RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH OWEN ULLMANN

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the second interview session with Mr. Owen Ullmann, on July 26, 2021. We will be joined later by Jonathan Esterlit. Thank you very much for joining me again. I really appreciate it. We were just talking off the record about one of the first issues I want to talk about, what you did after graduation, but you got involved in travel before graduation, as an editor of *Targum*.

Owen Ullmann: Right. I am pretty sure it was the spring of 1969, Pan American Airways, which later went out of business, was having a promotion. They were trying to encourage college students to visit Europe. It was very cheap at the time. The dollar was strong. Europe was very, very cheap. It was just the beginning of kind of a boom in American tourism, and so they were really trying to appeal to college students to come visit Europe. So, they offered several college newspaper editors, including me, a chance to visit, for about a week or ten days, London, Paris and Amsterdam. That was my recollection, it was those three cities, all expenses paid, and I agreed to go. I guess they didn't have an ethics officer at *Targum* to say, "We really can't accept freebies like that, or if you do, you can't write anything favorable about Pan Am." Well, I recall writing, just saying that, "Hey, Europe is really cheap," and I think I even mentioned there were cheaper ways to get there than Pan Am. I know Icelandic Airlines had a really, really cheap fare at the time, where you had to stop in Iceland, but then it would take you to Luxembourg. It was very, very cheap, my recollection is like 179 dollars round trip.

Anyhow, I planned to go on this trip. It was the first time I was ever traveling to Europe. It was very exciting. My passport was delayed. I hadn't gotten it yet, and we were about to take off that evening from JFK Airport. So, a friend of mine agreed to drive me into the city and I had an old Plymouth Fury convertible--that was my car on campus--and we were going to stop at Rockefeller Center, where there was a passport office, to pick up my passport and then go on to the airport, because I was told my passport was ready and I can pick it up then. I seem to recall that for some reason, my trunk was filled with old tires or something like that. Anyhow, I had to put my suitcases in the back seat of the convertible. We went and we parked on a city street and we went to Rockefeller Center to the passport office. I picked up my passport, which was great. We get back to the car. I see that the top of my convertible had been split wide open, and someone had stolen the suitcases that were in the backseat. I guess it was like one carry-on and a suitcase. I said, "Oh, my God, this is terrible." Of course, we reported it to the police, and they laughed and said, "Yes, that happens a lot." I don't think they were going to investigate much. [laughter]

My flight was leaving in a few hours. I had no time to do anything. We went to the airport, and the Pan Am person who greeted me. I explained I had no clothes for our trip, they were all stolen. He said, "Don't worry, we'll help you when you get to London." I remember we arrived at London at customs. I had no luggage, and I remember the customs person looked at me like, "That's strange, you're coming to London and you don't even have a carry-on." The first thing we did, I guess, after checking into our hotel and maybe getting some sleep was the Pan Am person had given me two hundred dollars and took me to Carnaby Street to go shopping. Carnaby Street, at the time, was the fashion place to buy clothes. Remember, this is 1969, and I remember I bought--I still have them--I bought these striped bell bottoms. They were black and rust colored and yellow, really wide bellbottoms, with some corduroy jacket and some bright shirt with a really loud polka-dot tie. I looked like, I think, Elton John did thirty years later, but

that was the fashion at the time. Of course, I bought some underwear and some other needed clothes, but that was my outfit for the next week or so.

We had a great time. It was really eye-opening. That encouraged me to arrange with a very close friend who was an editor of *Targum* two years behind me named Steve Alexander--a wonderful man who passed away about ten years ago, who was suffering from Parkinson's--Steve and I decided we'd go to Europe for the summer. We arranged for a four-month tour. We had read this very popular book, Arthur Frommer's travel guide *Europe on 5 Dollars a Day*, which had a lot of tips on youth hostels and other cheap things to do, and we actually followed it pretty religiously. We went to Europe that summer, and we traveled all over. My sister was living in Scotland at the time. She was working at a hospital, where she was a dietician, so we visited her in Edinburgh. We traveled all throughout England. I remember we rented [bought] a used car. Do you want to hear details of this, by the way? Go on, okay. Tell me if this is boring and you want to move on.

SI: This is interesting.

OU: Okay. We rented [bought] a used car for a couple hundred dollars and drove all over England and Scotland, which was kind of scary because you drive on the other side of the road. During rush hour in London, I kept almost running into buses because I'd turn the wrong way. But, anyway, we survived that.

I remember it was time to go to France and we got on a ferry that, I think, went from Ostend, Belgium to Calais, France, I think it was. Anyhow, we drive off the ferry, the car ferry, and we couldn't have gone more than a mile, it was a Sunday, and we crossed these railroad tracks. We heard a big thud, and the next thing I realize is--the car had been totally rusted in the underbody, which we didn't check at the time we bought it, because it was cheaper to buy this used car than to rent a car--pretty much the body fell on top of the chassis and the fenders were rubbing on the tires and smoke was coming out and the car had been on fire. We drove three miles an hour, and we saw a gas station. We didn't speak French, but we pointed to the car and there was a mechanic there at the place. He looked at it and turned to us and said, "*Impossible*!" It was pretty clear we couldn't do much. So, we decided we were going to have the junk car there. But when we went to a junkyard, he said, "Because you bought the car in London," there was a tariff. This was before there was a free trade zone in Europe. He said, "Even if you gave me the car at no cost to take it, I'd have to charge you like two hundred French Francs import duty," something like that. We would have to pay him a lot of money to take the car, so I thought that was ridiculous. We decided we would just abandon the car on some side street.

Then, when we started one night to do that, the car was out of gas, so we had to go to a petrol station. All we had was an empty wine bottle, and we were trying to fill the wine bottle with enough petrol to start the car. We're trying to be inconspicuous, but here we are on the street at night and people see us pouring something from the wine bottle into the gas tank. Then, we tried to inconspicuously drive the car to some dark alley. Meanwhile, the frame is on top of the tires. The car is making this huge screeching noise, and sparks and smoke are coming out of the back of the car. Everyone who was on the street is staring and looking, "Who are these crazy people?" We get to this dark side street, and we tried to rip off the license plate so they couldn't track us

down. Anyhow, we abandoned the car, and we never did get caught. I guess maybe the police didn't think it was worth following up on. So, we were hitchhiking and taking trains for the rest of our tour.

We had quite an adventure. I remember one time we took a train to Genoa, Italy. It was the middle of the night and a thick fog, and we got off and said, "Well, let's just camp here," because we did have backpacks with us and sleeping bags. We found a park, what we thought was a park, and we were sleeping. The next thing I know, there was an Italian policeman hitting my foot with his baton. It turned out that--because it was very dark and foggy, we couldn't see--we were sleeping in the middle of the town circle, in front of the train station. We were considered vagrants, and we were forced to leave. So, we had to do that.

I did discover that there actually is good coffee, which unlike in the U.S., Italian coffee was wonderful. Of course, we discovered Belgian beer, which was always fabulous, and German bratwurst. We got thrown out of the Munich opera house once when we went to see an opera. We had met another friend. When the usher was giving us a difficult time about not being dressed properly enough--because I think we had jackets but not ties--my friend, this other friend, gave him a Nazi salute and the guy freaked out and kicked us out of the opera house.

We spent also some time in France and visited my relatives who lived in Strasbourg, and we had a wonderful time visiting them. One of them worked as an executive at a champagne company, and we had some of the best champagne ever and some fabulous meals. Anyhow, it was a wonderful experience.

We went to Spain, where it was still under the government of dictator Francisco Franco. There were armed guards with machine guns patrolling everywhere in Spain, which was kind of scary, and they wouldn't allow some people into the country. We traveled, at one point, with a Swedish student we met, and they wouldn't let him into the country. They let us in because we were Americans and we could show we had some money to spend. Spain was so cheap then that you could get a fabulous meal for like a dollar. You could stay at a hostel overnight for fifty cents. A bottle of Coca-Cola cost ten cents. It was unbelievably cheap. People from all over the world, students, were camping out on the beach at Costa Brava, just south of the French border, in the Pyrenees. It was really an amazing time.

Anyhow, I had this fabulous experience. I came back close to Labor Day, having just had this wonderful experience, and I had to start in law school. I enrolled at NYU, and I moved into an apartment on St. Mark's Place on the Lower East Side, which was sort of the center of the counterculture. Jerry Rubin lived down the block. He was under constant surveillance by the FBI. There was a famous disco, the Electric Circus, there. There were drug addicts all over the street. There were constant shootings. It was insane. In our building, we lived on the first floor. In our building, on one of the upper floors, there was a raid, and some people who were part of a drug syndicate got arrested. We once found a dead body in our lobby. Anyhow, it was quite an experience. It was when John Lindsay was the mayor. [Editor's Note: John Lindsay was a lawyer and politician who served as the mayor of New York City from 1966 to 1973.]

I went to NYU Law School, and I think partly I just didn't have my heart in it, having just come back from Europe and feeling like a free spirit. In fact, I really hated it and decided to quit after a semester. I managed to get a 1-Y deferment from the draft because of a diagnosis that a psychiatrist had said was severe anxiety, and that kept me out of the draft, except in an emergency. 1-Y was somewhere in between 1-A and 4-F. [Editor's Note: 1-Y was a Selective Service classification that meant, "Registrant qualified for service only in time of war or national emergency." The 1-A classification stands for, "Available for military service," and 4-F stands for "Registrant not qualified for military service."]

