

John Perkins Interview by Lisa Mighetto
Olympia, Washington
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Tape #1
ASEH

Mighetto: Well good afternoon. I suggest that we start at the beginning. Can you tell me about your background, where you grew up, where you were educated?

Perkins: Sure. Well I guess I'm a Westerner. Born in Phoenix, grew up in Colorado Springs. Then, went east to college. Graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts, and then I did a year of graduate work at Stanford and then changed to Harvard. And this was all in biology. So, I started as a biologist, not a historian, which as always made me sort of a maverick within the Environmental History Society. Any rate, I got interested in this field, not out of the graduate work I did. I finished my PhD, finished the work in '68. Actually got the degree in '69.

M: Harvard?

P: Harvard. But by the time I finished the work, I knew I that I didn't want to do experimental biology. And that's what I've been doing. I did fungal physiology and genetics, and so I was interested in [unknown] bodies of a little mushroom and photo physiology and genetics and development and that sort of thing. And I really thought it was terrific material, but this was the time of great social [fronting]. And I thought ya know, I'm not sure the world needs another experimental biologist. And I thought there were more important problems to work on, so I had a person that I knew back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Everett [Mendleson]. He and I both worked with the American Friends Service Committee, which I did for a couple of years after I finished my graduate work. And I was talking to Everett and he said "Well." Everett is a historian of science, history of science department at [Highland]. And Everett said, "Well yaw know, you can do history of science which allows you to add all sorts of questions about science, where you can bring in the social dimensions." And I thought, that's exactly what I

would really like to do. So, with Everett's assistance and sponsorship, I got a [post doctoral fellow] to go to the history of science departmental track after I finished work with the American Friends Service Committee. And started a research project that ended up some years later in a book. The research was on DDT and the simple minded question I had was how come people were so anxious to use DDT especially after we discovered it caused lots of problems. Why was there such emphasis to use it? I mean it...

M: And this was post Rachel Carson,. It was '58 or '60.

P: Oh yeah, it was post Rachel Carson. Rachel Carson's book was very very influential in my own thinking about pesticides and DDT in particular. So with Everett's help, I worked for a year as a post doctoral fellow, and did a paper on some of the early history of DDT, which I gave to the, what was it call, the Atlantic Conference on History of Biology or something like that. I think the meeting was done at Yale, near Haven. But at any rate, after I gave my paper, this fellow came up to me whose name I knew, but I never met him. It was [unknown] Hudgenson, a very well known Ecologist who was at Yale. And he said, "Well I really like your paper." And I thought that if [unknown] Hudgenson likes my paper, I'm very happy. And then he said, "I'm on one of the committees of the National Academy of Sciences, and we're just starting a new study. Is this something that you might like to play a role in?" Well, I was ecstatic. I said, "Well sure. Not a problem at all." And so that led me to go down to Washington DC for three years where I worked on the study on problems of pest control. At the time, this was the first time the National Academy, National Research Council, had done a study on pesticides that was not done by the agricultural division. The Academy have had a number of studies done during the 50's and 60's because the problems that Rachel Carson articulated so well were getting pretty obvious. And they had the agricultural board do the studies, and there reports were, I thought, fairly predictable.

M: I guess they have an interest.

P: And the scientists who worked on those committees basically said well if you use them as directed they won't cause problems. It's the people who

don't use them as directed would cause the problems. And Environmental Studies Board, which was a new board just newly, organized late 60's early 70's. They took it upon themselves to say we think that there's more to say about pesticides than what the Ag board is saying. And so I got hired to be the staff person, and the Environmental Studies board had allocated a certain amount of its money to support a staff person coming in and getting something going. So we worked for a year during a preliminary planning study on what a major study on pesticides would consist of. And then a new committee was organized. I was one of the people that helped organize it. Don Kennedy who was at that time a professor of biology at Stanford agreed to chair the committee, and we were successful in getting money from the Ford Foundation, EPA, and the US Department of Agriculture. And the National Science Foundation.

M: The EPA would have been brand new.

P: Brand new, yes. Very brand new. They barely knew where their paperclips were. But we started in, must of been '72. Early '72. And were successful in doing a complete study on pesticides. It ended up about a five-volume report. And without taking too much pride of authorship, I will say I think we did the best report that had ever been done by the National Academy on Pesticides after that time. They have since been some reports that surpassed ours quite a bit but we pioneered a new way of looking at pesticides within the National Academy structure. The report had only very modest legislative congressional changes that came out of it. But I think it did set a pattern for a much broader way of looking at pesticides and it legitimized asking things other than is this material going to increase crop [unknown] and increase the profits of farmers. And we thought those questions were important, and they were necessary, but they were not sufficient. There were many other questions. And so I think that we did succeed in showing that there was a very broad range of questions that were important to policy on pesticides. And as I say, our report came out in the mid 70's. And then in the 80's and 90's, some very good, very important Academy reports finally came out that actually did change legislation. So, it took another two decades.

M: But you felt it laid the foundation.

P: I think it did. Or at least I will probably go to my grave convinced that it must have done some good. It was certainly very interesting for me. I always regard it as, I lose track a little bit as to whether it was my second or third graduate education, but at any rate, I went from the Academy, when the academy study was winding down, I made a decision I didn't want to stay in Washington. I wanted to teach. I wanted to teach undergraduates. I applied for it and got a job at a brand new division of Miami University of Ohio that was starting an interdisciplinary studies college. And I was in the founding faculty, and so I went out to Oxford, Ohio.

M: Was this in the mid 70's?

P: '74. Right. Yeah. And we started the college. And all I will say is that you should probably do this only once in your life because it's too bloody much work. We arrived in July. Students were due in the end of September. And we had to create a curriculum. Fortunately it was only the freshmen class. So, we only had the freshmen curriculum. But for the next four years, we added a sophomore curriculum, a junior curriculum, and a senior curriculum, sequentially, one year at a time. And the first class graduated in 1978. Now to come back to something that's relevant to ASEH. It was when I was in Ohio, I contributed a paper to the Doucaine History Forum over in Pittsburgh. John [Opey] was at Duscaine at the time. I don't know if I met [Opey] when I was over there giving a short paper. I might have.

M: How did you find out about the Forum?

P: I don't know. I saw a notice. And it seemed to be [unknown] to what I was trying to do and so I gave them my abstract, and they said fine, come give the paper. But it was shortly after that. I don't know if I met John [Opey] at the conference or he picked up my name. But anyway, somehow we got in touch with each other. And he told me that he was very interested in this environmental history business. And I said, "Oh, Well that's great. What's that? I mean I was still mostly a biologist. I mean I still thought like a biologist. And I hadn't really written a whole lot of history. I'd written policy stuff for the academy.

