

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
KEVIN FITZSIMONS
APRIL 25, 2019

Q. Good afternoon. My name is Kevlin Haire. I'm at The Ohio State University Archives on April 25, 2019. I am going to be conducting an oral history interview with Kevin Fitzsimons. Welcome, Kevin.

A. Thank you very much.

Q. Could you spell your last name?

A. It's F-i-t-z-s-i-m-o-n-s.

Q. Thank you. Let's just get started. What is your date of birth and where were you born?

A. Born in Columbus on January 10, 1953.

Q. Did you grow up in Columbus?

A. Grew up in Columbus. I spent one year in South Carolina in the early, early '70s.

Q. Why were you in South Carolina?

A. I lived with my sister and her husband for a year, just to do something different.

Q. How old were you?

A. 22 maybe. I was actually 20.

Q. We'll get to that. You grew up in Columbus. Talk about your family a little bit. You obviously have a sister, but what did your parents do, how many siblings did you have?

A. [As for living siblings,] I have a sister and a brother. My brother just turned 80.

Q. Your brother turned 80?

A. 80.

Q. May I ask how old you are?

A. I am 66. My mother was 47 when she had me.

Q. Wow.

A. I was a late comer. That's why I'm a little wacky. I have a brother, a sister and then I had a sister who passed away in 1969 of cancer. She was a college student.

Q. I'm sorry to hear that. What did your parents do?

A. My father worked at North American Aviation. He was an expeditor, which is a fancy name for a person who moves parts around to where they needed to be. He worked there, his whole career that I knew, that I was familiar with. He was born in Detroit, lived in Chicago and lived in Montreal for a while, then Columbus. My mother was pretty much a homemaker, but she also worked for Standard Oil. She was [an assistant to] Mr. [Beman] Dawes, from Dawes Arboretum, she was an assistant to Mr. Dawes for a while. She had a career. But again, as far as I knew she was pretty much a homemaker.

Q. Where in Columbus did you live?

A. I lived on the Near East Side. Franklin Park was right down the street from us. We used to go ice skating in Franklin Park. We used to have winters and it would freeze enough to ice skate on the pond. I can't imagine them doing that anymore.

Q. Where did you go to high school?

A. The first year, freshman year, I went to St. Charles on Broad Street. That was a college preparatory school. It was just too small for me. There were 13 people, 13 kids in my class, 13 boys. It was just a little bit too small for me. I ended up going to Wehrle, Father Wehrle High School in the south end. We had our choice of Hartley or Wehrle and I went to Wehrle, because our high school (Holy Rosary) closed. I went to Wehrle.

Q. You attended OSU as a student. You not only worked here. Tell me how you got to OSU, although growing up in Columbus maybe it was a ...

A. I started at Ohio University, the branch at Lancaster because we lived on the east side of Columbus. I kind of liked the idea of a little bit smaller college. I went to the branch at Ohio University-Lancaster. Actually, probably at that time, which would be '71-'72, easy. It was probably easier to get there than it was to Ohio State. Going on Route 33, which was a couple of blocks from me ,and I went down there. I went there two years and then took a break. I was [majoring] in Education, and at that time in the early '70s there weren't hardly any jobs for teachers. I left OU and worked. That's when I went down to South Carolina and worked for a year. My brother-in-law had a Honda motorcycle dealership, so that was fun. It was just too hot. I hated the weather. Actually, I hated the racism. It was early '70s and it was still really, really bad there. I couldn't stand it. It was so blatant it was unbelievable. Anyway, I left there after about 10 months and came back. I got a job with Farber Cycles. I used to cycle tour a lot, bicycle tour a lot, and then bike race a lot. I was always into bicycles. I got a job with Farber, which was a distributor out of Detroit. I probably worked at the bike shop when I came back. I can't remember exactly what the exact timing was. Then I got a job with Farber and my territory was Ohio, part of Pennsylvania and part of Indiana. I thoroughly enjoyed that because of the interaction with people. I had a lot of time to myself because I drove everywhere. It was just kind of nice. They were a really good company. It was kind of called the birthplace of salesmen for Schwinn [Bikes], which Schwinn was the big one and if you worked at Farber more than likely you could graduate to go to Schwinn or some major manufacturer. I did that for a couple of years. That was the years of the blizzards [1977, 1978] we had in Ohio. After the second blizzard – because for both of them I was in

Cleveland – I came home because I didn't want to get stuck on the road. It was just tortuous. After that I worked for a few more months and then left there.

Photography was always a hobby. I worked at McCallister Camera Store and I worked at Cord Camera. I actually got a job with Bernie Siegal who was an architectural photographer in town. By that time, my wife and I married. We met in 1976. We married in 1978. About that time, I decided to go back to school. I had worked ... done some work ... no, that's not ... I had not worked for AP (Associated Press) until I came back to school here. That's what it was. Anyway, photography was kind of a hobby. I decided to come back [to finish my degree]. I wanted to look up my record and see exactly when I did come back, and I didn't. I've thought I've got all my grade cards in my drawer. I knew I wanted to get into photography. It was just kind of a hobby and I was going into some type of commercial [photography], like portrait. I actually had a friend who was an architectural photographer. He had always wanted me to go into business with him. He was an older fellow, and maybe [I could] take over his business. Anyway, I started in photography here and I think in my Photography 201 class, Harry Cabluck was the AP photographer in town. He came to speak to one of our classes, one of our large classes, it was either 101 or 201. There were probably 30-35 people in the class. He showed his portfolio of what he did. He covered Olympics. He covered presidential campaigns. And just a lot of other really interesting things with the Associated Press. I was amazed at what he did. Then at the end of it he said, "There's 30 some of you here and nobody's knocking on my door for stringer work. "I thought, "Oh man, that's for me." After the class I went and talked to him and he said, "Well come down." So, I did. Then, he hired me to shoot some assignments for them. I actually covered the Ohio State Fair. I think

the Ohio State Fair at that time was maybe 2 1/2 weeks, maybe even three weeks. It was much longer [than today]. He paid me \$200 to do two features a day from the fair.