I needed a job, so I got a job at a newspaper in Elizabeth, New Jersey called the *Daily Journal*. That was actually set up by a friend of mine, Jim Gerstenzang (Class of 1969), who was also on the *Targum*, who had worked there one summer, and so he introduced me to the editor. They interviewed me, and they hired me to be a night reporter. I remember my second week on the job, I got a really bad flu, and I was out for a week. I was really, really sick. I think they were going to fire me, until I got a doctor's note to convince them that I really was sick and not unreliable. So, I wound up working there for two years, before I decided to go to graduate school.

When I was there, I covered local townships in Union County, which included Elizabeth, Roselle, Roselle Park, Rahway, that general area. There were a number of crime stories I covered. I remember I became friends in one town with the local funeral director, who also served as a coroner. He would call me with tips about interesting deaths. There was one, he said, "Oh, I've got a good one for you. A guy killed himself with a shotgun." I couldn't even bear to look at the remains. It was pretty gruesome, without going into any details. There were some tragedies too, I remember. I was asked once to interview a family, which was coming home from the hospital after identifying their teenage son who had been killed in an accident. I want to say it was a hit and run. They were absolutely distraught obviously, and I couldn't bring myself to bother them. I went back and lied to the editor that they weren't home, because I just didn't feel I had the stomach to really intrude on their grief.

Another time, we had good contacts in a local hospital, and they would call us anytime a prominent person died. So, we would do an obituary. I remember once I got a call about a very prominent businessperson who had been in the hospital for a while, and he had died. He had just died, we were told through a source. My editor told me to call his widow, and I called her at home. I got her on the phone and I said, "Hi, I really apologize for having to have to call you now, but I wanted to get some information about your husband." She said, "Well, why don't you call him at the hospital? I'll give you the number." She hadn't even been informed. The good reporter that I was, I said, "Okay," and I hung up. [laughter] I lied to the editor again and said she wasn't home. I was too much of a softy to be one of those hard-boiled reporters who never let emotions get in the way. So, I kind of realized that I didn't have what it took to be a police reporter.

I should tell you, the editor at the time, his name was Doug Bailey. He was a former Merchant Marine. He was a boxer in the Merchant Marines and lost one eye in a fight. He had a glass eye. He had this little moustache, and he literally wore a green eyeshade. If you've ever seen the movie [*His*] *Girl Friday*, it was right out of some cliched movie. There were four of us young

reporters who worked nights. We worked like six-thirty at night to two or three in the morning. He was our manager, and he sat upfront in an otherwise deserted newsroom, where everyone else was gone. We all sat in the back together. After we had turned in a story, he would shout, "Mr. Ullmann, step into my office." Of course, he didn't have an office; he just had a desk. He, every so often, would say, "You fancy college guys, you think you know how to write. Well, let me tell you how to write." But he taught us some pretty good basic lessons about clear writing rather than fancy writing. He used to disappear about every hour or so. He said he was going into the back shop to see how the newspaper was being put together. One time I went looking for him and I saw he went in the back shop with a big bottle of scotch or bourbon, I can't remember what, and he finished off almost a bottle a night or a fair amount of it.

One thing I remember about working at that newspaper was that at the time a very big social issue was school integration. Courts were approving mandatory bussing of students to integrate schools, which was extremely controversial, which meant that a lot of white kids were being bussed to schools that were predominantly black and black kids were being bussed to schools that were predominantly white. In some cases, parents were concerned about their kids not going to local schools. In other cases, there was blatant racism or legitimate concerns about kids being sent to a school that didn't have as good a reputation for academics. It was kind of a mixed bag, but racism was a big part of it for a lot of the white parents.

One of the things that we covered were school board meetings, and they often became very contentious. In a number of towns, I think one of them was Roselle Park, in response to forced court-ordered busing, there was a recent election for the school board. All of the current members of the school board who complied with the school bus order were voted out, and a slate of very conservative members were voted into the school board. I was covering the meetings, and they were threatening to defy the courts and refuse to bus students. It became very contentious with the parents. I remember a lot of white parents came and were shouting support for the school board, and a lot of black parents and teachers, who were white and black, had come out and were condemning the board and calling them Nazis and racists. It was pretty ugly. So, I wrote a lot of stories that were getting a lot of front-page coverage on these very contentious meetings.

Remember, at the time, there was no Internet. There was really nothing else to compete with. These were local stories, so there was really no one else covering them as much as I was. I was kind of like the primary reporter for the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, which was like the largest newspaper that included Roselle Park.

There was one meeting that I covered that became so contentious that a riot broke out. I think someone threw a chair at a member of the board, and then punches were thrown. People were screaming, and the school stenographer, who was taking minutes at the meeting, jumped out of a window, an open window. It was on the first floor, the meeting. People were screaming. The police had to come, and it was a full-scale riot. Quite a few people were arrested and put in jail, including some members of the school board and some members of the audience, some teachers.

There was a court proceeding that came up, as there were all kinds of charges of disorderly conduct and rioting, whatever their various ordinances were. This was just as I was preparing to

leave to go to graduate school in the fall of 1971. I had already accepted enrollment at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I was subpoenaed to testify as a witness about what I saw. So, the lawyer for the newspaper and I and the editor all conferred about what I should do as a reporter. They concluded, since they weren't asking for any confidential information from sources, what I should do is simply answer questions about what I saw. Just factual questions, that was okay, but don't go into any interpretations and don't offer any opinions, play it straight. So, I said fine.

I think I had already literally finished working at the newspaper. It was just a few weeks before I was going to graduate school. So, I was called to testify. I talked about what I had seen. I was asked about who threw a chair, and I think I was being questioned by the attorney for the school board or for the school. They were asking me about how the riot had been provoked and whether someone had thrown a chair or not. I said, "I'm not sure who threw the first chair, but I know there was a lot of shouting." The attorney asked, "Well, would you agree that the teachers were the protestors in the audience and provoked violence?" I said, "Actually, no, I don't think they provoked the violence. I think, actually, the violence was provoked by members of the school board because they refused to answer some questions. They were very insulting. They hurled insults and threats at members of the audience, and I think their hostile attitude actually provoked the subsequent violence." The attorney was kind of shocked that I had said this. I think so was the attorney for a newspaper [laughter], since I was offering an opinion. I remember I looked at him, and he was covering his face with his hands. He says, "Wait a minute, you're saying that what they said at the meeting provoked the violence and not the teacher who threw the chair?" I said, "Well, I think that's true." So, the attorney turned to the judge and said, "Your honor, I want to declare this is a hostile witness and conduct a cross examination." He got very nasty, and I think at one point he said, "Are you a Communist or something?" He started to attack me personally. I happened to know the judge; I knew the judge from covering other events. He was a good guy, trying to run a fair hearing. After the attorney kept attacking me like that, I turned to the judge and said, "Your Honor, I'm being personally attacked. Do I have to tolerate this? Don't I have a right to insist that I be treated fairly?" He chastised the lawyer and said my character is not an issue and to ask me factual questions. He scolded me [laughter], something like, "Behave yourself, and just start answering the questions," and I did.

Anyway, the upshot is that because I was the only one in a position to testify who was objective and I refused to say that teachers or the people in the audience provoked the fight, the judge wound up dismissing it. He dismissed the charges against everyone and then gave them all a very stern lecture, told the members of the audience, "You have a right to be angry and to protest, but you have to do so within civil bounds." He scolded members of the school board for their hostile behavior, saying, "You have an obligation to be responsive to the public, including critics." He told me, afterwards he said, "I let you off easy. I could have given you a sterner lecture." Then, I left, and I went to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin.

SI: In addition to issues like bussing, at the time, you also had white flight happening and all sorts of issues with real estate.

OU: Right.

SI: Do you remember covering any of these issues?

OU: Well, I remember covering a couple race riots. There was one in, I don't know if it was in Metuchen or Rahway. I mean, it was a crazy summer, I think, in '69 and '70, and this was '71 when this event occurred. There was just a lot of high tensions. I remember I was sent to cover, there was a riot in one of the towns, and I was sent with the photographer. At the time, the newspaper had a fleet of cars, these black cars with the gold writing on the side that said the *Daily Journal*, so we could be identified as being with the newspaper. We went to cover one riot, and we saw a bunch of young black men who looked like they were burning stuff in trash barrels. I went up to them and identified myself and said I wanted to interview them, and I thought they would be receptive. Instead, they saw us as just being part of the white establishment and said, "Hey, let's get them." So, I'm running and jumping back into the car, and the photographer was driving. We drove like crazy to escape them. One of the young black men got into a car to try to chase us, but we managed to get away. So, I figured maybe that was not the best way to conduct an interview.

You're right; there were issues about white flight, although at the time there wasn't that much. I think it probably occurred over a period of years, and I wasn't in there long enough to really see it because it was just really starting to bubble up. The other issue is there were a lot of cases of corruption involving New Jersey politicians at the time. There was Congressman Cornelius Gallagher, who was indicted for some corruption. Senator Harrison Williams, I think around that time or later, he was caught up in some corruption scandal. There was a lot of that going on too, but I don't remember other social issues that came up. I figured that was quite enough at the time. [Editor's Note: Cornelius Gallagher served in the House of Representatives from New Jersey's 13th District from 1959 to 1973. Gallagher chaired the Invasion of Privacy Subcommittee and became embroiled in a controversy involving FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and the use of illegal wiretapping. Later, in 1972, Gallagher pled guilty to charges of tax evasion and perjury. Harrison "Pete" Williams represented New Jersey's 6th District in the House of Representatives from 1953 to 1957 and served in the U.S. Senate from 1959 until his resignation in 1982, after he was convicted of bribery and conspiracy stemming from the FBI sting operation called ABSCAM. He served two years in federal prison.]

