TRANSCRIPTION RE:

CSUMB Founding Faculty
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Rina Benmayor, Project Director

Interview with Steven Levinson, Lecturer
Teledramatic Arts and Technology
School of Cinematic Arts and Technology Arts
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Interviewer, Kristen La Follette
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Narrator: Steven Levinson
Interviewer: Kristen La Follette

La Follette: Okay. So today is Thursday, January 10, 2019. I'm here with Steven Levinson at his house in Schoonover Park. And this is Kristen La Follette. I'm interviewing him for the CSUMB Faculty Oral History Project. So thanks, Steven. Like I said, like anything like you feel comfortable sharing, please do. And if you don't, not a problem.

Levinson: Okay.

La Follette: So actually what I always do like when I start an interview is I ask people to share their full name and tell me if there's any story behind how they got their name.

Levinson: Their name?

La Follette: Yeah, and if there is any meaning behind it.

Levinson: My name is Steven Hugh Levinson. No major story. My parents are both Jewish. I grew up Jewish. Levinson is a very classically Jewish name. I believe my middle name, the first initial H is in honor of my Uncle Henry. Apparently my parents sort of gave us all middle names related to some relative indirectly. That's really all I know about the name.

La Follette: Yeah. Could you tell me about where you grew up, like the neighborhood you grew up in and the time period.

Levinson: Okay. Well, I was born in 1959 and I'm 59 so there's some mysterious connection. I grew up in Berkeley, California and as being born in 1959 I sort of grew up in the 60's in Berkeley, California. And that's sort of very definitive for who I ended up becoming or have yet to become, your choice. So it was a very radical time in Berkeley and my parents and family were very involved in much of the radical activity, although more Oakland than Berkeley in terms of the radical activity they were

involved in. The specific neighborhood I grew up in was mostly Black people on the immediate block I was in. And then white people on the other side of Dwight [Way]. That seemed to be the demarcation for my childhood although I believe there's only one Black person living on my block now which is interesting, now that I think about it. So that's pretty much where I grew up. It was radical Berkeley in a primarily Black block.

[3:55] La Follette: Yeah, I actually wanted to ask about your parents because they were so like – oh, I should mention there's a dog in the background.

Levinson: I'd put the dog outside except I think he'd make more noise.

La Follette: That's totally fine. Yeah, I wanted to ask about your parents because they were really involved in a lot of things.

Levinson: Yeah. The reason we're in Berkeley actually is because my father was working for a union as an engineer on the East Coast and they sort of assigned him out here essentially to do union work at the Chevron Oil factory in Richmond. My father was an engineer at the time. I could have had a nice much higher middle class upbringing if he'd stayed an engineer. [Chuckles] Being socially conscious and all he decided to become a teacher so we ended up lower middle class for the rest of my childhood. I've never forgiven him for that. That was the reason they came to the Bay Area, it was by basically union activity. But he left the engineer – I guess he left the union, too, he must have – and he became a teacher. But it was sort of political belief that brought them to California. They were very involved my entire childhood. They met in I believe the University of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh, both in college there. She was an English major. I'm not sure what he was, actually. He ended up becoming a math teacher and he taught in West Oakland for probably close to 30 years. So he became kind of legendary in West Oakland as a teacher in essentially all Black schools. Lowell was the one I remember mostly, Lowell Middle School. And he was there so long, people he taught became teachers there, he had children of people he taught. There's a man named John Noble who I know still, who was in the first class he was ever in and [Chuckles]

put glue in Dad's chair before Dad came in, actually. I've heard this story both from Dad and from John Noble. And when Dad came in he sat down, he couldn't take the chair off. So John Noble actually had to buy him a new pair of pants and fix the chair, and has become a life long friend of my family's. I'm still in touch with him, actually.

La Follette: Wow.

