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Boonshoft School of Medicine

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### David Buzzard interview (1) conducted on February 24, 1984 about the Boonshoft School of Medicine at Wright State University

David Buzzard

James St. Peter

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# WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

## School of Medicine Oral History Project

### INTERVIEW INFORMATION

Interview date: February 24, 1984  
Interviewer: James St. Peter (JS)  
Interviewee: David Buzzard (DB), Director of Communications,  
WSU School of Medicine  
Interview 1

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

[Beginning of recorded material]

**JS:** My name is James St. Peter, and this is the first in a series of interviews with Dr. David Buzzard, first Director of Communications with Wright State University School of Medicine. The date is February 24th, 1984. The time is 2 o'clock PM, and Dr. Buzzard and I are in the conference room of the Kettering Center in Dayton. Dr. Buzzard, could you tell me a little bit about your background prior to coming to Wright State?

**DB:** Let me take you back to the year 1963. When I got out of the Air Force, I'd spent 4 years in there as an Air Force medic, and that's sort of significant -- as you'll see in a minute. Getting out of the Air Force, I got out and I went to college in West Virginia at a very small school called West Liberty State College. I graduated from there in '68 -- I actually left there in '67 -- I'd finished the degree. Had a child born that year, and got a job teaching high school in Wilmington, Ohio. Came to Wilmington -- taught in Wilmington for about 2 and a half years while I was working on my Master's in English up at Ohio State. I commuted back and forth to Ohio State, and in 1970 Ohio State offered me a graduate teaching associateship----that's hard to say----associateship to work on a Ph.D. in English and Education up there. So, my wife, my son, and I moved to Columbus at that point. Ah, for the next 3 years then I was a graduate teaching associate. I worked with student teachers, and I taught some courses at Ohio State. Finished the Ph. D. in 1973, then moved to Dayton, Ohio to become the publications editor for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation here in Dayton. I was editor at the foundation for about 2 and a half years,

and along about the 2nd year I was there -- which would have been about 19---early 1975. I met a woman named Bea Diehl, and Bea was a graphic designer. She had her own business called Diehl Communications, and she would call me on occasion to help her out when she would be doing a graphic design job -- if she needed some writing assistance, she would call me. One night in the spring of 1975, she called me and said, "I need to see you tonight", and I said, "Okay". I was at work at the Kettering Foundation in the afternoon. She said, "Could I see you tonight at 6 o'clock?", and I said, "Yeah -- where?", and she said, "Well, at the medical school at Wright State." I said, "Hold on -- I didn't know Wright State had a medical school". She said, "Well -- they don't really, but could you meet me at the medical school". I said, "Well -- where is it?", and she said, "Well, it's in downtown Dayton at, 140 East Monument Ave.", and I said "Well, that's not the medical school -- that's the Kettering----", she said, "Just forget it! If you want to work with me, be there tonight at 6 o'clock." So I said, "Okay." even -- we'll say April. I suspect it was around April of 1975. So I showed up that night, and -- well this actually really amusing now that I think about it in retrospect -- I showed up that night -- in this very room that we're sitting in now, the Kettering Center. I got out of my car and went up to the 3rd floor as I'd been instructed, and got off the elevator. Walked into a lobby area up there, and there was nobody around! The lights were on, but there was nobody around. There was a little sign up on the wall that said, "Wright State School of Medicine". I walk in there, um...I hear behind a door-- --behind a closed door, I hear a woman crying and a man screaming at her, and what appeared--- or sounded like Spanish, okay. So I thought, "Boy! This is a wild place this School of Medicine here at Wright State". So I sat down and this racket goes on for another 5 minutes or so. Pretty soon \*clicks tongue\* it stops, and a woman opens the door and walks and she looks at me, and she says, "Oh! Who are you?" I said, "Oh, I'm Dave Buzzard." Then she said, "Oh you must be here then for---to work on the book." Then I said, "I'm---to be honest with you, I'm not sure why I'm here, but I was asked to be here tonight by a graphic designer named Bea Diehl." This woman by the way, was named Liz Lewis. Liz was sort of the administrative coordinator -- I guess -- for the School of Medicine at that point. The man who had been yelling at her in Spanish turned out to be a guy named Tony Zappala, and Dr. Zappala was the Chairman of the anatomy department. He was an MD. and a Ph.D. -- so both of those degrees. He was from Brazil -- I believe. At any rate, he and Liz had been having some sort of altercation there or something -- but that was my introduction to the School of Medicine, a guy screaming in Spanish, and a woman crying. A few minutes later, this Bea Diehl showed up and she and I went and met with Dr. Spanier, Dr. Suriano, and Fred Stewart. Fred Stewart if you really wanna get technical about it, was the first Director of Communications for the School of Medicine. Fred had been the Public Relations Director for Greene Memorial Hospital in Xenia. Dr. Beljan hired Fred, and Fred lasted 6 months before Dr. Beljan suggested it might be better for Fred to try something else... Um...but at any rate, on this particular evening, there was Stewart, Suriano, and Spanier and what they wanted was----they wanted somebody to do a writing job for them. They were trying to----they were being visited shortly thereafter by something called the LCME -- the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, and there were a group of 5 people that were coming