The other thing I was involved in living in New York was I protested at the Selective Service Office before they eliminated the draft. There was one in downtown Manhattan. I think they had changed the draft to a lottery system. Anyhow, there was still a draft office. I went down with a bunch of protestors once and we did sort of a sit-in, a lie-in actually, in the front of the building so people couldn't go in and out. The police quickly came and arrested us. I remember sitting in jail one night, and I got my one phone call. I called the editor of the paper and said I was "tied up" with something and I couldn't get to work that night. I didn't want to say I was in jail. I remember sitting in jail with a couple of prominent journalists at the time who were sitting with me. They had also protested. We were eventually [released]. I think a judge, en masse, or at least with us, gave us kind of a warning instead of filing charges against us, and so we got off, pretty luckily. [Editor's Note: On December 1, 1969, the Selective Service held the first Vietnam War draft lottery to determine the 1970 draft order for men born between 1944 and 1950. 366

capsules, each possessing a date of the year, were drawn to determine the draft order. The lottery was broadcast on television and radio. In 1973, the draft was abolished.]

There were other times I was protesting. Nixon, at the time, was speaking at the Waldorf-Astoria and I went to a protest there that turned violent, but I was away from that. I wasn't involved personally. The first Earth Day was in 1970, if I recall correctly, and I covered that. Actually, I went to the first Earth Day in New York, where there were speeches, and I wrote an article for the paper on that.

Then, I got involved, I forget with whom, but we were concerned about homeless people. There was a bag lady who was sleeping on the street one summer, and my roommates and I decided we would take her in as an act of charity. Then, we couldn't get rid of her. She, every day, would come back after collecting garbage, and she would have these bags of rags and junk piling up in our apartment. Finally, we had to say that we can't continue this. We got her into a women's shelter so she wouldn't be on the street, but I think she escaped from it and wound up back on the street.

Then, one other thing I was involved in was a movement to help families that needed a place to stay, and I got involved in a squatter's movement, which was going on on the Lower East Side at the time, where I was living. There was a push by landlords to change the zoning to allow taller buildings to go up. My recollection is there was a height limit of, I don't remember if it was, six or ten stories, and they thought that they could persuade the city council to change the zoning to allow high-rises to go up. In anticipation of that, a lot of landlords, as tenants were moving out, they were leaving the buildings empty in the hopes of being able to tear them down and put up very high-profit high-rises. It created a real critical housing shortage for a lot of lower-income people.

What we did is--I was part of this group and we would liberate apartments. We would go into these buildings and open the apartments to allow people to live there. They were squatters; they weren't paying rent. What happened was, when the landlords would find out about them, they'd call the police. We would have the families leave and we would sit in the apartments, claiming we were visiting friends or something. It was kind of a crazy idea, but we did prevent the families who were actually living there from being arrested. This went on for a while.

At one point, I guess one of the landlords wanted to make an example of us to discourage us from liberating these apartments, and they decided they were going to press charges. I happened to be the lucky person who got arrested and was charged with breaking and entering, which is a felony. [laughter] Fortunately, the non-profit group provided me with a lawyer. Because there were a lot of lawsuits, they had good legal representation. I remember I didn't have to spend the night in jail, but I was kind of booked on those charges of breaking and entering. There was a pre-trial hearing, and I was really panicked, "My God, if I'm convicted, there goes my career." Fortunately, the lawyer was very good, and at the brief hearing, the attorney for the landlord was not very good. No one saw that I broke into the apartment, and my recollection is that the doors maybe weren't even locked. I don't recall really breaking in. I think the doors of the apartment were open. Anyhow, there were no cameras; no one could say otherwise. The story I gave was that a friend had invited me to come over and gave me his address. I must have written down the

wrong address and I went to these apartments and then saw it was empty. I was trying to figure out what was going on and what happened, and then I was arrested. Anyhow, for the lack of evidence of a crime, the case was dismissed and I think the record of my arrest was expunged. It never got to where there was a charge.

That was my flirtation with civil disobedience. I guess I decided it was a little risky and that maybe I should tone down my protest to peaceful, civil protest that wouldn't get me into such trouble. Then, I went to Madison, Wisconsin, which was one of the epicenters of the anti-war movement.

SI: When you were in New York, how would you find out about these things and how to get involved? Was it through friends, or were you part of any kind of group?

OU: I think the squatter's movement was through the NYU Law School. I think a lot of students were pretty radical at the time and had told me about it. There were all kinds of ways of finding out. The *Village Voice* had stories. There was quite a bit of alternative press. Also, being a reporter, I had access to a lot of information, between word of mouth and posters that were put up. I remember at the time, there was a longtime Congressman, a Democratic Congressman, in the district where I lived who was indicted, and I think he might've lost in the Democratic primary to Bella Abzug, who was a famous reformer who wore big hats. I worked for her to get her elected and I remember a fundraiser on Houston Street at a famous deli, the Houston Street Deli, I think it was called. Through those people, I heard a lot about protests. [Editor's Note: Bella Abzug was a women's rights activist and politician who represented New York's 19th and 20th Districts in the House of Representatives from 1971 to 1977.]

Anyhow, so, I went to Madison in the fall of '71. The year before, there was this horrific bombing of a research building on campus where they had some military contract and people bombed it. I think it went off at three in the morning, and they did it intentionally because they figured the building would be empty. Unfortunately, there was a researcher there who was checking on a project who was killed. So, it became a huge controversy. Three of the people who were charged with the crime, I think they eventually turned themselves in and I think they got prison sentences, pretty long prison sentences, and they served their time. The fourth person was never found. It's kind of a mystery. They knew who he was, but they never found him. He's either dead or still at large somewhere. There were a lot of stories on--this would have been around the fiftieth anniversary of that. It's remained another one of those mysteries. [Editor's Note: On August 24, 1970, a van loaded with explosives blew up outside of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Sterling Hall, killing a physics researcher and wounding three others. The bombing was carried out by four anti-war protesters who were targeting the Mathematics Research Center, an Army-funded research center located in Sterling Hall. Leo Burt has never been apprehended.]

I went to Madison. There were a lot of protests against the war at the time, and I participated in them. I'm just remembering that there were a lot of protests with a lot of tear gas. It was lobbed. So, I was going to classes at the journalism school, which I really enjoyed. I went to school there for a couple years. I also taught classes as a teaching assistant. I worked one summer at the morning newspaper, where I covered a bunch of different events.

It was also the 1972 Watergate era, and so that captivated our attention. I remember the morning newspaper was more conservative and ran very few stories about it, while the evening newspaper, which was very liberal, ran front-page stories of the latest blockbuster explosions by Woodward and Bernstein. People there got quite a choice of what newspaper they wanted to read.

It was also the year where there was a mayoral election, and the current mayor, who was up for reelection, was very right wing, William Dyke, who later became the vice-presidential candidate of the American Independent Party. He was defeated by the first bona-fide socialist mayor of the city, Paul Soglin, who remained as mayor for quite a number of years, until recently. He had interrupted terms, but he was a long-term mayor. This was his first term starting in 1973, and I worked for his campaign in the fall of 1972. There was a lot of political activism in Madison. Then, I got my master's degree in 1973, and I got my first job with the Associated Press in Detroit. Excuse me, my dog is scratching. [Editor's Note: Paul Soglin served as mayor of Madison from 1973 to 1979, from 1989 to 1997, and then from 2011 to 2019.]

SI: Sure.

OU: All right.

SI: Before we talk about the Associated Press ...

OU: Right.

SI: Were there any professors that particularly stood out during your master's program or that you think shaped your interest or style?

OU: Quite a few actually. I'd say the two main ones were Jack McLeod, a communications specialist, who's still there--he's retired and actually I hope to see him this fall when I go back--and his partner Steve Chaffee, who unfortunately passed away quite a few years ago. He was from Stanford. The two of them did a lot of really great research into communication patterns. I just found them to be fascinating people. That got me interested in journalism as kind of a social science, and with their encouragement, I took a number of statistics courses and methodology in polling. I have to tell you that it has advanced my career immensely to understand both the science and the limits of political polling. You understand why now you have all these concerns about why polls have been so inaccurate in the last two presidential elections, but it's really clear how you can introduce so much bias into your polling in so many ways. Then, what people don't understand is that you have to make assumptions when you poll. When you extrapolate from your sample size to the population you're trying to measure, you had to make a lot of guesstimates about composition and it's very hard to do. It used to be easier, but now it's much more difficult. It's harder to reach people.

Anyhow, so, that served me very well. Plus, the statistics served me very well as I became more interested in economics and I could understand how you do some basic calculations. I remember, for my entire career, people would come up to me and ask me if I would help them

understand simple mathematical computations for stories they were doing. They were always afraid to cover anything that had numbers because they weren't sure how to explain it properly. I became kind of a resource. So, that served me very well.

Then, my teaching assistant at the time became a longtime friend of mine. We've stayed in touch for years, and in fact we talked probably about a month ago. He's retired now living outside the University of Georgia, in Athens, Georgia. He was very helpful in helping me understand computer programming. At the time, we had computer punch cards to help you do computer programs. All of that was very helpful for my career. Should I go on from there? Do you have other questions?

SI: Yes. The work that you did with the mayoral campaign, was it more like the legwork of going out and knocking on doors? What did you do?

OU: Right. I think I mainly went door to door and distributed the campaign material on his behalf. Not a lot, I just did a little volunteer work.

