

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
BOYCE LANCASTER
APRIL 23, 2020

Q. Good morning. This is Kevlin Haire for The Ohio State University Archives. It is April 23, 2020, and I'm about to conduct an oral history interview of Boyce Lancaster, retired on-air host of WOSU Radio. I am talking to him via phone from our respective homes because of the Corona virus outbreak. Good morning, Boyce.

A. Good morning. Good to talk to you.

Q. Good to talk to you. Let's start at the very beginning and tell me when you were born and where you were born.

A. To steal somebody else's line, I was born at a very early age in Lubbock, Texas. That has stuck with me all of these years. I'm originally from Lubbock, Texas. My dad, my folks had moved there for a television job, and September 2, 1953, I came along into a sandy, dusty, little apartment: Mom said she used to have to dust the sand off the breakfast table in order for us to eat in the morning it was so bad. But dad had started at a station there. He was there very first weatherman many years ago. We lived there for a short while before we moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma where I grew up.

Q. Do you have siblings?

A. I have a sister. She lives near Rockford, Illinois.

Q. Just curious. I like to get a little bit of people's family background in these things.

A. You are a digger.

Q. Exactly. You say you moved to Oklahoma, to Tulsa you said?

A. Yes. I grew up in Tulsa, had a sister. I was there until I was in high school.

Q. Okay. You said your dad was at the television station in Lubbock. I assume it was the same in Tulsa.

A. Yes. He worked for Channel 8, KPUL, which was an NBC affiliate and was there for, let me think, I guess it was 13 or 14 years. Television was really in its infancy at that point and so it was kind of the Wild West. They were kind of making things up as they went. I really enjoyed going into the television station with him and seeing all these things as I grew up. It was, I don't know, it was just fascinating to me. That's really all I ever wanted to do, was be in television and radio. He finally gave up trying to talk me out of it and said, "Okay."

Q. Was your mom a stay-at-home mom or was she also involved?

A. She stayed at home for a while until we got into school. And then she worked part-time while we were in school and eventually would go back to work full-time. She worked there, even though they were both broadcasters by training, she had been a broadcast major and a music minor when she was in school. She worked for one of the local custom home builders. His office was in the home the next block over from ours, and so we kids could run in and out of there whenever we needed her. She kind of felt like she was watching us, even though she was also working at the same time.

Q. That's a great arrangement.

A. It worked out pretty well, actually.

Q. You lived in Tulsa through high school. Where did you go to college?

A. I went to a couple of schools. I went to actually three. I started out at St. Clair Community College in Dayton and went to Wright State for a while. There's a little liberal arts school in northwest Arkansas called John Brown University. That would be not the abolitionist

John Brown. It was another guy who decided he wanted to start a school that was for students who needed to go to college, wanted to study, but really didn't have a lot of money. So he set up, it was kind of a work-study kind of thing. You went to college, but you also worked for the University in some capacity. It had a really high-quality broadcast major. They had former broadcasters who were running this. They had multiple radio stations that they owned around the country as well as two of them there in this little bitty town, really in the middle of nowhere. It was about 30 minutes from Fayetteville, Arkansas. They had 100,000-watt FM and they had a 5,000-watt AM and they had a student station. And you had to do all of the different jobs at the station before they would let you graduate. You had to have 15 vocational credit hours in order to get a degree. You really had a solid well-rounded background, and that, coupled with the fact that my folks both had a broadcast and music background and my dad was in the business as I was growing up, really gave me a strong foundation in the business. And unfortunately, I wound up leaving the school before I finished the degree, to work in the business.

It was really weird, but you learn that broadcasting is a business that you actually learn more quickly from the inside. I was just really fortunate, I was hired by a company in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and they had never seen me face-to-face. They never heard any voice-over stuff that I had done. Somebody contacted them and said, "Talk to this guy." So I talked to the general manager on the phone and by the time we finished, he said, "I need an overnight guy. Are you interested?" I thought, "Okay." So I popped in my car and drove to South Carolina. When I got there, the man, the program director, was running the air shift in the morning. It was about 8 o'clock in the morning. Somewhere around 8:30 or 8:40 he said, "Well, Boyce, why don't you go ahead and take over and pick up the 9

o'clock [slot] when we join the network." I said, "I don't know your play list. I don't know your equipment." He said, "You'll be fine." I thought, "Okay." I don't remember what I did or what I said, but by the time we got through he said, "You know, I think I'm going to have you do mid-day." So all of a sudden, instead of having to stay up all night, I was doing 10-2 on this little country gospel radio station in the middle of South Carolina. That's kind of where it started. I never really had to look for a job. Somehow jobs have always been there when either I need one or I wanted one. That by the way was in the summer of 1977 when I started there.

Q. And do you remember how much you were paid?

A. I was making about \$650 a month. It was almost enough to keep from starving and for gas. I bought a motorcycle to get back and forth to work because my car broke down on the way down. It was starving-artist territory, I guess you could say.

Q. It sounds like great training.

A. It was really wonderful training. Ernie Scott was my first program director. He had come out of country radio and taught me a lot about production and personality and all of this stuff. I learned a lot of things from him for which I am quite grateful. When I decided to move back up to Ohio, it wasn't too long before I had an offer of a position there. I met a guy who would not only wind up hiring me at Dayton, but eventually when I had gone on to another job elsewhere would hire me to bring me up to Columbus, which is how I got up here to begin with. And I've been here ever since. That was sometime around 1980 or so. But I'm getting ahead of things a little bit.

