RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEBORAH SHUFORD

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KATHRYN TRACY RIZZI
and
AVERY KELLY
and
ANTHONY DELCONTE

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
JULY 17, 2018

TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSE BRADDELL

Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an interview on July 17, 2018, with Deborah Shuford, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The interviewers are Kate Rizzi …

Avery Kelly: Avery Kelly.

Anthony DelConte: Anthony DelConte.

KR: Thank you so much for coming back and doing part four of this oral history series with us.

Deborah Shuford: Thank you, this is so much fun. I'm really getting a lot of pleasure out of doing this, and it's nice to take a walk through memory lane, so to speak, and just reflect on what I've done. I didn't realize I've done so much and my journey continues. It continues today. Thanks for having me.

KR: At the end of part three, we left off talking about your graduation from Douglass in 1981.

DS: Oh, yes, yes.

KR: At that point, what plans did you have?

DS: Well, I was very fortunate because my junior year--as a Douglass student majoring in English literature and also journalism and media studies--I was very fortunate to have an internship my junior year with RKO General. They were the owners of WOR Television, WOR AM Radio, WKYS, Kiss FM radio. So, I did a full internship in radio, television and film at the time. They said to stay in touch, which I did. So, throughout my junior and senior year, they would call me, and I would take the train from New Brunswick, downtown New Brunswick, I would go over and they would ask if I would produce shows, for the radio and television stations, when people were taking their vacation or personal days. They called it, at the time, "vacation relief." You'd have a lot of the producers going on vacation or personal days, and so I would produce the shows for them in their absence. I did that throughout my senior year and throughout the summer, but they didn't have a full-time position at the time when I graduated.

I have a great friend, Patient Wiggins Jones, and as we speak, Patient, she's in Japan visiting with her son, who just recently graduated from college, and Patient just recently graduated with her MBA. So, they're off in Japan. I remember Pae was always an adventurer, and she said to me, at graduation in Antilles Field, "You know, we should go to Houston. I hear there are jobs in Houston." It was the craziest thing. After graduation, after the graduation parties that we had with our families and friends, we decided to find our fame and fortune in Houston, Texas, which was a disaster. [laughter]

We got there in June, and it was so hot. Even though my family's from the South, there's something about Houston, and it was extremely hot. Not to mention [that] we didn't really have any contacts there. We just went out there, and I had another friend named Kim there from church, from Paradise Baptist Church, in the Ironbound section of Newark, who happened to be there working for Texas Instruments. Her family told us, "Well, when you get there, you could stay with Kim."

Then, my aunt, Dorothy Sanders, had a friend who also lived in Houston. At the time--this is, of course, '81--a lot of people were leaving Detroit, Michigan and leaving Ohio because, I guess, the plants were closing, and they went to Houston for jobs. So, Patient said to me--graduation, "Everyone's going to Houston; we should go," but that had nothing to do with us because we were recent college graduates in Douglass College. We weren't working in the auto industry or with the tire plants in Ohio. I guess since we never left the state of New Jersey, this was our adventure.

We went there and we stayed with friends, but we didn't last the summer because it was so hot. I was fortunate enough that my mom and dad, coming from Alabama, you had to have a job. So, I got on a bus and I said, "I'm going to just take this bus and ride around," and I saw this hospital, Southwest Memorial Hospital. I was so hot, I just got off. I said, "The hospital's going to have air conditioning; I can go inside." So, I go inside and then I said, "Well maybe they have jobs here." I just felt, "If I'm going to be here for the summer, I want to be somewhere where it's going to be nice and cold," because it's just so hot there.

I applied for a job. I went to the Human Resources Department, and they had an opening in public relations. Turns out--I filled out--back then, you had paper applications--I filled it out, and the next day I got a call. The gentleman's name was Mario--I can't remember his last name now--but he was the director of public relations for the hospital. He said, "I saw your resume and your application. Can you come in?" I said, "Oh, now I've got to take that bus again in Houston." I mean, everybody drives, but because we didn't have cars, I had to take the bus. I went and I got there early, and it was the best thing because Mario was from New York. We had such a nice conversation; it wasn't even an interview. It was basically two people from the North, and he said, "You know they call us Yankees here." I said, "Yes, I know. I've had that experience, and I get that experience when I'm traveling to meet family and friends in Alabama." We had a nice conversation. He said, "You know I want you to work for me. I have to go back to New York for a few weeks, but I need you to work for me. I need to have two articles written, and you have a degree in English and journalism." So, the two articles that I wrote were my first published articles, and it was for Southwest Memorial Hospital. I still have those articles today. It was written in their hospital newsletter and magazine, and they gave me a copy.

While Mario was in New York, [laughter] I started getting homesick because he would call from New York, "How are things going?" I said, "You know it's going okay, but it's really hot down here. How are things in New York?" "Hey, they're great!" Of course, he's a New Yorker, I'm from New Jersey, and so I was really homesick. One day after work, when I got back to Kim's apartment, our friend Kim--and Patient had not found a job. She did try; she went to a couple telephone companies and she had a degree in English. We just looked at each other and we went to the movies, because that was a nice place to go in the evenings, so you had air conditioning.

We came out of the movies--we're watching movies--and I think we saw *Superman* that year. I also remember we watched Princess Diana's wedding in Houston, and it was something about Princess Diana's wedding and family. Then, watching the *Superman* movie, and then as we were leaving--I think we took a cab that night. Then, there was a friend who traveled down there, and they were going to a party, believe it or not, in Louisiana, because you're in Texas and people go

over to Grambling. Grambling University is a historically black university, and Patient went because she had some friends there and went to a party. Then, she came back and we had a conversation. She said, "Do you really like it down here?" I said, "No," and then she said, "Neither do I. I really want to go back to New Jersey, because my younger sister, Ebony, she's at the age where soon she'll be in high school. I want to be there for her when she goes to her prom and her high school graduation." That comes to mind because Ebony sends messages me to me every week on Facebook now. She is a music teacher in the South Orange-Maplewood school system. She and Patient are now in Japan, and I should be in Japan with them. It just reminds me of when she said she wanted to be with her sister and her family, and then I said, "You know I feel the same way." Then, I said, "But now I've got to wait until my boss calls and tell him that, 'No, I really don't want to stay here.'" So, Mario calls, his weekly call, "How are things going." I said, "You know, Mario, I really want to get back to New York. You're in New York; I want to be in New York." He said, "Well, just wait until I come back, we'll have a talk about it, and hopefully you'll stay." I said, "I don't think so." So, I said, "But I appreciate everything you've done, and I'll give you two weeks' notice. I'll just do everything you need me to do here, and if you need me, I can write articles from afar and send it back to you." In those days, we didn't have Internet, of course, so I guess I would've had to mail it or whatever. But he understood, because that's why he was in New York.

I don't know what happened to him; perhaps he was interviewing at the time. Maybe he decided to go back to New York. That's where his family was from. Mario's Italian American and he missed his family as well, but he was there for a job. So, after I spoke with him on the phone--we didn't have cellphones back then, and I'm quite certain people in the hospital heard me talking. I waited until people were going on their lunch break. It was during my lunch break; I never did anything on company time. During my lunch break, I called WOR Radio, and they said, "Where are you? You know we had a couple of jobs for you, freelance jobs, 'vacation relief.'" I said, "Would you believe I'm in Houston, Texas?" and they said, "How did you end up there?" I said, "Long story, but I really want to come back to New York." They said, "Well, we don't have anything right now other than freelance work. However, we expect something to open up in September or October. Will you be back?" I said, "I'm out of here. I'm on my way now." So, then I told Patient when I got home. I said, "Pae …" I called her Pae. I said, "You know, you're right. Maybe this wasn't the best thing. It was a nice summer break, summer vacation, whatever we want to call it, but I'm with you." At the time, we'd already left a deposit on an apartment. Because I had a job, I was able to get the apartment with a deposit. Well, we lost the deposit, and I think it was about 250 dollars back then, which was probably a lot for us, especially coming out of college.

We didn't care, we just wanted to leave. It was hot, we didn't have a car, and she had not gotten the dream job she thought she would get. When you're young and you graduate from college and you've got your first degree, you think that you're going to get a job at the top; you're going to be the CEO or the COO. But you don't realize you have to start at entry level. I think it was a rude awakening for us, and why did we go so far, I don't know. We decided to return to New Jersey, and what Pae did was, she had a degree in English and education, but I don't think she wanted to teach. She completed all of her coursework, we graduated together, she did her student teaching, but that wasn't for her.

When we got back, we kind of lost track of each other after that, I think because she was kind of disappointed it didn't work out and I think she kind of felt badly about it. When I returned, I said, "Well, you know Pae, I'm going to go substitute teach until I find something," but she didn't want to do that. We had done that together when we were college students. That's what I did. When school started--after Labor Day in New Jersey--I was substituting, and then I got the call from WOR.

I remember at substituting they would call you on my dad's landline. My dad said, "Oh, my God, it's that school system again." They would call [at] like five in the morning, but my dad was still working then. He would get up at six, but he didn't mind at five. He would make jokes about it. At least I was working in the AM, because I come from that family with the work ethic that, "You're either going to work or you're in the military." You can't just graduate from high school or college and sit around and wait for an opportunity. We were always told that you either, "Go in the military if you don't find a job, or you go to college. Even after graduating from college, you will go into the military if you don't find a job."

I started substituting. I would get these calls, and I think that went on for about four weeks. I said, "Well, you know, substituting doesn't pay that much, and I'd like someday to buy a car, so I'll also go to a temp agency." I went to a great agency--I wish I could remember the name--in New York. My first assignment--because I had a degree from Rutgers in journalism and media--was HBO. It wasn't an internship; it actually was a job. It was a temporary job, but they hired me. While I was at HBO, as luck would have it, I get the job with WOR. It wasn't the job that I wanted, and I remember it didn't pay a lot. This is going to be shocking, but it only paid like eleven thousand dollars. It wasn't the department that I wanted; it was in traffic. I said, "But I'm a producer," and so I said, "This is not going to work out."

My parents always felt like you couldn't job hop, because they believed in working twenty-five, thirty years at one place, getting the gold watch, and retiring. So, while I was there, Patient, my friend Pae, says, "Guess what, you know all these students from Rutgers? All of our friends are going to the airport; they've got this new airline," and it was People Express Airlines. It started 1980. One of the founders was Donald Burr, brilliant man, and a lot of the executives from Southwest Airlines. They decided they would form their own airline, and it would be at Newark Airport. It was at the North Terminal, which was used mainly for cargo. It wasn't a developed terminal back then. Patient wanted to go there and apply for a job; she did and she didn't get it.

After a year at WOR--and now this is January '83--I said, "Maybe I should try something else." I went to my review at WOR and I said, "You know, I'm a producer; I've worked for you for a year. I'd really like to [be a producer]," and I did. I applied for jobs as producer, but they would only let me fill in--never got the full-time producer jobs. So, that's when I said--I went into the director's office, news director, and I said, "I've been filling in, but I really wanted something full-time. Not to mention that I'm really not making a whole lot, and I want to get my own apartment." I was still living with my parents, and I said, "It's time for me to get my own apartment, so I'm going to take another job." They said, "Where?" I said, "Well, I'm applying with this new airline."

I don't know, I guess when you're young, you take chances--which is good--when you don't have a mortgage and you don't have kids and you don't have a lot of responsibilities. I didn't have a car payment, and I was taking the train back and forth. So, I decided to pursue this opportunity, and I'm glad I did. However, it was unpaid training for a month. Thank God I didn't have any student loans to pay, because when I worked at WOR, the one loan I had--the one personal loan--I paid that off the year that I worked for WOR. I didn't have a car, so I didn't have any debt and I could do it for a month. The training was very intense. It was training I ground operations, gate agent, flight attendant. We had to do weight and balance, so that we can balance the fuel with the baggage in the cargo and then in the airplane. It was very intense. I remember you had to have ninety percent--you just had to--or you could not get the job. They were training us for all areas of working for an airline and then working in the airline industry. So, it was something that was very new. However, if you succeeded, you would get paid very well. I said, "This is going to be something I've never done. I don't know if I can do it, but I've already made that decision." So, the first interview, when they saw my resume and they knew that I had graduated from Rutgers--and they had so many Rutgers graduates working for them, which I didn't realize--that got me to the second interview. At the second interview, there was someone there who knew one of my classmates from the Journalism Department, and they moved me on to the third interview.

After the third interview, which, interestingly enough, the third interview was more of to ascertain how you would act socially. The first and second interview is more about your credentials, but the third, it was interesting because it was very informal. It was in a boardroom, but they had refreshments and wanted to see how you would interact. They said, "Wow, you really have a lot of social skills." I remember them saying that, not thinking that they're really assessing what I would do if I worked with the public. After that, I get a call; I'm moving to the fourth and final interview. The fourth interview was just to welcome me to the company. It was great, and they said, "By the way, some of your former classmates are working here." That's when they told me. Then, they said, "We're going to have you to go over to operations and see some of your former classmates," which was great, because then I ran into a classmate from second grade, Wanda Pridgeon. Wanda was working there, and we had lost track of each other in high school. So, she was there. Then, Chris Bristol, who graduated from Rutgers. Duane Guilford. These were all Rutgers graduates, and they were already there working.

The best part about the job was there was a great bonus, signing bonus. When I left WOR, my salary increased three times, and that was a lot for 1983. Not to mention that we had stock and profit sharing and every three months--because this airline was called the no-frills airline, People Express--they were turning profits every quarter. Business students will tell you about this company and how they had a horizontal management structure. We did everything, which saved a lot in terms of overhead, but we turned a profit every three months. Every three months, you would check in the operations room and you had your--like a mailbox system they had there. You'd go in, and they would have a profit-sharing check. Back then, we didn't have direct deposit, so you'd have your salary check. You got your check every two weeks, your salary. That was part of your salary, but you'd also get, every three months, a profit-sharing check, and we owned stock. We were in our twenties, early twenties. It was incredible. It was so awesome because we were so young, and we were right out of college and we were running this company.

It was [an] airline and it was a no-frills [airline], and we were competing against major airlines then. Back then, you still had Pan Am and TWA, Trans-World Airline. You had Eastern. You had United, American. You had Northwest. You had Southwest, and then you had people from Southwest who said, "We're going to start our own thing," as they said back then.

It was People Express, and they were just making so much money. The tickets were as low as twenty-four dollars, twenty-five dollars, and people were flying from Newark Airport to Florida for--round-trip--like fifty-five bucks or something like that. Then, they were growing so fast. We were so young and we were just working all the time, but we worked on a four-three work schedule. So, you'd work four days, have three days off. In the winter, I would fly to Florida, because I said, "Wow, this is great." Then, on my days off--four days on, three days off--I would go to West Palm Beach, Sarasota, Jacksonville. Whatever flight I could get on out of Newark, I would go.

KR: Was that the first time you had flown?

DS: That was my second time. My first time flying, I was fifteen, and I was working at a mom and pop ice cream store. I wanted to fly. I'm so glad you brought that up. My family--as you know, from our prior interview sessions here--we always had that hot station wagon. So, the first time I flew, I was fifteen, and I flew out of Newark Airport to Ohio to visit my aunt and uncle, my mom's sister, Mrs. Dorothy Sanders. I was fifteen, and that was my first flight. I treated myself to that because we never flew anywhere.

Then, the People Express, my parents were able to fly for free. That's another perk. That's when we stopped that drive in the station wagon. It finally stopped in 1983 because my dad was thrilled that he could fly for free, and he felt like such a big shot. That's what they would call you in the South, "You're such a big shot. You can do this and do that." He thought it would be impressive that we could fly then. We could, the whole family could, and my parents flew. It didn't cost them anything. I think we paid like taxes; that's all I would pay for them. To get to Alabama, because People Express did not fly to Alabama when they first started out, we would fly to Jacksonville and rent a car and drive over and then we could afford the nice car with the air conditioning, I guess. We would drive to Alabama, so that was great for my parents because now they could go to Alabama more often than they ever did before because now they were flying. At the drop of a hat, someone got married or whatever, graduated, they could just jump on a plane and fly now. That was another nice perk for my mom and dad, that now they could go back home to Alabama and my father wouldn't have to do all that driving because my mother didn't drive. He didn't want her to drive. I don't know if her driving was bad. I remember her driving us one time, and that was it. That was such a nice thing for them.

I worked for them '83, '84 and '85. The reason that I decided to leave in '85--we had flown to Paris with some friends of mine, because with People Express, we could fly--we started expanding and before '85, we expanded to what I thought was a big mistake, Chicago O'Hare. You're a no-frills airline and you're competing with United and American now. Now, you're going with the big companies, which we were still a young company with young people in their twenties. They decided, "We can do this. We can go against United." Of course, we were young but we were smart, especially all of my classmates from Rutgers. We said, "Bad idea."

We recalled just what we learned here at the university. We knew certain things you could do, but everything had its time and place and we just felt like, "This is a little too fast." I think they should've listened to us. So, I went out to Chicago in '84. They asked me to go out and start operations at Chicago O'Hare, and it was a disaster, like Houston.

I go out, and of course the airline paid for everything. I mean, all of my clothing and household items, they moved on the plane. I rented furniture. So, they put us up in a hotel. Wherever they sent you, whenever they opened operations--whether it be in California or London or Chicago--they would pay for everything until you found an apartment. They give you like a month. I found one in two weeks, so they paid me for the hotel for two weeks. Then, I found an apartment, I put a deposit down, [and] got a little studio apartment because I said, "I'm not going to stay out here. This is going to be a disaster." I knew when I went out to the meetings. Then, I went to Chicago O'Hare Airport--much larger, busy--and you've got United and American, established airlines, and they didn't want us there.

They placed us at a gate near Frontier Airlines, which was a small regional carrier. I mean, it was such a disaster because we didn't have proper crowd control and our flights were so cheap, so everyone wanted to fly on People Express if they couldn't afford American and United. Then, United and American would call the police every day, because of the crowd control. [laughter] It was just bizarre, and we had irate passengers every day.

Then, in the winter--and I know Tony and I were talking about snow earlier--well, the winter was the worst, because when I went out there it was June. I'm like, "This is great." They've got the jazz concert at Grant Park, the same park where President Obama and his family stood when he won the first term of his election. So, I had been at Grant Park before this. This is '84, and this is a great park--free jazz concert. I love jazz and I'm thinking, "This is going to be great. The park. The jazz is free. The Art Institute, museums." Chicago pizza was okay, not like New York, but it was okay. Just being in Chicago and Lake Shore Drive, I'm thinking, "All these things I heard about Chicago and I'm here. It's going to be great." Well, that was a summer, but by winter, the weather was so bad that we had to cancel flights almost every day. That's when we had the irate passengers show up and the crowd control. We couldn't control the crowd, and the police would come out and fine me. We just got fines like every week. Flights couldn't get in. When they de-ice the planes and they could takeoff, you could only have so many passengers leaving. The others couldn't get on, so they're delayed.