[6:52] Levinson: And then so my parents had been members of the Communist Party. My mother always blamed my dad for not leaving the Communist Party early enough when things got strange in Russia and the Communist Party got a little less than community-aware. Then they came here. In '69, '70, '71 they were very connected to the Black Panther Party. I'm still connected to former Panthers myself. Later on my brother got and died of AIDS and my parents were very involved in the Names Project, the quilt, which was in San Francisco at the time and is now in Atlanta. So my parents were sort of very involved in political activity my entire childhood. Not so much sort of the Berkeley hippie movement or Free Speech Movement but very connected to sort of the Oakland Panther movement. My parents basically in 1969 founded the National Committee to Combat Fascism. NCCF. It was originally NCCF, National Committee to Combat Fascism, which worked very closely with the Panthers. In fact, on a number of summers my family would take trips to various Panther communties and then through the Panther communities find local white allies and create chapters of what was originally NCCF. Although we misspelled committee and Tom Hayden pointed out to us at one point that our sign on the front door I think only had one "m". And so we had to cut the sign and add an "M" and move it over because Tom Hayden could spell. So they were very involved in that for a long time. They knew all of the main Panthers. Very good friends with Bobby Seale, especially. Eldridge, we knew a little bit and then he left the country. Huey, we knew a little bit and then he went to jail. So Bobby was sort of Bobby, David Hilliard, people like that were sort of the more ongoing presences because they were the people running the Party on a national level at that time. So they were very involved in politics my entire childhood.

[9:29] La Follette: Yeah, so how do you think that might have influenced what you were interested in and aware of?

Levinson: Well, a major influence. I'm still very politically involved. I think it's the reason I became a good Service Learning teacher in terms of CSUMB history and expectations because I mean Service Learning to me was just part of who I was. A lot of teachers come to Service Learning without a real emotional commitment to it. It's just a class they're offered to teach. For me it was a class that I had grown up in, that was I felt an emotional commitment to the need for community service because of who my parents had been. Because of what I had done as a child and who I was. So I think that very strongly related to my coming to CSUMB in the first place, and then being involved in CSUMB as an institution that tries to connect to the community, because I had always grown up in community aware families, been involved in various community organizations. So when I came here being part of a local community was just natural to me. So teaching Service Learning became as much an emotional commitment as an academic commitment.

La Follette: Actually you are leading right into my next question. I know it jumps from your childhood to work but yeah, I was wondering how you first heard about CSUMB and how you came here.

Levinson: I've been expecting that one.

La Follette: Yeah, like what brought you here?

Levinson: God, what year was that. So it must have been '96. Probably February or March. Well, to back up just a bit, I'd been at San Francisco State University getting my Master's Degree in Radio and Television which was I think '93, '94, '95, something like that. I sort of had heard that there was something happening in Monterey within the CSU system. It was just sort of in the air. You just sort of people knew that something was happening down there. And that was about as vague as anybody did. But I was aware that there was a CSU developing down there somehow. I knew nothing about it. Then in I guess '96 something like March or April there was a conference in Berkeley, the National Association of Media Arts

and Culture, NAMAC, which is sort of a somewhat progressive media culture/arty kind of an organization. I don't even know if they still exist. But it looked interesting, given my media background and my political background I just was curious what it was. So I just went to it. It was at a hotel in Berkeley. And when I was there, I just went and showed up and somehow mentioned to somebody that I had some skills and I ended up actually [Chuckles] being responsible for audio recording a lot of the workshop. So I ended up actually – I don't know if I went to very many workshops because I was running around checking on all the technology, it turned out. But while I was there there was a table from CSUMB. With some catalogs and a man was … at the table. I cannot remember his name. He was not faculty. He was sort of a computer staff person for HCOM [Humanities and Communication], I believe, very early on. And he didn't last much longer. Very few people at that point lasted much longer. But I just talked to him. I'd just graduated. I had been TA'ing [teaching assistant] in San Francisco State for a year. I knew that was all about to end or maybe already had. I was looking for a job. I was interviewing at a couple of different schools at that point, mostly community colleges. And he told me that there was a faculty member there giving a workshop, which turned out to be [George] Baldwin. So to my credit I still came to the school even after meeting him. He was odd but he talked a little bit about what the school was trying to do. And then I flipped through the catalog and I noticed that there was this department called Teledramatic Arts and Technology which is a phrase neither I nor anybody else in the world had heard at that point. And it was run by Luis Valdez. Now, I had had something of a history in *teatro* at that point because while I was in San Francisco and at San Francisco State I'd worked with the San Francisco group, Teatro Latino run by Carlos Barón. And Teatro Latino was sort of one of the grandchildren or children of Teatro Campesino. So I knew Luis by reputation. I knew a number of people who had worked with him. So I had this sort of shared Teatro connection to him. So when I saw that he was running this program at CSU, I was like, "Well, that's a possibility. There's a connection there." So I just sent off a letter to him. I believe I also sent one just sort of randomly to like

HR [Human Resources] or something and then one directly to the department. I read that letter actually a couple of years ago and it was a pretty good letter. So he didn't have –

La Follette: What did you put in the letter?

