

Rae Weimer
UF-314

Rae Weimer begins the interview by describing the foundation of the College of Journalism at the University of Florida (page 1). The College of Journalism is noted to have grown quickly, and Weimer describes various administrative issues such as establishing the curriculum (page 2). He details the emergence of the college's education for radio and television broadcasting as well as the development of the WUFT television station (page 3-4)

Discussion centers on the rejection of advertising money for WUFT and the process of obtaining funding from the legislature and through private donations (page 5). He goes on to mention the expansion of the college's facilities and the improvement of equipment and the requisite funding for each (page 6-8).

On pages 9-11, Weimer discusses the work of staff members at the television station, especially the contributions of Ken Christianson and Bill Kessler. Conflict over the value of educational television and the evolution towards public television is detailed on pages 12-13. He then notes the involvement of Mae Burton and Mickey Nubill at the television station (page 14).

He again explains different conflicts with the administration, specifically in relation to the need for doctorate degrees among the journalism professors (page 15). He also revisits the concept of educational television, discussing the Civil War period as an example of its usefulness (page 15-16). Finally, Weimer gives a brief treatment to the beginnings of the University of Florida's Radio Center (page 17).

UF 314

Interviewer is Hank Conner

Interviewee is Rae Weimer

C: We are supposed to get you to state your name and your relationship with the University of Florida.

W: My name is Rae O. Weimer. I came to the university in 1949 to start the school of journalism, which is now the College of Journalism and Communications, and stayed there until June of 1968 when I stepped down as dean and went over to work as a special assistant to the president. Then I retired from the university in the end of 1973.

C: Can you give us a brief summary of your experience prior to coming here?

W: I had twenty-five years in the newspaper, working on daily papers in the Midwest, starting in Nebraska and Illinois, Indiana, reached down into Arkansas, Ohio, where I worked on **Harding's** paper, up in Oleander, New York, and then Indianapolis and Akron, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York, and Cleveland, Ohio. Then in 1940, I was invited to come to New York City as assistant managing editor and later became managing editor of the experimental paper *PM*. That paper published for eight years, 1940 to 1948. When it was sold, I left it and went back to Ohio with my brother. We ran a public relations and advertising agency for a year. During that time, in the spring, **Herb Davidson**, who owned the Daytona Beach papers, had been my national editor for three or four years in New York, and he went back to Daytona Beach. He headed up a committee for the Florida Daily Newspaper Association, and they came to the university, this committee of three—Herb Davidson, **Bill Pepper**, publisher of the *Gainesville Sun*, and **Henry Wren** of Tallahassee—asking the university to update its journalism program. The president agreed to do that. That was President [J. Hillis] Miller [of UF, 1948-1953]. President Miller agreed to improve the teaching of journalism at the University of Florida. What they had here was a little one-man department and then a two-man department for about twenty years. It was not turning out the kind of reporters, if any, that the newspapers wanted. Herb Davidson was really the spearhead of it. So, Miller went out to hire somebody to come in and start a school. He interviewed about four, maybe five, Ph. D. English teachers. Each time he had a name and brought it in, the committee turned it down, the newspaper committee, said they did not want an English teacher. Finally, Miller said, all right, you guys, you go get somebody. Herb knew that our paper had folded up, sold out and became *Star* and then something else, so he called me. I was in Columbus with my brother, and we were running this advertising/public relations agency and asked me if I would be interested in coming down to Florida to be interviewed by the university for the job. I said yes, I might be interested. I came down when the daily association and the weekly association was having its annual convention down at the **Thomas Hotel**. That was the strangest interview. We went up to the university, and there was the president and the vice president

and the registrar, and the dean of arts and sciences, the journalism committee and me. It was over in Anderson Hall. They did not know what a school of journalism was, and I had never been to one. They did not know what to ask me, and I did not know what to tell them. So, we exchanged the pleasantries of the day and chatted for an hour or so. Finally, Miller said to the committee, is this the man you want? They said yes, this is the man we want. So he said, okay, I will recommend him. That is how I got to Florida. It was just through the newspaper association that really brought me here, and the school started out. You had to be a school until you established yourself, before you could be a college, and you had to be attached to some college. He gave me as an example, music was a school attached to the College of Architecture and Fine Arts. They said, we should have you attached to [the College of] Arts and Sciences, and I said, that is okay with me. I did not know any difference. I was supposed to report to **Page**. I found out quick. This was my first exposure, really, to academic life. I found out if I had any problems or suggestions or something to do, why, it would be referred to a committee. I tell you, if you want to kill anything at a university, give it to a committee. The university is full of it. All universities are, I suppose. I went over to Miller one day early, and I said, how much do you want me to report to you? He said, Rae, I will give you enough rope to hang yourself. From then on, the school was pretty freewheeling. I reported to [the College of] Arts and Sciences. I had to run my budget through them. Whenever we had any graduates, I had to go to the faculty of arts and sciences to approve them. As we moved along and got to offering a master's degree, I had to take those candidates and get their approval. That is when **Stan Wimberly**, assistant dean, said, look, this does not make a lot of sense for us to be approving his graduates, especially when it is getting into the graduate program. For us to be approving them, we do not have a thing to say about what he is doing. That is really how they came about to let us become an independent college. The school was the fastest-growing unit on the campus. Of all the units in the campus, it grew faster than any others. It really took off, I think, because I did not know enough about the school traditions and structure and how you have committees investigate everything and talk about it. I made decisions about like you would on a newspaper or something, come up with an answer immediately and go ahead and do it. I thought in those days, I will just do as I want to do and if they do not like it, they can come tell me. That is what really let the school take off. The people that I hired were, as you might know, professional people and not academic. I did not have any academic background, and the kind of people I hired [were] like **Buddy Davis** and **Hugh Cunningham**. **John Paul Jones** had come down here from Illinois, and he was a tremendous help to me. We just sat down and rewrote the whole curriculum. He knew something about a school of journalism because Illinois had a good school. He was the most valuable person I had to help get the curriculum revamped, but all in a professional sense more than academic.

