

ASC Alumni Oral History Project
Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA

LARRY OTT

interviewed and transcribed by

JEFFERSON POOLEY

recorded by

ANNA GAMARNIK

July 8, 2025

Philadelphia, PA

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ABSTRACT

In the interview, alumnus Larry Ott (Lawrence L. Ott, Jr.) recounts his childhood interest in aspects of communication, including ham radios, theater, and music in high school, which led to his matriculation to Fordham University's communications arts major. At Fordham, Ott worked at WFUV and WNEW. After graduating in 1964, Ott chose Annenberg's new master's program over alternatives, attracted by its blend of practical training and theory. He describes the school's curriculum, fellow student cohort, and encounters with faculty, including George Gerbner, Charles Siepmann, George Dessart, and Arthur Brodbeck. Ott's post-Annenberg career is described, including working in psychological operations in the Army during the Vietnam War, which led to a 16-year career with the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) as a television producer and director. Ott recounts his secret, urgent work for a 1983 UN Security Council presentation related to the Soviet Union's shooting down a Korean Air Lines flight. He also describes his subsequent career, including a six-year stint in Saudi Arabia for the U.S. Treasury Department. The interview includes Ott's description of freelance work, including international satellite projects for organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO). A through-line in the interview is Ott's description of his lifelong use of the mix of practical and theoretical skills he acquired while at the Annenberg School.

RESTRICTIONS

None

FORMAT

Interview. Video recordings at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA. One mp4 file of one hour 17 minutes.

TRANSCRIPT

Transcribed by Jefferson Pooley. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Jefferson Pooley. Transcript reviewed and approved by Larry Ott, Jefferson Pooley, and Samantha Dodd. Transcript 22 pages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CITATION FORMS

Video recording

Bibliography: Ott, Larry. Interview by Jefferson Pooley. Video recording, July 8, 2025. ASC Alumni Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives, University of Pennsylvania. **Footnote example:** Larry Ott, interview by Jefferson Pooley, video recording, July 8, 2025, ASC Alumni Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Transcript

Bibliography: Ott, Larry. Interview by Jefferson Pooley. Transcript of video recording, July 8, 2025. ASC Alumni Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives, University of Pennsylvania. **Footnote example:** Larry Ott, interview by Jefferson Pooley, transcript of video recording, July 8, 2025, ASC Alumni Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives, University of Pennsylvania, pp. 22–23.

Transcript of interview conducted July 8, 2025, with LARRY OTT

Philadelphia, PA

Interviewed by Jefferson Pooley

Q: Okay, this is an oral history interview of Larry Ott, conducted by Jeff Pooley at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. The interview is part of the Annenberg School for Communication Alumni Oral History Project of the School's Library Archives, and the date is July 8, 2025. So, welcome back, Larry, after 60 years to the school, and thanks for sitting for this interview.

OTT: Well, thank you. It sounds silly to say, but it does just seem like yesterday, actually.

Q: Okay. Well, why don't we just start off. If you could tell us a little bit about your family background, where you were raised, and that sort of thing.

OTT: Sure. I was born in New York City, so I'm a native New Yorker. But shortly after the war, we moved out of New York, upstate New York, and my dad came back from the war. He'd been in Europe. And we lived in Schenectady, New York. And I went to school there. And then when I finished school, I was—high school, which [where] by the way, I began the interest in communications. I was involved with—I was a ham radio operator. Not so much for the technical side, but because I liked to communicate with people all over the world. I could talk to them and so forth.

Q: So can you say a little bit more about that in high school? How did you get into the ham radio world?

OTT: I just got interested in it. And when I was 13 years old, I took the exam and I passed it and I built a little system and I had it—and I used to talk to people around the world and communicate and so forth. So that was part of my communications thing. And of course, I was interested in media and television and radio and all that type of thing. I mean, I can remember when we didn't have television. When I was a kid, we used to listen to the radio. And that really is something nobody can talk about anymore, probably. But then I was in a theater group. I did—my junior and senior year in high school. I was in two plays. I had major roles in a couple plays in school. And I also was involved with music. I was in the Glee Club, and I played the piano, so I was the accompanist for the Glee Club in high school. So that's sort of a communications world, anyway. So that's what I wanted to do when I went to college. I was looking for a school that had a communications program, and I chose Fordham University in

New York, and they had a communications arts program. So I went to school there. I spent four years there and studied communication arts, which was a wide variety of things including—it had general communications but, then, we also got involved in, because it was the arts, we got in courses in art and music and in aesthetics and that type of thing when—in being in New York City I got a chance to visit all the great New York City art museums and that type of thing. So that was fantastic, and while I was there I worked at WFUV-FM, which is a [public] broadcast radio station there. And I was a broadcaster and also producer of programs for three years.

Q: And as an intern or were you?

OTT: No, I actually did it. It was a student-run—it's a broadcast [station]. Today it's more controlled. But in those days, it was run by students. We had one professional person at the helm. And the rest of us, we did the live broadcast every night. And mostly in those days it was mostly classical music. But then we also did sports. I got involved in sports and I did live play-by-play broadcasts in baseball and basketball. And my last year I ran the whole sports program. And it expanded into live coverage of crew regattas, which had never been done before. So that was fun. And also in my last year I did an internship with WNEW AM/FM in New York, which at that time was the largest, most successful radio station in New York, with their news department. So I spent six months there. And I was actually working in the news department there when John Kennedy was shot.

Q: Do you have any memory of—

OTT: I do. What I remember, I was watching television. This is when they were taking the man who shot him [Lee Harvey Oswald] out of the prison, in Texas. He was coming out and Ike Pappas, who was one of the broadcasters on the radio station [WNEW], was there covering it. I knew him. We used to talk and everything. Suddenly I saw him on the television screen. It was live. I saw Ike lean forward with his microphone like this, to try to get an interview with him. The police were pulling him out of the station to take him away. And just at that moment, he was shot and killed. [Lee Harvey] Oswald. And I said, My God, you know, he was literally—it almost looked like, I almost thought for a second, it was Ike Pappas killing him, you know, because it was so—he was leaning forward with his microphone and the gun went forward at the same time. So that's my memory of that.

Q: Wow. Okay. That's pretty vivid, lightbulb memory. So you were in this internship in six months during the college years or right after?

OTT: No, my senior year.

Q: Your senior year.

OTT: Yes.

Q: And as you approached your graduation date, did you have in mind that you would go into radio or some other media field?

OTT: I wanted to go into media. I was interested in television and radio and film, all of the media. We also took some courses in film, film history and so forth. So I was—and then I decided in my senior year that I wanted to do a graduate program. I applied to five different schools and one of them was Penn [University of Pennsylvania], which was a new program that had just started. And there weren't very many universities that offered communications programs. I applied to Boston University at the time, Syracuse [University], which had a broadcast program, Michigan State [University] and the University of Southern California (USC) and here. And I was lucky enough to get accepted at all the schools and I got a couple of very nice offers of money from some of the schools, including Syracuse—offered me a very, very nice deal, which was they offered me full scholarship, internship, and a bunch of other stuff, teaching things. So actually, it would have looked pretty good. But at the same time, I didn't really want to go to Syracuse, actually, particularly because of the winter, having grown up in upstate New York.

