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Oral History Interview with Dick Schwarze (DS)

Conducted by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Matt Jones (MJ) and Elementary Education Undergraduate Student Gracie Pare (GP) on 2018, June 20.

Transcribed by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Rachel Burns

MJ: So it's June 20th, 2018. This Matt Jones I'm a grad student here at EMU and I'm here with Gracie Pare. We're in Halle Library today talking to Dick Schwarze. He was campus photographer here from 1970 to 2006. Before joining the staff, Schwarze served in Vietnam, the United States Army, and briefly attend Wayne State University in Detroit. During his 36-year career here, he won numerous campus and professional awards, including "Institutional values Award for Continuous Improvement, Innovation, and Customer Service" in 2005. His photography captures a lot of aspects at EMU and has been used for promotional work and public relations campaigns. I know that doesn't even begin to-we look over there and see those slides, like my little introduction probably doesn't do justice to everything you've done and seen. Can we start with your background? Where you're from? Family details- parent's what they did, siblings.

DS: Okay. I grew up in Birmingham. My mom-My dad was guy who always wanted to be his own boss, although he wasn't very good at it. He was a great dad and a great guy but he just didn't have that mean edge to be in business so he had a succession of "ma and pa" kind of businesses: gas stations and an undercoating if that means anything, the gunk that they used to spray on cars before they became more rust proof. My mom always worked because if she hadn't worked, we would have lost the house. But they were great parents, doting, standard white middle class, *Ozzie and Harriet* kind of upbringing. Grew up in Birmingham, I've got one sister who is two years younger than me. Pretty uneventful growing up. It was just like *Leave It to Beaver*, you could go anywhere you wanted. You played with your friends all the time, blah blah blah-so a standard thing. Went to Seaholm High School. Played basketball, was horrible at it. But I have two letters by default. When I was a junior, there was a senior who was worse than me, and he got a mercy letter and because he got one, I got one. And my senior year, I got the mercy letter, even though I rode the bench most of the time. Graduated from Seaholm, went to Michigan State, was going to be an English teacher because my family is full of teachers. Turns out I didn't like to study all that much, so I dropped out of State after the fall semester of my sophomore year and I went to Mexico with my friend and that was pretty much the end of my academic career because going to Wayne was pretty much just to dodge the draft. Back then, my last semester at Wayne cost \$100. It wasn't like now, it was worth it to pay the money and stay out of the Army, although that didn't work in the long haul. Then I went to the Army, did the standard thing: went to-I got into Army intelligence, went to Vietnam, had a pretty cushy tour, came back, spent 15 months at Fort Bragg riding out my hitch. I was gonna give myself a month after I got out to figure out what I was going to do, I'd figured I'd just go back to school. But I had a high school friend, the guy that sort of got me into photography, who was staff photographer at the Ypsi Press, which at that time was a small free standing small paper right downtown. I got out in March. He had gone to a basketball game and he was talking to John Fountain, who at the time was the SID (Sports Information Director). John said to my friend "Sumner, are you gonna apply for the new job?" My friend said what. John told him my slot had just

been created. So my friend called me up and told me to call this guy and ta-da.

MJ: Was photography-was it ever on your radar as a child?

DS: No, I never even thought about it until I met my friend Sumner when we were juniors maybe. I think we were in homeroom together. No, no, no-he worked for the school paper and two of my oldest friends also wrote for the school paper. I got to meet Sumner that way, and we hit it off. I started tagging along with him on photo assignments for the high school paper and here I am.

MJ: Was there any sort of immediate draw? How did you get so good at it?

DS: He was a great help. But it- I had an affinity for it, I guess. Part of it in back in the day, was the nerdy part. Now, anybody with a good eye, and I don't mean to say this in a bad way, because I shoot with my phone like a whore. I shoot all kinds of stuff with my phone. You had to develop film, make your own prints, so you had to really want to do it to do it right. So, my friend Sumner showed me that end of it and having access to the high school dark room meant that I could just experiment and shoot and go back and do my film.

MJ: That's funny that you use your phone so much. I know some professional photographers and it was always really surprising when they pull their phone out. Wait what are you doing?

DS: They've gotten so good now. The cliché is the best camera is the one you have with you. And you always have your phone. So, yeah.

MJ: You said you were at Wayne State before you drafted?

DS: Yes, I was. Michigan State first and then Wayne State after I got back from my Mexico thingy.

MJ: What was the campus feeling about Vietnam at the time?

DS: God, I don't know. Everybody thought the war was stupid. But most people that I knew were not that politically aware, you're a kid from Birmingham. All I wanted to do was not go myself. I didn't really find out about the war and the politics leading up to it until I was in the Army and I was at Fort Holabird, which was the intelligence school and there was a National Guard contingent there from DC. It was full of lawyers and people who were just doing their basic training to not go back to being in the real army. Well, I found out all the lies and the crap and all the stuff from them.

MJ: What do you mean by the lies?

DS: The whole-the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. All of it, it was their country. Don't get me started on this, we'll be here forever. But you know, we didn't have business there. They were supposed to have an election and combine the country. We knew that Ho would win and we said you can't have your election in essence. All of that, which to my folks was "just commies, and go shoot 'em." I didn't realize any of that until I was already in.

MJ: What did they think about your attitude towards the war?

DS: My folks were Republicans. They were white people from Birmingham-it was almost baked in. They disagreed with my politics but of course, even I wasn't, I was their war hero. They had a big party when I came back and they were proud me for doing that. But they never got any of the politics of the war. For them it was special, because they were the World War Two generation, that was a whole different thing. They didn't make any distinction between a real honest to god war that was a fight for survival and this kind of backwater, racist crap that we had been involved in since then, you know what I mean? They didn't get that. They didn't care about the politics. They didn't care that it was their country and we didn't have any business there. All they saw was a bunch of commies that we should defeat.

MJ: Did you bring anything back to your photography career from your Vietnam experience? Military experience?

DS: Not- I mean I shot stuff there. My parents, bless their hearts for all the fact that we didn't have a lot of money, when I graduated high school, they gave a camera. A Pentax single lens reflex camera. So, I had that with me and I shot stuff but just because. I was a kid from the Midwest and all I'm in this tropical paradise. If you spent a winter in Michigan and all of sudden it's January and it's 80 degrees. It was just overwhelming. So, I shot a bunch of stuff, but it was just "snapshotty" stuff.

