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Paul Wolfe interview, Professor Emeritus Department of Physics and Department of Geological Science, Wright State University

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retiree Association Oral History Project

Interview date: 8/22/2013

Interviewer: Lewis Shupe
Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Communication

Interviewee: Paul Wolfe
Professor Emeritus, Dept of Physics, Dept of Geological Sciences

Lewis Shupe: This is Lew Shupe, Professor Emeritus from the Department of Communication at Wright State University. Today is August 22, 2013, and I am interviewing Dr. Paul Wolfe, Professor Emeritus from the Department of Physics, and the department of Geological Sciences. This is part of the retiree association's oral history project. Paul, thank you for joining us today. To begin, tell us a little bit about your background before you came to Wright State?

Paul Wolfe: I'm from Mansfield, so I'm an Ohioan. I went to school at Case Tech in Cleveland for a long time, got my undergraduate and graduate degrees all there. Worked in, for GE, in Cleveland, for a year between my undergraduate and graduate, and then after, so, basically, was there before I came here.

LS: What work did you do there?

PW: At GE?

LS: Uh-huh.

PW: I was a photo lamp design engineer. That is, made, or, designed new lamps for photographic purposes, and particularly I did ones for projection lamps. Like for 8mm projectors that were very common then...how to get, uh, good illumination for those, so.

LS: Well, those are interesting points in the interview.

PW: (laughs) Okay.

LS: Now, when did you come to Wright State?

PW: In September, I guess it was, in '66.

LS: September, '66.

PW: No. (laughs) Let me think. September, '65.

LS: '65.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Also, you were here very close to the very first...

Chris Wydman¹: So the second year?

PW: Right.

LS: The second year.

PW: Yes.

LS: Good.

PW: Yeah.

LS: How did you interview here? How did you find out about Wright State?

PW: Ah, well, I was getting near finishing my PhD, I went to New York City, there was an American Physical Society, which is kind of the big professional organization in physics, and they had, at the meeting, they had, uh, a place for employers, potential employers and employees to get together for interviews. And so I just looked at the various places and Wright State was one that was listed and I went and talked to the people that were there, which was Harvey Hanson and Bob Carpenter. And uh, talked to them about it and they told me what was happening and what they hoped would happen, what the plans were, so.

LS: Now were they, what was their affiliation at that time with the university?

PW: Uh, they were in the physics department.

LS: They were in the physics department?

PW: Yeah, they were the two people in the physics—I think...Bob, now, Bob Carpenter was here. Now I'm beginning to worry about the dates I said (laughs). I should think about that.

CW: No worries at all, no worries at all.

PW: Let's see, because Bob Carpenter was here one year and then Harvey Hanson came— well that's probably when they interviewed me. And then probably I didn't start until probably the following September, is when I actually started.

¹ Chris Wydman, WSU archivist, was also present during this interview.

LS: Oh. Mm hmm.

PW: I think. I don't remember the time of year.

LS: Well, what programs in sciences were offered when you first arrived?

PW: Ah, physics, chemistry, biology, and um, geology.

LS: Mm hmm.

PW: Then there was also of course a College of Science and Engineering, so there was an engineering department that was also part of it.

LS: That was part of.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Oh. Ok.

PW: Yeah that was just a part of it.

LS: Who was president when you arrived?

PW: Well, there wasn't any president.

LS: Who was acting President?

PW: There was a director, trying to think who it was. It was still a Wright State Campus, and so there was, Miami University had somebody in charge of their half, which was the Liberal Arts and Business and Education I guess, I'm not sure what Ohio—I was actually hired by Ohio State, and um, let's see...I'm trying to think who, what that person was called and I can't think of his name.

LS: There were two components, Miami and Ohio State.

PW: Right, and that was just for the first year. The first year I was here. Jack Redden was the dean, and I'm not sure if there was anybody else from Ohio State who he reported to or he was as high as it went, locally. Maybe he reported to people at—

LS: He was the main, he was basically the main person...

PW: He was the main people. He was the only one I knew. And I couldn't think of...

LS: Oh, that's great.

PW: But yeah, so.

LS: When did you first visit the campus?

PW: Um, well it would've been I guess in the spring of that year, so.

LS: What are your memories of driving up to this place?

PW: Well, I mean, it was one building. Everything was in the one building, Allyn Hall. So, that was kind of out in the middle of the country, a lot of farm fields around, and barns, and farm houses, on the property even. And...

LS: What went through your mind when you saw this?

PW: Well, I don't know, I guess I kind of knew what to expect to some extent from what they'd told me. I mean they didn't mislead me into thinking it was going to be something different, that it was very much of a startup and just getting going. And uh, so, there was other construction going on, even though there was only one building in use. Millett and Oelman were both under construction at that time, so you could see things were progressing rapidly, even though there wasn't a...