in to Dayton to look at what currently existed at that point, with the medical school, and based on that -- they were going to make their recommendations for some sort of um...I forget what they called it. A provisional accreditation, I believe it was something like that. So, people here -- the administrators here in the new school needed a document -- a professional looking document with some pictures, and of that stuff on it -- to give again a little more physical reality, again -- to this thing called the School of Medicine, so they needed somebody to write the script. Fred Hughes had tried to write the script, Beljan had apparently taken a look at it once it was in its final typeset form and said [Chuckles], "You know, were not gonna do that. You guys get somebody in her who can actually write this thing for us and make it zing!" So that was my chore. They said to me, you've got until----well, they gave me two nights to get it done, which was a tremendous chore -- because, I didn't know about the School of Medicine, and they were using terms like, "primary care". They said, "We're going to educate primary care physicians." I said, "Well, that's great -- but what exactly is 'primary care'?" I'll never forget it, Suriano who is a marvelous guy! He's the Associate Dean for Admissions, he was at that point too. He said, "Well -- we aren't really too sure. Why don't you tell us what you think it means. "So I said, "Okay...". So I went home and worked on it for two nights. Put it out in my mailbox two mornings later, and Spanier came by and picked it up, and the rest was history. The reason I mentioned earlier on by the way, that I was in the Medical Corp, was that was one of those things that then Belson got attracted to me for, because he felt that with my training as an Air Force medic -- I at least knew some of the terminology of medicine. That combined with the fact that I could write well, I had communications experience, had a Ph.D. and all that -- it made me a very attractive candidate then when they finally opened up the position of Communications Director, after Fred Stewart resigned from the job and went somewhere else. Let me see, uh----

JS: What did you do after, immediately after you got finished writing the (garbled)?

DB: Well, I wrote that uh...gave it to Bea Diehl, the graphic designer, and she took it and had it typeset. She did what a designer does. They published it and printed it, and it was a nice little docu----little flyer, I guess you would call it. it still exists somewhere I suspect, there must be one around somewhere, I'm sure that Marianne has one. That was the extent of my involvement. I mean, I simply did the little job for them as I recall, they paid me \$150 bucks for it. That was it. I remember, I had a full-time job with Kettering Foundation -- okay now, here's a little more background. About a month late----mmm...6 weeks passed. Um, we'll say now its mid-May. I get a call from Bea Diehl again, and she says, "These guys really like what you did for them----" Oh! I forgot to tell you, they hadn't said a word to me after that. They had simply paid me the \$150 bucks and that was it. 6 weeks later, Bea Diehl calls and says, "Spanier and those guys really liked what you did for them, and now they'd like you to do another job for them." I said, "Okay, that's fine. What do they need this time?" Well -- this time they needed a more expanded version

of this thing and they wanted to go ten, fifteen manuscript pages and begin to produce a little booklet that they could use to begin to recruit students in here. So, I met with Bea Diehl again and she and I worked together, and I developed this manuscript then -- and really, it was kind of creative writing to be honest with you, because I didn't know anything about the school, because there really wasn't much to know about it. So I produced that, and I spent weeks on that -- as I recall, in the evenings, on weekends, and finally I got it finished. I sent along a copy to Bea Diehl and copy to Dr. Spanier, and with Spanier's I included a bill for -- I don't know, five hundred dollars or something like that. Which was not any huge price -- I didn't think, considering the amount of work I put in on the thing. A few days later I get a call from Spanier saying -- oh no, I'm sorry -- It wasn't a few days later, it was a few months later, like about July. I get a call one day from Spanier and he says, "I don't think we oughta have to pay you for this manuscript that you produced for us." I said, "Well was it not good?" and he said, "Oh no! Its fine -- we didn't use it." I said, "I wrote it and I thought you guys were going to publish it?" He said, "Well, we were at that point, but we decided in the meantime that we were not going to do that, so really -- we don't believe we oughta have to pay you." I said, "Well, that's not the way it works, Dr. Spanier. The fact that you chose not to use it is your decision, but I did the work for you. I sent you the bill. In the world of communications and ad agencies and things, the client pays for it whether or not he chooses to use it is his decision -- but you gotta pay me for it." So he hemmed and hawed, but finally he agreed, "Okay. We'll go ahead and pay you for it." Then I sent him a letter a couple days later saying "Sorry for the misunderstanding, but I feel like I've got right on my side -- and by the way, if you'd like to avoid these kind of things in the future, why don't you just go ahead and hire me full-time." A day after that letter arrived in his office, I guess they asked Fred Stewart to move on. So Spanier called me and he said, "I can't violate any Equal Opportunity or Affirmative Action guidelines of the university, but you should know that we will be advertising for a Communications Director here in the very near future, and if you'd like to apply -- you're certainly welcome." So that was kind of how I came to be known by the School of Medicine, and how they got to know me.

JS: You say this was about July 19---

DB: Yeah, it was about July...could have been as late as August even.

JS: Summer of '75?

DB: Yeah, late summer of '75 because -- when they advertised the position in the paper, I applied along with a whole bunch of people from around here, because it was considered quite a

lucrative -- well, not lucrative, but kind of a nice job in healthcare to have because it was new, it was exciting, and it was growing. You could tell it was really gonna take off. Then I was invited to come down to this building again and talk to Beljan and I got interviewed by him. I was interviewed by a bunch of people on campus. I don't know if we ought to go into all of these names including Liz Harden for example, who at that point was the Executive Director of University Services, she's now -- as you know -- a full professor of English. She interviewed me. Geez, I can't recall all of the people who did interview me. Whoever the Director of Communications was for the whole university, had to interview me. Of course Spanier, some of the other people who were in the medical school. So it was quite an extensive interview process, but finally they gave me the job and I went to work then full-time as their Communications Director on October 15, 1975.