MJ: Still have any of those things?

DS: I do actually, in a box.

MJ: We've heard a lot of people we've talked to about the EMU campus in the early 70s. Something we always come back to in the conversation is vets coming back to school and how faculty and students responding to the veterans and vice versa. It's been said a few times they were almost set apart from everybody else. Whether they set themselves apart or whether other people did it other to them. Did you notice that?

DS: No, not individually I didn't. Part of it was, I kind of BS'd my way into this job. I showed up for an interview with Curt Stadtfeld who was the Director of Information Services. I had no degree, I showed up with a Kodak paper box with some prints in it and said "here you go, by the way I have all my own equipment." So, I got the job, but I mean I was scrambling. I never had a photography job ever.

MJ: It must have been a little daunting.

DS: It was a little scary.

MJ: Would he have been your boss?

DS: Yes.

MJ: Stadtfeld, okay.

DS: He was a great guy.

MJ: Was he an okay boss?

DS: Oh yes.

MJ: We've come across his name a lot.

DS: When I knew Curt first he was my boss. He was the director but he had come from the faculty. He got into a little campus politics and went back to the faculty. He was a writer, a really bright erudite type guy. He was a great boss.

MJ: I found an article in the 1973 issue of *The Spotlight* where, they were talking about joining VFW or the Legion, you're quoted as saying "I'm real negative about the whole military thing. I feel out of place with all the flag wavers in the American Legion because I would be only who asked why we had to put a missile in this year's parade. I'm not patriotic." This is my favorite part "Also, why would anyone my age want to dance with a bunch of old people?" (laughs)

DS: Well the patriotic line, I remember that interview. The "I'm not very patriotic" line caused some issue. Nobody said anything like "you can't say that." You know what I mean? That sort of got around.

MJ: You were hired in 1970?

DS: Yes.

MJ: Stadtfeld helped you get the job. Did you ever meet Sponberg (Former University President Harrold Sponberg)?

DS: Oh sure.

MJ: What kind of guy was he?

DS: He was the last of the old fashioned academic presidents. I have no idea how good he was as president because I was just new. I was a kid and I was brand new. He was easy to work with, he was personable, he and his wife Grace were a great first couple. She was really engaging. I was really a peon at the time and most of the time. Later on, I got older and everybody knew me. I would just knock on the door "hi, I'm here, let's do your picture." But when I started, especially with Sponberg, Curt would go or some other administrator would go "Hi Mr. President this is Dick the photographer- blah blah blah." So, it was a different kind of thing.

(Paused 16:26-19:30)

DS: Larry [Dr. Laurence Smith] did a great job for Eastern. He was a guy with a vision, he was student orientated. He did a lot of stuff to get students involved. I think that the people were hired were good, I mean Glenna [Former Director of Campus Life Glenna Frank Miller] worked for him for a long, long

time. He was good for Eastern. But I would not want to work directly for him. He just bowled people right over.

MJ: You think that helped in a lot situations?

DS: I'm sure it did. For all the fact that he is a big presence, he doesn't, in my experience, he didn't have his ego involved in stuff. Even during the Sesquicentennial, he kind of ram-rodged that big celebration. He didn't want his picture taken. He didn't want to be the face of the celebration. We were at the shindig which was in Roosevelt at the time. I was in a tux, you know? We're all dressed up, we're doing this thing and I wanted to get a picture of Larry and he said "that would be appropriate." He didn't care about being "the guy". So, for that aspect that was cool, he had a vision and he knew how to get stuff done, but he didn't care about him, which is kind of cool.

MJ: That's admirable. Do you remember any of your impressions-Did you have any association with Eastern before you got here?

DS: None.

MJ: Just a foreign place to you.

DS: I want to say this. I want to say that an old friend of the family who would have been a contemporary of my mom went here because it was teachers school. But I might be making that up. I was aware of Eastern, but I didn't know anybody who went here or any of that.

MJ: Or its reputation as a school or an employer?

DS: None of that, it was pretty much cold. I had a girlfriend before I went into the Army who went here. So, let me take that back, yes, I was aware of the campus but not the institution if that makes sense. So, my girlfriend lived in Downing, I knew how to get here and get around, but I didn't know anything about the school as a school.

MJ: Do you remember any impressions of when you first got here?

DS: Funny, I don't know. It's pretty. I like campuses. When I go to towns. We visited Boston two or three years ago and I walked over to Harvard. Let me just say that's a haul from downtown. You can't be that close and not go to Harvard. So, yeah, it's [Eastern Michigan] a pretty campus. I like the way it rolls down to the river from uphill, blah blah. The people, I would think as a student, would be a great place to go. Everybody's approachable. I don't know now, you probably have adjuncts out the wazoo. But at the time, one of the big selling points was 97% of the classes were taught by faculty with terminal degrees in their subject and all of that. That's a cool thing because at Michigan State the first couple years, you got grad students and second tier faculty, that kind of thing. That part was very cool. The whole time I was here, the only person I never did not call by their first name was the president at the time. It was a good place to be.

MJ: We've heard from several other people, especially in sixties and seventies and the eighties when John

Porter was here, that there was a tight knit aspect of the school was definitely here the entire time and at some point, it started dissipate. We've been trying to pinpoint when that was. That is something we hear, and I like to hear that. But I'd like to know what happened.

DS: I don't know if it was anything you could pinpoint. It's the standard thing-you get administrative bloat. Then you get Republicans in the state legislature who have chopped the budget every year for 30 years, I don't know what. Things got tight that way. You start hiring part time faculty and stuff. Well who-you don't get that cohesion and the loyalty if you're essentially working minimum academic wage with no bennies and no tenure. What kind of an atmosphere is that? That's a rant and I'm sorry. But it's true. Early on it was tighter, it was a tighter community, it felt smaller.

MJ: We hear the word familial a lot. And that's pretty special.

DS: We were talking about Harold and Grace Sponberg. I was at some function or other, the function was mostly over, it was just a bunch of us hanging around, getting ready to leave. Something came up and Grace and Sponberg started dancing. Come on. So that was pretty nice.

MJ: I love it. Why do you think your position just created in 1970? Why didn't they have one before that do you think?

