Q. This is Tamar Chute, Associate University Archivist. I’m conducting this oral history interview of David Hopcraft on June 22, 2010. We are located in the University Archives conference room. Thank you for participating. I guess let’s start off, tell us a little bit about yourself, where you’re from and how you decided to come to Ohio State.

A. Okay. I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland called Mayfield Heights. Neither my father nor my mother went to college, although I had an aunt that did. My older brother, older by just under two years, did go to college and I was part of the generation of, “Gee, I think I’ll go to college because my brother did.” And I was not well-prepared for college. I hadn’t taken high school very seriously. But I was determined to go, and came down here with about half a dozen or so friends from my high school class. And of them, only two us that I know of graduated. It was the time when the sons and daughters of the post-war generation, the baby boomers, had no boundaries, so why not go to college? And so that’s how I got here. I actually probably was more influenced by the fact that my girlfriend at the time was going to Ohio State than I was that my buddies were going to Ohio State. But that’s how I got here.

Q. That sometimes happens. Now do you think that the people who didn’t graduate, they weren’t interested in college?

A. No, I think it was a lot of work because I was not prepared. And I struggled with grades, certainly my first two years. But I think the others, I can’t speak for all of
them, but I know that some of them, that they came to college because college was a lot of fun and it was a good place to be and that was what everybody else was doing, so I’m going to go. And they found that it wasn’t suited for them pretty quickly. And it probably wasn’t suited for me for two years either, but I was fortunate enough to find enough books and had the encouragement of my older brother and just muddled through.

Q. So you said right before we started, you said you were here for two years.

A. Yes, I was here for two years. I did not make academic standing so I had to take a year off, in essence flunked out by the thinnest of margins. But in this recording I will get even with the economics professor who caused that to happen. I went back up to Cleveland and had been involved through an association with some fraternity brothers with the Journalism school and with the Ohio State Lantern. And so it’s about all I knew other than fixing refrigeration, and I didn’t want to go upon roof tops carrying tool boxes. So I applied and went to work for a small newspaper outside of Cleveland, Ohio, the Painesville Telegraph. At that time it was a pretty hearty newspaper, and I loved it for a year. And then after that year was complete, I was eligible to re-apply, came down, said, “I want to be a journalism graduate and this is what I’ve done.” And they said, “Okay, you can come back.” And then after that, I never looked back on the grades. It was clear sailing. I had grown up, I think.

Q. When you worked for The Lantern before you had the break, what was the biggest thing you noticed about being a reporter and the environment of the campus at the time?
A. At that time, and it changed after I came back, but at that time the student newspaper advisor was a former editor of some measure from one of the New York tabloids. And The Lantern was a tabloid. So this advisor encouraged stories that were right against the top, pushing the lines. And in fact, a very able young woman named Jeannie Heller, who was a couple of years ahead of me, wrote a story about a young woman, a student from, I think, Beachwood in Cleveland, who had been arrested by Columbus police and taken away in cuffs and jailed for jaywalking tickets. Big spread. It looked like I’m sure it would look today on the New York Post. And by about 5:00 that afternoon hundreds of Ohio State students were intentionally jaywalking across High Street, and a mini campus riot happened. That was The Lantern. That was good stuff. When I came back, it had gotten a little more serious, I think, because of the input of Everest Dirkson, a former Plain Dealer editor, who came down and put a little discipline in things. And then that tradition was carried forward.

Q. And he was the advisor?

A. He was The Lantern advisor. And he had retired from the Plain Dealer and was here for a couple of years. He brought order to things, and made it more professional certainly than the New York approach.

Q. What was your favorite thing to write about?

A. Well, I was always fascinated with politics and government. I spent a lot of time in political science classes and in history and the like. And so government, I was always drawn to government. I remember in ’64 [during the presidential election] I got to cover [Arizona U.S. Sen. Barry] Goldwater’s stop in Columbus and I got
on several occasions to go and cover Gov. [James] Rhodes at the time. And I was fascinated by that and liked it a lot.

Q. How did they treat you as a student reporter? Like Gov. Rhodes?

A. Gov. Rhodes treated all reporters the same. In fact, on Gov. [John] Gilligan’s inauguration day after Rhodes had served eight years and was done and Gilligan had been elected Governor of Ohio, the two of them met in the Governor’s office right before the swearing in ceremonies, and those of us who were then covering for real papers were standing outside the reception area and Rhodes looked at Gilligan and said, “Governor, watch out for those guys. They’ll treat you like a dog in heat. If you run they’ll bite you in the ass, and if you stop they’ll screw you.” So Rhodes treated all reporters like that. And if you were from The Lantern or the Plain Dealer, it didn’t much matter. Certainly, the national people at that time, they’d give you a little deference and sort of pat you on the head kind of stuff. It was a good time.

Q. That’s good. Is there anything you want to cover about that time?

A. Well, no, actually the things I wrote down were just a little bit of a scenario I was trying to recall on specifically the 1970 riots. So when we get to that section I’ll be able to at least get my memories in order.

Q. Okay. So give me the dates again when you were a student here.

A. I was a student here enrolled in 1962 and was here for two years, so that’s ’64. Left in ’65 and worked for a year in Cleveland. Re-enrolled in ’66 and graduated in ’67. When I came back to Columbus and re-enrolled, I got a job, and by the way I was married, and got a job at The Columbus Citizen Journal, and worked
there about nine or ten months when the OSU Alumni Monthly magazine called to invite me to apply for the job of Assistant Editor. For the last year I was in school I worked full-time as the Assistant Editor of the Alumni Monthly, until my graduation. And when I graduated in ’67, shortly thereafter I went to the Dayton Journal Herald, and worked there for a couple of years, and then joined the Plain Dealer here in the Plain Dealer bureau.