C: When was the first time that you hired on radio and television or broadcasting?

W: I do not remember the exact date, but it was fairly early, because it must have been maybe 1952. **Norm Davis** was a Jacksonville boy who came over to the university and wanted to be a radio announcer/reporter and maybe even a sportswriter. He wanted to go into radio. Nobody had heard of television yet. He wanted to go into radio from the point of writing and announcing and reporting. The speech department had two men on their staff, one to teach radio and one to television. **Clark Weaver** was the radio man, and **Tom Batton** was the television man. All they had to teach with was a microphone, nothing for television. Kind of a **mock-up** in the classroom. They had one of these old little miniature houses that they run the windows up and down for sound effects, slam a door. All those old things were really here on the campus, and that is where they were teaching radio. Kids would stand up there and talk into a microphone, and Norm would get in a **bit of writing**. He came over to see me—I think it was around maybe 1952—and told me his problem, that he wanted some writing. He wanted to learn how to write for publication on the air. I agreed to put in a course in radio writing, I think we called it. That is the introduction that came in with journalism, with Norm Davis. He now is a lawyer down in Miami and has been for years. He managed the NBC television station down there for quite some time. I cannot remember the dates. You would have to look it up somewhere. We grew and we let radio and television grow, and it caught on. People were very much interested in it. When I came, Tom Batton had asked for a leave of absence to go down to Houston. Houston was starting to teach some television. I did not have anything to do about letting him go, but they gave him a year's leave. Maybe 1952 is a little late because that was fall of 1949.

C: He was still with the speech department teaching for you, though?

W: He was in speech, but he left. I believe he left that year. [He came] round the next year, and I could not hire anybody on a permanent basis. Maybe Norm came a little earlier than 1952 because there seemed to be some interest in the radio field. I looked for somebody to take over that area because I had just been hiring newspaper people. Davis and Cunningham came later. Tom came back and asked for another year's leave, and I refused to recommend it. It was everything in his favor and none in mine. I wanted to get somebody in there who was going to help me develop that program. As long as he was on an official leave, I could not offer a permanent job and you could not get anybody worth much to come down here on a basis of one year. So, then he resigned. I do not know if this is when **Lee Franks** came, but Lee was the first television man I hired. He was a very good choice, too. He later became head of the television network in Wisconsin, died up there. Anyway, Franks was here. About 1952 again, along in there somewhere, the Congress passed a law setting aside, I believe, 253 channels for educational television. I saw a story the other day that there were, they give a figure, give-or-take, about twice that many. About that time, J. Hillis Miller died, and John S. Allen was the vice-president. Luckily for

me, I went over to see John. I just thought this was something great, let us get into television too. I said, let us apply for a channel. John wanted more information about it, but he said go ahead, get me all the dope on it. He was gung-ho and supported me all the way. We decided to apply for a channel, and I suspect we were one of the first universities probably that had a channel. I do not really know. There must be a record somewhere, but I did not know of any other than the United States.

C: You applied in 1953?

W: I believe we got our license about 1953.

C: This was Channel 5.

W: Channel 5, and I circulated around to find a name. I asked all the staff to turn in suggestions and finally went back to my original selection of WUFT, sort of like WRUF. Just there it was radio. I thought University of Florida Television, and so that is how UFT came about. I never worked harder in my life. We applied for a channel, got it. **Glenn Marshall**, manager of WJXT in Jacksonville and a man down in Orlando, **Joe Brechner**—who gave \$1,000,000 to the Freedom of Information Center here—I suppose, were my principal advisors. I did not know [anything] about radio or television. I did not think about it. I had been on newspapers for twenty-five years. So I ran to them back and forth all the time for help. Iowa State had a television station, a commercial station, a commercial license. It was not one of the educational ones. They were on the air making money hand-over-fist before Des Moines ever had a television station, selling advertising, [with money] pouring in on them. I went out there for a week to find out what some of the **handles** were of television. Then I went to the University of Michigan, went up there where they had a week seminar. They were teaching some television in a classroom. That is all, no station. Then I went up to Syracuse, New York, for two weeks, registered and got graduate credit. I did not have a degree.

C: Was this with **Colby Willis** up at Syracuse?