JS: What was the Directors office like? What was the department like? Was it a small office? Did it have many---

DB: [Laughs] Okay, well I walked into the job on October 15, 1975. The office as it was called, was located at the Veteran's Administration Center out on West Third Street. I show up the first morning, bright and early -- walk into this really old building, and yet, a lovely looking building out on the grounds of the VA Center. I walk in, Spanier is sitting in there with--- Regina Borum is in there. They've got some moveable panels and things up around them. I walk in and say good morning to Spanier, and we shoot the breeze for about five minutes. Then I say, "Well -- where do you want me? Where's my office? Who would I report to?" and he says, "Well, I can tell you one thing -- you don't report to me" and he says, "I think your desk is back here in another room". Then he pointed me back to a room in the back of the building, and I walk in and I think there was 6 or 7 other desks in this big ol' room -- it was kind of like a cubic--- or a bay, like an open bay that you would find in the military in a barracks or something. There were about six other people who had desks back there. My desk, as it were, was sitting there, and the only thing on it was a typewriter, and a bunch of return cards. It was stacked high. I suspect there several inches of cards lying on the desk. What they had done was, they had created a newsletter several months before that and they had asked people to end back their address changes and stuff like that, so that the desk consisted of nothing but a typewriter and a stack of return cards and that was it. I think it was another week before Dr. Beljan made his way back out there, because he had about three offices around town at that point. He showed up a week later, welcomed me to the organization, and said "I hope you're getting along all right", and that was it. I have always found him to be pretty much that way in the seven years that I worked for him. He was never very directive with me. He would just sorta let me go out and do whatever the hell I thought needed to be done, and he would pull me back in if I got too out of hand, but for the most part he was very liberal with allowing me to make my own way.

JS: Did you have a specific job description or a specific set of responsibilities that you were in charge of?

DB: Well, we didn't have a defined spelled-out job description. It was pretty understood, at least we never said it this way -- but there was kind of a covert understanding perhaps, that there were a lot of things I did that you simply couldn't anticipate in advance -- therefore, you couldn't create a job description and hold the person to it because about the time you would write it down on paper, everything would change and you'd find yourself with ten other duties. So, as I recall it was a very general kind of thing, simply said "responsible for media relations, internal/external communications". Things like that, very, very general kind of categories

because about the time you would write it down on paper, everything would change and you'd find yourself with ten other duties. So, as I recall it was a very general kind of thing, simply said "responsible for media relations, internal/external communications". Things like that, very, very general kind of categories, but not the most specific things like, "You will report to work at 8:30 in the morning and go home at 5", because that would have been ridiculous. The first year---the first two years that I was a part of the medical school, as a then classified employee, I guess I entitled to a total of eight weeks vacations, and as I recall -- I had a total of three weeks. The first year I was in there I had one week, and it was the kind of thing where you didn't have time to take a lot of vacation, even if you wanted to -- there was just no time, and you were so busy, you didn't really care. It was a lot of fun -- a heck of a lot of fun. So you're very, very busy.

JS: What were the kind of things you did in your first year there?

DB: First year there? Well one of the things I did after I had been there two weeks, was to go up to Dr. Beljan with a suggestion that we create a "good" newsletter, and by "good" I meant one that was a little more uh...descriptive of the kinds of things that were going on. Prior to that they had been putting out like a one sheet---er---a one page sort of mimeograph thing. We got that cleaned up and we created a newsletter that we called "The Vital Signs", and that was more of tabloid kind of thing. I also worked with a graphic designer, uh --- Bea Diehl as it turned out, to create a logo for the School of Medicine, and I guess I'm proud to say that that logo is still being used. It was a stylized kind of logo, very stylistic or stylized in the sense that it used the classic caduceus of the AMA, and yet it was stylized so that it looked---it was very modernistic. It was set in a shield, it was a red snake within a blue shield, and the shield was the same shape that the university's logo was in at that point -- the university now has no logo, it has a wordmark, but at

that point the university had a logo, and we tried to use that same shape, but to put inside of it the caduceus -- the modern mystic caduceus. So if I were to answer your question I guess generally, I was working for that first year or so simply on, developing an institutional image, or a corporate logo or corporate image for the school, so that it would be a recognizable entity in the community and also throughout the nation. I also worked closely with the press. I developed the newsletter, I worked with the university printers on campus -- there was a lot of coordination that had to go on there, because they were already up to their eyeballs in printing when the medical school arrived, so the medical school created tremendous impact on a lot of the service units within the university, printing, personnel, and areas like that. They suddenly found themselves with a whole lot more work than they could handle, so we had to be very sensitive to their needs at the time. But at the same time, I had Dr. Beljan in my back saying, "Go get it done", so I had to get it done one way or another. If the university couldn't meet my needs, I found people on the outside that could.

JS: How did you handle that -- the overload?