Q. I'm going to back up just a little bit. I want to understand the connection to Ohio. You said before you went to John Brown University, you had gone to St. Clair Community College and then Wright State in the Dayton area. Had your family moved to Dayton?

A. They had. Actually, to Sinclair, at that point, College.

Q. Of course. I'm sorry.

A. My dad took a job at Channel 2, which was in WLWD in Dayton when I was a sophomore in college. I moved to Dayton when I was 15 and finished my high school there and everything. When my dad took a job with a company up in Grand Rapids, I said, "I am done moving." I had been to, we moved around a lot when I was in Tulsa because he'd get a better job. He'd get promoted, so they would want to get a better place and finally they bought a house. So I went to, let's see, I changed elementary schools twice. I was in two junior highs and three high schools, so I never really, I really felt kind of ungrounded. When they decided to leave, I said, "That's it. I'm done." So I stayed in Dayton. I was working for a grocery store, Kroger, and I said, "I'm staying here." All my friends were there at that point, the kids I had been in high school with. So Dayton really kind of became home. I haven't been back to Tulsa very often, but I'm not as connected with the people from there as I am, to this day, with my friends I made in Dayton.

Q. The gospel station you worked at, was that the only one you worked at that wasn't in Ohio? Was that when you moved back after working at that station, and how long were you there?

A. I was there for not quite a year, but I moved back to Dayton because my family, my first wife and we had a child at that point that was quite young, was ready to come back to Dayton. Orangeburg was just not her thing. So we moved back to Dayton. Her folks were there and I was there for a while. It wasn't the only station outside of Ohio. There was one

more, and you asked a very interesting question about the number of places I worked, which kind of feeds into that. Because I would wind up working in the capital of West Virginia, Charleston, for a couple of stations there. I got into sales for a while. I got a job as a manager of a station first in Charleston, and then when they started having some issues, I moved over to a much larger station, WCHS, which I did sales there and eventually did some work on the air there as well. They were kind of to Charleston what WTVN was at that point to Columbus. Kind of news talk. They were still playing some music at that point. So I got a whole different kind of education from them because I began to learn about the commercial aspects of the business, working with clients, selling radio time, writing and producing commercials, before they asked me to do mornings there. It keeps coming back to mornings for some reason.

I was in Charleston for a couple of years before they decided, the radio station there started changing, and they were going to start bringing in other people. I was not going to be part of the mix for them. The thing is, if you haven't been fired at least once in radio, you haven't been in radio. I left there, came back to Ohio, got into Columbus. A friend of mine said, "I've got a place for you here." I worked up in a little area just north of the outer belt. It's up there the Nationwide training center is, and all of that. There is a big white building that looks kind of like a house. There was a Delaware County Bank in it, and a radio station, WRFD, was in that building. A little historical note for central Ohio: WNCI used to be WRFD FM. They sold the FM station to Nationwide back in the day, so NCI stands for Nationwide Communications, Inc. They sold the station to Nationwide and kept the AM side of it. I worked up there for them for a while, and eventually then from there my next radio station would be at Ohio State. A long trip.

Q. It is a long trip. I'm tired. Let's back up. You said you went to Charleston, and you were hired as manager of the station. How old were you?

A. I was in my 20s.

Q. Was that unusual to have such a young person as a manager, or you had enough experience with enough aspects of the station in South Carolina, that they felt that you could do it?

A. That's an interesting question. Managers that young are really kind of rare. This station was a small station. It was, I don't think it was even a full-time, I think it was a daytime station, which meant that they weren't licensed to be on after sunset. They [would go off the air at night] then they would sign on the next morning. But I think the man who hired me was looking for someone who had on-air experience, production experience. I had been an operations manager at a small station.

Here's another stop for you: London, Ohio for a short period of time. I got hired at that one because I went to college with the son of one of the people who ran this little network. He contacted me one day. I was hoping to go to their station out in California, but that didn't work out. But he said, "I've got this little station not far from you in London, Ohio. Are you interested?" [I thought,] "Oh, why not?" I was willing to do a lot of different things because I just wanted to be in the business. I was learning so much from the places I had been in, and even if I didn't really have a lot of experience, apparently, I felt my way through it in the dark pretty well. I must have done something right because people kept hiring me.

But late 20s for management was pretty young. I took a friend of mine with me. He went down there as the program director. I liked the music mixes he put together and everything. The official title I had was Operations Manager and the owner, the vice

president of the organization, said, “If you get us into the ratings book and get billing up to this point for this period of time, I'm going to change your title to General Manager.” And when those things happened and the title didn't come and the raise didn't come, I got a little miffed, and that's when I went to WCHS in Charleston. There were pluses and minuses. He kind of had me over a barrel cause I moved to West Virginia and he said, “Well, we're not going to do that.” “Oh, okay,” and I just happened to be fortunate enough to find a job in the sales department at this other station, so I learned another aspect of the business. I've just been really, really fortunate, to be in the right place at the right time almost every step of the way in this industry.

Q. Right, but as you moved along, you gained a lot of different experience. I can see why, as you moved along, you'd be a much more attractive candidate as well.