W: They never asked me. I was a director of a school. They just took for granted, probably, that I was qualified. They were producing some television programs and taking them down to SYR, the abbreviation for Syracuse's television station, and putting them on the air once a week. That is where I got my first experience about how it was done and came back. We began to get some students in. I do not know the years now. We began to get some students, and other people maybe volunteered to help. I had made arrangements with Glenn Marshall to give me a half-hour on WMBR, in Jacksonville. I think that was before they called it WJXT. We went up there on Saturday and had a half-hour program on that

television station. We rehearsed it up in my office in Building K, a temporary building. Was it there when you came here?

C: Yes, it was there.

W: Right where the building is today. They came up in my office, and we rehearsed it there. Then, we took off and drove to Jacksonville and put on that half-hour program up there. We were so proud of that.

C: Was Clark Weaver involved in this at all?

W: No, he was not. Lee Franks did it. Clark was pretty much stuck to radio. I had just one course in radio first and one course in television.

C: Were there other interests here in the town that were interested in the Channel 5 allocation?

W: Yes. There was pretty stiff competition for it. There were all kinds of offers to the university to try and kill my proposal off, but we owned the license. People at WGGG...

C: **Doc Chamberlain?**

W: Doc Chamberlain made a bid for it.

C: My understanding is that [channel] 5 was the ETV channel and [channel] 20 at the time was allocated to be commercial, and they wanted to swap out.

W: I believe that is right. I had forgotten about that 20. But he came and offered to give us _____ us out. That ought to be in the archives.

C: I have seen a letter that said that he would give you some air-time.

W: Yes. He guaranteed to give us air-time, which you know would not be [worth] the paper it was written on before you got through down the road somewhere. He would run the station and he would control it, but we would just have some free time to broadcast our lessons. It was strictly ETV then. It was educational television. There was not any entertainment about it. Thank God I had John Allen, who did not listen to that nonsense. He was determined to support me if I thought we ought to have the television station. John went all the way.

C: After seeing the University of Iowa and their money-making operation out there, were you ever interested in perhaps going the commercial route?

W: No, I never was. I had too much experience, probably, with newspapers. The

greatest experiment in journalism in this century was *PM*. The principal thing that made it unique in America was it was going to be a daily paper with no advertising. I was very conscious, and all the editors in America knew this about that papers, that advertising had a tremendous influence on how you played the news. It just could not help but be. Your biggest advertiser in town had some influence, whether you carried a story of what he did or what happened to this store or something. The only reason I think I left the *Cleveland Press*, a good solid paper in Cleveland, to go down to *PM* was my interest in tackling a thing like that, no advertising and a slogan that says we are against people who push other people around, the most liberal paper that had ever been founded in America. Strictly twenty-five years ahead of its time of representing consumers. I thought it would be a terrible for advertisers, money control, to get a foothold in a university over something that was going to be an educational tool.

C: After the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] approved your Channel 5 allocation there, who in Tallahassee were the key people in terms of the legislature in helping you to seek funding for going on the air?

W: **Ralph Turlington** was there. I believe he was the only one we had from Alachua County up there at the time, and I expect Ralph was, but I had some other people. I suspect I got some support from Jacksonville representatives and probably Orlando, probably St. Petersburg, because I had a strong relationship with Nelson Poynter and the *St. Petersburg Times*. My brother was once associate editor of that paper, and Nelson and I had become very close friends. He was in New York for awhile when I was there.

C: And he had some broadcasting experience, too, had he not?

W: Yes. He had a radio station, so I suspect I got support from other people too. Miami Junior College was dabbling in closed-circuit television. There was a guy down there—I forgot his name—who was interested in doing some with television. There was a dentist in Jacksonville who spearheaded the move to get Jacksonville a television station, one of those channels. See, they were not allocated just to universities. They were allocated to be not-for-profit, civic.

C: There was a very close tie, was there not, between what was to become WJCT in Jacksonville and your station to begin with?

W: Yes, that is kind of a story. I needed money. We got our license long after the budget had been made out, and there was just no money to go ahead and do much of anything. I violated all kinds of rules. You were not allowed to buy any equipment that you could not pay for. I got some **Orkon** cameras, got a guy to come down from up in Alabama somewhere, bought them. He did not bill for them, and nobody ever knew I had not paid for them. He gave them to me just on strength that I would somehow pull it off. Then I went to New York to the Ford

Foundation. I got that idea about the Ford Foundation because I was put on the radio/television committee of the Southern Regional Education Board that met in Atlanta. That is where I met **Ken Christianson**. He was working for SREB. I met Ken there and was much impressed by his knowledge of this kind of television, non-commercial. Ford was putting money into it. I went to New York, and there was a woman in charge—I do not remember her name—of that unit. I went up to White Plains where her office was and talked to her and talked to some of the people down in their office in Manhattan. This dentist in Jacksonville had asked for a grant from Ford, so Ford gave me a grant of, I believe it was, a little less than \$100,000, on condition that I would put in a microwave from here to Jacksonville to support this WJCT when it went on the air.

C: For live programming?

W: With programming, because they gave them \$120,000, I believe, but they had no confidence that they, independent of any educational institution, could come up with enough program material. Now, they knew better than he did how fast television eats up talent and programming. They made me agree to put in a microwave from here to Jacksonville to get the money. I spent \$35,000, I believe, for that. Maybe it was \$100,000 I had, and I had the rest then to use in this station.

C: I have seen some figures that said it took about \$360,000, give or take a few dollars, to finally get the station on the air, counting everything. Do you think that might be accurate?