DS: I don't know about the position, my guess is-this all speculation. This might not be true in the slightest. So, Curt, I'm assuming and Curt's boss, whoever that was at the time, I don't remember who he reported to. Anyway, you want your own guy. They had for the big publications, they had been using freelancers. There was a guy named Irving Lloyd who was a local photographer. Really good, I mean he was really good. I was in awe of the stuff that I saw on campus that he had shot for. He had done advertising and everything. He was a slick commercial photographer. He was good to me, he took me to his house and showed me his operation and all of that. He didn't feel threatened by me, God knows, as a photographer. Why they open the slot up? I'm assuming it was the internal politics were such. I started for \$8500 so it wasn't a big investment on their part.

MJ: Actually, my next question was-we read a communication by Curtis Stadtfeld, lobbying Sponberg on your behalf saying you would finish your studies at EMU while you were working as a photographer at \$8000 a year at age 25. Did you want to be a student or did you have to be for the job? DS: That never really came up. I didn't even know that. Curt didn't care. He wanted a shooter. I thought I would probably go back to school. I have five years of university and I'm like a sophomore. I'm not a student kind of guy. I assumed I would go back and get a BA or something at some sort liberal artsy kind of thing. Nobody ever said "so when are you going to register?" There was none of that, so I think Curt was spinning that for Sponberg.

MJ: You did attend classes?

DS: No, never ever, not one.

MJ: I have a bunch of questions about balancing your time with being a student (laughter)

DS: It would be almost impossible. The nature of the job always has been long hours and six and seven days because of sports primarily. It would be impossible to do the job right and go to school. I don't know how you would do it.

MJ: When you started, was your job-What kind of instructions did they give you? Was it just, photograph everything? Or just athletics?

DS: The job got more specific, I think. It sort of broke down into two main things. You had specific things you had to shoot-go here, see so and so, take a picture of this. Whether it was for the faculty staff newsletter or just some stupid awards dinner where you sucking up to a donor. Look at all the garbage we went through [Referring to photos in the Dick Schwarze Collection at the Archives]. But the good part of it was to just walk around the campus in the spring and the fall when it's pretty and make the campus look good so they could plug those into publications, long before the web. It was just to have a stock pile of stuff so that the graphics guys, all that used to be in-house, would have a whole bunch of stuff. They could say to you "Go get me a picture of Pierce the whole tower and blossoms in it" You go run out and do it.

MJ: Did you ever not like what they do with your photos?

DS: Yeah, but photographers are jerks. You run into people who are good and I never worked for a bad art director, but some people are merciless. They got a vision of the whole publication and if they have to crop one of your photos to fit a hole, they'll do it. It doesn't look bad in the printed piece, but it's still not your photo. And I've worked for guys who would lay out the publication around the photos which for me is a way better thing. One of the guys who was an art director, he left and I ended up doing a lot freelance work for him which we did on the medium format. The Hasselblad which would give a square negative. And Larry, Larry Sheffler, if I shot it on the Hasselblad, he would use it all square. He was that good and he liked the square look. So, it just depends. When we started running stuff on the web and that stuff got hacked just so it would fit because it had to fit a given window because no one wanted to change the formatting of all that stuff, especially early on when it was a giant pain. They would just mush it into the hole.

MJ: Would you use the campus darkroom or their facilities here?

DS: I always had my own darkroom. I started out, there were two houses where the Coatings Research Facility is.

MJ: Oh yeah down on Forest [West Forest Drive]

DS: Yeah, the placement center was in one. We were right next door. I had a dark room in the basement. Then where did we go? We went to Snow and I had a dark room there because the second floor of Snow used to be an infirmary and when they closed the infirmary they threw offices in there. So, I had a darkroom in there and we were in- not King, one of the old dorms. Those ugly old brown ones at the front of campus [Jones or Goddard Hall]. So, I had darkroom and studio there. I always had my own.

MJ: It's easy to think of a photographer as being a fly on the wall for a lot of things. Kind of like an ever

presence here on campus for different events. But I also think you were kind of immune to things, some of the politics and things. But you didn't look into them from that fly on the wall position, is that accurate?

DS: Not so much because I didn't get any more gossip than anybody else who similarly connected because the stuff that I shot 99% was public stuff. No one's going to say anything anyway. You hear about feuds and who hated somebody else, but no more than someone like Glenna (Glenna Frank Miller) would know way more if it because she was connected at a level above me so she knew more than me. I was just a "jamoke"

MJ: What's that other one percent?

DS: Oh god, I don't know.

MJ: I always wonder about photographers and videographers that have assignments. Let's say you photographed someone at one of those dinners or award ceremonies and then you went somewhere else and photographed them at sporting events. Do you see different sides of people?

DS: Oh, sure. But most people I photograph, especially off-campus people, were rich. They were giving us stuff. It has been my experience like from growing up in Birmingham, I had a lot of rich friends. Those people are nice to you, they're smart, they're educated. I'm no threat to them, I'm just a guy. Whenever I did any of that, it was very cordial. We were for them, a fun setting, some kind of a cocktail party or homecoming, blah blah blah. They're in a good mood and it was just me. A, I was the only guy and after a while after everyone knew me. So "get a picture of me and my grandson?" and blah blah blah It was fine. You saw people at their nicest and best. I wasn't the guy from Development and asking them for \$50,000.

MJ: You probably had to photograph right after a couple of those meetings.

DS: Sure. But those people are used to it. I mean they gave us money, but they give a lot money to people. God bless rich people, you know they do that. They're good at it. They know how to play the game. And that's all you want. Just keep your eyes open and smile and "I'm out of here."

MJ: Did you have anybody you really liked to photograph on campus? Was anyone fun or more accepting of it?

DS: Everybody was. I can't think of anybody that really wanted to be photographed. There were people that would pester, not me, but my office over the whole course of time, because people want their programs publicized, and I get that. But I can't think of anybody that wanted a picture of themselves. With rare exception if people were told "Dick's going to come over to take pictures for so and so" people were fine. You get the odd people "I don't want to be photographed." What are you going to do?

MJ: What if you have some sort of assignment where you have to photograph someone and they don't want to be photographed?

