ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

TOMMY O'SHAUGHNESSY

Q. Good afternoon, this is Kevlin Haire at The Ohio State University Archives. It’s April 1, 2010, and I’m here interviewing Tommy and Jane O’Shaughnessy. I will first interview Tommy O’Shaughnessy and then Jane. We’re going to be talking about their time at OSU as students, particularly during the period of the student demonstrations [in 1970]. Welcome.

A. Thank you. Go Bucks.

Q. First, I’m going to interview Tommy. Tommy, tell me a little bit about your background, your family, where you’re from, when and where you were born, and that kind of thing.

A. Okay. Well, the O’Shaughnessys – about eight go to Notre Dame, about nine go to Ohio State. So, we’ve been Buckeyes for three generations.

Q. Your father was a Buckeye?

A. Yes. Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. And [I was] raised in Upper Arlington and live there now. And just have always been a northwest Columbus person.

Q. What year were you born?

A. I was born in 1951 at White Cross Hospital, now Riverside Methodist.

Q. So I think you just answered my next question, which was why did you attend OSU, although you didn’t attend Notre Dame. Why did you pick OSU over Notre Dame?

A. Well, first of all I was just ingrained to be a Buckeye. My father was on the football team at Ohio State and my older brother went to Ohio State, and I was
just ingrained that I was going to be a Buckeye. And I was lucky enough as a kid to go to games with Dad, and go to the Faculty Club, and stuff like that. So I was a Buckeye when I was nine years old, for goodness sake. I was on my way to being a Buckeye, no matter what.

Q. Okay. Now you arrived just as the unrest was building at OSU.
A. Actually, I came in the summer of 1969. I came in summer quarter.

Q. It was probably pretty good on campus.
A. It was great. It was just so great because it was so quiet. And I was able to indoctrinate myself into student life just very casually because it was so quiet. And it was a really great experience. I went every summer quarter after that when I was in Columbus to graduation because I loved summer quarters.

Q. How did you indoctrinate yourself into it?
A. Well, I was just able to, I guess because I wasn’t overwhelmed by the campus with all of the people in the fall. I was able to really just come and enjoy walking around the University in the beautiful summer weather. The professors were cool to me. The teachers from Upper Arlington High School were not cool, and then you go to Ohio State and your teachers are cool. They ride their bicycles. They’re taking their bikes into the classroom, and to me that was just amazing. They were TA’s, a lot were teacher’s assistants but I didn’t know that. I just thought this was the coolest place I’d ever been. So anyway, it was very cool to start summer quarter.

Q. Did you live on campus at first?
A. I did not at first. I lived at home. I was a townie, but I did end up with an
apartment on campus later on in my sophomore/junior year. Actually, that’s not
true. I did have an apartment; I forgot about that. Forgot about my first apartment.
I did have an apartment at Northwest Gardens on Presidential Lane. I had three
roommates. I forgot about that. Three roommates and we built our bunk bed with
two by fours. I forgot all about that one. So I did live at home and had an
apartment.

Q. From the very beginning?
A. From the very beginning.

Q. Okay. Why didn’t you move into the dorms?
A. I remember not wanting to. When I was beginning school in the summer quarter it
was so relaxed. Then in the fall all my friends hit campus that I knew from high
school and the classes at Upper Arlington, etc. And they’re all going to Morrill,
Lincoln Towers, and all that. And I just was flabbergasted at how awful it was to
live in a dorm. And I just had no desire to do that. That’s why we had the
apartment right off. Anyway, but I just didn’t have any desire to do that really. I
never even thought about living in a dorm.

Q. Did that affect your admission fees at the campus? I guess of how involved you
were in campus life?
A. Probably, because I worked my way through school. I paid for my own education.
So I was also working. So from that standpoint, as far as ingratiating myself into
the social part of school, to me that wasn’t happening initially. I was working to
get my degree.
Q. Where did you work?
A. I worked at Ohio State. I worked in the maintenance department, and it was a cool job because I actually came on campus, worked planting flowers and trees, which Ohio State is a gorgeous campus. I began to, one of our first dates together with Janie, I took her to show her my tree by Mirror Lake. I had my own tree because I was on the truck one day when I was working and one person was not there, called in sick or something, so they had this tree ball right next to Mirror Lake and they said to go ahead and plant that. So I said, “Yea, I’ll plant that. I’ll have my own tree.” So how old I am, the tree has gone, grown up and died. The tree is gone. I’m older than the trees at Ohio State.