Q. That's not bad.

A. At that time \$200 was fairly good money. But the other thing was, that led to other freelance work too. I did that, and it was probably the best learning classroom I've ever had because Harry was a very good photographer and I would get great feedback. I'd go there first thing in the morning. I'd do a morning feature; then I'd run down to the AP office. The AP office was in The [Columbus] Dispatch building. I'd go down there, and I'd develop the film, make a print, show it to Harry. If it was okay, we'd put it out on the wire. In those days you'd make a black and white print, put it on this drum roller, kind of tape it on there under these clips, and then it would spin in this thing like a polygraph would go across and make a noise. That's how it transmitted. I did that, but if it was just an ok photo, not class A photo but just a fair quality photo, he would say, "You know, this will work but if you did it this way, if you shot it from this angle or this way, it would be a lot better. This is okay." Feeling guilty, I would get on my bike. I always rode my bike because it was easier to park, I'd go right back up the fair, reshoot it and come back. He'd look at it and say, "Yeah, that's better." I would learn what made a better picture. And I was hanging out with Dispatch photographers there, too, because they were in the same building. I got to know some of them.

One of the best things that came out of the fair assignment, though, was, Governor Jim Rhodes, we had just signed an agreement with Hubei Province in China, like a trade agreement in a sister city. The chancellor or whoever he was from Hubei came over, and Governor Rhodes, being a pretty gregarious guy, took him out for a tour

on a golf cart. I got a golf cart and sat in the back of it. We went ahead of them and he's pointing out stuff. I did a picture of that and it ended up running on the front page above the fold in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the next day. I thought, "That's really cool." But what it made it really exciting for me was, another AP photographer from someplace in the United States, sent Harry a message. Of course, it wasn't an email but however he sent a message, probably over the wire. He said, "Harry, that was a great photo of Jim Rhodes and the guy from Hubei." Harry told him it wasn't his, but it was mine. I thought, "People think that it's good enough to be Harry's." That made me feel really good.

A couple of things came out of that deal. I got to shoot a lot, especially 10 or 14 or 21 days of the fair right off. It got me shooting a lot, one after the other. I learned to find stories and find feature photos and do that. But then again, it helped me because sometimes another newspaper, like the Philadelphia Inquirer, would call the office and say, "We need a photograph of somebody in Columbus," and Harry would give it to the stringers to do. I did work for the Philadelphia Inquirer; I did work for The New York Times, and work for Business Week Magazine, and Black Enterprise Magazine. That opened other doors for me to do some freelance work. I continued to do work for Business Week for a long time and for The New York Times, up to maybe eight or nine years ago. I did a lot for them. Maybe four or five or six jobs a year. It was just fun, in addition to my University work, because it gave me something outside to do and different than what I was doing at the University. Then, if there was something The New York Times needed at the University, I generally had the contacts for them. I would always talk to my boss and say, "Look, The New York Times is calling. They need a photograph of so and so. Is it okay to do?" [It was OK] as long as I did it on my own time and had

that documented. I had plenty of comp time or vacation time. I would document that and do the job. I got a lot of work done there. That gave me a lot of extra work.

Q. You were still a student at that time.

A. Yes. We really didn't have a photojournalism program here. I did a personalized study program. You could develop your own. My advisor's name, I think her name was Jane Pletcher. I was trying to think of that on the way over here. I kept thinking Jane Goodall but it wasn't Jane Goodall; it was Jane Pletcher.

Q. Sounds familiar, actually.

A. I think she just passed away, maybe a year ago. I think I read her obit. She was really, really good to work with. We worked out a curriculum and that worked great for me because I studied journalism and I studied photography in the photography department. I worked with Bruce Johnson, who was a photojournalism teacher there. I also took classes from Walt Seifert. There're stories about Walt Seifert, who was the public relations professor. Then in photography, Dana Viberts, Willy Longshore. I can't remember the others. I never did have Ardine Nelson. I was afraid of Ardine. But now I wish I would have taken her classes.

Q. When did you graduate?

A. 1981.

Q. But you also, while you were here – students in journalism had to work for The Lantern. Did you just do that as a class, or you kept doing it?

A. No, I did it as a class. That was the thing. I was kind of a non-traditional student.

Q. One of my questions was where did you live, but you weren't living on campus.

A. No, we had bought a house. I got married in '78 and we bought a house. That's the other thing my wife Linda and I joke about. I got married so I could afford to go back to school. I had to marry somebody who had a job. We had bought a house. Actually, when I was doing AP work while I was in school, I would always shoot the football games for AP. There was a group of us. There was Amy Sansetta, who was at Ohio State, Kurt Mutchler, who was at Ohio State, and Charles Arbogast. Amy and Charles ended up working for AP. Amy took an early retirement because of disability. Charlie is still working in Chicago. And both of them have had stellar careers with AP, really stellar careers. They've covered world events. Kurt is a photo editor of National Geographic. They were all mentees of Harry Cabluck. There was a gathering last spring of photographers in Texas where Harry retired, to surprise him, I think it was his 80th birthday. There have been some really successful photographers graduate from OSU. Sharon Farmer was, she's a graduate from Ohio State, and she was Clinton's photographer. An African American. She would be another great interview. I studied journalism and photography. I think I graduated, it was either summer or fall quarter, maybe fall quarter.

Q. Of what year?

A. '81. My sister came up from South Carolina to attend my graduation. After graduation we were in the French Field House. That's where we lined up at that point, because graduation was in St. John arena. [Then-Ohio State President] Ed Jennings was over taking his gown off. My sister said, "There's Dr. Jennings, you ought to go over and introduce yourself." I thought, "Okay." She said, "You never know who you're going to work for." I said, "Okay." I went over, he had handed me my degree and I said,

“Thank you, nice to meet you.” A year later, I was working at Ohio State. How that came about, though, was, I got an internship [while I was a student] with Doug Martin, who was the photographer in the Office of University Communications, at the time. Doug Martin was also a freelancer for AP. That was part of it, too. It all intertwines. He said, “You ought to come over. “It was an unpaid internship, but it was great because it was in Brown Hall and I could study there if I wanted to, or just go hang out, or whatever. I had an office to stay in. Doug had been there three years and we’d always kept in touch. A year after I graduated, he said that he was going to leave. He got bored after three years. I can’t imagine, but he said, “I’m ready to go.” Lloyd Lemmerman, who was a lab tech, he was already there working with Doug. Doug said he was leaving, and he said, “You ought to apply.” From my internship, I knew everyone in the office - Scott Mueller and Gary Honnert, Earl Holland, Steve Sterrett, who interviewed me for the job. I don’t know if there were other interviewees or not, I imagine there were. Anyway, I got the job. That was fabulous. It was really kind of a dream job to work at a university. I actually had the chance, that’s where I was going with this football stuff: Some of the people, Chuck Scott and Terry Eiler, would come up to photograph the Buckeye football games for AP. He was head of the visual communications program down there, photojournalism in particular.