W: Yes, that [number] sounds familiar. We went closed-circuit in 1956 and talked with closed-circuit.

C: On the campus?

W: On the campus, in journalism, and then we broadened that a little. We were on the air though, I guess, for the rest. No, we got on the air. We were teaching journalism. I got Glenn Marshall to give me a kinescope, one of those big art cameras with arc-lights, carbon sticks. God, they were hot. He gave me a couple of those and gave me a projector, and I bought these two Orkon cameras from this guy for our studio cameras, little things like this.

C: You were functioning, an effective station, managing...

W: I was the station manager, signed up as station manager. I notice they keep saying Ken was the first one, but legally, you could not operate without a station manager with the FCC, I guess, so I was the manager of the station. Lee Franks was the television expert. All of that gridwork down in the studio under the stadium. Lee apparently had some experience in his family somewhere as a

plumber. He got up in there and put that stuff together, all those pipes up there himself.

C: Tell us more about the physical facility that you started with down there.

W: What we started with was over in Building K and the _____ up to Jacksonville. We were growing so fast that K would not hold us. You just cannot believe how that school took off. The university just had their mouths open wondering what was happening.

C: It is my understanding that when you came here, in journalism there were around 150 to 160 students, and in just a few years....

W: No. In journalism, nineteen.

C: Nineteen?

W: Yes.

C: And in a few years, you had around 600.

W: Oh yes. The university did not know what was happening. We got so big that they took over some extra space in K, and that thing was about to fall down. When I got a press like you got up there now, Ralph traded off the real first press in the state of Florida because Nelson Poynter wanted it and he took that one he has got up there. I did not like it, but anyway, he did. But when I got that press out of storage down in Clearwater, I had to have a carpenter come and build up under the floor of Building K to keep the floor from falling through with that press on it. So, there was no space for us. **George Bowman** is a friend of mine. He was a business major. I got to looking around. I came here from Columbus, Ohio, where, as I told you, my brother and I worked for a public relations agency. I knew there [that] when Ohio State [University] built the stadium, they built in dormitories for athletes. That gave me the idea of looking around on the stadium. They had built that great big west side stands. I got to looking around underneath and nothing down there but scraps of **line bags** and old broken hurdles and a bunch of broken up stuff. I got George, and he came over and looked at it. He was an entrepreneur for getting things done, and he said, it sounds like a great idea. So, we set to work. George moved back here in town, as a matter of fact. He got the radio station to put in, I believe, \$100,000. WRUF developed its wing up here on the fourth floor. He got the University Press to put in money to develop its wing down on the third floor, down at the other end. Got the athletic people to put in some money so they could have ticket offices down where they are. The athletic people put in enough money to put in a dormitory up on the fourth floor of the south end for football players. Journalism had no money. We could not put in a dime. So, that was all right. We went ahead. George went

ahead, without authorization. Maybe that is one of the reasons he ran afoul with the powers-that-be, because he went ahead and committed himself to take on and do it without authority. They built all these facilities for these people who paid for it, went on the ground floor. The second floor, I believe, went clear through to the end; on the third floor, halfway. They put in partitions and the floor, and that was all he had enough money [for]—George could scrape up money from all the other funds around the university to pay for it—so they had to quit and went ahead and finished the others. Then we began to organize propaganda to go to the legislature and say look, here is a building half-done. You are going to have to build a building for this school somewhere. It has got umpteen-hundred students, and now you got it all half-done. We need an appropriation of, I believe it was, another \$100,000 or \$120,000 or something like that, to finish it, and they voted it. That is how we got it a year later. It just sat there for almost a year.

C: Some of your Ford money went into helping...?

W: No, the Ford money did not go into that at all.

C: But did it not help the studio money though?

W: The Ford money went into equipment. The only money we had was what George would scrape up somewhere.

C: And your early lighting equipment and so forth, some of it was donated by people such as...?

W: We got donations from everybody we could, but Glenn Marshall was the biggest benefactor. He once told me that he would give me his old tower, and I do not know why he ever changed his mind. Was there some liability? Because when I got ready to go get it, we were getting on the air, he wanted \$3,750 for it. By that time, we had begun to throw our weight around a little or get some recognition and began to get some money in the budget for all this stuff. They little knew how much it was going to take. It was quite a while before we got an **IO** camera, though. Those little Orkons were all we had. We tried making kinescopes, because you had no tape, you know. **If it would have been tape to come in first, we would have been off and running.** I was going to put them out there on the drill field, my transmitters. I got all ready to do that and sent in the application, and you had to clear it in Washington. They discovered that was in the landing pattern of the airport, right over the university, so you could not do it. Then I did not know what in the hell to do. Then something struck me—I do not know how I got on to it—that it the university owned forty-eight acres of land up at Millhopper, and so I got them to give me sixteen acres and I fenced it. That is where the transmitter is today with a fence around sixteen acres. We went up there and took **borings** that winter for where we were going to put the tower,

where it was dry and everything. So, we got ready to put the tower up, got the tower up in Jacksonville and hauled it down here, painted it and got ready to put it up. We were putting the anchors down, and there was water. Honest to God, we did not go down three or four feet until we were in the water.