It was just very hard, and then that's when I recalled my third interview, "How do you interact socially with people?" Now, I said, "Now I know why they had us to do that," but it didn't matter because no matter how much training we had and how nice we were, people had places they needed to go and it needed to be at a certain time, but mother nature had other plans and it was just a total disaster, operations in Chicago. So, I called and I said, "I really don't want to stay here. Can I get a transfer?" They said, "Only if you go to London." I said, "I'll take it." [laughter] After about eight months there, I went back to Newark. Then, you have to have training on the 747s, because those are the big planes flying overseas to London Gatwick. That's where we flew, London Gatwick.

KR: You lived and worked in London?

DS: I lived and worked in [London]. I went from Chicago to London, but I had to get out of Chicago. [laughter] Here I am, I had to get out of Houston, I had to get out of Chicago.

KR: What did you do in London?

DS: In London, I worked at operations. We had operations at Gatwick. We always had operations at every airport wherever we flew. This was new, but you also--the way we were trained--horizontal management structure--we were called customer service managers. If they needed you to fly--if a crew member were ill--you had to be trained to be on a 747. The Federal Aviation Administration, the way it works is you have so many flight attendants per seats, even if no one's in the seat. I recalled that training, and I had to have that training in Newark. Once I was approved and certified for the training, then I had to head over to London and sometimes I had to fly back. Someone would get sick, and the way it works, you have to have proper rest. If you have a crew member who flies to London and then they're too sick to fly back, [I would take their place]. They would only fly back on day five. Day one, you arrive in London Gatwick; day five, you head back to EWR, which is the city code for Newark Airport. If someone were sick, someone in London had to be trained to get on [the plane]. You have to be trained to be a flight attendant, which a lot of people think flight attendants are just there to serve you coffee and peanuts and coke, but they're trained to save your life. So, I had the training, so that on occasion I would have to fly back. I'd have to have a bag ready if someone were ill on day five and couldn't make it back. Then, I had to fly back. Then, I'd come back to Newark, stay with my parents, and then I had to get back to my job as manager at Gatwick. After I'd fly there, they'd give me five days off. Then day five, they fly me back. So, there was a lot of back and forth flying whenever they needed you, but the nice part about being in London is that we could then fly from London all over Europe. We got these agreements with other airlines, like British Airways, and I was able to fly on the old British Concorde, which was a fast plane.

KR: What was that like?

DS: Oh, my God, I remember when it first landed in Newark--one time it was in Newark. It is so loud, supersonic, yes, the sound.

KR: Right, when it breaks the sound barrier.

DS: Yes.

KR: It makes a sound; it makes a bang.

DS: Yes. It made a bang. So, the first time I heard it when I was in Newark--and I hadn't gone back to London yet--I said, "What is that sound?" We were all at the gates in Newark, and this is at the old North Terminal, before they opened terminals A, B, and C. The reason that the airport expanded in Newark, New Jersey is because of People Express. When they started flying to London, they had to open the terminal over at Terminal A, B, and C that we know today; that's when they opened the terminal there. At the time, it was just one terminal. Now, it's Terminals A, B, and C, but it was one terminal, A, just for People Express to fly those London planes,

because prior to that, you had to fly out of JFK. So, we were at the old terminal, and we heard this sound, like you said. Kate, the way you explained it is exactly right. It was like it was scary, and we're like, "Should we run out?" I know nothing crashed, because we would've gotten alerts and we're in operations, and that's what it was. It landed and they said--and the British people, so reserved and so nice--they came in and they introduced themselves at the gate to us. We had never been on and he said, "Would you like to come on?" and they had this British accent. We did and, believe it or not, they had very narrow aisles, but these women were just so professional. They went about as if they were serving us and they had us sit down and they had fine china and linen. Well, People Express, we were like called the brown hound of the skies, like Greyhound. [laughter] We didn't have anything like that. I mean, we had plastic and they had silver. They had fine china, because people were paying a lot of money to fly so quickly over the pond, as we call it, to fly from New York or Newark, the New York Metro area, to fly over to London. They paid a lot, so they expect that kind of service. So, they had the food and they had to--some kind of emergency landing. They weren't able to go wherever they were going when they arrived, and then for some reason they weren't going back. So, they had the food, and they just placed the linen tablecloths on the tray tables and gave us linen napkins and brought out the fine china and served us. That was such a highlight for me, because I had never been on that plane, and I was like, "Wow. Maybe I should take my profit share and check the next check and fly on them." So, that was my experience with them.

Then, when I had to go back to London, I stayed at the Copthorne Inn. This was in Sussex, which is where the Royal Wedding was recently with Prince Harry and Princess Meghan, and that area, the way you see it on television, it's just like that. For me to watch it, it was like time stood still for me. Then, of course, I wanted to be there because I remember when Princess Diana got married and I was watching that from Houston. Now, I'm living in London, which was a dream come true. The people were so nice, and the inn that I lived in was so quaint and just so tranquil and just peaceful. I would wake up in the morning, and there was a pond in the back. I'd look out my window, and I would see these ducks in the pond. It was just beautiful, and it was very green. It's just very green. Then, when I would fly over to Ireland on my days off, everything was green, just green, beautiful, and just so pretty.

Coming from a metro area where we have--as Tony mentioned--concrete city. [laughter] Then, you go over there and it's rolling hills, and it's very green. Reminds me of the Hollywood movies, *How Green Was My Valley?* It's just like that. *The Quiet Man* with Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne. You see these little huts. They're not huts; they're cottages. These cottages, well, it's just like that. So, we were in a cottage, and it was just so pretty. Then, my breakfast, having scones, which [was] just delicious, and tea. Tony knows I love tea and so does Kate and Avery, because we always have tea here during the interviewing process. That part of the job with People Express was probably the best for me, not Chicago, but when I was in London. That was the absolute best. [Editor's Note: *How Green Was My Valley?* is a 1941 film starring Maureen O'Hara and Walter Pidgeon. *The Quiet Man* is a 1952 film starring Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne.]

I was trained on 747s when I would fly back to the States. Sometimes, I had to go to LAX, Los Angeles. If someone were ill--and that happened the first time. They said, "Oh, do you have your uniform?" I said, "Yes, it's in the car." You have great parking. Tony and I were talking

about terrible parking. Well, if you work for an airline, you've got all these credentials and they have employee parking. So, we had our own shuttles. They said, "We're going to drive you." The rule with People Express--and they were very clever--is that you had to have an overnight bag with your uniform. We were all trained, that if someone got sick--not the pilots, not the cockpit crew--if someone were ill--the flight attendants--you were trained on the 737s--at the time 727s and 747s--so that you would go and put on your uniform and get on that plane, because they would lose money if that plane could not takeoff. That's why we got profit sharing checks. [laughter] I remember them saying, "We're going to need you." They knew, they had a system where they knew who was trained and who was not. I'm in the office and I'm like, "Someone's sick, right?" I could tell [by] the look on their faces and, "Yes, you've got to go to LAX." I wanted to go to Los Angeles but not to work; I'd like to go on my day off, like the four-three schedule. I said, "Oh, my God." So, then, I had to go, and that was the rule. We were customer service managers. It's a management decision, and so I had to go.

That first time, oh, my God, we had a mechanical--I thought we were going to turn around and come back. Well, that was an eighteen-hour delay, and operations in Newark said, "We don't have enough flight attendants." They have to change the first officer and the captain, of course, and the engineer. They had an engineer, first officer, and the captain. They get to stay. They had cockpit crew to fly the plane back. As far as flight attendants, again, you have to have so many flight attendants per seats. That was how it worked, and so I'm like, "Do you mean I have to stay?" They said, "You're going to have to stay." I said, "Well, can we stay overnight?" "No, because we need you guys to come back, and then you have to go back to London." I'm like, "Oh, my God." So, that's when I realized this job, although we're making a lot of money, we're putting in a lot of hours, so are we really making a lot of money? The way we were trained is that, "This is your company. So, if you want it to succeed, these are the things you have to do." I guess they knew we were young and we wanted to succeed, and so we did whatever they asked.

There were some bright times. I remember going to Chicago again one time, and it was Christmas Eve and there was--my goodness--there was a family. This is the issue with airlines today; children have to have their own seat over the age of two. There was a family, and they didn't buy an extra seat and it was Christmas Eve. They had all these Christmas presents. So, the captain said, "You're a customer service manager, I'm flying the plane. What do you want to do?" and I said, "You know what? I'm going to make a management decision." He said, "I have to take off on time. You know that if we don't take off on time, we're going to get fined," and I said, "I know." I said, "I'm putting this child in a seat with the parents, and I'll just call operations and say, 'Just take it out of my check,' but this plane has to take off. We can't hold up this plane. This is a family--all these families with gifts--and you don't want people upset during the holidays." I'll tell you, the mom and dad, I remember their faces to this day. They were a young couple, and they were trying to get back to New Jersey to visit their family. They just grabbed me and hugged me, and I just said, "Merry Christmas."

Then, I told the fuel guy, "Give me the fuel slip," and I ran up the steps. [laughter] We had to do weight and balance. I had to have the fuel slip and I had my baggage number, so you have to calculate that and we weren't using calculators. We were trained to do that. I was like, "This plane has to take off on time." So, I had the fuel slip, I had the baggage slip, I did my calculations--which thank God I learned how to calculate in math here at Rutgers--quickly and I

gave it to the first officer [who] comes out. He takes it, he goes over it, and he says, "Close up the plane." We closed it, and they took off. So, that's one of the things that I remember. I'm glad I did that, and so glad I did that for that family. It was a great Christmas present for all of us, and we didn't get fined. Then, I said, "Get me out of Chicago." [laughter]

The way it worked, they could send you anywhere in the country and even overseas, and it kept the company going. That airline went from 1980 to 1987. The reason I decided to leave is because I felt like it wasn't really my career choice. It was a job. It was exciting. I got to travel everywhere. I remember, as I said, when I lived in London, some of my friends and I, then we could take [flights all over Europe]. Back then, there was an airline called British Caledonian; they charged us twenty bucks round trip from London-Gatwick to Paris. I remember the first time I went to Paris, and I was there for Bastille Day. So, I'm watching the World Cup, and I'm recalling when I actually traveled back and forth from London to Paris. I got to travel all over Europe. I went to Rome. I went to Vicenza, Rome and Vicenza, Italy, London, Paris. I traveled all over the Caribbean--winter months--because we had all these great inter-airline agreements. I did that for three years.

I recalled Roger Cohen, my professor, and Jerry Aumente, from journalism--and it was from the Journalism-Media Studies Department, Communications now--it's the School of Communications here--but I recalled how much they invested in us. I felt kind of like I was letting them down by working for [an] airline. I don't know. I just had this epiphany one day, and I said, "You know, I've travelled, I've done this for three years, but what am I doing here? Am I working as a journalist? Am I in media?" [Editor's Note: Roger Cohen is a Professor Emeritus in the Rutgers School of Communication and Information. He worked at Rutgers from 1975 to 2004. Jerome Aumente is a Professor Emeritus of the Rutgers School of Communication and Information. From 1969 to 2000, he worked at Livingston College, where he founded and directed the Department of Journalism and Urban Communications until his retirement in 2000. Dr. Aumente's oral history resides in the collection of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

I was in Paris on one of my vacation trips with two friends, with Marnelle and another friend. Marnelle and I, we were working for the airline, and I said, "You know, I think when I get back, I'm going to the office at operations [to] tell them I'm going to resign." So, I called the temp agency again, and they had a job for me at HBO. I said, "I'm going to apply at ABC," because for some reason, I always loved ABC Network. I think it's because they did the mini-series *Roots*, and they did that back in '77, when I was in high school my senior year. This is after [graduation] and then coming to Douglass in '77. I remember the impact that *Roots* had on me and that ABC was the network that aired that miniseries. It was highly rated by Nielsen Media Research back then and still today. For some reason, I just thought I could just walk right into ABC. [laughter] I don't why--it's because I'm a Douglass woman.

I worked at the temp agency when I left People Express, August of 1985, and I was with the temp agency. I applied and I said, "They didn't call me," and my father said, "Well, it's their loss if they don't hire you. You can continue to work a temp job with HBO through the temp agency." Then, the phone rang one morning and it was ABC; it was ABC Radio. It happened to be someone that I met, and his name was Novak and he worked as an executive at WOR Radio.

Somehow, he saw my resume, human resources sent it to him, and it had on there WOR Radio. That's why you never burn any bridges.

He called me in and he said, "I have a producing job for you at ABC Radio. It's on weekends. It's on West End Avenue in Manhattan, and you're going to produce these ..." It was like a garden show. These people would call in, it was a talk radio show, and it was about flowers and plants. I said, "I'll take it." So, I go in with him and he said, "It's on the weekend, and you'll have to do the newsfeeds. You'll have to do the cards. You're going to have to do everything, and you will have an engineer who does the boards, the sound for you." While I was at HBO, I said, "You know, ABC called and they have something for me, so I'm going to ABC."
I went to ABC. It was great, because back then, a lot of the news veterans were working in radio and television network and ABC's local WABC television station.
So, I went to ABC Radio, and I did this show.

Then, there happened to be a guy--he passed away--that I produced his show on the weekends. He had actually set up an interview for me at Fox. Maybe I should thank People Express for that third interview with social skills and how you interact with people, because I kind of continued that when I met people at ABC Radio. Then, while I was at ABC Radio, I would check human resources, because I wanted to work in television. They had [an] opening in television, and it was affiliate relations. Affiliate relations wasn't really what I wanted, but in affiliate relations, you'd get to know all the stations that are carrying ABC programming. Plus, it paid more money. I wanted to get a nice apartment and wanted to get my own apartment. When I went to television, I was able to get my own apartment in Edison. I didn't have to have a roommate, because television paid more and ABC was doing very well.

I went to human resources and said, "I want to apply for this position in affiliate relations in television." There happened to be a woman, Judy Magnus Long, she said, "Well, on paper, you've got great credentials. You did a great internship." I said, "Well, I have to thank my university for that." At Rutgers, Roger Cohen and Jerry Aumente secured the internship with RKO General, and it's RKO Pictures, General Tires. At the time, they owned radio, television and film. She said, "Well, you have it all, so we can send you to our radio division and we can send you to our television division at ABC." That's how I got the job in both producing on a weekend the radio show and then working in television during the week and it was affiliate relations.

In affiliate relations, once you get to ABC New York, you meet everybody in the cafeteria. I remember Regis Philbin would come in, and he carried my tray one morning, my breakfast tray. His [voice], "How are you, young lady?" He just had this great personality when he was doing his show. I guess he saw that, "She's either going to spill that orange juice or her coffee. Maybe I should help her out." So, he grabbed my tray and I grabbed my two cups and walked over. That was the way it was at ABC. They wanted everybody to interact, and then again, social skills and interpersonal skills and how do you get along with other people. At ABC, they were big on that, and we would have breakfast together.

At the time, they had a lot of soap operas in New York. They were taped in New York. The big productions were done out in California, but soap operas and news were done in New York. So,

all the soap opera stars would be there, all the news people, Peter Jennings. I remember, at one point, I was in affiliate relations, and there was a guy named Greg Brown, who I still remember today. He worked for marketing and research, and Greg would come to get research information about the ABC affiliates, if they're carrying the programs.

Television networks own about six stations, and they're called owned-and-operated stations. The affiliates are stations across the country, over three hundred stations that carry network programming, but the Federal Communications Commission mandates that they don't have a monopoly on all stations in the country, so they're able to own about six at the time. They would own six, and ABC had their owned and operated WABC, Channel Seven, that they owned, and NBC, WNBC, Channel Four, that they owned, and WCBS, Channel Two, that they owned. So, Greg Brown worked in marketing and research. His job was to make sure that the affiliates were carrying the programs, because when you go out to Utah and Montana--some of these places that they have a local football game on--they will not carry a network show. They'll carry what's important to them. I mean, if it's a big--and especially my relatives in Alabama--I mean, some of the affiliates in Alabama would carry a big major football game, as opposed to carrying a network program. So, Greg's job was to come to affiliate relations, get the list, and find out if they're carrying the programs or not. That's how I met Greg Brown.

Greg Brown told Henry DeVault, an African American from Harlem, and Henry had this idea, back then, that he wanted his department, marketing and research, to be very diverse. So, he would look for people of all nationalities; he would recruit them. So, Greg Brown, who was also African American, said, "You know, there's this African American woman, Deb Shuford, and she's working in affiliate relations." Henry called me in for an interview. I had no plans to go to marketing and research because I wanted to stay clear of the numbers and the numbers crunching, but Henry talked me into it and it's probably one of the best things I did. Then, I got a raise, I got a new position, I got an office, and I didn't have my own office. I shared [an] office in affiliate relations, but then I got [an] office in marketing and research. Then, I got introduced to Nielsen Media Research, because ABC had a contract with Nielsen and Arbitron and they did the ratings for ABC. That was my new position, and I didn't know anything about television ratings. Well, I knew something but not a whole lot--what I learned from school--but I didn't work in that area. I thought I would always be a producer.

I had the radio producing gig on the weekend, but then marketing and research Monday through Friday, which paid more. The first year I worked there, I bought a car for the first time. Well, actually, my first car was at the airline, so then I bought my second car, and I went on vacation. I could go on vacation every year. When I left the airline, I didn't think I would ever be able to do that, but once I got to ABC, they paid so well. They were doing well in the ratings, and then they had training for us with Nielsen Media Research. Now, I'm getting marketing and research experience, and I didn't take those courses in college. So, I was able to get that through Nielsen Media Research for free through ABC.

That's when I started doing focus groups, because we would do qualitative and quantitative data research, and if you could do that, you could get a job anywhere. You could work for the advertising agencies. You can work for any of the broadcasters and you could work in the cable industry, which was still new, and they needed a lot of marketing research. So, I was very lucky

that Greg Brown found me, and he said he needed someone to work with him. He told Henry about me, and that's how Henry DeVault and Greg Brown recruited me.

KR: Henry DeVault and Greg Brown.

DS: Yes.

KR: It sounds like they had an appreciation for a diverse workforce.

DS: Yes.

KR: Was that typical at ABC at that time?

DS: It was. We all worked under Henry DeVault. His wife worked for the old telephone Bell System and she worked in New York too, I think because they were from Harlem too. I think that had a lot to do with Henry and his wife. Greg lived in Queens. Greg and Henry were two African American males that I didn't know them. The people I knew that recruited me at WOR were not African American. To have these two men embrace me, and then Steve Vause--Steve was Japanese American, and Steve, his family was in a Japanese internment camp. Henry, I don't know how he found Steve or how they found each other, but I reported directly to Greg and Steve and Henry.