Q. Wait, down where?

A. Ohio University. When I attended OU in the early ‘70s, I wasn’t in the photography program at all, didn’t know anything about it. He said, “You ought to come down to OU, I can get you a scholarship or get you some money, maybe free tuition or whatever.” Because OU is really, really, probably one of the top photojournalism schools in the

country. But since I was married, and we had a house here, I didn't want to move down there and be away. I ended up coming to Ohio State. That's how I kind of got in here.

Q. Football does really rule our lives, doesn't it?

A. That's for sure. Sometimes I wonder what my life would have been like going to OU because I probably would have gone into newspaper work. That would have been interesting, but I always thought covering funerals and fires and that kind of thing, I did a little bit of that with freelancing for The New York Times. Then doing the shifts, the graveyard shift and all that you have to do with newspapers and just the grind of that, I think I'm glad I was where I was.

Q. When you were ready to get a job, since you were grounded in Columbus, it sounds like your focus on where you got a job, you were hoping for Columbus.

A. For sure.

Q. And what better job? What better place to work?

A. [After graduation] I was freelancing. I was doing freelance work, and I also worked for Bernie Siegel, this architectural photographer, after graduation. Some before graduation and a little bit [after graduation]. He said, "Oh, I'll teach you all about architectural photography." I turned to be just a gopher for him, basically. I was a really good printer and I did all his printing. But then I also went and got his laundry, got his coffee, and that just didn't work out.

Q. Where was the photo lab, once you started for University Relations, was it in Brown Hall?

A. It was in Brown Hall. Everybody was in Bricker, on the first floor of Bricker, and then the photo lab was in Brown. Then they moved, I think, from there at one point to Fawcett. I stayed in Brown.

Q. You mean Communications moved?

A. Communications did.

Q. Sounds about right.

A. I don't know if anybody actually stayed in, it might have been a small group, that stayed in Bricker. Then they moved to Fawcett. I wasn't really interested in moving there because they were looking for space for the dark room. I just thought being on campus was way better than being over there and having to commute back and forth. Then everybody moved to Kinnear Road, 1125 Kinnear. We were all over there. That's kind of when they split marketing and the new services. New services went to Bricker again. We didn't call it branding at that point.

Q. Were you still riding your bicycle?

A. A little bit, not much. I would have loved it because I lived in Upper Arlington. It was just like five miles from work. But I never knew, I never knew where I was going to have to be. I'd get a call, "You have to run out to the president's house in Bexley," so I just never knew what I would have to do. I'm not sure I ever - maybe a couple of times - rode my bike, but hardly ever.

Q. When you got the job in what was then University Relations, and a lot of people say [about their first job] - well, you weren't as young as a typical new grad - but they say, "I'll do this for a couple of years but then I'll do x, y or z." Did you think instead, "Wow, I think I'm really going to like this."

A. Yes. I mean, I liked it before I started working. I love the University atmosphere. I love the learning atmosphere. Doug said he got bored after three years. I do remember maybe the first two summers not having much to do. It was kind of a break for us, because we weren't so busy. Fall was always busy; spring was always busy. After summer commencement, which was in June at that time, like the first or second week in June, you really had half of June and July and August as your kind of break times. You could get a vacation there. I loved it from the beginning. I just thought it was fascinating. I was doing exactly what I loved to do. I loved doing environmental portraits. We had Quest Magazine. I remember that. That was a publication by University Communications. We took a mummy, a wrapped mummy, over to University hospital because they had an MRI machine. That was when the MRI machine was new. They did an MRI. No, it was an X-ray. It wasn't an MRI at that time. It was just an X-ray. They did an X-ray and here you saw the bones of this mummy. Then they went over to the morgue for some reason. Maybe they were doing some more work. I thought that was fascinating, just the different kind of things that we would do.

Q. You probably became a fountain of University trivia.

A. No.

Q. Kind of like here. We know all these little bits and pieces of things that go on in the University that most people don't pay attention to.

A. Yes. It's funny, in the office or when I would get home, people would ask me what the scoop is on this and that. Because I was everywhere. I was kind of like a fly on the wall in a lot of meetings and stuff. I would never divulge anything confidential that wasn't

public. That's for sure. I stayed pretty quiet about the whole thing. A lot of times people would try to dig stuff out [of me].

Q. Do you remember your first assignment?

A. I think I remember my first portrait I did. It was [Physics Professor] Leonard Jossem. I think there's a picture of him in the magazine article. At least it's in one of the little ones. He was in physics, chemistry or physics I believe, an older gentleman. His office was just, he was just piled floor to ceiling with journals. I remember just doing that picture in black and white. I thought this is good. It was probably, about the first memorable one that I can remember. Actually, Ed Jennings was president, but I had my first official assignment before, in May, I started June 1, but in May I did a farewell dinner for Harold Enarson. So I actually worked for him also.

Q. That's funny. Very briefly. Did you get to meet him?

A. Oh yes. I met him.

Q. How about Audrey? Did you meet Audrey Enarson? I'm sure she was there.

A. She was there.

Q. They were quite a couple.

A. Oh yes, no doubt about that.

Q. Did you ever tell Jennings ... you can talk about all the presidents. But we'll use Jennings as an example. I would assume you're kind of like a presidential photographer becomes, I remember reading an article about Obama's photographer. It's almost like a member of the family because they are there all the time. Did you have those kinds of relationships?