CW: How old were you at the time?

PW: Uh, I don't know, twenty-four maybe? That ballpark. I was pretty young.

LS: Yeah. Others have said that it was kind of like a shock, when they saw this.

PW: Yeah, I can imagine it would be, but I don't remember being shocked, you know, I mean, I remember being interested.

LS: So you moved into Allyn Hall?

PW: No.

LS: Was that your office?

PW: That's when I came for an interview. By the time I'd come here, Oelman Hall was open.

LS: Oh.

PW: And Millett was open. So they'd opened between when I came for the interview and when I started. So I moved into Oelman Hall.

LS: So you were never a part of all of the faculty in Allyn?

PW: No. Never was.

LS: Oh, okay.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Well they moved fast, didn't they, getting into the other two buildings?

PW: So, yeah. Yeah.

CW: Who, what all was in Oelman Hall? What other departments?

PW: Uh, I think all the sciences and engineering were there. Oh, psychology was in science and math, too, originally. When you were asking which departments were there, psychology was also there, at the beginning and when it moved over, it moved there. There were still a few labs, teaching labs, over in Allyn. But for the first year or so. I remember having some things over there in what's now the Executive Wing or what, I don't know it's called now, it keeps changing names.

LS: What were your first assignments?

PW: Um, teaching mechanics, like junior level mechanics. By then there were juniors, by the year I got here. So there'd been two, freshmen and sophomores and they were up to juniors, so there was a junior class. And uh I was teaching that, and then I guess doing parts of the introductory physics classes. I don't remember which ones now, because I did so many of them so many times, but...

LS: Well did you have a lab over there?

PW: Well then we had some lab space and uh, that was another thing, we were trying to get set up to do research. And I'd been doing nuclear physics research. And um, so we were looking at what kind of equipment we needed here and developing a relationship with Wright Patterson because they had facilities there for nuclear physics. And, at that time they did. And so we were making connections with them. Harvey Hanson had made some contacts already, and the people there were willing to work with us and so on.

LS: So you did have an inter-relationship with Wright Patterson?

PW: So, yes, pretty early on, got that going.

LS: Well that's good.

PW: Yeah.

LS: That's very nice. What were some of the early trials that you had, getting started as a professor? If any?

PW: Uh, oh, well I think the expectation of how difficult the class could be. I mean, it was, the students that first year were not really very well prepared. And um, so there was this, the struggle, kind of getting them to work on stuff. (laughs).

LS: Tell me more about the level of preparation of the students.

PW: Well, I mean they just didn't have too good of a mathematical background for one thing, or a physics. So by the time you get to junior level physics courses it gets to be fairly complicated mathematics. So it took a more kind of filling in things with them. At the beginning, I thought 'oh, they'll know how to do all this' and there was a lot of things they didn't know how to do. So there was extra time in kind of getting them kind of up to speed.

LS: Even so, were you impressed with the quality of the students?

PW: I wouldn't say I was impressed, no, but it was okay.

LS: It was okay?

PW: It was okay. But not impressive.

CW: What was the pass-fail rate that first term?

PW: Um, I think in that advanced class, well, there were only four students, so, as I remember, so it was not much of a class. I think, you know, one of them might've dropped out and I think there were three who passed. Not high grades, really.

LS: So it was almost a tutorial?

PW: Yeah, there was a lot of personal interaction.

LS: Well that's good. That's good.

PW: But that's, you know, physics courses there usually is, especially when you get beyond the introductory ones, so.

LS: Then what happened, what advancements were made that were kind of good for you?

PW: Uh, well, we started, as far as research goes, we started doing things at the base, we were able to—there was pretty good funding to buy some equipment initially. And so um, we were able to buy some nuclear physics instruments that we could use at the accelerator. There was a Van de Graaf Accelerator at the base. So we were able to take our equipment over there and use it, plus they were generous in sharing theirs, uh, to get started on some nuclear physics research.

LS: So Wright Patterson was really a good laboratory for you and your students?

PW: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, that was very important, otherwise we really, it'd be way too expensive to start a nuclear physics program.

LS: Mm hmm.

CW: Were there any laboratories here on campus? At that time?

PW: No.

CW: There was not.

PW: No. There wasn't anything except, well, you know, just a few teaching laboratories, but, I mean, there was space for faculty to work on things.

LS: So your first office was there, in Oelman?

PW: In Oelman, right. Yes. And the um, physics and geology departments shared a department. There was one secretary who- both chairmen had kind of side offices and one secretary in the middle, so there was a joint department office between the two at that time.

LS: Do you remember who your secretary was?

PW: I'm trying to remember if there was one there for a short time, but the one that was there for a while was um, Julia...I can't—

LS: Well that's okay.