Again, Steve Vause--and I liked Henry and Greg--but Steve Vause, the Japanese American, was the best boss I've ever had in my life. I say that, and I wish I could find him now. I know he retired. Steve Vause, I don't know if it had a lot to do with what happened with his family in the internment camp and the stories that we would share, because we would talk about Asian Americans and African Americans. We would talk about the images of Asian Americans in film, and I didn't know then that I would be teaching film as I am now. So, a lot of the things that I learned from Steve Vause at ABC I include in my syllabi today, because this is firsthand information. Steve lived in San Francisco, and he was in the military. Then, he moved to New York, and he lived in a brownstone on the Upper East Side. Steve was brilliant at ABC.

I think ABC lost a great employee when Steve retired, and I wish, somehow, they could've convinced him not to retire, because I think he had to be early fifties and he sold his stock at ABC. We had stock at ABC too. That's why when I went to ABC television; then I had stock at ABC and the airline. I wasn't even thirty yet, so I was really, I thought, doing well. I think to work for these men and to be a female, I have to say that Douglass College prepared me for that.

I remember at ABC, once I got into television, then I met Barbara Walters. Barbara Walters then had an event with the women who worked at ABC, and a lot of the women didn't have those positions when I worked there. Most of the women were still working as--and they weren't called administrative assistants then--they were called secretaries and there were a lot of them. So, the few of us that got jobs in the networks, if we weren't secretaries, I mean, that was outstanding, and Barbara Walters told us that. She opened the door for us. That's another reason why I enjoyed my time at ABC. [Editor's Note: Journalist Barbara Walters (born in 1929)

started working for NBC in 1961 as a researcher and writer and in 1964 became a co-host on the *Today* show, though NBC did not give Walters the title host until 1974.]

Prior to working at ABC, I ran into her one time when I worked at the airline. She came up to us and said, "Is there a place I can go?" I don't know why it was Barbara Walters at the airline. Then, later, I meet her again and I'm actually working for the same network. I remember her at the airline one time flying, because she needed to get on a flight, and we happened to have that flight. It's funny how things like that happened, because little did I know that one day I would meet her. The second time I would meet her, I would actually be working with her, but I remember her conversations. Even when she started with *The View* and *20/20* and doing the Oscar night interviews--she had a rough time, initially. At the time, it was groundbreaking for a woman to leave that secretarial pool and to get the kind of position that she got. So, she opened the doors for us. I like to say she opened it for me because, I mean, I was in radio producing and then next I'm in the network division, and there weren't a lot of women there.

My friend Denise Walcott--fascinating woman--Denise told me that when she started that she started as a secretary. She's a few years older than I am, and her husband later became education secretary for New York, Dennis Walcott. Denise told me some stories too. We were the two African American females in marketing and research, just Denise Walcott and myself. Then, there was a woman, Catherine Alexander, who was a consultant for Harlem--brilliant woman--who did the focus groups, but she was a consultant. So, she would do certain focus groups when we would do our upfront presentations at ABC, when ABC and all the networks are showing upfront [to] the advertisers their best productions that they will have on their fall schedule. That's something we'd work on in December and January at the networks. [Editor's Note: Dennis Walcott served as the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education from 2011 to 2013. He is currently the president and CEO of Queens Public Library.]

Denise and I, we were the two African Americans, and she was from the Caribbean. The reason we bonded and got along so well is because we knew that if we messed up, that was it. You know what I mean? I think Greg and Henry knew that, and Steve knew that. Steve hired Judy, Judy Chun. I loved Judy Chun. Judy Chun, her family is from China, and Steve's family is from Japan. So, we were the ones who would come in early, we would stay late, Steve, Judy, myself, Denise, because we thought we had to. We had to do it for Henry, because he hired all of us. Henry just had this great talent of recruiting people that he knew would do well, but he also knew how important it was that we did well in a major network in New York, the number one market. It's New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. New York is number one. To his credit, it was just amazing that he did what he did for us.

Again, I say Steve was the best boss and Henry was a good boss, but Steve was a little more sensitive. I have to say, I think it has a lot to do with the fact that his family was in the Japanese internment camp. When we would have lunch together--and we always had lunch together when I worked in television. Steve would have our group, and we'd have lunch together, Steve, myself. Greg would never have lunch with us. Greg was always busy crunching numbers. Then, it would be two secretaries, Lorraine Erante Lamb. Lorraine was Italian American, and Lorraine taught me how to make sausages and sauce too. She was really a good cook. She lived in Queens. Chris Ticcio. Those two taught me a lot too about the network, about how they just

didn't promote the women. Chris said a lot of the women would graduate from high school and they would get jobs as secretaries, and they knew they weren't going to get promoted. So, they would get married, and they would leave. I would see this a lot. Chris got married, and then we had a baby shower for her--wedding shower, baby shower--and then she left. Then, Lorraine left, and I think they left because no one promoted them. If I had been in a position where I could've promoted those two, I would have, because they knew the company. I think because they hadn't gone on to college--they didn't have a college degree--I think they used that as a reason not to promote Lorraine and Chris. They knew the company, they knew their jobs, and they were very smart women. I learned a lot from them about the glass ceiling at ABC. They definitely had a glass ceiling.

Denise and I did not, because we had college degrees. Denise had a lot of other credentials--she was older than I was--and I think Denise had also worked in New York for the state and other positions, so, but she wanted to work in television. The way she got in, she said, "As a secretary." I told Denise, "I just felt like I spent four years in college and doing internships, and I remember that Roger Cohen and Jerry Aumente prepared us to do more than clerical work." I felt like I owed it to them that I would never take a position as a secretary and I never did. Now, who knows? I may have to do that today, you never know, because times have changed. I felt like I owed it to Jerry Aumente and Roger Cohen and Professor Hartman and all the professors in now our School of Communication, and also to Dr. Louise Duus. The late great doctor Louise Duus at Douglass College, and all these people who worked so hard to get me where I am today. [Editor's Note: Louise Duus (1929-2014) was a Professor Emerita at Rutgers that served as the associate dean of Douglass College from 1985 to 1994. For her work at Rutgers, she was awarded the Douglass Medal in 1994.]

I just felt like, at ABC, that I would not let that glass ceiling put me in a position like Chris and Lorraine when I knew I could do better. Even after I worked at ABC, we'd always stay connected with Rutgers University and let them know what we were doing. It was important that we had those positions, because then other interns would come in and get positions and we wanted them to move forward as well. So, that's why I declined the clerical positions, not that I thought I was better than anyone, not that I felt that it wasn't a good job, but I just felt like it was important for women, moving forward, to be in positions where we were visible, where other women could see us, and other women could have that kind of hope that they could do it and go further.

I think, after Barbara Walters told us this at a meeting--and this was [an] after-work meeting that we had at this company that these two executive women started and it was a clothing line. It was called Alcott & Andrews, and they had a shop on Avenue of [the] Americas, right across the street from ABC. They did this clothing line with professional clothing for women. They wanted women to look well, dress well, feel well, and the first speaker was Barbara Walters. Because it was near ABC, we went over. I remember Barbara Walters saying how important it was for us to look good at work, feel good, and then she told the story again how she started.

I just felt like all that Barbara Walters did and other women--and there's so many that I couldn't name them all--at ABC, at HBO, at WOR--brilliant women. We needed to show--and please men, forgive me--but we needed to show men that we could do the work. I had home economics

classes myself in elementary school, but I'm not a great cook. We needed to show men that we could do these things. I mean, during World War II, I remember my mom telling me and my aunt--I wasn't there--but I remember them telling me about World War II, when women had to go into factories to work when men had to leave. Women showed men that, "Okay, we'll keep things going and we'll operate the machines and we'll work in the factories." After World War II, then women are back in the kitchen again, but there were some women who decided they wanted to go on to college and they wanted careers.

I think we're part of that legacy, and I think Barbara Walters proved that. She went through a lot, and so many other women. Then there was Patricia McCann, when I worked as her intern, as her producer. She's, today, doing voice overs. Patricia was a Sarah Lawrence graduate, and she refused to be a secretary. So, I had these women that I worked for and worked with who showed me that it was possible. [Editor's Note: Patricia McCann was the broadcast host of a talk radio program on WOR Radio from 1970 to 1983. She is now the commercial spokesperson for 1010 WINS radio station.]

Then, I had the women at Douglass College, who showed me the way when I wasn't even twenty years old and prepared me so that I could stand shoulder to shoulder with Barbara Walters and Patricia McCann and then also help other women come along after me, because it's important. We should not be limited, and I think Henry understood that because later when I went to graduate school at American University, and they called ABC--because I wanted to do some research work as [an] independent study at ABC, an internship, as a graduate student--and Henry right away said, "She's the right person." Again, you never burn bridges. In graduate school, ABC News made one phone call to ABC New York, and Henry had retired and Henry said, "She's the one." Then, Henry called me at my news desk at ABC News and said, "We're so proud of you." He said, "I was sorry to see you leave when you left us, but we're so proud of you." I remember when I left ABC, Henry asked me if I would just stay a few more months, because they were going into UpFront.

When I left ABC, 1990, it's because I got recruited to work at Arbitron Ratings. I met the people at Arbitron Ratings at ABC, but they offered me--and I say this, "Sometimes you shouldn't take the job for the money"--but I wanted an opportunity to do something more. It was a promotion and it was as a supervisor, and it was more money and relocation money, everything. I mean, they just rolled out the red carpet, and that was for Arbitron Ratings. They're now owned by Nielsen Ratings. Nielsen acquired them about a year or two ago. They met me in New York, in my office at ABC, and they didn't tell Henry, they didn't tell Steve, and they recruited me. That brought me to work for them [at] Beltsville, Maryland in Columbia, Maryland; that's where their offices were.

I moved to Silver Spring in 1990 to work for Arbitron Ratings, but it was a promotion and I had women working underneath. They were older women who worked in Arbitron Ratings, and they lived in Maryland. Some of these women, they were like twenty years, twenty-five years older than I was and I had to train them, but I had the New York experience. I'd worked for a major network and worked for HBO, worked for the radio station. So, I knew radio and television ratings, and I learned that at ABC and WOR Radio and they knew that. So, that's when they hired me and they paid me well enough that it was such a nice promotion.

I remember the executives at ABC, and Bob Iger is one of them. Today, he works for Disney. He's in charge [of] Disney, ABC. Hate to say it, but he's the man in charge who fired Roseanne. [laughter] He was our top boss at ABC in New York, Bob Iger. I remember him saying and the other executives saying, "You know, you did well here. You never called in sick," which I hadn't thought about. I never called in sick. I think I was out sick with [an] ear infection maybe two days, and I had to go to St. Barnabas Hospital--which is our RWJBarnabas Hospital in Livingston, New Jersey--to have tubes put in my ear. [Editor's Note: Bob Iger is the Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Walt Disney Company. Previously, he was the President of ABC Television. In May 2018, Iger cancelled the successful reboot of the ABC television series *Roseanne* after Roseanne Barr made a racist tweet. Disney is the current owner of ABC.]

KR: Okay.

DS: I had gotten sick during the winter--Tony and I were talking about cold winters in New York--and I had gotten sick. Only two days. After working at ABC a total of seven years, and I only took off two days. [laughter] I said, "Well, when I was in college, I never got sick. I never took off." They said, "Well, you know, you always have a home here. You could always come back." I remember Bob Iger saying that. So, I said, "Maybe I should call him now." [laughter] He's doing a reboot of Roseanne's show. [laughter] Bob Iger, when you talk about another person who is not African American, who believed in diversity, when you talked about, "Did ABC really believe in that?" Yes. "Does Bob Iger believe in that today?" Yes. I support his decision on when he cancelled the show, and I knew when that show was cancelled that Bob Iger was the one who cancelled that show, because this is a man that I knew.

When I was crunching ratings, I would always commute early, I would get a six-thirty train from Edison, from Metropark Station, so I could get in on time. Then, I would take the subway uptown to West 66th Street to my office--once we moved from Avenue [of] the Americas uptown--so I could get in early to get those ratings to get them on Bob Iger's desk early, and I'm glad I did. He really appreciated it and remembered it. Whenever I need recommendations, these are the people that I call to this day. They'll make a phone call, and they will remember me for some reason. It's something about when you don't burn bridges and when you do a good job and when you don't call in sick a lot, people remember that.

I remember giving those ratings to Bob Iger, good or bad. I remember when Spencer Christian did weather for ABC *Good Morning America* and going into his office and delivering the numbers and the ratings. I just remember all of that and the people that I met there. I always knew that, number one, you have to be on time, and when you say you're going to be somewhere, you need to be there. You need to do the best job that you can possibly do. If you don't know what you're doing, there are people who can help you. [Editor's Note: Spencer Christian was the weather forecaster for *Good Morning America* from 1986 to 1998. He is currently the weather forecaster for KGO-TV in San Francisco, California.]

Even in radio with the sound engineer, he showed me the boards, because ABC's equipment was so modern. I remember the old radio equipment we had at Rutgers with Roger Cohen, which

was the foundation. Then, I get to ABC and they had a sound room that I had never seen before, but then the engineer showed me. He said, "Well, if you learned it that way from your professor, now we'll just show you we got a few more toys." So, what I learned from Professor Jerry Aumente, Professor Roger Cohen, Professor Hartman, Dr. Louise Duus, Dr. Cheryl Wall--English Department here--you never forget those things. [Editor's Note: Dr. Cheryl A. Wall was a pioneering scholar of African American women's literature who taught at Rutgers for nearly five decades. She passed away on April 4, 2020.]

One thing about the university [is] you should stay connected--not just for the alumni--but stay connected with your professors, because those are the people that when you have questions, when in doubt, that's who you should call. They're well trained, they have the knowledge, and whenever I had a question, I could always call. I could always call the university and find one of my professors, and then if they didn't have the answer, they would find someone else who did have the answer. Then, while working at WOR and HBO and ABC radio and television, they thought I knew it all. [laughter] I knew I could always call the university and get whatever I didn't know. If you don't know, there are people that could help you, especially at the university level.

KR: Before we talk about your time at Arbitron.

DS: Sure.

KR: You mentioned taking the train from Metro Park into the city ...

DS: Oh, yes.

KR: … Getting there early, getting the ratings.

DS: Yes, yes.

KR: Can you take us through a typical day?

DS: I would get up at five. I don't remember getting up at five when I was a college student, because I didn't have a whole lot of reasons to get up at five, I guess. I realized later that I think you're very sharp in the morning when you're working, as opposed to being a college student. I did have some eight o'clock classes, but I never really got up early until I felt the sense of responsibility. Now, I had a lot on my plate, that if I didn't get to the train at a certain time, then I couldn't make the connection to the subway, which meant then I had to spend a lot for a taxi--if I could get one--but I wanted to be on time. So, my day would start--I'd get up at five, shower, dress. I didn't eat at home in my apartment at Edison. I lived in Evergreen Meadows Apartment, and the reason I chose that apartment is because I could leave my car at the apartment, and from Evergreen Meadows--a few blocks--you could walk right to Metropark Station. So, that's what I did. [I would get] up at five, shower, dress, and six-thirty, I was on the train. I would have my newspapers and always read. Because I was working for a network, I'd always have *The New York Times*. I don't think I read *The New York Times* a whole lot as a college student. I did read it but not as much as I did when I had a responsibility of working at the network and knowing

what was going on in the world and what was on the news, because I did news ratings. Primarily, my job was all news ratings. With network news, you have to know everything that's going on in the world globally. Six thirty, I'm on the train, and then in Manhattan, depending on which train. Sometimes, I could get the New Jersey Transit, sometimes I'd get Amtrak, sometimes they had that express Amtrak train, so that would get me even faster.

When I first started working for ABC in '85--and that would be the fall of '85--we were on the Avenue of the Americas, so it was, to me, a faster commute, because you're in Midtown and you could even walk. I mean, if I took the train to 33rd Street, then I could walk up the twenty blocks if I missed the subway, or sometimes the subways--there's always a delay or some issue. Sometimes, it was very hot in the summer and you couldn't get the air conditioning; you're better off walking where it was cooler. I was a fast walker, and again, I come back to college. That physical education class I had where we had to run around College Farm Road came in handy. [laughter] When I was in Manhattan, if I missed the subway, I was [like], "I've got to get there on time." Then, I would just walk, and I walked really quickly, fast-paced. I had my sneakers on, and I had my pumps in the desk drawer at the office.

Seven thirty, I know I was either walking in the door or not far, maybe three or four blocks [away]. We were on Avenue of the Americas right across from CBS, which we called Black Rock. This is in the '50s, Midtown Manhattan, and this is right across from, I believe, the Hilton Hotel, Avenue of the Americas, and it's still there. This is before we moved up to Lincoln Center. So, I knew the time that I had to get there because I was in Midtown. I would quickly go to my desk and throw things in my desk, but then I would go in the computer room and check the computer for Nielsen Ratings to come through. The overnight ratings would come in the morning.

If there were a delay, I would call Nielsen, and they would tell me what time they were coming through. Then, I'd jump on the elevator, run down, get breakfast--get it to take out--and bring it back up, and go into the computer room and wait for the overnight ratings. The networks are ratings driven, and you've got to be sharp, on time, and waiting for those ratings. The whole network depends on the ratings, unlike PBS, which is not commercial driven, ratings-driven. Then, you have your competitors, NBC and CBS, and everybody is fighting for those ratings and the overnight markets that Nielsen has put together. Then, after a week, you'd have the national ratings, but the overnights would come in overnight.

The phone at ABC would ring. I remember Eddie Murphy calling one time. He had this show with Redd Foxx, and they were worried about the show being cancelled and he actually called. [laughter] We were waiting for the ratings, and I remember Greg Brown saying, "Mr. Murphy, we're waiting for [the ratings]. We get the ratings from …" They were so worried about the show being cancelled. He said, "Mr. Murphy, we're waiting for Nielsen. We're at the computers. When it comes over, we'll call you." They were like, "No." The producers [and] Eddie Murphy were like, "No, you don't understand. We need to know now," but we didn't have them. They didn't realize the ratings come from Nielsen. We'd analyze the ratings in marketing research, but we would get calls like that for ABC shows, overnight shows. You'd have a show on a Monday night, Tuesday morning, and they're calling from California, so you know they're up early--three hour difference. They were so worried, but shows would get cancelled.

It was important for me to get up at five, and to get to Manhattan by seven-thirty. There was no nine to five. They say it's a nine-to-five job; it was not. We could leave early, but we needed to be there early because everyone depended on those ratings, the West Coast production companies, producers, actors. They depended on it, because their show could be cancelled. Then, our sales team, they depended on the ratings because then they have to show Madison Avenue what a high rating the show got, so they can sell the commercial time.