A. With almost everyone. Very personal relationships because you'd be riding in the car to one event with them or on a plane or just hanging out before an event or after an event.

Jennings was a professor of finance also. I always have a soft spot in my heart for him because we had our money, my wife and I, we were young, had our money in Home State Savings, which was part of the Charles Keating episode down in Cincinnati. Home State closed and that's where, like all of our money was kept. My wife worked at Doctors Hospital North. She worked in microbiology. She was a lab tech in micro. But anyway, she had a sense for finances even then, and I think she had money in a couple of accounts. But anyway, I mentioned to Ed, or Dr. Jennings, that we had our money in Home State and what should we do? Should we worry about it or anything like that? He was in finance. He said, "Don't worry about it. If you get in a jam and you need money, you just come and see me." I thought, "Wow, that's cool." Less than a week later he put out a note to everybody at Ohio State, that if you're in a financial bind because of this Home State Savings thing, you come and see somebody, whether it was head of finance or something like that and, "We'll help you out."

Q. That's amazing.

A. Yeah, it is amazing. I just thought that was really neat of him to do that. We never needed anything. It was fairly short-lived. He was a very personable guy.

Q. Very much, yes.

A. That kind of cemented us and bonded us, financially bonded us. He was great to work with. Actually, and I loved Mary Eleanor, his first wife, who also I think just passed away in the last two or three years. I knew Mary Eleanor and I knew Barbara Real, who worked in development, who was his second wife. I never will do wedding photos, but he asked if I would do their little wedding service. And I did. At the First Community Church. I did that for him.

Q. Really? Then your only wedding pretty much?

A. I did my wife's cousin in Piney Fork, Ohio, which is where they were from, at a little church there. That sealed the deal. Because the first bridesmaid walks down the aisle and I take a picture. My wife, the second bridesmaid walks down the aisle and I take a picture of her. She goes by and she says, "Your flash isn't working." I thought, "Oh my God." I panicked, but I got things working, I just didn't like the idea of doing weddings. Anyway, I got it fixed and everything was all right after that. I thought, "Too much pressure. I won't do weddings."

Q. Did you have many equipment malfunctions?

A. No, one time and I can't remember what it was. I did shoot without film in the camera. It must not have been a major thing because I don't remember it.

Q. It must have been a much more laborious process. For people who will listen to this who are under a certain age, they may not realize that we didn't always have digital photos. They had to be so-called processed, [the images were] actually on film. That must have affected your workload and a lot of things about your job.

A. And actually, digital is not that much quicker than film because it takes a lot of metadata you put in, a lot of processing and archiving of digital. But film, we had our own black and white lab, we [processed] our own film. We used to do, I don't know how many years we did, all the prints by hand. You'd have three trays.

Q. You had a dark room then?

A. Developer, stop, fix and then wash. You do it with the tongs and the red light and make your prints. We did that. Actually, one time we had a student intern, a really nice guy, a really nice kid. I have a sense of humor and we're in the dark room doing film. I said

something like, “Oh yeah, we can look at the film.” Without thinking, he flipped on the light when we were doing film. I said, “Turn off the light.” We lost some of it but not a lot. I guess I shouldn’t joke about it. That was the only really bad thing we had. I learned, and he learned. Actually, one of the funny things about going down to The Dispatch: I do a little bit of work for them every once in a while. I was souping [soaking in development chemicals] film for them one time and Casey, I can’t think of his last name, I think it was Fred Shannon’s son. It was somebody’s son. Maybe it was Fred Shannon. Maybe it was Casey Shannon.

Q. Who was Fred Shannon?

A. Fred Shannon was a photographer. He looked like Weegee. He’s this short, heavy-set, always wore kind of the fedora type hat. He was like an old-school photographer. I think it was his son. It was somebody’s son who worked down there. Anyway, smoked a cigar. I was in the dark room with Casey. We’re doing film and he lights up a cigar. He’s smoking a cigar. This is when you could smoke anywhere. I thought, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” One funny thing was, with Fred Shannon, though, when we got the MRI machine, it’s a magnetic deal. It’s all about magnets. This was in the days of film and mechanical cameras. Of course, your shutter is actually a magnet. They warned us, “Don’t go too close to this thing because it will screw up your camera.” Fred is walking around and looking and I’m not going to get mine messed up or anything. Fred says, “Hey Kevin, look.” His camera, the straps were around his neck but it’s hanging out this far. It didn’t work after that either. It’s just one of those crazy things. I can still picture him doing that. “Fred, come on.”

Q. Did you still cover football?

A. I did and actually. I had started getting football tickets, I don't know how long ago, but my father-in-law was a real, real fan. He and my mother-in-law would use the tickets and go.

Q. Because you were working then.

A. I was working there, so I could get tickets. They're from Piney Fork, Ohio. He worked in a steel mill in Steubenville. They thought this was the greatest thing in the world because he was a big Ohio State fan, and to be able to go. Then my brother-in-law, he would come up every once in a while, and he would actually help me shoot photos every once in a while, as my son would also later. They thought that was the greatest thing. To meet somebody like Archie Griffin. I just ran across a picture of my mother-in-law on the track, in the football stadium. I took a picture of Archie and my wife and my mother-in-law. I thought, "Man, they could never get on the field these days. "

Q. No way.

A. I can't remember what the circumstances were, but the Red coats [people who usher for the games]...

Q. Aren't as forgiving. 9-11 changed a lot of things.

A. Yes, yes, I'm sure.

Q. Security-wise. And the program's just gotten so big security wise for the players and everyone. That makes me think of, because you mentioned to me, I don't know when it was, it before you retired, but there were times where you'd be at the stadium until 1 a.m., when they started doing night games.