DS: They've been told that I'm coming. So, I don't have to be the bad guy. I can say "maybe some other time" and I tell my boss and my boss calls their boss. Sometimes their boss chickens out especially with faculty, you have to keep a relationship or sometimes they just arm twist and then I get a picture like this (forced smiled). But most people are pretty cool.

MJ: Alright. How about yourself? Do you like to be photographed?

DS: The only pictures that I have of me that I can think of from my time here I have some studio shots I did as lighting test. Remember the Styrofoam head? I would use as a thingy and then I would plug myself in where that was and then I had one of squeezey bulb things and I'd shoot myself. Or students from student publications-I have pictures they took of me at sporting events. After a while, I was the old guy. So, I had a little experience. We played Michigan years and years ago over at the Big House. We're all there and it starts to rain. I had garbage bags to cover the camera, I was the guy with more experience. So, the kids liked me. I have pictures of me at work shot by those kids. But that's the extent of it.

MJ: There was a photo in the Spotlight issue from 1973. I think you have really long hair.

DS: Isn't that hilarious? Everybody looked so stupid. Even the administrators, they would show up in leisure suits, Nehru jackets and bell bottom pants and all that stuff. Oh my god.

MJ: I haven't even thought about how you saw fashion change more than most people through a lens.

DS: And women can get away with that. I'm sorry, women look better. But guys in that era? In that clothing? Oh-

MJ: The seventies?

DS: Just idiots. It's unbelievable.

MJ: I was born in the late seventies. I don't remember it in person, but I have pictures. Was there a good era?

DS: For men's fashion, no. I think for guys, the more traditional you look the better off you are. Women can get away with looking different and standing out, but when a guy tries it, you look like a jerk. I mean what are you going to do? Wear a polka dot suit? I had three Brooks Brothers suits, for God's sake, to wear to shindigs. A three piece, a two piece and a blue blazer. You just want to blend in.

MJ: Right. What were your favorite events to photograph here?

DS: Sports.

MJ: Any particular sport?

DS: I discovered here volleyball. Didn't know anything about volleyball, that's a great game. And it's easy to shoot. You have tall girls, they're easy to shoot. Swimming is hard to shoot, because it's just your head. We had great swimming teams. We've got, you go to the pool, The Mike Jones Natatorium, there

are like 30 banners in the rafters. Great teams, hard to shoot. Basketball is easy to shoot and it's fun. When I got here, it was just the beginning of all that Title Nine stuff. So, we had women's teams and early on they were horrible, of course. Like women's basketball was hard to shoot because if you're not very good and you're losing, I don't get much to shoot. If you are getting a ball mashed back in your face that's not a picture you can put in the media guide. Sports was fun. I liked track. I didn't know much about track and that's fun to go to. We had great-Bob Parks was legendary.

MJ: Going to talk to him soon.

DS: You're going to need the bleeper button.

MJ: Good!

DS: Bob was really good and John Goodrich is good now. That was fun. We had a lot of sports. Gymnastics for a while we had men's and women's.

MJ: Gymnastics seems like it would be fun to shoot.

DS: That took me awhile because besides diving that's the only one where people are sideways and upside down. So, you had to plan a shot cause you got to show the face. You had to figure for each event where in the cycle of flipping and twisting you were gonna see the face and where you had to be to do that. So that took a while.

MJ: Would you have to know their routine?

DS: You had to know what they were trying to do

MJ: Know by someone's body language they were going to do a flip?

DS: Yeah that kind of thing. Well for the floor exercise, you know they were going to go diagonally flippity-flippity. You can try for the side or you can get in the corner but not their line of sight because that gets them upset and hope in the midst of all of that they are doing something where the form looks good and you can get a face. I discovered early on that you can get a lot nice shots that other people like, that the coaches don't like if they are grimacing, especially the girls. The women- volleyball and gymnastics, the gymnastic people like these, well the thing's over when they do that. They flip, they put their feet together, they go like this (smiles) and they look at the judges. That's not a photo I care about. Coaches love that. Kim, the volleyball coach, she didn't want the girls to sweat. After they score, they all do a high five at the net that kind of thing, that's the picture she liked. Who cares?

MJ: There's a photo I think it's a newer *Focus*. They did a feature on you?

DS: Probably just before I bailed.

MJ: You submitted some of your favorite photographs. One of them is a gymnast on a balance upside down. Do you ever have to worry about your shutter clicking?

- DS: Even after I started putting strobes in Bowen Field House. The coaches- “You can’t use your lights; the girls get distracted.” You ask the girls “what lights?” No, in the middle of anything as intense as most sports and even gymnastics they’re so focused, because you use a motor drive, they do something and you’re just like (imitates sounds of the camera). Nobody said anything.
- MJ: Did you have any relations with the coaches? Did you have to?
- DS: Kind of. I liked all the coaches I worked with except for a couple. We had some football coaches that were jerks.
- MJ: Who did you like working with?
- DS: Almost all universally the coaches were fine. The only issue I ever had was, it was hard to say in a way that didn’t sound like you were being a jerk. I’m a sorry that your little non-rev sport is only going to get one or two meets shots. I can’t come to every gymnastics meet, I can’t come to every baseball game. “Well you go to every football game.” Yes, I do. I’m sorry, that’s just the fact of life.
- MJ: Was that up to you?
- DS: No, but you know how it is. It’s like when they axed all those sports. Axe football. It costs a million dollars a year to fund a team that hasn’t won in 30 years. That’s never going to happen. There are too many men on the board who want football. It’s just a fact of life. But that was the only thing I had with coaches. You had your program to get some PR. I get that, but I couldn’t do it.
- MJ: I thought about this interview when I was driving in my car and I heard on WLEN, my hometown radio station in Adrian, Michigan about Eastern cutting women’s softball and diving?
- DS: Men’s swimming and diving. If you can believe that, probably the most successful program in the whole school.
- MJ: You must form a strong bond with the athletics department because you are at so many events.
- DS: Oh, sure. But it’s funny though, I had a great working relationship with all the coaches that I dealt with and all the guys at sports information, but the athletic directors, I almost had no contact with. I would shoot the new guy when he came in. They would have a press conference, we’d get a picture of him with the EMU hat on, get a headshot after that. They had bigger fish to fry. The photos were all sports info’s responsibility. John Fountain was an SID. [Jim]Streeter, who was there forever, was great to work with. And Greg, who is there now, worked for Jim, so there’s been a succession. Streeter worked for Fountain and Greg Steiner worked for Streeter. So, the whole time I’ve been here, there has been a direct line of- there’s some institutional memory in that office.
- MJ: Can you describe what makes them better to work with than others were?
- DS: Well they all worked their asses off. So, when Randy Mascharka took my job, I came just back here just