Q. Maybe some day they’ll let you …
A. Plant another one? Yes, I’ll just plant one on my own.

Q. You talked earlier about how the professors were cool. Talk about the atmosphere on campus at that time. It was the late ’60s. What was it like?
A. Well to me, I guess my first impression was that it was it was so casual. I just felt so comfortable at Ohio State right away. And I just felt the people … I loved it from the get-go, because I just felt that the teachers wanted to help me. I really felt I was getting an education. I really felt I was in college, but I didn’t have this incredible pressure that I thought I might feel because to me, the atmosphere was very casual and very comfortable. And I don’t know why that’s the feeling I remember, but that’s what I remember, just really enjoying Ohio State as a young man.
Q. Did you feel like your professors were more authoritative figures, [or more like] friends, but …

A. I know what you’re going for and I don’t know what the word is, but coming from a school where male teachers wear a little thin black tie and a white shirt, short-sleeved shirt, everyone but the science teacher, and that’s what they looked like. And then to go to Ohio State and feel that these people were kind of with it. You felt they were with it and you could have discussions. I never talked to my teachers in high school about things. I remember my English teacher, right off the bat I liked him; his name was George something. He later died in an accident, mountain climbing. But we talked, we talked about things. I never did that in school with teachers. So it wasn’t a friendly thing but it was a learning thing. I felt I could learn from these people. And I sought that out, I sought that out.

Q. What, if any, perceptions did you have of the administration at the time?

A. I thought about that before we came in [to this interview]. And I didn’t have any. To me the administration was just the administration building itself. I had met Novice Fawcett once as a high school [student] at some type of event. I remember that. I remember thinking, this guy’s Lyndon Baines Johnson. That’s how I felt. He was big. He had the same big head as Lyndon Baines Johnson had. And at the time I remember thinking, “This guy’s just like LBJ.” That’s the only person other than Novice Fawcett. [OSU President Harold] Enarson, I got to know later and I loved him. But Fawcett was kind of a riddle, I didn’t know who that guy was. I had no impression, no thoughts about him.
Q. Okay. When did you get the sense on campus of various issues that students were involved in and things going on between students [and the administration]? Were you involved with those issues, between the students and the administration?

A. I was associated, I was asked to associate with the Freshmen Senate. So I did that because my family has been in politics in Columbus forever. So it was just a natural thing that we try to get involved in the community. And I noticed that women from the library walked across the Oval [at night] up to the sororities and I was actually thinking, “They should have an escort, there should be somebody there,” because that’s not good. So I remember wanting to do something about it, and I found out you can’t be in student government, you have to be in Freshmen Senate. So I had to get in front of the board, and they appointed me as a senator. To this day you can call on that phone and somebody comes and escorts you to the library. And I did it 40 or more years ago.

Q. Well, thank you.

A. Seriously, I’m very proud of that. But that’s how you get involved. I had no idea when I got in Freshmen Senate that I’d be going from that, doing something politically and socially correct, to yelling, “On strike, shut it down.” I didn’t know that was going to happen.

Q. But tell about that progression.

A. Okay.

Q. How did you make that progression? First of all, you joined Freshmen Senate your freshman year?

A. Yes, I think it was autumn, so fall of ’69-70.
Q. Tell about the progression and your involvement in the political realm.

A. What happened, really I want to get the record straight on this as far as I’ll be interested to see what other people say. When I began to feel this situation happening, where students were feeling empowered, in student government, all I remember being in Freshmen senate, and Undergraduate Student Government had an issue with the African-American curriculum. That was the issue. What the Undergraduate Student Government protested against and wanted to strike about. And when it came to Freshman Senate, to ask for our approval and get a vote from us, that was the issue on which we voted to strike. Nothing about Cambodia, nothing in my mind at that time was why we were on strike. We were going on strike because of the lack of curriculum for the African-American student. That’s my absolute memory of it. And all the other stuff happened once the riots started.

Q. Okay. Now when the riots started or during that time, the administration, there are old meeting minutes and things like that that I’ve looked through, I have the sense that the administration thought there were a lot of outside rebel rousers amongst the other people who were demonstrating on specific issues such as the African-American curriculum. Did you get that sense?