SI: All right. Then, you went to Detroit and worked for the Associated Press.

OU: Right.

SI: What was your beat there?

OU: The way it usually worked is the new people got the crappy jobs working the overnight, eleven to seven in the morning. Fortunately, we had someone there who actually liked working the night shift. I think his wife was a nurse, and she worked the night shift. They actually wanted to work nights, so I avoided that. I was very lucky, they needed a new auto writer, which was the premier beat, as you can imagine in Detroit, and I was able to do that after just a couple months of being there and getting oriented. I had a really good day job covering the most important beat in the area, which was the auto industry, and it also included covering unions, which was very big there too, the United Auto Workers. I didn't know much about cars at the time, but I learned a lot about them. It was an amazing period to be there.

I got there in the fall of '73, right as the oil embargo had broken out, literally that October. I had gotten there a few weeks before. So, you had gas shortages, which sparked this huge move by consumers to smaller cars. This was in the first wave of imported cars. It was just a huge number of stories. There was a very bad recession in the auto industry. At the time, the auto industry was possibly the largest industry in the United States, the largest employer, and General Motors was the largest company in the world. So, it was front-page news, and it was just an unlimited number of stories to do.

I remember that I would write all these dispatches. At night, I would hear Walter Cronkite reading stories about, "In Detroit, General Motors announced this or that or this problem happened." I started to realize that, gee, maybe Walter Cronkite was actually reading my stories because they'd rip the AP copy and he would read it. As a test, I would start to insert little words into my copy that would be a signal that I wrote it. It would be a word that wouldn't be

completely out of place, but it would be an unusual word that if I heard him use it, I knew he was reading my copy. I'm trying to think of some words that I used. I think that I would use the word "quite," or sometimes I'd use an adverb or an unusual verb I would throw in. Sure enough, I'd hear it and say, "Hey, he's reading my story because I added that word." [laughter] I got a kick out of that.

I got to know labor leaders really well. My apartment was very close to where the UAW [United Auto Workers] headquarters was, and so I was able to go there for a lot of interviews. It was very fascinating. I actually met my future wife in Detroit, and one of my closest friends lived in my building. It was quite an exciting time there.

I got to interview Henry Ford II, when he was chairman of the Ford Motor Company, and Lee Iacocca, who was there. I remember once I was interviewing Iacocca and I think he was still at Ford. He was president of Ford at the time. He later ended up having a falling out with Henry Ford and left and went to Chrysler and he became kind of iconic as a super salesman. Iacocca was famous for--I think he was father of the Mustang and that made his career because that did so well. I remember interviewing him, and we were talking about the importance in why Japanese imports were suddenly becoming big. He said, "Oh, Japanese imports, the quality just is not as good as American products" and he wished people knew that. Then, he said, "What do you drive?" I said, "Well, actually I drive a Toyota Corolla, and I've been very happy with it." [laughter] He said, "Why'd you buy that?" I said, "Well, it's got real good gas milage, to tell you the truth, and I couldn't find an American car that offered as good gas mileage during the gas crisis." He said, "Well, have you been thinking about buying something new?" I said, "Well, I did buy a bicycle, so that I can ride my bicycle." He said, "What kind of bicycle is that?" I said, "Actually, it's a Japanese-made Itoh." While I'm talking to him, I had brought a tape recorder and the tape recorder is playing. As we were talking about this, the tape started to snarl, and the tape recorder stopped. I had to turn it off. He says, "Ah ha, a Japanese tape recorder?" I looked at it and I said, "No, actually, it says it's an RCA," which was American made. [laughter] That kind of quieted him for a while. I remember that interesting interview.

I had quite a few interviews with heads of General Motors and Chrysler, and there was also American Motors at the time. That got bought out by Chrysler. I had done a story, because I had some pretty good sources at companies, they would tell me things about planning that hadn't been announced yet. So, I broke quite a number of stories. One, I did a story about Chrysler beginning to phase out its big cars, which was true, but they hadn't even told the dealers yet. This was like a year or two ahead of schedule, just because they saw the handwriting on the wall, and Chrysler's largest car was going to be reduced to the size of what had been considered intermediate cars. That created a huge uproar, and there were protests by dealers against Chrysler. They tried to find out who my sources were, and I wouldn't tell them.

There was another story. I remember there was a national strike against Ford, and the strike was going on for weeks. I was covering that, and that was big national news because a couple hundred thousand workers shut down auto plants all over the country. There were rumors that they might be close to a settlement, but they weren't at the time. I had asked one of the public relations people what the chances were for a settlement, and he said, "Well, we'll know because Mr. Ford is supposed to go on a trip to London, and if they have a settlement or are close to a

settlement that he has to sign off on, he'll probably postpone his trip." I knew that he had a suite in the headquarters building, so he could spend the night there if need be, but he was planning to leave that evening.

I needed to take a break, and so I went out to walk a little bit and relieve the tension. I ran into a cleaning lady, who was out in the hall, and I just made some small talk with her. Somehow, she volunteered that she had just come down from Mr. Ford's suite. I said, "What were you doing there?" She said, "Well, they asked me to clean and prepare his bedroom because it looked like he was going to spend the night." I said, "Really? Are you sure about this?" "Oh, yes, he's there. Actually, I saw him there and I put down the bed and made sure everything was ready for him." I said, "I thought he was supposed to go to London." She said, "Well, he said he's going to spend the night." So, I figured that was the tipoff that there was going to be a settlement.

I asked the PR person, I called him aside, and he said, "How did you find that out?" I said, "Well, is it true?" He said, "I'm not supposed to confirm it, but I'm not going to steer you away from it." I filed a bulletin right from the Ford headquarters press room, saying that they were on the verge of a settlement because Henry Ford was spending the night there. Everyone immediately got phone calls from their editors, all the other reporters, asking about this bulletin, and they were asked to match it. Everyone was looking at me, and I'm just sitting there smiling. It turned out to be true. They announced the settlement a few hours later. So, that was one of my big scoops. Who would have thought my source would be a cleaning lady, right? That's one of the serendipitous things about being a reporter. It always helps to charm and talk to anyone you can find. You never know who is going to know something that can help you.

Years later, I actually learned about a settlement of a Teamsters strike when I was in the men's room and overheard one of the negotiators at the urinal with one of the federal arbitrators talking about a settlement they had agreed to. That was inside information that I was able to use. You might say it was literally a leak. [laughter] Anyhow, those were all really interesting stories.

The biggest story, of course, was the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa on July 30, 1975, a date that I'll never forget. It just became a huge, huge story, one that reporters all over the world were covering. Of course, they never solved the disappearance. We think we know what happened. The mob got rid of him because he was threatening to come back, having been in jail, to take over the union leadership from Frank Fitzsimmons, who was in bed with the mob, and they didn't want to take any chances. But we could never prove it. It was just an amazing story to cover. It was early in my career, but it probably was the most fascinating story that I was ever involved in. A colorful labor leader, a murder mystery, the mob, it doesn't get better than that. I had some friends I covered him with, and every year, we would say, "It's coming up, July 30th." These friends, we would always talk about it. It's 2021. This was '75, so forty-six years ago.

SI: Yes, wow.

OU: I don't know if anyone still does stories on that. I remember we interviewed Chuckie O'Brien, a close aide and unofficial foster son, who was accused of luring him to this restaurant when he was killed. We used to do a stake out at--the Hoffa family stayed outside Detroit--and wait for news and news conferences. It was quite exciting. I remember the FBI and the U.S.

Attorney saying he probably got ground up or turned into soap or was destroyed in acid. [Editor's Note: Chuck O'Brien worked as an assistant to Jimmy Hoffa when he led the International Brotherhood of Teamsters from 1957 to 1971. O'Brien came under suspicion during investigations into Hoffa's disappearance, although authorities never brought charges against him and he maintained his innocence until his own death in 2020.]

Then, I helped cover the 1976 election. I remember Jimmy Carter came to Detroit, and I interviewed him. Then, I helped cover the '76 election. It was mainly covered by the Washington Bureau of the AP, but we provided support throughout the campaign and the election. We covered some other political stories as well.

I remember one time I had to fill in for the AP Radio editor. What they had to do was, the AP Radio wire had mostly national news that would be read on radio stations. But we had to produce local stories to fill up the fifteen or twenty minutes of every hour it would take to read them. I don't know whether it was twenty minutes before or after the hour. It was like being on a treadmill because you had to keep sending out stories to the wire to fill up this space. It had to be done in time for the radio announcers to read it. You basically had forty minutes to find twenty minutes of material to write, and if you fell behind at all, you had to come up with something to fill it up. It was just an unbelievable burden until someone else came to take over. I think we only did it for like four-hour shifts because it was so grueling. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. There was no forgiving if you didn't have enough material. I remember that was a real challenge.

Then, in 1977, I was transferred to the Washington Bureau of the Associated Press. I worked there first covering the labor beat, which was pretty big then because George Meany was still president of the AFL-CIO. It was a very big story because there were still a lot of national strikes. There was a national Teamsters strike in '79. That was the strike where I got that tip I mentioned about the settlement in the men's room. There was a national coal strike. There were lot of strikes at the time. Of course, inflation was very high. A lot of union contracts had these cost-of-living increases that were contributing to it, so there was an effort to get labor to agree to go easy on some of these cost-of-living escalators, which they refused. Labor was a big part of the Democratic coalition. Now, it's miniscule, but then it was a big deal. I think labor still represented close to a quarter of the workforce, maybe even more, maybe a third, and it was growing in a lot of areas, like public employees and teachers. It was a very vibrant beat. Of course, Meany was a cigar-chomping legendary figure who was iconic from the '50s even, until he died. He was, to a large extent, a king maker for Democratic presidential nominees and other politicians. A lot of that influence waned with his death. He died while I was on the beat, and I covered his successor. [Editor's Note: George Meany (1894-1980) was a labor leader who headed the AFL-CIO from 1955 to 1979. Lane Kirkland succeeded Meany as the president of the AFL-CIO.]