shoot the breeze with him. He says about Janet, my wife “Did she ever complain about the hours?” Well yeah, like every day. Because he got a dream job. Well his wife was on his case because you work late, and you work weekends all the time. The people in Sports Info do that in spades. They work seven days a week and I don’t know what the staffing is now but when I was there, there were only two real staffers everyone else was just students or volunteers. You got to be a good manager to get people to work essentially for free, evenings, and weekends all year round. They were good at that. I shoot the stuff. During the days of film, I was just out the door. Once we went digital, I would go up to the press box, I’d give them my memory cards and then I’d be out the door. But they would be for hours, writing releases, sending those out, blah blah blah. They worked hard. They are all very good managers because they had no money and no budget and no real staff. Everybody pretty much who does that loves sports anyway, they know all about pro sports and college sports. For them, it’s a nice job. But hellish hours.

MJ: I found a 1997 performance review. I don’t know if you’ve seen your own bio file upstairs [Biography File in the University Archives].

DS: No, that’s a scary thought.

MJ: There are tons of your performance reviews of yours. And they’re all just glowing, just A plus for every category. There was only one time where somebody said in 1997, in the areas of improvement you had cut back on successfully cut back on time for overtime shoots which had little to no value. I don’t know what that meant.

DS: Sounds like Susan Bairley wrote that.

MJ: I can’t remember if their names were on them.

DS: It would depend on who wrote that. Even before I just left, Pam was my boss, and she was a really great boss. Nice person.

MJ: Pam? What’s the last name?

DS: Young. Setla was her real name but she always went by her maiden name. It was often hard to get people who didn’t care about sports to understand that a big part of my job is to shoot sports and if you shoot sports, sports never happen 8 to 5. We never got paid overtime but we got comp time. Fall comes and a new semester starts, you got 5 or 6 home football game, track and cross country, blah blah. Well, within a couple of months I max out all the OT I could do. Most of my bosses were cool they get that. I filled out fake time cards. We’d turn them in to be legal, I would keep track of my real hours and then this time of year, I was gone and most people didn’t care. I had a couple of bosses that wanted to play by the book and the only thing I could do that worked was “do you want me to work to rule?” Because if I work to rule, nothing happens because none of those first two months I can’t do anything other than 8 to 5 including stuff you want done. “Well okay” But most people were fine because they understood that, but usually the low value things were sports.

MJ: Does a photographer feel like all his shoots are valuable?

DS: No, there's a lot of junk. Especially after I'd been here a while. I knew people. Well if a person you know who is a work friend wants you to do some stupid thing because they're getting a hundred-dollar check to buy a thermometer in the kitchen in home-ec or something like that, what are you going to say? If I had a student I could trust, I'd send them. But I did a lot of that kind of garbage. You just show up. I did one on a Sunday. Went a little award ceremony for a department that will remain anonymous. Got there, waved to the department head who was my contact, went to the back of the room for this whole thing. We were going to shoot a grip and grin [A handshake picture] at the end. The thing ends she lets everybody go! They were not equally valuable.

MJ: Did you have much-I think you did, did you help with the Echo [Student news publication The Eastern Echo] or the Aurora [Student published yearbook]?

DS: Only in the same way we would help anyone who had requested a photo. I never worked for them. I never shot anything really specifically for them. But if they'd call up "you got a picture of so and so?" Well yeah, the same if the *Ann Arbor News* called up. If you had it you'd say sure.

MJ: You have worked with student photographers?

DS: Yeah

MJ: I think I read in the feature on you that you had mentored a lot of young photographers.

DS: That's a fancy word you only hear on campus. Sometimes you'd luck out because you'd put an ad, wherever you put an ad for student help. "Photographer wanted." Well you were just-who ever happened to answer the ad, sometimes you'd get a winner. I had probably four or five good shooters and I had a lot of people that I sent out that "oh for god sake, remember to load the camera!" It varied. But I had some really good kids work for me.

MJ: When they go on in the photography field do you kind of keep track?

DS: Kind of. I sort of lost track-we used to trade emails, but then they would get married and have kids blah blah blah. But the last guy that worked for me, Craig Watson, started out doing weddings, now he's doing commercial work, I go to his website. I have a whole bunch of photo things that I check at least once a week. I check Craig's-he's really good. That's always nice. One kid is a newspaper shooter, don't know where he's working, but he's stayed in the biz. The guy that actually who had a digital Nikon before the university did, a kid from Ann Arbor. I run into him in Ann Arbor all we still are "hi how are you doing?" pals

MJ: Since you mention that, the digital camera- over those 36 years that's like I said, that one comment that I mentioned earlier was the only one approaching something negative. Every single one of them going back talks about how you are so adept on keeping up with technology and every field that's evolving-that tech? That's got to be exhausting.

DS: Well, but it's fun. Fountain said that once because when they started doing the AP and PT classifications, it was my considered opinion, I was classified too low. John, who I worked for at the

time, agreed with that. So, we had to go to an HR board and get me bumped up a slot. Part of the talking points that I had written down was “oh by the way, all this stuff is my stuff.” John says “Don’t worry about the equipment, photographers are always buying equipment.” And it’s true. That’s why it’s more fun to be a photographer than to be a painter. You get cool stuff. I was always buying stuff on my own. If I wanted something and the university couldn’t afford it, often times I would buy it after a set to with the little woman. When the digital thing came along, it was kind of exciting but it was scary. I had 40 years of darkroom expertise under my belt that all of sudden (poof sound). It’s like being a typesetter, nobody cared. I never had a computer and all of a sudden “what’s this Photoshop thing?” So, it was exciting but if you’re doing it for work-bam there you are “well you better figure it out.” The Ann Arbor guy he worked for me at the time, he knew about Photoshop, so he showed me how that worked. That was a lifesaver, a lifesaver.

MJ: Do you remember any instances where you were on assignment or shooting something or just realized this would be so much better with a digital technology?

