

A.V. SHIRK
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
AT THE OSU ARCHIVES
MAY 18, 2016

Q. Hi, my name is Kevlin Haire. I'm from the Ohio State University Archives. It's May 18, 2016. We're at the OSU Archives. I'm here interviewing A.V.Shirk. Welcome and thank you for doing this.

A. Thank you for having me.

Q. Please tell us first off your full name and your date of birth.

A. Albin Vineyard Shirk. April 8, 1938.

Q. Okay, thank you. I want to ask you about that name. That's an interesting middle name.

A. Albin is my father's name. Vineyard is a family name on my mother's side.

Q. Is it a last name? Or do you remember?

A. I think so. My sister is the genealogist in the family. She'd be able to tell you. But nobody ever calls me Albin.

Q. You've always been A.V.?

A. As far back as I can remember. Some people assume that I use it because I don't like Albin, which is not true. Occasionally people call me Albin and that's perfectly fine. It's really the tone of voice more than anything else.

Q. Speaking of your family, let's talk about your background, your family background, where you grew up.

A. I was born in Wilmington, Ohio. We moved to Findlay when I was about two. My brother was born there when I was four. Then we moved to Columbus. We lived on Kossuth Street for a while and one or two other places. Then we moved to Hilliards.

Q. What did your parents do for a living?

A. My father was a radio engineer for the Highway Patrol. We moved to Hilliards, which was Hilliards then, not Hilliard.

Q. Okay.

A. And about 1947 we moved to Worthington.¹ We moved to Colonial Hills, which was not part of Worthington at that time. It became part of Worthington later, although it was the Worthington School District. And so I grew up mostly in Worthington.

Q. And you graduated from Worthington High School?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you go to college then?

A. OSU.

Q. Oh you did go to OSU. When did you graduate?

A. I didn't. I never finished.

Q. When did you start at OSU?

A. '56 or '57.

Q. We're going to talk about how you got to WOSU, but when you went to Ohio State, what was your major?

A. Sociology.

Q. Were you interested in radio at all?

A. No, not at all.

Q. Okay, this is going to be an interesting story. How do you get from Sociology to working at WOSU at one point?

¹ My younger sister was born when we lived in Worthington.

A. I was working at *The Columbus Dispatch* in the Classified Advertising Department. This would have been 1960.

Q. Were you selling ads?

A. At that time I was working the evening desk and taking paid obituaries.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't remember clearly at this point. This is the Eisenhower administration. And somebody whom I had become acquainted with, it was a customer, said there was a job opening up at WOSU, and suggested I try for it. Why he suggested I try for it, I don't remember. And why I wanted to try for it, I don't remember. This was a long time ago. But I went down and applied for the job and got it.

Q. Okay. And what was the job?

A. The title I think was Clerk Typist, followed by a number, 2 or 3 or something. But let's see, WOSU, I worked in the Music Department. Essentially I was the Assistant to the Music Director, Fred Calland. And one of the things you had to do at that time, when new recordings came in, new LP's, you had to play them and time them. If you're going to program something for broadcast, you have to know to the second how long it lasts. So you would play them and time them. And you would type up a card catalog, a catalog card for it. This was before data bases.

Q. Yes, it sounds very labor intensive. But go on.

A. Well, we needed to be able to program by composer, by artist and by time. If we wanted to do a work by a certain composer, we needed to know what works we had by that composer. If we wanted to know what we did, if we wanted to feature a certain artist, we needed to know what recordings we had by that artist. And if we needed to fill 18

minutes and 37 seconds, we needed to know what we had that ran about 18 minutes and 37 seconds. So this meant three files, three card files. One for composer, which had the composer's name, followed by the selection, followed by the artist, followed by the time. Then we needed another card for the same selection, for the artist, followed by the composer, followed by the selection, followed by the time. And a third file for time, followed by the composer, followed by the artist, so that you would be able to look up anything you wanted. So how many cards for each selection?

Q. There would be three.

A. Well, not exactly. The Beethoven Sonatas for piano and violin have a pianist and a violinist.

Q. Oh okay.

A. How many artists do you suppose perform in the opera "The Marriage of Figaro"?²

Q. Oh...Too many.

A. This isn't something we had to do. This is something we were able to do. This was the best possible means of keeping track of the material available at the time. But this wasn't an onerous task; this was the means by which we were able to store the information that we needed to do the broadcasting. So originally I timed the selections. There was an office, there was a room that held the LP's on big shelves. And there was a turntable with a stop watch built into it³; a big one. And you just put the things on and started the stop watch. When the thing ended, you took note of it, and you actually wrote the times on the cover of the album, on the back, where they had the selections listed. You would

² We did not make a separate card for every single artist that appeared in an opera, oratorio, or similar large scale work. We made cards only for the conductor, the orchestra, and the major singers.