The movement slowly ebbed, and I got transferred to covering economics. I was working under the chief economics writer. That became very interesting, as there was very high inflation and the Federal Reserve was jacking up interest rates to twenty percent and it felt like the wheels were coming off the economy. Then, [Ronald] Reagan--because of the problem of inflation as well as the Iranian hostages, those who were held hostage after the revolution--Reagan got

elected. By coincidence, in 1980, the Republican nominating convention was held in Detroit, and so I helped cover that. I went back to Detroit from Washington. I was on the floor when we covered that event. This was in the early years of very crude cell phones, which were these large things you held up [makes motion of holding phone to ear] with batteries and they didn't work that well, but at least they worked somewhat. You were able to communicate with wherever our war room was at the convention center when I was on the floor. I got a few scoops out of that. I think I got the first scoop--there was all of this talk that Reagan was going to choose former President [Gerald] Ford as his running mate. People said this would be a winning ticket, but they got into a fight over how much authority Ford would have and Reagan dropped him and decided to go with George Bush as his running mate. I think I got the first word of that, and I was screaming that into my giant cell phone to make sure they understood what I was saying.

Then, I covered Reaganomics as the chief economics [correspondent], which was very interesting as he'd try to combine big tax cuts with domestic spending cuts and a big increase in the defense budget. It was extremely controversial. I got to know his budget director at the time, David Stockman, who was a very controversial figure, a Michigan Congressman, who was very bright, but he made the mistake of confessing a lot of his doubts about Reaganomics to a reporter for the *Atlantic Monthly* named William Greider, who published it in 1981. It created a huge political scandal in Washington, because here was the budget director who was one of the architects of Reaganomics expressing doubts about whether Reaganomics worked or not. It looked like he was going to be fired, but Reagan "took him to the woodshed" and gave him a talking to and he stayed on for another five years. I got to know him really well, and actually I wound up writing a book about him, a biography of him. It came out at about the same time his own memoir came out. I did a lot of interviews with him and his family and colleagues, so that was an interesting project. I think the book came out in 1986. I remember he told me that his mother liked my book better than his book because she could understand it better. It didn't have as much economics. It was more about him. [Editor's Note: Owen Ullmann is the author of *Stockman: The Man, the Myth, the Future*. David Stockman served as the director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1981 until his resignation in 1985. Stockman's experiences working in the Ronald Reagan administration are detailed in his memoir *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed.* Prior to the Reagan administration, Stockman served in the House of Representatives from Michigan's 4th District from 1977 to 1981.]

SI: Had you worked with him or covered him before going to Washington, when you were in Detroit?

OU: No, I didn't really know him before. It was only in Washington that I got to know him. He represented a district in western Michigan near St. Joseph, Michigan, sort of near Lake Michigan, not too far from Grand Rapids. What's interesting is that one of his young aides at the time, who was in his twenties, Fred Upton, who was also a source in my book, in subsequent years became the Congressman from that area and he's still the Congressman for that district. If you check, he's been in the news because he's one of the ten Congressmen who voted for Trump's impeachment, and we'll see how he does next year when he's up for reelection. He's got to be, I guess, in his fifties or older now. When I interviewed him, he was in his twenties. Of course, this was in the mid-'80s, so that's thirty years ago, almost forty. He may be sixty by now. That's interesting to see that he's another political contrarian like his predecessor. I pretty much

lost track with Stockman. We haven't really talked much, although we had a couple mutual friends that I talk to. I've seen them and have stayed in touch with them over the years. One of my good friends now was an excellent source of mine for the Stockman book. [Editor's Note: Fred Upton, who was born in 1953 in St. Joseph, Michigan, has served in the House of Representatives since 1987, first from the 4th District and since 1993 from the 6th District.]

I left the AP. Actually, when I wrote the book, I had already left the AP. I left in '83 and joined Knight Ridder Newspapers, which later became McClatchy Newspapers. They were bought out. Knight Ridder at the time was one of the largest chains in the country, from when the Knight Newspaper chain and the Ridder Newspaper chain merged, and their newspapers included *The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Miami-Herald*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *San Jose Mercury News, St. Paul Pioneer Press*, about twenty-six student newspapers. They had a circulation of four million all over the country, from the East Coast to the South to the far West to the Midwest, *Akron Beacon Journal*. It was also known for good quality journalism.

They had a Washington Bureau that wrote dispatches for all the newspapers, and so I was in that bureau. I enjoyed working with a lot of really talented journalists there. I started off covering economics, and then I started covering the White House full time in 1984, which I did for six years. I covered the rest of Reagan and the Bush presidency and a little bit of Clinton, and I found it to be too grueling. I already had a young daughter, who was born in 1982, and my wife was getting a little tired of my traveling so much for campaigns and presidential trips. Then, when my son was born in December 1990, I decided that I really couldn't keep that up, so I switched to covering the State Department, which was a little more stable. The secretary of state would go on these sudden foreign trips, sometimes with a few hours' notice, but it wasn't quite as hectic. So, I covered that until 1993.

Then, I went to *BusinessWeek* magazine, where I was back covering economics. I was the senior news editor in the bureau and oversaw coverage of economics, business leaders, finance. This is when *BusinessWeek* as a weekly was very influential. Policymakers and businesspeople followed it very closely, and after *The Wall Street Journal*, it was probably most influential publication in the international world. It was very interesting. More than any other job I had, I could get senior officials on the phone. You would have to arrange it, but I could get the treasury secretary on the phone. I could get the chairman of the Fed [Federal Reserve] on the phone. On a couple occasions, I got President [Bill] Clinton on the phone for interviews. It was really something.

It seems like every place I've worked has been bought out and changed, just like Knight Ridder Newspapers became McClatchy Newspapers. *BusinessWeek* was eventually bought out by Bloomberg. It might be *Bloomberg Businessweek* magazine now, but I'm not sure. *BusinessWeek* had been owned by McGraw-Hill Publications, which now basically is a financial company. Their main asset was the S&P ratings company, which was extremely profitable but got a black eye during the housing crisis. It turned out they were irresponsibly giving high-credit ratings to risky bonds because the bond issuers were paying for the ratings, and that created conflict-of-interest problems for them. That was my career at *BusinessWeek*.

Then, in 1999, I got a call from a friend who said they were looking for someone to cover economics at USA Today, and it seemed appealing. I took that job, and I was there for twenty years. I had a variety of jobs, briefly covering economics, national security. I was the editor for national security, which was good because it was during the Iraq War, the Second Iraq War, in [2003]. Then, I went into management. I became the deputy managing editor of the news department, the number two editor in the news department.

Actually, before that, I was a deputy editorial page editor, where we edited all the daily editorials, which it's very hard, by the way, to write fact-based editorials that aren't just opinion but you try to persuade with facts. I found that one of the most intellectually challenging jobs that I had. It made me really see the difference between a smart editorial and column and one that just states the obvious. We always had this rule that you needed an "insight" in either an editorial or column, so readers would say, "Ah, that's something I hadn't thought about!" It was never enough to just "applaud" or "deplore" an issue, you had to try to persuade. We managed people submitting columns, and it was tough intellectual work.

I'll tell you one memorable incident that happened in 2004. I had come up with this idea. I said, "Why don't we find a new way of covering the political conventions on the editorial page?" This was in 2004 where we had George W. Bush running for reelection. We were going to cover the conventions in a different way. Bush's convention was in New York, and John Kerry, the Democratic candidate, his was in Boston. I came up with this plan, I said, "Let's have a noted conservative covering the Democratic Convention and a noted liberal covering the Republican Convention," and the editor thought that was a great idea. So, I arranged for--do you know who Ann Coulter is, the super conservative woman with long blond hair? I arranged for her to cover the Democratic Convention and for Michael Moore, the filmmaker Michael Moore, to cover the Republican Convention. Everyone was really excited, "Wow, we've got these two well-known political celebrities," and we figured they would certainly have provocative things to say about the other side's convention.

Coulter filed her first column about the Democratic Convention. It was a diatribe, but I would have published it. I mean, it was colorful and controversial and in my mind kind of what we wanted. She said something like, "I cringed watching all these ugly women that had frumpy hair and big asses and unshaved armpits who are representing the Democrats." It was a lot of name-calling, but, like I said, I would have run it. There was nothing obscene about it, but my editor thought it was too crude and he canned it. We argued over it, but he wouldn't change his mind. As a result, Coulter quit in a huff, and because we wouldn't publish her column, she posted it online and got probably more views than we would have gotten if it was published on the USA Today website. Then, we hired Jonah Goldberg from *National Review* to be the conservative commentator, and he wrote a pretty good column. He actually did a very good job, though not as colorful as Coulter, but we got beat up because no one paid attention to the fact that we hired him because he was not as big a celebrity. We got beat up for firing a conservative because we didn't like the columns, which I thought was a mistake.