C: Can you give us an idea of about the year this was? You went on the air in November, 1958.

W: Well, that probably was in June of 1958. I wore out an automobile on that road, driving back and forth up there. I had to build a **coffer's** dam down in those holes to keep the water out and then pour the concrete in, because before, all the cement floated up to the top.

C: Who was your consulting engineer at the time who helped you put in that transmitter?

W: Let us see, a man named....this guy was a nice guy and he worked his tail off, but he just was not used to working like I was. Hours did not mean anything. He would get so discouraged, and he would come in and say, I quit. He kept doing that so damn many times that I got tired of it, and once he came in a quit and I said okay, I will let you go. Pick up your stuff, and I will get your money for you and you are through. I caught him by surprise. He did not really think I would do it, but he was frustrated. I tell you, we were working night and day, and he probably came from a better-organized operation.

C: What kind of support did you get from the school board at the time? Were they involved?

W: No, we did not develop any of that much, I do not believe, until Ken came. Ken, I think, was largely responsible for putting the TV sets in all the schools in the county and teaching art and music from our studio. I believe we were on the air before Ken came, because we were teaching junior college down at Ocala.

C: It is my impression you were on the air before Ken came.

W: I think that is right. We were on the air with that. We taught Journalism 118, that survey course, Survey of Journalism.

C: Was that **Buddy Davis**?

W: Buddy Davis. I had an idea for that course that I wanted to cover newspapers and magazines and broadcasting and advertising and radio and television, four of them. Clark Weaver was going to teach the radio part, I think Lee would teach the television, Buddy Davis would teach the news part, and **Manning Seal**, I

guess, would do the advertising. Good God, those knuckleheads spent more time on the air knocking the other guy. Television would be running down newspapers, and the press would be running down television. It was a horrible mess.

C: Let me back up a little, if I can. You went on the air in November of 1958. Do you remember the moment you went on the air, by any chance?

W: Yes, we had a big dinner down in the studio. That is when I had brought in a lot of the television people from around the state. Somebody looked around and said, who is the knucklehead that planned this studio with a sewer pipe coming down the middle of it? I remember that just as plain as day. We had to explain to him, if you took that thing out, the whole thing would fall down.

C: The whole stadium.

W: Right clear to the top of the stadium. We had to wrap that thing; it is wrapped and wrapped and wrapped and wrapped so you would not hear the flushing of the john up there. We had a dinner down there, and I think we broadcasted from there. [End of Side 1.]I do not think we had tape yet, that early. You may know when tape came in.

C: No, you did not. You did not have videotape at that time.

W: We tried making kinescopes but were not very successful at it. Nobody else was either, as far as that is concerned, all over anywhere else they had commercial stations. There may be no record of it. I do not know whether anybody got an oral record of it or not. A lot of the television [people] are gung-ho about it and paid a lot of lip service, and I think really gave us moral support, probably, [when] their legislators supported us. The newspaper people began to wonder a little whether I was turning the school into a television station or not. Some of them asked me about it. Several were concerned, but they supported me all the way through. The newspaper people were just marvelous to give me support.

C: How many hours a day did you start out on your total broadcast day?

W: I really do not know, but I would guess it must have been...

C: I have seen a figure of two hours a day on some of the...

W: Two hours is kind of straight to me as what it was. It was hard to produce that with the limited staff. Hank, the staff. I remember when you came. There was not any staff in any educational unit in the university that worked as hard as the faculty did in that school.

C: Speaking of staff at the station, at the time you went on the air, can you give me

idea of the staff? You were functioning as station manager.

W: Yes, I had to begin to sign the papers. Lee Franks was the frontman in television. He made all the decisions, practically, that had to be made regarding television and the programming. I had to get a new engineer, and that may have been when **Rolo** came. I hired another engineer, though, with Rolo. He lived right out there on that street going up to Ken's, where Ken lives now. I had to fire him because he could not stay sober, the first labor case the university ever had. You just would not believe, but Rolo shows up as his lawyer. This man, a chief engineer, filing a claim against the university, a labor case. I take it somebody, I do not know a name, had a committee of three that met in the HUB, where the bookstore is. Over there, we had hearings every day for about a week. I was the lawyer for myself, and Rolo was the lawyer for this guy. I guess _____ I could not lose. I would win. But that was the first labor case. They had one more. Stephen O'Connell [president of UF] had one labor case firing a faculty [member].

C: Tell me again, you met Ken in Atlanta, you said, the first time.

W: Ken was working for the Southern Regional Education Board, and one of the reasons I got him to come—it sure was not the money—was that they were going to move. I do not know now whether he worked for the SREB or worked in the Ford Foundation. It could **not** have been for the Ford Foundation. It must have been for SREB, but he used Ford money. They were going to close up their operation in Atlanta, and he was going to have to move to New York. He was not very keen for that. He had three kids, and I do not know whether they had ever lived in New York or not. Anyway, that was the factor, I believe, that as much as anything at least helped to make up his mind to come down here. I did not have enough money to pay him. I forget whether it was Farris Bryant [Florida governor 1961-1965] or LeRoy Collins [Florida governor, 1955-1961]. I had become very friendly with both of them, probably more so with Farris than with Roy, but very close with both of them. They both put me on the state committee to plan educational television for the state. I got them to agree to pay half his salary, and he would work for them in helping to develop concepts of state educational television and the other half he was working for me. That was the way it went for the first year until I could get around to another budget. We budgeted then every two years, and somehow I had to wait until another budget came up where I could get more money. So, that was the way we paid him. I paid him half a salary and got a half from the state. The state knew—Farris knew and so did LeRoy, whoever it was—that whatever we did at Florida was going to be the leadership for the state anyway.