³ The stopwatch was built into the base that held the turntable; not into the turntable itself.

just take a pencil and write in the time for each selection right there. Then, whoever was doing the cards would have all the information on the album, and could type up the cards necessary for that.

Q. Okay. So you were doing the timing, the typing or both?

A. Both.

Q. Now did you have any interest in music?

A. Oh yes. Oh my goodness, yes. Oh my goodness, yes.

Q. Alright, so then it was a nice job for you.

A. Yes, it was a nice job.

Q. Maybe that's why you went up there. So you started as a Clerk Typist. And what year was this?

A. This would be 1960.

Q. And were you still going to OSU at that time, nor no?

A. No, no.

Q. So how long did you do that? The Clerk Typist job?

A. I don't remember exactly. At some point I got a promotion and a friend of mine, named David Sonner, came in and took the job I had, and I moved out to an office across the way, and did music programming and also started producing my own shows.

Q. Oh okay. So it was learn while you earn, sort of, environment?

A. Something of the sort, yeah.

Q. So when you got promoted what was your position? Is that when you became Assistant Programmer?

A. I don't remember the details anymore.⁴ I remember that Fred needed more help and I was taken off the job of just typing and what not, and given more responsibilities for programming. We had to program, Fred, the Music Department, of which Fred was the...Fred *was* the Music Department, programmed all of the music, with the exception of certain programs that we got from the NAEB, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, which came to us on tape recordings, seven inch-reels. The Salzburg Festival, the Bayreuth Festival, a lot of European festivals, would come in. They would be given to assigned slots. But all the selections⁵ were programmed by Fred and by Fred and me later. And we would simply take a block of time and decide what was going into it. And program it in. We did this all by hand, wrote it out. Then the information was sent to be set up for the WOSU Program Bulletin. And they would send us back galley proofs. Do you know what a galley proof is?

A. Yeah, it's basically the first draft of a newsletter or newspaper.

Q. It's actually the pages⁶, but they're all on loose sheets. And we would go over each one and mark in all the corrections that were necessary, and then send them back. And they'd send them back. We'd go and mark all the new errors that occurred, and all the old errors that we overlooked the first time, and send them back. And it took about three times I think. That was normal. My God, there is an immense amount of information in there. You have to go over it character by character. If it's the Mozart Quartet in G, Koechel

⁴ As I think back now, I remember that there was an outside candidate for the job to which I was promoted. The decision was Fred's; and he gave the job to me.

⁵ What I meant here is that the regular music programs that were broadcast each day, and which were the bulk of WOSU's music programming, were programmed by Fred; and later by Fred and me.

⁶ My wife, who is an editor, tells me that the pages are called, "page proofs". The galley proofs are taken from the type before it has been divided into pages. Fred and I worked on the galley proofs.

387, you have to read to read 3, 8, 7. It shouldn't be 3, 8, 6 or 2, 8, 7. So you had to go through a lot of this stuff character by character, and that took a while. And it's practically impossible to get it done the first time correctly. It took two or three sweeps before you'd get it. And, of course you never do. I mean, books get published all the time and you go through and sometimes you go and there's a little errata slip in there or something like that. It's very difficult to do this. And that's what we'd do and then eventually we'd get it printed up. Then we'd go through it again and find all the mistakes we missed.

Q. Now when you were doing this, you've mentioned a lot of classical music, but WOSU was airing lots of types of music?

A. Not really. It was mostly classical music at that time. When I went there, I discovered a lot of records called "The J File," which people told me variously that it either stood for jazz or junk, depending on the taste of the speaker. And I went through there. And my God, there was the Leadbelly's Last Sessions, that magnificent Folkways set. There were a lot of Folkways field records. There were all sort of things that had never been catalogued, never been timed, nothing had been done with them. I went through this stuff and I started going through them. I actually started taking this stuff home and timing it on my own. And eventually I started producing shows with that stuff. Now the first program I did, and I don't know how it came about, was a show on Puccini's Turndot. Then I think after that I did a series of programs on the history and development of American Negro Folk Music. And I just took that material and thought this is a treasure trove of stuff. And so I started producing shows that made use of it.

Q. Were you on the air as well?

A. Yes, producing shows. I typed out the scripts. I went into the studio, and read the scripts, and told the engineer when to play the music. Now a lot of the shows were taped in advance. But I had a live show I did at, I think, at 11:30 in the morning for 15 minutes. And I would go in and give the engineer a copy of the script, and the recordings. One of the other things that had to be done, by the way was, after the music had been programmed each day, the music had to be available to both the announcer and the engineer.