A. One of the things I've really found in this business, like I said to you early on, that when you can go in and learn by doing from somebody who really knows, it's like having a one-on-one professor. Rather than sitting in the class and taking notes, you really get a lot of incredible insight. We watch a show called the Incredible Doctor Pol. He's a vet up in Central Michigan, but he brings in a lot of students who he hires as vet techs, and inevitably they'd get out somewhere [to treat a patient and would say], “I never did this in vet school,” or, “I don't think I've ever seen this before,” so they're learning as they go. The difference is, they didn't put medications in my hand and allow me to give people inoculations. I wasn't ever going to hurt anybody, I don't think.

Q. I suppose so. When you run a small station, I'm guessing you aren't too worried about the consequences of what someone might say on the air, or if somebody flips the wrong switch? You've got probably a small and perhaps very loyal audience who may be very forgiving.

A. You hope so. Of course, you're not going to be in a ratings book very long if you have too many technical issues. One of the things that I learned very early from my dad was that quality matters, content matters, and professionalism matters. And he said, "You may be in there and the world is coming down around your shoulders, but the audience doesn't ever need to know that. You need to be able to deliver even when things are crashing about you." You begin to learn that when a piece of equipment fails or some feed you're getting from the network falls apart or something like that, or people walk in and interrupt what you're doing while the mic is open, you learn to go with the flow. That probably was the thing I learned more. I remember I was sitting at the studio at WOSU at one point, and we had big windows in the door, so you could see us in there. I'm sitting there. I'm in the middle of a break. I'm doing some kind of an underwriter credit and stuff, and I hear this knock on the door, and the doors open and this woman says, "Excuse me," and I keep doing my break. "Excuse me, I'm looking for." And she kept talking and I'd hold my hand up and she didn't stop. So I finished my break and I turned around and I said, "Excuse me, did you not see the light outside the door that said, "on the air." "Oh, I'm looking for Engineer so and so." I thought, people who aren't around this business, apparently some of these things just don't register. That was the wildest thing. People just walk in and say, "Oh, hi, how are you. Can I ask you a question please?"

Q. Let's get you to WOSU now. I think [the last stop before that was] the predecessor of WNCI, right?

A. Yes, WRFD, which was very strong with farmers. WRFD stands for Rural Free Delivery, I believe is what that stands for. And they had a lot of farm reports and news and things like that on the air. And at some point, they brought in new management, and the old adage

is, "If you've never been laid off or fired in radio, then you've not been in radio." They brought in a new manager, and the new manager decided that she was going to bring in her own people. So I was one of the casualties. Fortunately, I was working here and there around town. Fortunately, in fact, I was loading trucks at Consolidated Freightways, which was a big freight hauling company off of Greenlawn Avenue, south of Columbus. I have very wide-ranging skills. If you ever need pizzas delivered or moving trucks loaded or anything, I'm your boy. I did construction for a while. I shingled roof. But that's neither here nor there.

Anyway, I'm working at this truck dock and a friend of mine contacted me. He had been at the University and had been for a while at the radio station. He said, "Boyce, they are looking for someone to work in their operations department as a technician, working with satellite feeds and things like that, running some of the air shifts for the announcers. You need to talk to them." So I contacted the people there and told them who I was and they said, "Send us a resume," which I did, and a tape. The tape they didn't really need because they were looking for somebody who wasn't going to be on the air. So I went and talked to them. That was in April, I think it was. So somewhere in August they finally called me up and say, "We have an opening. Are you interested?" I said, "Well, yes, I thought you'd never ask." So I took the job there in August of '84. We had a huge master control room where we had a number of then reel-to-reels, and satellite links where we downloaded a lot of the syndicated programs, we ran on both the news station and the music station. Then our jobs as operations people, we'd get those recorded, quality check them, get them ready to go into broadcast, line things up in each of the studios for the people who would be running the air shifts. We cleared a lot of copy off of what they called

the Dax machine, which is essentially where they sent you lists about the content of the programs and all that kind of stuff. It was all just kind of crazy paperwork. And we would occasionally, we would go in in the evening, the announcers would record what they called voice tracks, which were what made up the content of the breaks, and then we as operations people would mix the voice track, play the music, and put it on the air for them. So they weren't in there in the evening if we were running it. So there I am, working in the middle of the night, sometimes into the wee hours of the morning, and eventually when WOSU went 24 hours, they asked me to do the overnight because they said, "We need somebody here who can fix this stuff if it goes to pot." That's what got me to WOSU, was a technical job, which I really enjoyed. I loved running the equipment. It's one of my favorite things. I'm running all the gear and sometimes engineering broadcasts for the announcers. And just trucking along.

Q. But somehow you transitioned to an on-air host. How did that happen?

A. I don't know if you will recognize the name Mary Hoffman. Mary Hoffman was the program director of the classical station at that time. Most of what I did in the studio when I would play the voice tracks and the music was for the classical station. So I'm listening to the music. I had studied some music. I played an instrument all through my elementary, junior high and high school, sang in choirs. My folks, as you asked earlier in this list of questions, were both musical. My dad was a choir director, while I was growing up, in the church. My mom played piano and organ, so I would sing in the choir, and I sang solos and things. So I had a musical background and understood the basics of music. I didn't have formal musical training beyond the instrument I played, but I did have some background in it, so I knew what was going on.