M: And is that what you did for the forum?

P: I did a history paper. I essentially started finishing the DDT work I had started at the Harvard post doc. Because I knew I wanted to bring that to [unknown] and get it published. In fact, while I was at Miami, I did get that article published on technology and culture, as a history of technology. And I put it forth. If you asked me to come up with a title of that paper now, I'd have to think a while. But it was something about connecting the emergence of DDT as a technology in wartime, as a World War Two product. So I made the major focus of the paper was how the Second World War totally shake the American research and development of DDT. And that DDT did come to life as a very important commercial product and it had uses beyond agriculture. It had a lot of uses in public health concerns, and so the paper focused on the wartime connections to new technology.

M: But John heard that and said that you were interested...

P: Well he thought I was doing environmental history, and I agreed that I thought I must be too. but I wasn't trained as a historian. I spent just a year as a post doc in a history of science department. And historians of science, they're always sort of odd because some of them are science trained and some of them are history trained. So, it wasn't at that time. It didn't feel like a professional history department. It felt like people who were a lot of mavericks in it.

M: But the term "environmental history" was around?

P: It was sort of around; mostly what I knew about it came from John [Opey]. And he was starting this newsletter that he was trying to circulate around. And then again, I probably couldn't come up with a year. Maybe John [Opey] could. He said, "Well I want to get this American Society for Environmental History started. Would you be on the steering committee, the executive committee?" I said, "Sure." It sounded like a good thing to me. I was transitioning from being trained as a biologist to trying to learn to think like a historian. And the modes of thought are very different. I didn't

realize how different they were until I finally managed to get a number of things published that were history, and then I realized, “Oh my gosh, you don’t think the same way you do as a biologist. It’s totally different.” And then it was sort of...

M: What are the main differences in your [unknown]?

P: Well, I’ll talk about a symptom of the differences. When you write a biology paper, you talk about the literature which is identifying the problem. Then you explain your materials and methods, then you present your data. Then you discuss your data. And then you draw your conclusions at the very end of the paper. Historians usually have to tell the answer up front. That most histories are written so that by the first couple of pages you sort of know what the answer’s going to be because the way, at least my understanding and the way I’ve done it, most historians sort of frame the whole story very quickly. And then the rest of the paper is the elaboration about why they’re right. Well this was, as I say, a symptom but it suggested that in history, you sort of have to figure out what your story is, and then you tell your story. But you tell your reader what your story is to start with. In the sciences, it was much more, what’s the problem, How are we gonna get data? Let’s look at the data. And then at the very end, they tell you what the answer is. And you don’t know the answer up front, and so I don’t know whether it’s in the doing of the research or the writing of the research that the difference are just very profound. I remember one of the first things I tried to write, or one of several things I was writing early when I was trying to write history; I gave to one of my history colleagues here. And he just...

M: Here at Evergreen?

P: Here at Evergreen. Yes, and he just, well not so gently, told me I had written it all wrong.

M: He wanted the thesis up front?

P: He wanted the thesis up front, and I said: “Well that takes all the surprise out.” And he said, “Yes, right. But then people can understand what you’re

doing because if you don't tell them your thesis up front, they're not going to get it. And they're not going to wade through all your lengthy explanations. And it's not like writing a science paper." So he was actually, this was [Ron Woodberry], Ron [Woodberry] probably did more to educate me on how to write history than almost anybody else because he was so frank. But on the other hand, that's why I gave him the paper because I wanted his feedback on it. It was very very helpful.

M: When you're saying that John [Opey] asked you to be on the executive board, or the steering committee of the new...

P: Yeah, I can't remember...of the new ASEH. And so...

M: Did you call it ASEH back then?

P: Yeah, I think we did. I think we...I mean the general was called the Environmental Review so the general title had changed but I think the organization, I think it started out with that name. And the first group, I'm not even sure I can come up with all the names of the people on it. I got to get my records somewhere.

M: The people who were on the committee with you?

P: But it was John and myself. And there was Rob [French] from George Washington University and [Howell Burston] from; he's in the Washington area. Did he work for USGS, for U.S Geological Services or maybe he was working for National Science Foundation. I can't remember where Howell worked. Then [Kierse Sterling] I think was on it. And I think I'm forgetting some others...

M: How did these people come together? Did John find all of them or did you?

P: John found them all.

M: Ok. Did he meet them at the forum you mentioned? They weren't there?

P: No. We finally got a meeting of the executive committee or the steering committee.

M: You met in person?

P: Yeah, we met in person because we thought if we were a society. We didn't have any members to speak of. Or they were maybe a few members. It was mostly John's newsletter that I saw as a...Anybody that he could think of will find out about, that's interested, he sent them a copy and put them on the list. And so that was the list of people when we decided to organize the association in the society, that's the list of people that as far as I know, we sent it out to. John was sending most of this out. And a number of people said yeah, they were interested; they'd pay some dues. Ya know, I think we got up to, I don't know, a hundred or two hundred members fairly quickly. And then it sort of stayed at somewhere around 200/300 members for quite a while.

M: Now you were still at Miami at this time?

P: I was still at Miami. Yeah, I came out to Evergreen in 1980. So, I've been at Miami from '74 to '80.

M: So you're getting this newsletter? Do you remember what was in the newsletter? Was it mostly...

P: John [Opey's] musings as far as I remember. I'm not even sure I have any copies of that. Maybe he does. I hope he does.

M: Well, I have a few. I was just trying...So you're getting this newsletter with John [Opey's] musings.

P: I invited John over to Miami. So, he came over to Oxford and gave a talk to our undergraduates, and that was very interesting. He and I...

M: About environmental history?

P: Yeah, he came over and gave an environmental history talk. The students found it fascinating. John and I talked a lot. I probably had him over to Miami maybe twice.

M: Was environmental history part of your curriculum? You built a program there, right?

P: It was, but ya know, we never called it environmental history. We called it Creativity and Culture II because those are the names we were...

M: Culture number two or?

P: Well there was Creativity and Culture I, which is freshmen. And Creativity and Culture II, which was sophomore. And it was Curt Ellison, who's an American Studies professor at Miami. Curt and I teamed up to teach Creativity and Culture II. We said, okay let's make this an environmental history course. So I think we used Joe [Patula's] book.

M: Oh, that was out?

P: I believe it was. Now [you know] this was a long time ago, and I can make up all sorts of stories about what we did.

M: We're historians.