A. I was absolutely, at the absolute moment the riots started at Ohio State University, I was at that inception. And here’s how it happened. I had an arm band on as a student government person to watch, to try to oversee stuff and make sure it doesn’t get crazy.

Q. This was during rallies?
A. This was actually when they announced we’re going to strike, yes. We’re closing this campus down, okay? So the very initial protest was at 12th and Neil [avenues]. All’s I can remember is all the afros. You remember how afros were huge back then. All’s I remember is the black students went to the gate, there was a symbolic gate at 12th and Neil. It was a fence. It was a red painted fence on two stone pillars. And that was the entrance to Ohio State. And it was a beautiful day. So I’m up on the hill by the commons there. I’m trying to remember, something commons. You could get a hotdog or a hamburger there.

Q. Pomerene?

A. Pomerene Hall. I was by Pomerene Hall, by the hill there. It had a grassy mall if you will. So I’m kind of watching this whole thing happen. And the students decide to close those gates. First of all, not one car ever goes on 12th and Neil. It was extremely symbolic, that the University would close to the black students. So they closed the gates. And I’m as a student kind of a watcher with the student government and I thought, “Yeah, that’s kind of cool ’cause there’s nobody here. It’s a cool symbol.” And then they all sat down behind the fence. So it was a sit-in on the road itself. It was a nice day. I can’t remember the chants, but there were chants about the issues of the day involving the curriculum, nothing about the war. And then, I’ll never forget, a gray bus from the Highway Patrol with bars on the side came down the street. And so this went on for about an hour and a half. It had not been long and we would have dissipated, by the end of the afternoon. But all of a sudden, for no reason, and I mean absolutely no reason, that bus opens up and highway patrolmen come flooding out of that bus with billy clubs. They
didn’t line up and say, “Please disperse.” They didn’t do anything like that. They lined up and started kicking the absolute crap out of people. I mean, completely unprovoked. The closing of 12th and Neil had nothing to do with anything that was really, if it was 15th [Avenue] and High [Street], maybe somebody would have been dispersed. But there was not even a question of dispersal. So I’m watching this happen and I’m watching this bus unload. And all of a sudden the bus comes out, and all of a sudden they start coming toward the gate, and then all of a sudden they start cracking heads, and I went, “Oh, my God.” That was the end of my days as a student [activist]. I wasn’t really, I had one more day, but I drove off. I couldn’t believe it was happening because there was no reason for it to happen at all. But that was the absolute start of the riots. And then that led to a lot of other experiences which we’ll talk about. But that was the moment it started. It was completely unprovoked. It should have never happened, period.

Q. And you think that those were students and nobody else?
A. Students, absolutely.

Q. So you ran away, and so then what happened? What are you thinking?
A. I just remember the chaos began. That was so absolute in my mind, that that moment happened. And I know when that happened. In the archives, what day did the riots start at Ohio State?