But also Penn really was attractive to me for various reasons. One was that I liked the program because it had television and media activities, but it also had communications theory and looking at communications on a broader scale. And I always wanted to be involved. You know there are people who want to be like, I want to be a TV director, I want to be a filmmaker. I like to do all those things, but I really was interested in communications in a broader sense, but incorporating these and using them in whatever I was doing. And I thought Penn had the program that most attracted me that way, because it appeared to be encompassing all those things. So I guess I was a little brash in those days and I said, Well, I'm not getting any money from Penn. I don't want to—. So I called up and I think I talked to Mrs. [Eleanor] Maloney. I'm not sure. I think it was her. It was a woman. I'm sure it wasn't the dean. And I said, I'm really attracted [to Penn]. I really want to take this program and accept it. I've been accepted to other schools. Is there any way that you can offer me any money or anything? She said, I'll get back to you. So the next day she called me back and she said, Okay, we'll give you a half-tuition scholarship and we'll give you an assistantship. You can work in—and so I said, Oh, that sounds good. Thank you very much. I accepted. And that's how I ended up here.

Q: Did I ask what the tuition was?

OTT: I think, and I've said this, Howard says it's not true, but I remember it paying \$500 for a semester. Now my daughter went here undergraduate and also got her master's degree here, so I know—and that was like—so that was 30 years ago when she was here, so I know—how much it was then and I don't even want to think about how much it is now.

Q: So here you are you have these six offers you've secured half the tuition that presumably—and this assistantship that was the deciding factor.

OTT: Absolutely. I just, and I'll be honest with you, I probably would have come here anyway because it was my choice, but why not, you know, see what you can get, right? So, and I came and actually I got out of college in June, we finished college in early June of 1964. And with two friends of mine, we went to Europe for the summer. And we bummed around Europe from the end of June until I came back on the 4th of September. And I had to show up here on the 6th to start. And so I got home and I had a, you know, I got like two days at home and I said, I'll see you, I'm on my way to Penn. And I showed up here, I didn't have anything, I didn't have a room, I didn't have anything. I just, you know, here I am. And I finally found a place up around 44th Street or something like that in those days. This whole campus was totally different then. It's even hard to imagine how it is now compared to the way it was, and it was much smaller and many of the other streets—Walnut Street and all—they were all the old, old houses, the old brick houses and big buildings and all that. And where a lot of the campus has been enclosed and those [days there] were cross streets then, there's traffic going on. I mean, even stores and a few of those cross streets, but it was quite different in those times. It was more—very, it was very urban in that sense then, because there wasn't much of a campus. So we came in and we started right in. That's it, so that begins my Annenberg period.

Q: Yes, if you have any memories or impressions of that early, like first month for example, once you secured this 44th Street place and what was the school like and you met your classmates at that time, any memories from that early period?

OTT: Well, I think we're all kind of—first of all, for me, it was a real kind of awakening. First of all, I have a group of people who are all interested in communications, —that in itself was exciting. And we had lots of things to talk about, so there was that. There was a lot of camaraderie. I mean, there was a lot of—there were two or three bars here that we frequented, one here on Walnut Street, another one up around [the corner], I don't think it exists now; I think it's been enclosed in the campus, up around 40th or 42nd Street, up around there somewhere. So there was that. And one of the things that was interesting was that the TV —well, the way the school was structured, we had the general courses and then you had to pick a—what did we call it, see what I had written down here—what we called media labs, and there was one for TV, one for film, one for photography, and one for writing.

And some of the people who were involved—George Dessart ran the film [television lab] and I'll talk about George later. Great guy. And then we had the film with—Joel Sayre did the writing. Sol Worth did the film. And then George Dessart and Lew [Lewis] Barlow did the TV. Barlow was sort of an assistant to Dessart. And then there was a photography lab and I don't know who did that. I don't remember who that was. So the way that is, the classes were during the day, but the labs were at night. And they met, the TV lab, we met I think once a week for three hours and then the other lab—my job, my assistantship job was to work, to run, to work in the other labs. So I ran the equipment, took care of the equipment, and all that kind of stuff. Which was great for me because I got to have two TV labs for the price of one. So it was really good. And I really enjoyed it as an opportunity. Plus, I got to do a lot of physical things, which was a learning experience. And so we would, the TV lab people, we would have these nights. So they went from like, I think, around 7 o'clock at night to 10 o'clock usually. And so when we would get

finished, we'd go off and we'd get something to eat. We'd go off and, you know, have a drink or whatever. And then that was really the only sort of free time we ever had. It seemed like it was the only free time we ever had. Because remember, this course then, this master's degree, was two semesters, one year. It was a lot of work. I mean, you're just—plus we had this thing, the labs.

So anyway, one of the things we always used to get together, a lot of us, afterward in somebody's apartment or somebody's place. And Howard [Burkat] and I were talking about this today. One of the—it would be late at night, it was about 11. And they used to have reruns of Groucho Marx, and "You Bet Your Life" on it like at 11:30 at night. And we'd all sit around eating and talking, watching, not seriously watching it but just watching it for his laughs and stuff. That was one of our best times. So that was the feeling I got. I mean, there was a real huge different mixture of people. Remember this is in 1964. For one thing, we had at the time, we had a fairly large number of women in our class, which was really unusual then because there really weren't that many women in these programs. And we had a real variety. I thought about this a bit. And here are some of the people we had. We had a Catholic priest, a Mennonite, a fellow from India, had a Naval officer. We had one African-American woman, Mimi [Mildred] Shaw from Chicago, University of Chicago. And then people from different parts of the country and different places.

So it was very eclectic at the time. And in that sense it was really interesting and fun because—we even had one lady who was taking the course, and I'm trying to remember her name [Lilian Bregman]] now, but she was like 45 years old and she decided she would go back to school. She seemed like our mother. She was there in class. So that was the group. And it made for a very eclectic group. There was another thing, and Howard may have mentioned it in his talk, that there was a strange side group of people, about four or five people, who ran some sort of magazine. And they were here and they were still running their magazine, but they were involved in the course. And they were here for a while. I don't think they finished with us. I think somewhere at a point they dropped out. But no one ever really understood what the rationale behind that was or why they were here. So it's always been a mystery. Maybe someone can explain that to you.

Q: Yes, Cincinnati was the location, according to Howard [Burkat], of where this magazine was.