I'd be in there playing the greats and stuff and running all of the voice tracks, and Mary Hoffman came to me one day, and she said, "You know, I'd like to talk to you about maybe doing some fill and things in between programs, so it takes a little pressure off the announcers. Would you be interested in doing some weather and maybe an underwriter credit, and maybe an occasional piece of fill music?" I said, "Sure." So she said, "Let's do an audition." I had been in radio by then for, let me think here, probably about 7 1/2 years and maybe close to 8, and I'd been on the air for all of that until I got here. I never thought I would see the day when I had to audition to read a weather forecast. But okay, I'm happy to do that. So I did that and she liked what she heard. She said, "We'll give you all the pronunciations you need and the pieces of music and everything, and then you can do that." So I started doing some fill-in there.

Then after a while, she said, "Well, one of our announcers is going to be on vacation for, I think it was two weeks, would you be interested in filling in for him?" [I said,] "Okay." She said, "We'll give you all the playlists. We'll give you all the pronunciations. We'll work with you on the content, and whatever questions you have we can take care of it." "Sure, I'll try that." So I did that for a couple of weeks. I was still doing some fill-in and stuff. I was starting to kind of get this, I had been getting this really great musical education from the program hosts and from the program director, and eventually it would come out that she really, what she really wanted, was a little different sound on the air. She wanted something that was a little more relaxed, a little less public radio-ish, if I could put it that way. Or classical radio. A lot of it was kind of stuffy and stilted.

Q. Are you talking about the music or the voice of the on-air host?

A. The voice and the delivery and all of that. Interestingly enough, she gave me, well I'm getting ahead of myself. Anyway, she came back in. I had by then started filling in doing the overnight thing when they went 24 hours, to try to get that set up. She came to me and she said, "Boyce, our morning announcer is leaving. Would you be willing to fill in for him until we find somebody?"

Q. When was this? Do you remember?

A. This was late '85, maybe January or so, February '86, somewhere in there.

Q. Okay, so you had been there almost two years.

A. Yeah, I started in August of '84, so it was about a year, not quite a year and a half that I had been at the station. And she asked me if I'd fill in and I said, "Sure, that would be fun." So I went from working midnight and getting off at six, to having to be there at six, which was a real brutal transition. But I said, "Okay, I can't miss this chance. I'm going to do this." I did it for a while, and finally she came in and she said, "Boyce, I'm telling them I want you to take this position permanently." I said, "Really?" She said, "If you're interested." I said, "Yeah." She said, "We'll work with you, but you'll need to learn how to choose the programming yourself and how to work all the different aspects of classical music into this program. There are some here who have told me that you won't last six months."

Q. She said that to you?

A. Yes, she was very honest with me. I really liked Mary, but she said, "I've been told by some people that you're not going to last, they just don't see it." But something she saw in what I did or how I did it, got her attention. And so I said, "I'm going to show them." I waited for 30-plus years for them to find a permanent replacement, which they conveniently never

did. I started April 1986. That was when I officially started doing what they called Morning Drive on the classical station there. It kind of stuck.

Q. It did kind of stick, yeah, sure.

A. It kind of stuck.

Q. I know at that point [in your career] you can handle glitches and people walking in and things like that, but do you remember how you felt that first morning, considering I'm sure some of the hosts had been involved in or been music majors in classical music their whole lives? They knew their stuff that way.

A. Yeah, and it was interesting because a lot of the hosts there maybe, they hadn't studied music to that degree in college or anything, but they had loved the music their entire lives. They understood in the way I didn't. It was a little nerve-wracking because the mid-day announcer, Jodie Williams, was fluent in Spanish and had been doing this for a long, long time. Her language skills were really strong. John Magrody, who was the afternoon drive announcer, he had been doing it forever. He was really a brilliant guy. He had this great dry sense of humor. And I'm looking at these people, and I have to say, it was intimidating as hell, I tell ya, because all I got is a good delivery and the ability to string my words together,

When I walked into the library the first time, I'm going, "I don't have a clue where to begin." So I would go pull big armloads of LP's out of the music library, go to my office, and sit there and drop needles on them and listen to them, and try to figure out what am I going to play. Then I would show my play list to Mary Hoffman. She would go through it and say, "Okay, well, this is a really nice play list if all you want to hear is baroque music for three hours. You need to do something else." Besides that, [she was] sort of teaching

me about mixing up styles, mixing up eras, mixing up orchestral and chamber and solo, and vocal, and it really began to give me an education in what it took to make a play list that was palatable to a broad base of people without being boring or off-putting. And she also allowed me to mix in some things that were, shall we say, not necessarily straight classical music. She let me – she was a brave woman. I got this thing going where I would play things leading up to the end of my shift, which at first was at 9 o'clock before they changed it to 10 o'clock. And the last thing I played, I would find something that tied in with classical music in some way, but wasn't really classical necessarily.

For instance, I was sitting in my office. I'm listening to Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs playing Foggy Mountain Breakdown. And she walked in and said, "Boyce, they're really quite good. Are they classically trained?" I said, "Mary, I have no idea. I just like this piece of music." She said, "Are you going to play that on the air?" I said, "Well, I hadn't really thought about it." She said, "Well, if you do, make sure you have a really good reason, have an explanation and a purpose for playing it, and then find a table together because some people are probably going to come after you." That was like Pavlov's dog. Ring the bell. Here he comes for a treat. I found a guy by the name of George Stavis who played the banjo, but he had made a recording of classical music. So he's playing, "Hall of the Mountain King," by Edvard Grieg. He's playing all these other neat pieces. You've heard "Hall of the Mountain King" on a banjo by the way. And so I played, this guy playing, "Hall of the Mountain King" and I said, "Now just to show you the range, the dimension, of this instrument I've got something else here to go with it." So I played "Hall of the Mountain King" first, then I played "Foggy Mountain Breakdown," and then went into the network at 9:00. There were some people who were not happy, but there were a lot of

people who thought, “Well, that's kind of cool,” and they would want to know what it was. So then it would be Bobby McFerrin. Bobby McFerrin is a classically trained musician.

