



James Douglass Oral History Interview, December 5, 2013

Title

“Three Decades Leading OSU Bands”

Date

December 5, 2013

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Douglass discusses his upbringing in Illinois, his early musical interests and his involvement with the U.S. Navy Band. The remainder of the interview focuses primarily on Douglass' long and influential career as Director of Bands at Oregon State University. In recounting this time, Douglass reflects on memorable events including international travel to Japan, Taiwan and Costa Rica; notable music students who studied and performed at OSU; the creation and growth of the Northwest Band Camp; and changes in the university's music program over time. Marching styles, favorite musical arrangements and noteworthy performances are also recalled, as are interactions with OSU Athletic Department personnel and encounters with multiple generations of professional musicians.

Interviewee

James Douglass

Interviewers

Bob Schapper, Chris Petersen, Steve Matthes

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, gentlemen. If you would introduce yourself first, please give us your name, and today's date, and our location.

James Douglass: Well this is James Douglass. I was the Director of Bands at OSU for 31 years, 1968 to 1999. I get that confused. [Laughs] And I was in charge of all of the bands, and actually, I had an assistant a good bit of the time, and Steve Matthes, he was one of them, and I would classify him as one of the best I had. And I did the marching band, and the top concert band, and the basketball band. And that took a lot of time, and it was an enjoyable experience. We had probably over 300 kids, over 300 bodies that played horns in university bands at that time. And of course the program—the entire university was a little bit smaller than it is now. But that was my tenure here. I came from—my last school attended was the University of Michigan before I came here.

CP: Okay. So, today is December 5th, 2013, and there's three other people in this room. I'm Chris Petersen.

Bob Schapper: I'm Bob Schapper.

Steve Matthes: And I'm Steve Matthes.

CP: And we'll begin with some questions about your earlier years. Where were you born?

JD: Oh, I was born in central Illinois, in a town right close to Macomb, Illinois. That's where Western Illinois University is. But I didn't actually—when I graduated high school there, I went to the University of Illinois, and then from there I went into the Navy. And that was the U.S. Navy Band in Washington, D.C.; I played trumpet solos with the Navy Band. Was there four years, then I came out, and then went to the University of Denver, Ohio University, and then the University of Michigan. Taught three years of public schools, Davenport, Iowa. And then I came out here and started at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, California. I was there two years, and then I came up here to Oregon State.

CP: What was the name of the town you were born in?

JD: I was born in Macomb, Illinois.

CP: In 1936, is that correct?

JD: That's right.

CP: Did you grow up in Macomb?

JD: Pretty much, yeah.

CP: And what was that town like?

JD: It was about 10,000, I guess, at that time. And I went to the high school of the university there, the laboratory school, Western High School. Had a good, solid music program, good band director there, and it was an interesting experience.

CP: So there was a university in this town?

JD: Yeah, Western Illinois University. The school here has occasionally played Western Illinois. Of course, the school here is much bigger, and also I don't know if Western Illinois was much competition to them, certainly not in basketball. But all of those Midwestern teams are pretty good.

CP: What were your parents' backgrounds?

JD: My father was a postmaster, and my mother was a school teacher. My dad also directed—he was a trumpet player, and he directed the municipal band there in Macomb for a number of years. This was during World War II.

CP: What were their names?

JD: My father's name was Ralph Douglass. My mother's name was Ruth Douglass.

CP: Did you have any siblings?

JD: I have a brother, William Douglass. And he was also a music teacher, and is retired now in Minnesota.

CP: So, it sounds like music was a big part of your family from the very beginning?

JD: Oh, yeah. Yes it was; it was. And when I was a kid, why, the U.S. Navy Band would be—would tour the country, and they'd play a couple of concerts there in Macomb, which I went to, of course, and was extremely impressed by the group that played. And then the Marine Band was there a time or two also, so that had a big influence on wanting to get into that program, the Navy Band especially, at an early age. [0:05:06]

CP: Do you remember any other early interests in music besides these influences?

JD: Oh, the college bands at that time. The University of Illinois band had a fine program, and I played in that before I went into the Navy.

BS: As I recall, you said—or there was an article written about the fact that your mother accompanied you, and sometimes she played the piano and you played the trumpet on some pieces?

JD: Oh, yeah. Back in those days, school contests were very important. I mean, almost all major universities—or all major cities, had kids at school who participated in these music contests, either ensembles or solos, soloists. And we had a trumpet trio there that did quite well, played all over the state, and not just in contests but for other functions too. And then I played trumpet solos in contests, and we always came out on top. But, it could be some pretty tough competition there, I'll tell you. [Laughs] With those kids—they were really into it, also. And might be a couple of other kids there on top, just like me. [Laughs] I had—I had some peers. [Laughs]

BS: Did you take private lessons?

JD: Oh, yes. Yeah, my dad was a trumpet player, so I took lessons from him for quite a while as a kid. And then when I was in high school, I rode to the University of Illinois with my band director, who was working on his doctorate there at the School of Music, and I studied with the trumpet teacher there at Illinois. Then after that, I actually started studying with the first trumpet in the Chicago Symphony for maybe a couple or three years.

BS: Mm.

JD: And picked up a lot of good things from him before I went into the Navy.

BS: It sounds like you must have practiced a lot.

JD: Oh, yeah. [Laughs] Yeah. And the trumpet player at that time that was very popular, and made recordings and they were sold all over the land, possibly the world—his name was Rafael Mendez. So I had about, most all of his solos, and they were accompanied by orchestras. And some of them were orchestras that he hired to accompany him.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And then I got to know Rafael Mendez, because I played a lot of his solos while I was in the Navy.

BS: Wow.

JD: [Laughs] So I got to know him real well. He had a big influence on my life, as well as the Chicago Symphony trumpet player.

CP: Did you play any other instruments besides trumpet?

JD: Oh, yeah. I played violin to some extent, but that was never my true love. And piano, even less of a true love. [Laughs] But I did both.

CP: Was it common for the family to play together at the holidays, or anything like that?

JD: Oh, yeah, we did some. Yeah. But not like some families that have five or six in them. I just have my brother and I, and my dad, and we would do things. But some families, you know, are five or six, and not in the immediate area, but in the state, that would form a little band and go out and play Christmas carols, and things like this.

CP: You mentioned Rafael Mendez. Were there other people as you were a boy growing up that you admired in terms of their musicianship, or maybe [unclear]?

JD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, of course, I was interested in Harry James, who was a popular jazzer at that time. And let's see. There was two other trumpet players in symphony orchestras that I was very impressed with. One is Adolph Herseth, who became first trumpet with the Chicago Symphony, and Shelky [?] kind of retired from that job, but he's remained in the orchestra. So, and Herseth was a tremendous player. And then I studied a little bit later with William Vacchiano, who was first trumpet with the New York Philharmonic, and Lloyd Geisler, who was first trumpet with the National Symphony in Washington, Washington, D.C., so I guess that about covers the trumpet players. [Laughs] [0:10:09]

CP: When you were growing up, were you able to travel elsewhere to see performances, Chicago, or any other place like that?

JD: Oh, yeah, to some extent. I heard the Chicago Symphony play when I was in high school, yet. And then of course, orchestras would come to Macomb, my home town there, on tour. And oh, the Saint Louis Symphony was there, I remember, and I think the Minnesota Orchestra—it was called the Minneapolis Symphony then—played there, too. So, that about covers that.

CP: Your parents were clearly mentors, as far as your musicianship was concerned. Were there any other folks when you were growing up, that you would think of as a mentor?

JD: Oh, there were two band directors in Macomb, the one that I played under, which was Western High School, which was a laboratory school of the university, Western University—Western State College at that time. And then the other one was Dale Kempton [?], who was the band director at Macomb High School, and he was a trumpet player. And he had some influence on me, too, and he was a good trumpet player.

CP: Can you give us a sense of your practice regimen as you were growing up?

JD: Well, I practiced far more than I [laughs] did since I've been out of the Navy! But oh, yeah, I a lot of times would spend two hours a day on it, sometimes three, when I was a kid growing up, before I—well, I was in high school. And I played solos with the high school band, and I came up that way. But I went to Washington, D.C. and auditioned for the Marine Band, and the Navy Band, and I riffed off a couple of those trumpet solos, and they liked them. Both of them said they had a spot for me, and I chose the Navy.