Q. Why was that?

A. So the announcer would know what to tell him.

Q. I thought you meant after it aired, I'm sorry. This was before.

A. No, the announcer had to know what music to announce, and the engineer had to know what music to play. So the records were put in Studio A, the biggest studio. There were some shelves, and there was a slot for each day of the week. And for each day we put the recordings that were going to be broadcast. Then inside the cover we would put the sheets, the cue sheets. One copy for the announcer who would know what selection was coming up, and one copy for the engineer who would know which album, which side, and which cut to play.

Q. Gotcha. Okay.

A. So the announcer would say, "Now we're going to hear the Beethoven piano concerto number 4, performed by Ivan Moravec," which of course was impossible. He hadn't recorded it yet. But Ivan Moravec or whoever. And then the engineer would have a copy and he would know to play, in this case it would have been side A, cuts 1, 2 and 3. And one of my jobs was to make sure that all of that information was in there correct and

ready go to, so that when the time came to broadcast this music, the engineer and the announcer would have what they needed.⁷ Now I would go in, when I was doing my shows live, I would go in and give the engineer the record or records, whatever it was, and the cue sheets. Then I would read the script and I would go like that, which I would raise my hand and make a circular motion, which was the symbol to play it. And I remember there was one occasion, he moved his hand like a mouth opening and closing, which was my signal to keep talking, because something had happened in there and he couldn't do it. And if that happened, you had to sit there and talk, and you had no idea how long you would have to talk. You would just have to wing it until the engineer let you know he was ready to go. Live radio was fun.

Q. It does sound like a lot of fun actually.

A. Actually it was.

Q. Now you worked for Fred Calland?

A. Yes.

Q. And he let you just play whatever you wanted. He didn't have any strict rules that it must be classical⁸.

A. No, he certainly didn't have any rules. I knew the guidelines. And if I had overstepped them he would have been upset. I remember one case, we had broadcast Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as the last piece before the station went off the air. And it ran three or four minutes beyond the normal shutoff time. And the announcer at that time did the signal to the engineer to fade out about five or seven minutes before the end of it.

⁷ This was my job when I first started. When I was promoted, and David Sonner took my old position, it became his responsibility.

⁸ Of course, the regular programs the WOSU Music Department (Fred) was producing were classical music programs. WOSU music programming in those days was similar to WOSU 101.1 today.

Q. Oh my gosh.

A. And he just gave the closing announcement and went home, because he wasn't about to sit there for another five or seven minutes. Fred hit the ceiling! He was, as one person put it, all smoke and fire and mushroom shaped-clouds. He was really pissed. Disrespect for the music. Disrespect for the work we were doing. It was intolerable.

Q. Did the announcer get fired, or no?

A. You know I don't remember. Here's the problem. It's been half a century. I wasn't there at the time Fred found out. But after all this time, I don't know if I wasn't there because I wasn't in the station at the time, or because I hadn't been hired at the time. I simply don't remember anymore.

Q. But it such a vivid story.

A. I learned about it promptly. I don't know when it occurred. I don't know whether it occurred before I was working there or when I was working there. This interview should have taken place 30 years ago. I was, I think, the youngest person on the staff which means I'm the last one standing.

Q. How old were you?

A. About 22 at the time. David Sonner, who is two years older than I, was also working with me. He's up in Oberlin, and I recently recorded about an hour and a half conversation with him about this period at WOSU, which if you wish, I'd be happy to give you. I assume he and I agree on what form this is for publication. The interview wasn't structured. We went on about all kinds of things, some of which had nothing to do with WOSU. And we weren't even drinking.

Q. That's okay. We should do these sooner than we do, but for whatever reason we're doing it now, which is good.

A. But the point is, whatever I say goes, because anybody who may contradict me is dead. I mean, for the past couple of decades, I've seen the obituaries of people that I associated with in one way or another. They are gone. And I'm not entirely happy about that because, it would be better if there were some reality check on my memories, if there was somebody, even if there was somebody who disagreed with me strongly, to give you another viewpoint, but they're gone.

Q. Well, that's okay. We have a lot of interviews where, we have one in particular, where the person who did the interview had a strong opinion about a certain topic and a certain person, and that person had long been gone. It happens all the time.