Q. Right.

A. He conducts orchestras. He has an incredible voice. His father sang at the Metropolitan Opera. But I would have him, he would sing a little something that would tie in with something. It just went on and on and on like that. Finding things that were related to classical music, but weren't strictly classical, to kind of try to say, “Okay, we're not just dusting old things out of a library. This is a living, breathing, vital musical form that you might want to check out a little bit.”

Q. I'm going to back up a second. This is actually related to that because you do obviously talk about the audience. The morning drive time is supposed to be the premier spot in a radio format, [at least] on the national level. Is that not the case on a classical music station? Or she just thought you could handle it?

A. I'm not sure exactly in some cases what her thought processes were. Because at 9 o'clock we had a syndicated program we ran, and I'd have to think back through what followed that, but in classical music, oftentimes it's the mid-day [that is the premier spot], because people have settled into their work day or in whatever they've got going. So oftentimes, the middle of the day was one of your strongest places, but she wanted that morning to develop and to get stronger, and I felt like, well, the people that listen at that time of day, there's a lot of tune and tune out because people are going to work and stuff, but you're talking to people in government and people who run businesses, and people who own businesses. I really felt like, for me when I was in commercial broadcasting, morning drive was where you wanted to be definitely, and I really felt that way about mornings on WOSU, because

I felt like I could reach an audience at a time before work started getting in the way. For me, mornings are a unique time of day where you get people as their day is beginning. You have a chance to kind of give them a really good start to their day.

Case in point: I went to the airport one day. My wife and I were going to travel. We got to the desk and there was a guy at the counter as we're getting ready to go back to check our bags, or we're at the counter checking our bags. He and I talked for a minute. And he said, "By the way, I want you to know how much enjoyment I've gotten out of your program." I said, "Well, I really appreciate that." He said, "My wife and I recently had a child, and so there have been a lot of days when we've been up very early trying to get this child to go back to sleep, and you would come on the radio and just kind of smooth things out. I've been listening to you while rocking a child and trying to get it to take a bottle for a long time. And I just wanted to say thank you." And then he upgraded me to first class, which I really appreciated. That kind of feedback, it makes you work harder. A lot of times mid-days you've got a different audience, but for me I felt like mornings were key to people's days.

Q. Right. Now you know the tagline for WOSU is, "Compose yourself," because of the craziness in the world. This was even before this [Covid] outbreak. And then I think that's a perfect time to have that message, and that's a perfect time to relate that to people. Compose yourself when you go to work and just kind of chill, and you'll get through the day kind of thing.

A. Yeah, and I felt like when we heard from listeners during fund raisers or things such as that, they always responded, when we went on and were just very straightforward about the need, there was always, you could tell who the core group was of those early morning

hours, who was always there listening. We had someone, when we went back on after the change of the format for a while, then we went back on and started doing 101 side, we had somebody show up at the door with a great big basketball full of goodies just to say thank you for giving me my mornings back again. They are a pretty loyal bunch.

Q. Explain that change because I'm not familiar with what you're talking about.

A. Okay. For many, many years, I was on 89.7 in the morning, and then there came a time when there were financial downturns and all of that. And at one point, they decided, and AM radio was, we were moving into a new generation. We were becoming less and less relevant. Most public broadcasting is done on the FM band. So the decision was made at one point, the news side really was suffering in terms of audience outreach because of where they were. They were at 820 AM. So they said, "Okay, we're going to blend the two." So they would have morning edition come on from 5-9 on 89.7, and then I was on from 9-1, and then they had an announcer on from 1 until the time when "All Things Considered" came on. So they put some key programming from NPR on to 89.7 to try to shore up the news side and all of that. And that went on for several years before they began to realize from feedback from people who were long-time classical supporters, that they really, really wanted a full-time station. So at that point, the news migrated, they went out and found another frequency. They bought CD101 essentially. And they migrated news to 89.7, and we moved to 101. That's when it expanded back to when we were 24 hours of classical music. There was about a four, five-year period, I've forgotten exactly how long it was, where the formats were combined. It may not be quite that long. I'd have to ask somebody for you. So there was a period of time where my shift was a little bit later in the morning. And then all of a sudden, it went back up, and I was going on at six again.

Q. I remember that now. I wasn't a fan of it either; I was happy to hear that you all had gone back because it didn't work for me.

A. I have to give huge props to Tom Weiland, who is still the general manager there, because he really, he shepherded these stations through some really difficult waters, financially and content wise. I mean, it would have been really easy, because of the advent of HD broadcasting which means you could have a secondary band, where you could have a completely different format. It would have been really easy, and some stations did this, to just kick classical music to another, like to HD2 on the band or to the internet or something. And that happened at a lot of stations, or just to get rid of it completely, which happened at a station where a friend of mine worked in Florida, where classical eventually just disappeared because news was in great demand and brought more money to be able to really support the business. Tom Weiland somehow managed to thread that needle and keep both formats viable, and then it got to the point [where he was] working with the University to help us fund the purchase of 101, to get the University to work with us to buy another frequency. That had to have been a tough sell. I'm eternally grateful to Tom Weiland for enabling us to have this content for central Ohio from the WOSU stations.