It was a crazy environment, but then again, I was young. I worked for an airline, traveled everywhere. I said to myself, "Listen, if I could fly on all these 737s, 27s, 47s, I can certainly take a subway and get to work on time. All I have to do is go from New Jersey to New York. I'm not going to England now or London or Paris or Rome. I'm just going to Manhattan." So, I [was] up at five, and back then, we had alarm clocks. We didn't have these fancy iPhone products and setting your iPhone or the iWatch or whatever. Set the old alarm clock, and I happen to have [an] old alarm clock from WOR. They gave it to me as a parting gift. So, I still have my old WOR talk radio alarm clock, my handy dandy.

Set it, up at five, shower, dress, out the door, sprinting three or four blocks from Evergreen Meadows Apartments right to Metropark train station, up the stairs, on the train, but I got to read my *New York Times* on the ride in and then come out. If that subway train was not there at 33rd Street, then up the stairs, dash out, and start sprinting. I was in great shape then. [laughter] I wish I were in that kind of shape now. Then, I was in that building by seven-thirty, no matter what, seven-thirty, no later than a quarter of eight. Then, I would turn on the computer and wait for those ratings.

The phone would ring, and I remember Bob Iger's assistant calling. It's funny, because she worked for People Express at one point. She worked in reservations, and then later she worked for Bob Iger and then she went out to California with him. So, you always need this--it's kind of like you come full circle. You keep meeting the same people on the East Coast.

That was my day. Once we would give those ratings to producers calling from the West Coast, the sales people were like standing right over our shoulders. We'd give them a copy; they're going to Madison Avenue to the ad agencies. Around ten o'clock, actually, you could take a coffee break, and ABC had the best treats and coffee area. You hear people talk about the jokes that people tell at the water cooler. Well, that was therapy, because you've just had this crazy morning, from anywhere from seven-thirty to nine o'clock where you can't even eat. Everyone's nervous about the ratings. Then, ten o'clock, you could take a nice coffee break because you know that the numbers are out. There's nothing you can do about it. You just go through your day. We had a lot of memos to do. You hear journalists say that they're spinning questions. Well, we were spinning numbers.

If we didn't come in number one in the ratings overall, then I would find a way to look at the news ratings. News is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, so I'd have to look at all the news. Then, I'd look at the demographics. If I couldn't say to Bob Iger and Henry DeVault and Steve Vause, my bosses, that we did well with Peter Jennings and the news, then I would look at the demographics. "Well, maybe we didn't do well overall against CBS and NBC, but here's

what we did with women eighteen to forty-nine," or, "Here's what we did with men and women eighteen to forty-nine, or fifty-five plus for certain news programs," or looking at *Good Morning America* and looking at a younger demographic, maybe, or older demographic. Then, I would look at the demographics. I had to show that somewhere we did okay, and that was my job.

After the ten o'clock break, then I was doing the memos. Then, again, we had these women who were word processors who would type up our memos. We didn't have the computers that we have now. I mean, we had computers, but they had women--they had like a pool of women who--I don't really--and I hope the men forgive me for this--but I don't remember the men doing that type of work. They would have the secretaries--they'd have like a wall of secretaries--and then, they had these women in the word processing pool. They would type all the memos for us.

KR: Yes, in the days before PCs.

DS: Absolutely. Denise and I were very nice to them. All the women, we all got along, because we understood that we're all the same. Some of us were just lucky enough that we got promoted, and Steve Vause promoted me. Even under a year when I left Affiliate Relations and worked with Greg, Steve, and Denise, and Henry, Steve promoted me, Steve Vause, again. That's why I said he was the best boss in the world. Now, I was really frightened. I said, "Steve, I haven't been in this department that long." He said, "Well, don't you want this promotion, Debbie? This is a great promotion. This is great for you." He gave me the encouragement. I was like, "Woah, if he has that kind of confidence in me, I guess I should do it," and then I started thinking, "What would Roger Cohen say? What would Jerry Aumente say?" They would say, "You need to take that promotion."

I accepted, but then they would have these women who that was their job. They were typing memos all day with just ratings and how this show did. You're looking at a network schedule, and then we're comparing it to CBS and NBC. That's all they did all day, and they're typing all day. I said, "Wow. Thank God that I did go to college. Thank God that I had the internships that the School of Communication secured for me," because I would probably be sitting there typing all day. I didn't have to do that. Then, I had the luxury of--and this to me was kind of like being a celebrity--I had these numbers hot off the press and I would get on the elevator and stroll upstairs to the top floor with the top executives. They would have actors there, producers, and they knew my name and they knew I had these numbers that would make or break their show. They were so grateful.

Then, the afternoons, we'd have these two-hour lunches. Maybe I shouldn't say this now, but our old bosses, Capital Cities--ABC sold to Disney--but then they would give us a two-hour lunch break, especially if we had very good ratings the night before. The salesmen would bring these lunch vouchers, I guess, and they would say, "When you get off, you can go to the Met [Metropolitan Opera]," and I went to the opera for free. They would give us all these perks at ABC, and this is before Disney came in; maybe we had too many perks. The salesmen would sell commercial time for these top restaurants, the Lincoln Center, Midtown Manhattan by the Metropolitan Museum, and they would say, "You know, we just sold commercial time there. Here, you take this voucher, they have your name on it, and go have dinner after work." I really didn't cook, because after work I got to go eat at all these restaurants for free.

KR: You were enjoying the New York City nightlife.

DS: I loved it. I was like Debbie *Sex and the City* [laughter] with my girlfriends, afterwards. I wasn't a drinker, but I would go to the restaurants. I would go to the museums, and I would go to the opera. My life after work was incredible, working for ABC. I felt like some kind of celebrity. Then, I'd take my train back to Edison, New Jersey. [laughter]

Steve Vause--if he ever learns of this, he knows this is true--I would go to Steve's office, and I would be so tired sometimes. I would fall asleep and he [said], "Debbie, just go home, just go home. We've got your numbers, go home." Sometimes, he would say that to me, and I didn't realize later it was because I was anemic. I didn't realize it then. I would get tired in the afternoon, but I didn't know I was anemic then because I was so ratings-driven. I didn't pay much attention to that issue until I moved to Maryland and realized that I was anemic. Steve would say, "We've got your memo. We've got your ratings." Steve and Henry, "The numbers look good, go home. You've already given them to Bob Iger, go home." So, they would let us go home early.

The point was my schedule was critical from seven-thirty until, I'll say, twelve noon. After that, everything is out. [The] salesmen are gone; they're selling the time. The West Coast has everything. Basically, that job was a morning job, and if the ratings were good, the afternoon was like a party. It was a celebration that we just got the best ratings ever or we've got the best demographics ever, and then you prepare for the next day. You're doing your memos, and sometimes I'm in the two-hour lunches.

Then, after that, you're just on call if a salesman comes back from Madison Avenue and needs you to--I call it spinning now, because we would spin those numbers to make them look really, really good. You could always find a way, and I learned that at ABC. You could always deliver something positive about one of your network shows. Then, also in the afternoons, we'd watch a lot of productions from the West Coast. Back then, they had everything on tape, VHS tapes and betas and whatever. Some of the shows were horrible. So, everyone had a television in their office too, if you could imagine that. You're working for a network. On your desk is a television set, and you'd have to have it on and you'd have to know what's going on on all the networks. Then, cable came in too, later.
The point was, the afternoon, it's more visual. You're watching everything that's going on, and for me, because I was doing news, I had to know what was going on in the news.

At my office, I had every newspaper you can imagine delivered, and it's on my desk. I'm going through all the newspapers, watching all the news channels, and then, going in the system, because sometimes we'd have reports coming from Associated Press that there's going to be a press conference or whatever. So, then we'd go in and we'd have to change the network schedule and put that time block in. Greg Brown and I would do that, so that when the ratings would come in, it would go in the proper time block for that show, because you're breaking the network's schedule and you're putting in the breaking news, like the special report. It would say, "This is [an] ABC Special Report."

Well, we had to know all that in advance, because the numbers at Nielsen would go overnight to Florida. Dunedin, Florida, Tony? I don't know if you know where that is. Dunedin, Florida. Back then, it was electronically sent, and they would process the numbers in Florida overnight. So, that's how I got the ratings the next day in the morning, but they needed to have our schedule before we left. Before we left for the day, we would put in whatever changes we were told by ABC programming. If the president was going to speak or [there's] any special report in news, we'd have to go in and change the schedule. The primetime shows and the gameshows, they would just remain the same. If there was going to be like a press conference or a State of the Union address, anything like that, we'd go in and type that actual title in, so that they wouldn't get the wrong title and the wrong ratings. So, we would do that before we would go home.

Basically, we could go home at four. I mean, our job was done. I remember Mike Nissenblatt and I--Mike Nissenblatt did Affiliate Relations numbers, and he and I in the evening would walk together because we commuted to Jersey and he was in South Brunswick. His wife was a schoolteacher. I think they're still in South Brunswick; last time I checked--when he sent me something on Facebook--they're still there. So, he and I would walk, and we would come in early too in the morning. We took different trains, but we would get our breakfast from the cafeteria in the morning and start with the numbers. In the evening, we knew we were going back to Jersey; all the Jersey people were kind of like, "If they were going the same way, we'd walk the same way, get our train."

Sometimes, if we were tired, we'd take a cab, if you could get one. That's the thing about New York, can't always get a cab, so we would walk. We were all in great shape, because we did a lot of walking over there. Even some of the professors here who take the train, who live in New York, they're in great shape, because they do a lot of walking. I noticed the women here--Dean Michelle Shostack wears her sneakers. I see her and she takes the train, because she lives in New York. She and I talk about that. I always tell her how I miss doing that, because I did that for seven years. That was basically the schedule. [Editor's Note: Dean Michelle Shostack is the Assistant Dean and Director of the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences Educational Opportunity Fund.]

The fun part was we had a softball team, and this is back when they had the show *Moonlighting*. We called ourselves the Moonlighters. This was with Cybill Shephard, when she had that show. We called ourselves the Moonlighters, and we played against NBC or CBS, some of the banks in New York. We had a softball team, and we played in Central Park. Some evenings during that season, I was on the team, and so we got to play softball in Central Park. So, it was great.

The whole time I worked at ABC, it was just wonderful. Then, you meet people in the financial industry too, because we played against them too, so I got to network and meet people there as well. So, it was wonderful, and then we would do the March of Dimes Walkathon, where we walked from Central Park down to Battery Park. So, we did a lot of fun things. It was great.

I think for students--especially our students here in New Brunswick, and Newark, and Camden--if you can work in New York, I think it's great once you graduate. Great opportunities, great jobs, great networking, great connections. We do have the Rutgers Club of New York. They have a lot of great events going on there, and I know President Barchi, on occasion, has different

events there. He speaks over there in New York, because you do have a lot of alumni there. I think it's a great place to work when you're first starting out and you're starting out with your resume and you're meeting people and, believe it or not, you come full circle. Even to this day, I'm still meeting people. [Editor's Note: Robert Barchi served as the twentieth president of Rutgers University, from 2012 to 2020.]

In fact, I'm supposed to get together in August with Denise Walcott from ABC and Greg Brown, who's still at ABC. Yes, we're going to ABC, we're going to get together, and a few other people if they can manage. These are people that I met in the '80s, and believe it or not, we're still friends and still in touch.

A great story when we worked there--and if Oprah Winfrey ever hears this, oh my goodness. [laughter] When Oprah Winfrey was starting out, I was working in Chicago then when her talk show started. So, I wasn't at ABC, but later when I did join ABC--when I left People Express and joined ABC in '85--Oprah wanted to take her show national on ABC network. Some person there had the idea that it wouldn't work, and they turned her down. [laughter] This is a true story, and we still talk about that today, a missed opportunity. Oprah did [a] mini-series there, *The Women of Brewster Place*, but somebody there made a big mistake. I don't know if Oprah ever forgot about it, but it was the wrong call. Denise Walcott and I, to this day, still talk about that. That whoever did it--no one says the name of the person. It wasn't me. It wasn't Denise Walcott. It wasn't Henry DeVault. It wasn't Steve Vause. It wasn't Judy Chun. Somebody missed that opportunity, and the rest is history, as they say. Her talk show could've been distributed by ABC. Then, it was distributed by King World Distributors. It was an idea--it was presented to ABC. [Editor's Note: Oprah Winfrey hosted *The Oprah Winfrey Show* from 1986 to 2011. It is the highest-rated daytime talk show in American television history. *The Women of Brewster Place* was a 1989 mini-series that starred Oprah Winfrey. King World Productions, Inc. was a production and distribution company that was founded in 1964 and bought by CBS in 2000. It distributed *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.]

KR: Oh, okay.

DS: There was another show presented to ABC, and several others, which I won't mention because I know it's kind of sensitive. There were things like that that would happen where people kind of dropped the ball, but we were young people and we were making major network television decisions. I said, "How did I get into this?" Just like People Express, we're making major airline decisions, and then television, major network decisions. I just say I was truly, truly very fortunate to have the preparation that I had in college, because I never could've done those two industries without it; there's no way. So, I was very fortunate to do that, and then getting recruited to Arbitron, and then at Arbitron, getting recruited to Public Broadcasting System, PBS, while I was at Arbitron.

I go to PBS for a visit and [met] Jennifer Lawson, who was from Alabama originally, who left college to join the civil rights [movement] and then later completed her master's at Columbia University, an African American woman. Jennifer Lawson is in Paris as we speak because she sent a message. She was at the World Cup event recently. Then, she said, "Next up …" she's retired now, she said, "I'm going to the Jay-Z and Beyoncé concert." She sent this to us on

Facebook. Jennifer I met going to PBS for a visit when I was living in Silver Spring, Maryland, working for Arbitron. I'd read about her in Black Enterprise, and she was second in command at Public Broadcasting System at Alexandria, Virginia. I said, "Wow, this woman, I would love to work with." [Editor's Note: Born in Fairfield, Alabama, Jennifer Lawson is a civil rights activist who worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), before earning her MFA at Columbia University in 1974. In 1989, Lawson was hired by PBS as their first chief programming executive, which made her at the highest ranking Black woman in public television at that point. Lawson left PBS in 1995 and founded Magic Box Mediaworks.]

I went there, and she came out that day. It's funny how people just show up when you least expect it. She came out in the common area and she said, "Hello, how are you?" and I said, "Fine." I said, "I'm Debbie Shuford," and she said, "Are you here applying for a job?" I said, "Yes." Then, I'll tell you--and this is unbelievable--how within three days the phone rang, because there was somebody at Public Broadcasting Systems who had worked at ABC. Jennifer mentioned that she met me in the lobby area, and Sue Baumzer had worked at ABC. We never worked together because it was a major network. She was from New York, and she said, "You know, you should bring this woman in for [an] interview." Sue Baumzer told PBS to bring me in, and that's how I got the job at Public Broadcasting System in marketing and research because I had the ABC marketing and research experience.

I remember in 1990, March 1990, telling Henry that I was leaving, it was bittersweet, but I knew that I didn't want to be--I don't know if this is the right thing to say--but I didn't want to be in a ratings-driven environment in my forties. That's why I made the decision to leave, because media is a young environment. I think it is still today. You have a lot of young [people]. You have some older people who are top executives, but then if you're in middle management and you haven't made it to that point--and I think maybe that's why Steve left when he left, because he felt like he couldn't move on. Henry was his boss, and I guess Steve felt, "I'm in my fifties now, I'll just leave." It's a young environment in media. I just said, "I can't imagine myself being in my forties being at ABC in New York," and because I was thirty, I said, "Sometimes you have to make a decision or another three years, or five years, or ten years would go by and I'll still be here, but where will I be and is this the type of programming I want to do?" Some of the news I enjoyed, but some of the programs on the network I just thought were not [the] kind of programs that I really had an interest in, but Public Broadcasting Service did. They had quality programs, documentary films, which I love and still love today, and I'm still a big fan. So, that's when I said, "Maybe I should go and leave." When I left, they gave me a big party at ABC. Again, that's when they said, "You'll always have a home here." That was March 1990.

KR: You went from ABC to Arbitron?

DS: To Arbitron.

KR: That was a promotion to Arbitron?

DS: Yes. Arbitron was a big promotion in terms of salary and position. I mean, I went from having a supervisor to being a supervisor, and then I had like thirty women working for me,

thirty women working for me, and then college students for the first time. They would hire college students during the periods of the ratings where they have--this would be May, July, and November--the sweeps. They call them the sweeps, rating sweeps months. These are crucial months that the networks and local stations put on their best programming, so they can get their best ratings and sell it. So, it was very crucial to hire college students, and so I was able to hire college students in the Washington Metro area. Boy was that a job, because now you're doing human resources, and it's a fast-paced industry. I needed to hire a lot of students to help with getting these ratings, because back then they had diaries. In the ratings, they have the electronic system, but they also had diaries, which they probably still have some of those diaries, where people actually write in a diary what they're watching on television from the time they turn the television to the time they turn it off. So, I hired a lot of college students too, so now I had a big responsibility. It wasn't just me reporting to someone, I had people reporting to me, plus college students, so that's why they paid more. I had to work on weekends for the first time. It was like nonstop and total burnout after a year, because it was a lot of work and I think Arbitron should've hired more people.

Well, it turns out one of my friends, Bill Idzorek, who worked with me at ABC in Affiliate Relations, had gone to Arbitron a week before I did. They recruited him too, but Bill, within a week, came back to New York and said, "No way." I think because they wanted him to do weekend stuff, and it was a lot of work. He knew that, and that should've been my clue, "Don't go, don't go." As Oprah says, "That little voice in your ear tells you not to do something." I said, "Oh, I'm going to do it," because my sister lived in Maryland, so I had family there. I had a sister there, and we're very close. She's still in Maryland. So, I went. Bill, within a week, came back to ABC. He called ABC and said, "No, this is not for me," and they let him come back and get his job back.

When I went, Terrance Green from human resources at ABC said, "You know, we looked at your file. You only took two days off. You've been here almost seven years. You know, you can come back." I should've listened to Bill, and I should've listened to Terrance, I think, and I should've gone back to ABC. I had no idea the amount of work involved. No wonder they gave me the bonus and the increase, but the hours that I worked were unbelievable. At thirty years old, still fairly young, you can't have a life like that. Then, I was anemic and didn't realize, and I had to have surgery. I had only been there--let's see--close to a year, but the doctors there--I had great doctors there--Dr. Fred Mecklenberg said, "You need surgery." I said, "Oh, now that I have surgery, these people are depending on me." He said, "No, you have to have surgery," and then I had to go out for three months.

At that time, the television division at Arbitron was shut down while I was on surgery, so that's when I went to visit PBS and got a job right away. I think that happened because Jennifer Lawson saw me there, and she was a female, African American female--I don't know if she would say this or not--but I think it had a lot to do with it, that she saw me there and that Sue Baumzer, another female, and Sue was from New York. Sue and Jennifer probably said, "Here's a female," and they brought me in, in a good position, and it wasn't a secretary. Then, I said, "I should take that position." So, that's what brought me to Public Broadcasting System. [I'm] glad I did it, because from there, I met PBS producers and I got to produce again and I went on-air.