A. It happens all the time.

Q. But let's get back to you career at WOSU. You were playing classical, and then you said you were playing American?

A. We programmed classical music. We had regular shows that programmed classical music, regular spots. But, in addition, I took all this folk material and I don't remember what all was in there. There was jazz. Bill Parks⁹, one of the engineers, as a matter of fact, did a beautiful set of shows on the Library of Congress records of Jelly Roll Morton¹⁰. And I dug into these things, Folkways, and a lot of other recordings,

⁹ I have put an addendum at the end of this document giving more information about Bill Parks.

¹⁰ Bill Parks' Jelly Roll Morton programs, which were taken from Library of Congress recordings, turned out to be another instance of WOSU coming under attack. A letter to the editor appeared in The Columbus Dispatch, complaining about the coarse language in the programs (I think Morton said "damn" once or twice). There followed a controversy over WOSU's broadcasting standards. I heard Bill later say that he had discovered that the letter was written, not by an offended women who supposedly signed it, but by the Dispatch political cartoonist, Ray Evans, Jr. I don't know what evidence Bill had for that conclusion.

Tradition¹¹, and I had no idea where they came from¹². And I put them together and I started putting together programs, a series of programs. Series of half-hour or hour-long programs, whatever they were, maybe six, eight or ten shows in a series. And they'd get broadcast.

Q. At one point you got into trouble for one of these broadcasts. Let's talk about that. Lead me up to that, how that came about.

A. I put together a series of programs on topical and political singing in the United States.

Q. Sounds very interesting.

A. It went back to, I had recordings in the library that went back to Colonial times, the recordings didn't, of course, but the material did. And so I put together a series that chronicled the history of topical and political singing in the U.S. And I gathered some of my own material¹³. I had the Republican Glee Club come into the studios and record campaign songs for Eisenhower and, I think, Taft, and I think you've probably got them there. I think I gave them to you.

Q. Interesting, okay.

A. And I went out and, at one point Don Davis, one of the people from the News Department, covered a rally at the statehouse protesting the U.S. invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. And there was a singer there who had... was singing what he called the Song of the Cuban Revolution. I thought, that would be interesting. So I invited him to

¹¹ Tradition was a folk music label.

¹²By which I meant that I had no idea how they came to be in WOSU's music library.

¹³ I sometimes had people come into the WOSU studios and record material that I wanted for the series; and sometimes I took one of the Magnacord tape recorders out and made recordings on site of people singing such material.

come into the studio and record it for me. I eventually I got, I think, fifteen reels of songs and commentary out of that guy. His name was Bob Henes, H.E.N.E.S.¹⁴

Q. I think you gave me something.

A. I gave you everything I've got. I gave you all of it. He was an organizer for the Socialist party. He taught at OSU. I've forgotten in what capacity. He was also an organizer for the local Socialist party. And the Young People's Socialist League, which was the youth arm of the Socialist party, youth being defined as anybody who didn't have a full-time job yet I guess. And he was enormously knowledgeable about the history of American topical and political music. And I recorded reel after reel of this stuff. His performances were adequate. He wasn't the greatest performer in the world. He was okay. But his knowledge was immense and accurate. In the years since then I've only discovered some minor details where he was wrong. It's Leonard Bernstein, not Leonard Bernsteen, and that sort of thing. Everything I've been able to check, he was spot on. So I took that. I took the Republican Glee Club. I took all of the material I could find. And one of the things I learned is that people on the right don't sing a lot.

Q. Okay.

A. I hadn't known this before I started. I was vaguely liberal and political. My politics were vaguely liberal but not well formed. I went out and I was prepared to take anything I could get. Most of what I could get was either labor union, civil rights, things of that nature. I was really glad to get the Republican Glee Club, because I discovered there just wasn't that much, there just wasn't that much singing on the left¹⁵. Conservatives

¹⁴ At first, Henes was a bit startled that WOSU would ask him to come in to record his protest song. As he later said, "This *is* the Ohio Police State University."

¹⁵ I meant, "...on the right.", of course.

apparently don't play the banjo and guitar much. So I put it together in a series of programs. I had the program in the month for which they were broadcast, and they were 15 minutes shows that run from 11:30 to 11:45. I think that was my regular slot anyway.

Q. And this was in, I think, 1961.

A. This was 1961. It was the fall of 1961. September I think. It was the September Festival of the Arts. WOSU, every year in September they did a Festival of the Arts, in which they did special broadcasting and things of that nature. As I was preparing it, one of the recordings I got was a meeting of the Dissent Forum, an OSU recognized organization, that was a Socialist discussion group.