Q. Now, when you were with The Lantern and then when you were working full-time for the alumni magazine, what was the relationship between the students and the administration?

A. Increasingly hostile. The president at the time was a former Columbus school superintendent, Novice G. Fawcett. How he got to be president, I think, is a reflection of the complete ownership of Ohio State by the Columbus establishment. And he was, I’m sure, a good administrator, and I’m sure an effective President of The Ohio State University in many ways. However, one of the ways that he was not effective was in his relationship with students. Students as we’ve already discussed were of a different breed even than they are now. I think clearly the enrolling classes at The Ohio State University main campus certainly are much better equipped for college, and much better quality of student today than they were then. Students then were pretty full of themselves and breaking away from traditions. And, in fact, between the period that I enrolled in college in 1962 and the time that I started to work for the Plain Dealer in 1969 or 1970, say, all the rules had changed. The dress codes had changed. Civility standards had changed. The rights of women and the anticipated roles of women
in this society had changed. The whole civil rights movement had reached the north. It was now in the north. It wasn’t always, “Isn’t that terrible that happens in Mississippi or Alabama.” It was here. And of course, the war. So all the rules changed, and I don’t think Novice G. Fawcett was ever prepared for that or knew what to do with it. In fact, one of my impressions of him came when I was a young Lantern reporter covering an announcement that he was making. It was strictly a PR thing for the University. The President was making an announcement about the development of a new dormitory or something. (There was an awful lot of that going on as the University was just exploding in student population, which I credit him with managing very well.) Anyway, he had a loose leaf notebook with his remarks, with his speech in it. The notebook had the seal of the President of the Ohio State University on it, and he read every word of his speech bound in that notebook and left. And it was the first time, I guess, I had ever been so close to someone with so much authority, and I was just shocked that he could stand up and say, “Today we’re dedicating XYZ hall and this is going to be great for these reasons, and great rooms for the students, and it’s keeping up the demand, and blah, blah, blah. Any questions? See you all later.” It was very formal, very organized, very regimented. And that’s what he was. It shocked me. I thought: “Did they take the notebook back and put it in the Novice G. Fawcett library for his announcement of the Drexel Hall opening or something?” It just shocked me how formal he was. That’s who he was. And he was certainly not equipped for the generation of students that he found himself with.
Q. One of the things that I recently read is that he considered retiring several years before 1970. It would have been interesting.

A. It would have been interesting because Harold Enarson, who followed him, was quite a different personality. And would have, I think, just intuitively handled the students, the riots and independence that they were expressing in a different way. I don’t know if it would have been better, but it would have been different. The man running the Board of Trustees at the time that Fawcett retired, James Shocknessy, for whom by the way the Ohio Turnpike is named, was a flamboyant character (and lawyer) from Springfield, Ohio. But anyway, Shocknessy pretty much took over as the Board President at the time the selection of a new president was being made and it got to the point where it wasn’t going well. The students were involved in the process and were advocating one thing and one style. The Board was certainly comfortable with another style. And the editor and publisher of the Plain Dealer at the time, Tom Vail, began to lobby Shocknessy on behalf of Enarson, who was president at that time of Cleveland State University. And so Enarson came, through Vail’s influence, and I’m sure others, as sort of the compromise President that they brought in. And I think did a good transitional job for a few years.

Q. What about other administrators? Did you have much dealing with other administrators?

A. I remember John Mount. And he was pretty neat and he got it, I think. But he was working for Fawcett, who didn’t get it and it was troubling, I think. But I remember him and others in a positive way, but not as much dealings as I had
with then-President Fawcett. Jack Fullen was the director of the Alumni Association, had really created it out of whole cloth and was just going into his final year. In fact, I worked for him for his last six months. And he was a real character and hell on wheels and I don’t think I’ve met anybody more devoted to this University. I guess Dan Heinlen might be a good second. But he was memorable.

Q. Was the offer working for the Alumni Association full-time while going to classes and being a student, or was it kind of compartmental?

A. Yes, it’s just what I did. I was a newspaper reporter, so I wrote stories for Alumni Monthly full-time, and nobody was really asking me what their editorial position ought to be. But I agreed with it because Fullen was one to be jabbing the (university) President all the time. And for good reason. The Alumni Association at that time was very independent from the administration, and Fawcett saw to that being changed when Fullen left. They couldn’t take on Fullen. He tried once and lost. Then later, when Fullen was retiring, he got his way, as he did with The Lantern and everything else. He outlasted them, and he eventually brought them all to heel, whether it was good or for ill. I have my opinion.