Doing the pledge drives, the PBS producers at WETA, which is the PBS station in Washington, DC, and Maryland Public Television, they invited me to go on-air. That's the first time I ever went on-air. So, I was producing, but I actually got to go on-air. So, I have tapes of doing on-air pledge drives. So, that started my on-air work, and I got to do voice overs at Maryland Public Television. So, you just never know where you're going to end up, and so I say that to say that even though I didn't return to ABC, I was in the Washington Metro area and I met great producers. Then, I started producing, and I had an opportunity to go on-air as on-air talent. So, I have my tapes, and I actually went on-air.

It's so funny because it's public television, but you'd be surprised. I would go to grocery stores and banks, and people would say, "Oh, I know you. I just saw you on television." [laughter] That was when I said, "Oh, wow, PBS. Really, you watch PBS?" because PBS numbers are different. It's a different type of viewing audience, but you do have a lot of--when we looked at the ratings and the research for Public Broadcasting System--you do have a lot of college-educated people, professional owners and managers. You have a lot of graduate students, a lot of Ph.Ds. who watch the type of [programming] that air on Public Broadcasting System.

That was a whole new world for me because it was not ratings-driven; it was quality television. Our salaries were paid through Congress and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and through members. As you hear in the pledge drive, "Through members like you." On public television, I remember saying, "People would donate for the type of programming they wanted to see." I still love PBS to this day.

I met Jennifer Lawson, and again, she was second in command, an African American female, at Public Broadcasting System then. She went on to work for Corporation for Public Broadcasting. She was general manager at Howard University's WHUT PBS station. She worked in civil rights, and she was wonderful. I remember when I left PBS, we had a nice lunch together. We talked about Alabama and Birmingham, and Jennifer actually drew the symbol for the Black Panthers [of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization]. She did a lot of civil rights work and traveled everywhere, and she's just a world traveler. She and her husband have their own production company in Washington, D.C., in the Adams Morgan area, and they still have it, but she's retired and a great woman. She was second in command, and I had not had the opportunity to see someone in television in that position until I got to Public Broadcasting System. So, that worked out quite nicely. [Editor's Note: Jennifer Lawson designed the symbol of the black panther, based on Clark University's mascot, for the political party Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) in Alabama.]

Then, at PBS, I met people from Maryland Public Television going there for meetings, which was in Owings Mills, Maryland. I met Jonathan Slade, who was a PBS producer, graduate of McDaniel College--that was his undergrad--and he had a master's of fine arts in film. He's the one that said, "I should put you on-air for the pledge drives." Then, later when I was in graduate school at American University, Jonathan said, "Can you help me create film courses?" and that was in 2006. He invited me to create a course at McDaniel College, and that's how I got into academia, through a PBS producer who returned to his undergrad school. [Editor's Note: Jonathan Slade is a professor and department chair of the Department of Cinema and Communication at McDaniel College.]

KR: Let's take this opportunity to have a break.

DS: Sure, sure.

KR: Then, when we come back on, we will talk about your on-air time.

[RECORIDNG PAUSED]

KR: We are back on. Before we took a break, we were talking about your time at PBS ...

DS: Yes.

KR: … And your appearances on-air.

DS: Oh, yes.

KR: Can you tell us what it was like to appear on-air?

DS: Oh, that was so exciting because the last time I was on-air was as a college student over on the Livingston Campus with Jerry Aumente and Roger Cohen, my two professors, when we were training. So, I had the training as part of the curriculum, but I never really had any plans to go on-air. I always thought I would do behind-the-scenes producing, directing, and writing. When I was invited by a colleague at Maryland Public Television to do pledge drive, I said, "Pledge drive? You mean the beg-a-thon?" I made jokes about it, because you're asking viewers for money because public television is not ratings driven. So, he said, "Sure." I said, "Well, I'm not really an on-air person." He said, "Oh, sure you are. Yes, you are."

When I arrived on the weekend for that first assignment, they had a makeup artist and hairstylist. I wore my own clothing, and I just wore a nice dress. It was kind of like going Hollywood for me, because now I had someone checking my makeup because you're going on set. So, you have to have a certain type of makeup when you're on television, not the makeup that we wear every day as every day wear, but a certain type of makeup that you wear under heavy lights. I remembered all the lighting equipment that I learned in college. So, they did the makeup and hair, and then they do a sound check and then they show you on camera. They had three cameras. Then, Jonathan, my friend Jonathan Slade, actually gave me a copy of the script, but then I was like, "I think I'm going to freeze," because it was live. [laughter] It wasn't taped.

I've always made jokes about pledge drives--because they're asking people for money--but if you're on-air, you're professional. When I first went on-air, at the very beginning, he said, "Are you okay?" I said, "I think I need a glass of water or something," because I was starting to freeze, choke up. I was like, "This is going on live. People are going to see me. I'm going to stumble," or whatever, but it went well. It went very well, and then they have a break because they're showing programming. During the programming, you have your producers like Jonathan Slade to come out and tell you, "We're going into the next segment of the pledge drive, and this

is your script." You're basically reading a teleprompter, so it's great. Thank god I had that training as well.

See, you never know what training you get as an undergrad or grad student. I know that we had training on teleprompters at the Livingston Campus in the Communications Department, so I knew how to read a teleprompter. Then, I also recalled doing that at ABC when they had the NABET Strike. That's the union for the technicians, and they had teleprompters there and I remember sitting next to Peter Jennings while he read the teleprompter. So, I had experience with the teleprompter from ABC Television Network as well as in college. So, I was so grateful when I saw the teleprompter, because I knew I could read it and I knew how to follow it. I had the training from undergrad with cameras and the equipment. [Editor's Note: NABET, or the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians, is a labor union for workers in the broadcasting industry that was formed in 1934.]

That made it easy for me, but I think if you're not accustomed to that, most people are like, "Where am I looking? What camera do you follow?" Well, you have the cameras and then you have a light on the camera, and the light on the camera tells you which camera you're looking at. You'll [have] actors even today--if you watch some of the shows, they'll look to the side--they're not really looking at the camera because they're not trying to do that. Whereas people who are trained in broadcasting know which camera to look at, and they know how to read a teleprompter and they know how to slow down. You pace yourself, because the prompter is rolling the words in front of you. So, you have to know how to read it so that it sounds like it's coming out of you naturally and that you're not just reading a script. Thank goodness for that, and Jonathan understood that.

He's a great friend, because he knew I had the training, and he had so much confidence in me, even when I didn't have it. I never thought I would go on the air. Again, that was an opportunity that was there, and you have to rise to the occasion. So, from that, they invited me to do voiceovers as well. Now I have on my resume that I have done writing, producing, directing but also on-air, as an on-air talent person and a voiceover talent person. I say this because some people don't think of this in terms of acting, but you're providing a voice for characters--if you choose to do that for a Disney animated movie, you could do that, or if you listen to the Public Broadcasting, you'll hear them say, "We want to thank viewers like you." You have someone actually saying that. They're getting paid to do that too. So, these are things that I was able to do that I never thought I would do, and I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. So, I was so grateful to Jonathan Slade for allowing me that opportunity and allowing me to have the teaching opportunity at McDaniel College, first as an adjunct and then as a visiting instructor. Then, that was my segue into academia.

When you're sitting in the classroom, don't be afraid, when you're doing your class schedule before the fall semester or the spring semester, [to] look at all the courses that are available, some that aren't available. Think of your electives as courses that one day you will be so grateful that you had that particular course. If you can, take a course in the business school and marketing. Don't be afraid to take a course in the College of Engineering, hopefully, in electrical engineering, something in a digital environment. Take all the writing courses that you can, because every job I've had--from the time that I left this campus--I've had to write something.

Whether it be for the hospital publication or a script or film analysis or ratings analysis, [I'm] always doing something pertaining to writing. So, take all the writing courses that you can in the English Department, in the writing center, wherever you can, and in the business school. Learn to write in the business school, because what I was doing with ratings--analyzing ratings and writing--I was doing writing for a business. Show business, it's a business, and so if you cross out show, it's a business. That goes for radio, television, film, cable, internet, and print. First and foremost, it's a business, so if you can take at least one business course on campus. I say that now, because I look at--coming full circle and going into all these areas of my career--and [I am] just so grateful for the courses that I had that were not in my major, just electives, just courses that I needed to take for graduation, but thank God I had those courses. I have to say, every course that I had on this campus--at some point in my career--there were learning lessons from that course that I had to actually implement in my work and the work that I was doing. So, I was just so grateful that I had such a well-rounded liberal arts education, because I didn't go into the medical field. [laughter] So, I really needed that liberal arts education, and I'm very grateful for that.

Then, again, standing in front of the camera and thinking about Professor Roger Cohen and Professor Jerry Aumente, and saying, "Wow, if they could see me now." They were teaching us that, "This is what you need to know," and here I am, I'm actually standing in front of the camera, reading the teleprompter, and doing production work that I learned on the Livingston Campus. So, that was exciting for me, especially the first day, because that's when I realized how valuable my education was and that I'm actually using it. Unlike working for the airline, I was actually using some of the skills that I acquired in journalism and media studies, so that was very exciting.

Then, when we wrapped after the first night of the pledge drive, I actually had a professional tape that I could use if I chose to go anywhere on television. I had a tape. Usually, when you're meeting with producers, writers, and directors, they want to see you on tape. Now, you have your iPhones. You can have someone tape you on [an] iPhone too, but back then, we had tapes and they would always ask for a tape, "Do you have a tape?" If you didn't have a tape, they just felt like you just didn't have the credentials, and they would say, "Come back and see us when you have a tape." Well, now I had a tape. Then, the pledge drive for Public Broadcasting goes on and on and on, several times a year. I actually have a box of tapes now of on-air work at different stages, different months, during pledge drive, but I actually have that professional experience and I have it on tape. I have a professional letterhead from Public Broadcasting System that actually says that I did on-air pledge drive work. So, that was great.

That was a great night, and we made a lot of money. [laughter] We gave out thank you gifts. We would say, "Thank you for your generous offer and generous gift to public television." So, I remember saying that and, "With your gift, we will give you this if you decide to donate to public television." So, I remember saying those words too. It was exciting, but I was doing some work that I thought was important, because these programs, in order to sustain these types of programs, they have to have donations from members and viewers like you, which is what we would say, because they're not ratings driven. So, they weren't selling commercial time. In order to produce quality programming, they depended on the pledge drives to raise that kind of money, and I was glad that I was a part of that. So, that was exciting.

Afterwards, I said, "Now am I an actor, because I'm on camera and I'm acting," but, really, I wasn't acting. I was being very open and very honest, but it was professional on-air experience. At that point, as I was driving home--I lived in Owings Mills, right down the road from the studio at Maryland Public Television--as I was driving back to my apartment, I realized that now I was doing professional on-air work. It didn't hit me until after I drove away. I said, "Wow, all these years later and now I'm on-air." That was a great feeling, and I felt like I had accomplished something. I was using some of the skills that I started out with in college, so that was a wonderful feeling the first night that I did pledge drive, very important.

KR: You talked about doing the on-air pledges and doing the voiceovers.

DS: Yes.

KR: What else did you do? What were your other responsibilities when you worked for PBS?

DS: Marketing and research, because they knew I had the experience in ABC. I like to say my day job at public television--now at Maryland Public Television in Owings Mills, Maryland--was marketing and research. Again, I wasn't doing--because public television isn't ratings driven--so I wasn't doing ratings, but I was doing more of a qualitative measurement. I was looking at Mediamark Research, which is a company that looks at viewing patterns of people who have some college education, maybe two years, four years, professional owners and managers. So, I would look at people who are viewing programs who had those credentials, looking at owners and managers, and if they watched public television.

We would get the research from Mediamark Research. I would look at those numbers, and we would actually show those numbers to corporations. In a way, it's similar to doing the ratings. I'm showing them where we've got college-educated people watching our documentaries. If you're selling a particular product, this is the audience that you want to reach, and so I was doing press kits for corporations through Maryland Public Television. [It was] more work than I ever did at ABC because we had so many people to do it, whereas Maryland Public Television, believe it or not, only had myself in that position. Then, they'd have a sales manager, and then he would hire maybe two or three salespeople, because public television didn't have the kind of budget that you would have at [a] ratings-driven network. They thought, "Well, she's from New York; she can probably do this and five other jobs." It was a lot of work, and because I didn't have the luxury of having the women working in the word processing pool or secretaries or assistants, it was just me. Some of the information I'd have to get from the Public Broadcasting System Corporate, which was in Alexandria, Virginia, and they would send stuff over to me. I would get some of their information because they had more equipment in terms of computers that can compile the data, but the raw data was my responsibility. What I would do is use graphs and charts, using that data to explain the type of viewers that watch public television versus the type of viewers that watch commercial television. I was able to do that, because I had worked in commercial television for seven years.

I could show the viewers in PBS versus the viewers at ABC, NBC, or CBS, and they really thought that was great. They knew, with me, they had a person who could give them a lot of

information at a fraction of the cost, because I had a very low salary working for them. The bonus was that I got to do the on-air work, which was great. I don't think I would've ever done on-air work had I not been invited to do that at Maryland Public Television. So, I had the best of both worlds, but it was a lot of work. After two years, I said, "I've done a lot of work for them, and they're in a very good position. I've left them with a lot of press kits, data," and they had a lot of shows that I worked on, a lot of kids shows.

[I was] working with children's television workshop, *Sesame Street*, and also *Kratt's Creatures*, at the time. They had a new program called *Kratt's* now; it's still on PBS. I did the original press kits for that program so that these producers could actually show how great this program would do. The program is still airing today. It has a different titled called *Kratt's*, but it's still airing today. I still have the original kit that I put together showing that this program would do well on television. [Editor's Note: *Sesame Street* is an American educational children's television series that has been on-air since 1969. *Kratt's Creatures* was an educational children's television series that aired fifty episodes in 1996. The show led to the unofficial spin-off called *Zoboomafoo*. Currently, PBS airs *Wild Kratts*, which is a live action, flash-animated television series created by the creators of *Kratt's Creatures*.]

I learned all that at ABC, and so when I was at Public Broadcasting System, that was like being on vacation. Coming from ABC in New York and then going to public television, I was able to do that kind of work in my sleep, because I knew it very well. I knew the ratings. I knew quantitative and qualitative research. I learned all that at ABC, and I learned on-the-job training. I didn't learn that prior to going to ABC or PBS. I was never really formally trained at Nielsen or Arbitron. I kind of learned at ABC, and it was my boss, Henry DeVault, at ABC [that] said, "You know, this is New York. It's sink or swim. You either have it or you don't."

I learned everything about marketing and research at ABC television network and [was] very grateful for it, because I probably would have had to have gone back to school for a business degree. At ABC--that environment--I mean, they gave us the opportunity to do things that we probably never would have done on our own, and we probably would have had to go to graduate school for that kind of training. I'm quite certain of that. Denise Walcott and I talk about that even today, the decisions that we were making, and then to leave ABC and go to PBS and then now I'm making those decisions on my own. I'm making it for Public Broadcasting System, and they're relying on me.

They actually have programs that go out on over 353 television stations across the country. So, they're relying on my data to prove that these programs should be on Public Broadcasting, on the national programming service. So, that was a big responsibility. Then, at that point, I was in my thirties, but it was great that they gave me the on-air opportunity, so, again, you never know. I mean, I'm hired to do marketing research based on my ABC credentials, but then I get to do on-air. So, if I wanted to do on-air now, I very well could.

In fact, while I was at Maryland Public Television, someone I met there suggested that I go to a casting agency. [laughter] I said, "I don't really have time for that." They said, "No, you're doing on-air. We saw you on the pledge drive." I'm like, "You can't even go to the grocery store now. I can't go to the grocery store or the post office, and people will see me now just doing

pledge drives, not a major act or anything." Then, I go to a casting agency, and I didn't think anything of it. They, back then, were taking these old Polaroid pictures and they have your resume. They were shooting a film with Will Smith. They were doing *Enemy of the State*. [Editor's Note: *Enemy of the State* is a 1998 American action film starring Will Smith.]

KR: Oh, wow.

DS: This is in the '90s.

KR: Yes.

DS: I'm like, "These people are never going to call me, and it doesn't matter because they have to get up really earlier to be on set." I remember that from training in college. While they're shooting in Baltimore, they never called me. Then, I get a call at night and my son's asleep, and so this is, I think, '96. So, he was born in '92, so he's four. I get a call at ten o'clock at night saying, "We're looking at your photo and we need you on set." I said, "Set? What are you talking about?" They're like, "We need you." I said, "I work for Public Television. What set are you talking about?" They said, "No, no, no, no, we have your photo here and your resume. We need you to go to Washington, D.C." I said, "Washington, D.C.? For what?" They said, "For the movie. We're shooting the movie *Enemy of the State*. Haven't you heard of it?" I said, "Yes, I heard you guys were shooting down there, but I'm not an actor." "Oh, yes, you are." They said, "We need you to be there. We'll pay you." I said, "Look, it's ten o'clock on Saturday night. I have a four-year-old," and they said, "Bring him with you." His dad is at work and his dad is a physician, so he's on call. Then, I call him and he says, "Well, I'll meet you there." Well, now, I've got to get my son up at four in the morning. My son wakes up and he's like, "What's going on?" I said, "I'll tell you on the way." So, I'm driving from Owings Mills an hour to Washington, D.C., and they tell us I'm parking on K Street somewhere. There's this driver. When you watch the credits of films and they list the names of all the drivers, they're important. The drivers drive you to the set, because they don't want people to know where you're going. You'll have the whole general public out there.

Well, it's dark when I get there, and then this big guy says to me, "Put little man …" he called my son little man, because my son is like four years old, "Put him up front with me," because you've got all these actors getting in the back of this van. He puts my son in the front, puts the seat belt on him, and we're all climbing into this van and he drives to the set. Mind you, it's still dark. Will Smith is there, and the other actors are there. They're in the trailers. I said, "This is crazy. I don't even know what I'm doing here." His dad is right there. He says, "I'll take Miles with me," and then he says, "Well, I want to be [an] actor; they didn't call me." Then, they leave. Six o'clock, we're still sitting around, and then hair and makeup calls me. Again, I said, "Here's the glamour again, the Hollywood stuff," and this is Washington, D.C. They do the hair and makeup. Then, we sit again and they have catering, full breakfast.

You're waiting for them to call you for the scene that you're actually in. You're doing more sitting than anything, eating, socialize. I'm meeting all these extras and other actors. Then, they say, "Okay, we need you now." So, one of the assistant directors comes and grabs me and says, "And you stand right here," and he shows me my mark. Will Smith is coming to the ATM to try

to get money; that's the scene with the ATM. He says, "Okay, we're going to put you on your mark, and then Will Smith will come out of his trailer, not just yet."