Q. Was this a student group?

A. A student group.

Q. Okay. But on this one occasion, instead of having a discussion group, they had a hootenanny in which they had people come in and sing songs. And I learned about it, and I was able to get there and record the whole thing.¹⁶ So there was some nice material there. But in one of them had a song called, "The Talking Un-American Blues," and in it was the line, "Mr. Scherer, are you now, or have you ever been a bastard?"¹⁷ Gordon Scherer from Cincinnati was on the House Committee on Un-American activities, the House Sub-committee on Un-American activities actually¹⁸. And I listened to that and I thought, "Uh-oh." And I called in the most senior management person who was in the building at the time. It happened to be Don Davis and I played it for him and said, "I

¹⁶ This recording is among the things I have given to the OSU Archives.

¹⁷ This was a play on one of the frequent questions that would be asked of those who appeared before the Committee. "Are you now, or have you ever been..." a member of the Communist Party, or whatever.

¹⁸ I was wrong there. It was not a sub-committee.

don't know about this. What do you think?" And he said, "If you put it in context, go ahead and if anything happens I'll back you." Let's stop for a minute and go back. The political climate in Columbus was such that I knew it was hazardous to broadcast certain material. So I put together a series of programs on political singing that did not include *anything* that had anything to do with the Communist party. No Woody Guthrie. No Pete Seeger, no Almanac singers, no Josh White even, for crying out loud, because I knew; and I never gave it a second thought; I mean, I would no more have broadcast that than have stepped in front of a freight train. So I was aware of what was happening. I was being careful.¹⁹ And in this case I went and got management approval of this item, because I wasn't sure of it either. Well the series was broadcast and as it happened, that song was run on the last show of the series²⁰. And yes, there was a great controversy about it. *The Columbus Dispatch*, I think, ran an editorial or two against it. Representative John Ashbrook, over in, what?, Youngstown?, either wrote a letter or there was a radio station, WNCI, that was involved²¹. It was a big controversy. I was suspended without pay for 30 days. Fred was suspended without pay for a week. And a lot of people in the University community supported me. They collected funds. They went out and collected donations to make up what I lost. As a matter of fact, I came out with something like five or seven dollars ahead. So I didn't lose any money. The ACLU supported me. A lot of people on the Socialist party, Bob Henes' group. It was Henes who performed the song at the dissent forum by the way. So a lot of them supported me.

¹⁹ What had not occurred to me was that I would be called a Communist by people who would simply lie about who I was and what I was doing.

²⁰ It was the most recent example of political singing I had. I never heard of any criticism of Bob Henes for publically performing the song; or of OSU, or The Dissent Forum, for providing a venue for Henes' performance.

²¹ WNCI broadcasts from that time are among the material I gave you.

I got emotional and financial support during that period. I think somebody sent me a publication from California, talking about censorship of anti-HUAC criticism.²² It was quite a controversy.

Q. Now when you aired the show, I assume, how quickly did it build, and what was the station's official take on it? You said a couple of minutes ago that Don Davis said, "I'll back you."

A. Oh, he never did. He never did. Fred did. And Fred actually didn't know about the particular song. He knew about the series in general. But I went as high as I could at the moment. And Don Davis never said a word. And we never spoke of it.

Q. Okay. And so how quickly were you suspended after that?

A. Oh gosh, the stuff I gave you will answer that, because the correspondence, the letter of suspension is in there, and so you have the dates and everything. I don't remember.

Q. Did you think to appeal it? Could you appeal it?

A. To whom?

Q. I don't know.

A. I don't either. To *whom*?

Q. And would it have mattered?

A. Or did it occur to me to say, "Hey, I got clearance for this?" To whom? Who would have been interested? Nobody was. There was a reference, the OSU administration at one point made reference to an investigation²³. There was no investigation. Certainly no investigation that involved talking to me. Nobody, nobody came to me and said, "A.V.,

²² That is also among the material I have given you.

²³ That reference is in one of the documents I gave you.

what happened? What did you do and why?" Until 50 years later, when Tom Rieland, General Manager of WOSU, asked me.

Q. Really? No one ever asked anything? You were just suspended.

A. *No one ever asked me anything!*, on either side of the controversy. Nobody, nobody. The people who supported me, and the people who opposed me. Nobody was interested in checking the facts.²⁴

Q. That's pretty amazing.

A. And so to whom should I have gone? The last time I went to somebody to get it cleared, the whole thing blew up. You want me to do it again? Oh, that sounds like fun.

Q. What were the effects of that, both on perhaps your career and at WOSU?

A. Well, I'm not sure "career" is the word. Look, I was a 22-year-old kid who hadn't decided what he wanted to be when he grew up.