CP: Was there a particular method to your practice? Was it playing songs, or solos, or scales?

JD: Well, I worked with the *Arban* book. *The Arban Method for Trumpet*, which was considered by many to be the trumpet bible. And I played a lot of exercises, and worked on that quite a bit. That's where I perfected tonguing techniques, and all. And then, of course, yeah, I was constantly working on solos, trying to build up my repertoire a little bit. And probably more than a little bit, but so I had some backlog there that I could fall back on when I went into the Navy.

And then I probably played—the four years that I was in the Navy, I got out so—a lot of the guys made a career out of the Navy Band, but I got out at the end of four years, to go back to school. I decided I would rather be a university band director than I would sitting and playing in a band, even though it was an excellent band. I learned an awful lot in there. I was a young kid. Most of us guys, the average age was, oh, in their 40s, and here I was 21. And I was actually nineteen when I went in there. And so I learned a lot by being around those guys, sitting there playing with them.

BS: You mentioned once that you played with Gordon Finley?

JD: Yeah, I didn't know whether there was time to bring that up or not, but yes. He came from here. Gordon went to Oregon, and back then it was Oregon State College.

BS: Oregon Agricultural, yeah.

JD: Before that it was Oregon Agricultural College. They had a band, and it was under the direction of Harry Beard, Captain Harry Beard. And Gordon at that time was a college kid, and he was their top trumpet player. And this was back in the, gosh, '20s.

BS: He graduated in '36, I think.

JD: '36, he graduated. That was the year I was born. But anyway, I don't know what he did for a couple of years, but then he went to the Navy Band. And he spent his career there, and he later became the first chair cornet for that band. And I remember, it was about '56, I guess, '57, Oregon State went to the Rose Bowl, and they played Iowa. [0:15:09] And the band, the Navy Band, marched the head of the parade that year. They flew us all the way out there. And so that was an interesting experience, marching at the head of the parade. And they gave us tickets to the game. Well, we went to the game, and of course Gordon was all for Oregon State, boy. [Laughs] And that's when Ted Mesang, my predecessor, was the director here, and he conducted the halftime show with the Oregon State Band, and they were on the field. And back in those days, the nice part about it is that networks covered the entire halftime show. And when I came here in '68, when we did a halftime show—do you remember when I first came?

SM: Mm-hm.

JD: We had about five days to prepare that first show.

SM: Yes.

JD: And I'd never seen the kids here before. I came from the University of the Pacific. And ABC Network, nationally televised, played the University of Washington. At that time, football, we had the Giant Killers, they called them. They won the game, but we went out; Washington didn't bring their band out. I'm really surprised. But I called him and said, "You're welcome to come down." Because the band director up there was Bill Cole at that time. Said, "You're sure welcome to come down and perform, because it's going to be a nationally televised show." Well he didn't think it was a nationally televised show. But he found out it was, sitting at home watching it on the tube.

SM: [Laughs]

JD: And I heard from people all over the country, you know, that wrote us about that. And the band did a good job, and we really worked hard. In five days, maybe it was six, from the time we first met them. I first met them at Benton Hall and then we hit the field. And this went on for about eight years, maybe ten. We had several shows that were televised, either regionally televised or nationally televised, and at that time, they covered the entire show on TV. Then something happened. I was talking to the present band director, Chris Chapman. He was telling me that, oh, it must have been 20 years ago anyway, or 25, the band—it wasn't this one, but someplace—went out on the field and did a show of published music. And the network, I mean the football network, didn't obtain permission from the publishers.

So one of the publishers sued the network—not the band, but the network—for letting this happen, and they won. And this really ground off the football networks, and from that time on, they would never cover a halftime show, and that would just be—that was the reason. That's why you always see guys talking at halftime, and talking about what was happening in other games. And that's really a shame, because the band here at present time does a good job, and all you see them—the only time you see them is when they're sitting in the stands, playing. So because of that, it's unfortunate.

BS: So, did televised games make a difference, in terms of promoting and recruiting?

JD: Oh, I think so. I think so. There's one thing that we did every year with the marching band. Nowadays they go to bowls about every year, you know. You could have six losses, or five, and still go to some kind of a bowl. They'll take the

band, so that's a big thing. But they didn't do that then. It was only one bowl for us, and that was the Rose Bowl. And we almost went, twice. But we never did go to a bowl—we didn't go to a bowl here, but we went to a bowl in Japan. [Laughs] Getting back to what I was saying, before the Japan trip, we took a trip to San Francisco about every year.

The Director of Athletics at Oregon State, Jim Barratt, was a former saxophone player, and he loved band music. And so he made certain the bands had the money to do what we needed to do. [0:20:01] And the football team at that time went downhill, why, the trip to San Francisco, playing either Stanford or the Cal game on Saturday, and then on Sunday we'd play the Oakland Raiders or the 49ers. And they would pay for that extra night in a hotel, and give us lunch and everything, and they were delighted to have us. Then we'd go out and give that show. The kids would do a great job, and the crowd were just on their feet, clapping. I mean, they'd give us a standing ovation, and that meant so much to the kids. And then we had a nice place to stop and eat on the way home. And that way they gave them two nights in San Francisco, they gave them meal money, and that was like a bowl trip, and that's what kept us in business.

That's what kept the band; I think the band—when I came here, I think the marching band was around 112. And my last year of doing the marching band, we had about 138—I'm sorry, 238, I think. And of course now it's a bigger university, and the guys that are here now are doing a good job, and you know, it's grown from there. The band is somewhat bigger now. Of course, I've been retired now for how many years? [Laughs] At least 12.

CP: 14.

JD: Fourteen years! [Laughs] So, but we had a different marching style then that the crowd loved. And of course, my training in marching band was primarily from Michigan, and it was their style of marching, a high step. You guys remember that. And I see people even to this day, that were in the marching band at that time, that are now in their 50s, were telling me that that was the best physical shape they were ever in. [Laughs] They took pride in the fact that that was their style, that was their way of doing it, and nobody else did.

I remember; we'd go down and play Stanford. Well, of course, if you've seen the Stanford band, that's kind of a pandemonium out there. I mean, it's student-run completely, there's no band director on the faculty in charge. And they would go out, and some of the stuff out there is risqué. They would do their shows, and it would be all that stuff, and that was back during the late '60s and early '70s. And the kids were, back then were still—Vietnam had a bad influence on a lot of our students.

But when we hit the field, with our high step and spit-and-polish approach, why, the Stanford band would always stop and watch. [Laughs] I think, stopped and watched in awe, you know. And then it wasn't long after that, believe it or not, that there were Stanford kids that would come down and talk to us, and tell us how much they appreciated the band. And they couldn't understand why their band couldn't do that.

CP: Hm.

JD: But that was a few years later, when the Vietnam War feelings wore off. [Laughs] But the tradition, the Stanford tradition, of this type of show, continues even to this day. [Laughs]

BS: So you mentioned the University of Michigan. That was where you went after the Navy?

JD: Yeah. Yeah. That was the last—

BS: You got your master's degree?

JD: No, I was working on my doctorate there. And I had a family and two kids and all, and so I couldn't stay there three or four years to get it. But I got my year of residency in, and I stayed there, and I picked up a lot of knowledge on how to—and they had a terrific band program at Michigan. And that was back in the days of William D. Revelli and George Cavender. And so that was their style of marching, and they went over big, too. They had a great following, so.

BS: Do you have any personal Dr. Revelli stories?

JD: Oh, yeah, I could stop and think about it. [Laughs] There were a million stories about Revelli. But he was a perfectionist. And that's where I—of course, I kind of was inclined a little bit that way. [0:25:05] And then playing under him, both with his top symphony band, he called it, and with the marching band, he was a perfectionist. Everything had to be absolutely right, the spacing on the field, and everything. If there was anybody the least bit out of line, boy, it was time to hail Columbia. [Laughs] And so I picked up a lot on that.

Now, I don't think that approach would work today [laughs] with kids. But it did then. And when I came here, it was a student-run program, as you guys know, and they were used to running the show themselves. And Ted Mesang would come out and do a few things, I guess. But I came here and started running it that way, and yes, there was some clashes there. But I've talked to some of the alumni that were in the band at that time, like you guys were.