Q. They were in March or April. The campus shut down May 5 or 6.
A. And Kent State was May 4. Because what I remember about that, when I realized it was getting serious. I kept going to class, all right? And I’ll never forget I had a class at Hagerty Hall. And the big windows were open, it was a nice day. And this
teacher is trying to teach. And he’s at the board, and the more determined students were going, were outside on this old beautiful Oval. You’ve got students throwing stuff at a line of National Guard. You’re watching this as you’re trying to learn a business class. And you’re watching outside. And then for the first time, I don’t know what day, if it’s in the archives, but they used rubber bullets. Because I remember all of a sudden the National Guard was taking out their guns. I remember watching this, and the professor at the black board and he said, “To hell with it.” He said, “I’m not going to teach. Just leave. This is ridiculous.” Because everybody was watching tear gas canisters [being thrown] and National Guard fight students, on the Oval, during class. That was a vivid memory. The other vivid memory I want to make sure as far as we didn’t have cell phones, didn’t have any way of communicating. And how I found out about Kent State is that, and this will probably lead into what happened [on fraternity row], the National Guard somehow got the idea that they were going to push up 15th Avenue. So I was on the Oval. That’s when I got you involved. And there’s placard, a guy has a placard on a stick and it says, “Four dead at Kent State.” There were so many people. I know the placard was above the crowd of people. And I remember going, “What? Seriously? I mean there’s people dead?” And I remember being completely shocked about that. And find out later from a friend of mine, because I had friends at Kent State. And a very good friend of mine was a good friend of Alison’s, [Allison Krause] the girl that was killed. And that’s when I really, the soberness of watching kids get beat up made me say, “I don’t want to do this,” but I continued. Because I was in student government, they asked me to do some
things. Had to be at the B&Z [Botany and Zoology] building and kind of monitor the activity. I don’t know how many days that was into the riot. I don’t remember all of that. I just remember you almost had to shut it down but being more attuned to it. But don’t hurt me. And those are vivid memories. And then I started getting mad. I started getting mad because then it became a show of ridiculous power. And two vignettes about that. One vignette is that I went to a fraternity party for the Fijis [Phi Gamma Delta]. In fact, that’s where I hung out. A lot of my friends were Fijis and because there was so much tear gas going on, I just went to their house around Iuka and 12th and I would sleep up there in the dorm. They would say, “Go ahead,” because I was friends of theirs. And I’d look out the window and watch the [tear gas] canisters, watch the war going on. It was, like, amazing. But way too much power. I was at this fraternity at this bar. It used to be south campus before Gateway. It was called the Oar House. It was a typical college bar, and it was a typical fraternity party. And so I was at that party and we were watching it on TV. Mayor [Maynard E. “Jack”] Sensenbrenner was saying, “I will not lose one of my policemen. I’ll take out 20 students to one policeman.” Some ridiculous comment. Again, my father was in politics and I knew Sensenbrenner, and I just couldn’t believe it was the same guy I knew. He was a nice grandfatherly guy. He was all of a sudden calling the students out at Ohio State. And I remember that vividly because I watched the TV and then I turned, this fraternity party, and armored personnel carriers were coming down High Street. I means, like tanks, coming down High Street. And I went, “This is out of control. This is completely out of control and I’m going to get out of here.” So I go out the
back alley and there were guys with shields. I don’t know whether they were cops or National Guard but guys with shields. I’ll never forget. I had my good pair of madras shorts on and a shirt on, and a guy comes out and he throws me against the wall and he’s checking my pants for bricks. He said, “You got any bricks?” I’m going, “What? I have shorts on! How am I going to have any bricks?” And he said, “Where have you been?” I said, “We’ve been at the Oar House.” The guy thought we said whore house, all right? So all of a sudden a paddy wagon shows up and starts arresting guys that they thought were in a whore house. And I went, “This isn’t good. This is ridiculous.” But they weren’t really getting to me yet. So I kind of walked away. I probably walked 100 yards and I’ll never forget, a trash can, he aimed mustard gas at me and it hit a trash can right next to me and scared the bejeebers out of me. I mean, the trash can exploded and before I knew it I couldn’t breathe whatsoever. I could not breathe at all. And I remember that’s when I said, “This is out of control.” But be that as it may, my student government days were at an end or over. So I spent the rest of the riot at the Fiji house. I think I really did, too.

Q. Were you still working for maintenance then?

A. That’s a good question. I don’t remember. I had to be. I had to be working for maintenance but I don’t remember that being, maybe they called the student employees off because of what was happening. Maybe that happened, but I don’t remember being on the trucks watching the riots. I remember being in class watching the riots.
Q. I asked because one of our oral history [interviewees] who was in Physical Facilities talked about the head of business and finance. Because so many people would try to camp out overnight on the grounds, he made sure that the sprinklers would come on at 3 a.m. to get everybody scattered.

A. I just remember my boss’s name was Mr. Botchie and I just remember that I clocked in and got on the truck and planted stuff and raked stuff, and I don’t have any recollection of that job associated with the riots at all. It’s interesting, I’m sure I had to be but I don’t remember.