Q. But you liked what you were doing?

A. I liked what I was doing. I stayed there until 1964. In 1964, the Taft administration, I think, did a cutback, in which all departments had to cut their spending. I remember one of the things was that printers and equipment would have to be repaired, rather than to be replaced. Somebody pointed out that was usually more expensive than replacing it. You could buy a new one cheaper than you could have an old one fixed, and my position was eliminated. Now at the time I was told that, and I can't remember by whom, it was by

²⁴ There was a staff meeting held in Studio A, to which upper level WOSU management came to express their extreme displeasure with my series, and anyone who had anything to do with it (I think Hull was there, but I don't remember). It was there that Fred Calland spoke up for me; and Don Davis didn't. The engineers who were controlling the station broadcast at the moment were not at the meeting, of course; but they could see and hear everything from the control board. If you look at the photographs, that I gave you, of a WOSU Christmas party in Studio A, you will see, in some of them, a large boom microphone. Bill Parks arranged for that boom mike to be live, and for one of the Magnacord tape recorders on the control board to record the meeting. I never heard the tape, and I don't know what happened to it.

somebody I had never seen before. I was told that this was because I was something of a trouble maker. This went back to that. However, I can't remember who it was that told me. I don't know if that person knew what he was talking about. So I don't even know that that was true, simply that was what I was told. This was in '61. I was there until '64. If that's the case, it was a delayed reaction. I never programmed anything again of course.

Q. Oh you didn't?

A. Of course not. Do you think I'm going to try?

Q. Well, now, that's quite a big result of, you know. I mean, you were Assistant Programmer. You were only suspended.

A. I did the regular music programming. I never produced another show.

Q. Okay.

A. I continued to do my regular job. All this, incidentally, was in addition to my regular job. I often did the work at home. I'd take the stuff home. I'd type up the scripts. Sometimes I'd take it home and type the materials with my own stopwatch²⁵. I timed them. This was all I was doing. This is stuff I was doing extra, in addition to my regular duties. And as long as I did what I was supposed to do, and as long as the programs I produced met certain standards, Fred didn't care. In fact, he encouraged me. At one point, I forget the circumstances, he said to me, "A.V., what are you doing? Are you trying to cause trouble? Maybe I can help you." This was before²⁶.

²⁵ Photographs of me, at home, working on the series about Negro folk music, are among the material I gave you.

²⁶ Before the series on topical songs was broadcast.

- Q. Well did you talk to Fred afterward about the suspension? Because both of you were suspended.
- A. Yes, I don't remember to what effect. Of course, we talked about it, but I don't remember. I didn't take notes.
- Q. I'm assuming that if this hadn't been the last episode of the Song's of Dissent series, the actual last episode, it would have been the last episode, but who knows? That's an assumption.
- A. It seems likely but we'll never know. We'll never know. Because I don't remember how long it took for the reaction to occur. As I said, this interview should have taken place 30 years ago, so I can remember. Also, Fred was still around then.
- Q. You were there from '61 to '64. What other notable events or changes or anything at WOSU. First of all, where was WOSU at the time?
- A. It was on main campus. If I had a map I could show you, but I don't remember the name of the street. Let's see. Let's see, it was north of 15th, south of Lane Avenue.
- Q. We can look it up but I think I know where it is.
- A. It was an old building. I was told it was an old airplane hangar.
- Q. Yes, I think you're right.
- A. Really? I always wondered about that.
- Q. Either a hanger, I can't remember. We can look it up after this. So you were on campus. It wasn't out at the Fawcett Center obviously because it hadn't been built yet. And how many people worked there at the time?
- A. Oh, a dozen or so people in production, administration plus the engineering staff plus the news staff. Thirty maybe, I don't know.

Q. After your suspension, what was it like with your colleagues?

A. Oh, they supported me. I didn't have any trouble there.

Q. Alright, good.

A. I received sympathy and encouragement.

Q. Good. So in general what was it like working at WOSU at that time?

A. Well in later years I look back and I realize that just about anybody could produce something if it was worthwhile. David Sonner, who took over my job typing and timing, had a regular show of his own that he produced called, "Panoply", a commentary, and I don't remember what all. Bill Parks, engineer, produced that series of programs I told you on Jelly Roll Morton, and he did other stuff. Anybody who had an idea that seemed worth broadcasting would be able to do so. And it was a relaxed, enjoyable place to work. It was people who believed in what they were doing and were enthusiastic about it, who wanted to do a good job, who wanted to see good stuff produced, and who wanted to produce good stuff. And the atmosphere was relaxed and pleasant. I remember our secretary, Gloria Hines, came to Fred Calland's office, and I was in there working with him on something. She said, "Fred, will you take two," meaning there was a call on line two. And he said, "Certainly, come right in." And she rolled her eyes and said, "Thank God it didn't come in on line three."