C: And Ken Christianson had a national reputation at the time.

W: Yes, I was much impressed with Ken. He was very knowledgeable about the

philosophy of educational television. I think he probably was more familiar with that than he was on the engineering side. Then I got **Bill Kessler** over in engineering. Bill was a maverick over in engineering, probably knew more about electrical engineering than any of the faculty over there, but he did not have a doctor's degree, and you know as well as I do that if you do not have it, you do not rate top-rank in the university. So Bill was interested in what I was doing, and he gave me a lot of his time and advice. Then I hired Bill Boehn as my engineer, or maybe he preceded Rolo. I believe he did. I do not think Rolo was here when we went on the air. Bill was an amazing guy. If anything went wrong, like equipment, see, we had television sets in every classroom in the stadium and we were teaching on closed-circuit. We got up as high as eighteen sections of Journalism 118. I found out early on that you got your money at the university by the number of students you had. It does not matter how bad you are teaching or how good you are teaching, they counted your budget by how many students you had. A lot of students were interested in this program. [The course] Beginning English at the university, taught in [College of] Arts and Sciences, was for the birds. They wrote four pieces in the whole semester. I began to offer this university-wide—anybody could get it—and I reorganized the state association of high school journalism. It was a tri-state thing of Alabama, Georgia and Florida, and I thought that was for the birds. I organized, with a lot of help from the high school teachers, but I gave them the lead on it. We reorganized and called it the Florida Scholastic Press Association, and I gave them a man to run it, **John Webb**. John Webb and I, after school started in the fall, every Friday took off to give a workshop in some county seat or somewhere in this state. We traveled the state over for about three or four years. When any kid got ready to go to college, he would come to Florida, and a lot of them wanted journalism. But all those kids in journalism, when they got ready to go to school, here is where they came, and the school just grew like crazy.

C: Now, initially, the programming and television station you have described included some professors...

W: Oh yes, we taught American history.

C: The school board was introduced, and your programs in schools came with Ken.

W: I think more with Ken. Lee was here then, and we arranged to teach a course in American history, but what I found out was that the faculty never really got a grasp of what educational television was. They would come in and give a lecture just like they would in their classroom. Well, that is for the birds. You do not need television to pay to put that out. Television can do so much more. American history could be one of the greatest courses you could put on televisions with, visuals. Think of all the things you could do. Look how they did the Civil War, the _____ **of the world** but I could not sell anybody on doing that. I finally sold a

Frenchman, a little short guy, on how to teach French. Just like you and I learned to talk, you would say magazine, table, book, sit down. You did the important things. That was the way we learned as kids. That is the way our parents taught us. He started teaching French this way. I got him a grant, sent him to France, and he took pictures over there of things he would use in his lectures. The French department did not like it. Honest to God, they froze him out. They let him go, and he went up to Wayne State [University in] Detroit. You could not convince the faculty, because they thought educational television was going to displace them. [They thought it] was a threat, and it was not at all. It was for the enlightened professor who would use it as a supplement, would be the greatest lecturer in his class. But it never went over.

C: It was educational television until the late 1960s.

W: I do not know when that change came, Hank. It must have come a little before the late 1960s.

C: CPV and PBS were clearly central in 1967.

W: But we were producing quite a lot of things, like we would go up to White Springs and cover the festival up there. We were producing, I suspect, a lot more programs than they produce today. There was not anything else. You had to produce them because you did not have PBS or anybody to send it in to you. So, you had to produce it.

C: You do not remember about the time that a Monday-through-Friday news format appeared on the station, do you? I know it was here when I came here in 1966.

W: No, I do not. What I started to tell you awhile ago, after all this terrible mess of teaching Survey of Journalism, I had to wipe out all of them and tell Buddy Davis, look, I want you to teach this class, but I want you to teach journalism for journalism's sake, but you have got to learn television and tell it as if that is the best thing in the world, and advertising, and public relations. And he did. Buddy did a good job, as much as he cannot stand advertising, probably, or public relations, kind of like **Red Newton**. Red Newton, the managing editor of the *Tampa Tribune*, denounced public relations. Every turn he got to give a speech, the paper was full of public relations releases. But Buddy did a great job. There was so much jealousy, with everybody defending his own turf. It would not work anyway. But we were teaching after the community college, and then when **Ken** came along, we began to develop where we had art and music. The school board got interested, and they would supply somebody to teach art and it would go out to every school in the county. It was a hell of a great thing. You know, **I do not think** we made progress sometimes. We still ought to be doing it.

C: But then, the station evolved. They were changed from an ETV station to a public

television station.

W: Yes, and then the Friends of Five organized to support it, get money. When you have to buy programs that needs more money, the state **does not** have to come through with enough money for that.

C: Do you remember some of the local citizens who helped you after that?

W: No. My memory sometimes is not very good.