Q. What did he do with The Lantern?

A. The journalism school had exploded in its vitality under a director [named] George Kienzle, who was the former public relations guy for Borden Foods in town. He was like Fullen. He was larger than life. He knew how to work the press. And he established that Ohio State was going to be a school that taught students how to be top-notch journalists, and go to work in top-notch journalism
positions, which at that time, for the most part, meant newspapers. And he was having great success doing that. The graduates of the school went on, started almost immediately at positions higher than you would have thought they should have, and had long and successful careers in the field. He got ill with cancer and eventually passed and they named an interim director, faculty member Paul Barton. Then the challenge was on as to whether or not the next dean or director of the school, I think it was director and not dean, was going to take the line that the School [of Journalism] was on, or he was going to take the line that President Fawcett wanted them on. President Fawcett’s cover for all this was that Ohio State University was a graduate institution. And that it ought not be spending its resources on educating students, undergraduate students, to be newspaper reporters. It ought to be spending its resources on developing graduate programs for people who were going to do research, and the like, into journalism and communications. That’s the direction he saw for the University. It clearly was a direction that the Ohio government wanted. It’s not like I’m sitting here saying he’s wrong about it, but it did change the School [of Journalism]. He went out to the University of Nebraska, interestingly, and got the director there whose name was William Hall to come in and lead the School. Well, he was the antithesis of the previous administration and he led the School for a short time. But the transition had been made. It was going to be a graduate education school. And eventually, I’m sure to Fawcett’s delight, although it was in retirement, just pretty much moved the school into the speech department or something and that’s where we are today: producing anchor persons for CNN, which is wonderful.
Q. Do you think as part of that transition The Lantern reporters themselves changed?
I’ve always thought it was interesting that The Lantern was a class.

A. Yes, and it was a hybrid. And again, this is Kienzle. The idea was that the way you taught people to be top-notch reporter is you made it a class. We went to class, and the first day of class it was, “Okay, I’m professor so and so. Everybody go out and find a story and come back and write it.” This was a two-hour lab. “Go out and get a story, come back and write it for tomorrow’s paper.” And that’s what you did. You went out, literally walked out the door and said, “Where in the hell am I going to go to find a story?” And you had to do it. That was the kind of attitude. Now shortly after I left, the people right behind me in the school changed their approach. They became involved in things, so that Lantern editors and student reporters, student newspaper people, were involved with the people planning these demonstrations and riots. That we never would have done. We never would have been involved with them. It went to an extreme and you’ve got to remember that was a time when drugs were proliferating and LSD was a big thing. We picked up a story from a woman who had become managing editor of The Lantern and wrote a big column on her use of LSD and what was so wonderful about it. We picked up that story and did a story on her, which was quite controversial for the alumni magazine. That was all happening too. So there was a dramatic shift. We went from students who are going to work for the New York Times and Washington Post to students who were going to be directly involved in changing the society and the University. And that’s how it got there. Almost like with a pendulum because it snapped all the way over to one side
before it came back. And it really never found its middle here at Ohio State. It’s a shame, but it didn’t. And when I was on the Alumni Advisory Board, when I was Executive Editor of the Plain Dealer, part of my responsibility was to report to the Alumni Association Board on the School of Journalism. And I remember I did that and I had just trashed it, and I was not a popular candidate. I had one term on the Alumni Advisory Board.

Q. When was that?

A. I think it would have been the early ’80s. That’s my record here. This interview should be lost or tucked beneath a few Columbus phone books from 1940.

Q. We don’t do that here. When you were writing for the alumni magazine, what types of stories did they have you writing?

A. You know, it was a very good book and as I say, the controversial stuff for the most part was written by Jack Fullen, his column and the like. But we tried to do all kinds of stuff. We reported, as a monthly would, on whatever sport was in season. We’d have a little paragraph on each outing or game or whatever. We had a cover story. I did a lot of the cover stories, which were on Ohio State news, like the first Ohio State graduate who was selected to be an astronaut. We did, as I mentioned earlier, the LSD story. We did a story on [the Speaker’s Rule, which] I think that had been a major issue at the University prior to my attendance here, but was later being examined by the Faculty Council. And we did a number of stories on that, and they were awfully boring and hard to write. So features right on through the book. But there was usually one keynote feature that was a cover story, and I often did that.
Q. What did you think the mood was on campus in that sort of ’67-’68 timeframe?

A. Angry. Violent. Changing. It was like a boiling pot of coffee. It seemed like everybody had a chip on their shoulder, and that was both students and administration. It probably mirrored what was going on in households all across Ohio, the Midwest and the rest of the country, where parents just didn’t get what the kids were about, and the kids just didn’t think that their parents had anything to tell them. Especially in the ’70s and late ’60s, ’68, ’69, ’70, it started to change.

Q. So when you graduated then, you went and worked in Dayton.

A. I worked in Dayton for a couple of years, I guess, and was city hall reporter, political reporter down there. And then an opening occurred in the Plain Dealer bureau and I was sort of recruited for that. Always wanted to work for the Plain Dealer. It’s my home-town newspaper. So I got the job here and moved my family up here.

Q. Here or in Cleveland?

A. It was in Columbus. I was in the Columbus bureau of the Plain Dealer and that meant you worked here full-time. It didn’t matter if the legislature was in session or whatever. And we lived here. In fact, during that time I wrote a story with a colleague, that was the politically powerful Ohio loan scandal. It involved almost all of the Republicans that were comfortably seated in office. And almost all, in fact all, were defeated in that next general election by Democrats, who hadn’t seen much time in office for quite a while. And we were nominated by our paper for the Pulitzer, and we came in second. So I was hot stuff at about 22 years old.
Q: So you were here anyway basically when they said …

A: When the riots started?

Q: Yes.