P: And if you find out that I'm wrong, you'll just tell me I'm wrong. But I think we used [Petula's] book, and so we actually tried to create an environmental history book that was influenced a lot by Curt's American studies so he brought in literature as well as history. And it was influenced by my history of science and biology because I brought in the history of science and biology. But we conceived of it as an environmental course although we may have had a subtitle besides creativity and culture too, but I couldn't possibly remember what it was now.

M: But students responded well to it?

P: Yeah, we think that they responded very well. Particularly the first time we did it. Actually I'll sort of go off on a little tangent here. In the freshmen curriculum that we invented, we had natural scientists teaching with natural science, social scientists teaching with social science, and humanities teaching with humanities. So, it was all team taught, but within those big divisions. And I was one of the people in the second year when we were inventing the sophomore curriculum that said; let's shake this up. Curt and I will team up natural sciences/ humanities, and do an environmental history. And that actually started the ball rolling. So then we had social scientists teaching with natural scientists and humanities teaching with natural science and social scientists teaching with humanities. So, we had a much more diversified second year curriculum that got interdisciplinary much more vigorously working for the students.

M: And the university supported that?

P: Yes. We were in a division called the Western College of Miami University which was it's own degree program. So, our faculty had a very high autonomy in setting the undergraduate curriculum. The only constraint we had was it had to be something that satisfied the general education requirement of Miami University. And that wasn't hard. Because we made people take natural science, social science, humanities, and arts. For two years. So by the end of the two years, they had gotten, what I to this day think is still my favorite general education program that I've ever been involved with. So Western College actually just this past year was, well I guess you could say, it was demolished. The University absorbed it into the rest of the University, and so it's no longer, I don't know the details, but it's not a separate program. But it lasted thirty years. I can't tell you why the University decided to change it to Miami.

M: Wasn't John [unknown] at Miami?

P: I thought he was at one of the Ohio State campuses.

M: Yeah, ok. I must be wrong about that.

P: Yeah, I don't think so.

M: You mentioned there were maybe around a hundred members of ASEH at this time. Were students members? They are now, but back then, was it mostly professors from other...

P: Yeah, it was professors and a few administrators.

M: You mentioned somebody from USGS. So they were government agency historians?

P. Yeah, there's something in the back of my head that says Hal Burston was working at USGS. But he was interested in historical things, and somehow he had gotten into Opey's loop. So, he was one of the founding steering committee people. But we were such mavericks. I mean Rob French was a philosopher. Lovely sense of humor. Rob used to just crack us up at the meetings. But he was a philosopher, but he was interested in environmental. And I think he was maybe a [unknown] at GW. I mean he was a high administrator at GW. And [unknown] Sterling was, somewhere in Ohio or Wisconsin he was teaching. I can't remember where. We were, I think Kier was an orthodox historian, and John was, of course, a historian. But then you have mavericks like Rob French and Hal Burston, and me who were not professional trained historians. And in one sense, that was the strength of the founding of ASEH. It got a lot of people in who were not orthodox historians. It was also the weakness because it wasn't until more historians came in that ASEH then became the legitimacy in the historical profession that I think it has today. But it's much less filled with mavericks today. To me, it's a much more orthodox historian's kind of thing. And the most people who go there are in history departments. My perception, and maybe I'm wrong is that maybe the founding that was in the, sort of the 70's, by the 90's, it had sort of been made into a real history professional society. And there's probably better stuff coming out in terms of the publications and the books. The publications and books are amazing in terms of the [breath] and the quality of what comes out.

M: Better stuff in that more...there are more people and so the...

P: There's more people, and well they're better trained historians. And they're doing a good job writing really interesting history. And in the early days, I think what drove us was the idea that there should be something called environmental history, and I would say that the early days of ASEH took that first step which the historical profession itself had not really done.

M: And why do you think that was? I mean, why them.

P: Oh, I think there weren't enough historians who were environmentalists. I mean, there finally...History of science and history of technology have, and I wasn't around when the founding of those societies, history of science was a long time ago and history of technology when I was still in high school. But, you know history of technology at first was some historians and a bunch of engineers. And it was the engineers who were interested in the old stuff, and they thought somebody ought to be writing the history of this. Then there were a few historians who got sort of interested, but most historians, they worked with kings or great ideas or great transformations. They didn't deal with widgets and things like that. Until the History of Technology Society finally brought enough people in that then orthodox historians said, "Oh wow! You know this technology stuff's really got something." I think the environmental history to me had a very parallel, that at first it was a few historians who were interested in the environment. People like me, I mean I wasn't a retired biologist, but I was a biologist who was searching for a way to [start] thinking about science and the environment in a larger context and history turned out to be a good one for me and the kinds of interests I have. But there weren't many professional historians who were terribly interested in this. They didn't think, I mean it was like, historians at one time weren't interested in widgets and what they could do. Well they weren't interested in DDT and pollution so what grand historical story is there.

M: Well of course we know now there were all kinds of grand historical stories, but you're saying that it wasn't a traditional topic.

P: It was not a traditional topic. We didn't know what those stories were. A lot of people in the history profession who were trained to sort of ask questions like this. They didn't know how to ask the questions, we didn't either. The only thing that I would credit the early ASEH is, and Tom Dunlap was certainly a major contributor you know. He found that the DDT was interesting. I was doing parallel work that involved DDT, but it actually started...Tom got interested in DDT as a pollutant. I got interested in DDT as a technology. Why were people even using this stuff? We know it's a pollutant. That's a given. I mean it kills things. If it didn't kill things it wouldn't work. I mean, it's got to be a pollutant of some sort. But to me, the interesting story, and it came out of the fact that I was also involved with the [SHOT], the History of Technology.

SIDE A OF TAPE STOPS

SIDE B BEGINS

P: Well it's very important to understand these pollutant things as they had their origins in technology. I don't know, maybe it's part of my, I guess my intellectual autobiography. I was very taken with very commoners of the closing circle. Where this was at the time in the late '60's very common was sort of a heated intellectual debate where people like Paul [Airlick]. And Paul [Airlick] population was a problem. And Commoner says no, there's lots of problems. It's not population that's the cause. It's technology. And I actually thought, it's not that I don't think population is important, and I think Paul [Airlick] is very important in building and understand of this many years ago. But on this particular case, I thought Commoner was more right than [Airlick] was and that you couldn't understand environmental problems unless you understood the technology that [unknown] them. That's what brought me into SHOT originally. And when John [Opey] and I hooked up, and then I was sort of looking for how do you think about things that end up as environmental problems. How do you think about them as technologies and write a history about how to understand the environmental problem by understanding the history of the technology behind it. And that's what I was trying to do with my work on DDT and insect control. Tom's book, which came out a little before mine, was very much on the pollution and how the pollutants were...how it was handled as a pollution

issue. It's a really fine book. I've used that in classes before and very much admired that book. But his book didn't answer the question: so why were people using that? And that's what I tried to do. And so I came out of the history of technology/ environmental history kind of combination. Because Opey had put together such a group of mavericks. That was fine. But we were trying to learn how to write environmental history.