[15:31] Levinson: Well, just that, you know, I had this degree in Television and Radio. I had experience in Teatro. I was community involved. There was a political connection. I don't even know. I wonder if I still have it somewhere. But in retrospect it was a letter that would have interested him. I first got sort of an automatic reject letter from the HR which was more than I expected. I expected never to hear from them again. I also assumed that without a Ph.D. I would never be able to work at a CSU. That was my sense at the time. I had assumed I would end up teaching community college. That had been my goal. In fact, that year I'd started teaching at Laney Community College in Oakland. So I was teaching a television production class in Laney. Then I simultaneously applied for this – I mean not a specific position. I just said, you know, I'd love to help teach. I believe I got a phone call in July from a woman named Tila Long who was sort of the front office admin for what was then the Teledramatic Arts and Technology department. She said was I available the next day [Chuckles] for an interview. Seriously. I believe I had a glass of wine in about three minutes and then sort of … I think it was a phone call, actually. And then I called her back and said, "Sure." I had no idea how to get there. I actually drove down the coast. [Chuckles] So it took like three and a half hours or something because I went through San Francisco and down [Hwy] 1 because it was like the only way – I thought Monterey was on the coast, I should drive down the coast. I didn't look at a map. [Chuckles] I just got in the car. She said that there would be actually an army guard post still up. It actually had just been torn down, I guess, because it wasn't there when I got there. And I had an interview with Luis Valdez and two of his cohorts, Marilyn Cardinale and Phil Esparza. We were in this big empty room in what I later found out had been basically sort of an office building with an armory in the back of it. It was a big, empty room. It must have been early July. No, early August because school was about to start. And at that point there was sort of no … there was really no Human Resources of any

kind. So there was no structure to the questions. There was no standard for conversation. There was – none of that. So we basically just chatted for over an hour about politics and theater and people we knew. I remember we talked about Wes Connerly for a while who was a Black Republican academic back then. I mean we barely discussed any sort of academic structure or class expectations or anything. But it was a lot of fun. It was a fun conversation. And actually critical to my getting hired, it turned out was I had done a radio show at San Francisco State, which had a big radio station, KSFS, called Ethnic Voices in which every week was sort of a different ethnicity and I would have sort of a poet-artist at the beginning and then sort of a professor-academic trying to make some very complicated connection about cultural identity. One of them had been about the Filipino community. So I knew a fair amount about Filipinos in California, which is not, you know, a normal topic of knowledge. And Marilyn Abad Cardinale turned out was Filipina. And she told me later that I kind of got hired because I knew something about Filipinos and nobody knows anything about Filipinos. That actually turned out to be quite critical. It was almost more my Filipino understanding than my Latino cultural background as far as Marilyn was concerned. So I left that, drove home and it was like I was thinking to myself, "Well, that was a lot of fun." I still don't have a Ph.D., so I still sort of assumed it was hopeless. I did not know at the time that I was the most educated person at the table. Phil Esparza I don't believe ever graduated from college. Luis had a Bachelor's degree. I don't think Luis had a Master's at that point. Do you know for sure one way or the other?

La Follette: I'd have to look it up but I think you're probably right.

[21:27] Levinson: But he did have some honorary doctorates, I know. And he actually had taught at San Jose State already by the time I got to know him. He certainly did not have a Ph.D. So I was at least as educated as everybody else at the table which I did not know at the time. But still, my understanding was you needed a Ph.D. to teach at a university and I was like well, okay. And then I went home and started to look for a real job. I then got a phone call, I believe, from Tila like a week or two later, quite fast, saying, "Ready to go to work?" This was like a few weeks later. Now, I didn't know at the time that CSUMB was