OTT: Was it Cincinnati is where they were? Yes, yes. I thought they had some connection to Yale [University] too, but I don't remember why. Now the other thing was about the faculty. The faculty was—again, there was very few faculty here on staff. They were mostly brought in. We had two or three of the faculty come down from New York. [Arthur] Brodbeck came from Yale, came down from New Haven. And then they brought one or two people in from other parts of the university. So the internal staff was relatively small. There was George Gerbner, and then there were the two instructors. There was Klaus Krippendorff, that was his first year, and a fellow by the name of Wendell Shackelford. And Klaus, as you know, stayed on for the rest of his life, so he was here. And we had the chance to see him again in 2015 when we had our reunion. And some of the others—Robert Lewis Shayon was here, he was a reviewer who worked for the

Saturday Review. There was Charles Lee, Dr. Charles Lee, who was a television personality here in Philadelphia. And we had George Dessart, as I mentioned before, who was with WCAU at the time. Dr. George Gerbner, and there was Arthur Brodbeck from Yale, and Charles Siepmann from NYU.

Q: I would love to hear about any of those that you had courses with, if you have memories of any of those you just listed.

OTT: Yes, well I took courses with, obviously with Dr. Gerbner, taught proseminar and taught courses. And then George Dessart I did my media with. Then Charles Siepmann, I took a course in propaganda with him. And then Arthur Brodbeck, I took his course. All, really, some fantastically interesting people. Brodbeck taught at Yale Law School and he was a protege of Harold Lasswell. He was supposed to be the new Harold Lasswell. He brought that down from Yale Law School and taught. He was a very unusual guy. He taught a course, and I guess you would call it in creativity—is what he would think I would call it. And a thing that I learned from him—he was a psychologist like Lasswell and dealt with politics and legal issues as well as communications, which Lasswell had across all three. But he talked about a thing which came to be part of the—everybody does it today—but he talked about creativity, of having the things in front of you, that are for creativity. So he's the first person I saw that actually [said], Put those papers up on the wall all around you, write the things on the wall. Nobody did that in 1964. And now today everybody—you know, that's the way everybody does those things. You either put them up on the screen or put them up on the wall and write them. And so he was a pretty interesting kind of guy—a little unusual but a very interesting person.

And then George Dessart was the TV person. George was an incredible individual. He was a very—I wouldn't use the word sophisticated—I would consider [him] to be sort of an erudite person who was involved in media, but raising—his idea was to raise it to another level. He went on to become, he went to New York and became a producer, a new major producer of major high-end stuff in New York after leaving WCAU here. And I ran into him many years later, oh gosh, 30 years later—he was running something at the United Nations and I was up there and I had dinner with him up there in New York many years later. So he was involved—I think he was the head of the American Cancer Society for a while too. He was involved in that. George really taught me a lot about television, and seeing television and broadcast media as something which you can be—it doesn't have to be low level, and it can do different things.

Charles Siepmann, fantastic. Charles Siepmann, I think probably Howard [Burkat] talked about him too. He taught a course in propaganda. He had been involved with the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and involved during World War II. He's almost probably the most famous person of all the people that I can mention in the school in terms of long term. He was a very interesting guy. He commuted down on the train [from New York]. He was the epitome of a British, a Britisher. He always wore a suit, a wool suit. He never wore an overcoat, never. No matter how cold it was, he came in his suit. He came down on the train from New York, and he walked from the train station to here. And then he walked back to the train station and went back to New York. His wife was an editor, senior editor for *Reader's Digest*. And so he would

always be dressed in these very British wool, heavy wool suits and he would smoke a pipe and he would always sit like this, his legs crossed, kind of leaning forward with his pipe and talking. I mean, he was out of a novel, really, like out of a British novel. He was a great guy. Very interesting person. And I think, based upon my career, became very [influential]—he—I'd say, when we go on later, as you'll find out most of my career becomes involved. I don't want to use the word propaganda, but I will because it relates to this thing. Propaganda in a broader sense of the word. And he really talked about how you can use media, how it affects us, and how propaganda can be used, and how ideas can be used, and how they can be transferred across media. Of course, he was talking a lot about film and radio in those days, but also television to some degree.

And one of the things we had to do was to review and analyze some of the great propaganda films, Leni Riefenstahl's films of the Olympic Games in 1936, and *The Triumph of the Will*, which is the famous Nuremberg conference that she filmed. And the things that were done in that. I mean, a lot of people, you know—I don't know if you know that. I think it's in the Olympic one where, no, it's the Nuremberg, I think, where it opens up with Hitler's plane flying through the air and the Wagner music behind it. I mean—and then, you know, Hitler walks into, that was all staged, by the way—it all worked out beforehand, the cameras were placed in the right place, it was all, all staged, and for greater effect. And where the high camera with the thousands of people all lined up and Hitler walking down this long, slowly walking down this long, slow, not quite until he finally comes to the stage. I mean it's all planned. It's not happenstance. And it was all done for a purpose. And then you know of course working [together]—Riefenstahl and [Joseph] Goebbels hated each other by the way. So, anyway, I don't want to get too much involved in this.

But this is the type of thing that we talked about. And of course he goes to propaganda, he talked about the relationship to the—propaganda comes from propagation of the faith, which came out of the Vatican. *Propagare* in Latin means to spread forth ideas. So, anyway, that was another fantastic course and interesting. Meanwhile, we had a series of—we had a weekly documentary film series. I think it was on Wednesdays afternoons—we had a film series here. And they had a lot of the great documentaries going back to Robert Flaherty's films, *Eskimos* [*Nanook of the North*], and the films that were made during the WPA [Works Progress Administration] films.

Q: Do you know who was managing that in the faculty or staff?

OTT: Sol, I think, had a lot to do with it. Sol Worth. Because Sol had his own group, the film group, but this film series was opened to everybody.

Q: Was it required? Do you know?

OTT: No, I don't think it was required. There was—I don't remember anything really being required. That part of it was not required. Now another person who was there, by the way, who was not teaching but was still there, was—let me go back over this again—was Gilbert Seldes.

Gilbert Seldes had been the dean of the school for the first three years. He wasn't doing anything, but he had an office downstairs in the basement.

Q: Did you encounter him?

OTT: Yes. You just go in and chat with him. Like he'd be sitting there, he didn't have a lot to do, you know, and he would just sit there. [And we would] go in and sit down and chat with him. And by that time he was in his late, middle or late seventies, I think. And he was a raconteur, you know, and he'd like to be there and he'd like to talk. And I remember we were sitting in there one day and he was opening his mail. And he opened it up and it was a check. It was a royalty check, and he said, You know, the best thing I ever did in my life was to come up with the title of the *Seven Lively Arts*. He said, I made more money from that title than from anything else I've ever done in my life. And he was getting a royalty check for *Seven Lively Arts*. So looking at these things now you're talking about history, but in those times it was just day to day. All these people are gone now.

Q: Did you encounter Klaus Krippendorff?