M: You used the term "environmentalist" a little while ago. Do you think some of early members or the founders were environmentalists?

P: Oh I have my suspicion they were all. That's what got them into it. They were environmentalists and particularly John. You know, he was looking for so I'm an environmentalist. Can I do anything as a historian?

M: Was there any tensions?

P: Between environmentalists and environmental historians? There always is.

M: I was thinking more between some of the established the university and you used the term orthodox historians and the environmental historians. But yeah, the environmentalists and the environmental historians. Those are two separate groups.

P: They are, and I think that most environmental historians are environmentalists.

M: Even now you think?

P: Even now. That's one of the reasons they get interested in it.

M: Was there any tension at Miami University?

P: No?

M: So, no opposition to thinking that...[unknown]

P: No. Not, I mean, at Miami, we were a separate division called the School of Interdisciplinary Studies Western College Program. And we were a group of six that grew to twelve faculty. We had a dean and then an assistant dean. We had a residential living program. So we had a residential living program with interdisciplinary studies and self designed majors. Now the tensions we found at Miami were not over whether we should do environmental studies or not. It was can students design their own major? Should faculty have lunch with the students? Shouldn't there be a little distance here? You mean you faculty live on campus?

M: Did you live on campus?

P: We did live on campus for a couple of years. Then, we moved off. That was enough. But that was the questions that we were asked. And there was an argument inside the Western College Program. The advertisement that I answered said: "The Western College Program is hiring a new faculty to start a brand new college with a new degree program, and the majors are going to be American Studies and Environmental Studies." And that's why I answered the ad.

M: Okay.

P: I got there and discovered I was the only one interested in environmental studies, and nobody else wanted to do it. And the people who wanted to do American Studies didn't want to do that either. So, we then had to reinvent the mission that we were going to accomplish in terms of. So what kind of students are we going to turn out because we thought that we had to call them something? Yes, they were self- designed, but there had to be thematic descriptors that said what they were. So we extended on one of the descriptors was science, technology, and the environment. And once that was settled upon, I was fine with that. I thought that was good. To me, it sounded like environmental studies, but other people liked the other language better, so that was fine. And the batch of students that we saw through that were the first graduating class, there were two students who wrote their thesis with me. We required a thesis for undergraduate. We did

a joint thesis, and we published the paper in an environment magazine, and it was an assessment of [note hill] agriculture, which used a lot of herbicides to control weeds [for sort of] plowing. This was such a perfect environmental studies thesis. The two students were excellent students. The paper we published in environment, I think has more citations than anything else I've ever written. And I'm just the third author. It was really their work. So we did environmental studies, and it had a historical line to it. So everybody who wrote on environmental studies pieces usually had a pretty good historical section because they saw history as something you had to understand before you could really understand the environmental stuff about it.

M: Were there tensions within ASEH?

P: Well sure, but none that were [other] than invigorating. I mean, there was no...There was no method to environmental history. There were no central questions. It was just people sort of groping around, each using thier own idiosyncratic interests. I mean I was interested in the pesticides and insect control technology. Tom Dunlap was interested in the DDT. Don [Opey] was interested in land use, particularly in the West, and water issues. [unknown Finch] was interested in philosophical issues, but he wasn't, he didn't have time to publish much. And Hal Burston was interested...I kind of went blank on exactly what. But we were interested in trying to write stuff that we thought had historical stories and documentation that was worthy, and said something about a contemporary environmental issue or a past environmental issue that people were kind of interested.

M: My first reading was in 1984 at [BAMP]. And I remember attending a session that talked about advocacy. Should historians be advocates? So you're saying early on, that wasn't so much a concern/

P: It wasn't. I mean I think in some ways all of us probably were in one way or another advocates. The only time I personally have ever felt a tension is, and maybe this come from a background in biology, but I think it's a general thing in scholarly work is you got an idea. And you go out and try to show you're right but, you should be willing to falsify your idea if the evidence

isn't there. And I know because I have many friends who are very strong environmental advocates. They are much less bothered by the notion. They're not scholars. They're political advocates, and they're much less bothered. They want to be right. They want to have the facts right and the fact behind it. But if they suddenly discover the facts aren't behind them, they just reformulate their argument and they go on. They don't go and agonize over: "Oh my gosh I'm wrong." Political activism, you get a general sense in the direction you want to go in, and you're not worried about the scholarly details. If you're a scholar, I think you should be.

M: You kind of have to be don't you?

P: Well yes, if you're going to be a good scholar. And, you know, it's just something you have to be willing to say, "Oh gosh, I thought this was the case. There's no evidence for it. I was wrong." And then that becomes actually what makes life interesting as a scholar. Find out what really did happen. And in the second book I wrote, that was exactly what happened to. Was that it was on the invention of high yielding agriculture as an agricultural technology. The Green Revolution that caused all sorts of problems. And I started off with a hypothesis about why the Green Revolution was invented, and I was dead wrong. I found no evidence whatsoever for it. And I found lots of evidence for another reason. So, I had to back up and reformulate what I thought that Green Revolution meant. And if I had not been willing to do that, I don't think my history would have been very good. I don't know, I mean there was a lot of activism that sort of comes and goes about anti-green revolution, anti-high yielding agriculture. And many of the reasons about why we have higher yielding agriculture to me just don't make any sense. I don't think that they are...I think there are reasons that we have high yielding agriculture. And if you don't like high yielding agriculture, you should know why you have it, otherwise you'll never be able to fix it. And that's my own form of activism

M: Did you say that you came to Evergreen in 1980?

P: Came in 1980, yep.

M: What made you move out here? Your being the only [unknown] in Washington.

P: Well there were a number of factors. Have you ever been in Oxford, Ohio?

M: No.

P: That's one reason why we moved.

M: What the weather?

P: The weather is great. The summers are so hot. Winters can be just jolly cold. And the winters didn't bother me as much as the summers. The summers that heat.

M: Kind of sticky, humid...

P: Oh God, it's just oppressing. It's like most of the East, you know, in the summer. The second thing was, I did want to try my hand at administration. There's a Deans, Academic Deans job here. And the third was that although we had settled at Western College on a way to do environmental studies, I was still a little [unknown] and what attracted me to Evergreen, not only did they have a Dean's job that was available, they had an environmental studies unit. And I thought, it's out of southern Ohio. There's a Dean's job. They've got environmental studies. I think I would like to see if I could do that. And so I put my name in. They pulled my name out of the hat, and I've been there ever since. When I got here, I discovered that in fact the college was also just starting to do the planning for a graduate program in environmental studies. Well that just solidified the deal. And so when I came as a Dean, part of my work as a Dean was to do the Dean's part of the work on getting that new program going. Oscar [Sewel] was a faculty colleague here. Was the Chair of the faculty committee that designed the program, but I worked on that committee. Then when it got to the point the faculty was done, I did the administrative work of shepherding the graduate program through the college and through the higher education bureaucracy

of the state. So we started that program in 1984, and I served as Director from 99 to 2005. But that program, it's been one of my favorite parts of teaching even after I stopped being the Dean. So, I'm glad I left Miami because I got to live in the Northwest.

M: And you like it here?

P: Yes. I would live in the East very happily again, but not happily in southern Ohio. Washington D.C. and New York are really just quite all right. Southern Ohio makes Olympia look exciting. And Olympia's a pretty quiet town.

M: Well I imagine that environmental studies would be quite popular here.

P: It has. It's always been an important part of Evergreen's curriculum. We have never had what I would call an orthodox environmental historian. We have a number of us, myself included, Colin [Ramey] who was a historian, but he was a Soviet studies Russian studies historian. Martha Henderson was a geographer but instead did environmental history. There have been a number of us who bring environmental history into our work, but we'd never describe a job that said flat out we want an environmental historian. Maybe that will happen one of these days, I don't know. But it's in a sense, the people that do environmental history here are like the first days of NSEH. It's mavericks from every field to come in and carved out a piece of work that they like to do. And I've never taught anything that was called environmental history, but historical debates and currents inform everything I teach because that...I can't understand. Basically, I like teaching about environmental problems and environmental problem solved. But I think environmental problem solving today, now, current policy issues. I think that it has to start with a historical prospective. Otherwise I think that you're just spinning your wheels because I don't think you understand why. The things that cause environmental problems are not there for silly, stupid reasons. They're usually technological in origin cause that's the way I see it. So to me, everything looks like technology. And people adopt technologies for very good reasons. It usually solves some problem they got. And if you say well that technology is very damaging, weather its DDT or nuclear

power or budding [unknown] wealth. Whatever it is. If you tell people, you can't do that many more you totally run the risk of totally enjoying . You have to be able to understand why they got to the place that they got, and then you have to worry. Get so you can work to figure out what to do that's not so damaging. So to me, as a historical prospective, it's just absolute essential.

M: Have you found that the interest in Environmental studies has increased over the years? You got here in '80, which [unknown] me as sort of the height of the environmental interest. Is the interest as strong now as it ever was?

P: The way I would describe it is that the interest goes up and down, and up and down, and up and down. The average is quite steady. It's got years where there's a lot of interest, and it'll drop off for a couple of years. Interest means students.

M: Right.

P: And then suddenly, without your knowing why, suddenly students are back in large numbers for a couple of years and then they dwindle down again. And I've seen this cycle go through several iterations. So the way I describe it is Evergreen has a very important environmental studies curriculum. It's been here since the day the college was organized in 1971. It will probably be here forever I guess. I'm not gonna be here forever, but it will be here forever. And its fortunes shift from year to year. Sometimes it has over enrollment. Sometimes we're a little shy.

M: What's an average number of students?

P: Well, let's see. Probably around 500 undergraduates at any one time. And ...

M: And the total enrollment is four thousand right? So that's a sizeable number.

P: Yeah, were one of the larger sections of the college. Graduate students, we've had classes entering with as few as twenty-five and as many as forty-two. Usually we try to be closer to forty cause it keeps the Dean's happier. Deans are very conscious of these things.

M: Of numbers?

P: Yes. They have to be. but sometimes we don't make it. But the quality of students from what they contributed, the graduate program is now considered a good firm fixture of the college, too.

M: You came here in 1980, and the first SEHS express conference was in 1981. Did you attend? It was on the West Coast.

P: Was that the one down at UC Irvine? Yes, Ken [Bales] organized it. Yes, I was there. Gave a paper.

M: ;What was that like?

P: The conference?

M: It was the first one.

P: We were ecstatic that it finally happened because we had been working for five or six years and we didn't feel like there was. There were a couple of channels organized. And I didn't go to them. Like the AHA and the Organization of American Historians. But you know that two or three people, [Opey] I'm pretty sure was always one of those. He'd find a few more historians who were sort of interested. You know, but we didn't think there was strength to call a meeting until Ken [Bales] and I can't tell you the origins of how Ken came up with that, but he got interested. I think he was a Russian Studies, a Russian historian, a Soviet historian.

M: Was that a major initiative? When you were on the steering committee, what was the most important thing? Was it to get a journal? Was it to have a meeting? or was it...

P: Well first thing was to get a journal because we feared if we weren't publishing something then it didn't exist. And so John. He just put the [unknown] and we came to the starting point [at the] Environmental Review. And that took up more of the headache time of the executive committee for the first couple of years because well I guess what you'd say it wasn't well capitalized. The fact that it's the amazing thing is not that sometimes the issues were late. The amazing thing is that John was able to get them out at all with essentially a budget that is about as close to zero as you can get. And so he just did an amazing job of pulling everything you could get, and we got people to volunteer. So, he started putting out papers, and then we had something to send around and say, "See! People who look like scholars are writing [scholars]." And I know Tom Dunlap had an article. In fact, Tom and I had an article. Each had an article. I think it was issue number five that made sort of an insecticides kind of issue. A pest kind of issue. But getting the journal was clearly the most important thing. And that was really hard. And I honestly can't tell you what it was, what the connection was that suddenly what Ken [Bales] wanted to do and what ASEH wanted to do were exactly overlapped because I just wasn't involved in those negotiations.

M: But you ended up at the conference?

P: Yeah, but I went to the conference.

M: How many people were there?

P: It was pretty big. At least a couple hundred. I mean I remembered it's big. There was more people than we had ever seen anything to do with environmental history before. It could be there was just a lot of people at Irvine wandering around and then happened to come in. I don't know. But there was a proceedings volume that came out of there, and I've got a paper in there. And I think that really...to also have a major university like the University of California put some sort of imprimatur this must be okay because the University of California does it. And the University of California wouldn't do it if it wasn't okay. It sort of...

M: Legitimized it?

P: It legitimized them, and it's sort of a specious argument because I think we had good scholarship before them. But if a research university isn't sort of agreeing that you've got scholarship then it's hard to tell you've got scholarship. So that was very important.

M: And then you had, well there was another meeting in Miami. Did you go to that? Your old campus?

P: Yes. In fact I was the...they didn't call me the program chair. I think I Vice President for Programming. But I made all the arrangements with my former colleagues at Miami. You probably know the year of that better than I do.

M: '83?

P: Was it '83? That sounds about right. But it was, we set the time and place to coincide with just after the OAH in Cincinnati that year. And we thought oh well people will be very happy to come from Cincinnati up to Oxford. And we thought Oxford was a cheaper place to do it. And I have the contacts there. I knew they had the good conference facilities which is all true. Turned out we didn't get anybody to drive up the road from Cincinnati, but enough people came to Oxford that we had what we thought was a successful meeting. And then I guess the next one was at Houston maybe.

M: There was one in [unknown] for the North American Environmental Education and that's the one that I went to. And that was in '84.

P: Right. John [Opey] and I had something to do with that because we were both participants in the environmental education association.

M: So were you in [Bell]? You were? Okay, so was I.

P: Oh, well I guess our paths didn't cross. So, yeah. And because I was a member of the environmental education group as well as the environmental history group. And I know John Opey and I, we arranged a panel with the environmental education people a year or two earlier than that at Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky.

M: I didn't know that.

P: Where we, gosh what a year. That was even before the Irvine conference. But I've been involved in the environmental education business. I can't remember if it was before [unknown] or after. And I suggested to the program chair of the environmental education people and said, "Well, I'll put together a panel of history, environmental history because I think this audience would really find that interesting. And the program chair said, "Yeah sure. That sounds good." So I got John [Opey] and myself and was it Marty [Royce]?

M: The core historian?

P: I think it was Marty. This is where you can check my memory and you'll probably find lots of [orals] here. But we went and we gave very well received. I mean it was like, I think it was [Opey] that said afterward, well I go to these history meetings and none of these historians want to hear about environmental history, but if you go to the educators meeting, they all wanted to hear environmental history. So we were all quite elated that we found an audience, and I think that's probably what led us to double up with environmental education again. So...

M: And then you met at Evergreen?

P: We met at Evergreen in '89.

M: You must have organized that.

P: Yeah, I organized.

M: What was that like? I wasn't here then.

P: Well, it was again a joint meeting. There was a regional association, the Northwest Association for Environmental Studies which was about ten colleges and universities around Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

M: Did that [unknown]

P: No, it's sort of gone to sleep again. It actually was invented in the 70's, had a long nap. I came back. I was sort of instrumental in getting it to wake up again. And it had a run of about six or seven years. And we had meetings at all the campuses that were active in it. And then the one wanted to organize a second meeting, so it went back to sleep again.

M: But in '89 you met [unknown] with ASEH?

P: Yes we lined it with ASEH. So we got a bunch of regional environmental studies people plus the environmental history group. The environmental history group was just at the time starting to sort of look more like a history society. Where a lot of graduate students presenting their thesis work. That sort of thing. It's not just maverick professors presenting their work. So, and Oscar [Suell], he's a colleague here. Oscar and I organized that joint in '80. And then I think the next time after that was down at Marty Malosee's in Houston.

M: You mentioned that the journal was a major concern in the beginning and it sounds like the biggest concerns were finances initially.

P: Oh yeah, we didn't have any. There weren't many members, and one of the things I subsequently learned about publishing is, if you have more than a thousand issues printed, you start getting economies of scale that are really significant. And if you're down to three hundred, you have no economies of scale and so it was always touch and go. We really need to get this out just to quickly [market].

TAPE 2:

P: Well I credit John Opey with the persistence through, I don't want to call them dark years, because we were having too much fun.

M: Was it fun?

P: We always enjoyed getting together, and we'd talk about all the problems and we'd try to solve them.

M: Were they mostly financial or were they intellectual.

P: Oh, there was no intellectual problems. The only intellectual problem was getting a critical mass of people who were doing something that had something to say. But that usually came fairly easy because there was always a hand full of people who were trying to do this. Like Tom Dunlap was certainly one of the first. You know, John was doing stuff, I was doing stuff, and there were many others.

M: So do you remember at the meetings if there were other , well I would call them administrative concerns. But it was just the journal and getting together, that was important? There weren't other initiatives?

P: No. If they were, they didn't infringe on my consciousness. We needed a mailing list. We needed people to pay dues. John was working nightly with very limited resources to put out a journal. I'm now the editor of the journal, and I have a much better sense of...I don't know how he did it. But he did it. I just credit him forever for that that he managed to figure out how to get it done. Without anything like a you know a permanent pay [unknown] or an academic publisher. We didn't have one. I don't know. [Kinkos] didn't even exist. So, we found a print shop in Pittsburg somewhere where we could print this thing.

M: Is the reason you didn't have an academic press that the field was too new?

P: Too new, too small. Academic presses start getting interested in you when you get close to a thousand. Three hundred, six hundred. That's what they see. There's no [unknown] scale. You know, the first copy that we put out was really expensive. The second one's only half as much. By the time you get to the thousandth one, they're cheap. You're down basically to the cost of the paper. But that first copy you put out is just, frankly it's expensive. We were too close to the first copy, and you know, there weren't enough dues to give our treasury.

M: How much were the dues? Do you remember?

P: Oh gosh, they weren't much. We certainly didn't want to scare anyone away with being too expensive.

M: Who could join? You mentioned it was mostly faculty, but were there any restrictions, or could anybody join?

P: I don't think we had many restrictions. I mean you have to have an interest in environmental history. And I think you could be professional or amateur. If you just wanted to buy it and leave, I think we would have said fine.

M: I wonder if you had many library subscribers.

P: Not many, no. I'm pretty sure not. I mean that was one of the things also because libraries subscriptions can, if you get enough of them, can make out a good difference. But we had no marketing. John was the editor and publisher. He had to arrange all the logistics, and he had to deal with all the manuscripts. They were peer review, so we got review comments, and that was very important, We wanted it to be a peer review journal. But John was editor and publisher, and that's more than anybody should ever take on. And, as publisher, he didn't have a marketing division. Basically, his publishing was he organized the printer. And he organized somebody to do the pipe setting and the graphics and the art work. And he got most of this I think done for a very low cost or for free. So no marketing. We had no marketing. We couldn't even produce a brochure in the allowance. So it...