DS: I never appreciated that. The immediate and most obvious thing about digital was the turnaround time. For the longest time, we’d do black and white. You’d shoot it, you’d come back to the office, you’d develop it, make contact sheets, send those out to people blah blah blah. So, the speed of the digital stuff was the most immediate benefit, but the early digital cameras were not that good. I look at digital files from the original Nikon D1 which cost \$5000 in 1999. That was a big deal. Outside, they look cool. In Bowen Fieldhouse, they look like garbage. At Rynearson [Rynearson Stadium] with those horrid lights, we would play all these night football games back in the day-that stuff looked horrid. And the film looked horrid too. It wasn’t so much that digital looked worse than film, but you didn’t notice a difference in quality, but that got quickly better by the time I left. And now, digital is-I read a lot of photo stuff and you get people talk about (imitating) “Oh, film.” No. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. The digital quality is better I can say that as a stone-cold fact. You’ve got that. It’s better to start with and it’s quicker, and you can look at it, and you can edit it. If you got the slide, you’ve got the slide. It was harder to get the slide. Back in the day they called it “delivering a clean chrome.” The slide you gave was as perfect as you could get it. Well now, for god’s sake, you got five and six stops of latitude for exposure and color balance and get rid of the grain and blah blah blah. Does someone have a pimple (poof sound) it’s gone.

MJ: Since you mentioned venues for photography, did you have venues on campus that you preferred to others? Is it always about lights?

DS: Yeah. The campus is pretty, it’s easy to shoot. It’s like those old dormitories we ran across [referring to photographs in the Dick Schwarze Collection in the Archives]. If it’s a junky setting, what’s the point? But I can’t think of any-it’s mostly the amount of light and the quality of the light. So, you’ve been to the Convocation Center? That big lobby out front with the windows that look at to the football field? Well, when they first opened that, they thought wouldn’t it be cool if we had podium backed up to that window so that the people at the event would see out the window. Well, here’s a clue. All the people on the podium are backlit, how am I supposed to shoot them? So now we shoot them at the end. So, it’s little things, I can’t think of any place that place that was horrid to shoot. When they did the gymnastics in Warner, because they had like six lightbulbs forty feet up on the ceiling, so there was no light. To shoot in color in Bowen was bad because the old lights that they used, which were GE Lucalox lights.

They were orange and there was no filter you could use and even if you did, there was a filter for the color of the light, but it was a three-stop filter. So, you're in a fieldhouse where you can just barely shoot the action because the color film would only go up to like ASA 400 or so. And then you put a three-stop filter on it to correct for light and you couldn't do it. It was horrid.

MJ: I saw this photo you took of Erich Goldschmidt playing the organ. I love that photo because that organ is so impressive especially when you have someone sitting there playing. How was it shooting in Pease?

DS: Pease is not bad. It's way better now. Most of what was going on in Pease was either somebody on stage with a microphone in his face or some artsy event. The lighting might not be perfect, but it had that artsy fartsy look to it. So that helped even if the stuff would be grainy because you would be pushing the film to beat the band. But you'd get a nice-the Alvin Ailey dance company came and somewhere there's a picture of a black guy in leotard and he's in the spotlight on the stage. It's a little out of focus, and he's a little blurred because he's moving, but in that kind of light, it looks cool. So that kind of light is fine to deal with.

MJ: I think also, I've had to digitize a lot of sound recordings for the archives and I've heard Erich Goldschmidt play a lot. It was nice to see what he looked like when he was playing that organ. I found a nomination for you for the gold medal award-Gold Medallion award and it's for people who have contributed a lot for the success of EMU and it's from '98. The nominator, whose name wasn't on the form, said "Dick is a like a rubber band. He twists, turns and stretches every way possible to service the university, departments, faculty and staff needs. He adjusts his perspective to world the world of teacher, researcher, celebrity, statesman, student and family in order to best represent them in his photographic images." That sounds like a lot of responsibility to me. If you set that kind of precedent in terms of what you mean to people in this place, it just seems like you could get tired. How did you serve that many people and that many capacities?

DS: Every photographer that I know that works with people does that. When I freelanced, it was the same way. You walk into somebody's small business. You have to quickly establish a rapport with them, find out what's important to them and then figure out how to take a picture. It's the same way as doing the stuff on campus. You can't just walk in as a New York photographer with a black turtleneck and expect people to kiss your ass - that's not the way it works. You have to go in and figure out why am I here, what do they want to show, what have I been told the university wants to show, and it's not hard. I've only run into, in the whole time I was here, a small handful of people that I felt like saying "screw you, I'm leaving" Everybody's pretty cool.

MJ: You mentioned, you had to take into consideration what the university wants you to shoot. Is taking pictures for a university like Eastern is it a place where you want to try to have some creative control. Or do they guide you the whole time?

DS: They mostly let you alone. I would certainly get an assignment go here shoot this. But how I did it, I can't really think of how I did it. That was really up to me, and I can't think off the top of my head of any assignment or something where they said "no this isn't going to work." So, no. that part was easy. You do a lot of dumb stuff, like grip and grins that no cares about but somebody cares about it because they are giving you money. Then instead of trying get a really good photograph what are you trying to

do is make the rich guy and the president look good individually. And that's a matter of just kissing some ass. That's just part of the job. That's what you do. The button pushing part is easy it's doing that. So, you just do it.

MJ: There is one photograph, there's another of you're at a football game and it's in your favorites that you chose. It's of two referees

DS: With the FU?

MJ: Yes, I was amazed that the caption made no mention of the FU. If I bring this up maybe he didn't mean it.

DS: It's funny because I didn't notice that. I was walking down the sideline and the band director, it might have been Dave Woike. The action's going and I don't know if we kicked or threw a pass but I was going from down from this end and I'm going down the sideline and the band director is like (imitates laughter) and I go (imitates camera shutter) and that was the end of it. Could you send me a copy of that? People have asked for it.

MJ: Yes, I love it. I wonder if you ever do that in any other photos, if there's any hidden humor.

DS: No because the thing that was always nice about working here is that even though I worked for a boss, I didn't work for like Larry [Laurence Smith]. I didn't have to worry if Larry didn't like something, he could bitch to my boss, but Larry couldn't do anything. I always saw my job as being to show Eastern as a whole in the best light. So, I would have never really done, like that FU photo, up until I left, never saw the light of day. You certainly would never run that in a media guide or any of that. That was a joke photo that was used once. You have to be careful about that.

