotherly type of woman, and I brought it home for my new grandson. And I bought a pair of earrings for my daughter, also from someone out on the street, and which she just wore here the other day, on a visit to Corvallis, so yes, we did that kind of thing, too.

And I made sure to run every day. And as I went out running, I had to look at the temperature gauge on the various buildings, and try to figure out centigrade into Fahrenheit. We went in June, and so there was sort of a mix of spring-like conditions and still-lingering winter conditions. And I was surprised at the Coke machines and the McDonald's, and all of these things that were going on. And this was post-Stalin Russia. [0:50:00] This was the beginning of Yeltsin's career as the Premier, and the revolution that mounted the coup that was mounted against him, which he overcame just as we were entering Moscow, just as we came to Russia. So there was a heady political time there, as well.

**JD:** And did you have the desire to cover the story? [Laughs]

**DW:** No, I just had a desire to see Saint Petersburg, and to see the crummy houses that people had to live in, the bureaucratic apartment houses, all the same, and the decrepit conditions that most people lived in, while the Imperial Palace of the Tsars was in a great state in Saint Petersburg. Czech Republic was much more open.

**JD:** Mm-hm. And then you also applied and were selected to participate in a faculty seminar and series of workshops by the Academy of TV Arts and Sciences.

**DW:** Yeah.

**JD:** What was that event about? What did you do there, and take away from that?

**DW:** Well again, it's a matter of mingling academic with professional, and the American Television—the ATAS wanted to bring academic people to Hollywood to meet with their producers and their programmers, and to get an insider's look at what went on in the making of television programs and films. And so they had this ongoing program between various universities in the country, and the head organization, the Academy. And so I think I went to two of those. I arranged funding through Faculty Development at the university, and after being selected, I went to learn and to see what they were trying to teach us. And so as a group, we all had projects to do, based upon the themes that they were working on at the time.

**JD:** And this was held—?

**DW:** In Los Angeles.

**JD:** Do you remember anything about the project that you worked on?

**DW:** It would take a moment to think and reflect. I couldn't give you a quick answer.

**JD:** That's fine. And do you remember any of the lessons that you learned there, or what you brought back with you to OSU?

**DW:** Well, what I brought back was something that I'm sure they didn't want to give, and that was how the thinking of all the producers who make the programs that America sees is so focused on Hollywood, and their life, and divorced from the realities of other people's lives.

**JD:** And so when they invited academics there, they weren't necessarily interested in having a two-way conversation? It sounds like perhaps it was more of a one-way conversation.

**DW:** Right. Yeah.

**JD:** So we've talked, between our earlier interview and this one, of the variety of work that you did directly with OSU, as well as some of your other projects, your work outside of there. And you did decide that it was time to retire in 1998. Maybe you could talk just briefly about that decision, and a very customized farewell that some of your former students did for you upon your retirement.

**DW:** Well, I retired, primarily, but I was still teaching past retirement, on the plan that allows people to teach part-time once they've retired. My wife has Alzheimer's—had Alzheimer's, and I was able to leave the home and do my work at Oregon State University up unto a point, and then I felt I couldn't leave the home anymore. And that's when I retired. And I had a big retirement bash that the department put on, and my family was there, and people from the university were there, and my students were there. And the students made a video for me, which they called a "Doc"-umentary [0:55:00], with emphasis on the first syllable, because Doc was the nickname that I was given all through my teaching career by my students. And so they put a lot of time, the night before, or two days before, into shooting it, and stayed up all night to edit it. Very typical of the kind of work that they did as students. And they had a showing at the retirement, and it was very moving.

**JD:** And you did loan me a copy, and it was very fun.

**DW:** It would be nice if you had linked, or included that DVD, as part of my spot on the website.

**JD:** We'll see what we can do.

**DW:** Because talking about it doesn't really- .

**JD:** It's true, it's true. Well, this will inspire people to look for it. It'll be a little harbinger.

**DW:** And I think there was another film that I was involved in making that had been archived by OSU, called *You Gotta Start Somewhere*.

**JD:** Yes.

**DW:** Did we talk about that?

**JD:** We did.

**DW:** Oh, okay.

**JD:** And the Archives shared a copy with me, so I could look at that before our first interview session.

**DW:** Okay. And also, there was a showing of that since I've been in my wheelchair. I don't remember what year it was—a showing of various things from the archives, and they had that film shown-.

**JD:** Okay. Maybe just a brief description, so that someone who's jumping into this interview right here will know what you're talking about.

**DW:** Well, it was the first project that I did involving minorities and the mass media, and the students in the program were not students at OSU, but they were students recruited from the various minority communities around the state—three, primarily: Portland, the Salem area, and the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. And the students came and spent eight weeks doing a learning of what was involved in making media, not only broadcasting, but also journalism, and photography. And again, we had an interdisciplinary group of faculty. Harrison Branch taught photography, and Harold Dorn taught journalism. I taught broadcasting. And Denny Miles, who was with the Information program, taught filmmaking. And this was filmed by one of the Corvallis filmmakers, Jan Barrows. She filmed a workshop in progress, and the students' reactions to the workshop.

And the title comes from a statement that one of the guys made during the course of the workshop. I don't know what question he was asked, but he said, "You've got to start somewhere." And this was to be a start. And all of these students eventually, during the same period during the summer, went out on internships in various media outlets in Oregon, newspapers as well as broadcast stations.

**JD:** And then, was the goal to have some of them enroll at the university and continue on, or just to give them the experience?

**DW:** No, no, it wasn't. Well, the goal was primarily to bring change to the media, which excluded minorities at the time. And the thinking was that change could best be brought about from inside the media, rather than, or as well as, protesting outside. So the goal was to place minority students in positions in the practicing media, starting with internships, and if there could be some hiring after that, that's fine, but at least having the internship, and have a voice in what's going on in the media outlet. We thought that was a way in. And we continued that in successive projects two years after that.

**JD:** So you have several current projects going on [1:00:04], still working in media, and voiceover in various aspects, but I know one that you've done a personal documentary about, titled *The Thin Edge of Dignity*, chronicles your current living situation and facility. And you're also doing an AARP column—would it be fair to say along the same topic?

**DW:** Yes, it's moving a little different direction now, but it was basically—it is, essentially, what life to me is like in assisted-living facility, and from me thereby reflecting the lives of other people, as well. And the columns, the blogs, which they're called, have been used as such by various people involved in teaching about long-term elder care to people

who are going into that industry, people who are caregivers, or administrators, or activity directors, to get some personal insight, or to get the personal insight of one person.

And *The Thin Edge of Dignity* was/is a 20-minute documentary which depicts my life at this particular facility, and talks about the life of a person who is in assisted living, and who was once highly independent and who is now very dependent, and what I do to make my life productive—what I do to make my life productive for me while I notice that lives of other people are really not very productive. And I think it's not their fault; I think it's the fault of the long-term care industry. And apparently this has hit a chord, because as a result of this documentary, it has been shown in every state by the ombudsperson, ombudsman, of the state, and of the people who work in long-term care for elders.

And I went to Washington, D.C., in November to present the documentary, and to make a presentation on living in assisted living. And I guess I was also nominated to be at a meeting for the White House Conference on Aging, which will take from various regional committees to the White House meeting, and apparently I'm to be nominated for the Northwest meeting, so that my voice will be heard there, and perhaps taken to the White House Conference on Aging. So all that through *The Thin Edge of Dignity*. And also I will appear at the Oregon Gerontology Conference, on a panel with other people involved with geriatrics, and transitioning to and from home to elder care. And that will be in the spring, held on the OSU campus—the OSU Gerontology Conference.

So I've started a second career, as it turns out to be, that I've become a spokesperson, or an advocate, for people who are living their elder live in long term care facilities.

**JD:** And do you have other ideas percolating, or projects that you want to pursue in the near future related to that issue? Or do you have more life that you're imagining getting from, or ways that *The Thin Edge of Dignity* gets known and utilized?