A: Well understand that we were government and political reporters. *The Plain Dealer*, at the time had a state editor Wilson Hirschfeld, was a brilliant editor, and he said, “I don’t want you guys covering what the AP covers. I can get that off the AP [wire]. I want you to go find out what’s wrong, what’s not working.” So we were doing things like the loan scandal. We were really deeply into that type of story because that was our job – go find something. I wrote a series on Ohio University, which they didn’t like at Ohio University. It implicated the former president, who had been sort of a rock star, in some land and insurance dealings. It also implicated a former trustee, who had been the chairman or ran the trustees forever. And, in fact, at one point even involved John Glenn and John Galbreath, the developer, on the edges. So that was our job – go find that stuff. And we were based in Columbus to go find it. So that was our job and that’s what we did. But when there was an overwhelming story, we eventually got pulled into it out of sheer panic in Cleveland, not because we were any good at covering it, just because, “We’ve got some guys down there. What are they doing?” That was what happened with the riots in ’70, and just as an example, it also happened when [Dr.] Sam Sheppard died in Gahanna. I was by the phone and got to go up and interview the then-late Mrs. Sheppard – her mother – which was quite a stitch. But that’s what it was. So under those circumstances, “My God, they’re rioting at the University, get up there.” So that’s how we got to cover the riots.
Q. Okay. So you came up to campus. How often were you pulled up to campus before the University was shut down?

A. Well, actually what happened was on April 29, I think, was the day that the violence actually started. And that was [between] the Columbus police and students – and undercover Columbus police on one side and the Columbus police and Highway Patrol on the other side of Neil Avenue and 11th Avenue, where the gates were. The students and police began a pushing-and-shoving match over closing the gates. And so the next day’s headline from AP was, “We’ve got a pushing-and-shoving match going on at Ohio State. It’s anti-war.” Well, it was more than anti-war, but anti-war was the trip switch. And so Cleveland says, get up there. So the next morning my bureau chief, the fellow that I worked with, Rick Zimmerman and myself, came up. And this thought just struck me and it will tell you a lot about how things were and how quickly things were changing. I had graduated about three years earlier, barely three years earlier. And I came up to the University with my colleague, who was a few years older. I was wearing a pair of slacks, I’m sure an Oxford button down shirt, a tie, and a sports coat. And leather street shoes. And [I] had a haircut that probably was pretty short, and no facial hair. And I walk onto this campus, which I know intimately. I’d been a reporter here. I’d been a student newspaper editor here. I walked onto this campus and looked at the students, and to them, I might as well have been 40 years old. I might as well have been a policeman or a University administrator of some small measure. At that time, the campus, the main entrance to the campus was 15th and High. It was before they got the prefab concrete building and the
vegetation that’s native to South Carolina to decorate the front of the campus. It was a beautiful entrance. It was an entrance befitting a large Midwestern University because it was almost this boulevard effect with Mershon on one side and the Historical Society on the other side. And you walked down and the Oval worked. And the streets on the Oval worked. You actually could drive either on the North Oval Drive or South Oval Drive down to Neil Avenue and then take Neil Avenue either way. So the Oval was more vibrant, more a part of being here. And the entrance to it made you feel like you were entering somewhere different or special. We walked down there and we got to the top of Oval, just a little bit skewed to the North Oval Drive, and looked down onto campus, and man oh man, was it trouble. Wow. Blue helmeted Ohio State highway patrol were all on one side with their back to the buildings on the north, and the students were in the center of the Oval, with their backs to the south, going north. It became very clear very quickly that the one thing that the administration and authorities didn’t want to happen was have those students occupy any buildings. A year or so earlier there had been occupation of Columbia and Berkeley. These kids weren’t going to get in a building and occupy it. And so, it became this sort of cat-and-mouse game where the authorities and police would try and move the students back, and the students would surge and the students would move back. It was almost like a dance.

Q. Were you up?
A. We were on ground level, Oval level. Really, between the two. We weren’t police and we weren’t students. So you had this scene. You had a couple
thousand students milling and surging and milling and chanting in the middle of the Oval. And you had these blue-helmeted authorities, police and guard behind them. The guard was behind the police. It was civilian authority and then the military authority, surging back and forth. I would go around behind the police and the guard and go into the buildings and see what I could see from there. Got into the administration building much to the consternation of whoever was supposed to keep reporters out of there, and that kind of thing.

Q. Was there anybody in the administration building?

A. Oh yes, they were in there. They were all hunkered down. I’m sure President Fawcett wasn’t there but others were. And the police and guard were using gas with the wind coming out of the southwest. I got gassed, pepper gassed. I thought I’d die. I happen to be coming out of one of the buildings and they shot off a can of gas and I walked around the corner and walked right into it, because it was blowing right back at them. They had gas masks; we didn’t. I ran back around the corner, went into a building, went to the washroom and tried to wash it off. Pepper gas is really bad. It’s worse than tear gas. And tried to wash my face and get it out and I’d look over and there’s a young guardsman, probably my age or younger, with his gas mask ripped off, trying to do the same thing. He didn’t have his gas mask on right and he got it too. I looked in the mirror and I looked at him, and I looked back in the mirror and I thought, “There’s something wrong with this picture,” because this guy doesn’t want to hurt those kids any more than I do. But we were both hostiles. I mean, we were the enemy to those students, who again were a couple of years younger than me. And so that’s how it went.
There was one incident I wrote about for the paper the next morning and my editor changed it and made it wrong. I was outraged about the changes. But my editor couldn’t believe the picture I had drawn. The picture was of a little cadre, a little platoon if you will, of highway patrolmen who actually got into formation and marched right toward the students, and the students would surge back a little bit and then forward again, just like a parade march. And out of the crowd came a brick and it hit off the side of one of those policeman’s helmets. It would have killed him if he didn’t have a helmet on. It didn’t do him any good as it was. He staggered back and fellow officers grabbed and steadied him. A student had thrown a brick at the head of this policeman. I was shocked by it. And I reported it, and my editor changed it to be a highway patrol car not men on foot that had driven toward the students. And I was mortified because it was an error and everybody in the world would know I made the error. Of course nobody did. And I was talking to the editor the next day and I said, “That’s wrong, that’s not what happened.” And he said, “I couldn’t believe it. I’m sorry but I just couldn’t believe it.” And I said, “I couldn’t believe it, either.”