OTT: Yes, I took Klaus's [course]—I thought, Oh, I can do that. I took his course for about two weeks and I said, I don't understand what he's talking about. I just don't understand it. You know, he's a nice guy and everything. And of course, he had a heavy—even then, because he just recently arrived, he had a very heavy German accent at that point. And so besides being a difficult subject matter with someone—so I said, No, it's not for me. And I switched to, I don't remember what other course, it might have been Brodbeck's course, actually, that I switched to that. But I did it early enough that you could do it. And you know—Klaus was around, but he was only an instructor at that point. He was kind of one of the few—he was trying to kind of establish himself too, you know, and build a relationship with Dr. Gerbner, I'm sure, at that point.

Q: And you refer to Dr. Gerbner. Give me your impressions of Gerbner. You probably had him as the proseminar instructor.

OTT: Yes, he ran the proseminar. He was, I think it was not—as I said, I wouldn't consider him a simpatico person. He was very much the academic. We have to realize here, too, and we'd mentioned this, that the school was going [through] a pivotal point in the history of Annenberg School. Up to that point, it had only been in existence for about three years. The whole idea of graduate studies, of getting a master's degree, was really, really a new idea for most Americans. I mean, the people who got master's degrees are [were] mainly teachers and academics who were going to go on and get a PhD—and begin to start talking about as an MA or a master's degree as a terminal degree or degree required for other areas. And today we take that as given, but it wasn't then. And so I think the whole area of communication studies, there weren't that many universities that even offered the courses and there was a lot of trepidation that this was light, lightweight stuff.

You know, it's interesting today that so many people now in academia and in the world, people want education to be work-focused. Oh, how much money can I make from it? What profession can I get from it? Back in those days, people saw education, the traditional schools, that you went there to learn. Maybe you would become a faculty member or educator, but this is part of your—it's sort of a different attitude and that's changed today. And of course there were a lot fewer schools and they didn't—this whole idea of being able to sort of get course classes online, and all the things that have happened today and for-profit universities, they didn't exist. So there was a totally different attitude.

So there was a lot of trepidation within, I think, within the faculties of the Ivy League schools or the well-known schools that this might be a little bit *déclassé* for us. We want something a little bit more serious. And so they brought Dr. Gerbner in to kind of toe the line and switch the school over to become more academic. And Gilbert Seldes, for all of his capabilities as a writer and as an interpreter of culture, was not an academic at all. And so to some degree I can see why they wanted to do that. But I think that created a kind of tension with the student body, because a lot of the students had come here with the idea of seeing it as more practically oriented, let us say. And Dr. Gerbner was a very strict, kind of by-the-numbers kind of person, I think. And he was not sympathetic to it. And I don't think he was particularly sympathetic to the students. So there was a tension there that really went on through the whole year. But I think it was the beginning of what became the Annenberg School as it's known today. And in that sense, it probably was a positive thing. And it certainly has a great reputation today as a school of communications. And some people consider it the best.

Q: So if you encountered—you and your fellow students—Dr. Gerbner, would he speak with you? Was he accessible? Was he a presence outside the classroom?

OTT: Not particularly. I don't remember him as being particularly accessible, actually, quite frankly. He may have been for some people. I think there was a group of people in the class who were very open to becoming more academic. We had two or three people who went on to become professors of communications and communications theory. Ed [Edmond] Weiss was a professor. He taught here for a while. Then he went on. I think he taught at Fordham actually. And then there was a fellow from India in our class. He went on to be professor of communications, I think, at the University of Illinois. So we did have two or three people who really—that was their meat and potatoes, really. And they caught on. And I think he may have been a little bit closer to them, than the rest of us. He probably figured, Let's get through these people, then we'll get on to where in the future we want it to be. That was the feeling I had anyway. Other people may have a different opinion.

Q: So did you encounter Sol Worth much besides this documentary film series or evening?

OTT: Not too much. I occasionally would talk to Sol about some things. When I did my final paper, since it had to do with directing, I did give it to him to look at and review. He was not the one who was the reader or my teacher on it, but he was involved. He looked at it and he made some comments on it. It was good because—and he would talk sometimes at some of the

screenings about some of the documentaries and he would participate in some of the meetings. But the proseminars and the colloquiums here, sometimes there'd be multiple faculty members participating. It was very much of a—sometimes very open—sometimes they would bring in speakers from the outside. And that's another really interesting point. They brought in some wonderful speakers, some from the industry, some from the local industry, some from academia.

One—Harold Lasswell spoke, for example, [came] to speak here. There was a story about Harold Lasswell. There was an open room, an auditorium room, a big room, where he spoke. And he sort of was considered kind of a god, right, even then. And he was speaking up in kind of a presenter piece up in front, and the stage was behind him. But while he was speaking, guys arrived with a piano, piano movers. And they moved the piano out onto the stage while he was speaking. They didn't know. They were just doing their job. And of course somebody from the faculty got all —ran up on the stage, Oh, you can't be here now. And they got [them to leave]. But that's my memory of Harold Lasswell.

Q: Did Lasswell react? I mean, he's famously awkward.

OTT: He just sort of kept on, as I remember, he just kept on going. He was on his, you know, he had his [paper], he was [reading]—I don't remember him as being a particularly exciting speaker. He was reading and he just presented his paper or whatever.

Q: Were there others that you remember who came through, either for the colloquium or the, you know, the proseminar?

OTT: I really don't remember anybody else. I went to—it was a long time ago and there were a number of people and then, and as I said, the faculty would talk. We would have group things with faculty to discuss certain things.

Q: And so the proseminar, even if it was blended into this colloquium, that would be where the whole group would get together once a week?

OTT: Yes, everybody would get together. And I think that Dr. Gerbner would be running them, and then different people would speak—would be different presentations, there would be some back and forth. They were good sessions that way. And there's a lot of things from then—. It's funny because my job became more a practical world thing, but having to deal with concepts. And there are certain things that came out of this that are really, I think, really became very important in my life, in my professional life. And I—one of the things is just understanding what communications is and how it's structured. You don't know how many times I've had to tell people, Look, before we do this, let's sit back and say, What do you want to communicate? Who do you want to communicate? How do you want to communicate it? Given the restrictions you have, how does that limit what you have? What are the results you want to get from this? I mean, the classic communications questions.

When you deal, as I did in a lifetime, dealing with government figures and other people to produce things—people jump into things. We got to have a spot on this right away. Okay, we want to promote this. Yes, okay, let's do it this way. Yes, but what's the audience? Who do you want to reach? How are you going to reach them? How will they react to this? I mean, this is simple, basic communications theory, but people live their lives and do things without thinking—spend, waste millions of dollars by not even simply doing this. I think simply asking themselves these questions. The other one is, and I think this is from Lasswell, but maybe not, they said that changing of attitude is almost impossible. You can modify existing attitudes, but if someone has an attitude or belief, it's almost impossible to change it. And I always remember one of the examples they gave at the time—I think about it was that—I'm forgetting whether it was Jaguar, and I'm going to use figures that maybe they're—I'm just making these figures up now, but that Jaguar would spend \$10 million a year on advertising to change the, to raise their market share one percent.