C: Ken could probably fill me on that.

W: Ken would be much better. I can remember women who were just gung-ho for us, who worked hard. Some of them were teachers.

C: I talked to Ken about some of those individuals.

W: We were pressured in the beginning very hard by these commercial people who wanted to take over that channel.

C: Looking back now, it seems like a wise decision to have retained that **VHS**.

W: Absolutely. **It just could not be anything else**, because one of God's gifts to this country is public broadcasting when you see the terrible programs that are on commercial television. I wrote *American Heritage* a letter the other day. They were asking me for some money, and I wrote and told them that I would not give them any money when they are opposed to public television. I do not think the public probably appreciates--well, this place does. They give a lot of money here for it. But it is such an asset to the public when you think what lousy programs commercial television puts on. Now, commercial television has a lot of merit, and it is very powerful. It carries a lot of good things, but if you did not have PBS, it would be worse, I believe.

C: Commercial stations, in the early days particularly, were very supportive of your station.

W: Yes, they gave money, I think, for it but not anymore. I think they figure it is a competitor now, probably. I suppose they do. If they were smart, I believe they ought to support it because it is not going to hurt their business any, with no advertising. You cannot buy advertising on PBS, so you got to go to them. I believe they would be wise to support it so there would be an alternative. They can say look, you got an alternative. **Not really a good thing** to do. Advertisers do not have an alternative, but I think they ought to support it. Do you know that the format for television programs in the daily papers, we started. When I went to

work on *PM*, the 1940 New York newspapers would probably not mention radio in their paper if they could help it. Radio is a competitor, and ignore them. They would not have anything to do with radio. We started out and laid up a big format for radio, all the stations in New York and what their programs were. When television came after the war, we shifted right over to television, and it stuck. Newspapers found out they had to carry it.

C: So the radio and TV listings appeared in *PM* first.

W: First time in America. We founded those.

C: When you are describing your role at Gainesville and the starting-up of the station, I did not realize that you had quite as much hands-on experience in actually putting that station together. Do you consider yourself a broadcaster as well as a journalist?

W: No, I am not a broadcaster at all, but you did not have any choice. If you were going to do it, you got to get in there and do it yourself. Lee worked awful hard. My gosh, that poor guy worked awful hard. We did not have anybody. Clark was pretty much steeped in radio and satisfied with it. I do not know why he left here. He went to Tallahassee **for some new job**. I do not know quite why he left. Friendly, but I do not know whether he thought he was not getting recognition or not. I do not know why he left.

C: Tell me about some of the other people who were involved.

W: **Mae Burton** came in, and I must thank Clark for that. He taught down in Texas and knew about her. She was a real asset in the programming and the content of television. She knew nothing about the engineering and that sort of thing. You asked about my hands-on [experience]. There is not a whole lot of difference, when you get into the business part of it, in running a newspaper or running a television station. You got to buy equipment, you got to supervise the people that you get to do the work. I did not know much about content. I pretty much left that up to staff that ran the content, although I tried to **hunch** a lot of things, like going up to White Springs. I went up there personally to look over it to see what it was like to get them to go up and do it. But Mae came, and then **Mickey** came.

C: Mickey **Nubill** at the time.

W: Mickey Nubill, and I was very much impressed with Mickey. Mae died, had not been here too long.

C: Mae Burton was producing and directing at the station?

W: Yes, and Mickey was extremely bright. She was young, and I figured early that

she was going places. I believe Mae had her doctor's [degree], but Mickey did not. It seemed to me, I think one of the weaknesses in a university is we ought to bring in 200 instructors or social professors every year and we ought to fire a third of them, at least, at the end of the first year. You ought to look down the row at everybody you got and say, now, where is he going to be ten years from now? If you cannot do that, you ought to get in there in front of what he is doing to know what he is doing, to be worth anything or not. We let quite a few people go out of our staff. We probably fired more than any other department did. Nobody ever said a word. There were not any rules how to do it. You just did it. You just said, your contract is not getting renewed this year, and that was that. But I picked Mickey as a cover, so I said to her, you need to go and get your doctorate. She got interested in that, bought it, decided to go. I got her a year's leave of absence to go and do it. You could not finish a doctorate in one year, so at the end of the first year, she said, I can finish this in another year. I sent in the recommendation that she get another year, and the university turned it down. It made me so damn mad, I went over to the committee—I guess [J. Wayne] Reitz [UF president, 1955-1967] was in on the committee—and really raised hell. I said look, you people keep yacking, yacking, yacking, get doctorates, you need doctorates, you got to have doctorates in your graduate program. Here I get one of my brightest faculty members to go get her doctorate, and you know you cannot do it in a year. Now, you are going to stop her in the middle of it? That does not make any sense. I said, give me a second year for her. You know, universities are not innovative at all. They are conservative. They do not experiment much, except the scientists, who are going to get paid for it. But really, they are not innovative. They do not go out and take a step, or you may fall on your face, like we did. They really do not. You know that rivalry of Cunningham and Davis. You could not promote one without the other. They would have the stadium fall down on you. Come along time, I would promote them to associate and full professor, and they said, what have they written, what have they published? I said, publishing? That is their business. Well, let us see some of it. I had to go back and pick up a lot of clippings, editorials, stuff they had written and took it back over to another meeting. I spread it out for them, and the first question somebody asked was, was this in a scholarly journal? It just about floored me. I did not say it, but I wanted to blurt out, if you do not know whether it is a scholarly journal, you ought not ask.