PW: Well, I mean, she married my close cohort Richard, so I just think of her married name Julia Richard. Now I can't think of her maiden name. So she married one of the faculty members and I knew her 'til she died, which was, you know, quite a while later, so.

LS: So you got started well—

PW: Yeah, we got off to a good start.

LS: And then what evolved, with your work?

CW: Because I know in just reviewing the catalogues and the faculty lists you see the number of faculty in the sciences all of a sudden it was a much, much bigger number.

PW: Yeah it gradually, it grew for the first few years. There were the two people that were there when I was hired and the year I came, Joe Hemskey and I both came that year. And Ben Richard came that year, in geology, who, turns out that was important because I

worked extremely closely with him for most of my career here. And then the following year there were two more in Physics and then I imagine it was similar things because the number of students kept growing dramatically. So there were two more the following year, Tom Listerman and uh, Dave Wood. And then I think it was a couple years there weren't any more so it kind of, that was—

LS: Did your teaching responsibilities change much, right after the beginning?

PW: Well there got to be more advanced classes, so, but they didn't change, change too drastically. There were, you know, some freshmen, or introductory courses that were kind of shared, various people worked on and then some advanced courses and different people would do different ones for a years and then we'd typically rotate and someone else would do them.

LS: What were your interactions say, with the Miami group of people here?

PW: Um...

LS: If any?

PW: Yeah, well, there was some. I mean there was faculty meetings and things like that, uh, they were, by the time we got here though they were in a different building. Ah, so, there wasn't as much as the people who'd been here a year earlier were all mixed together. And it already split into two segments that interacted, less on a day to day basis.

LS: Who was the first president you worked with?

PW: Well, Brage Golding.

LS: Brage Golding.

PW: Yeah, I knew him.

LS: Did you work closely with him?

PW: Oh, I wouldn't say closely but I knew him and he knew me. In fact I was surprised he remembered me when he came back years later here, they had all the presidents back at one time, and he came back for that and I was talking to him and he remembered me from back when he was president here, which surprised me, but, but yeah I pretty much knew all the presidents until fairly recently.

LS: You worked with Kegerreis? Dr. Kegerreis?

PW: I wouldn't say I worked with him, but I knew him and interacted with him.

LS: I'm leading you to Dr. Hathaway. He was a physicist.

PW: Yeah, well, that was not one of my better experiences.

LS: Well I know that he was a physicist, and so...

PW: Yeah that didn't seem to have much bearing on anything as far as—

LS: Oh, it didn't?

PW: No.

LS: He always talked about physics.

PW: Yeah, I don't know. It didn't have, he didn't really interact with the physics department any more than he interacted and usually most of it was negative with most of the departments I had anything to do with, so.

CW: Who was he?

LS: Dr. Hathaway, he was provost.

PW: He was the provost for under...

LS: Kegerreis, wasn't he? No.

PW: No, under Flack, wasn't it?

LS: No, no, no. It was under, with, um Mulhollan?

PW: Mulhollan. Mulhollan, that was it.

LS: Mulhollan.

PW: Yes.

LS: He was that part of the administration.

PW: Right, that was him.

LS: Well, those are interesting parts of history.

CW: I haven't heard that.

LS: Oh, haven't you?

CW: No. I mean, we have pictures of him, but...

LS: Uh-huh.

CW: So not the most popular provost?

PW: Well, ah, not in my area.

CW: Not in your circle, yeah.

PW: Not in physics or geology. I don't know how you know popular he was, but being a physicist did not mean we had any better relationship with him, so.

LS: Yeah. Because I know he talked physics quite a bit, so, anyway.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Did your job change at all over the years when you moved to other areas?

PW: Well, yeah, my job changed a lot in a way because I, um, one of the things that happened several years into our research was that Congress passed something called the Mansfield Amendment, that the military labs were not allowed to do non-military research. I'm probably not saying it quite right. And so what they were doing and what we were interacting with, with the people at the base, was more general nuclear physics. And I guess originally the Air Force thought well they needed people that had a broad training and broad activity in nuclear physics. Anyways, that was, Congress said no you can't do that anymore. So they basically shut down what we were working with over there. And so we kind of got stuck with it.

LS: Can you give me a time frame for that?

PW: I would say '70, maybe '72.

LS: See this is an important part I think of the university history.

PW: Yeah.

LS: It's what you're telling us at this point.

PW: So, yeah. Maybe even a little before that. Maybe '70, '72. In that ballpark, I can't remember.

LS: That's okay.

PW: And they had a group of very competent nuclear physics people, but basically that whole group was disbanded and their accelerator was pretty much shut down, it was still used for a few other things. So, we started looking for other places to do research.

LS: Tell us more about that.