A. On night games I'd get out of there at 1-1:30.

Q. Was it digital photography by then?

- A. Yes, it was. You had to edit, and you'd shoot hundreds of pictures.
- Q. Instead of dozens.
- A. Yes, instead of dozens. You'd have to download them, and it was kind of slow downloading. But I loved it because it was a lot of work, but then I could post this gallery on the Facebook page, the University's Facebook page. You get instant gratification because people would be waiting, sometimes waiting for it. It astounded me, some of the night games, that 2 or 3:00 in the morning there would be a comment. "I remember that," or "Great picture." It was just kind of cool.
- Q. You probably got a huge response. You could see, there must have been thousands of likes whereas if you waited until the Alumni Magazine, whatever, you're not going to hear from anybody.
- A. When we went to the National Championship game, that was the other thing. I could send, when they built Wi-Fi into cameras, I could send a picture from my camera to my phone immediately, right after a touchdown or something or a big play. I could send it to my phone and email it back to the office, and then they would post it. Or I'd email it to Pat Kindig, who was doing social media for the athletic department. I started doing work for the athletic department too. They would get it out immediately. That was a huge hit with the athletic department. They thought that was the greatest thing. Now they can do video right away. They are hardly using any still pictures. They do video. But the National Championship game ...
- Q. This is 2003?
- A. No, a little bit later than that.
- Q. 2013?

- A. Jim Tressel. That would have been 2003, wouldn't it?
- Q. Yes. It was the nail biter until the very end.
- A. Yes, yes, yes. [The game I'm talking about] was against Miami. It was Urban Meyer. That was when social media was really big. I think the Tressel one, that was way before Facebook.
- Q. Right.
- A. Of course, we're all about metrics in marketing and branding. Our Facebook page just spiked like it never spiked before when I was posting pictures, especially the National Championship. The spike was fairly stable, then it would go up and down, but it went through the roof. I was like, "Wooo, this is good. This is good for photography." That was exciting. That was really pretty neat. Not too long after that, when IMG [the exclusive multimedia rights holder for Ohio State Athletics] started really putting the hammer down in athletic marketing, I couldn't directly post. They wouldn't let me directly post to Facebook anymore. I thought, "What the heck." I would send stuff to Pat and they would do it through the athletic department. They were getting stuff from some other photographers. I thought, "Let them do it, if I can't do it through our office and do our own thing also." They wanted to control every image. The last two or three years of football, it kind of lost its joy.
- Q. Took some of the joy out of it.
- A. Then it's all this marketing stuff and control. Another thing, I did a really cool picture at that National Championship, the last National Championship with Urban's team, I did a really cool picture of the team pre-game with the band, when they go down and do that, I can't remember what they call it, something cal, pregame calisthenics. Anyway, they ran

it double truck (across two pages) in the Alumni Magazine because it was perfectly split, and the fold was like perfectly placed. I got a bunch of requests for that, people would email me or call on the phone, alumni or whoever wanted that. We were cognizant of people using it commercially. We didn't want people to use it, so we sent out low res. "We just want a screen saver." "Okay." I'd be able to send it out. With IMG in the mix, then I couldn't send anything out. They had to buy it. It actually went to The Dispatch. I had to give it to The Dispatch because they were handling the photos of Ohio State. The athletic department had a deal with The Dispatch [so that] the athletic department would have access to all their photos.

Q. All of The Dispatch's photos.

A. Yes. Ohio State athletic photos. If somebody wanted that picture of the band, I had to give it to The Dispatch. They would contact the Dispatch and [individuals] had to buy it from The Dispatch.

Q. The Dispatch would get the money.

A. Yes.

Q. Interesting.

A. I just thought that was, I always thought, if alumni want a picture and they're going to use it personally, what's the harm in giving them a picture? They like the picture. Hey, great. They're using it for a screen saver, might be making a print for their room. That's fine. Life got complicated in the last four or five years there as far as that goes.

Q. It's more of a corporate type of atmosphere, I would think.

A. Corporate mentality, corporate atmosphere.

- Q. You know, when you guys were out on Kinnear you were kind of away from all of that. But then they moved you, when was that? 2014 or something? To the Gateway.
- A. Yes, Gateway. No, it was before that I think.
- Q. It might have been. Yes, you're right. It was.
- A. It had to be before that because we were over on Lane Avenue a good four years, I think, before I retired.
- Q. That's right, they moved you back out to Lane.
- A. It had to be pretty early. I should look up those dates. I'm horrible with dates.
- Q. That's okay.
- A. It all runs together, and it doesn't matter. To me it doesn't matter. Not really. It just all blended together.
- Q. One of my questions, and I don't think you can probably answer this, if you have a favorite photograph? Or maybe you have some favorite photographs. Or maybe you have a favorite subject.
- A. A favorite opportunity would have been, I think in 1996, with Gordon Gee. I went with President Gee, Constance, his wife, and Bobby Moser [dean of the College of Agriculture], some other professors from Ag, and the basketball team, Randy Ayers' basketball team, to South Africa and Uganda. The basketball team didn't go to Uganda, only South Africa. The rest of us went on to Uganda. We have relationships with universities there. While in South Africa, we had the opportunity of hearing Nelson Mandela speak. This was just a couple of years after the end of apartheid. He spoke to a university, I think it was in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal University, maybe. Anyway, he spoke to students there and was telling them how they are the future of South Africa, and

it's their opportunity to shape South Africa and all this. Gordon Gee was in tears listening to this. It was, like, unbelievable. It was just so amazing. It was amazing. And Gordon actually got to meet him prior to the speech and somehow gave, during the handshake or something, ended up handing Mandela his glasses, his sunglasses. I don't know how that happened, but the next day one of his security people came to the hotel and gave Gordon his sunglasses back.

Q. He got them back. That's amazing.

A. Yes, it is. That was one of those things, I don't know if there is a tape recording of it, but I was busy doing photographs and I couldn't listen to much of Mandela's speech. It was one of those things, it just like a total fog. I was just looking at a real figurehead in history and trying to do photos and trying to listen at the same time. I couldn't do it all at once really well. Actually, I started using flash because it was in kind of a gymnasium theater kind of thing. One of the security people came over and said, "Don't use flash." Because Mandela's eyes were injured while he was on Robin Island in prison because of the stone dust. That made it even harder. If those were digital days, it would have been no problem. I probably wouldn't have used flash anyway. But in film days, then I panicked too, cause I'm shaking anyway. You have to use a slow shutter speed for the film that we were using. It was a unique opportunity. That was interesting. Then we went to Uganda and that was even kind of more unique because I had never been in a third-world country. We went out to a farm, one of the professor's farms. Gordon was inducted into the Hippo Clan. They had a little ceremony and a little dance thing. They had a barbeque for us. That was really unique. I can just remember, there was a small band playing, like maybe three musicians. This older heavy-set woman, Ugandan, was singing. Her voice was like

an angel. It was like the most unbelievable voice I've ever heard. Just stuff like that. That was the most unique opportunity I probably ever had.

