We’re here today, November 7, 1985, here with Raymond Yeager, professor of Forensics/Speech of Bowling Green State University.

INTERVIEWER: When was your first connection with the university?

YEAGER: I came to the university as a student in June of 1946 right after the World War II. I graduated from January 1949 with a Bachelor’s degree and stayed for my Masters, and got a job with the university in 1950 as an instructor. I can recall the Korean War, after that I moved back to Ohio State University for my Ph.D, returned to Bowling Green and got the degree in 1956. I returned to Bowling Green in 1954, and was on the staff for over 30 years. I retired in 1980.

INTERVIEWER: As far as the changes in the university, do you recall what the university was like when you came here?

YEAGER: Of course there was just a central core of buildings when I came here in 1946. We started the great building boom because of the veterans coming back to college. So a school with about 1600 suddenly had 5000 and no place to put them. We brought in and used most of their classrooms and sleeping quarters. One semester I lived in what is now the Joe E. Brown Theater, it was called Recreation Hall, we had double decker bunks and lived down there and we were happy to be there with no place. We had two toilets for 400-500 men that were down there, no one complained because we were just glad to be in school.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think it has changed now? Of course, buildings have gotten more modern, full of space, and ....how do you think that has changed?

YEAGER: We have changed from a good education school to a major university. I lived through that and saw the changes and I think we have a very good school right now. Not saying that it was bad before but it was a strictly educational school.

INTERVIEWER: How about your duties, responsibilities as you came to the university as the Forensics were building? What were your responsibilities as soon as you came?

YEAGER: As a graduate student, I was an assistant in the Forensics program right then and there, as an undergraduate. Then I became a full time staff member, became director of the Forensic program, which included the debate team, the individual events team, and about one third of my official time was spent with the forensic team. I coached for most of the time I was there. I was out of the program for awhile, because I was in the administration of the department. I returned to it the last three years before I retired.
INTERVIEWER: As far as any other programs or departments that stand out did any build within the forensic department?

YEAGER: The whole speech program because we grew from a relatively small group of people to a major department to a school with a PLD program.

INTERVIEWER: How many people when you first started?

YEAGER: On the faculty?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

YEAGER: Well there was less than ten, we did not have a large department at all. My area consisted of only three people, by the time I retired my area was the size of my whole department in 1950.

INTERVIEWER: What is that number now do you know?

YEAGER: It is all split up now, we've even gone to different colleges, but there is about 40 in the school.

INTERVIEWER: What presidents have you worked under here at the university?

YEAGER: Well, Dr. Prout I first worked with at the close of World War II. Dr. McDonald, who was president when I was hired as a staff member. Dr. Harshman, who preceded Dr. McDonald and then Dr. Jerome and Dr. Moore. There was quite a few of presidents I worked under.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of their personalities as far as their individual name?

YEAGER: Everyone remembers Dr. Prout, because he's the one who went visiting everybody. He visited the hospital everyday to see the people who were sick. He took flowers to the housemothers of the sororities and fraternities and the dormitories. His office was open to the students all the time. Any student could just walk in his office and talk to him. For example, we came back one time from a debate trip we had won. The president had told us any time we had won a trip to stop by his home no matter what time. Well, about 1 or so in the morning we went to his house and got him out of bed and went downstairs to what he called his rumpus room and he opened up his coke bar, what really was Coca Cola. He celebrated with us and told us on Monday morning we should go to his office for a picture with him with our trophy. He always wanted to be a part of the students life, so he was really a wonderful man as a person. He got the university going let's say, "big time" following World War II.
INTERVIEWER: How about McDonald?

YEAGER: He brought the real leadership to this university, and seeing this school becoming a major university. Under him we had a great building program; he is the one who insisted on having PH.D's. To be a major university we had to have a majority of the faculty have PH.D's, and it was hard for a lot of people who did not have their PH.D's.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that caused animosity?

YEAGER: Yes, but the overall goal was a good one, of course he made us a major university. While there was controversy over his methods, I don't think anybody objected to what his goals were.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting, because I know there has been a lot of controversy over that topic. People have many different views.

YEAGER: There were some very bad times there toward the end.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that the different presidents, by chance, influenced your job in any special way? Philosophies?

YEAGER: I'm not sure that any directly influenced a particular job. They may have guided me toward roles that would help the university more, than say my parochial interest. Most of the presidents were very much interested in the forensic program and tended to back it and support it. Some of them were active participants, Dr. Moore for example, had been a debater down at Baylord University in Texas, an undergraduate. He was a very strong supporter of the program.

INTERVIEWER: How about activities around campus? What activities were popular when the university was young until now?

YEAGER: The fraternities and sororities had many more all campus events that were very popular at the time. They sometimes got a little rowdy, but for many events it was a major right of the whole campus. You do not see too much of that today. Each organization had its own special event and I think that the Beta 500 is the only thing left today. I think there is very little left, it used to be that each organization had one major event and it was an all campus event, not just one group.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think this is so?
YEAGER: One thing I feel they might have gotten a little too big as a university to accommodate everybody. Some were a little rowdy, some were silly, but when they were for worthy causes I think it is worth while.