Q. Right, okay. When Kent State happened, then they shut the University down. Do you remember that, the announcement?

A. Vividly, I do, because of the fact they took over St. John and the ROTC building and they put up a fence and made that whatever you call it, it was a military center, where trucks and tanks and tents and everything. It was the Army. It was the National Guard but to me, we were invaded and they owned the University. It was very clear to me. And I remember that they made the announcement, it was in the media, that Ohio State is shut down, it was closed. And as far as any vivid memories of thinking, the most important thing I cared about was that the grades went from U, unsatisfactory to satisfactory. All I cared about was getting – again it’s all about you when you’re student and you’re paying for your own education. I have to get all “S’s.” And I thought to myself, “If I get all S’s I can tell my mother it was a four point.” That’s a true story.
Q. It seemed that a lot of students were angry about shutting the University down, about the demonstrations stopping the learning process. I wonder, how much did you learn and what do you say to the people who complained about that?

A. I don’t have an opinion because I don’t remember that. I don’t remember any gleeful feeling of, “Oh class is out.” I knew it had to happen. Let’s put it that way. Since I was involved in student government, since I saw people getting hurt, I knew that this had to stop and I felt comfortable that they were closing. In fact, I thought it was necessary. Because I was not a wild, crazy, liberal screaming … I’ve got friends of mine that jumped on a fence, in the ROTC building, he went into the CIA/FBI archives with that picture [because the CIA/FBI] wanted to know who that kid was. It was a kid from Arlington that jumped on the fence. It had nothing to do with being a student, SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], was that the name? It had nothing to do with those guys. I never met one of those people in student government. I’m sure they were there. They had to be there because that was their job, basically. But as far as being in student government, being involved in Freshmen Senate, not one person ever said to me, “Join SDS,” ever, ever. I never remember meeting anybody from SDS.

Q. You mentioned about monitoring buildings, and we have some professors who have oral histories who talk about how they stayed overnight to protect the building where they worked and that kind of thing. What was your role in monitoring?
A. My role was just to make sure the students didn’t start throwing stuff, like at the glass, like breaking windows and stuff. So my role was very passive. I had a student government armband was all I had.

Q. Why were you there then?

A. I was just told to kind of represent the students in a way that is peaceful and non-violent. And I basically remember student government going, “We’ve got to make sure that we get in front of this thing.” And so that’s why I was at 12th and Neil that day. And that’s why I was at the B&Z [Botany and Zoology] building some other day. Because what I also was doing was I was explaining to people why we were on strike. Teachers were trying to get to class [who would say] “Kids, you don’t know any better.” [So I would say] “Let me tell you what’s happening,” and I thought I was the politician you know and I wasn’t the rioter. So I was kind of that person. And I just remember having assignments like that from student government and that’s what I did.

Q. Did people listen to you?

A. No, no I don’t think, I think the students basically when I would say, “Chill,” they’d go, “You go chill,” or whatever they would say back then. That’s not far out. I remember having really good conversations with professors and teachers as they went about their work. Because I really wanted to seek that out. I like to dialogue, obviously. And I was enjoying the dialogue with them. But as far as the students, to me they were just a bunch of long-haired rabble rousers, too. “Just don’t break the windows at B&Z,” that’s what I told the guy. I remember the kid specifically. “Don’t break the windows.”
Q. Do you remember people taking bricks off the Oval, because the Oval walks used to be bricks?
A. Yeah.

Q. And then they paved them over because people had been taking some of the bricks to break windows. Do you remember that?
A. I wasn’t a part of that, so I don’t remember it at all.

Q. How much damage did you see?
A. I saw when they attacked the Administration Building that day. I was not a part of that, but I was watching that with amazement, when they went in there and they started busting up the Administration Building. I just remember thinking how ridiculous that was. I didn’t think it made any sense at all. But the administration buildings on all campuses were a symbol of power and they were taken over everywhere, so Ohio State did the same thing, I guess. But I was actually concerned for people’s safety but I wasn’t thinking of, “We have to destroy buildings and stuff like that.” I was never into that at all. And I wasn’t around people that were. Nobody that I was around was vehemently opposed to “the Man.” There were students who got involved in some incredible [activities]. I learned from it, but yet it was a complete waste of time in my mind. In a lot of ways it was a complete waste of everybody’s time.

Q. Although as time progressed after the riots, changes were made because of people’s demands.
A. Yeah, you couldn’t park on the Oval anymore. They closed the Oval off. That was the worst part of the whole thing. You used to be able to drive around the Oval
and they stopped it. I hated that because then you had to go down 10th. I hated that. That was my problem.