DB: The overload? Well I handled it first of all by trying to go through the appropriate university channels. If they said, "sorry pall, we can't meet your needs", then I would go outside and get typesetting, for example -- I would get printing done. We would do whatever we had to do to get it done, because he was my superior, and I was not about to say no to him. On the same token, he was fairly influential in the university in that he carried a lot of power, so we felt that, you know -- if we had to, we could go to other channels to get work done. So I guess, the way we got it done was by simply getting it done -- however we had to get it done.

JS: What was it like working with the media around the area? Were they generally cooperative?

DB: [clears throat] [long pause] There was a lot of...as you can imagine, a lot of support -- for this new thing called a medical school. Medical schools inherently have appeal to people, because they are supposed to be doing good work -- God's work, in educating people to make the society better. Um, so yeah -- there was a lot of interest in the medical school. You gotta remember though, that there was a lot of controversy surrounding the creation of this medical school -- actually, it was a controversy around the creation of any new medical schools in the state of Ohio. This place was created, as you probably know -- about the same time, no at the same time up in the eastern area -- which town is it? The northeastern----

JS: The Akron area.

DB: Yeah, up in that area, you know the one I mean. So, the media here were generally very favorably disposed to the medical school, but at the Ohio levels, I think there were some politics among senior people, like in the media -- who understood the politics of the situation in Columbus, so uh...I would say generally, the media were very supportive. There were individuals within the media who didn't understand the politics of the school, but were difficult to deal with. One of them was Judy Petzall [sp?] from the Dayton Daily News. Judy was a very good writer -- a perceptive, intelligent reporter, but she realized the things that sell newspapers are things like, people falling off and being unable to get back into bed in the middle of the night, and a nurse -- perhaps, not being there to help them. She knew that the drama of medicine was something that would sell newspapers. I only discovered many years later, that Judy Petzall's brother was a physician. That was really fascinating, but Judy was one of our -- well, I would say antagonists in the early days of the medical school. She wrote favorable things about us also, but for the most part she was looking for difficult problem areas, and some of them were so trivial -- I don't believe she was the result of this particular one, but at one point, there was something that appeared, as I recall it was in the Journal Herald, and she worked for the Daily News, so it couldn't have been her -- someone wrote in the Journal Herald about us buying a \$675 dollar coffee table for the medical school. This appeared on the front page of the newspaper in the morning, that the School of Medicine was going to buy a \$675 dollar coffee table for the lobby. Well, that was a load of hogwash is what that was. What had happened was, that at some point somebody had put down on a tentative budget uh, a coffee table or conference table, or something for \$675 bucks. The thing was never approved, as it turns out, but it somehow slipped through and got on a budget line in Columbus, a reporter in Columbus saw it and called down here -- let me make a long story short -- there was absolutely nothing to it. So, we suffered from those kinds of things, those little---well, I shouldn't say we suffered, but we would occasionally see little silly things like that. There were never any major concerns though, as I recall. No major stories that were negative.

JS: Aside from the political ----from the political coverage here in the Miami Valley, did the political implications of the program ever touch your office?

DB: Not really. I don't think so. That was really at Dr. Beljan 's level -- the political ramifications. Admissions could have been a political thing -- it wasn't, but there were people who tried to make it that. But no, the politics of it didn't really impinge on me.

JS: When you met with Dr. Beljan -- you said you reported directly to him -- did you set up a regular series of meeting for direction from him?

DB: No. We were pretty much on an ad hoc basis. What I would do with him -- again, I had a good appreciation for the fact that his schedule was so incredibly full, that rather than add another regularly scheduled meeting to his list of scheduled meetings every week with people, I would simply send him memos of what I was doing. I would send him anywhere between half a dozen and a dozen things a week saying, "Here are things I have accomplished" or "Here are things I think we need to look at" or "Things I would like to do next week". He was really good. He would just go down through them and he would write "yes" "no", sometimes he would write "Hell no!" Sometimes he would write "No" underlined three times with three exclamation marks in red, as only he could do. So that's pretty much how we handled things. I mean, I used to see him regularly -- but it wasn't like a sit-down and talk about what am I going to do next week. It was usually to brief him on something, or to bring him up to date.

JS: What are some of the things that he said "Hell no!" to?

DB: Well, that's a good question... Uh...

JS: Were there any areas----

DB: ---I can't recall specifically---

JS: ---that you wanted to go into that he said wasn't appropriate at this time? Was there a set procedure he wanted you to follow -- set guideline for the development of ----

DB: He did not have a preconceived notion of where we ought to go with communications efforts. He was a very perceptive administrator. He understood the value of a good strong flexible communications program. He gave us a lot of freedom to create things -- as I said, newsletters---we had another thing I should mention. We had a weekly thing coming out of his office called, "The Deans Report", and I wrote that every week and we mailed it out to our faculty, and that included both the full-time faculty and the voluntary faculty -- and the voluntary faculty, quickly, were the people in the community, uh, physicians primarily, who had an appointment in the medical school. They were not full-time employees, but they had an appointment, "adjunct appointments" as we called them. So, we would send out about a thousand

copies of this Dean's Report every week out of Beljan's office, trying to brief people on what was going on – just, you know, sort of day-to-day activities like, uh, we got a hundred-fifty thousand dollar grant or something like that, or we just had a new Chairman of Obstetrics-Gynecology, or, uh, phase two of some building that was going up. You know, just the nuts and bolts of an organization. So we sent that out every week, uh, but he did not dictate that we had to be doing -- or moving at a certain pace, he simply sort of set me in motion and, uh, let it go at that. Uh... So, I don't know if that answers the question or not, but –

JS: Did you have any responsibility for hiring any of the staff that came later in your department?