being swamped with applications from all across the country. They put out the Vision Statement which is quite amazing. We can talk more about that later. But it had attracted, you know, socially aware people and community oriented faculty from all across the country. They were getting hundreds of resumes every day, I believe, back then. But, I knew something about Filipinos in California. So they offered me a job, which was complicated because one, school was about to start. Two, I was teaching at Laney that week – that semester. So they – this was also something you could do in 1996 at CSUMB that should not have been possible --, they basically rearranged their entire class schedule to give me some classes. So I ended up with the following schedule that semester. I was teaching at Laney on Tuesday and Thursday. I was teaching at CSUMB Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. So I ended up essentially driving between Monterey and the Bay Area virtually every single day of the week. That semester I taught an introductory television class with no cameras, no editing, no equipment whatsoever in an empty room. Oh. [Chuckles] I forgot one point. So when I had this interview with these three people in early July, or early August, because it was the same month that the school opened --, which was I had missed two semesters of the University at that point --, Luis told me that this was going to be a television studio by the end of the month. There were no drop floors, there were no cables, there were no lighting grids. There was absolutely nothing in that room. So I just looked around and I thought, "These people don't know what a television studio is." I did not say that in the interview. That room actually never became a television studio. They did put a set up in it at one point and it sort of became a sound stage but it never became any sort of structured television studio. So then I got this phone call to come and start work and I was teaching a Television class, a Photoshop class and something else. Three classes. I don't remember what the other one was. I think it was another Adobe product, which I barely knew. You know, I'm not a graphic designer, I should not be teaching Photoshop even now. But I started teaching Photoshop and basically what I would do is at some time early in the week I would open up Photoshop and find something interesting and then that's what I would teach that week. Now some of the students in that class have gone on to do digital

design for Hollywood movies. Not because they took my class. [Laughs] But it was very, very complicated because I remember an incredible mix of students. Some young, bright Asian white guys who just ate this shit up and knew it better than I did before I finished lecturing. And then some older women who would be in tears three hours later. It was just – it was a very strange mix. It was also interesting because that semester I ended up sort of teaching essentially the same class to two different groups of people. In Laney I was teaching sort of a highly diverse Oakland, you know, relatively poor group. And then a bunch of, you know, white kids in Monterey which was quite interesting. After that semester, I pretty much sort of went full time at CSUMB and just stopped teaching at Laney.

[26:52] La Follette: How did you make that decision?

Levinson: Well, you know, the CSU had more status. I don't remember what the pay situation was but it was also more classes. And there was an excitement to being at CSUMB. We were creating a world, on some level. You know, there would be these great meetings with essentially every faculty member on campus. I remember one, it was every faculty member on campus in what eventually became the University Center. At that point it was called The Pomeroy. This huge room which is now essentially where the conference rooms are. It used to be one huge open space. I was the only white man in the room at that point. I mean there were some others who I think showed up later to the meeting but there was a moment when I was the only white man in this room -- Rina was in that room --, which is kind of surprising given the lack of Black people historically at the University. So it must have been a lot of Latinos primarily and women I guess. But I essentially went full time at the University at that point. I was hired as a Lecturer, which never stopped. Twice, I think, I tried to get a tenure track position and didn't get very far. But at that point I just sort of stayed at CSUMB.

La Follette: Kind of going back to your first impressions of coming here, too, I mean after being in such a politically engaged environment you are coming to an old military base.

[29:07} Levinson: I mean there were two issues going on. One was sort of the development of this world that we called CSUMB. And there was an excitement of having all these faculty from all these diverse and political backgrounds, interested in developing an institution that really cares about the community, that has a Vision Statement that actually refers to working class people and that happened to be on an old military base. So, you know, I grew up essentially in the anti-war and political movements of the East Bay so being on a military base was strange. And that led to my interest in just the Fort Ord history. And I I just started wandering into buildings and looking for remnants of the military history. But there was just this incredible excitement to being part of this relatively small group of people. And at that point it was very small. Every faculty member, we'd have meetings with all of us in one room. I knew everybody. I'd go out to dinner with Gerald [Shenk] from HCOM [SBS]. And Angie [Tran] from Global Studies. And you just sort of knew everybody back then. It wasn't as divided into little worlds as it is now, as most universities are. You know, you generally know your department and that's about it. Maybe your school. Back then we didn't really differentiate. It was just CSUMB and we were all in this together trying to make this chaotic mess actually work as a functioning institution. I would answer phones. I'd sit in the office. You'd be on campus for ten hours a day. I was a Lecturer who was on hiring committees. That's probably unheard of now. So there was just this huge energy around all of us together trying to both turn this into something that we wanted it to be, and just make it work. There were very few rules, which had advantages and disadvantages. I mean for students who were driven and independent and super creative it was a dream. [Laughs] But that wasn't true of everybody. I remember one student who had grown up in the Bahamas. You know, very British, very standard, very traditional educational system and she said, "Don't ask me what I want, just teach me something." That's almost a direct quote. I mean she couldn't handle the independence. That's not what she wanted. She was used to a school that had a faculty member in a particular uniform who would lecture and she would write it down and she would give it back to her. Probably him. So for her it was a complete catastrophe. I don't think I ever saw her again actually after that,