Q. You mentioned something about trying to listen and trying to take photos, do you feel like you've experienced OSU history but not quite because you are focused on chronicling it? Do you know what I mean?

A. Yes. I would say I totally got the flavor of the University because I was always at big events and small events. That's one thing I mention in this article that was written for the Alumni Magazine in an interview there. I would cover portraits of faculty members for the magazine or the newspaper or publication. I got to know faculty members on a first-name, first-hand basis, and what they did. The first thing I would ask when I would go in, "What exactly do you do?" Sometimes I would understand; sometimes I wouldn't. It depends on what department it was. I always learned something. At one time, our office was an earnings unit. Anybody at the university could hire us. When the budget got bad we turned into an earnings unit. We had to come up with, like, half our salary or benefits or whatever. There was a little bit of pressure to do outside work. Outside, meaning other departments in the University. We'd get hired to do awards ceremonies or retirements or something like that. My wife will still say that if I had to go back in the evening, I would say, "Oh God, I just dread doing this." But invariably, I would come home and say, "Wow, I had no idea this was going on." I did a luncheon for the physical facilities people and their janitors and lawn keepers and all this stuff. That was one of the most fascinating things I ever did because they gave awards for people who did not miss a day in 35 years of working. You go, "Wow, how can that be?" [These people say, "I love my job. I can come in when I'm not feeling that great; it's no problem." I learned a lot there.

I kind of became the same way. I rarely missed work. I didn't get sick very often but I rarely, unless my wife was giving birth or something, I didn't miss much work. We saw the small things and saw the big things. The commencements or big development events I really enjoyed. People might think I'm crazy, but I really kind of enjoyed the development events because they were just interesting people who loved Ohio State. I got to befriend a lot of donors.

Q. Did you ever meet Les Wexner?

A. Yes, quite a bit actually.

Q. Enough to call him Les?

A. Yes, actually. I had done some freelance work for The Limited. I actually did some freelance work for him because, when they were developing New Albany, and this probably stems from him being on the board and being comfortable with me, when they were developing New Albany they hired me shoot the land they were developing. I would do this on the weekends, like early Saturday, early Sunday mornings. They gave me a map that had these plots on it, that they were purchasing the land. I would have to go out and photograph these plots of land and not let anybody know what it was I was shooting for. Then I did some progress photography on his house when that was being built.

Q. That's interesting.

A. I got to know him a bit, which was good because then he was comfortable with me doing photos around him. Actually, when the first board met for the Wexner Center, I did a board picture of them. I remember everybody that was on there. We were getting ready to do the picture and everybody lined up. He gets out of his chair and lays down on the

floor, like kind of crazy. I remember snapping a picture of that. I thought that was kind of funny.

Q. You have been on the, what's it called, the front steps of history at OSU, sort of.

A. Sort of.

Q. You've seen it all.

A. That's one thing. I'm working too. Technically, I had to think about my photography. I was there and observed, but I couldn't tell you what people said a lot of times, you know.

Q. Did you have much interaction with students? Or just at events like commencement?

A. Events like commencement. Jo and I, Jo McCulty worked with me for over 30 years. We were partners. It was a great partnership because she liked to shoot a lot of the student stuff. She liked to do the marketing part of it, like when we would do college brochures and all that. Not that I didn't have the patience to do it, but I just didn't have quite the interest in that. Not that I didn't like students. I love students. I would do a ton of portraits of some other student stuff. But she liked doing that. She did not like doing the event photography as much, like the donor stuff. I really liked doing that. And maybe it's because she was younger. She is eight years younger than I am, or seven. Maybe she related more to the students and I related more to the older people. I was established in my life.

Q. Even before you got here as a student.

A. Before I got here, so maybe I was just more comfortable with that and just enjoyed that more. We had a great working relationship, and it was great having two photographers because when somebody went on vacation you had somebody to cover. They already

knew basically what to do. We had a good stable of freelancers too that we could always call if we needed work done.

Q. I don't know what made me think of this, but did you participate in your own commencement?

A. I took my picture. I took a selfie. That would have been an early selfie.

Q. That would have been a very early selfie.

A. Yeah, but it didn't work because I tilted my camera and I think I only got the top of my head or something.

Q. You did participate, and you took your camera.

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Probably the only student with a professional camera, at least.

A. Could be.

Q. One of my questions here is about the presidents. You worked, it turns out, with six presidents. Tell me who your favorite was to work with and why?

A. They were all pretty unique. Jennings was pretty business-y but good personality. He was very good with donors. Good with alums and vibrant. Played golf, smoked a lot. They all were very unique. I remember when Brit Kirwan came, super nice guy, and his wife Patty was just really, really nice. He was really getting into the Buckeye life, Buckeye culture, and Patty not so much. She wasn't quite as participatory as we would have liked. Dr. Kirwan, he really wanted to be part of the University culture. Some of us, and this is very unofficial, we kind of mentored him. We could fill him in on some people, and he would take very well to your advice basically. He really became a good Buckeye. He really did. He was fun to work with. They were both kind of gray-haired and a little bit older, kind

of a father figure. He was great. I've got a picture of my son with Patty and Brit. It was almost like a grandparent picture. That's kind of the way we look at it actually. They were really nice. We hated to see him go because he was doing really good things.