Q. What was the make-up of the student group?

A. When we got amongst them, it was pretty clear that there were probably three groups that were in the intense demonstrators, maybe four. There were the organizers of the intense demonstrators, the intense demonstrators, the not-so-intense demonstrators, and then the onlookers, people that just came out of buildings and said, “Hey, what’s going on?” [Members of] the group that was running the thing were pretty grungy and pretty mean and pretty violent. Grungy,
by my standards. I was taken with – and I had been around student demonstrations at Ohio State – the world of difference because of the violence. It was like this dance of the authorities pushing, with movement, the crowd back, And the crowd, by its movement, forcing the authorities back. And then there would be just a bolt of lightning, and it would be very violent. It was quite dramatic. Later that night, after all the stories were filed for the early editions, my colleague and I, were driving his MG convertible around campus to see what was going on. We’re not leaving the story. We’re driving around in this little MG and we went by the dorms on the north side of campus and students would come out and threaten the car, “What are you doing here? What are you looking for? Are you guys a bunch of pigs?” We were newspaper reporters! That’s all we were. And the two of us stuffed in a little MG didn’t look much like we were anybody’s authority. But it wasn’t like the other riots where you have the kids up on 15th Street get gassed because Columbus police got overexcited and gassed the kids on the porch, which caused all the other kids to come outside. It wasn’t that kind of crowd, just drunk and hey, what are you doing, kind of shoving around, let’s look at this. This was violent. You know, I was a pretty big guy and I could take care of myself, but I didn’t want to be in that little car in that atmosphere. We reported on what happened but in the past you would have hung around and talked to people. There was no talking to anybody.

Q. Do you think the students – was it a combination of students/other people? Was it mostly students, do you think?
A. No, there were other people here. Clearly, there were other people here. Clearly, there were people who had come from other campuses, I think principally anti-war, but certainly with the civil right issues and the women’s issues were good issues to bundle into that. I think those hardcore kids were very serious. And there were clearly also “students” from the highway patrol and Columbus Police Academy infiltrators who were agent provocateurs. In fact, we had a photo taken at the 11th and Neil [avenues] gate shoving match, which started it all, with a male student’s purportedly picture hanging on the gate. My colleague, Rick Zimmerman, identified that guy as a Columbus police officer. So we clearly knew what was there. But the visiting students were clearly in the control group. Wednesday night was the Neil Avenue incident, Thursday was this violent confrontation on the Oval with the National Guard there. Friday it was almost like a spent fighter, but stuff was still brewing. One of the things you have to remember about these demonstrations is that they couldn’t sustain them. They could sustain a crowd for a while, but they couldn’t sustain the violence and the confrontation. So what they would do is have these bolts of lightning and these violent confrontations, almost one upping the last one and they would all have to fall back, almost like a fighter would spend his energy. And then they’d try and come back. By Friday afternoon, and I remember this as Friday, you know I could be wrong on this, but it was the only time that a ranking person in the University engaged those students. You know who it was? Woody Hayes. I like to think he did it out of his decency and concern for the University and his legitimate concern for the students. He just walked over to the Oval and engaged the students. You
know who he engaged: The Vice President of the [Undergraduate Student Government], Michael White, who later was a state senator and mayor of Cleveland. The two had a debate about some of the issues, including the war that the students were upset about. The only person of any note at the Ohio State University who engaged these students in a public way was Woody Hayes. So that finished the week and set up a weekend of planning and secret meetings, and then on Monday it was going to start all over again. Only on Monday Kent State [where four students were killed during a demonstration] happens. Our intelligence at the Plain Dealer, which by the way is an oxymoron, was that these outsiders, if you will, the organizers from other campuses, wanted to engage and confront the authorities at Ohio State because it was a big school and everybody knew it and it was a Midwestern school. So violence and the clash were going to happen here and that’s what we were looking for. And then Kent happened. That was it, within a few days they had shut down the campus. You have to remember, this is also right on the eve of a very hotly contested primary election race for the Republican nomination to the U.S. Senate. There were a lot of things going on that contributed to this. It was a perfect storm.

Q. When Woody came out and talked to the students and had the debate, did the other students listen?

A. They listened. Woody was an exceptional person. Ohio State would go out and win the Rose Bowl and the next day he’s on a plane to Vietnam. He didn’t have to go. He wasn’t making a position on the war. I mean, his position on the war is, “You follow the government because you believe in your President and you
support your President.” He did what he thought was right. He thought it was right to have a conversation with students. Can you imagine, in this University from the President on down, nobody else did? He was the only leader at The Ohio State University who had the courage to go out and talk to their students. Quite amazing

Q. Some of the material we have talks about the faculty, the Green Ribbon [Commission], were they in the mix there? Were they trying to be between the two sides, or were they just sort of …

A. From my standpoint they identified with the students. I’m sure they played an effective role. As a newspaper reporter covering the story, I didn’t see them, didn’t think they were doing much at all, having meetings at St. Stephen’s Church – big deal. It’s what faculty does. They sit and meet. There were people organizing the riots who understood violence, who wanted to use violence, and who knew how to get the support of the students to get away with the violence. And they did just that. And so what did the faculty do? I’m not sure but it wasn’t anything that I was witness to.