Anyhow, to make sure we didn't have any problems at the Republican Convention, I said I would personally go to New York because I didn't go to Boston to manage Coulter. I had someone else go with her. I said I would go to New York and I would personally manage Michael Moore,

who I guess he had just done the movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*. It had just come out, in my recollection, so he was very much in the news then. So, I remember he was in an apartment in New York and he filed his first column and it was great. I mean, he did an excellent job. It was thoughtful. It was critical, but he wrote it like a journalist. It was very professional. We were thrilled. I breathed a sigh of relief. Then, the second night, he told me, "I want to go there in person. I want to witness it in person." I said, "I don't know, Michael, I'm not sure that's a good idea. I think you're too much of a celebrity. You'll curry a lot attention." He said, "I want to go anyway. I'm going." So, I said, "Okay." So, I said I would accompany him.

He shows up and he decides to sit--there's press seats available at the convention center, it was at Madison Square Garden--and he decides to sit in the USA Today press seats. During the reelection convention for George W. Bush, there wasn't a lot of news to cover, since he had no competition. Moore's arrival there created this huge press sensation, as dozens of otherwise bored reporters crowded around him for interviews, which pissed off all the other reporters who couldn't get to their seats. I'm trying to manage this, and he's giving interviews. He had promised he would keep a low profile, but he obviously didn't. Anyhow, I finally had to get the help of security near the aisle, so that reporters could work and he would be left alone in one of our press seats to be able to watch the convention.

John McCain was giving the keynote speech. I'm sitting there next to Michael listening, and McCain doesn't know that Moore was in the hall watching him. In his prepared remarks, McCain said something defending the war in Iraq. This was before he kind of turned against it. He said, "We know we're there for a just cause, despite what some disingenuous filmmaker might say," referring to Michael Moore and his film, which was very critical of Bush and the war. When he said that, the audience erupted in cheers, because all the delegates and spectators knew Moore was sitting there, because he had made such a commotion in arriving and was shown on TV. The audience went wild with applause and stood up and they cheered, because Moore was there and they were trying to stick it to him. McCain still was unaware that Moore was in attendance and had no idea why the crowd was cheering so wildly, and he said, "Gee, I didn't know you'd like that line so much. I'll think I'll repeat it." [laughter] So, he repeats it. Once again, everyone is standing up and cheering. Meanwhile, every TV camera in the hall is turning to Michael Moore. I can see all these lights are blaring. I'm incredibly embarrassed, and I'm trying to get out of the frame shot. I don't want to be seen sitting next to him, and I'm ducking down like I dropped a piece of paper so that I wouldn't be seen. My worst nightmare is now all this attention is on Moore, who did this, the loser symbol. Do you remember that, Jonathan, have you ever seen the loser symbol? [Editor's Note: The loser symbol refers to making a "L" shape with one's right thumb and pointer finger, which filmmaker Michael Moore signaled at Senator John McCain during his speech at the Republican National Convention on August 30, 2004.]

Jonathan Esterlit: Yes.

OU: That's what Moore did, and people were cheering and booing. I'm looking down, wishing I was as far away as possible. It was on like every front-page newspaper the next day. If you want to go Google "Michael Moore loser," you'll probably find him doing that and you'll probably see some guy in a suit next to him on his left who's looking down and away so you

can't see his face. That's me. It was like my worst nightmare. I said, "Michael, we've got to get out of here." Then, I asked a couple of security guys sitting behind us for help, and we were trying to get him out of the hall. People were heckling him and trying to throw stuff at him. I drag him out, and we get him out. Somehow, we had some limousine waiting for him because he was supposed to go to some fundraiser downtown. I remember I get him to this fundraiser, far away from the hall, and all I remember is he gets out and there's Kathleen Turner, who was speaking at this event, you know, the actress.

I found my way back to the hall. I look and my cellphone had seventeen missed calls. It was my editor-in-chief. Then, I start playing the messages, "Owen, call me right away." The editor-in-chief had only been there for a couple months. "Owen, call me." "Owen, call me." "Owen, where are you?" "Owen, where the hell are you?" "Owen, call me right now!" Each one got more intense. I finally called him, and he starts screaming at me, "What the hell happened?" I was sure I was going to lose my job. He calmed down. I told him I had gotten Michael out of there. I said I didn't foresee that this was going to happen.

The next morning, I went to breakfast at the hotel we were staying at. I got into the elevator with the editor-in-chief and his wife, and I guess he had calmed down. He said to his wife, "This is Owen." She says, "Oh, so you're Owen." [laughter] I can only imagine what he had told her. I was sure he was going to fire me, but it turned out that our website had set a record for the most hits for Michael Moore's columns for the rest of the week. That record stood for a while, and so I think I was safe, thanks to all the clicks by people who were reading his column. By the way, I've got to say, his columns were excellent. He was one of the easiest edits I ever had. [laughter] I have to hand it to him, but I won't forgive him for what he did that night. That was my story of him. I can't tell you that I've seen him since then, but I do have a soft spot for him.

Then, I went on and was deputy news editor and managing editor for news, and pretty much had senior jobs there, including overseeing international news and some special editions we did. We did these stand-alone, tabloid-sized special editions of forty to one hundred pages on special anniversary events that we sold on newsstands and had advertising in them. It might be the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington or the fiftieth anniversary of Woodstock or the moon landing or something like that that people might want as a keepsake or collector's item. We did some partnerships with other media organizations. We did one with National Geographic Channel to promote upcoming TV shows, such as the centennial of the sinking of the *Titanic* or on projects on endangered animals, things like that, where they'd do a show that would deal with a serious topic like climate change. As a result of that, I went on quite a number of safaris in Africa with *National Geographic*, which was a chance to see some amazing animals in the wild. I did that and really enjoyed it.

Then, in 2019, I was already seventy-one, I guess, going on seventy-two and figured it was time to leave, and so I retired. Since then, I've been busy doing some teaching, lecturing. Now, actually, I'm in the throes of writing another book, my second biography since the one on David Stockman thirty-some years ago. I'm finishing up a biography on Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. I'm back to writing about economics. She's been cooperating. In fact, before I got on the phone with you, I was just transcribing or using an artificial intelligence program to transcribe my interview from yesterday. I've been really busy. I'm going to finish writing my

first draft by mid-October. Then, I'll chill for a while, and we'll see when the book is published on September 27, 2022. Then, I hope to teach another summer journalism course at the University of Wisconsin, which I did in 2019. I'm still active on the board of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the Journalism Department at the university in Madison, which is a really great organization. We try to look at the world of journalism and all kinds of settings that involve ethical decisions, and we give an annual award named for the distinguished alumnus Anthony Shadid, who worked for *The New York Times* and died actually covering the Syrian Civil War. [Editor's Note: Janet Yellen has served as the United States Secretary of the Treasury since January 26, 2021. She served as the chair of the Federal Reserve from 2014 to 2018.]

SI: I want to ask some questions and maybe start with some of the big issues that you have seen over your long career in journalism. The biggest one that jumps out is the shift from print to online journalism, and that kind of goes hand in hand with the consolidation of media outlets.

OU: Right.

SI: How did that play out in your experience, and did it affect what you could write or what you could cover?

OU: Yes, that's a good question. It had a seismic impact on our profession in so many ways. The Internet started to become big when I was at *BusinessWeek* in the mid-'90s. I remember when I got an email account. That was in '95 or '96. I was an early adapter. It was really starting to take off then, but there were still a lot of people who weren't using it. I should go back and say that AP was one of the first to start using computers, and I remember in 1973 we already were using word processors for stories. Back then, when I told people that I was writing on a computer, they were surprised. It was really not for quite few years before everyone shifted to computers. The same with cell phones, I was using cell phones at the AP before they were widely used. So, we were adapting to the technology.

By the time I was, say, at *BusinessWeek*, the Internet and then email were really starting to take off. As you know, that's when journalism made a fatally-flawed decision. All the smug and smart people in journalism decided that, "Well, newspapers are still extremely profitable." I should point out that the '80s and into the early '90s were salad days for the industry with enormous profit margins. They figured that, well, the Internet was kind of a sideshow and, "We can offer content for free." What they should have done was to make arrangements with the Internet providers, the companies that managed the Internet, with Verizon or whoever you get it from, that for them to even allow access to our news, they should pay for it. Anyhow, we gave it away for free. It was like the genie out of the bottle that could never put back in.

The industry just ever since started to hemorrhage. It just started slowly, and it just grew and grew and grew. Go look at a chart on advertising, and you'll see when Facebook and Google started running ads, you could see their advertising soaring up and the newspaper advertising soaring down. It just destroyed it. Newspapers were very late trying to come up with a new strategy. Now, obviously, you've got a number of newspapers that have winning strategies with charging for content. Some of them are making money. *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* all are making money with their content, but that's because

they're investing in a lot of original content. The paywall works only if you can get content there that you can't get elsewhere. If it's generic news, why should you want to pay for it? It's like the Olympics. It seems to me, why should anyone have to pay to get Olympic news when there are so many places you can get it for free? But if you want to have some interesting investigative stories on politics, you go to *The Washington Post*. *The New York Times* does a better job covering the world than anyone else. *The Wall Street Journal* covers economics and financial terms better than anyone else, and if you're going to stay up on that, you're going to pay for it. For a lot of others, it doesn't work, and maybe that's your local newspaper. But I think the problem is that young people--we should ask Jonathan this--got in the habit of being able to read news and not pay for it. Jonathan, do you pay for any of yours?

JF: Absolutely not. [laughter]

OU: What do you read?