INTERVIEWER: How about activities as far as entertainment, nightclubs, those type of things?

YEAGER: There wasn’t too much in the earlier days. Bowling Green is pretty much of a dry school, sort of a reputation that belongs to this institution, but this didn’t mean people didn’t drink. It was a bit more difficult doing it because there weren’t that many places in town usually you’d have to go out of town.

INTERVIEWER: I understand there was a rule that students weren’t allowed to drive females in the car.

YEAGER: That came after a specific incident. There was some turmoil on campus due to a student raped a girl. The parents came and other parents came and put real pressure on the president to protect their daughters. So, the rules had lasted about one semester and they were extreme rules. One of them was of course women could not ride in cars without a note from the Dean of Women. I was one of the popular young professors because being the forensics coach students rode in my car. The girls on the forensics team could ride in my car. I had a special permit from the Dean of Women. Some girls wanted to be on the team because they could ride in the car. This was so silly that the girl who was student teaching downtown, at what is now the junior high school used to be the senior high school, had to get a cab because it was pouring down raining or snowing but couldn’t because that was riding in a car, and she didn’t have permission. After a semester a lot of those rules were changed because they were just intolerable. All of this was because of the parental pressure on the administration to do something.

INTERVIEWER: It did not solve the problem because it has happened again.

YEAGER: Yes, anything can happen at some of these irrational activities.

INTERVIEWER: How about strengths and weaknesses of the university? What was the strength at the opening of the university and how has it changed?
YEAGER: Part of the strengths are the same and I think that is the collegability, the friendliness of the campus and the people towards each other. Some of that continues although in my own personal judgment we have lost a lot of the things we used to have. I think the faculty were more open to students years ago. Faculty were involved in the fraternities and sororities as advisor's and participants. They were involved with most the student groups and they think faculty had more students come to their homes than they do now. I think one of the disadvantages of becoming a major university is that we have become too impersonal. The faculty are so intent on publishing and getting ahead in their business deal, they do not give their time to the students, like the faculty used to do. I don't know if people take walks anymore on Sundays, we used to meet the students on Sunday.

INTERVIEWER: Really.

YEAGER: The latter part of my teaching career I didn't go out on Sunday's anymore. The university did not have too many places to go to, to be with the students on Sunday.

INTERVIEWER: So you prefer universities like that? How about the Big Ten schools?

YEAGER: I'll tell you for 10,000 and under you can have it, but when you start getting 15,000 to 18,000 it isn't personal. Yet there are some students and faculty that still have a close relationship. One of the things I liked about being in the forensic program is that I am with the students. Students came to my house, students would call me on the phone, I'd go to student places we'd party together you know. We still maintained personal relations with the help of forensics I think.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything that really stands out in your mind that you would like to mention?

YEAGER: I think the story of forensics has been kinda lost its university history. I perhaps know things a lot of other people don't. As far as I can tell the forensic program itself started right with the university, the founding of the university. I know that Dr. Clair Martin, the chemistry professor, is now deceased told me one time he coached debate when the university first started. He was in the chemistry department. I know Dr. Reo McCain who was head of the English department coached debate
during the days. We used to have a sign in the department that was announcing a public debate between Heidelberg College, Tiffin, and Bowling Green, was dated in 1919. I had some former members of the 1918 and 1920's who have stayed active in assisting our forensic program and our national honorary. Martin Hanna for example, the attorney whose one son is now on the Board of Trustees, was an active debater at the university in 1929. Led the British debaters in a public debate at Bowling Green......and Ashel Bryan who was an executive officer with the MidAm bank and a former trustee. He was a debater at the university at the close of World War II. There are a number of people like this, many of the people are prominent participators in this program and who still support the program monetarily as well as their official support of the Board of Trustees and this sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Did the presidents come in at all to show, speak to the participants of the program?

YEAGER: They came in to welcome people to our tournaments. Not in the later years, but they did earlier years. One thing I think that there are so many more tournaments that it becomes old hat, you couldn’t do it every weekend. It used to be fewer the tournaments the bigger the experience. Yes, the presidents would come and welcome people. We had the national tournament here twice 1947, and 1959 of our Honorary Pi Kappa Delta, I became president of that in 1963. Twice we held the national convention, we would have over 1,000 people here for a whole week and we came during Easter break, spring break we call it now, the students would be gone and they would take over the dormitories and the dining halls. For one whole week we would have this national convention of a tournament here. We would have big name speakers come in, of course, the presidents all took part in that. We thought that it was a great way of attracting people. In fact I had students come to me to go to Bowling Green for graduate work who came because their coaches said they were at Bowling Green in 1959 and that it is a great school to go to. Then they’d come to Bowling Green because their coaches have been here. We made a very good impression on them.