Q. Well, it’s just a good question because if you look at certain material, obviously it’s from the person’s point of view in terms of what they thought their view was. So that’s why I thought I would ask you from your standpoint.

A. That’s true. And I’m sure that’s good and accurate and all the rest, but as a reporter reporting on the story for a major newspaper in the state, I didn’t see them, or I didn’t see them as they saw themselves.

Q. So on May 4, did you come back to campus?
A. Yes, we were up here, and of course, we heard about Kent, and then it was Cleveland emptying the newsroom for Kent. We were not sent there because there was now a government story as well. What’s the governor going to do? You two go follow that story. We were sort of out of that picture. The riots, for our little bureau, were over. It didn’t matter what they were doing on the Oval. We had dead students 30 miles outside of the headquarters of the Plain Dealer.

Q. Right, right. So you covered what was going on in the Statehouse?

A. Yes, what’s the governor going to do? My God, what did he order the National Guard to do? What does the adjutant of the National Guard have to say about all this? What does Rhodes have to say about it? Is Rhodes going to close the University? That was where we were.

Q. Were you surprised when OSU closed down?

A. No, because it was after the primary. I believe it was after the primary they closed the school.

Q. I think it was the 6th, May 6th.

A. Wasn’t the primary the 5th? First Tuesday after the first Monday. If you had been on campus and seen what I had seen, it would not surprise you that they had to close the University. Shut it down, get everybody out of there. Once you sent the students home, what you had left to have a riot were the outside activists, the diehard anti-war students from Ohio State, and the diehard faculty from Ohio State. That wasn’t a crowd. The crowd was when you empty these classroom buildings around the Oval. That’s where you get a crowd.
Q. What were your thoughts when you were in the middle of this, just I’m sure primarily you were thinking about it from [the point of view as] a reporter. But looking back at it as an alumnus, what were your perceptions of what was going on? Just from the University that you had recently graduated from.

A. Yes, well, I was not surprised that the University administration, if you will, was incapable of engaging these students, because you have to remember, I’m the reporter who watched the President open a dorm with a prepared text in a notebook with the embossed crest of The Ohio State University on the front. I mean, how the hell was he going to talk to anybody? It was a shame. This failure was a black eye on the performance of the University. So I was taken by that and embarrassed by that. I was also, again, my awareness of the imposition of Columbus politics and standards on this greatest University also struck me.

Q. In terms of what?

A. The Columbus Police reacted to disturbances at Ohio State in a way that the Mayor needed to act to get re-elected, whoever the Mayor was. And I am sure with very good reason for the safety and well-being of the community. I am sure at other times for the pleasure of city business leaders, whether it was Dispatch [owner John Wolfe] or [commercial developer John W.] Galbreath or Nationwide [Insurance]. “We can’t have these kids running our city.” That has changed a lot – a lot. But it was true then. And it’s one of the things that I always believed has held Ohio State back. It’s one of the things I believe today holds Ohio State back. But Columbus has gotten a lot bigger and a lot more sophisticated. Its press has gotten much, much better. In fact, the Dispatch is as good as any paper they
publish in Ohio, as far as I’m concerned, and does an excellent job today. But that wasn’t always the case. And it certainly was a conservative paper in a liberal time. I was a young person, so I would see things that way. There were some things that I had developed as my perceptions of Ohio State that were reinforced at that time. For example, I believed that the administration was aloof and answered to Columbus authorities. The students were talking to the wrong people. The students should have been down talking to John Wolfe and to Galbreath and to those people because they were running the University. Novice G. Fawcett wasn’t. Never did. So, that was all reinforced. I could have been wrong then; I could be wrong today. You know, it was always amazing to me that you can have a major University at a time of great disquiet in our country, in a major Ohio city, and the police and mostly the Columbus police, but by extension the Ohio Highway Patrol, wouldn’t be any better trained to handle disturbances here than they were. You would think somebody might have sent them to a class. But it didn’t happen.

Q. When the University came back, did you come back to do any stories?

A. No, the story was over. It was a Kent State story. That wasn’t our role. And would it have been a good assignment or a good thing to do? Yes, probably, should have done that but we didn’t. You know, there was only one University at that time, and it was Kent State, and everything was what happened there. We really thought it was going to happen here. We really thought that this cadre that was out in that Oval was going to burn something down. And we didn't think it would be the ROTC building at Kent State. So we’re all sort of standing there
watching and waiting for it to happen and it happened behind us. We missed the play.

Q. Were there other reporters on campus?

A. Oh yes, because again, the other papers that had bureaus here certainly emptied their bureaus. We were all up here poking around. And we were fortunate we were huge, we had two people. Everybody else had one and so there was a lot of demand to be around Rhodes and to be around the government to find out what the government was doing. So some of them were occupied with that as well.

Q. Sure. So once things calmed down, how long were you in the Columbus bureau for the Plain Dealer?

A. I was bureau chief, maybe I left there around ’72 or so. Went up to Cleveland, first as state editor and then might have been ’73 I went up to Cleveland, and then wrote politics as political editor for a short time, and then city editor, or I think state editor again, city editor, managing editor and executive editor. And I left in ’84.