PW: So, we looked at- Ohio State had a Van De graph. And they were, one of our later faculty members that came, Sam Ling, was an Ohio State graduate, or Ph.D from there. So he came and was, so he kind of organized uh, or, getting together with them, using their facilities, which they were ok, they were not over-utilized so they had time on it. And we did that for a while, but I didn't like that. I mean, I didn't like all that traveling back and forth to Ohio State. You had to set up things and go back. And uh before that I'd gotten involved with Ben Richards 'cause we shared this kind of department, were closely involved. He got me to help with some physics, uh, he was doing geophysics, but, and he had moderate physics background but he was really a geologist. And so he got me to help him in some of his more computational and theoretical aspects of what he was doing, particularly with gravity, uh, surveys. And so I was helping him and got involved in that and I liked that, it was kind of fun.

LS: That was a big transition for you professionally?

PW: And so yeah. So basically when this nuclear business was getting more difficult and less interesting, there was a lot of opportunities in the geophysics. And so I started working with Ben very, more all the time. And eventually we worked together just as a team. A lot of things for, till he retired.

LS: Can you tell us a little bit more about what you actually did? Or is that secret?

PW: Oh, no, no, no, no, it's very open. (laughs). And um, no, we did um—well, some of it probably should be secret (laughs). Uh, we did a lot of seismic work, and gravity. Gravity's how I got involved in it, where you go out and measure gravity very precisely at various places. And then you can tell what's under the ground from that. And he did a lot up at Cedar Bog, trying to figure out how the water flow in the Mad River Valley was up there when they were trying to preserve Cedar Bog with the highway construction. Uh, we did a lot of things looking at the pre-glacial valleys, what the earth was like here before the glacier came and kind of filled all the valleys up. So we did quite a bit with that and we did a lot of things related to what, to train—we trained a lot of students for the oil industry. Many of our graduates went into the oil industry because we were doing seismic. And with the seismic we, you probably don't know too much about that, but basically you put out a long, large number of sensors underground, vibration sensors over maybe a mile. Uh, and then you set off explosives. Drill a hole in the ground and set off an explosive, which has its own set of complications.

LS: Where did you do that?

PW: Oh, through Greene County, sometimes in Michigan, uh, mostly in this region, but we did several summers we'd go up in Michigan with a crew of students. Um, so, looking for the deep structures under the area.

LS: This is interesting and it's the same—

PW: We did some on campus here, where they did some demonstrations, lay it out for something, and then drill a hole and shoot off some explosives and water would shoot out. It kind of was a good attention getter from time to time.

LS: Where on campus did you do that?

PW: Uh, well I think it was probably about where Hamilton Hall is now, up in that area.

LS: Oh, Hamilton wasn't there at that time.

PW: No I think that was before that was built, or maybe it was in between here and there. It happened more than once, so.

LS: Oh, did it. Did you get publicity about that?

PW: Uh, it was mostly internal publicity. We didn't try to get too much publicity, although sometimes when we were out along the roads, well in fact we tried to get publicity if we were going out and doing, because we'd do this for, you know, a couple weeks. We'd have a crew of students out there and we'd string out all these cables for miles in the end because we'd keep moving them along. And so we wanted the locals to know what was going on. Uh, and so we tried to get the, like the Xenia Gazette and so on, to come out and uh, write up a little story so people would kind of be aware. And we'd talk to people, you know, so they didn't get too panicked. Normally we worked in the right way, we'd get permits from the Highway Department to drill and blast in the highway, and we'd clean up anything that blew out, which usually didn't but once in a while we'd have to shovel a lot of dirt back into a hole. So it was kind of an exciting (laughs) thing to do.

LS: In this transition, did the type of student change, were there different students?

PW: Well, yeah. We got more students and so they were generally more capable. And then we started a Masters degree program and so out of the geophysics people particularly would come in here for specifically for that geophysics masters concentration 'cause it wasn't available at most of the other colleges around. And we had a good record of placing students in good jobs with oil companies, so.

LS: Well that would, yeah, that's fascinating.

PW: And we'd get a lot of, you know, during certain times when the oil companies were hiring when oil prices were high we'd get a lot of companies coming in here just to interview our students in the department. Sometimes it got to be a nuisance actually, you'd get, you know, a dozen different companies coming to interview students in a few weeks in the fall. But, uh...

LS: So that was really a very good promotion for the university is the...

PW: So, yeah. Yeah, I think so.

LS: Did you have any female students?

PW: Uh, over the years we had a lot, yeah. But not so many early on. But a few, we always had a few. And uh, now probably half are female, I'd say, that are still in the, you know, program now, so.

LS: Now, what was your next transition?