Well, who shows up? The mayor of Washington, D.C., Marion Barry and his entourage. [laughter] This guy, his whole history, we don't have time for that today. He shows up with [an] entourage and comes over; he thinks I'm this big Hollywood movie star. I just got a call at ten o'clock the night before. I'm just doing this because some of my colleagues in PBS said I should. He comes over to me, and I'm trying to ignore him because the director and assistant director are getting ready. Finally, they come out. Then, he goes and walks off with his entourage. That's how I met the mayor of Washington, D.C. Then, Will Smith comes out. I'm supposed to be a business woman there, and he's trying to get money out of the ATM. Of course, if you know the movie--and I won't give it away--he can't get the money out. That was my scene then.

KR: You are actually in the movie?

DS: I am actually in the movie.

KR: Okay. Well, I am going to rewatch the movie.

DS: I've got to rewatch it too.

KR: Because I have seen it.

DS: I'm on the street, and then I'm walking to work. You're talking in between takes and what have you. It's a long day, but you get paid and you're eating all day. You're sitting around most of the time waiting to get called and eating. I'm talking to someone saying, "I used to work at ABC." Well, they said, "Well, you know they're shooting this film about ABC." Next thing I know, ABC is doing a pilot, and I said, "I don't have time to do this stuff now." Then, he said, "Well, if you're ever interested, Central Casting casts for everybody." So, I kind of kept it on my desk, and then years later, ABC is doing a pilot through Central Casting. Again, and they call me, because they knew I worked for ABC. So, I get out there, and at this point, I'm in graduate school. This is in 2001, and they're doing this pilot. The director and assistant director says, "We know you worked for ABC. You know what you're doing. We're going to need you to help direct this pilot." So, I get to assist them directing a pilot. Pilots, I used to watch when I worked at ABC. Now, I'm actually on a set helping them direct one.

KR: What show was it?

DS: This was a show--it was going to be on lawyers and it was untitled. Again, this is early 2000s, so this is 2001 and it's right after 9/11. So, it probably--when I think about it now--they're doing *Scandal*. I didn't think of it then, but now when I learned about this show *Scandal*, about the Washington lawyers, that's what it was about. It took ABC all that time--from 2001 until today--when they started doing *Scandal* a few years ago--but they had that in mind. The person that had that idea probably kept pushing it, and eventually they get *Scandal*. [Editor's Note: *Scandal* was a television series that aired on ABC from 2012 to 2018.]

KR: Were there any notable actors in that pilot?

DS: In the pilot, no. What I learned when I worked at ABC, and this is 2001, I'm in graduate school and I'm working on [an] ABC project. Then, 2002, I'm working at ABC News, so it's like ABC followed me to Washington, D.C., but they didn't. They had untitled, and the producers of this pilot had the idea of doing a show about lawyers in Washington, D.C., where there are tons of attorneys in Washington, D.C. They had the foresight to know that one day this show may be a big hit. We fast forward, and look at *Scandal* and look at *How to Get Away with Murder*. [Editor's Note: *How to Get Away with Murder* is an ABC television series that has been on air since 2014.]

When you look at networks like ABC, they have the data, but at times, there are executives who will say, "No," and then years later they'll actually do a show. So, when I think about that pilot, I'm like, "You know, whoever was doing this back then knew that one day ABC would say, 'Yes,'" and then they get *Scandal* and it does well. You have people who don't take no for an answer, and that's why I tell students, "Don't take no for an answer." Based on my own experience working at ABC, leaving ABC, in grad school, then get pulled back to--it's like when Robert De Niro says in *Godfather II*, "Every time I try to leave, they pull me back in." I get pulled back to ABC doing a pilot, working in their news division. So, it was an untitled show, but I got to work on the set for the pilot. ABC did not pick up that particular pilot, but years later, they pick up *Scandal* with Shonda Rhimes. They call her production company Shondaland, but she came at the right time. I remembered that these producers wanted that show then. They said no to them, but then they say yes years later, the same thing with the gameshows. [Editor's Note: Shonda Rhimes is a screenwriter, director and producer that has created many successful ABC television series, such as *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*, and *How to Get Away with Murder*. Her production company is named Shondaland.]

I forgot to mention before the break that when I worked at ABC during news, Henry DeVault came to me one day. He said, "You've got all this time, you're done for the day. We're looking at game shows, and I need you to pull raw data on game [shows]." Well, the original game shows were before I was born, and they had scandals. Some of these quiz shows were rigged and that's the history, and the History Department would know that if you look at the history of gameshows in America. So, Henry says, "It's going to be a tough job for you. I know you're doing news ratings, but I need you to pull ratings on the original game shows." I'm like, "You're talking about the early '50s, these game shows on television and the scandals?" and he said, "Yes." Then, I go to the computer. I call Nielsen, and I order a lot of stuff. They actually gave me the data from the game shows in the '50s. So, what I did was I looked at the numbers, and I said, "You know, Henry, this may not be such a bad idea. These shows did very well in the '50s, and maybe it's time that ABC take a second look. Maybe they'll do well now."

I put together a memo on game shows, and then after I left ABC, now they have these reality shows and game shows. They've got *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* Then, they brought back a lot of game shows on ABC now. My original memo--too bad that I don't have it with me--it's still at ABC in the files. The numbers that I crunched--back before I left in 1990--they use those numbers when they put on the game shows that they show in the summer. I showed them, I said, "Maybe it's time for ABC to venture off and bring back the game shows. I know the sitcoms are

doing well, but look at the game shows again." I gave that to my boss; they kept the memo. [Editor's Note: *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* was a game show series on ABC that aired from 1999 to 2014.]

Now, this summer, I'm looking at ABC network, and they've got all these game shows on again. Again, you never know. I left those memos at ABC because the property belongs to ABC, but actually I'm the one who crunched the numbers, as we say. I did the raw numbers. I did the memo. I left it at ABC, because it's their property. Everything I did for them belonged to them, everything on my desk, everything, all the numbers, everything on the computer. The work was completed, and then fast forward, they've got the gameshows. Then, fast forward, they got the pilot that I was working on that they didn't pick up, but then they pick up *Scandal*.

I feel like, in my own way, I had a part in both, which I hadn't even thought about it until today, sharing this now today. So, I'm like, "Wow, I can't believe I did those numbers for gameshows back then, and now they have gameshows on ABC." I can't believe I did a pilot for this program on these attorneys in Washington, D.C., and now they have *Scandal*. So, it's a great story, and I share that story with you today because I feel that it's important and it's important for students to know that you just never know.

Don't be afraid to take as many courses as you can in your four years here, or if you're a transfer student, your one year or two years. At some point in your career, you will use that knowledge and what you've acquired in that classroom from that professor, from that media professional, or from that adjunct professor, or that part-time lecturer. You never know. Whatever they're doing in their careers or they're sharing in the classroom, you need to embrace that, and you need to stay in touch and connected with that particular person and your classmates, because you just never know. Everything you learn on campus you will use at some point in your life off campus. I firmly believe that, because I know it's happened for me.

It's just interesting that I got to do the on-air work. I got to do that pilot. I was the person who was on the other end looking at pilots, saying, "This is never going to make it on-air," when I worked at ABC. Now, here I am in graduate school and I'm standing here on a set doing a pilot that I know is never going to make it, at that point, but then years later, it did make it. I think that pilot that they were doing, at the time, it had a little too much violence. It really did. I didn't want to say that to the directors because that wasn't my job to do that, but coming from the environment of working in marketing and research, I knew at the time with that particular pilot, there was too much violence involved. Once ABC saw that pilot and they went and they actually presented that pilot during focus groups, Broadcast Standards and Practices [would] absolutely say, "No." I knew that, but that wasn't my job at the time and it wasn't my place to say that. They were trying to complete this pilot, but they had too much violence, I think. I think that's probably why that particular one did not make it on the air.

I know that we had a professor here, our very own Professor Avery Brooks--I forgot to mention. At the time that I worked at ABC, Professor Avery Brooks worked on *Spenser: For Hire*, and he worked here as a professor at Mason Gross, taught theater here. He was at ABC, at the time I was there in the '80s, on a program called *Spenser: For Hire*. They had a spin-off, and they gave him a program called *Hawk*. That was his character's name. The only regret I have about ABC

is that they cancelled *Hawk*. [Editor's Note: Actor and educator Avery F. Brooks graduated from Livingston College in 1973 and the Mason Gross School of the Arts in 1976. *Spenser: For Hire* was an ABC television series that aired from 1985 to 1988. *A Man Called Hawk* was an ABC television series that aired for one season in 1989. It was a spin-off of *Spenser: For Hire*.]

I didn't do those focus groups. They didn't allow me to do those focus groups, at the time, because they knew that I was a graduate of Rutgers and that Avery Brooks, Professor Brooks was my professor at Rutgers. So, there was a bit of a conflict of interest. They know if I had done the focus groups, I never would've had that show cancelled. I would not have approved it, but I knew that my colleagues did the focus groups and I said to them, "This is a great show." I think they thought I only said that because he taught me as a student here. Again, this is one of my classes; it was a theater class. I wasn't a theater major, but I did take that theater class here as an elective. I know that they knew that Avery Brooks was my former professor, so they didn't allow me to do the focus group. They cancelled *Hawk*.

I know Tony mentioned Urkel. They kept Urkel's show because it was a comedy, and at that time, they were big on situation comedies. They had not gone into reality television or game shows or more dramas like *Scandal*. So, they wanted to make people laugh, and they thought that middle America--when they did the focus groups out there--that's what they wanted to see. What I learned years later and what I learned now, from talking to some people who worked with me at the time. before they took the buyout--when Disney came in and offered the buyout, a lot of my colleagues left. They cancelled *Hawk* and kept Urkel. Tony? [Editor's Note: Deborah Shuford is referencing the character Steve Urkel from the ABC television series *Family Matters*, which aired from 1989 to 1997.]

AD: TGIF at this time? That was a big thing growing up for me. [Editor's Note: From 1989 to 2000, ABC's Friday night television block was called TGIF, or Thank God It's Friday. It had popular comedies such as *Full House, Family Matters,* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.*]

DS: Yes, that's it, TGIF. Thank you, Tony. That was a big thing, right?

KR: Urkel was on *Family Matters*.

DS: *Family Matters*. TGIF, Thank God It's Friday. It was a family show, whereas a show with our Professor Avery Brooks was a drama. He was a private investigator, and it was a great drama. It's funny because then students here, when I was teaching a course here, one of the students, when he learned that I worked at ABC, said, "Oh, my dad used to love this show called *Hawk* on ABC." He brought the tapes into class. [laughter] I had maybe a couple clips that I shared with them, and his dad was a big fan, he told me. So, it's funny that once the student learned during intros--first week of class--that I had worked at ABC and he told his dad and his dad said, "Oh, I used to love this show called *Hawk*." I told the students, "Yes and Professor Avery Brooks taught here." This student brought the tapes in, we watched the clips, and they said to me, the class said, "Why did they cancel this show?" I said, "Because of TGIF," as Tony just shared.

They wanted the image of being family friendly, and I think, today, that the purpose for that was because they knew that Capital Cities was moving into selling the company to Disney. I'm quite certain our business school would probably look at [that] or if I shared with them some of the things that I saw as I was planning to move to PBS. I saw some things going on, that I think they were putting ABC in place to prepare for selling this company to Disney. Maybe--I could be wrong--but maybe they just felt that TGIF was going well, the ratings were going well. Middle America loved that; they loved Urkel. Hawk [was] this huge character that they were probably afraid of, but yet now Disney produced *Black Panther*. You've got scary characters in *Black Panther*, but it did so well. [Editor's Note: *Black Panther* is a 2018 American superhero film starring Michael B. Jordan.]

Everything has its time and place, and at that time, it wasn't the direction that ABC was going in. I don't fault them. I think I have a clear understanding as to why I think they did it, but it was how they did it. It could've been done in a better way, I think, than how it was done. I don't think the production crew knew in advance, and it was released in the news and the media. I think they should've been told in advance. No one told me, and they knew that I was a Rutgers grad and that he was my professor and they didn't tell me.

Also, one of my roommates that I mentioned early on, Tracey Ross, who left Douglass to become an actress, she had a connection to ABC. At that time, she was on one of the soap operas, *Ryan's Hope*. When they did focus groups with her character, they subsequently released her and Avery, and they knew that I knew these people. We all had our Rutgers connection, so they didn't tell me. I think they didn't tell me because they just didn't want me to know, and they knew I would've objected and I would have. I would've done my best with my best efforts to convince them that they were making a mistake, and I would've done that. Even today, I would've done that. At the one point, we had Professor Avery Brooks working on a major program *Spencer: For Hire,* then his spin-off *Hawk*, and Tracey Ross, my roommate from freshman year at Douglass, who was an actress, who was working on one of our soap operas. We all had those ties. [Editor's Note: *Ryan's Hope* is an ABC daytime soap opera that aired from 1975 to 1989. Tracey Ross joined the cast of *Ryan's Hope* as Diana Douglas, appearing in show from 1985 to 1987.]

They knew that I was "Scarlet Forever," and if they had told me, I probably would've lost my job, but I would've gone right upstairs to management and I would've said, "You know, you're making a mistake." I think I would've gone in on weekends and crunched those numbers, and I would've proved that you're making a mistake. I know they made a mistake because Professor Brooks, he's still acting and doing great things and doing theater. Tracey went on to get [an] NAACP Award for another soap opera called *Passions* on NBC. So, we lose her at ABC, she goes to NBC and gets awards and stays on this program for ten years. We lose Professor Avery Brooks and he's doing everything. Film, he does. He did *American History X* [and] played the principal.

I know that they made a bad decision. Just like the Oprah decision, they made a bad decision, and Denise Walcott and I talk about this now. We're going to get together later this summer and talk about how we tried to show them, "You're making a bad decision here," but at the time the executives just didn't see it that way, because it's a business. In a way, I can't fault them, but

that's why I say it's kind of bittersweet. That's when I said, "You know what? They're not listening to me. I think I'm going with PBS." They didn't listen to me with *Hawk*, that program with my roommate, *Ryan's Hope*. As long as I did the news ratings, that was fine, but I had other ideas of things I wanted to do. I knew I couldn't do it there, the creative ideas that I wanted to do. So, you don't want to have regrets.

I'm so glad I worked at ABC, and I'm glad I worked at Arbitron even though, Arbitron, oh, my goodness, I wish I had done the year and then gone back to ABC and then go on from ABC to PBS, but as they say, "Hindsight is 20/20." I've come full circle, but I do think that ABC, those were judgement calls, management calls, that Denise and I couldn't make. They did make a mistake with my roommate Tracey Ross, because they had other soap operas. They cancelled *Ryan's Hope*, but by then, she was doing great on NBC. Professor Avery Brooks was doing great in theater, and then later he did a lot of films. He did *American History X* and [is] still acting today in theater.

Those are missed opportunities for ABC, and of course Oprah, that fiasco. That still haunts them to this day. [laughter] Alan Wurtzel is now top at NBC. He left for a better opportunity at NBC, and I'm sure if I ever go to NBC and speak to Alan, he'll probably say, "People from ABC still talk about that." Then, there was the thing that we did with Dick Clark. One of my coworkers, Alan Goldberg, Dick Clark wanted to do [a program] before he passed away. He always did the *New Year's Rockin' Eve with Dick Clark*. Well, Alan turned downed something that Dick Clark wanted to do. Dick Clark sent a scathing, scathing letter to ABC Marketing and Research Department, to Alan, addressed to him, "How dare you turn down this pilot for this program." To this day, I remember that, and this is for a friend of mine, Alan. Alan Goldberg had [an] office next to mine, and this was the joke every year during New Year's, because Dick Clark had this show on ABC forever, until he passed away. He wanted to do another special--another program--and Alan just said, "Based on the numbers in Nielsen Media Research, this particular show won't do well, but your *New Year's Rockin Eve* is doing great." Dick Clark Productions did not like that letter. It was a rejection letter that Alan had to do because you're running a business. Alan got this letter from Dick Clark and Dick Clark Productions, and he framed it and put it in his office. [laughter] That was the joke at ABC. [Editor's Note: Alan Wurtzel was the President of Research and Development at NBC Universal. In 2017, he moved into a senior advisory role. He spent twenty-one years at ABC before going to NBC. Dick Clark was a television host who lived from 1929 to 2012. He hosted *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin Eve* on ABC from 1973 to 2004.]

We had a lot of hit and misses. We made some good decisions and we made some not-so-good decisions, but that's the nature of the business and that's why they say, "That's show business." Well, if you watch *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, at the end, he says, when he's on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and thinks he's going to have this big hit record and it doesn't work out that way, and then he says, "Well, that's show business." So, that's what we say now, "Well, that's show business."

When your show is cancelled, you just say, "That's show business." When your film or pilot is cancelled, "That's show business." That's the nature of the business, and if you watch television today and within two weeks, if they don't have high ratings--and Tony's shaking his head--[the program will be cancelled]. It's a business. Remember, it's show business, and I tell students

here, "Cross out show, it's a business." All the business students get that in our business school here. That's basically what it is. So, that was my show business experience, the show and the business aspect of it. I learned a lot.

KR: What was the next step of your career after Maryland Public Television?

DS: Oh, after Maryland Public Television, it's interesting because, believe it or not, when I was leaving Maryland Public Television, I said, "What do I do now?" Then, I started doing the freelancing, so I did more freelancing on-air stuff for WETA, which is the Public Broadcasting Station in Washington, D.C. So, basically, you're getting gigs, so it's freelance, nothing permanent. I did voiceovers for Public Broadcasting System. It's a business, again, so sometimes you have work, sometimes you don't. Then, when I left them, I know my son was going into his first year of full-time school, because I had him in private school pre-kindergarten, but then, when he started kindergarten, I said, "Well, maybe I should go into education." Then, I decided, "Well, I'll do that because I'll have the flexible hours, I'll have the steady paycheck, and I can still do the freelance work on the side."

Then, I went to Howard County Public School Systems and worked for them. Because I had worked in New York, summer of '77, prior to starting college, for Willowbrook Developmental Center, I had experience working with the mentally challenged and special needs, so Howard County hired me. So, I got to work with special needs students. Then, from there, a friend of my brother's, who worked for D.C. school systems--they needed--D.C. public school system has such a challenge, even today. I know during the break, Tony and I were talking about different school systems across the country. Well, they needed teachers, and they needed special education teachers, and I had the experience in Willowbrook at Staten Island, New York. My brother from Minnesota--University of Minnesota, he graduated from there--he had a friend who was hired, and she was from the South as well, Katrina. Katrina worked in D.C. Public Schools, and she called me and said, "You know, we need teachers." I said, "Well, I'm starting graduate school now. I taught in Howard County to save money for graduate school, and now I'm ready to go." She says, "Well, we really need teachers. We'll pay you well. We'll give you a bonus." They were giving like five thousand-dollar bonuses; they just needed teachers in the classroom. I said, "I don't have [an] education degree. My degree is in journalism and media." She said, "Well, we'll send you to classes, and we'll give you a provisional teaching license," because teachers have to have a license to teach. I said, "Okay, I'll do it for one academic year, but I'm in graduate school, so I won't do it longer than that, because I've really got to get into graduate school."