DB: Yeah. Um, I was there I guess almost a year, and I was a one-man operation. I mean, I even did the typing for the newsletter. I mean, I did everything. Uh, but I didn't – that was no problem. I don't mind typing because – I don't know if anybody else will mention this along the way or not, but John Beljan himself used to do a lot of typing, so I figured, hell, if the dean of the place can type, I can type. He was a very capable typist, by the way. So at any rate, I did the typing even in the early days on our newsletters, I typed my own memos, I did everything. But after about a year, it – oh, it wouldn't have been quite a year, it'd have been the summer of '76, we'll say – the job was getting so big, and we were getting so many people in the medical school, and we were getting so many responsibilities that would come under the term “communications,” that it was clear to me that I couldn't go on doing all of this stuff, and I went to Beljan and I said, “You know, we have got to have some relief. I have got to hire an assistant.” And he finally approved that after raising a number of questions about how would that look to the rest of the university and all of this – and I really can't be all that concerned about how it's gonna look to the rest of the university. If I'm going to meet your needs and perform the way you want me to perform in this department, I've got to have help. I can't go on as a one-man operation. So he finally said, “Great, go hire somebody.” So, we did a, uh... again, we went through the appropriate channels and procedures and we advertised the position. We had a hundred and twenty-some applications, and one of those applicants was a woman named Ruth Hardin. Uh, Ruth, as it turned out, had been somebody that I'd worked with, Kettering Foundation. Um... Other applicants included the usual thirty social workers, uh... we had an undertaker from Xenia who applied. We had a couple of ministers. We had two or three PhDs in the English department at Wright State. In other words, it was a mixed bag of people. They saw it, again, as a nice opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a new and developing institution like the medical school. As it turned out, Ruth was the one that everybody who interviewed her felt was the appropriate person for the job, because she had a super personality, first of all, uh... and she could work well with people, and she'd had experience setting up events and doing events coordination as a part of her work at the Kettering Foundation. So in the end we hired her,

and she came on board, as I recall, it would have been in the late summer of 1976. She got on board just in time to help us put together the first convocation of the medical school in 1976. Um... I'll tell you more about them people that we hired. Uh... Ruth and I were a two-man – a two-person operation, then, for about the next year, at which point we both realized that we needed a good secretary to work with us, just to type our memos, to file, to answer telephone calls, and to do a whole bunch of things. So again, we got Dr. Beljan convinced of the need to have a secretary in our department. We, uh, filled out all the paperwork, advertised the job in the university, and lo and behold, there was a young woman over in – I believe in the education college – named Barbara Borders, and Barbara applied. We interviewed, as I recall, six people. We chose Barbara Borders because she was an excellent secretary. She turned out to be just one of the neatest people that we had in our department because not only was she a fine secretary, but we made a photographer out of her, we made a writer out of her, uh... She just did incredible kinds of things. She worked with Ruth in setting up for events, and um... So she was the third person, then, that we added to the department. That would have been, I suspect, in '77. Uh, off the record, for what that's worth, Barbara had also been in the fire down in Kentucky, uh, what one was it, the Beverly Hills fire in Kentucky.

JS: The supper club.

DB: That was kind of an interesting side-light, that when we interviewed her we thought, "She's got a strange voice." Well, as it turned out, she had a strange voice because she was still suffering from the smoke damage to her voice box, I guess, that occurred in that fire. She nearly died. She'd been trapped under a table, and just luckily got out of the thing. Barbara, by the way, is now in California working at the Scripps Foundation in La Jolla and having a ball, in an office that overlooks the Pacific.

JS: Wow.

DB: Okay, that's '77. Now we've got three people in the department. In – must have been '78 or '79, I honestly don't recall the exact year – but it was either '78 or '79, we were producing an incredible amount of literature out of our college – booklets, brochures, catalogs, newsletters, deans' reports, this that and the other – and in order to get graphic design help, we would have to go and stand in line in the publications department in the university, because by this point, we'd gotten out of – we no longer used the external graphic designer because we just felt that we couldn't afford it. She was very expensive. So we tried to use the university services, but we discovered that they simply were inadequate to our needs. They didn't have enough people

themselves to meet the university's needs, much less ours. So, Dr. Beljan and I and the president, President Kegerreis, and Bob Toper, who at that point was the Director of Communications – we got together one Friday afternoon at President Kegerreis's office and agreed that the medical school needed to have its own graphic designer. So, again, we went and created the paperwork and went through the search process, and we finally hired a man named Ron Geisterfer [sp?]. Ronald Geisterfer. He was out of work at that point. He had been – he was an excellent employee, but he had been, I guess, laid off from one of the aircraft corporations around here, I'm not sure which one, because their contracts had suddenly been terminated by the government or something, and they couldn't keep him on. Anyway, Ron joined us then, either in '78 or '79, and he did a – it could have been '77, I guess it's somewhat irrelevant, but '77, '78, '79. Somewhere in there, Ron came on board and did all of our publications work then, in terms of the design of it. So that meant that we had a four-person staff at that point, and that's as big as the staff ever got. A marvelous group of people who worked beautifully together. A lot of harmony, a lot of friendship, and then... But around 1980 – maybe I'm getting ahead of the story here – by 1980, after Dr. Beljan became Vice President for Health Affairs, he asked that I go along with him in that position. He asked that the graphic designer go along as a Health Affairs graphic designer, and the secretary Barbara Borders also went along. So that left only Ruth Hardin, then, back in the medical school, as the communications director. Um, this would have been in '80, I guess. Yeah, 1980. When Dr. Sawyer came in as the medical school dean, as the new dean. And so, Ruth, then, was left as director with the new dean coming in at that point, in the form of Dr. William Sawyer. I think... Yes, Ruth, then – Ruth and I – she asked me to work with her and we hired her a new secretary then named Joe Roof [sp]. Okay, maybe we better back up, though, and get the chronology –