And I would do this when I worked a lot with government. They would say—later on in life, I set up a lot of programs with the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], national media programs to bring about certain changes of anti-corruption and other areas. And I would say to them: Look, you're going to have a budget of \$200,000 to do this in a country. And you want to bring about, they'll say, we want to change this 22 percent. Or we want to change 50 percent of people. I say, look, Jaguar spends a million dollars to get a 1 percent change in their market share and you want to spend \$100,000 to get a 25 percent change in people's beliefs? It's stupid, it's unbelievable, it's un-credible, it's just not going to happen. But then these are theoretical things that come out of the theory of communication that are very practical and important. And if you don't understand them, you're going to hit your head up against the wall many times. And as I said before, millions and millions of dollars, maybe billions of dollars, have been cast around the world to try to create, with media and communications, that have been wasted because people haven't looked at the very basic ideas of what they're trying to do.

Q: And those are ideas that you were exposed to here in that year.

OTT: Yes, absolutely. I mean, that to me is, you know, it's great. It's just that I owe a lot to this university.

Q: Well, you know, on that point, you're back in 1964, '65. You're in your second semester. You've had this exposure. It sounds like almost every night there's some kind of class or programming. You're faced with what is something like a master's thesis or paper that you have to do. What did you choose? Who was your advisor? Sol Worth helped. But do you recall who actually helped?

OTT: What they said to us was this. We had to write many papers. They said, You have to designate one of the papers that you're going to do as your primary paper. So everybody had to make that decision. I was taking a course at the time, and I can't remember who taught it [Dr. Richard Stonesifer]. He came down from New York too, and I think he taught at NYU school of education as well. [[Stonesifer came down from Pennsylvania where he lived but was full time

at Penn in the university administration at the time—*Ott.*]] He taught a course in educational television. I can't remember his name. Maybe you guys know it. So I was taking that course, and I thought, well, this is something that I'm interested in. I'll do it on this.

So my paper was on the role of the director in educational television. And I'm talking about educational television in the strict sense of the word, using it to teach and that type of thing, rather than the broader sense of educational or public television today. And so what I tried to do was to look at things. What was the role of whether close-ups make a difference, whether people learn, or whether it's a far shot or whether you bring in graphics, and all that type of thing. I think today we've come a long way, but again this was 1964 and television was not [what it is today —now] we have a small camera over there [OTT pointing to the camera recording this interview] about the size of my wallet. And in those days if you wanted to do television you'd have a camera sitting in this room that would be the size of the three of us together, right? So it was a different world. But that's what I did my thesis on.

Q: And did you ever—this was Annenberg School, but Annenberg's school too, in a way. And I don't know if you ever encountered Walter Annenberg during your year while you were here.

OTT: I did. And Walter was very much hands-on. He saw this school very much at that time as his baby. And he was around. And from time to time he would walk the halls, you would see him. And then every year, for every class at the end of the year, he would give a dinner at his hotel on Rittenhouse Square. And we went, at the end of the semester, second semester, and it was in the hotel ballroom. Students, faculty, he [Annenberg] sat up on the dais with Dean Gerbner and a couple of others. And it was a two-hour [affair]—it was marked as a two-hour, I think it started at 5:00. And it was a fabulous meal, soup to nuts, everything, you know. And then at the end, after we had the dessert, of course there was wine and there were drinks, whatever you wanted. Then at the end we had cigars, but these cigars were only offered to the men, by the way, not to the women. And we had the cigars. And then exactly at 7 o'clock, Walter Annenberg stood up and said, Thank you very much. Good night. Everybody had to leave. Boom. Out.

So he was around. The other Walter Annenberg story, which I will tell you, was that I was sitting in the library here. The library was different than it is now. It was larger, and it had a balcony type overlooking it, which was sort of a study area. There were a couple of chairs up there, sofas and a glass coffee table. And you would go up there and read or study. And one day I was up there reading and Peter Schmidt [phonetic] was one of my classmates. He was sitting across from me because the coffee table was in the center. And I was sitting back in the chair with the book here. But Pete had his feet up on the coffee table like this. He was reading. And so we're not paying attention. We're studying. All of a sudden we hear this voice: Take your feet off that coffee table and take them off now. I paid for this school and I'm not going to have it destroyed by anybody. Just that way, you know. We just like—okay, you know, you feel like, where can I hide? Where can I go? What corner can I crawl into? And that was it. That was Walter Annenberg. And so he was very much hands-on.

Q: Okay, that's wonderful—or scary. So you mentioned a little bit about, you know, after the TV lab, you might go to someone's apartment. You talked about a couple of bars that you and your classmates would go to. What was the social life like? Was there camaraderie among the 50 or 60 of you in that class?

OTT: I would say, you know, some of the people came and went, came and went. There were some older people who were married with families, so they were not around too much. And then, as I said, there was a Catholic priest, there was a Mennonite, there were different people like that who were kind of off in their own little world. There was this mystery group from Cincinnati I guess. But the rest of us would get together from time to time and there wasn't a lot of free time. It was a pretty busy schedule. When we did get together it was over lunch or working together on a project or, once in a while, maybe over a beer or something like that. I don't remember a lot of parties. Occasionally there were things that we would do. We'd go to some events. I remember going to the Philadelphia Orchestra a couple times and sitting up [high]. You could get really cheap seats up [in the balcony]. I don't know if it's the same auditorium today, but there were balconies way up at the very top. And you used to be able to get really cheap seats up there. And sometimes we'd go do that.

But there was a group of us that got along pretty well. There was Dave Murphy and Mimi Shaw, who I mentioned. She was from Chicago and she was the only African American in her class. And a bunch of the other fellows that I mentioned. Howard [Burkat] was involved. And there was a number of people that would come and go. And then of course there were some people from other parts of the faculty, from the other parts of the university, who would come by and were attracted to the fact that there was a school of communications and that there was film. So some of these, like the documentary film sessions and all, those were open. People could come in and watch them. So occasionally you would get people from other departments, some of the undergraduates and stuff would come in and do that.

Q: Did you have any interactions with Bob Shayon?

OTT: Robert Lewis Shayon? I took his course. For some reason or other, Robert Lewis Shayon and I did not get along. And I don't know why. To this day, I don't know why. But I mean, the course was okay. It was interesting. He taught a course in criticism. He was a critic for *Saturday Review*. And he talked a lot about the role of the media and criticism in television and so forth. And it was an okay course. I mean, I just was not, I never really got into it that much. For some reason or another we sort of didn't hit it off at the beginning of the course and we never made it back. I made it through the course and that was it. So I never thought of it as—I know that a lot of people really liked him, and he stayed on. He was a full faculty member later on. And I think he was here for many years before he left. It may have changed.