M: How did you choose the sites for your conferences? I mean how did you come to organize the Evergreen conference? Did somebody ask you?

P: I think I volunteered. It was after...

M: So by that time, you were meeting fairly regularly? And it was decided it's time to meet.

P: I think we, if I remember right, I think we got on an every other year we'd have our own independent meeting that we organized. And then on the off years, there'd be something at one of the historical associations. And I probably went to one AHA meeting in Chicago at one time because of this. I probably drove up from Oxford. But I wasn't a member of AHA or OAH, so I didn't tend to go to their meetings. Yeah. There was whatever the meeting was, maybe it was the [unknown]. Irvine and then Miami and then [unknown] and then did we have another one before it?

M: I can't think of what it was.

P: I probably just felt like, well you know, in two years we needed to have a meeting. And so I said, well if you'd like me to, I mean I said to the executive committee, if you'd like me to, I'll organize the next meeting at Evergreen, and we'll probably try to do it jointly with the regional environmental studies group. And there weren't any other volunteers. So, now I do remember at the Evergreen meeting. I don't know I was, I don't know if I did the announcement or somebody else did but I simply said, you know in two years we'll be looking for another place. Is there someone that you would like to organize this. And bless his heart, [Marty Malosey] said he'd do it. So I don't think Marty had any confrontation to do this. So he organized the next session after that.

M: Did you go to Houston?

P: I think I did. There are very few things I would go to Houston for.

M: And this might be one of them?

P: This might be one of them. I'm pretty sure I went. I don't think I gave a paper though.

M: Did your students come to the conference while it was here at Evergreen/

P: No.

M: So it wasn't seen as sort of a recruitment tool?

P: Not for students. No. It was, in fact, I believe we had it in the summer, so not many students at all. And, yeah it was basically to keep alive that there was an organization and that it was starting to produce pretty good scholarship. It had a journal. It was printing interesting things. You know, it finally took hold. Now, I'm not on the executive committee anymore. I'm not really associated with the journal anymore really than as a subscriber.

M: Do you still go to meetings?

P: I went to the one in Denver. Was that 2002? And there was one in Victoria.

M: 2004.

P: So I went to Denver and Victoria. And Victoria was the last one that I went to.

M: Well it's [in Boise] this next year. So it's not that far.

P: I saw that. That's right. I could certainly go to Boise. The problem I've had in recent years because I've been editing this journal for the Environmental Professional Association. Pretty much my association time is taken up with that.

M: How long have you been involved with it? Is it the Northwest Environmental Professional?

P: No it's the National Association for Environmental Protection. I'll give you a sample copy. That's our latest issue. So it's a national group. And putting out the quarterly is ...there's not much time in my life left for ASEH.

M: And you're Editor in Chief?

P: I'm Editor in this [unknown]. Now I'm going to stop near the end of next June. I've done it for thirteen years.

M: So, who's taking it over?

P: We'll we're just about to start the search for that.

M: Ok.

P: Do you know anybody who would like to do that? Because we've got a request for proposals for hiring the Editor. [unknown]

M: We'll I'll ask around. I just got involved in the University of Washington's [unknown] so I'll ask.

P: It's been a lot of fun. It's a different association, and it's very practice oriented. So it's a lot of practioners with current problem solving that they get involved with. From time to time, I've tried to incorporate, again, historical articles in the journal.

M: It looks like you have a lot of University Affiliates on the Advisory Board.

P: Yeah, it's a mixture of University and consultants and [unknown] people. And the meetings are very much consultants, agency people, academics.

M: And it's national, not Northwest?

P: Right. It's next meeting is going to be in San Diego next April.

M: So this will be a national search. You aren't looking for local? Okay.

P: I mean we have nothing against them in the Northwest New England. We're going to do the search nationally. Hopefully somebody will [unknown]. I've certainly enjoyed it. The day I became editor, the association went into a financial meltdown so we stopped publishing for three years. But that was actually in some ways sort of nice because then it allowed me to totally reinvent the journal since we didn't publish for three years. We renamed it, and revamped the appearance of it, and changed the kinds of materials that we [unknown].

M: And where did you get funding?

P: Well the association pays for a membership. Now we do have institutional subscribers. We're a Cambridge Journal. This is probably a Cambridge [unknown], but I did learn something about the journal publishing business through our trials and tribulations keeping this thing coming up. Most journals are now sold in bundles. Institutions don't buy a journal; they buy a bundle. And we went from, Cambridge [unknown]. We went from 50 institutional subscribers to about 1000.

M: So that's good.

P: We'd been struggling for years to get it to 60. And in one fowl swoop, it went to 1000. So, I now know something about the marketing of journals. That libraries, they buy a list, and they get a discount for buying the whole list. And a lot of them get the online version only.

M: I learned about this stuff when I got involved in the online negotiations for ASEH's journal.

P: [unknown]

M: Well actually Duke did for a while. And now the Forest History Society.

P: Oh, the Forest History. I'm missing [unknown]

M: And the history cooperative has bundled us. I mean, It's online. Publication. And back issues are coming out on JStor soon.

P: The publishing industry went through tremendous turmoil in the last fifteen years. I don't think that they are out of it yet. But, we [unknown] exist. You won't have any subscribers but institutions. The fifty we got were basically, we have members that were [unknown]. Like Evergreen was an institutional subscriber. Cause I went and badgered the librarians, and it wasn't hard. But they said sure. But it wasn't until we were bundled that we were suddenly out there and much wider circulation.

M: Well, just getting back to ASEH for a minute. You mentioned several times the importance of John Opey's work and him being such a [unknown]. Are there other individuals that...

P: Tom Dunlap was very important, and Rob French was very important in the early days. I probably haven't seen Rob for probably over twenty-five years. I don't know where he is. Don't know if he's still alive. He's a little bit older than I am so. But, I don't know, to me John had the vision. John had the tenacity. And all the rest of us contributed, but I just have a feeling if it wasn't for John, the society wouldn't exist today. Now once he got people like Don [Ristal] and Don Hughes involved, then it started to take off a lot. You know, John Opey can [unknown] something like that. And you know, that's fine. ASEH moves right along. Getting Caroline Merchant involved is really very important. And Caroline became a main [unknown]. I think all of the people who became presidents of the association, just an amazingly good group of really great scholars and great people. When people like that agree to serve as President of the association. It didn't matter who the founders were. The association was. It had achieved a legitimacy. People needed it because the scholarship it was [unknown]. Publishing [unknown] available was important enough. So at that point, the founders became [unknown].