JS: What was your responsibilities after things started really picking up –

DB: Mm-hmm.

JS: – and you started going into development – and you had a change, when they moved you into an office here in Kettering? Did your responsibilities go up, or...?

DB: Oh, no – no, I'm sorry, maybe I've misled you here. When I first came to the school in '75, they also had offices here in this building. Some of – well, like, the admissions office was located up on the third floor here. There were a couple of administrative functions. I think Spanier may have had an office up here. Some of us had offices also, then, at the VA Center. Spanier had an office out there. He had an office here because you gotta remember that the VA

was sort of the driving force behind all of this. It was their twenty-some million dollars that helped to make the salaries possible for the people coming on board here. So, we felt a need to have close interactions with people at the VA. So, you take a guy like Spanier, he had an office at the VA, I believe he had another site here in this building, and eventually he had literally almost a closet out on campus in one of the Biomedical Sciences buildings out there. This – all of this – all of the time that that was happening, there was a new building going up on campus called the Medical Sciences building, which is out there now. We moved in there, though, in '77. In January of '77 we went out on campus. Now, I'm sorry, to get back to your question, what was it?

JS: How did your responsibilities change over time?

DB: Okay.

JS: -- the development --

DB: Well, once we got on campus, I think we were a little more able to get work done more easily. You gotta remember, when we were at the VA Center, we were ten miles away from campus, and just trying to get work done from that distance was very difficult. Once we moved on campus, then, we found ourselves with, yes, different kinds of things. Suddenly, we found ourselves with a building of our own called the medical school, and the public began to have expectations. For example, we would get calls from, let's say, a fifth-grade teacher in Kettering. And the fifth-grade teacher would say, "I have a class. Oh, they all want to be physicians. They're just marvelous kids. They're so brilliant. And we want to bring them out. Could you give them a tour?" And you'll say, "Buh-buh-buh-buh, well, uh..." And you'd sort of start trying to put them off because the public has, I think, an impression of medical schools that's formed from watching television shows. *St. Elsewhere* is the most current example, but Care Bear, Ben Casey, and all of those things in years past created in the minds of the public a stereotype almost of what medical students do. Medical students in the eyes of most people in the public are people who go running up and down the corridors of hospitals with stethoscopes dangling out of their pockets yelling, "Stat!" and pounding people in the chest, and, you know, being heroes. Our medical school was very different, at least on campus, because on campus all we had were the basic science classes. By that I mean you had those rather dreary courses in anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, and some of those things that really aren't that different from any other course. The action was out in the hospitals, because in the first year as Wright State medical students, those people had to get out into the hospitals and begin, literally, to get their

hands dirty. So, to get back to your question, we found ourselves giving tours, for example, of the facility. We found ourselves trying to make the facility look nice. We also wanted to create some sense of history, because I personally believe that any institution like that or the university needs to have a sense of history. So, we put up, for example, we had – Ruth Hardin, for example, had to coordinate with Mrs. Kettering, Mrs. Virginia Kettering-Kampf, to get a photograph. You may have seen that thing on campus, by the way. It hangs in the medical school. Well, we had to coordinate stuff like that. We had to coordinate the library, the Fordham Library. We had to coordinate with Mrs. Pruett to hang the portraits of her son and her husband – Fordham, Thomas Fordham, Sr., Thomas Fordham, Jr. – in the library. We had to coordinate with Ray Palmer the librarian, for example, to work, uh, to put together the rare books room in the library. So we found ourselves with a lot of things like that to do, plus simply, as I said, organizing events. We had – we organized Christmas parties. We had to organize the convocation – the first convocation of the medical school, which occurred in September of 1976. And that involved getting invitations out to everybody who had had anything to do with this medical school and the creation of it. Getting invitations out to all of the medical community. Inviting them out for the first convocation, which was simply a way of kicking off the school year. And the first one was in '76, and we had it up in the P.E. building on campus. We probably had, uh, we estimated over a thousand people in the gym that day, you know, and Beljan spoke, and it was a very nice ceremony, but again, all of that requires a lot of effort and time to put together. So our communications department did that. Primarily Ruth Hardin, I should say. I was off, you know, trying to create the first catalog, for example, for the school, which we called “On Call.” It was a full-blown catalog with photographs, lengthy descriptions of the departments, we listed all the faculty, and so we had all of those kinds of things to do. Plus, trying to work with the development officer to begin to raise some money from individuals and corporations in the community to help support the medical education program there.

JS: How was your operation funded?

DB: We were funded just through normal state channels, I mean we were part of the medical school budget, which came in part from the state and part from the VA.