Q. He was.

A. We understand why they left. Apparently, Patty wanted to be near the grandchildren. Everybody understood. We hated to see them go. Gordon Gee, who was here obviously twice, he was just a character. He's just such a unique personality. He was really easy. He was a photographer's dream. I can never ever remember him closing his eyes in a photograph. I don't think I have one photo, I can't remember ever having his eyes closed. He was a PR guy. He was a showman. He knew exactly what to do. You couldn't go wrong photographing him. He made the photos. He was like, "Kevin, come over and do a picture over here." Usually, I'm chasing a photograph but he's making the photographs. That made my job really easy and he would do really interesting things. We'd go to Florida every spring to do Winter College. We'd go down in January or February and do three days of these mini-classes. They'd bring down half a dozen or eight professors. In the Sarasota and Naples area, OSU South. All these OSU alum snow birds go down there, and the Development office would have mini-classes for them to inform them what's being done at Ohio State. That was fun. At Bowl games he was just really very funny. He made Ohio State.

Q. He's obviously very charismatic and maybe subsequently very photogenic.

A. Yes. He's just a character. By his own admission he looks like Orville Redenbacher. He used that line a lot. He was just really, really easy. Then Karen Holbrook, was just a challenge, a photographer's challenge. She did not like being photographed. She didn't

seem comfortable even around students. She was not touchy feely like Gordon was, or even Brit Kirwin. I never got her to sit for an official portrait. In the years she was here she would never sit for an official portrait. I'm trying to think where she came from.

Q. I can't remember.

A. It was Georgia.

Q. Yes.

A. We used her portrait from there for a while. Then Tom Watson did a story for Columbus Monthly and set up a white background, they just wanted a plain photo of her, so he set up a white backdrop out at the president's house I think. She posed for that wearing a blue dress, like a bright sky-blue dress. Somehow, we got to use Tom's photo as her head shot, like an official portrait. That was very frustrating. It was really, really frustrating. It was like pulling teeth to get her to be in a lot of photographs. I remember once, she was at the child care center. Gordon Gee would go sit at the table and get in there and eat some cookies and milk or whatever. He would just make the photograph. She didn't even sit down at the table with these kids, or maybe did but really standoffish. Just a different personality. That never worked for me.

Q. That must be why we don't have many photos of her. I never made that connection before. We have a paucity of photos of her.

A. Trying to get her with students or whatever, it was really hard. Really, really hard. I really felt bad for the development people, because she just did not want to participate in that.

Q. Did you work with Drake? You must have worked with Drake.

A. Yes, I've worked with Drake. We hit it off from the very beginning because we're about the same age. I think he may be a year older than me. He rode bikes in the '70s, late '60s,

early '70s. He's a cyclist. He was in California. He knew the west coast people, racers, and I knew people from the Midwest and the East. We would compare notes. We started riding Pelotonia together. We were buddies, and whoever the security team was that year, Brian or Cassie, who were the his security persons, the three of us would ride Pelotonia together. We rode the first three years. It was fabulous. We just talked about music because he grew up with the same music. We liked the same bands. Of course, he's a musician and I'm not. We hit it off from the very beginning. He was great. We had a great time. I miss him a lot. Now since I'm retired, we vacation in August. That's when our long trip is, which is when Pelotonia is. I haven't ridden the last couple of years.

Q. Why did you finally decide to retire? There may have been multiple reasons.

A. The big one was very simple. I got 35 years of service in and I turned 65 at the same time. I never really actually did the math, but I kind of trusted what people said. After 35 years you're basically paying the University to work. If you take your contributions, your parking, etc., etc. out, then what you're going to get in retirement is as much as you're going to get working.

Q. Correct.

A. Those were the two main things. I had worked 35 years and turned 65 and I could retire. A secondary reason was, my body was just starting to wear out. Getting arthritis in both hands and in my lower back from carrying camera bags all these years. I had foot issues. Probably another factor was, it was just getting too complicated at work. It just wasn't the same. Like we talked about before, kind of the more corporate attitude and bringing in people from the outside that weren't from the academic side or from academia. It's just a different mindset these days. The number of people they bring is, is just incredible. I

can't think of the name of the project management software our office implemented. Even though somebody was on the same floor, just down the aisle from you, they wanted us to use this workflow software to contact them, so there's a written document of your communication.

Q. Everything is tracked.

A. Yes. They got rid of our work cubicles, with not real high walls, but you had to stand up to look over them. They got rid of those, so you could work with everybody. Your privacy was blown. Supposedly to work together. Yet they put this workflow software in, that you have to document everything. The fun was going out of it by that time. It's just changing. The young people were fine with it for the most part. A lot of people weren't. I think the older crowd was just a little discouraged. We saw a lot of just crazy stuff going on. Those are the main reasons.

Q. What do you miss most about working at the University, or do you miss it?

A. I miss my group that I worked with. I was in the multimedia group, and there were about six of us. I miss those people a lot. Just the interactions and finding out what's going on with their kids. We'd get together for lunch once in a while. I really miss a lot of the alumni that I worked with. I miss a lot of the professors. A lot of staff members that I worked with. But I'm finding, I was here 35 years, and probably the middle part of that 35 years I knew a ton of people. It was just fun because I'd see people all over. Working at the University was very familial. It was just like a family. But then the older I got, then people retired, or they went to other universities or whatever. My group of close colleagues got smaller. They retired or left the university. I noticed, like even on radio or

Ann Fisher (WOSU radio) or listening to something about the University, I don't see those names that I used to know. It doesn't hurt as bad.

Q. You don't feel like you're missing out.

A. I don't feel like I'm missing out, no. I looked at my time as the heyday of expansion at the University, the Medical Center, the James Cancer Hospital, the Wexner Center, Schottenstein Center, I documented all those events and the building of them and the groundbreakings and all that. I thought, "That was my heyday." They're going to build another hospital tower. Let the next photographer deal with that. Expansion now is unbelievable. I can't even imagine. The one thing I really don't miss is parking.

Q. Right.

A. My office wasn't on campus anymore. The other thing that really ticked me off was, our office was on Lane Avenue, with free parking. But then I had to pay over \$700 a year, because I would need to drive to main campus a couple of times a week.