Q. So it was a very collegial atmosphere.

A. Oh,very,very.

Q. I don't want to say unstructured but there was room for ...

A. It was very structured. We had responsibilities. The continuity department, Olive Hanes, who died just two or three years ago dammit. I should have dug out her obituary.

She was here in Columbus. I could have looked her up. And Diana Zimmer, who later married Fred Calland. Keeping a station running, where everything has to go on within a second, requires a lot of work. I mean, I would go in and make sure that all the cue sheets were right, that all the records were there. It's upsetting for the announcer to announce a piece and the engineer not have the recording to play. This is frowned on, and it takes a lot of work to prevent that from happening. So the actual nuts and bolts, the mechanics of making sure the station ran, and ran all the time, that every show, every piece of music, every interview, was there at the proper time ready to be broadcast live, on tape or whatever. But I remember there was one problem. There was a show from the NAAB that had been scheduled but had not come in, and the deadline was approaching. And it wasn't clear that it was going to arrive in time. It arrived barely in time. And, afterwards, whoever was responsible for it, sent out a letter to the NAAB saying, "Thank you, we appreciate it. We know how these little problems occur from time to time, etc. etc." Well, there were two copies of that letter typed up. The one that went out to the NAAB, and the one that went to Bob Schweikert's desk for his records. Bob Schweikert was the Assistant Manager. And the one that went out over whoever's signature said, "We understand how these little problems occur." And the one that went to Schweikert said, "We understand how these fuck-ups occur from time to time."

Q. Thank goodness they didn't get accidentally switched it.

A. Look, if we can make sure the show goes on on time, we can damn well get a letter out properly. But that went to Schweikert. I thought he was going to, he blanched when he saw it. Oh, there was at one point someone put a 50-gallon oil drum in the lobby of WOSU, and it was supposed to collect books for some charitable cause. People kept

tossing trash into it. And finally, Bob Schweikert sent out a memo saying, “Don’t abuse this,” memo to everybody. The next morning he came in, and the WOSU studios were supposed to have been an old airplane hangar. At any rate, the ceilings were pretty high. On his desk was that 50-gallon drum full of water with a rubber duck floating in it.

Q. Oh my gosh.

A. Fred siphoned it out the window and it went back²⁷. And I think it was Don Quail, the manager, I’ll have to check this, whoever was the manager, Schweikert’s boss, sent out a memo that said in effect, “Don’t pick on Bob Schweikert.” Now the ceilings were very high there. There was this bookcase that went high. And the next morning Don Quail, I think it was, came in and there was that 50-gallon drum on top of his bookcase with a little rubber duck peeking over the side.

Q. Had somebody filled it with water?

A. No.

Q. Oh okay.

A. The duck was on a spring and it was empty. And when it fell, when he went up to check it, the clang reverberated throughout the studio.

Q. That sounds like a fun place to work.

A. It was a fun place to work. We worked hard. The standards were very high. We were committed to producing something we were proud of. But we had fun. When they dug up the street in front of us to repave it, there was this big trench and somebody brought charcoal and started to put it in there. We ran out and charcoaled hamburgers and hot

²⁷ That is, the drum went back to the lobby to collect books.

dogs²⁸. Oh God, all sorts of things. Work hard and play hard.²⁹ There was a lot of fun, a lot of hard work, a lot of hours put in, a lot of stuff that we did for which we were proud. Now I'm sorry about what happened to my series, cause one of the best things I ever did was this survey of political and topical singing in the United States, in some depth. The tapes were confiscated and I never saw them again. I assumed they were just erased and reused. But I still have the scripts.

Q. Now what did you do after that then?

A. Let's see. After that I worked as a commercial photographer.

Q. Okay. Did you have a lot of photography experience at that point?

A. As a matter of fact I did.

Q. I didn't know if it was a job like the WOSU job, where you were hired and it was sort of learn while you earn.

A. Yeah, I had done a lot of photography on my own. When I was a kid I had a Speed Graphic press camera. And my own dark room. And yeah, I knew something about photography, so I got a job as a commercial photographer. Then what happened? I worked at Lazarus for a while as a manager. I worked at Discount Records on High Street selling records. And then let's see, my wife and I were divorced in '68. And in '76 I moved out to Tucson, where my girlfriend was. She had moved out a couple three years earlier, and I moved out to be with her. We've been together for 40 years now.

Q. How did you get back to Columbus?

²⁸ I think a story about this appeared in *The Lantern*.