JS: When you were talking about Ruth Hardin coordinating special events –

DB: Mm-hmm.

JS: – did you separate that special event function out to her particularly? Like, did you separate that function –

DB: Well, I worked with her to do those kinds of things, but she was so capable and she was one of those kinds of people who all you had to do was point her in the direction [and] she would take care of it.

JS: Would you say that there were any particular special events that you could say marked particular periods of time?

DB: Yeah, let me just say one more quick thing about Ruth and special events, and that was the flexibility, and that was the key to whatever success we enjoyed, because she was over to do special events. She worked with me on publications. I at the time probably had more strength in publications and writing, graphics, and media relations, press relations, than she had. So I would simply ask her to help me out with those things, but in turn I would help her out, because she had expertise in organizing events, and she had a more gentle personality than I had. And she could get things done that I couldn't get done sometimes with people. I, on the other hand, could do things that she was uncomfortable doing, so we complemented one another very nicely. Now, what was the rest of the question?

JS: Were there any special events –

DB: Okay.

JS: – that kinda punctuated your –

DB: Yeah. Okay, the first convocation I already mentioned. Um... Yeah. In – I believe it was 1977 – we organized a special event to recognize the fiftieth of the Fels Research Institute in Yellow Springs. Fels had become a part of the School of Medicine a year before that in '76, I guess it was. So, it fell to me and Ruth and some other folks to be the organizers for a fiftieth anniversary of the Fels Research Institute. In 1979, I believe – or '80, probably '79 – we organized a marvelous special event where we dedicated the statue of Hippocrates in front of the medical – we did that right in front of the medical school on a Friday afternoon. It was beautiful.

It was like 3:00 in the afternoon we set this up for. Coordination, again, was the name of the game, but also a lot of work to invite special people. The statue, by the way, was made possible by a professor on campus named Peter Athenopolis [sp?]. He was Greek – he was born in Greece, had come to the States as a young man, and had gotten his education here. Spoke with a Greek accent, or I mean a heavy accent, although he spoke beautiful English. And Dr. Athenopolis was sort of a leader in the Greek community here in Dayton. He felt that medicine, since it had its origins in Greece, ought to be something that the Greek community would be interested in here. So he spent a couple years, I think, organizing things to get the money together to have the statue of Hippocrates carved – or whatever they did to it – in Greece. It had been put together in Athens, had been shipped to the States on Greek airlines, it was erected then, and we dedicated this statue, which was the gift of the Greek-American community here in Dayton, in, as I said, 1979 or '80, I don't recall the exact year. Probably '79. But that was another marvelous event. I'm trying to think of others that stand – ah, yes, the crowning glory, I guess, was in '80. 1980, would that be right? Yeah. It'd have to be 1980. When the first class graduated. And that was something that required a committed effort. It required incredible coordination and work, particularly on the part of Ruth Hardin. Again, I can't say enough about Ruth. She pretty well took that one off my shoulders, and I just sort of stood around and picked up the pieces. But what we did, Jim, we realized that there were a lot of people around Dayton who felt very personally involved in the medical school and in the creation of the medical school. All the physicians felt that they had a stake in it. There were a lot of important people in the community who felt that they had a stake in it. There were a lot of politicians who felt that they had a stake in it. Uh, students, parents, people in the university who felt that it was partly theirs. So, we realized that we needed to do something special for the first graduating class. So in 1980, we organized the first pre-commencement. There was – the university was going to hold its normal commencement ceremonies on, let's say, June 9. Saturday morning. The medical school decided that it would do a pre-commencement the night before, Friday night. The problem then was where are you gonna do it? You couldn't do it on campus. There was absolutely nowhere large enough to do it. Even the gymnasium was insufficient. So, we scattered around. Finally we landed at the convention center in downtown Dayton. And we organized it. We had to bring in a stage, chairs, lighting technicians – we had to do everything. But we held our first pre-commencement down there. After the commencement – er, pre-commencement exercises were over, we had champagne and food, finger foods and stuff for the people who attended. And there were several thousand people there that night. Then, we had an orchestra, and we had dancing. So we went on there until the wee hours of the morning, I guess. But that was probably the biggest event that we ever staged, up to that point.

JS: Why have commencements since then not be as elaborate?

DB: I think it's simply a case of, you know, the first of anything is – it's like, you get into another question there: why did the first class get treated differently than subsequent classes? The answer's simply because they were first. They were thirty-two people who were the first. It's kind of like Lindbergh, you know, nobody knows who the second man was who flew the Atlantic. People will not recall who the second – what the second class president's name was of the medical school, for example. In fact, most people won't even recall who the first person to graduate from the medical school was, and they sure as heck won't recall who the second person was. The first person, just for trivia, was a guy named Steve Bernarden [sp?]. And the only reason Steve was the first person ever to receive a diploma from Wright State was because his name was first in the alphabet, you know. If there had been somebody in there named Abramowitz, he would've been first. Uh... But why have the commencements been – er, the pre-commencements been scaled down since then? For a couple reasons. One, you don't need that kind of thing. We didn't need it afterwards because there was not sufficient numbers who wanted to attend. Secondly, it was expensive. And you could not justify the kind of money – we're talking thousands of dollars – to put something like that on every year, because the university and the other people in the university who were not a part of the medical school, quite rightly, would feel that it was not right for the medical school to have that kind of money spent, and not the other departments or colleges in the university. So, there were the economic reasons – you don't do that every year, to that extent – and secondly, there was simply the lack of interest, I think, to do it every year. Thirdly, it's just a lot of darn hard work, and it requires a number of people to work almost full time on it for a couple of months. So, three reasons.