PW: Well, off and on I was doing administration, you know like Department Chair, that kind of thing, so. I was a little bit unusual in that I was a department chair in physics for three years, um, and then I said that's all I want to do, I mean I said when I took it I'd only do it for three years and somebody else could. And then I took a sabbatical at the end of that, so I definitely was gone, somebody else had to do it. But then I also was the chairman of Geology two times, once kind of as an interim, and then later on not too long before I graduated, or, before I retired, as the chairman for four years or so. So it was a little strange—

LS: Of Geology?

PW: Of Geology, yeah, or Geological Sciences. Yeah, which was a little strange because I, uh, to be chairman of Geological Sciences I'd never had any Geology course in my whole life and so it seemed kind of odd to do that, but I'd learned a lot of geology over the years because I worked with the people there a lot and done a lot of joint projects. And I sat in on a lot of people's courses, to—

LS: Where was the Geology Department?

PW: Well it originally was in Oelman Hall, right there with the Physics Department. Uh, the offices were together and the labs were just down the hall. Then, um, it moved around several times. When Fawcett was finished, physics moved over there. I don't remember when Geology moved over but after a while it did, at least the departmental office moved there. And some of the research labs were in there and down in the basement. And then eventually Brehm Lab got built. And Ron Schmidt, who was the chair when, and promoted that through, uh, it was a, uh, request from the Brehm family that had owned this farm, that owned the farm here, uh, that it be a natural sciences lab. So Ron Schmidt convinced people that meant geology and environmental. And so, at first it was environmental lab there then eventually there was a second part added and the geology moved in.

LS: So the name of the lab went back to the family that owned the land?

PW: Uh, that's my understanding, yes.

LS: Brehm, that's nice. That's interesting, it was the...Did, um, was that your last professional teaching here before you retired?

PW: Yeah, I guess so. Not sure quite what you mean.

LS: Yeah. Tell me more about the Brehm Lab, that getting started. Could you?

PW: Um, Ron Schmidt did and I wasn't really involved in that but it was set originally as an environmental lab. And he was the head of the, it was separate from the Geology Department, although he was kind of a geologist. Uh, but they set it up as a research lab for various kinds of projects to come in, and they had tanks of water with algae, and all kinds of stuff, and they had some big floors that would open up to lower equipment in. And it was all one floor. And uh, well, there was two floors, there was a basement and a ground level floor. And then the geophysics part that Ben Richard and I did we got some space in the basement where we stored, we've got, we had a lot of equipment. We had, well, trucks were usually outside, we had a bunch of trucks and we had all these cables and so on that took a lot of space, and our drills. So we had the basement of that. Uh, but uh, it was mostly these tanks and there were various kinds of things going on. Uh, Brent Huntsman, you know him at all? He's uh, he has his own environmental company around town here now. Uh, he was I think the associate director or something and he worked there and did a lot of things. Particularly they were doing, trying to use algae to, or some kind of vegetation, maybe algae's not right, uh, water vegetation to clean up acid mine drainage. And so they'd get some polluted type of water in these tanks and see if the vegetation could take it out and clean up the water.

LS: And all that was happening in the Brehm lab?

PW: That was in the Brehm lab. And then I think probably after Ron Schmidt became chairman of Geology, uh, then they, there was some expansion going on and they got a second floor added to it. And so the Geology Department moved into the second floor there, kind of consolidated. They'd been around, had people in several buildings, so it pretty much consolidated everybody into one area.

LS: What was, it sounds interesting, did you have a lot of transportation around there, trucks that you mentioned?

PW: Yeah, yeah they were parked up in back though.

LS: Oh, were they? Where?

PW: Like you know were the big white mesh fence is?

LS: Uh-huh.

PW: By the auditorium there, the old original auditorium. I can't think of what number it is.

CW: 128, maybe?

PW: Yeah, yeah. But kinda behind that. That sticks out, but there's a big 'L' shaped open area there and there also was a ramp that went down into the basement of Brehm lab there. And so a lot of things were kept out there, uh, in that. And eventually there was a, there was some big construction project and they ended up they had some extra money. And so we builded a geophysics, or geological sciences, field equipment building, it's called. Which is down in the K lot—whatever, it's not called K lot now, but you know, the lower area. So that building down there, which has big drive-throughs so trucks can drive through the two ends and you get drill rigs in and out and the fenced area for drill rigs and equipment and so on. The thing about geology is, you can't—you have to go out to it. You can bring samples in but basically it's some place out there and students need to go out and research is outside, so.

LS: Why was the name of the department changed from Geological Sciences to Environmental—?

PW: Oh, Earth and Environmental?

LS: Mm-hmm.

PW: Uh, they merged it with what was called the IEQ: the Institute for Environmental Quality. And, uh, the fella who was named the chairman of the joint department had been the head of the IEQ. Uh, Al Burton. And so, and he'd been interim chairman of Geology while they were trying to get somebody else, and so the department liked the way he was doing. That's fairly, that's recent, though. That's not historical. I mean, that's...But basically that's when they merged them, that was, you know, I don't know five years ago, something like that I guess. It was after I retired, actually, so.