cause we were trying all kinds of interesting things. The whole idea of not course-based education, you know, outcomes based. You would get credit for your knowledge not specifically how you acquired that knowledge. That was something that was hard for us to sort of grasp. I mean I think I understood it more from a community awareness standpoint, from an access to community knowledge, from a recognition of students bringing material to the classroom. So I think my community background helped me to appreciate that more so than people who had much stronger academic credentials than me. It was very hard for people. And Joe Larkin -- who I think you are not able to talk to because he refuses, although you should really try and I told him he should talk to you --, he was very instrumental, he and Christine Sleeter. [Chuckles] I didn't know they were married at first, although I do remember a meeting. I was there with Christine, Joe shows up late and he says hello to her. And I turn around and said, "Why didn't he say hello to anybody else?" And they all were like, "Because they're married, you idiot." [Laughs] But, I mean, I remember workshops he did about what is an outcomes based grading policy, because that was very, very difficult. I don't know if you want me to spend a couple of minutes on this.

La Follette: That would be great to hear about.

[33:54] Levinson: So essentially at that point we were supposed to be able to give people credit for the knowledge they had. We never did a very good job of it structurally. So for example, at New College in San Francisco you can get massive numbers of units if you can prove to them you know something. My sister-in-law who had done theater in Cuba wrote a whole paper about that and got like ten units just immediately handed to her that she didn't pay for that just were … I don't remember the number of units but she got college credit because of the theater work she had done in Cuba. We never quite got to that successful an application of it. We were supposed to be able to give people sort of college units for information they had. So if somebody came to me and said, "Look, I've worked in a television studio for 15 years, I don't need this class I could sort of give them the class credit without them actually doing the class. Now they still had to pay for the units, they still had to sign up, it still had to be on their schedule as I

recall. So structurally it wasn't as effective as New College's very clearly defined presentation of units for knowledge. But then it became like what grade do you give this person or what amount of knowledge do they have to have? And this is where Joe Larkin became super helpful because he would point out to us that, "Look, if you take the class and you get a C you have passed that class. You have proven that you have sufficient knowledge to go on to the next level." Now most people at that point were demanding incredibly high standards for an outcomes based grade. I mean virtually you had to be brilliant deserving of an A+ in order to be allowed to do this. He would point out that that's completely unfair. Realistically all they had to prove to us was that they had a C, that they had the basic knowledge to pass the class, that should be sufficient that they have met the outcomes expected of that class, the basic knowledge that they would need to effectively move into an upper level or implement that or whatever else. So that was a critical lesson I remember getting from Joe Larkin. But still on a University structural level we never really implemented plans that really allowed that to work. There was just too much of a CSU structure of units and you know, you have to pay so much to get so much units for each semester. We really had no CSU structural process by which we could give units to somebody, which I always wanted to be able to do. You know, if somebody knew television production when they got here and they didn't need to take the Intro to Television class I should be able to give them the four units, and we can talk about why it's four units, and they shouldn't have to pay for it. It shouldn't have to be on their class schedule getting in the way of other possible classes when they weren't even really taking it. I mean we never really implemented it very well. It was a good idea, I think, and it was radical. But the problem is we sort of ran into the proscenium and you can't do experimental theater if there's a proscenium, the structure doesn't allow for it. This is from a Bill Irwin piece I saw a long time ago. But basically that's what we did, we ran into an academic proscenium. The structure of the space, the structure of the legality, the structure of the rules, the structure of standard CSU procedure, the structure of tuition, all of this didn't allow us to become as radical an outcomes based institution as we were trying to sort of publicly pretend to be. Aside from the confusion of