Q. Right. Don't worry. I will be doing an oral history interview of him some day because he's seen it all.

A. He has. Have you read his book?

Q. No, it's not out yet I don't think.

A. It's just out a little while ago, and it actually, it's really quite interesting. He goes through a lot of this in there, so it would be a good foundation for you as you are ready to talk to him. It gets back into some of the early aspects of the station, even pre-all of us, and even on up

into some of these difficult times in the '90s on into the 2000s and the financial hardships. I've had more than one person who has been involved with the station in an advisory aspect or maybe members of the Friends of WOSU say how much of a debt of gratitude we really owe Tom Weiland for enabling us to be here as a classical station. It was an amazing thing.

Q. Let's get back to your hosting because the morning host for many years, and then you switched briefly I believe to the afternoon?

A. I started going on at nine. I worked from nine, I think it was until one o'clock. So when they combined the news and the classical on 89.7, that meant that I would not go live until nine o'clock. And I was on until the early afternoon including, you know, we had a little Mozart thing we did at noon for a long time. We called it the Amadeus Deli which was a lot of fun. I did a little later shift in the morning for a while, although I still was going in early because I had been getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning for so long that it was a hard habit to break. I did a lot of work before I went on the air. But yeah, I did the later time, then when they bought 101, I shifted back to the early hours again.

Q. What was a typical work day for you? Because you just mentioned that you worked before your shift, the back-end work. I'm assuming you normally did that after, and what was that back-end work?

A. When I was going on the air at six, and actually for a while five-thirty, I'd get in and I'd do the air shift first and then there was programming to do because up until not that long ago, each of us as on-air hosts, we chose all of our own music. Most of your responsibilities were [choosing] programming [for] the next day, and at one point we were usually working four to six weeks in advance. We were really trying to stay ahead of the curve, planning special programming and all of that, and getting it submitted, so we knew that we weren't

doing a lot of duplication, that everybody was on the same page in terms of maybe special things that were going on. Interestingly, I met my wife at WOSU and she was at that point the music director. So she kind of oversaw all of these play lists we put together, just to kind of make sure that we saw it from an over-arching [point of view], so she could make sure that the flow was good, that we weren't stepping on each other's toes, etc. Anyway, we did a lot of that. If there was voice production to do, promos to record, things like that, things to be written, we did that afterwards, and eventually I was also producing a Saturday program called Saturday with the Pops. That was two hours. I recorded that and put it into, gave it to the operations department and they would play it. I wasn't in there on Saturday, but they would play it. At special times we produced special programs, we would do interviews. There was a lot going on behind the scenes that most people never see.

Q. Right, okay. You mentioned your wife and you met her there and she would approve all the various music that you all played, just to make sure there was an overall theme, that it all worked out. How did you guys work effectively together, because I could see perhaps there being conflict.

A. Amazingly enough, we really worked together well. We weren't in the same room, but we had proximity. Quite frankly, Beverly is everything [music-related]: She had everything but her dissertation toward her doctorate in music. She had been a performer. She was a professional bassoonist. She had taught music in school. She knew her stuff. I knew she knew her stuff, and I knew she knew a lot more than I did. We really wound up working together well because she wanted nothing to do with being on the air. We worked on a lot of special projects and all of that together. I picked her brain a lot and learned a lot from her. It could have gone sideways, I know. Working with a spouse. She could never be my

direct supervisor, yet over the years she supervised a lot of what I did. In terms of technical listening, I was answering directly to the station manager or I was answering for a while to the chief operating officer. But when she was, and eventually she got the job of program director, which is the position that would have hired me normally, but I was answering to her supervisor and she was overseeing the rest of the staff. They just kind of said, "You guys have proved you can work together. We're not going to fix it if it isn't broken," and they just left us alone. It worked out beautifully.

Q. Being sequestered together is a little different than working together. That's for sure.

A. It is. But you know, we enjoy each other's company and hanging out, and we like to cook. We go for walks and bike rides. It just was one of those, we were very fortunate to have the kind of relationship where she says, "Are you sure you really want to play that?" I knew well enough that I should say, "Maybe I better look at this again. Maybe I better re-think this," because she always had a good reason. I owe her a lot because of her support and input in this, I was able to do what I did over the many, many years.

Q. You had a good relationship with her as co-workers. What kind of atmosphere was it with other co-workers, both the technical side and the other on-air hosts?

A. How do you mean?

Q. I asked you this question in my list because I listened to a very short interview between you and Jennifer Hamlin. I think she brought you in just to talk a little bit because you were retiring. And you had a funny little way you would transition between your shift and her shift. It was very congenial. I just wondered, was it like that with everyone? And tell that story to set it up.