We also, you know—talking about people coming in from other parts, two things that were really interesting, people that would come in, let's see here. Remember we had the TV and we had the photography section. Mary Ellen Mark, who had graduated from here the year beforehand, would come in here and she was already taking pictures all over the place. And she

would use the photographic section here in the lab, there was a lab here then, to process her stuff. And she was a good friend of Lew Barlow, who was one of the instructors in the TV portion. He was a local television director, actually. And also she was a great friend with Candice Bergen, who was an undergraduate here then. And so Candice used to come over and they would hang out with Lew Barlow, and then they would go in and use the photo lab. And Candice was interested in photography a lot. So she would come in and take pictures and work with Mary Ellen a bit. They were very close, very good friends. And they were also great dressers, I have to say. They would dress very well. We were all sort of like poor graduate students. Candice Bergen would come in with her, like, \$250—well in those days, \$200 leather boots and beautiful, you know, all kinds of stuff. She was a model then. She was a model. So she'd have all this great stuff. I remember that. So we did have that kind of influx from different parts of the school coming in sometimes.

Q: And as you were heading toward the end of your second semester, you presumably were thinking about a job or your next steps either way, and finishing up this paper. What is it that you decided to do next?

OTT: Well, I was kind of caught, I was trapped, because I knew I had, as an undergraduate, I had taken ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. So by the time I came here I was already a—I graduated as an officer in the Army, so I was a second lieutenant. So I came here with that. Of course I got it—in those days there was the draft. We don't have the draft today. In those days there was a draft. And in the early [days]—when I started college, in 1960, I had to make a decision then. Well, do I want to go through school and take a chance against the draft or what am I going to do? So in those days I'll take ROTC, because all you had to do then was to go active duty for six months, then take inactive or active reserve for a couple years and that was it. So that seemed like a pretty good deal. Unfortunately Vietnam came along in the interim. So when I left undergraduate we had the famous bombing of—what was it, Tonkin Bay [Gulf of Tonkin] or whatever it was—in 1964 and that sort of heated things up. So that was that.

So when I finished in '65 here I knew that I was going to be drawn into the Army and it was no longer going to be a six-month [tour]—and it's going to be a two-year assignment. But then I got my orders at the end here. I got my orders to show up in the Signal Corps school [Army Signal School] down in Georgia in January of 1966. So I had six months to kill before. So what do you do? You can't take a regular job. So my parents still lived in upstate New York, in Schenectady, New York. So I went back there and I got a job. I looked at a few things, local things, and I found a job as a copy editor on a daily newspaper [*The Schenectady Union-Star*]. And I did that for those six months or part of them and then went into the Army. But that was an interesting experience.

And that was the beginning of my life in communications. If anybody said that they would have a life, go to a school like this and have a life in communications, and spend, which I did, basically 60 years working in communications in all kinds. I've worked in television, film, radio, press, print, every phase, internationally, all over the world. I brought things that we learned here to

my work and it's been great. This has been a wonderful starting basis upon it and I'm glad I did it.

Even what I learned undergraduate, it was okay, it was good. But it gave me, particularly in the world of the arts and bringing those things to the aestheticism. But a lot of both the theory and the practical, working with George Dessart, I think gave me a very good idea about how to produce good television or film. And some of the ideas we talked about are communications. My life has been facing a lot of the issues that came along. These questions that we raised in class popped up because we're dealing with—I have been, in dealing with wars and with having to deal with looking at attitude change and trying to bring about attitude change across cultures, across languages, and utilizing all kinds of media. And I'll tell you an interesting story. One thing that happened when I was working for the U.S. Information Agency [USIA] in Washington, which I did for 16 years as a television producer and director and writer.

Q: And did that come after your tour of duty so to speak?

OTT: Yes. I can tell you a little bit about that. The first six months or first year or so in the Army I spent out in California, and there was a group out there doing research and what they were doing it was 1965, I mean '66, and they were testing different kinds of battle equipment in the face of the battle with the Soviet Union. And what they were doing is they were taking the data—we were working with Stanford Research Institute [SRI]—and they were taking the data collected on very primitive computers and putting it into a master computer at Stanford. That was the beginning of what became computerized war games. It was the very beginning, at Stanford University and Stanford Research Institute doing it. And what I was doing was filming these research events and then putting it together in little films that were sent off then to Washington to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to look at and see how these things were progressing. But that was the beginning of computerized warfare studies. So that was an interesting moment.

Then from there I got sent to Vietnam. I spent a year in Vietnam and I was assigned as an advisor to the Vietnamese armed forces and psychological operations. But it was media basically. I was working with them and setting up television programs. I also worked closely with the Joint United States Public Affairs Office [JUSPAO], which was set up with the American Embassy where they took the United States Information Agency, the military, and the civilian, and they were working together to basically provide the public affairs support in the war. So here we're getting into communications in a wartime situation, a lot of what Charles Siepmann wrote and talked to us about. So suddenly I'm living in a world that Dr. Siepmann talked about. So it was a very interesting experience.

I traveled a lot around the country and also I got to travel to Asia, Japan, Hong Kong, and all different other places, Taiwan. And I worked with our own staff, but also we had with us a group of Chinese officers from Taiwan who were specialists in psychological operations. So we did film too, documentary films, we did slideshows, we did all the different kinds of media stuff. And then for the last part of my tour there I was assigned, our group was assigned to the general

staff,—besides my regular day work we were assigned to the general staff of General [William] Westmoreland, his name is famous. The general staff, where we worked, had a psychological operations directorate and I got to do—they asked me to do some research. So I did. They asked me to look at applying, using subliminal communications in television, to influence how that would influence audiences. So I did research on it and did a paper on that for the joint staff.

Q: Does the paper exist in your collection?

OTT: No unfortunately.

Q: It's not probably unclassified as yet.

OTT: Yes. I don't know, but well—what we, what I did was, which was really interesting, I went around of course again. I used a lot of stuff I learned here. Remember, part of what we took our course here we—there was a section, I don't remember where we did it, but we did a whole thing on research and statistics and so forth. There was a—I don't know if it was a full-fledged course, but it was part of one of the international, one of the communication courses. And so what I did was to do a study of—I talked to different groups of people in society. Because always the other problem you run into any kind of society, and particularly when you're looking at international groups, people, generally speaking, societies are not monolithic. They tend to be made up of different cultures, different languages, different religions, different groups. And that was the case in Vietnam.

So I found—I interviewed Buddhists and Christians, there were groups of different people from the south. In the end I said, Look, the problem you're going to run into is there are no images that—that if you use a subliminal image and you put it up there, it has an effect the way that person's culture brings to it. But if you have people who have different cultures, then the effect of that subliminal communication is going to be different across those different cultures. So what the symbol that as a Buddhist might see this way, that Christian over here is going to see another way. One of the symbols of Buddhism is the swastika. See it in sublimity, you're going to have a totally different reaction than that Buddhist is going to have to it. And that was the way we wrote up the paper. So as it turned out, they never did, to my knowledge, ever did use subliminal communications.