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: And I would say it's really amazing that I came out of the Navy, you know, spit and polish and perfection, and then I was at Michigan, where it was very much that way, very much. And then I came here, and I went at it with the same approach, and the kids had to make a tremendous adjustment, and a few didn't [laughs], you know. But anyway, as I talked to them, you know, it's amazing, but that did seem to work. We made it work. [Laughs]

BS: Mm-hm. Do you think the politics of the day also influenced the way that you approached the band?

JD: You mean in—?

BS: In terms of the Vietnam War, and the politics going on. Did that influence the way that you actually approached?

JD: Probably not. The only thing that caused—caused some problems is the fact that the kids at that time started to want to change their hair styles. You know, started to grow beards, and things like this. And of course, I didn't have anything against that, but the director of athletics, and the powers that be that run the university: they had to be clean-shaven, and the football team, too. And one guy back there, he was a black—one of the best black athletes.

SM: Fred Milton?

JD: Yeah, right. I think they wouldn't let him play football because of the fact that he had a beard. That had a devastating effect on that program, because I don't think any black players came here, to speak of, for the next three or four years, and that really hurt the football program. So I had to loosen up on that, but I started out that way, too. But anyway, yeah, that's the only thing I can think of in the way of politics affecting anything. But that was an adjustment that I made, thank God. [Laughs]

SM: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. You were talking about marching style. You used to always have some sayings that you would give us as to how exactly that we were supposed to march.

JD: Oh, thighs parallel with the turf. And we would go out, and before we got to our horns, we would practice that. And there was a certain way, by putting your palms of your hands out in front of you, and then you'd bring your—start with your left leg, and you'd bring the knee up to meet the palm of the hand, and then you'd hold it there as long as you could. Then you'd bring the right knee up and hit the palm of the hand. And that got people thinking where that "parallel with the turf" came from. And so, that's the way we would march, up and down the field.

And the kids that started this, when they first got here, especially the new ones, were not too sure they liked that style, but pretty soon, they began to see the pride. It did build spirit by doing that, I felt. And so, okay, we're doing something that no one else does. And when we would go to Eugene and play the University of Oregon, of course, the marching band there didn't do that. It was kind of a corps-style approach where, you know, kind of a walking step, glide step, and boy, that gave us a—people began to really respond to our marching style and performance over there. So the kids enjoyed that too, you know. [0:30:01]

I remember my own daughter; she wanted to get out of town when she graduated from high school here in town, and so she went over there, to the University of Oregon, and she marched in their band. And after the game, why, [laughs] it was

kind of funny, we'd be marching out, and there would be some Oregon people would come up to me and say, "Boy, your band sure is a lot better than ours." And I'd say, "Now wait a minute. I have a daughter in that band."

CP: [Laughs]

JD: "Ooh, well they're good too. They're good." [Laughs]

BS: [Laughs]

JD: But there were some great years that we had. The symphonic band, then we went to Japan, the Mirage Bowl, and we played UCLA over there. And we were there a week, and the Japanese really wined-and-dined us, and fed us well, and Steve was with me as an assistant on that.

SM: I did, and it got off to a rocky start, because one of the first things they did was they presented us with jackets from the Mirage Bowl.

JD: Yeah.

SM: And guess what color they were?

JD: [Laughs] Wrong colors.

SM: They were the wrong color. They were the University of Oregon colors.

JD: [Laughs]

SM: And half the organizers over there confused us with University of Oregon, and it became quite apparent, when we first got there, that it was all about UCLA, and we were just the fill-in team. We happened to be the team they're playing. But after that, with the exception of something that happened at the halftime, at the game, we were treated great. It was a wonderful experience. Maybe Jim might like to talk about what happened at the halftime show.

JD: Well, there were a lot of things that happened.

SM: Well, we had a Japanese announcer come.

JD: Oh, yeah! Yes, that's right. How could I forget that? Well, I had gone over there earlier with a couple of Athletic Department representatives here, and met with the Japanese on the Mirage Bowl—what we were going to do, who we were going to play for, and we even went to the high rise to meet the guy who owned the Mirage.

SM: It was the head of Mitsubishi Corporation.

JD: Yeah, head of the Mitsubishi. Were you on that trip?

SM: I was on the trip with the band, but not when you went over.

JD: Kyoto was his name. And that guy had designed the Japanese Zero, World War II. But I know we went there; as we were getting, going up on the elevator to his office, the Japanese guys with us were getting nervous. Guys, they were getting nervous, and, "You're going to meet Number One! They're going to meet Number One! Oh, I'm nervous. I'm really nervous." We got to the top, the door opened, we went out into this room, and, boy, we were really bowing and bowing to everybody. They were already nervous. And then, in walks Kyoto, just a regular guy. He spoke English, "How you doing guys?" Shook hands with us.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: "Have a seat." [Laughs] And so we talked, and had a nice chat. And so we met Number One. [Laughs] So, let's see, that thing you were referring to—at that time, we talked a little bit about—I mentioned that we would have a Japanese announcer, because the type of shows that we did, I wanted them to know what was going on. And so they couldn't

understand English—now, some of them could, but a lot of them couldn't. And they didn't say anything. You know, they didn't say we couldn't.

So I get one of our own faculty members here, Tim Hosoi; Hosoi was his last name. He was in the History, the Religion Department, or something. Anyway, he went with us. He was born and raised in Japan, and so he met over in Harper Stadium at that time, and went through a couple—went through the shows with us in Japanese, and he was coached on how to do it, on what to say, when, and he had a queue sheet. And so over there, we started the pre-game show, and he started reading it in Japanese. Well, all of the sudden, it went blank—they shut him off. And so, we waited—nothing. So then finally, just go ahead with the show; we can't hold it up. So we did. We completed the show without an announcer. [0:35:01]

Then a guy comes down from the press box, a Japanese guy, and says, "I'm sorry, but your show has to be in English. We can't allow it to be in Japanese." I said, "Well, you didn't tell me that ahead of time. This is the way the crowd is going to know." "Well, that's our policy." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what my policy is. If you don't let us use this announcer we brought with us, and do the halftime and the post-game show," which was a full-length show, "with my announcer, in Japanese, there will no shows from OSU. That's my policy." And so he goes back up [laughs]—

SM: [Laughs]

JD: —to the press box, and the kids came over and sat down, you know. And the UCLA band went out on the field. And then he comes back down and he says, "We change our policy." [Laughs] "You may have your announcer."

SM: [Laughs]

JD: So it was done in Japanese, the regular halftime, and then the post-game show, which was ten minutes long. We did three halftime shows at that game, because the crowd that was there at Olympic Stadium, I don't know, about 80 or 90 thousand. It was packed.

SM: And on national television.

JD: Yeah, and national TV. You could even get it over here. They really, they really enjoyed it, you know. And I think having it in Japanese was the big reason.

BS: So was that the first of your trips? Did that precede the Taiwan and the Costa Rica?

JD: Yeah, now that was with the Symphonic Band; that was our top concert band at the time. And I forget just how that happened, but they heard us someplace, and they sent me a tape of one of their trumpet players, and invited the band to go to Taiwan. I went to Taiwan on a sabbatical; that was it. I had tapes of our band, and programs, and all.

BS: And what year was that?

JD: And that was about '85, at that time. I was gone for about four months, and I stayed and taught at an American school there. So I took a train to Tokyo and met with the Pacific Cultural Foundation, they called it. I met with their officials and talked with them. They spoke English. Showed them what we had. I said, "We'd be delighted to come over here and do a tour of Japan." But you know, of course money was a thing, and so they thought it over, and then they wrote me a letter to say, "You're invited, and we'll pay for all of your expenses over here. All of your expenses, and part of your plane fare." So those guys—the kids in the symphonic band, people were in that. Were you in that then?

SM: I wasn't in that.

JD: Were you?

BS: Hm-mm.

JD: We went over there and played. We were there over a week, and we played all up and down that island, Taiwan, in concert halls. And they were very much impressed with it. They had had other groups over there from this country, but

they didn't really excite them at all, but I'm not sure whether they were college bands, or what they were. But they were really impressed. And then about four years later, the Taiwan Power Company—many of them were OSU graduates from our Nuclear Engineering Department—they invited us back, and they paid for it. And so we went again. And that was about three years before I retired. So, we did the same thing again, and that was a little bit more intense, because we had more concerts, and a little less sightseeing, but it was still an experience for the kids. They had never been there before, the kids in the band.

And then in between times, we had taken the Symphonic Band to Costa Rica, and I knew some guys down there at the University of Costa Rica, and one of them had their students in the band, and who is really doing quite well now. [0:40:01] And he came up here and was a student, and got his degrees. And he went back, and he worked on this. And so they invited the band down there, and they paid for all our food and lodging all down there, too. And I think maybe a percentage of the plane fare; that I'm not sure of, but I know it was very cheap for the students to do this, and they were down there for at least a week. So that was a great experience. So that was three big trips for the top concert band.

BS: I think you mentioned to me once that there was some type of special funding, or something that you did through the state. There was the Pear Growers, or something?

JD: Yeah, that was the Costa Rica trip; that's right, the Pear Bureau. Because they did a lot of business down there, and they had factories down there. And so, they wrote and said, "We'd be glad to pick up a good bit of your expense." But they wanted us to go down there and give a concert for them, too, and all of their factory workers, which we did. And so, that helped there. And then the University of Costa Rica picked up a lot of the expense.

SM: How long were you in Costa Rica?

JD: A week. About seven days, I guess.

SM: Wow.

JD: That was another great trip, and it was extremely educational for the kids. And we get beautiful letters from, actually, our Ambassador in Costa Rica. After a big concert we gave in their big auditorium there in San Jose, he came back behind the stage afterwards, and said, "Vet your kids together." So I did, after the concert. And he said, "You know, really, if it weren't—you guys, if you guys were regulars down here, coming down here every year," he said, "I'd be out of a job!" [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

JD: He was of course kidding, but that's what he—he was saying that we had a tremendous effect on relationships with the United States.

BS: So, is that where Alejandro comes from?

JD: That's where Alejandro Gutierrez comes from, yeah. Yeah, he did. And of course, now, he had finished at OSU and he was back down there. But we had him guest conduct the band, and all.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Of course, then he became first trombone with their national symphony orchestra in San Jose. And then he became the assistant conductor of the national symphony orchestra. Now he's studying conducting at the University of Texas, Austin. And then he has a job conducting in southern California, and working his way up.

BS: Really?

JD: Yeah.

BS: Now he's one of several that you can claim to be—

JD: Yeah. We had, let's see, four players from abroad. We had three excellent Chinese trumpet players. One of them was first trumpet in the Chinese Broadcasting Symphony. He came here, Jong Wing Wu. [?] Another one was Jay Chen. He's still here, teaching trumpet, playing in the Portland Opera Orchestra, and teaching trumpet here at OSU. The third one was Alejandro Gutierrez from Costa Rica, who was excellent low brass, trombone and euphonium. Oh, the first one that came was Prava [?]. He was an outstanding soloist, and our symphonic band played a concert at the American Bandmasters Association, at their convention, and featured him as a soloist. And he was the top soloist in China with what they called the People's Republic Army Band, the top army band in China. He didn't want me to call it the People's Republic of China. He says, "Why don't you call it the First Army Band in China?" [Laughs]

BS: Ah.

JD: I don't think people here would care, you know. He was a fine player. So that helped our band sound even better. You know, but they had a tremendous influence on the Oregon kids that were in the band, because these guys were all humble, really nice guys [0:45:00], and they interacted well with the Oregon kids, and can really play. And that had a real positive effect.

CP: Did they come specifically for the music program, or did they come—?

JD: Yeah. Yeah, they did.

CP: So how did they know about it?

JD: Well, they had a trombone teacher here who played first trombone in the Oregon Symphony, Warren Baker. And he taught down at the University of Costa Rica for a while, and that's how he met Alejandro and convinced him to come up here. When our band went to Taiwan the first time, the word got around about the program. And the people in Taiwan and the people in China, they correspond. The governments had nothing to do with each other, but the people did. And they were able to, you know, correspond. And the conservatory there in Beijing heard about us, and that's how we—these trumpet players, they were sending cassette tapes of their playing, and gee whiz, they really played, you know.

And I thought, yeah, let's see these guys in the band. Well, of course they didn't have money, and they were lacking in English. And my wife was really into this, kind of, too. So we would have them come over, and our son and our daughter had graduated and gone from OSU, and so there were two bedrooms. So we put one in one bedroom, and another one in another bedroom. And my wife worked with Jong on his English, really worked hard with him and got him—and they, Jay Chen and Alejandro, they got their bachelor's degrees here.

Jong almost got it, and then he—yeah, he was working on a master's, and then we told him we thought maybe he had gone as far as he could go here. And so he went to Portland State and they really opened up, accepted him with open arms, and he finished his master's there. And he's still in Portland, working in the Chinese-America export business, import business, and still plays his horn.

And the second one, John Wing Wou, he went back to China and played in one of their orchestras for a while, and then he came back with his family. And now he got into the medical business, so he's a physician's assistant now down in Texas, but still plays his horn and teaches kids.

BS: Do you have other students that have made it into major symphonies or bands?

JD: Oregon kids?

BS: Yeah.

JD: Let's see. Yeah, Ian Hunter, trombone. Now, he was here at the same time as Alejandro was. He was a fine kid. He went to Southern Mississippi. They have a great music school down there. He went there as a trombone teacher, and then from there he went into an orchestra. And I lost track of where that was. Toby Oft, we called him, Terrence Oft, he was an Oregon boy, and he was here after they were here.

BS: Another trombone player.

JD: Another trombone player. And I featured him here, out in front of the band several times, and he went to Costa Rica with us, I remember. And he is now the first chair, the first trombonist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. So he went from here, he went to Juilliard School of Music, and from there, he went right to the top. So that's where he is now. [Laughs]

SM: How about John Abrahams?

JD: He did, too. He was at Juilliard, and then he went—I think was first trumpet in the New Jersey Philharmonic, and then I'm not sure what happened.

SM: He came back, and he was first trumpet with the Portland Opera Orchestra.

JD: Oh, he was?

SM: Yes.

JD: Okay, and then what happened?

SM: I lost track of him after that, so.

JD: I did, yeah. [Laughs] I knew his dad had a very successful business. He might have decided that he loved to play the trumpet, but it was more—money was more important, if he had a family. [0:50:02] I don't know. I lost track of him too, but I had him back here, and played solos with the symphonic band. I remember playing one night. And I had another guy who I featured here; I had him come back. He was in the Army Band, and was one of the lead trumpets in the Army Field Band, which was—now, you had the United States Army Band and you had the United States Army Field Band, which are put together, you know. And he was one of their lead trumpets, and he came back, and I featured him two or three different times.

BS: And who was that?

JD: That was John Bry [?].

BS: Joseph Bry's son?

JD: Joseph Bry's son. Joe Bry taught on our faculty, piano, and then retired. But John came back and played, and boy, we packed that Stewart Center. Every seat was filled, and people wanted to hear John play. [Laughs] Same way with the other guys.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And our band at that time did pull in big crowds at that Stewart Center. And many times we filled it, balcony too. And I figured if we had less than a thousand people, we had an off night. [Laughs]

BS: [Laughs]

JD: But you have to play music that the people want to hear. You have to play good stuff, good literature. Good literature. You can't be playing cheap things, you know. But bring in some transcriptions, and other things, too, march and all. They heard Sousa many times. And that kept them coming back, and then to hear these outstanding solos. Steve played with us as a soloist several times. And of course, he was very good, and people really enjoyed hearing him play. I remember once standing up at the microphone, and saying, "Now, when you hear this guy play, it will remind you—he plays every bit as good as Benny Goodman, if not better." And Steve steps up to the microphone, and says, "Oh, that may be right Jim, but you've got to remember, Benny Goodman's dead." [Laughter] So I had to suck that one back. But anyway, Steve played many times. And then you played with us.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Trombones, and then you also played baritone.

BS: Yep, right.

JD: Mm-hm.

BS: Right. So how about, do you claim Bill Chisholm?

JD: Yeah, Bill was an outstanding tuba player, and at that time we started our jazz program here. And I could do a jazz band, but I'm not a jazz connoisseur. I'm not a jazz specialist, by any means. But anyway, Bill Chisholm started it; directed the jazz band. And then when he graduated, I took it over for about three years, I guess. And then after that, we hired somebody to come in to do it.

SM: Well, Dr. Carlson did it for a couple of years.

JD: That's right, yeah. Marlon Carlson did it. And Marlon was just a classroom teacher, and he had a tremendous resume! He had played his violin with the Royal Philharmonic under Bernstein, and he played in other symphony orchestras on viola, and he had a tremendous background. And I met him on the stairway once, because he was not happy. I could tell he was not happy. I said, "What you should be doing is directing this orchestra. That's what you should be doing." I said, "You're wasting your life." I laid it on the line to him. He was going down the stairs—or he was going up the stairs, and I was coming down. So I talked that way to him, and he didn't say anything. And then about six months later, there was an opening. The orchestra director left and he applied for it. He got the job; he's been there ever since. And the Corvallis University, Oregon State University Corvallis Orchestra, has done very well since then.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Under his leadership. And he tells people that I had a lot to do with that. [Laughs] By talking him into taking it.

BS: You've had some other notable student leaders, too, right? Other than Bill Chisholm?

JD: Oh yeah. Yeah.

BS: Some that did some arranging for you?

JD: [0:55:01] Yeah, what was it? Steve Stanley was a very good arranger for the basketball band. Oh, a gal by the name of Jana Kipper wrote "Tequila." We played it at basketball games [laughs], got all the kids screaming "Tequila" at the right places, you know. And then we made that music into a dance routine for the marching band, I remember, which went over. And then of course, Mark Dickey was a fine arranger. He was an assistant of mine. And he was here for, I don't know, two or three years. And, oh, there have been—Mary Bengal is her name now, Mary Wood, she was a fine saxophone player, and she was a student leader for a while. And there were others along the way that were good. I always had an assistant, but usually, as the band grew in size, you needed more, you know? And now they've got about, what? One, two, three, four, five guys in the band program over there. And I had just, when you were with me, Steve, just the two of us.

SM: Right, and I was strictly part-time since I was a grad student in chemistry.

JD: Yeah, yeah. But, yeah, that's right. So, at the expense of my own family, I [laughs] kind of made the program go. My wife thought that I was gone too much, but if you were making as much as a doctor, why, okay. [Laughs] But that wasn't quite the case!

BS: What would you consider your major achievements? I'm thinking more along the lines of introducing Band Day, and those types of things that weren't on campus prior to your taking over the leadership.

JD: Well, the Band Days that we had back in the '70s and '80s were, I think, quite spectacular. We had pictures of those where they covered the field, you know?

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And they would come here, and we'd have a marching band contest in the morning. And what that would be is a marching parade contest. Back then, bands marched in parades, and not so much corps-style competition shows. And so we would have 45 bands, 50 bands, several times. And I would put them in classifications, you know, triple-A, double-A, single-A, and had adjudicators all along the parade route. And then they'd all go to the football game, and they would sit—back then, you couldn't do that now, but back then there was a reserved seating for them on the—well, actually on both sides. The bands came out on the field to the left, if you were standing in the press box area. And you sat over on the left side, on the bleachers. And the ones on the right came to the right side.

And so we only had 20 minutes, but we had to get about, oh, I don't know 3,000 kids out on the field, play four tunes. And in between the third and fourth tunes, we awarded the trophies to the winning bands. And that was always a big thing. And at that time, President MacVicar would always be down on the field, and would hand the—they would announce the winner, and hand MacVicar the trophy, and then he would hand them to the band director and shake his hand. And so this was a big thing to the bands.

I do remember this one thing we did that had a lasting effect on me. My assistant, George Tuthill, with the marching band at that time, told me of a great arrangement of a hymn called, let's see, "Blessed Assurance." He said, "You ought to try that, Jim. That's a great arrangement." And so I did. And we had our mass band rehearsal in the morning, before the parade, and we went through three of those mass band tunes pretty well.

And then came to this piece, it wasn't that hard to play, and it was a mess. It was just a mess! And I said, "Why am I having so much trouble?" And so I, anyway, "Well, we can't spend the rest of the day on this." So then we went into the parade. [1:00:00] We had a certain way that they were fed out into the road, at 26th Street, and then started the parade. And that went fine. We came back to the stadium. Then our band would give a full-length show before the game, and the kids would be invited to go up and take a look at it, and watch it, high school kids.

And so then the game started, and all through—I would go up to the press box. They would bring me the results, and I would go to the press box with Dan Dunham, he was our announcer, and give him the results. And the whole time I was worried about that last mass band show: I hope that's not going to go like it did this morning. I was just petrified. I mean, I bowed my head a couple of times.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: And so anyway, we finished up the award of the trophies, and things were going fine up to that point. And then I raised my hands, thought, okay. What's going to happen now? I gave the downbeat, and I started conducting, and I couldn't believe it, how well it sounded. It sounded like an organ! It sounded like a pipe organ! [Laughs] It was beautiful, and I couldn't believe it. Went right to the end, had a great finale, you know. And then we were done, and the kids left the field, and I came down the ladder, and people were coming out of the stands to tell me how much they enjoyed that. [Laughs] First time that ever happened.

SM: Wow!

JD: And I was told later—I didn't see it, I was so busy conducting—that a lot of flag bearers, the girls, you know, they put them on the far side.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: A lot of them dropped to their knees with their flag, you know.

BS: Hm.

JD: And I was told that. How many did that, I don't know. But anyway, after the game, I would be down the streets in Corvallis, and I remember a guy who runs the distributing plant over here, Dumont's, Dumont Distributors. At that time. His wife saw me, and she says, "Say, that was a nice mass band performance." She says, "By the way, that last thing you did, that religious thing—that was beautiful!" [Laughs] So that was quite a turnaround. But we did a lot of mass bands shows. And another type of show that we gave that was always a crowd pleaser was having planes fly over the stadium, timed to the show.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: We would do a patriotic show. And I did one on the history of aviation once, and wound up with a big patriotic salute. And during the show we would have old planes fly over. Then we had a thunder jet fly over. And then we got into the flag, a map of the United States with the band, and the midshipmen, ROTC, they had a big flag out there. And that's when we started playing this. And that's when we had these four F-4 Phantom jets fly over.

BS: In the missing formation?

JD: Yeah. They would do the missing man formation. And the one plane would shoot up, and three of them would continue. And that had a real effect on the crowd. Now, I had to have the ROTC commandants here work with me on this, and, especially the Air Force guy, Gary Chandler at that time, and before him it was, oh gosh, Don Carpen [?]. They were pilots themselves in the Vietnam War.

BS: Hm.

JD: But they were the colonels, you know, and ran the ROTC program. And at that time, what made this possible was General Miller was an Oregon State alum. He was the head commandant for the National Guard in Oregon, General Miller, Richard Miller. He had been the principal of David Douglas High School before he resigned his job and went into full-time the National Guard as the commanding general. And he made it possible for us to get these planes. And then we had to have the colonels here, with the Air Force ROTC, would be in constant contact with the pilots. [1:05:02] And they would take off when we start our halftime show, from the Portland airport, then they would circle the field about five miles out, where people wouldn't see them. And they were given a countdown, four, three, two, one, and then they would be directly overhead. They couldn't hear the music up there, of course, but that's how they did it. And most of the time, they were right there.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And that was truly impressive.

BS: Oh, yeah. And you did parachutists sometimes?

JD: Sometimes we did that.

BS: With American flags.

JD: Yeah, yeah. What was that, Storm King Mountain, where we lost the firefighters?

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Firefighters were lost in a blazing inferno, and it made big news everywhere.

BS: Many of them were Oregonians.

JD: Yes, they were Oregonians, Prineville. So we invited the parents all to the game, and they had [unclear], so they were there. And then, during the show, we saluted the firefighters, and then, I forget what we had on the field now, but then we stopped, and then we played a hymn to honor them. And this had to be timed too. We had them do that in the morning, and here come the parachutes. And each one of them carried a plant, and that plant represented trees that were burned, and honored the men that died. And then they were planted out here close to Peavy Arboretum.

BS: Oh really? Okay.

JD: Yeah, about a month later, or so.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: But that was a very heart-rendering show, and it had a great effect on the crowd. So we had about three or four. My last show was with the alumni band, and we'd have to suit the alumni band up in uniforms, you know, for this type of show. And that's when we started out by saluting the American Red Cross, and it ended up by the men who were missing in action in Vietnam, we ended that. And then we had three F-15s then, fly right over the stadium at that time.

BS: And that was after the law had changed, right?

JD: That was before 9/11.

BS: Okay.

JD: Because after 9/11, you couldn't get that done.

BS: I remember something about one of the guys was going to retire the next week, and he was willing to do something.

JD: Yeah. Yeah, we had one that, there were three planes that take off. This was an earlier time.

BS: Mm.

JD: Three planes take off, were supposed to take off from Portland and make a flyover. Two of them couldn't make it off the runway because of something—not the planes, anything wrong with the planes, but something was on the runway, rubbish or something. So this one guy, he was late getting off the runway, and goodnight, he looked at his watch and he only had about two minutes to get down here. So he put it in about Mach One.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] And he got down here, and he says, "Hm, I know I'm late, but I've got to make the best of it," So he brought that thing clear down to almost the light level of the stadium, shot over the stadium and the show, at tremendous speed, and scared everybody to death! So that was one that kind of went awry. [Laughs] But that was the only time. All of the other flyovers were excellent.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: And I would actually, believe it or not, the day before, say on a Thursday or a Friday, I would even talk to the pilots in Portland and tell them to make sure when you fly over the stadium, aim for the middle of the stadium, how to aim, so that everybody could see them. And tell them to throttle down, so don't shoot over the stadium so fast they can't see them, but throttle down so that people can enjoy it. Now, not too much. I know you don't want to start going down.

BS: Right.

JD: But slow down so that people can enjoy it as you fly over, and listen to the music, and they did.

BS: Mm-hm. I recall that you said that Jim Barratt had something to do with the start of the Band Day being initiated.

JD: Yes.

BS: And he had to do with something else, too.

JD: Well, yeah, he did. But with the bands, the High School Principals' Association said no Band Day. [1:10:06] I was considering recruiting. Anything like this was forbidden. So Jim Barratt was able to swing it where it wasn't forbidden any longer. So I like to feel like I had a part of that, but of course Jim being the Director of Athletics had more to do with it. So they will do it, and they allowed it. And we had our first Band Day, I think it was, in 1976. And then it grew from there right up until about '90.

BS: Mm-hm. But then we had the band festivals that he—didn't he help with the start of the band competitions back on campus, too?

JD: Marching band?

BS: No, when you had the high schools come in for the contests?

JD: Oh, the contests, yeah. As a result of the Band Day, then they lightened up on everything. And so then concert bands could come and participate in the Stewart Center. We had a place for them to play, and they could compete for awards.

BS: Mm-hm. The first year, though, you were in Gill Coliseum.

JD: Yeah, yeah. That's right, and then they finished the Stewart Center in 1980, and then that's when we moved over there. And then later, Jim Barratt, believe it or not, felt like we ought to have a band camp. So, I said well—he had an athletic camp up here at Camp Colton.

BS: Mm.

JD: And he called me, "Bring you and your wife up here and look at this place." And it was beautiful up there, beautiful, and kind of rustic, you know. And so we went up there, and, well, "This looks great, yeah. It would be a good place for me to have band rehearsals." I said, "What are we going to do for money, Jim?" [Laughs] It takes money to start a camp. He said, "I'll put up the money." So he funded that camp for the first two years, and got us started.

BS: Now, that included choir and orchestra.

JD: Yeah, it did then, yeah. And then it grew from there, and it's been the Northwest Band Camps ever since, with 500 kids, 550 kids at times.

BS: Now you took that on as a separate thing from the campus at some point in time.

JD: Yeah. Yeah, and I, yeah. I had outside help too, because I was too busy, you know, with the job. Then when I retired, then I took it on full-time.

BS: Mm.

JD: And there seemed to be a real need for it, because being a junior high camp, it was to give these kids an incentive to want to keep playing. And boy, no one was against that, music, so.

BS: How many thousands of kids do you think you have influenced?

JD: All together?

BS: Yeah.

JD: Oh, I wouldn't have any idea, Bob! [Laughs]

BS: But it would be in the thousands, though, easily?

JD: Oh yeah. [Laughs] Yeah.

BS: Or tens of thousands.

JD: Probably.

BS: Yeah.

JD: You're quite right, I expect, the tens of thousands.

SM: Probably close to 20,000, I would guess.

JD: 20,000, yeah. Well, you guys were very instrumental in the band program when you were in it, and you even played in my predecessor's band, Ted Mesang.

SM: Mm-hm.

JD: So maybe you guys could do a little talking here.

SM: Oh, this is all about you. We can help you, but this is your day.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: Well, I thought it was kind of about the history of the band program.

SM: You can mention some other things, some highlights of the program. I remember going up and playing for the World's Fair, in Spokane.

JD: Yeah, we did that, took the Symphonic Band up there and played the World's Fair in Spokane. That was a long trip up there. We were in a hotel that night, then a long trip back. Of course [laughs], yeah, that was an interesting experience. And then the marching band once went to Canada. And my assistant took it up there at that time, and you weren't in it; you weren't around. And when he got up there, he started off, and he forgot that he was playing in Canada, and he forgot—he did the National Anthem, ours, and he forgot to do the Canadian National Anthem. So we heard about that. [Laughs]

BS: What year was that?

JD: Oh, gosh. I think that was about, well, that was our concert band—no, that was the marching band. That would have been about, oh, '91, '92. [1:15:02] But whenever our Symphonic Band played in Taiwan, Japan—we played Japan, we played Costa Rica—we always started with the national anthems. We played theirs first, and then ours, and then we started the concert. That's just protocol. [Laughs]

BS: So, you mentioned one of your sabbaticals was over in Japan?

JD: Yes.

BS: And then you had another one following that. You went to Europe?

JD: Well, yeah, I took a sabbatical for the fall over in Taiwan, taught at an American school there. And that's where I made contacts with the people in Taipei.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: The Pacific Cultural Foundation. And that's where they, after hearing our recordings, and our programs, decided to invite us over at their expense.

BS: Right. But then you had another sabbatical after that. Didn't you have one in '89?

JD: Yeah, I did. I took it; yeah, I did. I was gone, and visited universities all over the country, and usually, like, you know, places with band directors that I knew, like University of Illinois and University of Kansas, and, oh, gosh, Oklahoma, Hawaii. [Laughs] But that's when I was getting close to retirement, so there wasn't much that came from that, as far as the band program.

BS: Right. But there was a disaster right after that second—

JD: Well, the disaster was while I was in China as a director.

BS: Oh.

JD: I had retired and was invited—one of my students was playing in an orchestra over there, and they invited me to come over and guest conduct their opera orchestra, but they weren't playing operas, they were to play concert music, for a month. I was there for the entire month of September that year. And while I was there, that's when the planes flew into the buildings in New York, Pentagon, and then you had the crash of the, what was it? 93, in Pennsylvania.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And actually, one of the passengers on that plane was a granddaughter of a guy I had worked for at the University of the Pacific, Bodley. Deora Bodley was her name, and she was among the list that went down in that plane. But that's while I was in China.

BS: Yeah, no, I was thinking of the disaster of the band program after you got back in '89, when the marching band was reduced back to—?

JD: Oh, yeah. Well, they had a change in the Music Department of the chairman, who was thoroughly against—could not see the sense of marching, or athletics in general. And we had a dean back there who felt about the same way. They area gone now; they're retired. And then the president back then did not have near the enthusiasm for the band program as MacVicar did. And MacVicar was the best friend of the band, I think.

And so between the three of them, why, they discontinued the marching band completely. So we went from about 230 down to nothing, in one year. And they thought, "Oh well, that's nothing. If we get money, then next year or the year after, we'll just bring them all back." Doesn't happen that way, once those kids are gone, boy. [Laughs] So they caged our—they started up again. George Tuthill was here at that time, and he took over the band program, and so they went. I think the first band they had out there was about 40 kids, and then it kind of trickled up from there.

BS: And then in '96—'96, then you recruited Lewis.

JD: Yeah, we recruited another guy who was from Oregon at that time. At that particular time—up until then, Oregon had been having troubles with their marching band, but they weren't then. And so he came over and he graduated from Oregon, started working with the band [1:20:00], and I had retired from the marching band, and started to bring it back. He got it up to around 100, 110. The type of shows that he did would be great for high school competition, where they do the same show for the whole, you know, most of the season—very few changes. But he didn't—basically that, with this band, the football crowds were not particularly pleased with it, and so the director of athletics at that time told him, "Let's change the format of things here." And he said okay. And so three days later, he took another job, and that was it.

And then, oh, when I retired from the band program, the Symphonic Band—well, the band program went through about four different directors in about five years' time. Four directors, each, one of them was an interim, the first one; second one was here, oh, maybe two years, but he couldn't get things to come back; and then another one came in. They brought Dave Becker down from Lewis & Clark, and he was a good musician and all of that, but he decided that that was too much of a job.

BS: That was two full-time jobs.

JD: Two full-time jobs, yeah. That was too much driving, so he dropped out about a year and a half, or so. Then they brought in—Gonzalez was his name.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: So that was, I think that was, what? Four or five.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Then, after that, I was on the search committee for the last one. And that's when we hired Chris Chapman. And that was about, what, six years ago?

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And he's done a good job.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: Chris has really done well. Different approach completely from mine, but it's successful.

BS: Right.

JD: But he's doing successful. And the marching band—I was on the search committee for that, and we brought in Brad Townsend, and he did a good job.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And then now they have this guy Dana.

BS: Biggs.

JD: Biggs, yeah. I did not serve on the search committee for that. But they brought him in from Colorado. He was director of the athletic bands there, and he's doing a good job.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: So, band program's doing real well now.

BS: So, prior to the disaster of losing the band program, you had kind of, as you described to me, a process that you had of bringing students into the system through the marching band.

JD: Yeah.

BS: And would you describe your recruiting process, and how you built the program?

JD: Well, yeah. When I came back, fortunately the basketball team at that time—Ralph Miller, you know, was a great coach, and I remember the basketball team in those days. They packed that coliseum. And it was a great honor to be in that basketball band, and we had the best players on campus to play in it. And they played tough stuff, as you guys remember. And so a lot of those kids I was able to get into the symphonic band, and then the marching band.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And we started to grow; it kind of hinged on that.

BS: But even back in the early '70s, that was kind of your approach, too, wasn't it, to build up the marching band and to choose the best of—?

JD: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And then about from Thanksgiving on, then we would invite them all to come in and audition. And then others, too. We had a concert band going on at that time, too, and everybody would audition for the next term. And so that's how we picked up the program to carry on the rest of the year.

BS: Do you attribute that recruiting process to the overall success of the band program during your tenure?

JD: Oh, I think so. I think so. And then there was a gentleman; he never wanted me to mention his name. He's a retired professor, but he always enjoyed the band programs, and he would go to the symphonic band concerts, and go to the games and watch the marching band. And he played the stock market. And at that time, the stock market did real well, and he was making money. And he would donate six or eight thousand dollars every year to our scholarship fund, to use as I wanted to. [1:25:06]

BS: Mm.

JD: And then Mario Pastega, he would donate funds too, a couple of thousand. I always mention his name in Parker Stadium at halftime. And then there was a guy in Portland, an insurance man, who kind of fit the same category, Maury Clark. I think he had something to do maybe with the building of this library. I've kind of forgotten now. That was under John Byrne.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: When he was President. But Maury Clark always gave about, I don't know, three thousand dollars, anyway.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: To the scholarship fund. So with that money, we were able to recruit—I used it primarily for the symphonic band.

BS: Right. Then you've had a dentist up in Portland too, right?

JD: Yeah. Now, Jerry Fuji was drum major of the marching band back in the '70s, and he went to dental school, and now he's a very successful dentist. And Steve Blakely is another one. He was a trumpet player who played in the bands, and he's a successful dentist in Portland. And those guys gave a lot of money to the Benton Hall rebuilding when the band was there in Benton Hall.

BS: Oh, uh-huh.

JD: Down there on the first floor, it used to be just a piano room.

BS: Right.

JD: But now—

BS: It's the Jim Douglass Memorial Room, something.

JD: Yeah, a big display case of all of the bands.

BS: Yeah.

JD: That were there at that time. So, those donations really did help the program. I was wondering if I can take a break for a minute?

CP: Absolutely. [Pause in recording] Okay, go ahead.

JD: We could talk about some outstanding players that were in the OSU band program back when it was OAC. I think we're the oldest band in the PAC-12, the oldest program in the PAC-12. In fact, the marching band, way back when it first started, they were on horseback.

CP: Really? [Laughs]

JD: I think you have a picture here. My wife brought a picture, gave it to Larry Landis, I think, of the band being on horses. The band at that time was under Captain Harry Beard, who himself was a trumpet player. But I forget; he was a professor on campus. Of course we didn't have a music school or department back then. But he had the band. He knew something about bands, so he got it started. And there were some outstanding players. One of them was Gordon Finley.

Now, Gordon, when he graduated from Oregon State, he then went to—I forget where he went, but he wound up in the Navy Band in Washington, D.C., spent his career there. When I spent time in the Navy Band, he was still there. He was first chair cornet, and played out in front of the band several times, but he was their top cornet player, and that's one of the top bands in the country. Then there was another man here.

BS: Excuse me, before you go on, you said that he preceded you at the University of the Pacific.

JD: Oh, yes. But he got out of the Navy while I was at Michigan going to school, and he went to the University of the Pacific. And then when he left the University of the Pacific, I don't know where he went, but he was about retirement at that time. He was 65 or older. I went from Michigan then to the University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, and then I came up here. Then back during the days of Captain Harry Beard, they had a gentleman by the name of George Bruns, trombone player. He was an outstanding player, and he played in some professional groups.

But he was a composer, and he wrote for Walt Disney Studios, and they had a program at that time, a weekly TV show called Davy Crockett. I think Fess Parker played it. He was the lead player in that, lead actor, played Davy Crockett. And George Bruns wrote the music. And that song [sings], "Davy, Davy Crockett," you know, he wrote that piece. So I remember we had him out in the marching band, featured him out there as a soloist, and Steve was out there with him. [1:30:06]

BS: Yeah, Steve played with him.

JD: Who else did we have? We had a couple of other guys join him. But anyway, he was on the field two or three times with us. But those are some outstanding players they had back then, that would be outstanding today. [Laughs] If they were here.

CP: Can you tell us how you made the decision to come to Oregon State in the first place?

JD: Well, the University of the Pacific at that time, financially, was in trouble. And it was a small private school, and one thing that really bothered me was the fact that you hear a good player—and I went out and I did some contests, adjudicated some contests for high school kids—hear a fine player, but you couldn't get him to come to University of the Pacific because the tuition was too high, and the only way they could get there was to be on a sky-high scholarship. Well, that had to go through a committee. Well you know, committees don't act that fast. But the job opened up here, and that was by Ted Mesang. He had a heart attack right out there with the marching band, the way I understand it.

BS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

JD: And you guys were there.

BS: Yep, we were there.

SM: He got in his car, started it up, had a heart attack, and he was dead.

JD: And he was gone?

SM: Yeah.

JD: Then his wife came to pick him up, right. And so, this job opened up, and so it was actually William Revelli, Director of Bands at the University of Michigan, told me about this job that just opened up, said, "You might look into it." So I did. And, oh, a week later, the chairman of the Music Department gave me a phone call, said, "Come on up for an interview. Drive on up." So I did. I drove up from Stockton—long drive.

BS: That was Bill Campbell?

JD: That was Bill Campbell, yeah. So I came up and interviewed for the job, then I went back, and the school at that time was growing, and logging was real good back then. And, gee whiz, that has a future. So I made the decision in the next year to leave. But the next day I decided; I talked to my wife, I said, "We'd better go up there." So that's how that happened.

SM: Now, there is one interesting thing when you were at Pacific. Didn't you have a trumpet trio that made national news?

JD: Oh, yes, we did. Yeah, we had a trumpet trio down there at the University of Pacific. They had a show at that time on TV called *The National College Show*, and a guy by the name of Dennis James.

SM: Mm. Mm-hm.

JD: He was the narrator for that show. And it was a talent contest.

SM: It was a talent show for college students.

JD: Yeah, it was. And these guys went down and played for it, and they passed, and went all the way to the top. They appeared on that show several times. And then when they got to the top, why, they got second place. They had a Fresno opera singer [laughs] that took first place. Then, Ronald Reagan was the Governor of California at that time, and he had a big banquet there in Sacramento, so they invited the trumpet trio to come up and play for them. At that particular time, Ronald Reagan wasn't particularly popular with college students, the head of colleges.