²⁹ At one point, someone on the staff made, or had someone make, a beautiful, hand-carved, hand painted, wooden sign, that said, in a beautiful Old English font, "WOSU Ye Telecommunications Center". It hung outside the main entrance to WOSU for, I don't know, several weeks; maybe two or three months before WOSU administration noticed it and had it taken down.

A. We moved back 20 years later, in '96.

Q. Okay. For a job or you just missed Columbus?

A. No, my wife is Debora Bittaker, and at the time I was Assistant Manager of the Discount Records and she was the Assistant Manager of *The Journal of Chemical Education*. It's difficult. Tucson is two or three thousand miles away. It's tricky to maintain a relationship at that distance. And if we were going to stay together, no actually if we're going to get together, one of us was going to have to quit and move out. I was a man. I had a variety of saleable skills. She was a woman with a degree in Chemistry and a job in chemical publishing. I could support her income better than she could support mine. So I moved out there and did a variety of things. And she kept her job. This has nothing to do with OSU at all. *The Journal of Chemical Education* was edited by a figure prominent in chemical education. When Debbie was working here, it was edited by a guy named Dr. Lippincott. He moved out to Tucson. The Journal moved with him. She moved with the Journal. So I went out to be with her in '76. We were married in '78. Then in '78 the Journal moved to Austin, Texas. So we moved to Austin, Texas. I got a job as a commercial photographer and did a variety of things. And then in '78³⁰ we came back to Columbus because she got a job at Chemical Abstracts.

Q. Okay. And the material you gave us went with you all the way?

A. Yes.

Q. Good for you. I'm glad it did.

A. I'm not sure whether that was an attempt on my part to save historical material or reluctance to go through it and sort it out. There's some of each there.

³⁰ We returned to Columbus in 1996.

Q. I think so.

A. Now as far as WOSU goes, however, about, let me think, I left there in '64. About 10 years later I went back. Somehow I knew Mary Rousculp, who was the Music Director at that time. And I don't remember how I got to know her³¹. And I started doing shows for her on my own. And so I did a series of shows. Nobody remembered me from the earlier days. And so I did a series of shows for her. And I think I did tapes of one or two that are surviving. And then that was the last I really had to do with WOSU, except of course sending in my membership contribution, until Tom Reiland called and asked me to come in for an interview. And then this.

Q. Great. Do you have any other thoughts about WOSU or anything else?

A. A lot of dedicated people work there. Work hard and play hard.

Q. Well thank you very much. I'm going to turn this off. We appreciate your time.

³¹ I think David Sonner may have introduced us.

Adendum:

Bill Parks, with his brilliant, off-kilter sense of humor, along with a passion for fine broadcasting that encompassed everything from the overall impact of a program, down to the smallest detail, was one of the most remarkable people on the staff. Once, when he and I were listening to music together at my apartment, he was pleased to see me let the final note die away before I lifted the tone arm, when the selection ended. This was the standard he expected when music was broadcast.

Once, when someone accidentally tried to record something on the leader tape that was attached to the beginning of a tape reel, he posted a notice explaining that leader tape had "...very poor signal-to-noise ratio..." and should not be used to record any important material. He also once displayed on a bulletin board, a new technological development: The Non Tangle Extension Cord. It was about four inches long.

I once walked into his office and saw, on the wall across from his desk, a large block arrow pointing up to a sheet of paper, bearing the word "UP". Above the "UP", was another block arrow, halfway up the wall, pointing up to the word, "UPPER". Above this, near the top of the wall was another arrow, pointing to the word, "UPPERMORE". Finally, on the ceiling, near the word "UPPERMORE", was a final arrow, pointing back toward Bill's desk, to the word, "UPCHUCK"; beyond which, attached to the ceiling, was a plastic, artificial vomit.

At one time, Bill somehow got a financial support appeal from an extreme right-wing group called The Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. The appeal included a business reply envelope, which Bill pasted onto a piece of iron or lead, which he sent back to them, so they would have to pay first class postage to get it. He told me I should have heard the clang when that metal hit the bottom of the mailbox.

In 1961, a book titled, "The Un-Americans", by Frank J. Donner, was published. It was a controversial attack on the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and Lazarus Department Store refused to carry it in its book department. Bill waited until there was some event at the Lazarus book department, and then brought a copy of the book in, and took it to the checkout, as though he had taken it off the shelf, and tried to buy it. It caused a minor stir.

His sense of humor occasionally became surreal. I remember him telling me of his idea of having a hundred or so people; all equipped with large bottles of high-sudsing liquid detergent, flush them all down different campus toilets simultaneously. The foam would be flowing across The Oval, he said.