A. I can't remember exactly who started it. I want to say she started it because she was always starting with me. But it was just one of these give and takes where she'd walk in and she'd go, "All right, Lancaster." I'd go, "All right, Hamlin." I'd go, "Don't start with me." "I didn't start with you; I'm going to stop. You need to stop starting because if you don't stop starting, I'm going to start with you." And this exchange happened every day. It was really quite good-natured. We got along very well. Amazingly, the staff as a whole really worked together well. There was a period of time there where we did not have a program director. Our radio station manager, he knew we knew what we were doing, and he left us to do it. We kind of supervised ourselves. He wasn't going to walk in and say, "Okay, you're playing too much Frost boys. You've got to give me some more Beethoven or we're going to have to have a little conversation." He knew we knew the content, and he was happy with what he heard, and he would let us do our jobs. That is such a rare gift in any business, but particularly in radio where, when I was in commercial radio, everything was laid out down to the minute, as to what you were going to do and what you were going to play and everything else. We got along very, very well as a staff. It was a small staff. Even though it was a big station and there were a lot of other moving parts, on the classical side there were just a handful of us. We watched out for each other and helped each other. And we worked together really, really well. It felt like a small group within a very big organization. It was really a nice working environment, I thought.

Q. So then why did you retire?

A. Beverly retired in 2016. It was our 30th wedding anniversary, so we took a big road trip. I just got to the point ... I have aging parents. My mom will be 91 soon. My dad will be 90 in August. My stepmom will be 85. We have grandchildren that live down in Texas, outside

of Houston. It was just time. Interestingly, I went back, of course. I retired from full-time and went back and worked part-time on the air. I was gone briefly, but then when I got back a lot of people think it feels like the same thing. When I left permanently last September, Beverly had had a bout with breast cancer in 2018. She was going through some pretty serious treatments. She wound up going to chemo. She had surgery. She was taking radiation. God bless the radio station and Cheryl Rigg, who is now the program director, for giving me the latitude to do what I needed to do to help her and to be with her during this. But eventually, I just got to the point where I thought, “You know, there are just things I feel like I really need to do, that as much as I love this job, I feel like I've got other things that now have to take priority.” So it really was that that spurred me on into going and retiring. I'm still producing the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra radio broadcast which will start airing in a rebroadcast May 3, which is a Sunday, at one o'clock and run through May and June. I just did an interview with some of the musicians and conductor and one of the violinists for ProMusica that is on Facebook. I hope to sometime be able to produce some small things for them. I still feel really connected to the radio station, and I still get emails from people and notes, and I run into [listeners] on the street. Then they mentioned some kind of a little opportunity we had to meet some years ago. You're out walking and a gentleman says, “You sound like somebody I should know.” It's so gratifying, to know that listeners still remember you were there.

- Q. What were listeners' reactions when they heard that you were retiring? Did you hear from people at that point?
- A. I did. There were a lot of people who were somewhat distraught until we explained to them that at that point, I would be coming back in November of that year and I would be doing

mornings again. For most listeners, who really didn't know what went on behind the scenes, well he's back there again. Things are as they should be. I would do interviews and I would do an after-concert interview conversation at ProMusica whenever, please guys, we can have some more live concerts. So I do that.

It was when I left for good last September that I really felt the reaction. I started getting cards from people, from listeners who had been listening for a long time. We had a little gathering at Mozart's Bakery and Deli over on High Street, and a lot of people came by, to visit and say thanks. In all humility, I had a gentleman who came up and just looked at me, with his hand on his face said, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I've been listening to you for this period of time." And he was almost in tears. I just said, "Sir, the music is still going to be there and I'm not really going to go." He said, "I know, but it's just not going to be the same." It was really touching, that people came by and what they had to say. At one point, I told somebody at the station, "You know, I work here, but I really work for the people who turn on the radio every morning. Those are the people I work for." It's the listeners that caused me to go back and spend another three years working part-time at the radio station. It was because of the relationship with the listeners and the love of the business, that I went back and did three more years. It was just an amazing time.

It's an amazing group of people who turn on the radio on every day. I'm so grateful for music lovers, in not just central Ohio but we used to get, as the internet began to reach out, we used to get contacted, and we'd have supporters in New York City and Philadelphia and from San Francisco, and from people who had been here and had moved, or people who had moved here and said that they lost their classical station and, "I'm so glad to be here." At one point, I was exchanging emails with a woman in New Zealand who had run

across us and was listening to us on her computer. You never know who you're talking to and what conditions they're living in and what their personal needs are. As I met people and began to learn that his person's husband had been in the hospital and was having to have the leg amputated or this person was here, "I've been in the hospital for a week and you were my only connection to the outside world. You helped me keep my sanity." Or, "I'm listening when you come on the air because I have a terrible time sleeping." And so you really don't know who you are talking to at any given moment. You just know that everybody is listening from a different position. That made it a really gratifying place to be.

A. Oh absolutely, I can see that, definitely. The station isn't the only way you have a connection to the classical music community, which I find funny, when you first started working there you had to really bone up on your classical music, but now you're considered a figure, a noted figure, in the classical music community. What else do you do that has caused you to have that role?