LS: Did you work with John Ray at any time?

PW: Well, I knew John. I don't know that, I worked with him a little bit, but not much. But there was a few things that we overlapped on. I actually got to know him originally from church. Because we visited a church when we first came here and it turned out he was a member there and he and his wife came over to visit my wife and I afterwards. So that was my connection with him, really, and then, so I contented to know him and talk to him about stuff.

LS: Did he ultimately became chair of which department?

PW: Uh, I guess it was called Geography.

LS: It was called Geography.

PW: I think.

LS: Uh-huh.

PW: Yeah. There wasn't much interaction between geography and geology.

LS: Oh, there wasn't?

PW: No, not much, I mean other than just, you know, people knew each other. There was a little bit, some things like mapping and so on that they did, but they tended to concentrate more on the social aspects, and geology tended to be more on the physical aspects., so.

LS: That's fascinating.

PW: Yeah.

LS: What do you think were some of your highlight successes while you were on faculty? And in charge?

PW: In charge, well, I don't know if I was (laughs) ever in charge that much. Uh...I felt good about how we were able to develop the geophysics program and get some national recognition, at least in one segment of the thing. With our students, and with our, you know, research and interacting with people with universities around the country and companies. There was two areas that were emphasized, I guess, and we had a lot of students. One was environmental geology, and groundwater, and that was a big boom. And there was lot of things that went there and that did very well. I didn't, I only had a little bit to do with that. And then the exploration geophysics, which was kind of my area. But the groundwater did well, we had, um, Ron Schmidt was kind of the one who started it. We got a couple of our earlier graduates to come back and be faculty members, after they got Ph.Ds elsewhere. We had a, very early on, kind of a distance learning program that was funded by the Soil Conservation Service to train their field people in groundwater issues. And so Ron Schmidt was the leader of that, but it, um, they had a team of kind of student, graduate students here who were on call, and then these people in the soil conservation districts all around the country had these assignments that various faculty members worked out, but it was all mail and telephone. This was before Internet was available. But they'd do things remotely, call in every week and talk to their tutor. And uh, that did very well for a while. Eventually it kind of ran out, other things became available.

LS: So you were well recognized?

PW: So, yeah, that was a pretty well-known program in the geophysics, and the oil industry particularly, we had a lot of students around the country.

LS: Was this publicized well among the university?

PW: I think it was kind of known in our college but maybe not over in Liberal Arts.

LS: Well, coming from Liberal Arts, you know, I didn't hear about some of these things. Which is too bad.

PW: Well, there were some of these excellence programs that the state put out, and Theatre got one—it was a like a three or four year—and geological sciences got one. It was basically the same time, so there were to different kind of centers of excellence going on at the same time.

LS: The same excellence award, that's nice to know.

PW: So.

LS: If you could look back to those years here, what, how would you describe them say, with a single word?

PW: Uh, I don't know about a single word. I guess they were kind of exhilarating though, in a way, because there was a lot happening and a lot changing. And uh, it was kind of a, it was exciting.

LS: What would be your one word phrase now?

PW: Oh, well, I don't know, but...

LS: If any?

PW: Yeah, I don't know if I've got one now, since I've been retired awhile, but, I mean, things just keep, seem to keep progressing. You know, I'm fairly impressed with the way things continue to go.

LS: Tell us about your watch, that you're wearing.

PW: Oh, well let's see, this my thirty year watch, I guess? I think it was thirty years, so (laughs). What does it say? 'Thirty Years, 1996.' It means I must've come in 1966, I guess (laughs).

LS: Who did the presentation of that?

PW: I have no idea, I don't remember now. In '96, that's, you know,...

LS: Those are collector's items.

PW: They are? Yeah, I'll bet (laughs).

CW: They make fun of that symbol now.

PW: Yeah, it's the old radiation symbol (laughs). You know, I was always—I was glad when they changed the symbol. I don't like this one very well, but.

LS: Uh-huh. Well, that's good. Now, do you have any questions you would like to ask us?

PW: Oh, gee.

LS: You're doing very well.

PW: Doing well? Well, I don't know. Um, how many—am I the first one that you've talked to from physics or geological sciences?

LS: Basically, yes.

CW: From physics, yeah, mm hmm. We've talked to several in mathematics...

PW: Okay.

CW: Um, but yeah, yeah, yeah you're the first one from physics.

LS: This is why it's interesting to us.

PW: Yeah, well, it's a different...

LS: We may have to call you back for an additional...

CW: And I know your college really sort of changed over the years. Um, 'cause there's Science and Mathematics, but it wasn't like that previously.

PW: Right, but, well, it started out as—oh no, it was Science and Engineering.