JF: What do I read? I do not have a specific news source in particular, but in general, I go on to websites like Reddit, where they aggregate from different news sources. You read what people post. I don't really pay attention to what websites they come from. I mean, to an extent, I do. I will check and make sure it is an actual news website and not some crazy person. Yes, usually, it is from an aggregate.

OU: What do you read most frequently?

JF: Like what news source in particular?

OU: No, just the type. Is it news? Is it opinion?

JF: Mostly news, what's going on in the world, world news.

OU: Who is producing that news?

JF: Who is producing it? I can check.

OU: Do you consider it reliable?

JF: Let me just scroll through this real quick. NPR, CBC, Reuters, those are usually the websites, Business Insider.

OU: Good. Well, that's encouraging. The biggest problem I found was that one of the advantages of print is that you read stuff serendipitously. You get a newspaper and you don't know what you're going to find. You wind up reading stories that you didn't plan to read, while with online, you're choosing what you want to read. Yes, I guess you can find some stuff you didn't anticipate. To me, the reading experience is more self-directed than open-ended is what I find. I also think that especially if you're not paying for it, you don't read as deeply. You may be more influenced by video. You just scan headlines. I just think the whole news absorption process is different.

The irony is there is more news and news sources than ever before by far. On the other hand, there's also more bullshit and junk and conspiracy theories and grotesque stuff than ever before. I think it's asking too much for most people who aren't trained to wade through it and just read the stuff that's accurate and true and important and avoid all the horrible stuff out there, because, frankly, it's the horrible stuff that's driving so much of who we are now.

I don't know if there's an answer to it, but it's also created a crisis for journalism. The number of people who are actually collecting news and writing based upon the rules of ethics is at an all-time low. There used to be sixty thousand journalists; now there are twenty thousand [newspaper newsroom journalists]. Local news is being hurt especially because they can't afford to pay for news journalists. I mean, there are cases where there's one reporter at a newspaper. It's crazy. They try to have paywalls. Print is a very clumsy delivery process but is extremely profitable. I remember at USA Today, we used to say that the profit margin for each print subscriber versus digital subscriber was like ten times or fifteen times, which meant that for every print subscriber we lost, you had to enroll ten digital subscribers and that was very hard to do. So, that's been the dilemma for the business.

You were asking how effective was it what we did. At USA Today, we didn't have a paywall. They're slowly changing and they're trying to charge more for content, but when I was there, we didn't charge for anything. So, we had to attract an audience with our content. Advertising was based on the number of clicks, and so the push was everything needed to get as many clicks as possible. That put a premium on light and sensational news and photos and video and headlines and not a premium on important but dull news. As world editor, that was a real challenge for me. If I wanted to do a story about the drought in Kenya, I didn't have a lot of support, even though I thought it maybe was an important story. A lot of that was discouraged. I can understand the economics of it, but it didn't make the job any more appealing. We used to do experiments with headlines, where we would try a headline and see how many clicks the story would get in an hour and then we would change the headline and see if the story would get more clicks. We would manipulate the audience sometimes just by changing the headline with certain words, what we would call SEOs, search engine optimization, in tying in the volume with the latest algorithm of Google search. That became just too much for the kind of journalism I was trained to do. You had to have a video with every story. You had to have a photo with every story. [Editor's Note: On July 7, 2021, USA Today announced its shift to a digital subscription model, becoming the last major national daily to require readers to pay to read some news online, although a lot of content remains free.]

As I said, I don't know where we're headed. Even though we have more news sources than ever before, I feel that the American public is less informed and more driven by insanity than we've seen before. I think it's because so much of the media is driven by social platforms other than news platforms, so people recommend stories and there's no accounting for it. There's no arbiter saying, "This is fake. This isn't fake." I wish there were. Personally, I think Facebook is the worst thing that's ever happened to the news industry. I wish it would go away.

SI: Along with that, there is more politicization of how things are perceived and speaking to audiences along those lines. I do not want to get too far into that, but over the years, was it more

or less evenhanded in how you covered stories? Over time, would editors favor one side over the other, that sort of thing, such as when you were covering the labor side of the auto industry?

OU: I would say over my entire career, we tried our best to maintain balance--you couldn't always have pure objectivity. I mean, sometimes just by the nature of the story you wrote about, it would have a certain bias to it. We worked very hard for balance, so that if you had a story that was maybe sympathetic to one side, we would look for an opportunity to write something that maybe provided the other perspective. I think at every job I had, there was a sincere attempt--I mean, we didn't always succeed--to try to be as objective, fair, accurate, comprehensive and as balanced as possible with context that we thought was fact-based and not driven by partisan politics or emotion.

I think there's less of an interest in doing that now. I see stories--I don't want to give you examples--I see stories in the major media world where they use certain adjectives or approaches that I might agree with personally but I think has some real clear bias to it. Maybe you can't be unbiased anymore. How can you be fair to Trump when he lies all the time? I don't know. You can give the benefit of the doubt for a while, but if someone is making dangerous accusations, it's very hard to be objective in the traditional sense of not being able to take sides. I think that's one of the reasons I probably also wanted to retire. I think that we're living in dangerous times. While it's important for journalism to get the facts out there, also sometimes the content seems biased, but the context often is important too. I think it becomes increasingly hard to be objective in the sense of covering Hitler objectively and concentration camps. There are some truths that you have to expose. Not everything has two sides to it. A lot of people and events journalists cover are dangerous and evil, and I think you need to be conscientious about that.

At USA Today, we got to the point where we felt we could no longer treat global warming like there are two sides, like one side says the planet is heating up and the other says it's not. We took a stand and took the position that the facts show that the planet is heating up because of human activity and stuck to that. I suppose there are still some deniers who'd say that is a biased position. We would say that our position was factual based on science. Take the debate now about vaccines. I would say many people who aren't vaccinated by choice are making false claims about the dangers of vaccines. [laughter] I won't ask if you are among them. The science about the efficacy and value of vaccines is indisputably, one-hundred-percent clear. Get the damn shot to help end this scourge.

SI: Well, you have covered many stories, so I am not going to go into each one, but do any of the major issues or periods that you have covered stand out in your memory, maybe September 11th or the housing crisis, things that are more in your economic coverage wheelhouse?

OU: Well, I mentioned early on the Jimmy Hoffa experience. 9/11 was an amazing story. I remember that. We had just opened our Washington Bureau for USA Today literally the weekend before. People weren't used to going there. I was driving in early to work in DC when I heard on the radio about the plane hitting the one tower. I got to the office when the other plane hit the tower, and the phones were going crazy from the USA Today headquarters building in Rosslyn, Virginia. I was kind of in charge of assigning people to cover events. I remember hearing a tremendous number of rumors that weren't true about the Capitol was bombed and the

White House was bombed. There was even a story at the time that the tall USA Today building in Rosslyn was bombed. I remember my wife and my daughter called to find out if it was true, and I said it wasn't true.

It was one of the saddest days of my life covering it. I just remember dealing with all the deaths. I remember that morning when one of my reporters called me to say he actually witnessed the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. He was coming to work and saw the plane just barely missing cars on the road he was on. He could hear the explosion and see the flames jutting up because he was just passing by the Pentagon at the time, and it was horrible.

Having to decide what to cover in these events, we didn't know what was going on, and we worked all day and all night. In downtown Washington, all of the streets became--by noon--deserted. It was like you see now in *The Twilight Zone*. There was not a soul on the street, not a car, not a bus, nothing in the nation's capital. People just evacuated. We were covering events at the Washington Bureau in the downtown business district trying to file stories. Then, I remember driving home, I want to say, at like three in the morning or four in the morning, we were up late, and I drove to Bethesda, about eight or nine miles from the office, I didn't pass a single car, a single soul on the street. It was so eerie. I just went home and wept. It was so emotionally draining because you couldn't help but be affected by what had happened there. Often, you kind of put on an emotional shield and you cover something objectively, but it was impossible to separate your personal feelings and you didn't know what was going to happen. It was probably the saddest day of my career by far.

Actually, another interesting event occurred the year before. We were covering the election of 2000 with the vote stalemate, and I was in charge of the page one story and in charge of editing. I remember we just kept rewriting and rewriting, and I was under the pressure from the publisher about, "We've got to start the presses again." I think we had six or seven editions. Flashing in my mind was the headline from the famous *Chicago Tribune* "Dewey Wins." I didn't want us to have a similar wrong headline that we'd be remembered for calling the election too soon, so we were very careful of how we had headlines. We went with "deadlocked." We were pretty proud of that when we went back and looked months later at all of the headlines on the multiple editions we published. They all stood up. That was also an exhausting election. Of course, I wound up covering the election for the next whatever it was, thirty-seven days, until it got resolved by the Supreme Court. That was quite amazing. [Editor's Note: On November 3, 1948, the *Chicago Daily Tribune's* front-page headline mistakenly declared, "Dewey Defeats Truman," when, in fact, President Harry S. Truman defeated New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey in the election. The presidential election of 2000, between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore, became known for its prolonged ballot recounts in Florida. Ultimately, on December 12, 2000, the Supreme Court reversed an order by the Florida Supreme Court for a manual recount of the state's presidential election ballots, which effectively awarded Florida's electoral votes to Bush and ensured his victory.]