C: Of course, Buddy Davis picks up a Pulitzer Prize a few years later.

W: Yes, I know it. If they do not know whether it is a scholarly journal, they ought to keep their mouths shut and not show their ignorance. The *Des Moines Register* or the *Jacksonville Journal*, they ought to know whether that is scholarly or not. Oh Hank, I had a lot of fun.

C: Going back to the television station, you indicated that perhaps things have gone wrong with non-commercial television in the country by going away from the

educational TV concept and into something else. Yet, WUFT Channel 5 is one of the top stations in the country now, in terms of audiences.

W: I do not think they went wrong. I just think there is still a place to use television for more than entertainment. It is educational, and the things you see on PBS are educational, but somehow it seems to me we ought to be continually trying to improve our teaching. I think we go along. You got a good teacher, and if he keeps his nose clean and does not cause any trouble, he goes on a year and a year and a year. He gives his lectures, and pretty soon he has got tenure and you have got him. I think that is wrong. I went through a period, I would have gone crazy if I could not decide tenure for people. I thought they deserved tenure and nominated them for tenure, and that was that. Now, they applied for tenure when they think they have earned it. Some of these people I think ought to be fired are not, and if they do not cause any trouble, the department chairman does not pay much attention to them. They go on and teach, and pretty soon they got tenure. I think television could be used, could still carry some instruction, pure instruction. I cannot get enough on American history. [Ken Burns' PBS documentary on the] Civil War did not have a single footage in their movement. God Almighty, can you imagine the horrors of it? And it **moved**.

C: None of it was staged. There was no acting or anything.

W: No, it was all stills, but the whole thing was moving. [Burns did a] great job.

C: Do you think its lineage comes directly from that instructional mode?

W: I do not know. The guy who did it had a wonderful imagination of what he could do with it. I did not realize, until I saw that, how many people were killed. I have read my grandfather's diary that he kept in [the war].

C: Did your grandfather fight for the Union Army?

W: Yes. Captured, escaped from prison.

C: My great-grandfather fought for the Southern army. He was a _____.

W: Is that right? It was just so amazing how they made that thing alive. Newspapers went for years and did not improve any. *PM* was one of them that kind of gave them a spark, that there is a better way of doing some things. Then came along the *Observer*, and then you come along with *USA TODAY*, and it has changed. But sometimes, I think we are teaching the same way we used to teach, really.

C: Looking back now, what do you think might be the smartest move you made, in terms of that station? Was it in the form of a hire, the application itself?

W: I do not think you could divorce some of the things. I think one of the real lasting

smartest moves I made was to insist that it be non-commercial and a university station. I went to considerable trouble to figure out how to put the license in the Board of Control's hands. That was an important decision, and people were offering big money to get that channel. Now, I do not know, in those early days, the government might have granted it or the university might have been foolish enough to sign up a partnership. It would have been a disastrous. I am convinced of it that the commercial people would have overpowered them, outsmarted them, and taken them over. So, that was a big move, a big decision that has paid off.

C: Do you have any regrets, as far as the station itself is concerned?

W: No. It came along. I did not know what a station should be, to be honest about it. **I never set a radio station alive, never set a television station** because television was not on the air when I came here. I did not know anything about television. That is the reason I went around to these schools that were using mock-up cameras, trying to tell students what television was about. But I was not Iowa [State University], [University of] Michigan or Syracuse [University]. I just worked hard in reading and looking at all the literature and went around and spent time in those classes.

C: Before we finish, I did not want to concentrate [on] WUFT-FM, but you had a Radio Center going before WUFT-FM.

W: Radio Center was kind of hard to do. Mickey, it was a great deal her idea, that, and it was to have some good music, not all classical but good listening. We founded Radio Center to give us equipment that we needed up there for radio, separate from television down in the basement. Then we began to bolster the library. We got Ken Small to let us have two hours of FM for Radio Center. I think it was well-received in the community, but where we ran into trouble, if along come a basketball game, it was preempted. That just burned the hell out of me. I am a good sports fan, but dammit, it just was wrong to take something like that just because it is culture, and sports is king, you know that. Just look at the newspapers. They spend four times as much space on sports as they do on anything else, women's, news or anything else.

C: But you provided the seed from what is WUFT-FM. You were in on the talks.

W: WRUF-FM was founded without me.

C: **No, WUFT-FM. Right, but this had been in the works.** Had not people been asking you about a possible station?

W: No, I do not recall that they did. I do not know who pressed for the FM. It was not my idea. No, _____ **Powell**, I wanted to keep him at arm's length from us in

journalism. He thought he ought to train reporters for radio and television because he had **Red Barber** [famed sports broadcaster] and he had great success. Ken Small was a lot more cooperative. Ken came down here. I had him down here a number of times before he came to the station to talk to an advertising firm. But Ken Small was much more cooperative. He was very helpful, and I got along fine with him.

C: I think I have had you talk long enough. I appreciate your help.

W: Okay, Hank. It has been great fun. [End of Interview.]