INTERVIEWER: One question I have written down is that your were involved in ODK.

YEAGER: Yes, I was a founder and first president of ODK.

INTERVIEWER: What is ODK?
YEAGER: We had a local organization called the Pick and Pen, and the faculty and the outstanding students would meet weekly for lunch. We would talk about some of the problems on campus. We saw ourselves as idea people, we would come up with things that ought to be done and get other people to do it or take it over.

INTERVIEWER: Is it almost like the UAO now?

YEAGER: Yes, but we didn’t try to do the things ourselves so that all of us were busy doing so many activities. We saw where the need was and found other people to come up with the solution of the problem. Again it got faculty and students close together. That organization we got was a member of the national organization, ODK and I was president of both groups, Pick and Pen and then national ODK on campus. Some members have gone on and have done quite well for themselves because of the group.

INTERVIEWER: Anybody imparticular?

YEAGER: I couldn’t name one without naming half a dozen. Ken Krause who was the second president was very big in our state government as the man behind the scenes with the governors. We had a number from the Toledo area that were in my group who have made a name for themselves. ODK had people all around campus with the current activities if your not familiar with it. So you would have sports figures, straight scholars, people in activities such as music and forensics all with good grades and who held leadership positions already, sort of a brain trust, you might say of the student body.

INTERVIEWER: So you would try to solve the problems at the university?

YEAGER: Yes, we would find a problem and try to find a solution to it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you want to talk a little bit about Darwin Picleheimer and the book that you worked on?

YEAGER: Well I was his masters advisor Darwin Picleheimer who now has his PH.D from Indiana, and is a professor at Boston College. I have never seen Darwin but here, I have forgotten the year he was here for his masters in the 50’s. I had him direct a thesis on history of forensics at Bowling Green. So he went through all the things he could find in the catalog, in the BG News, all the sources he could locate, and come up with a story. Now he didn’t get all the way back like Dr. Clair Martin because I didn’t even know about Clair Martin at the time. His is mainly from the printup story that was in the newspaper of the town, you know as well as the campus. He was the only pretty complete story of the history of forensics here at Bowling Green.
INTERVIEWER: Now does that correlate with Overman, his book that he has written?

YEAGER: Overman's book came out later. I think that he interviewed Dr. Overman, but he didn't get all the information he could of gotten now 20 years later, because we know more about it than we did back then. That is the only permanent record I know of that is right there in his masters thesis.

INTERVIEWER: I wish I had read that. Another thing that I just thought of was when you said you were in the war and then had to go back. How was the campus during this period up to the Vietnam War, Kent State implies that we're going through rioting anything in particular that stands out?

YEAGER: Yes, I guess there were some student attempts to gain more freedom, more power, during the McDonald years. Most of the student attempts failed it wasn't until the faculty got involved that finally things came to a head under Dr. McDonald. The thing that most people I think are proud of Bowling Green during the Kent State crisis is that we all were very much upset with what happened at Kent State, but we were determined that our university was not going to be closed down. I think it made us closer with the students. Faculty and students worked out ways in which they patrolled the campus and watched for things that might happen. Everyone thought that there were going to be people descending on Bowling Green campus, every one of the other schools closed. All the state universities were closed this put students in great turmoil. Here we had meetings on campus and this sort of thing and we discussed it and they were very unhappy about this situation, but we were determined that we were going to stay open, and our students kept us open. Other schools students closed them. I think we can be really proud of the kind of student we have that while we had people that were very much upset, but they felt that their education was important and they wanted to stay with it and actively work to keep this school open. I know that students controlled with dogs on the campus for protection. There were stories that people were going to get in the tunnels and blow up the buildings, which were wild inventions maybe, but with the talk of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) out of Michigan, they were going to come to do things and we heard from the radicals on campus and all this. There were some who walked out but nothing ever happened to Bowling Green.

INTERVIEWER: That's fortunate. The way they talked about the riots and stuff and said that there was some attempts to turn police cars over on Wooster street along with that and I'm sure that went along with everywhere else. It was pretty much kept under control then?
YEAGER: Yes, our students marched downtown and expressed their concerns and then came back. The Vice President of Student Affairs met them in front of the courthouse on Court Street as they were marching back. The students sat in the street and held a conversation back and forth with them. Now that doesn’t sound like rioting students now does it? They asked him questions back and forth and when it was over with they all went back. Now because all of the fears of everybody sheriffs came to Bowling Green and lined up with the shot guns and rifles around the Court House to protect the city and county. They weren’t needed. Our students had common sense. Again, to that there were some people who tried to blame things, but didn’t get away with it. The students, faculty, and the administration were sound and talked things out, maybe they didn’t solve it but at least they listened to each other and I think that is an accomplishment.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that is true today?

YEAGER: We aren’t always happy, but I think we don’t have to destroy because we aren’t happy.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to touch on?

YEAGER: I think we just about covered it.

INTERVIEWER: Great, super, thank you again.