Covering Ronald Reagan was fascinating. He was quite an enigma. He did lot of interesting things as president, some good, some bad. I remember in 1993 being on the White House Rose Garden [South Lawn] when Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and PLO leader Arafat shook hands on the Oslo Agreements. It was the last agreement that's been reached between Israel and the

Palestinians. That was a rare moment. I didn't realize at the time that we would go so long after that without seeing any meaningful advancement in the peace between Israel and Palestinians. That handshake was quite an amazing thing to witness. I was at the White House in the 1980s when Reagan appeared with one of the U.S. hostages held in Lebanon who was released. During the Iran-Contra scandal, I was actually in the White House when they announced that they had found that they were using proceeds from the sale of weapons to Iran to help the Contras, and that was a big story. There were quite a few big stories I was fortunate to witness and cover.

Some huge stories, such as the 2007-'09 housing crisis, unfolded over a period of time and it's hard to remember any one single event. I mean, there were days, I guess, when Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, that was probably the darkest day of the crisis. I remember having an interview afterwards with the chairman of the Fed. This was an off-the-record meeting with Ben Bernanke. This was late 2008. Usually, they tend to be cheerleaders and find something optimistic to say about the economy, and he was talking to a few of us in an off-the-record session. Instead of being upbeat, he was unusually downcast and pessimistic, talking about looking into the financial abyss and how difficult times ahead would be, and I remember coming away from that really, really worried. I said, "My God, if the Fed chair is that downbeat, then we're headed for a real rough time." Sure enough, we were. We were still in the midst of a horrible, crushing recession. I remember, years earlier, interviewing Paul Volcker, the earlier chair of the Fed, when he had to jack up interest rates to fight inflation. He was a fascinating person to cover. He was big, six-foot-seven, and smoked cigars--I remember interviewing him, he would be sitting back at his desk with his big feet up on the desk, smoking with a lot of smoke pouring out.

I covered a lot during events, but I think the people stick out in my mind the most. Donald Rumsfeld died recently, the former defense secretary. I interviewed him a few times and tangled with him. He was a pretty tough character. I remember interviewing Robert McNamara, the earlier defense secretary under Kennedy who later became president of the World Bank, and he became very emotional when he talked about how wrong he was to support the Vietnam War. He was almost in tears. I had some sit-downs with George W. Bush before he became president, where he would be unguarded and candid--even a good source when his father was running for president. We had some friendly chats and played some blackjack together during the 1988 campaign to pass time waiting for events to start.

I have a lot of memories, but I think the people more than anything else stick out in my mind because you realize these people of historic significance and great power are just very, very human like the rest of us. You think--are they extraordinary? Do they have some special talent? Yes, they probably had some special gifts, but so much of what they become is based on luck and just good timing. Timing is so, so important. You realize that some of these are pretty ordinary people who just through a combination of luck and smarts land in these incredibly powerful positions, and it doesn't really change them. You realize that they're just like us, very human and insecure and make a lot of mistakes, some not always up to the enormous challenges and responsibilities. It's interesting, it's hard to demonize them when you see how human they are, even though you know some of these people were despised by the political opposition and probably did some things that were really bad for the country and for different groups. But it's hard not to feel they're human beings, from their twisted perspective of trying to do something

they thought was good. I'll exempt one person from that because I think it goes without saying. In my limited dealings with him before he was president, he was a narcissistic megalomaniac. Of course, he was the same lunatic as president. He was off the charts. He's a deeply disturbed person mentally. I would definitely not categorize other presidents I covered as psychotic or even neurotic. Now, George Herbert Walker Bush was one of the nicest people you could meet. I met him during the campaign in 1988. Clinton was unbelievably charming. They all had interesting attributes. Reagan could tell great stories. That's kind of my takeaway from journalism.

SI: Yes, I was going to ask if you had covered Trump before his political experience, going back to the 1980s.

OU: A couple times, I interviewed him at some events, nothing at great length, no great insights. He was so transparent. I mean, it's so obvious who he is. There's no mystery about him. I'm just glad I didn't have to cover him at the White House. I don't think I could.

SI: Well, you have given us this great overview. Is there any other aspect that you want to discuss or mention?

OU: Not that I can think of. I've done more talking than I have in a long time. If I ever write a memoir, I can use the transcript. I'm not a hundred percent sure what you're looking for, so I would say I've been pretty comprehensive. I know Peter Kuznick told me he only got through high school in his first interview. [laughter]

SI: Well, each person is a different kind of storyteller. I think you have been very open and forthcoming with us, which is all I can really ask of anyone.

OU: Plus, having worked at USA Today, when I give a speech, the first thing I say is, "Well, you know I worked at USA Today, so you know I'll be brief." [laughter] That always gets a laugh. I try to be concise. Wasn't it Mark Twain who said, "I'm sorry this letter is so long. I didn't have time to make it short"? It takes a lot of effort to keep it short.

SI: You mentioned the two biographies, the one you published and the one you're working on. Have you written any other books?

OU: No. I don't think I will. [laughter] It's too much work. I'm a deadline person. It's been nothing like a daily or a weekly deadline, but the yearly deadline, just having that hanging over your head, is uncomfortable. I'm ready to be done with it. I've actually made good progress. I'm probably almost done. I'm probably like three-quarters done, but I just did this long interview with Janet yesterday. It raised more questions about things I have to look into and I have to research this or that. The advantage is, my God, having the Internet now is an unbelievable gift. In the other book, I had to go to the Library of Congress or track down obscure stuff and interview people. Now, anything I need is online. If I need a transcript of some obscure confirmation hearing, it's there, or a speech. I'll just Google something, and the original source comes up. It makes it a lot easier to research today with a lot more material to integrate.

The other thing is I had to pay a lot of money for transcripts of the taped interviews last time. This time, there are various artificial intelligence websites that charge very minimal amounts, and you get a pretty good, eighty-percent-accurate transcript. So, that makes it a lot easier too. No, I mean, if you have an interesting life story that you want me to write a biography on, I'd be happy to [laughter] entertain it when I finish this up, or maybe Jonathan. The stars will have an amazing career for him, and when I'm in my nineties, I can write his biography. What are you trying to do, Jonathan?

JF: I am actually hoping to get into nursing, which is somewhat different from all this, I suppose.

OU: Well, God knows we need good nurses, especially now. Maybe wait until the Delta variant is over.

SI: One last question we are asking folks is how has the pandemic and everything that has followed impacted you?

OU: Well, last year, everything I had scheduled was canceled. I had two great cruises to places I hadn't been before, where I lecture, Vietnam, Burma, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, cancelled, so that was upsetting. My teaching in the summer, a journalism course at Madison, was cancelled two years in a row. I'm active with a program for the University of Missouri Journalism School in exchange programs in China, which were cancelled. Quite a few things were canceled, and I spent the last year pretty much isolated at home.

The good news is none of us got sick. I have a daughter in Miami and a son in Los Angeles. They stayed well. It was, I'd say, pretty tough, but we were among the more fortunate ones. We weren't sick. I didn't have a full-time job, so I didn't worry about either being laid off or working remotely. We have no school-age kids. We were very fortunate that we're at a point in our lives where there's less stress to deal with over the shutdown. This year we got vaccinated. It took a while, but we feel that we're fortunate. Our kids are vaccinated. Since the spring, we visited our son, we visited our daughter, we've gone on vacation. So, we've done some traveling and remain well. We're hopeful that we'll eventually be at the end of this pandemic, but too many people don't want to get vaccinated and it just worries me about whether we're going to ever finally get rid of it.

Then, the political situation worries me. As a country, we have a history of moving two steps forward and one backwards. We're definitely taking a step backwards, it's a big step backward, and I just don't know where we're headed.
I've never seen so much anger and division. I thought the Vietnam era was the worst time for this country politically, whether it was the sharp division and the true animosity between the so-called Silent Generation and the more progressive people who wanted to end the war, who wanted to improve civil rights, who wanted to allow more of a libertarian lifestyle, and it led to tremendous clashes, but that was much more generational. This is very different. I've never seen such amazing divisions sparked by two entirely different worldviews.

That's been the worst part of this pandemic. How could we allow a health issue to become politicized? For God's sake, it's a health emergency. [laughter] It's not about politics and freedom and all that crap. It's the most disheartening thing I can imagine. I can only say that I live in an area that, fortunately, people are a little more sensible than most. The overwhelming majority of people are vaccinated and they're masked when they're asked to without having a shit fit. Every airplane flight I've taken, people have been behaving as they should. I just hope we get past this horrible period in our history between politics and this health crisis and what's been an economic crisis. I'm still somewhat hopeful. I think the economy is going to continue to improve. I hope that will probably calm emotions, but I don't know whether this is one of those hinges of history that we'll look back on and say it all fell apart. We'll find out.

SI: Well, is there anything else you would like to add?

OU: No, I hate to end on such a discouraging note. I prefer to be an optimist about the future, but that is a challenge today.

SI: Okay.

OU: I look forward to seeing another football game at Rutgers sometime and maybe we'll win some games and just put all this behind us and focus on non-essential, pleasurable things. I enjoyed meeting you both and talking to you.

SI: We enjoyed it very much.

JF: It was great.

OU: Let me know if you want to talk again sometime. Stay in touch.

SI: Once we finish the transcript, we will send it to you to review. We still use human transcribers, so it is going to take a little bit longer.

OU: Oh, my God. There are amazing artificial intelligence websites, and you can still use humans because it cues the transcript to the actual tape, so that what they could do is they can just listen to it and just correct mistakes. It is not that expensive either. It's something to think about.

SI: Yes, we have been experimenting with some things, but we have all this free student labor we have to take advantage of. [laughter]

OU: Good, exploit them. [laughter]

SI: Thank you very much. We really appreciate it.

JF: Thank you.

OU: You're quite welcome. Thanks, guys.

SI: All right, take care, bye.

OU: You too.

JF: Bye.

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

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