JS: Let's go back to your activities with Dr. Beljan.

DB: Mm-hmm.

JS: Did he ever give you an impression that he was enjoying the process?

DB: Uh, I would turn the whole thing around and say that there was never a time when he was Dean of the School of Medicine that he gave anything but the impression that he was enjoying the process tremendously. He came in here, as I understand it – again, I didn't know him the first year he was here, but from what I've heard – he came in here and, boy, when his feet hit the floor, he was off and running. I mean, he came in ready to put together a medical school in record time. And he did that, by the way. I think it was twenty-four months after he arrived that the school had its first class, it had provisional accreditation, and from what we [can] tell, it was the quickest startup time in the history of any American medical school. So, he was having a

ball, uh, developing and creating something that, you know, would be a benefit to Ohio, to the nation... Uh, he was having a ball.

JS: In my interview with him, he scheduled a whole section around the idea of selling the program to the community –

DB: Yeah.

JS: Did you get involved with that?

DB: Oh absolutely. Again, that was something that I sort of assumed – when I was talking earlier about communications, to me that is a part of it is to do the promotion, if you will, or the marketing, in a soft sell way, to the rest of the community. I used to organize things like I would take Dr. Beljan over to Channel 7 and we would get on the, uh, on radio, on the call-in show, although I can't recall what [it was] called, Tom Hamlin as I recall was the uh... No! Ted Ryan. Ted Ryan was the moderator, uh... What the heck is it called? But people – there would be an open line kind of thing, and people would call in and ask Beljan questions about the medical school. We did that a number of times. We had live tape presentations that we would take out to the Rotary, Kiwanis, Jaycees, in the clubs in the area. Well, he fully realized the value of “selling,” quote un-quote, this new program to the community, because he also realized that without the community's support, the school literally could not exist. Because we had no hospital, all we had were some classrooms on campus. We didn't have access to patients unless the hospitals let us have access to patients. So we needed the understanding and support of the general community, and certainly of the medical community and the hospital communities around here. So no, we were very – I guess “aggressive” is a pretty good word for it. Very aggressive about getting the word out to the community that we were here, and that we, you know, fully intended to be something that they would be proud of.

JS: Did you ever have to go to Columbus with Dr. Beljan?

DB: No, I never did. The only time I ever went to Columbus, uh, even for him was for a grand total of [a] fifteen-minute interview with Senator Oliver Ocasek. When Dr. Beljan was writing the history of the medical school back in '77 or '78, he asked me if I would run up and interview

Senator Ocasek, because Ocasek had been one of the leaders in the development of the medical school here. But I never went with Beljan to do any testifying or anything like that.

JS: You mentioned interviewing. Did you do a lot of interviewing with, uh, in your...

DB: [It's] part of my activities. Not interviewing in the sense of looking for hard news. I simply used to talk with a lot of our faculty members, a lot of our chairmen, to try to get story ideas, to try to get more information about things that they or their faculty members were doing, so that, again, we could more effectively get out to the rest of the community what was going on in this medical school. Let me think of specific kinds of things... Oh, you know, we had a chairman, for example, who had been involved in heart – studies of human heart down in the Andes, for example, which was a fascinating thing. So, I used to talk to people like that simply to get information about what they were up to. But not hard-and-fast interviewing.

JS: Did you ever have any trouble filling up the *Vital Signs* publication?

DB: Oh, never, no. No, once that thing got started, people wanted to be a part of it. I mean, they would send us information about themselves. We had a section in there called "For the Record," and that was where we listed all of the names of people and what they were doing, whether they were publishing a paper, attending a meeting, giving a lecture. Whatever they were doing, we would include that as a part of the "For the Record" section. So we found, not only our full-time faculty members, but the community physicians who would send us volumes of stuff that they were doing. So, no, it was easy to fill it up.

JS: I take it that that had a good impact on the community.

DB: We think it did. Oh, absolutely, yeah. As I recall, Jim – I don't know if I'm exaggerating or not – I don't really recall anybody ever complaining about that publication. The only thing they would complain about would be if they sent you reams of information and you were only able to use a few pieces of it. Then they would call and complain about, "Why didn't you use it all?" And you would have to explain that you couldn't show too much favoritism because there were lots of people sending [in] information and we had a limited space.

JS: Did you ever get involved in minority recruitment?

DB: I was involved to the extent that I worked with Allan Pope, who was sort of the director of minority recruitment for the medical school. I worked with Allan to develop some brochures and some literature, which then got placed out in the colleges and universities in Ohio. And also, we did some summer programs for youth in the Greater Dayton area, uh, high school kids to come out to do some things on campus, I think it was about twenty kids who would come out, minority students. Just to give them a feel for what it was like if they were gonna go to college. So to that extent, yeah, we helped to develop some literature for Allan Pope. But to go out and actually try to recruit students, no.

JS: Well, thank you very much for talking to me today. The next time we meet, I'd like to go into more detail on some of the organizations you might have dealt with –

DB: Okay.

JS: In particular, the hospitals.

DB: Okay, yeah.

JS: Thank you.

DB: Super. Great.