Q: It's a variation on your Jaguar point that you learned here, that point you just made about the ways in which people take in images differently.

OTT: So that was my kind of [reaction], I said, Well, it really paid off to take those communications courses.

Q: So amazing. And then that led rather naturally, I guess, to the USIA.

OTT: It did, because I worked with USIA in Vietnam. And one of the guys I work with, who, by the way, had been a cameraman on one of Pare Lorenz's documentaries, which we had seen

here [at Penn] from the '30s. So just weird kind of stuff you never [expect to] run into. So he told me great stories about Pare Lorenz making the, what was the famous one, *The Land [The Plow That Broke The Plains]*, was it? I'm trying to remember the name. Do you guys see them here anymore? Do they run those great documentaries here?

Q: We don't have the documentary series, although there's going to be a semi-revival this spring, kind of commemorating the lab and some of its work.

OTT: He would tell us the stories that Pare Lorenz liked to shoot. He only liked to shoot in the afternoon because he liked that lighting. And so they would take the camera and then stop along the way and bring out the long lenses and shoot it just at the end of the day. It's fascinating stories like that. Anyway, I came back and went to work for the U.S. Information Agency in Washington and their television, what's called Motion Picture and Television Service. And I worked there for 16 years, starting out as an associate producer and then becoming a producer and director doing films and television programs basically all over the world. I started out—the first series I worked on was in Latin America. So I got to travel all over Latin America for a couple years. And I guess the good side, besides the interesting part of it, I met my wife in Brazil and we're still married 55 years later. So it was all right. Anyway, that's a whole other story. We did films in a whole bunch of different areas. We did live television. I did literally hundreds of productions.

Q: Are those archived and kept?

OTT: Yes, some of them. Well, let me talk about a couple of things. One is that one of the things I had to do later, in the latter part of it, most of the stuff was done on, a lot of it was done on what would be considered to be political and intergovernmental relations and so forth. But we did get involved later in doing a lot of—I got in the end doing a lot of art stuff. And one of them turned out to be, in 1982 I did the film for the Venice Biennale. But it just happened that year that the place that put together the exhibit was ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art] of Penn [University of Pennsylvania]. So Janet Kardon, who was the director of ICA, and I worked together and produced the film and she did the exhibit for the Venice Biennale. So that was coming back to Penn.

Q: Yes. And that was still USIA?

OTT: That was USIA. Yes.

Q: And you spent 16 years there and then what did you do after?

OTT: After that I—well, one of the things was that from a personal perspective I was traveling a lot all over the world and filming and spending weeks at a time. I went with President [Jimmy] Carter to Africa, on his first trip to Africa. And my family, you know, we had two kids and they were little and my wife was teaching part-time and doing some graduate work as well. And I kind of figured that I needed to be able to be with my family a little bit more. So I got offered

this job in Saudi Arabia with the Treasury Department, so I took it. Before we get off of USIA, though, I want to talk about one thing that I think is really kind of interesting in terms of again, of here. Let's see if I have it here. Here's the cover. This is the cover of *Time Magazine*. This was the cover of *Time Magazine*, September 19, 1983, "Putting Moscow on the Defense."

And I don't know if you all remember this story or not. But at that time, in 1993, the Soviet Union—or not in '93, I'm sorry, '83—Soviet Union shot down a Korean airliner over [Russia]—it had gone off track. At that time I was working for USIA television. And they decided—this was at the time top secret—they decided that they knew that the Soviets had shot down the plane. But the Soviets denied it. But the thing was that the Soviets didn't know that the U.S. had recorded the voices of the pilots who shot it down. They had been recording these through the Defense Intelligence Agency recording their flights. So they had all the recordings of the pilots as they shot down the plane. So somebody got there. This had never happened before. There was going to be a hearing the next day at the Security Council of the United Nations. And of course the Soviets were [saying], We don't have anything to do with it. We don't know anything about it.

So the U.S.[State Department-] did this and they decided that they would go to USIA and they said, We want to take this text [and sound recordings] and turn it into sort of a television presentation that we can submit to the Security Council of the United Nations. It had never been done before. I had been on some other things and they called me. It was a Sunday. They called me at home and my family had been away. My wife had gone to Brazil with the kids and had just come back from a couple of weeks with her family. And they got back and I said, I have to go in. It's a Sunday. I have to go into the office. So I went in and my job was to take this and turn it into a television program to show at the Security Council of the United Nations. So this is a case of communications being used in international activities specifically, with a very specific purpose and to create it.

And so what happened is I worked with the data and with the visual. And I had a map where I showed the positions of the plane and the positions of the aircraft around it. We had the soundtrack and then we had the English version of what they were saying on the screen. And then I cut it so that—it happened over a longer period of time, but we had to reduce it down to about a ten-minute piece for the Security Council, or fifteen—whatever it was. So I worked on it and what I did was to gradually move it, start out—and it goes like this. The pilot says, We've caught the plane. The plane's in sight. Oh, what is it? Boom. They go on and back and forth, back and forth. And then as it gets closer and they are talking and talking about this, I'm positioning into position and then, Okay, now I'm going to shoot. Fire. Boom! And then we just sped it up and then, boom—and it's gone and silence and that's the end of the plane. And 270 people died. So, anyway, this is the vision. So then there was nobody to narrate it. So they said, you've got to do it—so I narrated it. So I went back and the next morning they put it on a plane and flew it to New York. I finished at 7 o'clock in the morning. I worked all night.

Q: You spent all night?

OTT: All night. I worked all night with the crew and worked on it. They took it at 7 o'clock in the morning and I went home. And my kids said, Where have you been, Daddy? I've been working. And I said, Put on the TV. So then at 11 o'clock it came live from the United Nations. And that's the picture. You'll see it. They suddenly ran the video on the screen and it proved that the Soviets had shot down the plane. The Soviet delegates all got up and walked out of the United Nations. So, you know, it was one moment in life of really, you really could see how communications can affect world issues. I can give you more examples, but that's, I think, a fantastically good example of what can happen.

Q: Did your children recognize your voice on the tape?

OTT: Yes, they did, because my kids were there. My daughter, at that time, was about 11. She said, Daddy, that's your voice. Yes, it is.

Q: That's astonishing.

OTT: I didn't get any credits, by the way.

Q: I expect not. So, wow, I mean, we could talk about this forever. I mean, my interest in this set of topics runs very deep. We have some limited time.

OTT: I know, I know. But I wanted you to get—I think that sort of epitomizes the effect that one can have working in this kind of environment and affecting the world.

Q: It's amazing. So was that around the time then that you made this choice to transition?

OTT: Yes, that was, what did I say, '83. In that year, actually. I changed and we went overseas and I spent six years in Saudi Arabia. I was running a program there of media for the Ministry of Finance [and National Economy]. We had television, we had still photography, we had printing, the whole gamut, and working with them. I also did—I functioned as well to deal sometimes with international press that would come in, arranging to meet with senior officials and so forth. I did some advising. I worked with some of the other parts of the Saudi government to improve their media, public [affairs], you know, things that they were doing and so forth, presentations and stuff.