Q. So again it was all about you.

A. It was all about me when they closed the Oval to traffic. And that made me madder than anything. That was the one thing that touched me, candidly, from the riots.

Q. Now what did you do after it was closed? On the day it closed I assume you went home?

A. I’m sure I did too and I don’t have any recollection of the off time at all. It wasn’t vivid to me. The riots were very vivid. That’s why I had these very vivid memories. But after that I’m sure I just hung out. I’m sure I didn’t do anything of significance. I was a kid. I wanted to go to school and I couldn’t, so I didn’t. So I don’t have any recollections of what I did at all.

Q. Did you ever at some point think, “This is college life?”

A. Yes, I did. I really thought …

Q. I mean, your expectations of college life, how did they differ from that first year?

A. Well, I couldn’t believe it was happening. And I couldn’t believe all of a sudden it went from the curriculum for African Americans to the bombing of Cambodia to the Vietnam War. And that’s where I think the SDS did come in and started splintering the efforts to bring in the mass appeal of the media, so they could get more unrest going all throughout the United States. That was what they wanted to do and I understood that. So I understood the symbolism going on that was happening, but as far as the education I got from it, when I saw those people get
hit in the head for no reason whatsoever, I learned right then and there that, whatever we do we’re going to lose. Because we don’t have clubs and we’re not violent. That was my education because that’s what I remember. I learned right there for my entire life that I will run, I will not fight. I did learn that, that very minute.

Q. They do say you learn some of the most important lessons in college.

A. Yes, and I did, I’m not going to stay here, they’re hurting people.

Q. But when you think about, even the football riots that have occurred before and after that, do you sometimes think, this is nothing or this is ridiculous?

A. Well, the football riots, I was involved in the football riots because I actually carried the goal post down High Street to the State House and back. I was that guy on top of that goal post. I had the middle of the goal post from that win, Michigan win at home. But that was joy. There’s always going to be excessive activity brought on by drugs and alcohol. But as far as that was concerned, that was complete joy. I know there was glass breaking and stuff like that. But as far as the difference was to me, that the riots that I experienced at Ohio State were real. This was real. This was a social, the fabric of America, I thought, was coming unglued. And I remember thinking that vividly while I watched this. I remember thinking, “This is really bad. This is very serious. And these people think they can get the upper hand on this.” Students feeling empowered was an amazing feeling to me. I mean, I really felt like we were doing something until they started hurting people. And then I said, “I don’t want to do this anymore. I want to go to class.”

Q. Well as you said, there was no way you were going to win.
A. No.
Q. A physical battle.
A. No.
Q. But ultimately there were victories in terms of [the creation of] the Department of African American Studies [and other changes].
A. Yes, there were.
Q. And [the OSU] Child Care Center and things like that, that are direct results although they may have happened long after that period.
A. I know that and I remember reading The Lantern like maybe the next fall about what had transpired. And they did put an ad hoc committee [together] and let students have ability to, I thought of the word ad hoc since that was after the riots. Ad hoc was a big deal. That was a big word back then. But they put these committees together and the University did listen. But it was just amazing to watch. The National Guard was the most amazing thing. That to me was just amazing, to watch these guys shoot students. And the thing is, I knew one of the guys [National Guardsmen], a friend of my brother’s, and he’s on the Oval and people put flowers and stuff [on him]. It was Steve Ward. I thought, “You know you’re on our side. You know you want to be over here.” I just remember thinking that was amazing, because those guys were all young kids. The National Guard was. So it was an amazing moment. I wanted to get over, when I found out about Kent State I was done. So was everybody. That’s why the University closed.
Q. Now you came back for finals and then everybody left again.
A. Yes.

Q. So what was the mood like then and I guess since you were here during the summer, maybe you could talk about the summer, too.

A. Yes, because I went summer quarter after that quarter too, when it re-opened. And it was funny, I just remember back like I did the first time, it was peaceful. Again, summers are always great anyway. But it was so great to go to school, and it was so great to have that feeling back, that you were getting an education and normalcy had come back in your life. You know what I mean? I mean, I had just started college when those things hit and then all of a sudden they got over. I remember watching the ROTC. I remember them all taking the camp away and going down Woody Hayes Drive, not then, whatever it was then, and I remember them leaving campus. And I remember really being happy about that, that we can go back to school.