what outcomes is and having all these academics. I think I was sort of lucky not to have a strong academic background. You know. All the Ph.D.'s who were coming in who spent their years of slavery, I mean, tenure, it was much harder for them to adapt. Now fortunately we were getting sort of the more interesting, more radical, more open to ideas people. But still, you know, somebody who had been teaching somewhere for the last five years or ten years, it was hard for them to adjust to an outcomes based institution. So over time it just sort of became less and less radical. I don't even know if the word outcomes is allowed on campus anymore. But certainly there is no intent to be an outcomes based institution and we are very much a grade based, classroom based institution. I mean, Service Learning is arguably the remnant because the whole point of an outcomes based institution is the community has knowledge. That's essentially the understanding of it. And the community has knowledge that they can then impart to students and students can come to us from that community having learned something already. That they know it is what's important, not how they learned it. There was the whole concept of, you know, not being a seat-based educational system. I can't believe these terminologies are coming back to me. You know, you didn't have to have a group of students in chairs at tables listening to you talk in order to learn something. They can have learned those things in multiple ways and through multiple methods, and especially through some sort of access to community.

[40:00] La Follette: Well, yeah. So I was interested in asking about your Service Learning. Like you did the Community Oriented Media class, right?

Levinson: Right.

La Follette: Do you want to spend some time talking about Service Learning?

Levinson: Sure. So Service Learning has changed a lot and recently dramatically, but originally Service Learning was an idea wherein we would try and develop students who would have the value of community service as part of who they were. Part of this understanding is related to my study of military teaching as well. Sort of in both cases there was an intent of developing attitudes and values. It wasn't just

the impartation of skills. It was, "We will give you these skills but we also want to develop in you certain values and attitudes so that you apply those skills correctly." I don't think the University ever phrased it that clearly. I think the military did. But that's essentially what we were trying to do. So we wanted students who not only had the defined skills of a college education but who were committed members of the community, who were socially aware, who were knowledgeable about diversity and inequities of various kinds and we wanted them to implement their skills through that understanding over their life. And we would start that by having them get involved in the community which became this concept of Service **[41:58]** Learning. And at that point there were two Service Learning classes. You had an undergrad and … well, they were both undergrad but there was the lower level and the upper level. So the lower level would be when you were doing roughly your first two years when you were doing sort of your general classes without really knowing what your major is. You would take a Service Learning class and in that class you would get sort of a generic introduction to concepts of community, concepts of inequity, concepts of diversity, inequality. Hopefully a global understanding, although I think the University has always been very, very bad about developing a global understanding. But in your introductory class you do a lot of readings about inequity. You would do an awareness of community service and you would do some project or hours with some organization in the community. So hopefully you would be starting to implement an understanding of community service and social awareness. That was sort of the lower level. Then at the upper level, once you had chosen your major, if your major had it and not all did -- I don't think Psychology still does, certainly not within the last two or three years they didn't --, you would do a major-based Service Learning class. Now in this class it should be a class where you enhance your skills in whatever your chosen major was and then you would start to use that specific skill of that major in some service to the community in some sort of community defined need. That was also a critical element of Service Learning, the community defined need. It wasn't the white tower of the University going out and saying what this community is this production or that social awareness project or whatever. We would hopefully,

whenever possible, go to the community, work within some organization, have the organization determine what their need was and then we would help them fulfill that need. So as a then TAT-based Service Learning class -- it sort of changed over the years but originally we would do sort of video and audio media work for organizations. Which they often needed. You know, they all wanted a training video or they wanted a PSA or they wanted some sort of a television commercial. Or they wanted just a documentary about their issue. They all wanted some media support. So my students would go

[44:57] to the organization, hopefully learn from the organization what the need was and then produce some kind of a project in answer to that need. So they are both enhancing their technical skills of their given profession which is Television and Radio Production or Film Production while working within a community to serve a community need. So it should have two prongs of growing education. Then you would also have the classroom time wherein we would discuss sort of the more generic understanding of how your chosen major exists within the society. So when you're in a lower division class you learn sort of generally about inequity and diversity. In your upper division class, or your upper level class, you would sort of learn how those specific issues apply to your specific major. So in our major, which was Media and Film Production and Television Production there were questions of the presence of women in film, the role of advertising, the role of capitalism and so on. Corporate structures. Diversity in media. The role of people of color and women in the creation of media, the impact of images of these people on other people. So they were very clearly defined understandings of how inequity and social awareness should work within media. For me it was sort of the ethics class. Although there had been an Ethics requirement at CSUMB which didn't last for very long because again it was against California statute of what an education is. I am sure people told you when we got here we had twice as many expectations of our students as was legally allowed by Title VII, is it? I forget. But the State standard for what a college education is had a certain number of requirements. We had twice as many because our founders basically – everybody who threw out an idea it became a requirement. [Chuckles] And everybody had an Institute. But I had had an ethics class