MJ: We are getting towards the end here, but that same nomination letter for the Gold Medallion Award, I think it was written by Kathleen Tinney, and she was negotiating for a pay raise. Part of that was she said "Dick has to battle for parking like everybody else." You were part time?

DS: No.

MJ: Full time. Okay. The impression I got out of that was "who doesn't have to battle for parking?" Did you ever feel underappreciated?

DS: Overall no, but yeah. I pull in here at 7:15 in the morning, I got a place to park. If I have to go off campus during the day, I leave, I could be just like everybody else carrying that crap back half way across campus. Especially when you would find people whose jobs were not quite so demanding who did have reserved parking.

MJ: Someone who hasn't been here for 36 years?

DS: That's just small stuff. Like the vacation and stuff, I was treated pretty well. I stayed here long enough.

- MJ: Who was Kathleen Tinney? She was Director of Information Service after Stadtfeld-
- DS: When I got here, Kathy was a writer in the office. I don't remember the exact timeline she'd be easily traceable because she was an assistant VP when she got axed.
- MJ: When she was axed?
- DS: When Fallon [Former University President John Fallon] was here. At that time, Kathy was working for Juanita [Former VP of University Relations Juanita Reed] and they both got canned. Kathy had been here I think as a student-no. She went to Michigan. She was working in the old house when I got here. When Curt left, Dick Kerr, who was the editor of the Ypsi Press and a long time Ypsi mover shaker guy, got that job. He got broomed after two or three years. Kathy moved up into the Info Services job and then she moved up through administration. She did a lot of stuff here. She was always good to me but she was a person who there again had absolutely no ego. If her boss said 'we need this by the end of the day' it got done. But it was infuriating to a lot of people because she seemed kind of imperious because she did that to a lot of people. She would come in at four on Friday afternoon and say "I need this Monday." That's not good. It's kind of like Sheldon on *The Big Bang Theory*, she didn't do it to be mean or bitchy. She just knew it needed to be done and that was the end of it. She could come across as, not heartless, but insensitive. She was always great to me. She's stuck up for me.
- MJ: She was writing a lot. There's a long communication between Kathy and June Davis, Director of Personnel Services, and Wayne Douglas who was Associate Vice President for Administration. She was going after them and I was kind of amazed at how many letters there were from her back at them. It seemed like ping pong.
- DS: She was trying to elevate the position to more than it was and HR wasn't having any of it.
- MJ: She was saying-this in '81 actually. She's telling them over and over and over and she's telling them if you went anywhere else, you would be getting double what you get here. Towards the ends of these interviews, I always ask people why they stayed so long at EMU. I guess if you could have made more money anywhere else, why did you stay at Eastern so long?
- DS: Well it's a good place to work. After I'd been here awhile, people let me alone. So, it was kind of like sheltered employment. I came in, I kept my own calendar, I had my own phone line. People would call me and I'd say "sure I'll be up tomorrow afternoon" or "sorry I can't help you." The job was fun, I mean I tell people I was a photographer and the first thing they say is "that must have been a fun job." Well yeah! Fallon said the same thing. He said "the beauty at a university is they're generally pretty places and you get to work with a lot of smart nice people." Ta-da. I was always low enough on the food chain that I never had to worry about getting stabbed in the back and all that administrative stuff-nah. It was fine.
- MJ: Fallon is another person who doesn't get a whole lot of positive coverage. What did you think of him?
- DS: There again. He was the president, I was just the boy. He was always nice to me. He came at a difficult time. Not knowing any of the specifics but I get the feeling he thought he was a better manager and was

better connected in Lansing than turned out to be the fact. But Glenna could tell you that, I don't know that. I think that's why he let Juanita go. He thought he could do a better job in Lansing. I don't know. He was fine to deal with.

MJ: Any presidents you prefer more than other? Everyone seems to glow when you talk about John Porter.

DS: Oh yeah. I do know people who worked for him that found him too much like a school teacher. But he *was* a school teacher. To watch him-his public persona was kind of stiff. He wasn't a great speaker but you watched John with a bunch of students, unbelievable. He was a teacher and he had that whole philosophy even when he was "the man." He was a Michigan guy, he had been superintendent of public instruction. He was a teacher at heart and he had his heart in Michigan, this was a good fit for him.

MJ: I don't think about administrators or university presidents ever being around a bunch of students, even though it seems like that's where they belong. That's not where I see them in offices with other administrators.

DS: No it's more that way. I can remember when we hired Shelton. He was a great guy, personable guy, kind of Bill Clinton-y kind of guy-good looking guy. "Hi how you doing?" But I can remember when we hired him and my boss Rita wanted to drag him around campus and introduce him to students. Instead of just taking him, there was me and Rita and couple other flunkies. She's shepherding him around and she takes him to one of the lounges in the dorms "Hi I'm Bill Shelton" blah blah blah. After all of the (blabbering sounds) had moved on and out and I was getting names of all of the students that he'd talk to. This girl says "who's that?" Come on, nobody cares. What connection does the student have with the president? Zero. Porter was of all the guys, interested in students as students and whole process of teaching. It was kind of cool.

MJ: Was it strange at all that there has been such a quick succession for presidents since 2000? Do you have to keep getting assignments to take president photos?

DS: Yeah you do. I mean more, because he's the president. But it's the same as if you hire the new dean. You get a headshot in the studio, you get the informal shots, you get office pictures of him at the desk on the phone blah blah blah. We did all of that.

MJ: why do you think it's changing so much? I mean for so long you had McKenny who was here forever, Elliot who was here forever, Sponberg, Shelton, Porter.

DS: It used to be a more academic thing. Now it's all money. Those poor bastards have to be an administrator, run all that stuff. Forever going to Lansing, going to DC. All of the politicians on the west side of state are hostile to public education across the board. You have to deal with all of that. Your budgets are getting whacked. It's a hard job and at a school like Eastern, they're not making much. I mean yeah, I'd be happy with what they make, but not for what they do, when right down the road it's double or triple or quadruple. But what do they make 250 or something like that? But that's not a lot of money for what they have to put up with. You got politicians, you got the board to deal with, you got the whole board to deal with it, you got a faculty with whiny people. I think people burn out. We've got an appointed board. Pros and cons. I don't know. I think it's a hard, essentially thankless job. It's hard in a

school like Eastern because we're small. We're a second-tier school. You don't have Rose Bowl championships and you don't have a brand new nuclear reactor you can parade around. Even if you do a good job, it doesn't look like you've done a good job. I think it would be hard.