Q: You were based in Saudi Arabia?

OTT: I lived in Saudi Arabia.

Q: With your family there?

OTT: Yes, in Riyadh for six years.

Q: Wow. Interesting.

OTT: Yes, it was great. It was really interesting. We got to know that we—at that time, it's a very, today it's a little bit more open. In those days it was a very closed society. So we got to see a lot of things that nobody else had ever seen. We spent a lot of time in the desert, which is another fabulous story we won't go into today, but interesting place. And we got to travel a lot too around the world.

Q: Okay, and we're now in the sort of late '80s, by the time you're finished with that.

OTT: Yes, I finished basically '90, let's say. And I came back and for a short time I did a short stint with what was the Voice of America and USIA, and I set up—they decided to do a broadcast television into Cuba, TV Martí. And they needed someone to set it up, a bunch of people. I went in and set up some of the initial production staff and programming and stuff. I did that for about six months. And then the people that I worked with at Treasury wanted me to come back and function as a kind of coordinator of all these programs, that they were doing in the Middle East and the [Persian] Gulf region. So I did go back on that.

Q: And that was right after or during the Gulf War period?

OTT: It was. I was there right during the Gulf War. I was in Washington, but I was talking to people. I remember talking to fellows on the team and they would say, I'm sorry, we have to go down in the bunker because there are incoming rockets coming in now. So that was my third war, so to speak, in my lifetime. So anyway, then I went to—and also while I was there I started doing some, on my free time, I did some television work. I think I mentioned to you that I did the worldwide interconnective-by-satellite project for the World Health Organization [WHO] with AIDS, the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in 1990 or 1992, I think we did that. We brought together doctors, nurses, and technicians all over Latin America and in Africa who were working on AIDS. We brought in people. It was a two-day live broadcast in four languages.

Q: Did you direct the whole thing essentially?

OTT: I produced it. I had a director, too, but I produced it, and we did it out of Caracas, Venezuela. We had two mobile units. We had 12 cameras. We took over. At that time, someone told me, the person I worked with on it, she said [at] that time, next to the Olympics, we used more satellites for broadcast than anybody else had ever used. We had satellites up all over the place.

Q: I mean, that sounds technically very, very challenging in 1992.

OTT: It was challenging. It was challenging. We had a staff, obviously. We had a lot of people working on it, but I was producing it. And it was quite a thrill. Even my wife came down with me on that one. It was fun.

Q: And the WHO was more of a freelance project? Or was it on loan from—

OTT: No, I was a freelance that I did while I was working at Treasury. I did a bunch. I did something, another one on narcotics for a live, similar type of program for the Organization of American States [OAS]. And then I decided to take a job at this company that I had freelanced with, and we continued to do these [productions]. We did a bunch of these satellite broadcasts for USAID on corruption, anti-corruption activities. And then for the Department of Energy on geothermal [heat pump] developments. And we had brought people in from all of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and we set up these things. So we did a lot of that back in the '90s.

Q: And you were essentially a firm working on contracts for agencies mostly. OK.

OTT: And some of it was for the government. We did stuff for the World Bank, for the World Health Organization, for OAS [Organization of American States], for United Nations. We did a couple of things for the United Nations. So I've always either worked for the government or for the government, or for the government, one way or the other. Through government, not necessarily the U.S., but it could be the United Nations or World Health Organization or whatever. And all of it is in terms of—you know, it's really that using communications for a purpose, not just—trying to bring about change or trying to bring about, to improve things or to work with things or to change attitudes that will help. And so that's really what we studied here. We were looking at how attitudes change, how we make—how media can be used, how would it, the harm it can do, but [also] the good it can do. And, you know, there are all of those things. And to have a career in which I could do all of those things is, you know, just fantastic.

Q: I mean, it almost, in some ways, if you had one class to identify, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but from that year in 1964 and '65, which class was it that had the most lasting impact on what turned out to be long career working in communication for change?

OTT: You know, it's hard to say. I mean, I would say certainly things that we had in the proseminar, we talked about communications theory in general in some of these applications. Charles Siepmann, of course. Those would be the most, I would say, the two most effective ones. I think Dessart in the lab, not so much in the technical side, but in his approach to the kind of quality that you want in the product. He was a quality person, and he taught me that quality is important. Don't let your quality disappear for whatever other reasons come along.

Q: Well, I mean, it's been an honor to hear about your time at the school and then everything that came afterwards, which, I know, we barely scratched the surface.

OTT: Yes, I don't want to go on too much on this.

Q: But is there anything else that you wanted to raise, whether it was at the school or some contact with former classmates or anything else related to the post-millennial period?

OTT: Well, a couple of things. I'd like to make a note about, I think people find that the role that Mrs. Maloney played back when we were here. She was a wonderful lady and she really ran the school, so to speak. And so I know that she's highly regarded here, but she was an important person. And you know—we had that reunion in 2015. Which was the first time I think they'd ever done anything like that before. And that was great. We had a good time and a lot of people came and it was really interesting.

Q: Including Klaus [Krippendorff]?

OTT: Klaus was there. Yes, we had a good time. I think Klaus loved it. I think he was really, really good. And I'm glad we got a chance to do it with him before he passed. So that was nice. And, you know, there was, I think that's most of it. I did leave when I was here [before]. Do you guys have? I left a copy in 19—it's either 1965 or '66, the *Life Magazine* story about the school.

Q: I've heard of this.

OTT: Yes. I left my copy here. Then it was Dean [Michael] Delli Carpini.

Q: Yes.

OTT: Do you have that in your collection?

Q: We do have a copy. It could be yours.

OTT: Yes, okay. I brought a copy because it was my copy, and I figured you guys would need it more than me. But there's a picture of us there.

Q: Were you in this picture?

OTT: I am.

Q: Oh, you are? Okay. That's great.

OTT: We're in the hallway out here. I think you still have that sculpture of the—it looks like arms embracing, but it's in metal kind of.

Q: Yes.

OTT: Yes. Yes. Okay. Yes. So that's it. I guess, unless you guys have any other questions. I don't know if there's anything that I—I probably missed stuff, but all I can say is it was a really important part of my life.

Q: Clearly. And then the career you went on to have is astonishing.

OTT: Yes, it's been great. And the other things I've brought—I mean having a chance to travel all around the world and experience different cultures and stuff has really been magnificent. And that's what I've always said, you know, I wanted to find something that I could do to let me travel all over the world.

Q: And not stay in Schenectady.

OTT: Yes, not stay in Schenectady. Anything to get out of Schenectady.

Q: Okay, well, thank you very much for participating in this alumni interview, and we really appreciate it.

OTT: Well, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate it, too. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW