



## Tom House Oral History Interview, September 4, 2014

**Title**

“OSC in the Late 1940s”

**Date**

September 4, 2014

**Location**

CH2M Hill Alumni Center, Oregon State University.

**Summary**

This short interview with Tom House was conducted at an OSU Alumni Association Diamond Jubilee event. The session focuses on House's memories of attending school at OSC following his service in World War II, including the state of the campus at that time and his living arrangements at Kappa Sigma fraternity. House also discusses the arc of his career following his graduation from OSC in 1949, and shares his recollections of viewing the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in May 1980.

**Interviewee**

Tom House

**Interviewer**

Mike Dicianna

**Website**

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

## Transcript

**Mike Dicianna:** Today is June 9th—June 8th.

**Tom House:** June 7th.

**MD:** June 7th, 2014, we're at the Diamond Jubilee of the OSU Alumni Association at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center on the Oregon State University campus. My name is Mike Dicianna and I'm the oral historian for the OH 150 project and we're going to get a couple of quick stories about the class of 1949, a period of time when OSU was inundated by returning veterans. Today we have Mr. Tom House. He is going to tell us a little bit about returning from World War II into college.

**TH:** Well, I got out of the service in November of 1945. I was a flight instructor on B-25s in the Army Air Force and I arrived on campus January 1, 1946. It was the onslaught of many veterans like myself and the lines were horrendous. We managed to suffer through them and got registered and got going on the campus. I started out in aeronautical engineering and then switched to business and industry, and it was a great experience for me, going to Oregon State. Those days we had quonset huts for additional teaching facilities, which helped, but sometimes they were—we used to have boardwalks getting to them so that we wouldn't be walking through the mud and there was, however, a very good educational experience. I enjoyed a lot of the campus activity, went to all the ball games, was involved in student politics and became student body president in 1948, 49, and that was a great experience because we had a lot of activity on the campus at that time. Graduated in 1949 with quite a wonderful time, caps and gowns and the whole works and we got our degrees and went back into world and went to work.

**MD:** And your career after college?

**TH:** I was recalled for the Korean War and I flew paratroopers and dropped paratroopers in Fort Bragg, Fort Benning and Fort Campbell and after that I went back to the campus and talked to Dean Maser who advised me to go into the association movement because of my campus activity. So, I went to work for the Northwest Cannery Association, which led to a job with the—heading up the California Association and ultimately I went to the, became president of the American Frozen Food Institute in Washington D.C. So, that was a lot of fun. We did a lot of things and went a lot of places and worked hard for the business. So, I came out of the school of business and industry and that's what I did. I worked for business and industry, and it was a very great time. Graduating in '49 and then retiring in 1989. So, forty years later I retired from it. Living in—having lived in Washington D.C., we migrated down to Williamsburg, Virginia and bought a home at Ford's Colony Country Club, and that's where I've been ever since.

**MD:** What were your living arrangements when you were a student?

**TH:** Dean Lemon advised us to go—Stan Sharpe and I were here to get oriented and lined up for when we were coming on campus and registered, and Dean Lemon advised us to go to the Kappa Sig house, not to join but just to live there, so the captain of the fraternities could start getting their activity going. And both Stan and I pledged and then became a Kappa Sig and that was fine. During the—in the weekends I would go up to Portland and fly reserve and we would, Stan and I would join up in T-6's over the base and fly down to Corvallis and buzz the fraternity house. It was—we had a lot of fun. And we'd also race to the top of Mount Hood and go down to the ski level and all that sort of thing. Much easier in an airplane.

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**MD:** What would be your one thing that you want to tell the students of today?

**TH:** What would I do?

**MD:** What—you know, impart some wisdom to some of your students of today.

**TH:** Well, there's a lot of opportunity to get prepared for your career and life by what you study and work on in the campus. It isn't casual, because what you retain, for instance, in the school of business and industry, stays with you all your life. I happened to minor in geology and when St. Helen blew I thought well, that's the penultimate of geology

for me and I happened to be flying out and saw it. I was at 35,000 feet in a United Airlines flight and seeing this big mushroom come up and it was way above us, and we were 35,000. I had a meeting at the airport at Sheraton Hotel and we stood in the parking lot and watched this thing erupting, which was very near to Portland. So, it was quite a big event. And it was a terrible event for some people who got caught in it. Some geologists got caught in it and that was too bad, but it was a tremendous event and it—people said that the ecosystem wouldn't recover for thirty or forty years and next year there were sprouts coming up right out of the ground and pretty soon it was green again, so it worked out. It knocked trees down thirty to forty miles northeast of Mt. St. Helen. One cubic mile of that mountain came down on that Sunday morning. It was a horrendous thing. So, that's one memory.

**MD:** We appreciate your service in World War II and your service to OSU as an alumni and we really enjoy having part of your story for the 150th anniversary of Oregon State University.

**TH:** Well, thank you Mike.

**MD:** Thank you, Tom.

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