MJ: That is an interesting perspective and way to put it. You have a such a unique job here there's just one of you, right?

DS: And then Randy. Randy had the same position for ten years. He took over when I left and they broomed him and John ([John Rice-university videographer](#)) two years ago. Ten-ish, eleven-ish years.

MJ: With that unique position what do you think are the strengths of EMU?

DS: I would say it sounds corny but by and large we really do care about students. All the faculty that I have, not all, but most of the faculty have an open door-ish policy. If you want to get involved, this is a good place to do it. The numbers are big 25 [thousand] or whatever we say, that number floats. But it sounds bigger than it is. If you want to go knock on a door, I'm relatively certain that any faculty person would help you out here. You can't beat that with a stick, especially for undergrad. If you want to specialize and you need physics lab and stuff like that, stuff we can't afford, well fine. But just to get your four years in this is a perfect spot. It's hard to beat and we've been conscious about doing that. We're sort of a first-generation school, so we get a bad rep for that "maybe the incoming grade point-blah blah blah", well we're not Harvard. We're here to get people on the road. So, we're good at that.

MJ: Rings a bell because when I came, I was out of college for 15 years and came back on a whim. I'm just gonna walk around campus middle of the summer, no one's here. I was 36 years old and just looked lost and ran into history faculty and I wanted to be in history "you look lost what are you doing?" I was like "I don't know what I'm doing." He said "what do you want to go to school for?" I said history. And he said "come with me" we went to Pray Harrold and I was in Richard Nation's office with him talking about a path through school and the next fall, I signed up. Everything you said, it's that inclusive.

DS: That speaks to the whole. Everybody I ever worked with, and Larry was the same way, whatever your job here is, if you're walking through campus and you see people staring at those stupid maps, you say "what are you looking for?" Everybody does that. It's just that kind of a place. I'm not surprised at all that someone would do that.

MJ: Any weaknesses of EMU in your opinion? DS: The stupid adherence to keeping the football team. We could take that money and that energy drop out of the MAC [[Mid-American Conference](#)], we've always been good at track. Nobody cares if you're in a league for track. Back when I started and Parks was still here, he was the head coach, we held invitational meets that everybody came to. Kansas came here. We were a track powerhouse. You could do all that without a big budget. I don't know. It's hard being the size we are. It's big enough to be a pain to manage but you don't have a lot of money and you don't have-I can't imagine going to Lansing when Michigan goes to Lansing, they're Michigan. Kiss me, I'm Michigan. We go, and we go hat and hand. That's hard. You got to justify everything-why do you need a new building? Why do you need money for this? Blah blah blah. That's hard to do and we're always fighting that catch up kind of a thing.

MJ: Do you think that will ever change?

DS: No I don't think so. My guess is that we were probably more prestigious back in the day, we were a premier education school back when people cared about that. I think people see us as a starter school. I want to say "what's wrong with that?" It's not like the degree you get and the education you get are in any way inferior. It's just we're a smaller school. So, what? I don't know. I think it would be hard to run this place.

MJ: It seems like a school is kind of what you make it. So many people we've interviewed, they think one of the strengths they think is it's a first-generation school and so the people who show up here maybe take it more seriously because they're the first. I don't see anything wrong with it being a starter school. Anything else you'd like to say on the record?

DS: No. On my way home, I'll think of something. I appreciate your asking, this was kind of fun. I don't know how helpful but sure.

MJ: Very helpful. Anybody else you can think of that we can talk to?

DS: I would get a hold of Jim Streeter. Before they all leave, and if you get a hold of Streeter, I would-the core campus and athletics have always been separated and since they've been physically separated, I can tell you that- I shot some stuff for one of the assistant football coaches years ago, he had never been to the main campus until we came to here to shoot. We're not a big football power, so you don't have the big every Saturday where everybody comes. There's the resentment from part of the faculty that money is dumped into football. There's a lot of separation between athletics and academics here. But athletics, like or not, is a big deal and it's got a parallel history in the timeline. I would find some of the coaches, if you can get a hold of Peter the swimming coach. I think Mike Jones is still in the area, a treasure, a genius coach. Anybody like that-Bob Parks. Trying to think-

MJ: We're talking to Gloria Neve and Geraldine Barnes and Bob Parks, but on the athletics side of things, that's all we have scheduled thus far.

DS: Ask them who to talk to. I would get ahold of Streeter because he was the sports editor of the Echo as a student. So, he's got a long history of who would be interesting to talk to. Maybe even alumnus, maybe players on the bowl team. I don't know. In terms of administrators and faculty, I don't know.

MJ: The athletics side of things would be nice.

DS: Even, you talk about a thankless job, all the people who work for the Physical Plant who get nothing but shit. Anything goes wrong in one of a hundred buildings on campus, they get yelled at. And they're working on a tight budget, like everyone else. I was walking through Pray Harrold, I think, so, my office, they were looking for a studio for me. They didn't want to put it where it was because they were going to make it offices and they were going to do it a different building. Some poor guy from the physical plant was stuck with trying to find a suitable space and we were walking through Pray Harrold, looking at vacant rooms and this and that. A faculty person, who shall remain nameless, comes down the hall. She comes around the corner and the first she does is light in to him about heating or something in

her office. And he said “nice to see you too Mary.” They get that all the time, they would know bits and pieces at least on the physical side of things that who else would know?

MJ: Good idea. I’ll see who I can contact because that would be good.

DS: There are a lot of-besides the trades guys, I had a standup desk that one of the guys stick built. Just a beautiful piece of furniture and who knows?

MJ: You still have that?

DS: No it was for the university. They had it built for me. But this guy just built it perfect. You’ve got all these guys.

MJ: Gems over there. Alright, well thank you again for coming.

DS: My pleasure

MJ: We appreciate it greatly. I’m goanna stop the tape here

DS: Okay.