Q. Right.

A. That just really ticked me off.

Q. I'm sure you don't miss campus parking.

A. It was just kind of my time to go. I did my time and I wanted to retire early enough that I could still do things.

Q. Do you run into people – because it sounds like you were kind of not big man on campus, but you knew people everywhere. When you're in the grocery store or something do people come up to you and say, "Hey, Kevin, I remember you from ..."

A. Yes. Linda and I belong to McConnell Heart Center. Do you?

Q. Yes.

A. That's a great place. I see people there. And I'll see people, like David Goldberger, works out over there. I said, "You're David Goldberger from [the College of Law], right?" He says, "You look familiar." I say, "I was the photographer." "Oh yeah, okay." I was in Wendy's a couple of years ago, I was still working, and Flordell Phahl, her husband John Phahl, was a namesake for Fisher College's Phahl Hall. She was in there eating by herself, and I was by myself. I got my plate and said, "Hi Flordell." She said hi. I said, "Mind if I join you?" She said no. I sat down, and we started talking. After a couple of minutes, she said, "Now who are you?" I said, "The OSU photographer." She said, "Oh, I didn't see your camera." If people see my camera, they know exactly who I am. If they don't see the camera, they're like, "Hmm, I know him from somewhere." I still see a lot of people over there, Ron Green [Department of History of Art] and Gifford Weary [Department of Psychology]. Not a whole bunch of people but some.

Q. Yes, a fair number.

A. I'm still close friends with some people I worked with. Jim Brown was a photographer. That's a crazy story. He retired from the hospital. He's a big golfer. I saw him, like, the day after he got back from North and South Carolina. He went down there after he retired. He wanted to move down there so he could golf more. I said, "Jim, I wish I would have known because my sister lives in North Carolina in Sanford in a golf community. There're two golf courses there. It's unbelievable what she bought. She bought this house for \$167,000 and it's right on the golf course, and it's really nice." He said, "Really?" I showed him some pictures. He went down the next day, turned around and went back down, met my sister and put an offer on a house. They're kind of neighbors. He lives on another part of the thing. He is thriving down there.

- Q. That's great.
- A. And they're friends. He was a bachelor and met a woman there. She actually attended Ohio State. I don't know exactly where they met. She's from Ohio State and they married. He's in heaven. It's kind of crazy.
- Q. Do you have any current connection to the University? Some people have joined OSURA, some people volunteer.
- A. I haven't, and I thought I'm going to give it a year. It's been over a year and I haven't had time to do that. I mean, even OSURA, I do want to join at some point and I've run into the woman who is the membership person. I can't remember her name. I told her I'm going to join, but we just haven't had time. We're getting work done at home, and we travel whenever we can. When we slow down a little bit and get the stuff done, I'll definitely do that. We go to the Alumni Association for some learning-event lunches.
- Q. The Buckeye Learn lunches?
- A. Yes, we try to do that. I spoke at one about my tenure here.
- Q. You mentioned earlier you still attend football and basketball games.
- A. Yes, we do that.
- Q. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't talked about?
- A. Oh golly, I don't know.
- Q. You're glad you stayed at OSU?
- A. Oh yes.
- Q. It sounds like you had the best of both worlds.
- A. I did. For my family too. Because they went to Bowl games with me a lot of times, because we could afford it then. Actually, when it started, you could bring your spouse. I

was working staff and they said that they ought to let the spouse come at no cost. Originally, it was no cost for the spouse, and moderate for the children, two kids. Then they started charging for the spouse also, which wasn't too bad. The four of them came. Then my son just came with me once or twice when my wife didn't want to go, or we were going someplace another time. Then they started charging for the spouse big time, and then she quit coming about three years before I retired, just because it got really expensive. We had gone, I think we had been to all the major Bowl games and two national championships. The second national championship was interesting because it was the first playoff, the BCS playoff, when there were two games. I went to the first playoff game. The office sent me. Then the next one, I think they said, "If you can get there for \$1,500 you can go." What I did was, I called the Alumni Association and found out that they had a one-day trip. It departed Columbus the morning of the game. It was a night game, so we got back at some ungodly hour. That's what it was.

Q. I'm sure.

A. We left mid-morning and flew to Texas and went to the official university group motel and got tickets then went to the Buckeye Bash. I photographed the development pre-game dinner, then went to the Buckeye Bash and covered that. Then went to the stadium and photographed the game. That was fun because it was covering a major national sporting event. The camera companies were there for clean and check and loan, equipment loan. I had never seen that many photographers in one spot in my life. It was just a huge event. Then there was the game and we had to be back on the bus, I think it was 40 minutes after the trophy presentation. I photographed that, ran out, and I missed a lot of shots of the team just hanging out, but I had to leave. We flew back, and I think I edited some on

the plane. We got back at maybe 2:30-3:00 in the morning. And then I went to the office and worked, did more editing, got the gallery out or whatever I had to do. That might have been the last gallery I could do myself, the last season I could do that. I did that and then people would come into the office at 8-9:00 and I'm still there finishing up. I remember going over to Sunny Day Café on 5th Avenue at 10:00 for breakfast. I'm sitting there having breakfast and everybody's talking about the game. I'm sitting by myself just kind of listening and I thought, "I was there. Twelve hours ago, I was at the game." It was just the freakiest thing. It was like a dream. It was 24 hours of a dream.

I had always covered the game and university events at the Bowl games as part of an official trip. That's when I would go down with the official group. And actually, the first playoff game was our official bowl trip. That's when they had the development events. You never knew whether you were going to have another one or not. If you lost, it was over. Development would always have their big event the first game. I came back, and it was kind of a freaky feeling, I got to cover that. To win a national championship. As the photographer, you're right there. You're right there. It's pretty crazy. Just the opportunities to do that kind of stuff was just fabulous. My wife and I, we talk a lot about it. Those are some of the best times we ever had as a family. We'd be away for the holidays or generally New Year's. But we've got a lot of memories, seeing Gordon Gee dancing at New Year's Eve or something like that. Or Alex Shumate or David Frantz. There were just some funny times, just some really, really good times. I had a great job. It was a fabulous job.

- Q. This has been a great interview. Thank you, Kevin. I appreciate you taking the time.
- A. Did we miss anything?

Q. We might have. I've got plenty. That's awesome.