I had talked to Roger Cohen, and he says, "Time to do digital." This was '99 to 2000, and I started graduate school full time in January 2001. From 1999 to 2000, D.C. Public Schools, when you get to August and you really have to have teachers ready to go, they were getting desperate. They were looking for college-educated people who they could train to be in the classroom, and then they had reached out to Teach for America. They had a lot of young teachers from Teach for America. They had a lot of graduates from George Washington University, Georgetown, Howard University, Morgan State, everywhere in the Washington Metro and Baltimore area. So, I said, "Okay, I'll do it, but I can't do it longer than 2000. I'm getting ready for graduate school." Then, I started teaching there, and I had my own classroom.

I had a provisional license to teach special education, and it was some of the most rewarding work I've ever done.

KR: What grade level and what school?

DS: I taught at Turner Elementary, and this is Southeast D.C. So, it was a very challenging area because there was a lot of people who weren't working in that community, and so they didn't have a lot of money. I know Tony mentioned in Florida the same thing, plus southeast D.C. This is like in the shadows of Capitol Hill. This is before graduate school, before I went to the White House, and so I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness, this is right in Washington D.C., how could this be?" I just couldn't imagine, but when I got there, kids are kids. They're grabbing you and they're hugging you, and I ended up spending a lot of my own money. When we went to training--in D.C., they send you to training [in] July and you're in a class. In the South, you go to school in August, and they start early. We're in training, and they're showing us all these books and all these materials that they have. I know Tony mentioned having a lot of old books in Florida.

AD: Yes.

DS: Well, when we walked into the classroom after orientation, I'm like, "Where are my books?" So, I went to the principal and they didn't really have any books. I'm like, "Well, how can I teach?" She was from the South. She says, "Well, you have to go old school, like the southern teachers." I'm like, "What does that mean?" She said, "Well, your family is from Alabama." I said, "Yes, but I went to school in New Jersey." [laughter] I sounded like this dork. I'm like, "I went to school in New Jersey, Essex County, and we had stuff. We had teachers in my art classes who were from SoHo in New York and from the museums and galleries in my high school at Arts High. So, we had everything." I said, "Now, you're telling me to walk in here, I don't even have chalk," because they had the old chalk boards. She's like, "Well, you've got to improvise." So, I ended up going to these teacher's stores and spending my own money, because I had to scramble. I'm like, "I don't have anything to teach with. The books haven't arrived." So, a lot of the teachers told me about these teacher's stores, education stores. I didn't know anything about them because I wasn't an education major at all. So, I go to these stores, and they had given us a voucher. It had to be like 250 dollars; that was it. Well, later, I learned that when you're doing your taxes you can file 250 [dollars] as an educator for classroom materials. So, that's probably why we got that; it wasn't cash. You go to these stores and you're thinking you're going to get all this stuff for 250 dollars.

This is 1999. Now, I've got to move from Maryland closer to D.C., and that's when I moved back to Fairfax County. Then, I've got to get my son enrolled in school, but I'm thinking, "I'm in the store, and I've got to get school supplies for my son. He's going to second grade. I'm in here buying special education stuff." Well, when I got to the cashier and they rang up the bill, I ended up spending another two hundred dollars and I hadn't gotten my signing bonus yet. I needed this stuff from the training they gave me in the summer for special education so I could get the provisional license. I knew I needed all this stuff, so I bought it.

Then, I get to the classroom--the teachers always arrive a week or two before the students--I had to clean the classroom myself. It was just so dirty, and it was [an] old school. I think, Tony, you mentioned old schools in the South. Oh my god, this classroom, it was so old and dingy and dirty and in the basement, and then, they brought in [an] old-fashioned air conditioner. I had to open the windows. I had my son with me. I didn't let him really touch anything, but he said, "Well, let me just wipe down the desks." I let him wipe down the desk with gloves on, but I had to actually scrub the floors. The windows had old roll-up shades, and they were all dirty, the shades with the string in the ring. I had to go and buy new shades. They were so filthy that I just took them down. I bought new shades. I brought in some rugs to go over some of the areas of the floor. It was linoleum, and it didn't have the outdoor carpet we have here in the new Academic Building [referring to Academic Building West on the College Avenue Campus]. Well, it didn't have that. Some of the floor was missing. [laughter] I didn't want the kids to come into that kind of environment, because I recalled how bright my environment was at Chancellor Avenue Elementary School, Arts High School, Douglass College, Rutgers College, Livingston College, and I'm saying, "How can you learn?" So, I bought rugs to cover some of those holes in the floor, and new shades. I put posters over some of the cracks in the walls. So, it was a very bright, beautiful classroom when they walked in.

This is when I started thinking about the Black Panthers--the breakfast program.
That was started by the Black Panthers, and then, I didn't realize--and it never dawned on me--how important that was. Well, a lot of these kids didn't have breakfast before they came to school, so the school provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner in Southeast D.C. For some of these kids, that was all they had, and I didn't realize until after the first holiday, because they start before Labor Day. They come back after Labor Day, and they were so hungry. You're in Washington, D.C., [the] nation's capital, but there are some parts of D.C. that--the part over by American University and the embassies--those schools had a little bit more, and they're in the same school district. I wanted these kids to have what they had over at American University, over by Georgetown. So, I ended up spending my own money, and then I went to the principal and I said, "Well, they're in the nation's capital. Have they ever been to [the] Smithsonian?" They had never been to the museums, so you know me, coming from Douglass, I organized all the teachers and got the city to send city buses. Those kids, they're in walking distance of the school, so they didn't take the yellow buses like my son took in Fairfax County. We had the city buses to come into the playground, park there, and I said, "Let's go to the Smithsonian. Let's learn about history. Let's show them what they can be." So, we did that.

Then, I contacted some friends at Howard University, because at PBS, when I worked at PBS, I used to go to Howard University, they would have a big career internship program, for three days, at Howard. At PBS, they would send us to recruit college students from Howard to work at PBS. I remember that and I had friends at Howard, and I remember calling them and saying, "I'm going to bring these kids to Howard." So, they arranged for us to have the kids come to Howard University, after going to the Smithsonian. I showed them the portrait of General Oliver Otis Howard, who was a founder of Howard University, so they could see the history and make the connection. [Editor's Note: General Oliver Otis Howard served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War. Following the war, he served as Howard University's first president from 1869 to 1874.]

These kids in my special needs class were from third grade to seventh grade. The special needs, D.C. didn't have the money, so they blocked them all in. So, I called my aunt in Alabama and she said, "Well, back in the day when we had segregated schools, that's what we had." You would have sections of your classroom with different grade levels. So, I learned that from my aunt Erma--that I shared with you early on--who was an educator. So, that's how I divided the classroom, by their actual ability. They can all learn but at different levels, and they were different age groups. I said to the principal, "You've got kids in here from third grade through seventh grade?" and she said, "Well, our elementary school goes up to eighth grade." I said, "How can I do this? I mean, how is it age appropriate for a third grader versus [an] eighth grader?" She says, "You'll figure it out." I had to call my aunt in Alabama because I didn't go to segregated schools and I didn't have that experience. My aunt helped me with setting up the classroom. Then, I decided to take them to Howard, and thank God I knew the people from Howard University at the time. I hadn't started working at Howard yet; I just knew some of those people there. We had the best tour for those kids and their faces lit up.

Well, here's the other thing, you're taking these kids, so you've got to have a lunch. Some of the kids had a bag lunch. That little birdie or voice that you hear that Oprah mentions now, I think I kind of said, "I'd better stop and get some Oscar Meyer deli meats, just in case. Get enough for everybody." I remember the night before, I'm making these sandwiches, and my son is like, "Mom, I'm not eating those. I'm eating lunch in school." My son--I paid for his lunch in school, because I left so early, and so he got lunch in school. He said, "Why you are making all the …." I said, "I'm making it for my students." Then, I made the sandwiches and he said, "Well, let me get my juice boxes." So, he got his juice boxes because I used to buy stuff in bulk for him for his snack time at school. Fairfax County had everything. This is why I felt so bad. Fairfax County is one of the wealthiest counties in the country. It's like our Bergen County and other wealthy counties. Well, they had everything. They had hot lunch, and so my son had some snack things. So, we go in pantry and pull that out, and then I just grabbed all that and then I started making lunches. Then, I brought it with me, and I took them on that trip and their faces just lit up, that somebody actually cared enough to do that. Then, I had some of the parents who they didn't have money but they had time, and they would come. So, they came on the bus with us as chaperones, and they gave out the lunches. They just hugged me afterwards, and they said no one had ever done that for their kids.

It was a great day at [the] Smithsonian, and then we capped it off at Howard University. We had the city buses to do it, so we didn't have to drive our cars, and the city buses from D.C. drove us everywhere. Even the D.C. police officers thought it was the best thing. It was such a sense of community and to take them to Howard, oh, my God. At Howard University Hospital, you talk about diversity; it was like walking into the United Nations. So, you have everybody of all races. You think of Howard University as a historic black university, but the campus at Howard--the law school, the medical school, the graduate school--it's just like any traditional college or university. So, there's a diversity there. These kids saw people from everywhere, training to be doctors and nurses and medical professionals. So, it was like going to the United Nations, but we were at Howard University Hospital, and they got to meet so many [people].

They had never been out of the Southeast area, and then they had the housing projects there. Some lived there at the Barry Farms, [named] after Mayor Marion Barry who I had run into

during my pilot. [Editor's Note: Barry Farms is named for the nineteenth century estate owned by merchant and councilman James Barry.] He had this housing project there. I said to myself, "You know, not to take anything away from him," but I couldn't understand why, as a mayor, that he didn't have more initiatives to take these kids right across town from Southeast to Northwest Washington over to Howard and to Georgetown. At American University's History Department, they bring their students over to Howard University, because over at Howard they have in Founders Library history about the Civil War and General Oliver Otis Howard and General Shaw, who's featured in the movie *Glory*. [Editor's Note: The Founders Library is the main library of Howard University. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw was a Union Army officer who commanded the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, which was the first Union Army unit consisting of African Americans soldiers. The 1989 American war film *Glory* is about Colonel Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment.]

AD: General Shaw.

DS: Shaw. So, the whole district at Howard is called Shaw. The Shaw District of Howard is there. Then, you have a statue of General Shaw in the Shaw community at Howard, by the green Metro line, because you can take the Metro there. You have this statue of Shaw with one of the first African American regiments, the 54th of Massachusetts; they're right there at Howard. American University in Georgetown and George Washington University bring their history students--undergrad and grad students--over to Howard for this history. So, I'm like, "Well, why can't we take these kids there?" We take these kids there, and they were fascinated. Then, to go to the hospital, and then, they let them--the kids are kids and they're grabbing the stethoscopes and letting them do that.

The smile that I'm seeing on your face Avery and Tony and Kate is--that's the kind of smiles that I got from these kids on the bus ride home--and from their parents. It was probably one of the best things in my--I've had a long career doing a lot of things, but this to me was just so special, working with those kids. Sadly, I had to leave the D.C. school district because I was getting ready for graduate school. They had a lot of issues, and they had an issue with our paychecks. I don't know what was going on in the city of D.C. where they couldn't pay us on time, but I was tapping into my savings account and I couldn't get paid.

Then, not to mention, when I got my first W-2 form, it wasn't correct, and you know by law it has to go out by January 31st. Well, they made such a mistake--by February 15th, we had a corrected W-2. That had never happened to me in my life. I've been working since I was fourteen, and that was the first time I had a W-2 form that I couldn't even file my taxes. When the school year ended in June, I said, "I can't go back there." I still needed to raise more money for graduate school. I said, "What do I do now?" A friend of mine was working on her Ph.D., and she was at Arlington Public Schools. She said, "You know, we need special education teachers." I said, "Look, I have a provisional license." She said, "That's good enough. You have a license. You've been trained in D.C." So, the one thing I did get from D.C. is good training--special education--there and Howard County.

I was eligible. I could go to any school district in the country; they would give me the provisional license to be licensed in their particular state. So, Arlington hired me in June. I was

cleaning out my classroom, and it was bittersweet. I still have pictures of the kids, but I just said, "I can't even file my taxes for the first time in my life. I've got to leave. I can't have this, because I'm trying to go to graduate school." In June, Arlington hired me to teach summer session and to teach to their kids English as a second language because I had the English degree. So, they look at your transcripts. So, I called Rutgers and, gosh, Rutgers is so good with transcripts. They mailed it down there, and they mail it so fast. It's sealed. Just like with D.C., you get a sealed transcript, you give it to superintendents. So, I gave it to Arlington, and they hired me that summer.

I go into Alexandria, Virginia, right down the street from T.C. Williams [High School]. T.C. Williams was featured in *Remember the Titans*. We just showed that. Funny, I'm bringing this up now, because T.C. Williams--this high school--was featured in a movie in Hollywood with Denzel Washington in 2000. It's in a high school that--in 1971--was just integrating, coming out of civil rights, and should've been integrated in 1954, based on *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, they went through this integration in 1971, and it's a true story, T.C. Williams High School. Denzel Washington is featured in it as the first African American head coach. So, I bring that up now because I just learned that at our High Point Football Stadium, this past Saturday, they showed the movie *Remember the Titans*.

Well, getting back to my point of working in Arlington for their school system. They had this school right down off of King Street, which is right off the street that leads to T.C. Williams High School. Now, I'm working there, and they're shooting the film. They're shooting part of the film because it was in 2000, now it's 2000, and I'm working there at this school in Arlington Public [Schools] system, right over the borderline of Alexandria, Virginia, where T.C. Williams is, and that's where they're filming. I couldn't get to work on that film because I had now signed a contract to work at this school. At Arlington, my salary went up. Everything was done the right way.

Arlington, because they have a lot of people who work for the government who live in Arlington, it's very nice. Arlington, Virginia, not far from where I lived in Fairfax County, Virginia, so I could get to work in like fifteen minutes. Take 395 to King Street, get off the King Street exit, and you go right, you're at T.C. Williams High School. You go left, you're in this nice little quaint development with this school, and it's Abingdon Elementary School. They had a special education classroom for me in the fall, but in the summer, they allowed me to teach English as a second language there. They paid extremely well, and I needed the money for graduate school. I noticed the increase in my weekly paychecks when I started there in August. Everything was done nicely, and I had one great group; it was fifth grade.

I didn't have all the different grades, and I had an assistant. We had parent helpers when I was at [the] D.C. school, because they couldn't afford to pay people full-time or paraprofessionals. In Arlington, we actually had [a] teacher's assistant. I had an assistant, and I only had six students, big difference. We talk about here in our nation--and I know Tony mentioned its different school systems--Arlington [was] more pay. So, I had the money to start graduate school that following January. I had an assistant; so I had less work. Books, supplies, everything was already in the classroom. I didn't have to clean the classroom. They had enough people, janitorial staff--they had everything in Arlington.

Then, when I was in graduate school later, Arlington would ask me--they had some schools that would go all-year round with intersessions. They allowed me to teach "Film Studies" to some of their students during intersessions, and they paid very well. When I was in graduate school, they were paying--and maybe I shouldn't say this now because Arlington will probably say, "Now they've got to pay people a lot"--this is 2000 and they're already paying forty to fifty dollars an hour for grad students, in Arlington. We didn't get that in D.C. In D.C., we got the bonus, but you were almost done with the school year before you got the rest of [your bonus]. You got part of your bonus, then you got another part. So, with Arlington, I was able to put money back into my savings to get ready for graduate school.

I left D.C. [in] June of 2000 and went to Arlington that summer, 2000, and then January 2001 went into graduate school and continued to work for Arlington in intersessions and in the summer while I was a graduate student. I worked at Arlington off and on during whatever breaks I had from graduate school. I worked for Arlington until--the last summer I worked there had to be 2007. So, when we talk about--if you get jobs--not medical if you can't do that--but you can always get some jobs in education with a degree, because you have that degree. They will train you to get a provisional license. That's another career option, and that was for me. So, that was an education option and I was not [an] education major, but I had that resume too. So, I have like three resumes going. Well, actually I have two. I have media professional resume, then I have my CV for academia, and then I have an education resume teaching in Arlington County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools and Howard County Public Schools.

KR: Why did you decide to go back to graduate school?

DS: I was at an event, believe it or not, in Washington, D.C., with professors from [the] Department of Communications because it was a department when I was a student and now it's School of Communications. They were in Washington, D.C. doing a particular event, and it could've been for recruiting. Professor Roger Cohen was there--and some of the other staff members from the department--and they were saying, "What are you doing now?" I said, "Well, I do some freelance stuff, and then I've done some education stuff in between gigs." They said, "Well, the technology is changing." I kind of knew it was from working at ABC and PBS, but most people when you're older in your thirties [are] sitting there like, "I'm not going back to school. I've been working now over ten years." You would have to take time off to go to school, and a lot of people didn't have that luxury because now they've got kids and mortgages and car payments and then later they've got kids going to college if they go to college.

Really and truly, it was Roger Cohen who advised me. He's still my adviser. I'm working all these years later. The last time I ran into Roger, I was at WOR Radio. The second time I run into him, I'm in Washington, D.C. He said, "You know, you should think about it, because technology is changing. If you want to stay in media, you need to have the skill sets, have the experience as well, but you have to know the technology." So, that's when I said, "Oh, well, I've got to prepare for it," but now you're talking about financing your education because you're in a social science and you're in media. So, if you're looking for scholarships--and even today sometimes--it's hard to find money in those areas, but you can find money if you're going into medicine. I said, "Boy, this is going to be tough." After talking to Roger, I said, "Well, you

know, I can do it, because I can always go back to Arlington when we're out on winter break, their intersessions, in the summer, when I'm not in class." That was like bread and butter, Arlington County Public Schools, which I loved. They still contact me to this day. I said, "No, I've been in Jersey since 2010." It was wonderful because they gave me that financial cushion that I needed. So, with Roger telling me that--and he knew, he just knew, and I knew that he was right. I said, "I should listen to Roger, and I definitely need to do it."

I go to an open house and I'm like, "Oh, my God, this is American University." When I saw what the tuition was, coming from a state university--even when I got accepted to the University of Florida, that's still a state school. So, I had never applied to a private school, because I always thought they were very expensive, which they were. I went to the open house--and I had left D.C. schools; so this is 2000. I go to [an] open house--and I'm working now at Arlington in special education, and this is September. So, then they said, "The open house is November 2000." I said, "Well, I'm working in special education in Arlington," and they said, "Well, you know, it's on a weekend, you can come." So, I go, because Roger said, I should--he suggested American.