Q. Okay. When you said you were on the Alumni Advisory Board, when was that? During all that?

A. You know, it was early ’80s I think. I would think it was early ’80s.

Q. What was your role? Like what did the Alumni Advisory Board do?

A. The Alumni Advisory Board would have people who had achieved some success and were dedicated to the University act to inform the University of developments in their disciplines. It also gave the University family an audience to report important developments at the University. The only reason I was on it was
because I was with the Plain Dealer. David Hopcraft didn’t matter to anybody; the editor of the paper did. We would gather information on their area of presumed experience or expertise, and then report that to the rest of the Advisory Board, and have a discussion and maybe invite in the people, say, like the Archives are doing a great job with such and such, we’d like you and one of your co-workers to come over and make a little presentation to the Alumni Advisory Board and let them know what’s going on. It’s really a good thing. And then in that way I think it does a couple things. It allowed the Alumni Association Board and leadership to broaden their reach in the organization, to probably find and identify candidates that might be good for the Board later on, which by the way, was not me. And to just keep dialogue and keep people involved with the University. The Alumni Association here, at least under Dan Heinlen was overall quite exceptional, quite exceptional. And they did these kinds of things. And in fact before Dan left he even had a luncheon for former members of The Ohio State University Alumni Association Advisory Board to say, “Hey, you guys know a lot about the University, what’s going on? What do you think we ought to be doing? Is there a way we can use you that we’re not using you?” They really were reaching out. And so that was my involvement with them. It was for a short time, one term or whatever, and it was a good experience. When it came my turn to report, I did a negative report on the School of Journalism and that was the last time I was asked to report on anything.

Q. Well, you know, if you ask for a report, you get one.

A. They knew what was coming; they shouldn’t have asked.
Q. I guess, just thinking back, what do you think were the legacies of the demonstrations?

A. You know, I think it was that it was the turning point when Ohio State started to grow out of the cocoon that was the Columbus, sort of Columbus’ local University. Clearly the influx of baby boom students from across the state had changed things. The makeup of the student body, it clearly was no longer dominated by kids driving to campus from Upper Arlington and Worthington. It was now kids out of the streets of Cleveland and out of some of the tough suburbs. And kids that had dads that worked in factories, and they weren’t insurance adjusters. And it was true all over Toledo or Canton, you could say the same thing. And so it was changing. And that student body was part of that change. It was the example of the rules changing. And Ohio State was going to get pushed out of this cocoon kicking and screaming, but it was going to get pushed out. And I’m sure it happened at other major universities across the country, but it’s one of the legacies of what happened here. I could not imagine subsequent to those riots that the only person of authority at the University who would engage students would be the football coach. I can’t imagine. But that was a big deal then, that he did it. And again, please, I have to say this just in case anybody ever reads this: It isn’t that I’m enamored with Woody Hayes because he was a great football coach, which he was, and yes, I’m an alumni and I’m proud of the tradition of Ohio State football and all the rest of it, but I am not a guy who wears necklaces on Saturday. What he did was exceptional, almost as if he could see what was happening. He could see that there was no engagement of
the students, that they were his students. And so that’s what always been the
lasting impression to me of Woody Hayes. Not what he said, not what he said in
the debate or anything else, but that he saw it. Ohio State University, at that time,
at those riots, did not see it, was incapable of seeing it. After those riots, I can’t
imagine the University administration being incapable of seeing it. So I think
that’s one of the legacies. Here’s another one: I can’t imagine a Plain Dealer
editor or publisher, which was the case with Tom Vail, being engaged in the
selection of the President of The Ohio State University. He was. The Plain
Dealer editor and publisher was, in fact, engaged and was, in fact, an advocate
with Shocknessy for Harold Enarson. That’s another legacy of the riots.

Q. How did you end up in the room with the discussion of that?

A. You know, in part I had become sort of the known non-football graduate/expert
on Ohio State. And in part because I was moving up the ladder of management at
the Plain Dealer. I don’t know. At that time, as a matter of fact, I was still down
here in Columbus bureau. I was chief of the Columbus bureau. So the chief of
the Columbus bureau got calls from the publisher, who said, “What’s going on
with The Ohio State President? What’s going on with The Ohio State University?
You covered the meeting. You talked to Schocknessy. What did he tell you?
What are the other board members saying? What are the students saying?” So I
got involved in all of that. And, “Why don’t you come up here? We’re going to
have Enarson in. Why don’t you come up here and sit in on the conversation?”
That’s how I got involved.

Q. Okay.
A. Just goofiness.

Q. So when they were debating, the students were saying one thing, the …

A. The students were, you know, Schocknessy himself is a story, and in fact, I wrote one on him. He was the most preposterous man you ever met and very dramatic. And was completely bald before shaved heads were in. And he wore these thick, dark-rimmed glasses that didn’t go on behind the ear, but pinched into his temples. And he was a big heavy man and he was imposing. He was like a little bear. The students had been invited by the Trustees to sit in on this process of selecting a new President. And a couple of them were arguing, and I can’t remember the name but some liberal, and Shocknessy took the students on in a meeting, very effectively, very effectively. He was good, and very dramatic. And I had been sent to the meeting again by the publisher who was interested in what was going on with this. So I dash off the story because it was late. I’ve got to get home to the wife and kids, bang, let’s get this out. And so they run a big feature with a picture on him the next day. It might have been the next day or it might have been Sunday. Anyway, on Sunday I get this call at home and the caller says, “David, this is James Shocknessy. I am calling to congratulate on your story reporting the events of Friday at The Ohio State University board meeting. You covered it well and depicted me in a proper fashion. Thank you. Good-bye.”