M: But if it weren't for you, we wouldn't exist.

P: If it wasn't for John Opey we wouldn't exist. Susan Flader was...she was I think a very good President because she brought a legitimacy to things. Very important. You know, still [unknown]. With that legitimacy it became more like a professional historian's organization. The one thing that probably leads me to not always go to all the sessions is that like many history organizations, the people giving papers are the graduate students. And there are parts of ASEH that are sort of the meat market for budding PHDs that want a job. And that's great. I mean, it's a hard thing for them to have to go through, but Evergreen wasn't an [unknown] PHD environmental historian. [unknown] And we weren't producing them. And so there was a kind of, it became a kind of atmosphere that a person had to go on because these young scholars coming up have to get [unknown] and this is how it works. But it made the meetings less interesting to me because we either had our own graduate students in the mix. Our graduate students got to work usually with other accepted agencies. We're very practitioner oriented, not academic oriented.

M: And the ASEH is not practitioner oriented. That is interesting.

P: No, it's an academic [unknown]. That's fine. That's what it goes past. But our graduate students are agency practice oriented so ASEH is not a place for them. And we're not hiring in that field so, it, you know, it become a ...I hope my dues are all paid up. I hope they are. They're still sending me the journal. But I join up at meetings less frequently because well..

M: Well, we are trying to broaden the mission.

P: Okay, yeah. I mean this, putting out this, and pending to [unknown] business.

M: Yeah, I could see how this could be time consuming.

P: Right. I mean, I've got my day job that [unknown] expects me to do. And then I've got my night job. By the time I get done with NAEP, there's just not much left for anything else.

M: Well, what do you think's the biggest challenge that ASEH will face in the future?

P: I'm not sure I know anymore because I'm not sitting on the executive committee, I'm not on the advisory board of the journal. It's, I suspect it's the usual. Do we have enough members? Are we getting enough money? Should we be starting an endowment? Should we be fundraising [unknown] that Kellyn Merchantson had started. Major influence on fundraising. Yeah, I don't know. That's a great question. That's the challenge. I don't have a particular feel for it. But partly that's because I'm not president for the organization. I can tell you much more of the challenges of [N82] because I know those very very well. But ASEH, I don't know if the membership issues, numbers are an issue or is anybody unhappy with the scholarship. Or are people getting rejected and can't get published because skisms have arisen in the historical profession and some stuff is not considered environmental history. Now I have no idea whether if I wrote something whether I would get published. If I sent it to ASEH environmental history would I get published. I don't know.

M: And it sounds like that wasn't so much of a concern in the early days because you were just trying to find it, right? Is that the case?

P: Yeah. And I don't know. If I had been more active in ASEH in the last couple years, I might have a better feel for it, but I'm just too far. I mean I went to the Denver meeting, and I did a comment on some paper. It must of been up at the Denver meeting. Cause it was Ed Russel.

M: [unknown] of science?

P: It was the history of technology, science, environment kind of thing. I'm just trying to...I think if I stop thinking about it I'd come up with the other paper. And then I went to Victoria for, I think [unknown] Victoria.

M: Did you like the meeting?

P: Oh yeah, it was lovely. I mean it's always fun to see people there that I hadn't seen for a number of years. You know, but my own scholarly work is [unknown] somewhat in another direction. I'm about to retire, and I may come back to environmental history.

M: Well I hope it does. Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't talked about?

P: Well just one thing I guess. The only thing that would dismay me is that ASEH did have a skism that really led to some people having to drop in front of the organization. And it's not that I object. I mean academic organizations have had skisms and new organization is formed. And that had everybody happy, and that's fine. But ASEH was started by such mavericks who were just so all inclusive that that was one of the reasons the organization was fun. That's one of the reasons I put time into it. I think it's one of the reasons Opey put time into it. He was having fun, and doing good scholarly contributing to the [unknown] of scholarship and that was great. So, it would sort of sadden me if suddenly, you know, some skism arose that some people felt they had to leave ASEH and go off and [unknown]. But if they did, maybe that would be a bunch of mavericks, and they would go off and do something and that would be very interesting and that'd be great. So, I'm not going to get too upset.

M: Well I hope that we can keep everybody in the fold. I think we had some great presidents that have been good at building [consensus.]

P: Yeah. And to me the thing that made the field exciting was that here I was trying to survive of just a little stint in Washington on a policy exercise. And I was, I mean, I was trying to do what I thought historians did. I went to the archives. I read a bunch of old correspondence. I told a story about what that correspondence meant, and I offered an interpretation that I hope was useful. But there was just an acceptance of all sorts of people of very diverse backgrounds, and again this is one of the strengths and one of the weaknesses. The weakness was, we couldn't get any graduate student a job. There were no jobs in environmental history. There wasn't even an environmental history. Now there is an environmental history so the

association has to get its graduate students jobs, either in academia or in some other environmental [job]. So that's, I mean, those early days we weren't burdened with that, which was sort of a joy. Because it meant that we were interested in the intellectual content of what people brought. And it wasn't for several years until graduate students started appearing and then the organization had to change.

M: It's part of the maturity.

P: It is part of the maturity, and is ASEH as much fun? Oh probably so, but it's probably a more [serious] organization now.

M: I think [it's fun].

P: The graduate students better hope it is.

M: Well that's serious in any case.

P: Because they've got a very serious problem. You know, getting out and you know, it's not easy for a new PhD. You know, we want them to find an [unknown] somewhere which is interesting work. I don't think it has to be in academia. Now you're a great example. You're going into things that are not the academic side, but I wish more academics would do that. It's one of the things I find interesting about environmental professionals is that it's the only meeting that I can go to and not everybody I'm gonna talk to is a college professor. I really like that.

M: Well ASEH is getting more and more consultants and agencies and so on. It's still largely faculty. But there are more and more.

P: Well that's good. You know, [unknown] has always, I think, maintained a, an attractiveness to engineers. Often retired engineers who want to do something about old engineering stuff in their retirement years.

M: They're just in the artifacts. That's what you're saying earlier, right? Material culture.

P: Yeah, [unknown] material culture. I think for any historical associations, it's really good to keep the non-professional involved. Because if it gets too much just the clink of the professionals, they'll probably start talking in ways that only they can understand, and then the stuff is not much fun to read because if they aren't in that community, you can read it. It's not written in English. So, I'm hoping that the ASEH, I hope they keep writing in English. Good simple English without a lot of deep theoretical things that can provide people with stuff that may not be done. I think that's the only sermon I need to give.

M: Well thank you very much.

P: Well, you're very welcome. I hope it's of use.