CW: It was Science and Engineering.

PW: And mathematics was in there. But it wasn't in the name. And so engineers after that—

CW: So they kind of developed too.

PW: Yeah, engineers kind of felt they were being stifled by being in with the science people.

CW: They wanted their own college.

PW: They wanted their own college because most universities had a college of engineering. And so they felt they weren't on a kind of equal weight when they went out to deal with other engineers outside. But I always had a good relationship with the engineers. That was kind of, well, you know, I liked to have them around and didn't particularly want them to split off, but we kind of understood too. But we were all together and so, especially a lot of us were up on the fourth floor, had offices on the fourth floor of Fawcett. And so I knew the engineering people very well, you know, for a long time. And we did a lot of, there was a lot of physics and the interacting with the engineers, the kind of things they did, so, with Jim Brandeberry, and so on.

LS: I want to come back to, what remembrances do you have of biology? Do you remember the cages they had in the tunnels? For animals?

PW: No. I don't remember animal cages in the tunnels. In which building?

LS: They were I think the ones I think running from—

CW: Underneath—

LS: Underneath, so.

PW: But after they moved over to the biological sciences area, then I wouldn't have gone through there much. But sent a lot of—there were cages in the bottom but we...for a while we used to store excess equipment in them. The physics department did. And we used to get a lot of surplus equipment 'cause you could get that free and then scavenge parts off of it for other things. Air Force Salvage, or there was a Ohio—up in Columbus, there was a whole salvage place you could get used stuff. So we had them and then finally they decided they were just too darn ugly down there so they made it, everybody get rid of those cages that were in the basement of Fawcett particularly. There was a lot down there.

LS: (to Chris Wydman) Do you have any other questions?

CW: So who were some of the people and individuals, um, that you remember most, um, during your time working here who maybe stand out in your memory?

PW: Well of course in the departments I was in, Harvey Hanson was kind of the original, early people in physics. And I became physics chairman after he left that to become something over, Associate Dean of Continuing Education or somebody. And then so he was always around in influence and he taught introductory physics practically always. And he loved it, he loved to be the showman in that course, so (laughs). And uh, then those of us that came together kind of all cooperated on things, Hemske, Listerman, Wood, and so on.

CW: Hemske?

PW: Joe Hemsky.

CW: And, I'm just, so I can catch the names.

PW: Oh, well, Joe Hemsky came same time I did and he was in nuclear physics also. So originally we worked together quite a bit. And um, then Thomas Listerman—

CW: Thomas Listerman.

PW: And David Wood.

CW: And David Wood.

PW: Yeah, they were the next ones. Um, but then Merrill Andrews came a little later, and John Martin. And Merrill Andrews was chairman for fairly long.

CW: Merrill—

PW: Andrews. Uh, but he died kind of young. He had a heart attack, in his fifties, so. And I had a relationship with most of the Deans. Uh, some of them positive, some of them less positive. Mostly positive. I didn't get, I was not one who got into too many big hassles with people.

CW: Yeah.

PW: Not like, uh, Jay Kline. Did you know Jay Kline? (laughs)

LS: Yes.

CW: You can't laugh and not tell us more.

PW: (laughs) I believe, oh, Jay was just always...

LS: Historical. That's a very interesting part of history.

PW: Yeah, he was just always kind of the gadfly, maybe? I'm not sure what the right word—he was always against pretty much any, and he had a lot of good ideas. I knew him reasonably well. He'd have good ideas but he had a way of presenting them that made nobody want to accept them. He just was very-

CW: A little combative, maybe?

PW: Yeah (laughs). Yeah. And um, but um, so I knew Jay, he was in psychology.

CW: Psychology.

PW: Yeah. And I knew him and I dealt with him a lot. And I always got along with him, he always liked me and I liked him, although I felt—

LS: And you could get along with him.

PW: What?

LS: You could and I know that.

PW: Yeah, but, some people couldn't (laughs). No, he was always after the administration on something. The Deans or the president. But then other, after, uh, I was trying to think of who the first Dean was, was it Connelly? Or was there somebody before that that I forgot?

CW: First name?

PW: After Jack Redden.

LS: It could be Conley.

CW: What would—Robert Conley?

PW: Robert Conley, yeah. And then he was quite heavily involved in starting the medical school. Then he went to be president of Seton Hall and I guess got fired there as president. And then came down to Cincinnati and was I think was the president of one of the universities in Cincinnati like Union, or one of those, I forget what it was.

CW: We got in big trouble with his family. Fortieth Anniversary, we had all these photo exhibits up and we didn't have a picture of Robert Conley.

PW: Oh.

CW: And we got called to the carpet on that one by his—

LS: Family

PW: Yeah. Well he was a very prominent person in the thing, so.

CW: And I know he was very instrumental, especially with the school of medicine.

PW: And Brian Hutchings was, he was a good dean. And, I, you know, I had a good opinion of him.

LS: A nice person.

PW: Yeah. Kept in, in fact, after he retired I got—Utah, I visited him out at his home in Utah once, so.

LS: And he died not too long ago.

PW: Yeah, it's probably been ten years now.

LS: One quick remembrance back. We were talking before we started this interview about the early campus. Tell us about the house where Don Brumbaugh lived.

PW: Oh. Well, yeah, there were originally a number of houses on campus, uh, and the one down at the bottom of the hill, there was a barn, and the Brumbaughs lived there. And yeah there was a farmhouse and a barn. And um, Joe Hemsy and I very early on planted gardens down there. Behind that barn they got some space and they ploughed it up for us and we planted vegetable gardens. And we had vegetable gardens on campus for several years. And more people kept wanting to use them. One time there was a flash flood came down and wiped it all off, came down that gulley there. Of course there was the farm—when you first came...when Fawcett was first built, they'd dug up the dirt and you could still smell pig manure, in the dirt outside the door there. (laughs) Not strong, but just enough, you'd know it had been a farm. (laughs)

LS: (laughs) Well that's great.

PW: But then there was a Warner House, it was called, which was over along Colonel Glenn over, and they had a picnic area there which was very nice, for quite a while called Achilles' Heel.

LS: Achilles' Hill.

PW: Now the tennis courts and so on have pretty much taken that.

CW: So that's about the area where that was.

PW: Yeah, right, yeah it was about where the tennis courts are roughly, there used to be a road come in there. And they had some offices and things in that building, I think they even taught a few classes there, although nothing I had to ever do.

LS: They had registration there, initially, and that, so.

PW: And then was, out along Colonel Glenn, I think there might've been a barn up along there some place. Oh, and then there was an old deserted church building along there. Small place. But down where the Nutter Center is, there was a stone house and a stable, and the University had a riding club and my wife kept a horse there for several years. And somebody lived, kind of a caretaker, lived there. And there was big pastures there, they'd make hay, uh, to keep the horses through the winter. And so there was riding and of course then you could ride through all the woods and stuff, there were nice horse trails.

So it was a really a nice place if, to have a horse.

LS: Things have changed...

PW: Things have changed, yeah. The Nutter Center and all the parking lots now. So, and oh, the other thing, (laughs) is down in the corner where, um, Kaufman—well, where the soccer fields and the football field, or whatever it is now—

CW: The new, uh...?

PW: That was the old military housing, from World War Two.

CW: Really? Really?

PW: Oh, you didn't know that? Oh, yeah, that was a whole city down there.

CW: Is that, Sky, Skyborn? Or Sky?

PW: Skyway? Skyborn? Sky something.

CW: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PW: Yeah. It was a whole, there was a thousand people—

CW: I didn't realize that it was that close.

LS: We have footage of some of that.

PW: It was that section of campus between Kaufman and Colonel Glenn. Before the highway, big forty four went through.

CW: 'Cause there's lots of people that have a lot of memories...

PW: Yeah, I know people around Fairborn who lived there, my barber used to have a barbershop there.

LS: So you remember some of those structures?

PW: No, the structures were all gone but the roads were still there. All the paved roads were still there. And there was kind of trash, you know, with the old pipes from some of the houses were still there. And we used to take a class down there to do some geophysics experiments around, amongst that stuff. And then there was a water tower on the hill there, which is gone now, that was back from that. An old, not very big water tower, but, uh...And I turned into Archives, oh, quite a few years ago now, someone gave me when I was trying to figure out what was there for doing some student experiments, I ran into

somebody who knew and they gave me a bunch of stuff from that. There was an old telephone book from the town down there—maybe I gave it to you?

CW: Yeah.

PW: I don't remember, was it you I gave it to?

CW: Yeah, yeah.

PW: Yeah, so there was this whole—

CW: I remember that coming in, yeah.

PW: So I thought, well I kept it for a while when I was using that, but I don't, no reason for me to keep that, so.

CW: That is really a place that people have very strong, fond memories about.

PW: Yeah, there's a few of them still alive that lived there, not too many anymore.

CW: Yeah, you know, and people reminisce about this area...

PW: Yeah, they lived here, they came here in World War Two with probably Air Force husbands and wives.

LS: Do you have any memories or information about the old cemetery, that's right here?

PW: Not much. I've walked back there a couple of times, but I, no, never did know much about that.

LS: Well, Paul, this has been a very interesting interview. And we're especially happy to hear the news about when Fawcett Hall, you said, was dug?

PW: (laughs) Yeah, it was just kind of at the end there.

LS: Thank you, we may have to call you back for more stories, ok?

PW: (laughs) Ok.