Now, a little side note to that story is about a year and a half, two years later, I’m state editor. And I have to call him about something else. My editor has his number but apparently it’s a very guarded number. He gives it to me and says, “Call him.” I call him. He answers the phone: “Good afternoon.” I pipe up: “Mr.
Schocknessy, this is David Hopcraft from the **Plain Dealer.**” “David, I want you to destroy this number and never call it again. Goodbye.” So I call my editor who asks, “What did he say,” And I said, “Destroy the number and never call it again.” And he said, “Well, you didn’t get much out of him, did you?” And I said, “No, not much.” James Schocknessy was a character. But he was a good man for the time and again, he got Enarson in here, and Enarson, I think, did a good job transitioning the University through this period it had to go through. And it wasn’t only the riots – it was the drugs, the rights of women, it was black power. We covered the black or lack of black movement at Ohio State for many years after that, including another couple of disturbances. It was tough times for the University, and I think Enarson did it as well as most could have.

**Q.** How did Enarson deal with some of this?

**A.** He was more open. He was more available. I think he was politically attuned enough to see things coming and to head them off a little bit. I think one of the things that happened during the riots that was part of the element, and again, the University [was] just completely out of touch with what that was about. We saw it as about the war. We thought the motivating factor was that these kids were going to get drafted and get shot, and they knew it. The University saw it as, we’ll make an announcement that two years ago we created a discipline of black studies and we’re funding that this year for … Okay, fine. Enarson would have seen what it was really about, who to talk to and maybe had some success by his availability in isolating the outside influences that were pushing so hard, because there was no counterweight to that. Maybe that’s what the Green [Ribbon
Commission] Committee was trying to do; I don’t think so, but maybe it was. There was no counterweight to it. There was authority. Authority was not what students were looking for. They were looking for conversation. I think they got it from Enarson. He was the kind of guy like [OSu President E. Gordon] Gee… you’d never see Novice G. Fawcett on YouTube doing a dance with Brutus Buckeye. And there are those who might claim that maybe the good President Enarson had gone too far the other way. I would not be one, of course.

Q. I was just thinking of Novice Fawcett doing a dance with Brutus Buckeye and it was not …

A. It was not a pretty sight.

Q. No, no, no. Do you have any sort of relationship with Ohio State since being on the Alumni [Advisory Board]?

A. I’ve always stayed in touch with Dan Heinlen. He was, when I was the assistant editor of the Monthly, he was in charge of the alumni clubs, and he was a field guy for the Alumni Association. So we had known each other forever. I have over the years done some advocacy for the University with various political types that I’ve known through the University Advocacy Association, and have skirted around the edges a little bit of the Arts College Alumni Association, but very much on the edges. From time to time I’ve been involved with various people here who, for some reason, think I have something to say and ask me to do it, and I always do it. And the reason for that clearly is that I will go my grave with a debt of gratitude to the people of Ohio and to The Ohio State University for the opportunities and changes they made in my life. I know that if it hadn’t been for
The Ohio State University, I would not have had the quality of life I’ve had. I would not have gotten the quality of education I was availed. And it was and is a wonderful place. It was a wonderful place when Novice G. Fawcett was President. It was a wonderful place when the Columbus establishment seemed to control it completely. It was a wonderful place when students were rioting. It is an institution that is and just was a place at which I could plant a foot and pivot into an adult life that was unimaginably enriched by this University. So if this University in any way called me up tomorrow and asked me to do just about anything for them, I would do it. And it has absolutely nothing to do with football tickets. And by the way, one of the reasons that I don’t get involved more with, for example, the Arts College, is that the only thing I’ve ever been invited to is a day at which they have an outing around a football game. I understand that and they’re absolutely right in doing that. But I’ve been to football games. The point is, I don’t need football tickets to support the University. If the Arts Council called me and said, “We’re not going to give you a chance to buy football tickets, but we need you to go over here and do this,” I’d do it in a minute.

Q. Well, we appreciate your contributing to our little aspect of the University[‘s history].

A. Nobody uses phone books anymore. Nobody will look under the phone book if you put this under the phone book.

Q. I hate to tell you this, but we use the phone book all the time.

A. Well, I’ll have to come up with another one. Oh, the encyclopedia, nobody uses encyclopedias.
Q. Okay. Well, thank you. Is there anything else?

A. I’m talked out. I talked a lot more than I thought I would, and certainly more than I should have. No, I think that the only thing that I would want to reinforce is that I’m a newspaper man by training and by instinct. When I talk about things like these events or the University, I tend to talk about the blips, the things that didn’t work well, the things that could have been better. And so people who read this will say, “Well, here’s a guy who’s pretty cranky about the University.” And I guess I would like to say that’s not true. I did talk about the blips and I talk about the blips in terms of what I saw and where I think the University failed to meet its obligations, or was not effective. I talk about the Columbus establishment, not because it’s a mean, vile little group of people, but because it’s people who care deeply about the University and did everything they could to support it, and protect it, as they saw fit. But nonetheless, those things occurred. I think the University is one of the best things Ohio has going for it, and I only wish as far as Columbus and Cleveland, my home town – I now live in Columbus – but Cleveland and Cincinnati and Dayton and Toledo, I only wish that they could get over their regional pride and start working together and make this state, with the help of this University, really what it could be. So I don’t mean to demean or diminish the contributions that others have made just because I don’t agree with it. I still admire their contribution. I just don’t always agree with what they did.

Q. That’s okay, too.

A. Well, sometimes.

Q. Well, thank you very much.
A. Thank you. Thanks for giving me the opportunity. This is longer than anybody’s listened to me in years.