And I remember [laughs] in the car driving up, these guys were all criticizing Ronald Reagan, the trumpet guys, you know, the college kids. When they got up here, then they took their seats, you know, and then it was time to play, boy, they got up and they played. Then afterwards, he came over to shake hands with them, and me, too. I was their teacher. And they were right there, boy; they were ready to meet the governor. Boy, they were—then shook hands with him, they were really excited.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] So it was a little different conversation going back, back to Stockton. [Laughs]

SM: I remember the very first rehearsal of marching band when you came here. There was a big poster on the wall. Do you remember what that poster said?

JD: I believe it said—it was a carryover from the Michigan band, and it read, "Not as good as, but better than." That's all it said.

SM: And that poster stayed up for years in the Benton Hall band room, and that was the mantra.

JD: [Laughs]

SM: We're not going to be as good as; we're going to be better than.

JD: Yeah, right. Yeah, I guess it was. We had a lot of pictures up in the Benton Hall band room. We had a lot of pictures of the bands, and what they did, all around the room. [1:35:01] Of course, the orchestra rehearsed there, too, and other bands rehearsed there, and even sometimes the choir would go in there. But that got to be almost a museum in itself, in there. [Laughs]

SM: Yeah, it was wallpapered with photos of the bands at halftime shows, letters from important dignitaries.

JD: Yeah.

SM: Newspaper articles.

JD: [Laughs] Yeah, it was. And then of course when they rebuilt the band room, why, that stuff came down. But, boy, the band room's, it's a beautiful room now. [Laughs] But the pictures are gone.

BS: So if there's anything you'd like to be remembered for, what would you now?

JD: Well, that's hard to say. I guess you could say, of course, when they destroyed the marching band, the man who brought the program back, maybe. But I remember William D. Revelli was really a strict person. He had tremendous results. The students at that time took it, because—when I was up there, I did too. I had been a professional with the Navy. But you learned something. You were learning something every day under this guy, and his assistant, George Cavender. Well, when I came out of there, I was a little bit the same way, and we didn't have—I didn't lose anybody in particular, minus two or three that got mad and quit.

SM: Mm-hm.

JD: But, I look back and I think, you know, I got things done, but I probably could have done it if I had gone a little easier.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: And there have been people in the community band come in there and say, "Yeah, I remember you." One guy, a clarinet player, Jordan Brown? He said, "I remember you. I played in your band back in 1980," whenever it was. "Oh yeah," then he told me his name, "Oh yeah, oh gosh," I said. "I was a real jerk back then."

BS: [Laughs]

JD: And then he broke out laughing, "No comment."

BS: [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] Steve can remember that too.

SM: Eh, it was nothing to me.

JD: [Laughs] He'd been in the Army.

SM: I had been in the Army, yeah. But you always told the story about Revelli had a band contest, and so he came up to work with this band, they played *Mannendean* [?], I think you said it was. Do you remember that story?

JD: Well, I remember some stories. Well, there were a lot of stories with Revelli. There was another director, almost his stature, who was a real strict judge, and he would listen to bands play, you know.

SM: Oh, was that a Painter story instead?

JD: Yeah. Anyway, he would write along there on the comment sheet, instead of writing, "Improve this. You can do this," on the little flap here. He would write on there, "It's all right." He just gave up, "It's all right to play three pieces at a contest, but must you try to play all three at the same time?" [Laughs]

SM: [Laughs]

JD: And another one he wrote on there, "The only thing that would hurt this band more is another rehearsal."

SM: [Laughs]

JD: Now, that was back in the days when guys acted like that. That was their approach. [Laughs] Don't think that would work today.

BS: Well, I think we probably have covered most of the material, and you brought a bag of stuff along. So, I don't know if we need to record any of this, but make sure that we talk about that before it's time to go.

JD: Well, this one here, I think both of you guys were playing in some of the tunes on here. This is a CD taken from tapes we made back in, when was it?

CP: 1993, it looks like.

JD: Yeah. But actually some of those pieces were made before that, I think.

SM: Well, Jim, one thing we didn't cover—would you talk a little bit about Doc Severinsen?

JD: Oh, yeah. We had him here twice. First time he came, he was on the *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, both times. Everybody knew Doc Severinsen; you know, that was like Harry James. [1:40:03] And he came out and he knew Jim

Barratt, Director of Athletics at OSU, and he came back and played with the marching band. I featured him out there as a soloist, and he didn't need any amplification. Gosh, he didn't! He got out there and, boy, I was up there conducting, and while he was playing, I looked down at him and I thought, "My gosh, that thing is so loud." I looked—I thought that horn might explode.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] They heard him all over that stadium. Then he came back later, and he came played in the Stewart Center with the symphonic band, and that went over real well. Played a Floyd Werle trumpet concerto with us, and so that turned out fine.

SM: And he brought his band with him, too.

JD: Brought his band with him.

SM: To do the second half of the program.

JD: And, yeah, the second half then they played.

BS: Oh, I didn't realize that.

JD: Yeah.

SM: Yeah. Not the Tonight Show Band, but he had a little jazz fusion band.

JD: And that recording is here, on that one.

CP: What do you remember about him as a person?

JD: Oh, real nice guy. Those guys were very humble. He was, and so was Rafael Mendez. When he was on the stage, the stars just shot off of him, you know, just very, very much of a showman. When he was off the stage and you were talking to him, he was almost humble, like a Mexican farmer. [Laughs] That's the way it was. And Severinsen, of course he wasn't that; he wasn't Hispanic, but he was just an ordinary guy off the stage, real fun to work with. Our last tour we took was in Taiwan, and this is a CD of that concert. We gave that concert several times over there. And you guys wouldn't be on that. You'd have been long gone.

BS: Right.

JD: But I think you might have been on those other two.

SM: Mm-hm.

JD: Yeah.

BS: Steve Matthes as soloist on that CD.

JD: Yeah, yeah, playing solos on there.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: But we made a multitude of recordings, and back then they were LP records, 12-inchers, you know. And so a couple of those came from, the university did that, from those LPs, and made them into a—

BS: So these would be your favorites, then?

JD: Oh, yeah. I'd say so, probably.

BS: So, if it's okay, I would like to make copies of—

JD: Sure. Chris Chapman, bless his heart, told me not too long ago that he would like to do a concert; I think it's in February.

BS: No, it's April. April 24th.

JD: And that was supposed to be a concert with music that I played when I was here.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And he was going to have me swing the stick on a couple of them that I really, really enjoyed.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And I've already told him, my favorite was Claude Smith's piece, the Navy—

SM: "Eternal Father."

JD: Yeah, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." And that was a beautiful piece.

SM: Yeah.

JD: The hymn was there, but then it was a well-written overture, too.

BS: Yeah.

JD: And difficult to play.

BS: Yeah. I want to play fourth horn on that one.

JD: Yeah, you were there, okay.

BS: [Laughs]

JD: Well, we played that in my tenure at least twice over the years, and when I had just gotten out of the Navy band, I had been out about maybe a month, they were playing—Eisenhower was the President then, Dwight Eisenhower, and he was down in South America, and he was giving a reception for the president of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro. And that's where that bay is, Sugar Loaf Mountain.

BS: Mm.

JD: And the band was playing a concert over in Buenos Aires. So they flew the band in two different planes over to Rio de Janeiro, and over that bay one of the planes collided with a Brazilian airliner, and both planes just plunged right into the ocean, or into the bay. And so a bunch of guys in the band were killed right there. And a lot of them I knew better than my own brother; I'd been working with them the whole time. Oh, that really was disturbing, and really hard for me to get on an airplane after that, for a while.

BS: I imagine.

JD: But that piece, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," is the official Navy hymn. And so, that's why that stuck with me.
[1:45:02]

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: And of course, when President Kennedy died, was assassinated, and they buried him, it was members of the Navy Band that accompanied that parade, or that funeral—played at the funeral out at Arlington Cemetery, when they buried him, and they played?

BS: Oh, they played that there, too?

JD: Yeah, they played "Eternal Father." That was his piece. Yeah. He had been in the Navy.

BS: Mm-hm.

JD: JFK, he had been in the Navy. And so that's one piece I told Chris that I wouldn't mind doing, if I can.

BS: Steve will also be guest conducting on that night.

JD: Well, good. What are you going to be doing?

SM: I have no idea. [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs]

BS: I've been the go-between. He hasn't actually talked to Chris at this point.

JD: Well, I think you should. Be nice if you played your clarinet, sound like Benny Goodman. [Laughs]

SM: [Laughs]

CP: All right, gentlemen, we're up against noon. [1:46:02]

[End of Interview]