**DW:** Well, I appreciate the way it's being known and utilized. The Department of Human Services is handling the distribution of the documentary. And no, I haven't thought of a follow-up, but I do keep writing my blogs for AARP, and take the incidents that have occurred to me, and put them in some kind of a semi-humorous, semi-serious format, which characterizes my writing of these blogs—anywhere from how my shoes are put on in the morning by a caregiver, to the fact that there are no more tissues put on the table for all of us old people who have runny noses all the time [1:05:00], as a cost-cutting measure. So I speak about that, but try to speak about that in a way that not too critical, but does criticize. And I have been teaching at the university still, so it's not all past tense.

**JD:** Thank you.

**DW:** I taught, with Dr. Larry Roper, a class in "The Ism's" last winter term, a class that we taught together many years as an undergraduate course, and I hope to perhaps continue this kind of teaching in subsequent terms.

**JD:** Well, I've come to the end of the topics that I specifically wanted to ask you about, but if there's topics that I haven't addressed that you want to, this would be a great time to add them in.

**DW:** Okay, one highlight. Every year, new students are welcomed for a week prior to the university opening. These used to be called freshmen, but that's not the term now. They're "new students." And they go through various activities during the week, and at the end of the time, I guess perhaps on a Sunday—I'm not sure—a convocation is held for all of these students and their parents, as well as the members of the university community, students and faculty, who are involved with new students and student services at the university. And I was asked to be the keynote speaker at this convocation, maybe three years ago, maybe four years ago. I don't remember the year.

And that was what—the format for this event was to have the new students walk the same walk that the graduates walk through the university, except rather than ending up in Reser Stadium, they walk from the Memorial Union to Gill Coliseum, where the convocation occurs. So I was among the leaders in this parade, being pushed, naturally—pushed by Larry Roper, and along with President Ray and all the other people were participating in this program. And so President Ray made a speech, and Larry Roper made a speech, and then I was introduced as the keynote speaker. And as a speaker, as I do in my ALL presentations—I don't know if we talked about that or not, Academy for Lifelong Learning, in which I'm very much involved—I don't make speeches. I can't write speeches, or hold speeches, so I talk.

And so I was in my wheelchair, and I had a chance in a wheelchair not to stand behind a lectern, but to roll up to the front row of the Coliseum. And there were about 5,000 people there, in front, on the side and to the rear, and I'm able to manipulate myself in the wheelchair. And I gave my talk, and part of the talk involved reading from an email that a former middle-school student that I worked with, and who is now a college freshman—like the students I was addressing—had written to me. And my theme was "Perseverance." And so he was saying in his email that whenever he feels it's too overcoming, he remembers me, and how I worked with him in a school, in the middle school, in my wheelchair situation, and my no-hands situation, and so he feels much better remembering me. So I wanted to read that little piece, so I had that typed out and printed. And so I asked Larry first if it would be too dramatic to do it, or too soppy to do this, and he said, "No, go ahead."

So I got up to the point where I did my preparation, my conclusion. And I got up from the wheelchair, and I walked from the side where the wheelchair was to the lectern, and read that quote, and made some final remarks, and then came back to sit in my chair. And that was very well received, and the speech was very well received. [1:10:00]

**JD:** That's perhaps a perfect note to end on. If you have any final thoughts of OSU, your time there, and/or the institution and its future?

**DW:** Oh, why, no, I think we're good.

**JD:** All right. Thank you so much.

**DW:** Well, my thought is that I like to continue participating in OSU, and it's changing, and has changed so much, that I find it very exciting to see what the changes are, and to see the new kinds of students that there are. So I hope to continue doing what I'm doing, occasionally co-teaching a class with somebody.

**JD:** Well, thank you so much for all the time that you've put into this project, and sharing your recollections and your thoughts.

**DW:** Well, spent a lot of years here, so it's fine.

**JD:** Mm-hm. Thanks so much. [1:10:57]