I didn't even know about the program at American. He said, "Well, you're in D.C. and you're working there. If you were here, I'd tell you go to NYU," because we didn't have the graduate program here. He said, "We don't have that program at Rutgers." I wanted to come back to New Jersey. I wanted to come to Rutgers for graduate school for a film and video program, but we didn't have it. I think we're working on it now, because a couple of semesters ago we started the film program, Cinema Studies here, but we're still not there yet in terms of the graduate program. So, Roger suggested that, "Since you live in Fairfax County, you're in the Washington Metro area, you should go to the open house at American University." I went to the open house, and I said, "This is just way too much money." They said, "No, no, this is a great program." When you go to an open house, everything looks great, and you think you can do it. Roger sent a letter, which is there in my file today. Professor Roger Cohen sent a letter of recommendation. Dr. Cheryl Wall also sent a letter from the English Department.

KR: Oh, wow.

DS: Next thing I knew, I went home after this weekend open house, and by Monday morning, I get a call from American University, the graduate school, saying, "You know, we start in January." Now, this is November. They're like, "We start in two months. You're accepted." I said, "But, I mean, I don't think I can do it." They said, "You can do it. We have two letters here. We know you can do it." So, I started graduate school January 2001. Dr. Cheryl Wall did one letter because [of] my English major and Professor Roger Cohen. Two letters from Rutgers University and that's all it was, and they made one phone call to ABC, because they needed work experience. So, they didn't call PBS. They didn't call Arbitron. They didn't call Maryland Public Television. They called ABC and two letters from Rutgers University, and that was it.

They said, "You could start in January." I said, "This is November, I'm not ready." They said, "Get ready, you can start." I said, "This is going to cost me a fortune." So, I had money saved up from teaching, and then, of course, that was the first time I had to take out loans, I mean, real big loans, because tuition was high. [laughter] So, that's when I started, January 2001, and it was

[an] intense two-year program. Then, again, back to ABC, 2002, because I needed three more credits or something. Then, I went back to ABC News and got the three credits. I told them, "I'll do it if I can get credits for it," and ABC arranged with American University so I'd get three credits--work for them--when they had people coming from New York to work.

I was already in Washington working in the news bureau, and to work there, ABC News, you had to have credentials. Well, because I had not worked in that capacity at the White House, Capitol Hill, Supreme Court--I hadn't done any of that, ABC just simply--they had a copy of my Social Security card, and they said, "You know, we've got to get your credentials," and the next thing I knew, they ran my Social Security number. They do the FBI check, all the checks you can imagine, and I had the best credentials that I ever had in my life. I could go to the White House, Supreme Court, Capitol Hill, and I had ABC credentials. I remember my boss at ABC that summer saying, "You've got to keep your nose clean, because we just ran a check on you and everything is clean. We can send you anywhere in the news truck."

That was a great--that was my second great feeling--doing the pledge drive on-air--because now I'm doing real media stuff, doing the pledge drive on-air, which was on-air talent work in media, and then doing news, actually covering news and covering congressmen and covering, at the time, Tom Daschle at *CBS News This Morning*--on a Sunday morning--with my digital equipment. Thank God Roger told me, "It's time to go back to school, learn digital stuff," and then I was able--ABC said, "Okay, there's the equipment room. Go get it." I knew what I needed. I had learned that after a year at American in 2001. [Editor's Note: Tom Daschle served in the House of Representatives from South Dakota from 1979 to 1987 and then in the Senate from 1987 to 2005.]

Here I am, 2002, at ABC News, using digital equipment. If I had not listened to Roger and if I had not gone to American to learn the digital equipment, I would've walked in that room totally lost. Because of Roger's advice and going to American University--walking into ABC's room--I was telling them certain things that they should order in addition to what they already had. Then, when I stood with these men--and this is a great story for women at Douglass--standing with these cameramen with my mini-DV camera and digital equipment, and they're holding these huge heavy cameras. The last time I held one of those was during the NABET strike in New York when I worked for ABC, because when they went on strike, we had to hold those cameras.

Now, here I am with my little mini-DV camera, equipment, and my shoulder bag. I'm covering congressmen, and I'm at *CBS News This Morning* waiting for them to come out. We have all of our microphones and all of our equipment, and I have everything that I need. I go back and I edit, and I edit quickly, and then ABC is able to use it. That, I have to thank Professor Roger Cohen for telling me to go back and learn digital equipment, which was great.

KR: Tell us about some of the big moments that stick about in your mind about working for ABC News and covering events and people in Washington, D.C.

DS: Oh, my goodness, I remember going to the White House and that press room, very intense. Again, the first time I went, I was totally lost. I knew my equipment. I knew I had a degree in journalism. I knew how to write about news, but I didn't know how to get into the White House.

[laughter] This was 2002--summer of 2002--so it's after 9/11. The whole place was barricaded, and I recalled going to the White House as a kid with my parents, and it was never like that. 9/11 changed everything. It even changed the landscape, if you will, of the entire Washington, D.C. city. So, to go to the White House all these years later--now going as a media professional--and I couldn't get in. I didn't know how to get in. It's barricaded, streets were blocked off.

At ABC, I felt so confident going in the equipment room, getting my equipment and the driver, and getting in the truck, but when I arrived there, I'm like, "How do you get in here?" So, the driver's like, "You've got to go, I've got another stop." He had other reporters in there. So, he's opening the door, I get out, and he just--I was like, "Wait a minute," and he takes off. I'm like, "He's not going to show me how to get in?" So, I've got my equipment, and I can't figure out how to get in. So, I see these guards at these different command posts. I walk up to them, but I have my ABC media credentials, which are very prominent--you're wearing them on your neck. So, they knew I was a media professional. They probably thought I was a person who knew what she was doing--a veteran who worked in the news forever--but I didn't.

Then, I see John Roberts from CBS. I knew him from watching him on the news, a very nice man. I think he could tell, and he comes up to me and says, "Follow me," and I walk in. He's got his CBS credentials. I've got ABC credentials. We walk in together. There's this huge table, and of course they're checking our equipment after we go through the guards. He made it so easy for me, because I was just fumbling and just feeling lost and like, "This is a disaster." I know that ABC is going to can me the moment I get back if I can't even figure out how to get inside, but John Roberts made it easy for me and then I followed him in. After we got our equipment, after they checked everything, then he said, "Just follow me." I follow him, we go into this room--this tiny room that you see on television, it looks so huge--and I sit with him and this man has been on television forever.

KR: It was a White House press briefing?

DS: It was a White house press briefing; it was my very first. I'm sitting there, and I've got my digital equipment. I also have my pad because I also learned you've always got to keep that pad in case the battery dies, so I'm taking notes too, but then I felt that I can really do this. I'm here now and I'm sitting with John Roberts, who's showing me the ropes, somebody who--I felt like--another teacher. Here I am; I was very lucky that I walked in the same time. We were early--walked in the same time--and he's showing me the ropes, and then, afterwards, they showed me where to go for lunch. Then, after that, in the press room, then we had another--it was a long day my first day, but it was very exciting because then we were in the Rose Garden.

I'd never been in the Rose Garden; even if you do the White House tour, I don't know if you get to go there now or even in the past, but it was beautiful. We go out in the Rose Garden, and I had my seat and they have a seat for me. "Debbie Shuford, ABC News." Very exciting, because this is the stuff that you learn in the classroom, but at some point, you think you'll get that job. I remember, when we were students, they said, "This is a tough business, and some of you will get jobs in media and some will not. Some will go into other fields."

I know I was talking to Avery and Tony during the break and we were saying, "You never know what you will do in life. Things happen and you may not do it in your first job but years later." So, here I am, many years later, graduating in '81, but here I am in 2002--and we're talking twenty-one years later--and I'm actually in the press room, in the Rose Garden. I'm actually doing journalism. Thank God I had that degree and I had that training, and I was putting that all into place. So, that was very exciting for me, that first day at the White House, and then it got better, then Capitol Hill.

KR: Did you keep going back to the White House after that?

DS: Oh, yes, because I had the credentials.

KR: Okay.

DS: That was a whole summer.

KR: Were you in the White House press corps?

DS: I was.

KR: Okay.

DS: I had to do this all summer. That was the agreement. Then, when they sent me to Capitol Hill--my goodness--I'm like, "Another place with the security," and the tunnels underneath that you watch on television today when you see the press. They will catch some of the congressmen coming out in the hall in the corridors there. Well, you got to know where you're going down there. [laughter] They have a restaurant down there, but they need that, because I didn't realize [it's] for security purposes if they needed to usher them away from whatever could occur. You've got to know where to go in those tunnels, and they know where to go.

I didn't even know they had tunnels there. Then, I learned the history about the White House and the first White House burning, and they talked about that. When you're in Capitol Hill, they talk about the burning of the White House and they talk about Capitol Hill and then what would happen if we had an emergency. All this came out after 9/11. So, the structure, where to go--like they had to train me where to go there--and then, you can have lunch down there. At one point, we were pressed for time because I was covering Capitol Hill and I just wanted to grab a sandwich. There's [an] area where the press kind of just hang out, and if there's breaking news, they're already there. It's underneath in these tunnels, and then they have like a little restaurant or something. You can go grab a sandwich and you come back and you sit at your desk and you've got that Associated Press wire feeding you information. Then, if there's breaking news, then you don your credentials, and you head back up to cover the congressmen who are coming out of their offices. So, I learned how to do that. You're there all day. So, the second excitement was at Capitol Hill.

KR: What were the big events that you were covering?

DS: Believe it or not, they were still doing this whole healthcare thing.

KR: Okay.

DS: I remember that very well, because I remember ABC sending me to do that. I don't know, the healthcare issue seems to go on and on and on. Even then, we were doing that with congressmen and passing bills, and there were a lot of bills. I know the biggest one that I remember was healthcare--the whole issue about reforming healthcare--which we know today. We have [the] Affordable Healthcare Act, but they were still working on that then. So, they assigned me to talk to some of the congressmen and women about healthcare and different bills that they were trying to pass. I think the one that really stood out was interviewing--and he's retired now--Tom Daschle, and interviewing him at *CBS This Morning*, and then having to interview him again in his office. That really stood out, a very nice man.

KR: What was that like?

DS: It was exciting because ABC told me--I remember that one of the producers says, "Well, you've got to get there early. We've got to set up the lighting equipment. It's going to be like a *20/20* thing." I show this to our students here at Rutgers, where you have two people. You're doing a two-shot, but it's very important to get the lighting correct.

KR: Right.

DS: You have to have the lighting in the right place, and you have to have the two people, the two subjects, and the frame. Thank God I learned all that in school. So, I get there early. It took two hours just to set up the lights, two hours in advance before Tom Daschle arrived. Then, I had a stand-in--one of the people in the crew to stand in for him--so we could frame it, the two seats, the lighting. Well, we did that two hours before he even showed up. [laughter] I was exhausted by the time he arrived.

When you're in class, you're thinking, "Oh, you just turn the camera on and that's it." What I did learn at American University too--the kind of lighting equipment we use there, it's all professional stuff. We have it here at ITV Studios as well. So, that was very exciting. So, I had to set it up like a *20/20* interview, or any type of the interviews you see now. [laughter]

KR: So, you did a one-on-one interview with Tom Daschle.

DS: Yes, I did, yes. I did it, and it's on Capitol Hill. We had a room, like I said, a set, because you're not in a studio, so they've got to set up all these lights. So, that's why it took us so long, because we're in Capitol Hill; this is not a studio with all your lights, your barn doors on your lights. We didn't have that luxury. We had our equipment and the lighting guys, and we're setting it up. Then, I'm looking in my camera, my mini-DV camera, because this doesn't look right. "The frame is not right. Move the chair here. I'm going to sit there. Can I have a stand-in?" I had two people to sit there and I'm framing it in the camera myself, so that it will look the way it's supposed to look.

I got to do a lot of hands-on stuff and a lot of stuff that I learned in undergrad and graduate school in terms of framing and lighting and sound checks. You only get one shot and you've got a congressman coming in; you have to be ready to go. Then, at ABC--I'm telling you--my supervisor there--one time, she's like, "Where are you?" I said, "I'm getting my equipment," and she's like, "Well, the truck is waiting. The truck is going to Capitol Hill. You've got to be out there," because this truck--the news truck--is going to everything going on all over the city. So, they have people going to Capitol Hill, the White House, Supreme Court. So, you have to get there early, get your equipment, go outside, jump on the truck; the truck is parked at the Mayflower Hotel. [laughter] That's a whole other story with scandals going on in the hotel, which I never had to cover, thank goodness. That was a running joke when you're standing outside the Mayflower wondering what stories you could tell if you were covering the Mayflower Hotel. [laughter] Hope no one from the Mayflower hears this.

I'm waiting for the truck, but everything is time sensitive. News is news and it's daily, and it's old news if you've missed your chance and your opportunity. Breaking news is just that. You have to be ready to go, break the story, and move on to the next story. So, I think that was the one that stands out, to interview him. At the time, he was a very prominent member of Congress--now retired--and the fact that they trusted me to do that, I'm like, "You're trusting me? I'm a newbie here." Allowing me to interview him, that was very special, and to interview him twice. To interview him on Capitol Hill, but also to interview him coming out of *CBS News This Morning* on a Sunday morning; that's another thing. So, when you're doing news, I mean, you think you have the weekend off but you don't. There are no weekends.

I can imagine journalists covering overseas, like the ones we just saw recently covering in Russia. It's an exciting job, but it's a lot of hard work, it really is. I think if you do it full time, you're going to miss a lot of high school graduations, college graduation, baby showers, weddings, because you're away from your family a lot. Thank goodness that when I was doing it, I had a family support system because I'm doing this with my son. My son was born in '92. So, he was very young when I was doing all this. It's kind of great if you can do it once you have a kid that's in high school. When you have young kids, it's got to be hard. Of course, I didn't do it as long as some of the people do it now, but you've got to have a lot of help because the hours and then getting up and it's dark. You go in and get your equipment and you're going to cover these stories, and you never know. The producer calls you and you've got a story, you've got to go. You just have to be there, and you have to be on time.

KR: When you were in the White House, was it the White House Press Secretary giving briefings? Did President George W. Bush ever give a briefing that you heard?

DS: Oh, yes.

KR: Okay.

DS: Yes, yes, both.

KR: What was that like when the president gave a briefing?

DS: That, to me, probably was more exciting than having someone from the staff, because then you've got the Secret Service around. It's a little different with the Secret Service as opposed to just all of the press people in there together because it's old hat with them. When the president is there, you've got Secret Service there too. So, it's a little more intense, nerve wracking. Of course, I was very nervous, but everybody else was there. I said, "Well, now I've done this, I've been here, they know who I am." Once they know who you are, it's a lot easier than if you're just someone new walking in and they've got to figure out, "Is this person is going to be some kind of problem?" As we saw recently, when we saw protestors in Russia, someone from the press was escorted out.

They always worry about if you have someone new, someone doing something like that. It's live television, so people will see it. So, nothing like that ever happened when I did it that summer, and I was very fortunate that it didn't because I probably would've been very, very nervous. I always feared that something like that would happen while I was there. [laughter] Nothing like that ever happened. It was very exciting, and the Secret Service were very nice.

In fact, when we had President Obama here--and I was a commencement marshal--I had an opportunity to talk to some of the Secret Service members who were here and the FBI. I told them about my time working at ABC and shared stories with them. They knew I had worked there because I knew about certain places--I won't mention--that I knew about, for security purposes, at the White House and at Capitol Hill and at the Supreme Court. Once I shared that with them--2016 at High Point--before President Obama arrived--they knew I had worked there, because I knew places there that were top secret stuff that you get with your media credentials. So, those things I won't share because it's for safety. I know when I was able to have a few moments with them at High Point, it just brought back great memories and I told them. They said, "How did you get into teaching?" Then, I had to share my story from how I went from working in media to being a media professional and then giving back and teaching here, teaching our students.
[Editor's Note: In 2016, Rutgers University commemorated the 250th anniversary of Rutgers' founding with a year-long celebration. President Barack Obama delivered the commencement address on Sunday, May 15, 2016.]

KR: At the White House …

DS: Yes.

KR: … When they would say, "We will take questions now," and everybody raises their hands …

DS: Yes.

KR: … Would they ask different reporters to ask questions, or would they always pick the same people?

DS: They asked different …

KR: Okay.

DS: I'm glad you asked that question, because when I did it that summer of 2002--going into the fall of 2002--we would raise our hands--I remember--and they would call on us. They had our names, because everybody that goes in there--they have a list. You have credentials and security clearances. They had our names. Maybe it's this new administration, where they only call on certain people.

KR: Yes.

DS: When I am watching now, I say to myself, "I don't remember that when I did it." I remember we raised our hand and then they would just randomly choose someone, but now it's selective, I think, pretty much.

KR: You did get to ask questions.

DS: I did, yes.

KR: Okay. Did you ever get to ask the president a question?

DS: I had my hand up, but I didn't get called on that instance. It could be--and it had nothing to do with a list, because they didn't have a list. I think where I was--I know at that particular incident--I remember it well--if I had been seated in the front, I think I would've been called on, but I'm short. I'm five-three, and I was kind of in the back. I don't even think he saw my hand. I remember there were other people, like John Roberts always sits in the front. Even if you're watch him today, he's got the best seat in town. There were some other reporters from ABC New York who would sit in the front too. So, I think it was more of a strategic thing where you would sit in certain seats, and then again, there were a lot of people who have been doing it for a long time. So, they knew some of those folks by first name, whereas I was new there.

I didn't get called in that instance, but I did get to meet the president. I got to [meet] the White House staff, because everybody knows you, because you get these clearances, and they have to know who you are and you're roaming around the place. So, I got to meet everybody there, so that was great. I had forgotten about that. That was exciting. But that whole room--it's very small. It looks huge on television, but when you get everybody together in there, it's a small room. The Rose Garden is fabulous, and there's lots more space. If the weather's nice, it's just beautiful to be out there. That's a little more relaxing atmosphere.

KR: I am going to do a time check.

DS: Okay.

KR: It is 2:41.

DS: Okay. Should we get back at it again?

KR: Yes, I think we should conclude for today.

DS: We should, yes.

KR: we will reconvene.

DS: Oh, absolutely.

KR: I will do a wrap up.

DS: Okay.

KR: This concludes an interview with Deborah Shuford, on July 17, 2018.

DS: Yes.

KR: We will reconvene for a part five in the near future. Thank you so much.

DS: Thank you. This was so wonderful. Thank you so much for having me.

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 7/31/2018
Reviewed by Zach Batista 7/23/2020
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 6/14/2021
Reviewed by Deborah Shuford 3/18/2022