Q. So you appreciated it more?

A. Yes, I really did. That’s a very good point. It did make me appreciate school more and normalcy and the difficulties that can be created when people get a bad idea. On both sides. It was a bad idea for them to ever hit those kids. I guess it was a bad idea to close 12th and Neil. But at the time I never thought it would ever happen and become a moment in my life, I’ll never forget, that I thought was completely wrong. You know I thought it was completely wrong. I did say, “It doesn’t matter if I think it was completely wrong; they have the billy clubs. And they can’t wait to hit you.” They were so happy to start beating the crap out of
kids for no reason. I went, “They’re enjoying themselves. I’m getting out of here.” Because we were hippie kids to them.

Q. Now your father graduated, I want to say early ’50s?

A. Early ’30s, Like ’36 maybe?

Q. That’s right. I’m sorry. Which was a completely different time. Do you remember his … .what did your family think about this?

A. My father passed when I was young but he was a BMOC [Big Man on Campus] football player and was a Phi Psi. And my mother was a Kappa and she was a model. They met at Hagerty Hall. They had this idyllic Ohio State thing that I never got to copy. But they really had their romance at Ohio State, etc. To me, it sounded so cool, how they went to school. But my mother was in education. So my mother was very opinionated and obviously had dialogue with me about it. But she must have agreed with some things. I think she was more concerned about me getting hurt. Because my father passed when I was so young, I was raised by a very intelligent creative woman, but I guess that might be what the feelings are: “I’m not going to get hit.” So my mother must have taught me to run because I think she was just happy I wasn’t hurt. Because I remember when I was potentially drafted, my mother says, “I will puncture your lung before you go to Vietnam.” I remember that quote. One way or the other, it’s not good. So I know she was anti-war, that’s for sure.

Q. I have to note here that you’re wearing a tie that has University Hall [pictured on it], and you’ve got the Buckeye-colored hat, and you’ve got your class ring on.
How do you go from this amazing scary experience your freshman year to be obviously a die-hard Buckeye still?

A. That’s a question I’ve never thought about. I took that as a chapter in the United States history more than Ohio State’s history. I mean, from the Nixon to Cambodia to civil rights riots, I just took that as a part of America rather than Ohio State. Ohio State was a victim of the times at that time, and we did what we had to do. And if I was on the administration side, I would be not apologizing at all. Now if I was in the Ohio [Highway] Patrol, I’d be apologizing, because I’ll guarantee you that Novice Fawcett never thought that would happen when he called them in. And I think that everybody got caught up in that. So I never felt that that was a mark against Ohio State; I just thought it was amazing experience. But I turned the page immediately and just went on and kept going to school. I took off a couple of years, maybe that had something to do with it. Lived in Aspen, Colorado, for a while, just took off, but I came back and was an ardent student and I’ve always loved the place.

Q. Do you want to add anything else?

A. I know Jane wants to add …

Q. I know you have notes there.

A. I think she wants to make sure I talked about the fact that I was, when you talk about me working, I was the Stroh’s Beer campus rep on college at Ohio State. So I had the greatest job you could possibly have as a student.

Q. You worked in maintenance and as a representative?
A. Yes, I left maintenance because I worked in, we were doing a family [political campaign], my uncle was running for Senate, and I was the youth chairman of the campaign. So we went to the Bier Stube which is still there, the Bier Stube. And I told everybody, “Get whatever you want,” and I was going to wash my hands or something. And they all got Schlitz Malt Liquor, which I hated. And I went, “Come on, let’s get something good.” And the guy at the end of the bar said, “Can I buy you a Stroh’s?” It’s Remic Stroh from the Stroh family. And I happened to love Stroh’s at the time. I said, “You have no idea how much I love your beer.” And the guy was overwhelmed by me, and I became the campus rep for Stroh’s and Miller on campus. So I was responsible for every fraternity party and I had a social every quarter for all the social chairmen of the frats in the dorms and stuff. So that was the tough part of life for Ohio State.

Q. That’s quite a juxtaposition.

A. It is. The heck with the riots, you guys want a keg?

Q. Well, if you don’t have anything else to add, we’ll end your interview.

A. I just have one thing to say, that I want to make sure it goes down for all time, and that’s “Beat Michigan!”

Q. Thank you, Tommy.