Q. I think one of the main things has been working with ProMusica Chamber Orchestra. There was a point some years ago when my wife, Beverly, was asked to come in and be on their artistic committee. They knew her music background. They knew what she was doing at the radio station. And she was contacted by a woman by the name of Susan Quintenz, who was part of the [board's] artistic committee, and I think was one of the early supporters of the orchestra, and asked her to be part of that group. And they would sit and advise the orchestra as to upcoming artists and what kind of programming were they going to do. At some point then, they said, "Do you think Boyce might be interested in being involved with our marketing committee?" So I said, "Sure, that would be fun." I would go down and work

with them on things such as that and occasionally do an interview with one of the musicians. And then one day, they asked me if I would be willing to do this pre-concert conversation with the man who was then, he was one of the founders of the orchestra, and was conducting it, Timothy Russell. I said, "Sure." I would go down before each concert and we would do a little interview. This went on for a number of years and then when Janet Chen became the chief executive officer of the orchestra, she said, "I really think this would have more impact afterwards." [I said] "Okay." I began to stay after the concert, talk to the guest artist, talk to the conductor, and take questions from the audience. You began to interact with the audience in a way that you don't normally get to when you're on the air because you're face to face with them. You get to have a multi-dimensional aspect of them instead of just being on the air. So it was a combination of that. I did a lot of interviews that we would play segments of on the air. I had a lot of musicians who would come in and sit in the studio with me to talk. They began to realize that I didn't want to just ask them questions about what they ate for breakfast and how old is your Stratovarius. I really wanted to understand what motivated them to play this music, and began to see what all was out there in the music world that would be of interest to people who admittedly don't have a great music background.

I think that's one of the reasons Mary hired them to begin with. She said she really wanted someone who would dig into this music from more of a layman's perspective and understand it in a way that could be communicated to people in a very down-to-earth way. I can't sit here and explain recapitulation to you in any meaningful way or counterpoint or any of this other stuff, but I can tell you what it is that the finale to Beethoven's fifth really does to me every time I hear it, or why Beethoven, the second movement of Beethoven's

seventh symphony, is still my absolutely favorite of all of them. There are just things that you learn over time when you're listening to this and you're immersed in it, and you learn from these musicians and you just go, "Wow, these people are driven to do this, no matter what it takes, at pretty much any cost." I just got to the point where I really wanted to support them. I got to do narrations with the orchestras, with the Columbus Symphony, and with ProMusica. I got to do productions and interview people like Linda Ronstadt who produced a recording about glass instruments. I got to do interviews with Billy Joel, who wrote a classical album with John Williams, just amazing things that would never have happened otherwise. I'm really grateful for all of the opportunities. I think it was just that curiosity and that sense of wonder that comes from the ability to write a piece of music that stands the test of time over hundreds of years. I still enjoy it.

Q. That definitely comes across, I think, to your listeners. Part of it I think is, in the beginning you were learning about this music and your natural curiosity helped you to convey information to your audience in a, I don't want to say simpler, but perhaps more interesting or more relatable way than traditional classical music hosts.

A. Really in response to the word "simpler," I think simpler is a good way to put it because over-complicating things can get in the way. There eventually comes a time, if you're a musician who is performing and you're teaching, there comes a time when it's incredibly complex to watch what they're doing and watch the performance on an instrument. But on the other hand, I think they want the audience to be able to relate to the music they play in a way that they can feel and understand, whether or not they know what these terms mean. I think simple is a good thing in many ways because I think so many people find classical music intimidating, and I think maybe that's a better way to put it, to make it less

intimidating because it doesn't matter if you understand the difference between 3/4 and 4/4 and 6/8 time, major and minor keys, diminished sevens. It doesn't matter whether you understand that; the most important thing is that you just heard something you really enjoyed and you want to hear more of it, and you want to, if you want to you can dig as little or as much as you want to understand it in a way that suits you. So that was kind of my thing, is that I just wanted people to enjoy it, no matter what direction they came from.

Q. Is that what you miss most about working at the station?

A. I think so. The connection with the listeners, first and foremost, and what we do. I like to do production. I used to produce these little vignettes, one was with Albert George Schram, who was the long-time associate conductor at the Columbus Symphony. He just enjoyed talking about music. We'd sit down and I enjoyed mixing the music together and finding little examples that would illustrate what he was saying. Those two, two-and-a-half, three-minute pieces, took a lot of production. But when you sat and listened to it, nobody was going to know what kind of effort it took to do it. And that was fun, but it really was not the point. The point was, he made listening to this music really fascinating, and his joy and his effervescence about this, translated through the radio and made other people interested. There were a lot of technical things I like to do, but ultimately, it's what can I do to make this more interesting to the person who has the radio on.

Q. Yes, definitely. Do you have anything else you want to add because I think we've gotten through the questions pretty well.

A. Oh boy. As they say, I do go on, don't I? I think we covered it pretty well. I appreciate the opportunity that the University gave me through the people who hired me. Mary Hoffman, Quinn Coddington was the operations manager when I got here. He's the one who actually

initially hired me and began to teach me that I had worked at a lot of stations where I could fly by the seat of my pants, but now you're working with the big boys, and this is the way we do it. And you need to do it this way. I really owe a debt of gratitude to the University for not just the opportunity to start working there, but for the opportunities they've given me over the years and the trust that they showed, in letting this guy who really was trying to figure it out, the chance to figure it out. A lot of places would have given up and said, "I'm sorry, I can't deal with this. We've got to find somebody who can walk in here and hit the ground running." I'm very grateful for all of that, and I'm grateful for the opportunity that you've given me to talk about this a little bit, because there's a lot behind the scenes that people never get to see. I really hope that the next building [WOSU headquarters], whenever it comes along now, will really open a chance for listeners and viewers to see behind the curtain a little bit, and see what it takes to make the Great Wizard of Oz work.

- Q. Boyce, this has been very interesting, truly, and I appreciate your time. Thank you so much.
- A. My pleasure, Kevlin, and if you have any little follow-ups or things, I can shoot you a note or whatever. I've enjoyed it immensely.