in my Master's program and I thought that was particularly important for people making media. So I wanted my students to have an ethical understanding of the impact of the work they would be doing. You know, I think everybody needs some media literacy just so you are aware of the information you are constantly getting from various screens. But it was doubly important for my students who will be creating that information. So for me it was kind of an ethics class. You know, what is the impact. When you are writing a script, look at the creation of the woman character. What does it mean? How will that character when it appears on television impact people? So for me, it became important almost as an ethics parameter that my students really be aware of how social inequity affects media construction and how the media that then created is actually absorbed by the people who see it. So originally when I taught the class it was more of working with community organizations and creating projects for them. So we would do a documentary on ocean cleanup for Surfriders or whatever. Or a training video for Boys and Girls Club, that kind of thing. And I think those were two specific actual projects. Later on it became more of sort of we would work with after school programs and have the kids in the after school program create projects. So it was about giving students, or giving the young people the skills to create media in terms of using the technology. But for me, equally important was the awareness of media literacy. So I would give structures and encourage the students in my class that when they would go out to work with the young people in the Boys and Girls Club or the high school or whatever it was, that they at least be aware of the media literacy element of it. In some cases there would be discussions and there would be specific projects and assignments. But just the conversation around the editing process. You know, if a ten year old student in an after school program edits something, that inherently makes them more media literate, almost immediately. They become aware that in order to edit you need to make choices. You know, who do you show on this sentence? Is it a close up or a wide shot? You know, what is the power relationship of these two characters as you are cutting it together. So just the process of editing, of shooting and editing makes them more aware that when they are watching television that choices have been made. That, you know, they know

somebody decided to use that shot instead of a different shot. They know that somebody actually wrote those words on paper before that person spoke them. They know that somebody had to put a costume on that person and set them in this room. So just the process of creating media, hopefully with conversation going on about these things so that the middle school and high school students that we are working with automatically become more media literate. So I wanted my students to be media literate, both as absorbers of media like everybody else and more importantly as creators of media. But as teachers of young students, I wanted them to start imparting that knowledge to the young people they were teaching. So Service Learning became, as I was saying before, sort of an outlet to my own community background.

La Follette: It's interesting, you are jumping into some of the questions I was wondering about. Because you have that community radio background, what do you see as the unique intersection of or the unique qualities, I guess, of community service, media?

[51:51] Levinson: Well, I think to a certain extent it was sort of easier, [Chuckles], I think for us. You know, the math students are just going out and tutoring. You know. And in any of these majors you have the option for having a conversation. Again, I think it comes back to the teachers. You know, is that math teacher talking about why the majority of the students who need this tutoring are people of color? I don't think so. But that should be the conversation they're having. In any of these majors the ability to have that conversation is there. I mean, I have had many conversations with the Service Learning people about this over the years. Trying to give them [faculty] structures of how to teach the class is really not helpful. Unfortunately it's just who they are when they get there. But the classroom time of the Service Learning class is when you can really deal with those issues. And I don't think most Service Learning classes do that. I think the teachers really aren't emotionally committed and historically aware of the issue they are teaching. They sort of in some cases see it as a chance to just get credit for a class where the students aren't there much of the time. I know of Service Learning classes that would meet like for four weeks and then never meet again and the students would just go and down their hours in the community. My students, to

my credit and their pain, showed up for class every single week, every single class for the entire semester because I think in order for the Service Learning class to be effective you need to have those conversations. [Chuckles] At one point, at the end of one Service Learning class, that year we had a Spanish speaking commencement speaker who I believe was a Bishop or something from somewhere, but speaking in Spanish. He did not speak English. And some students in my class were complaining about that. [Chuckles] And I told them, "I think I just wasted an entire semester of Service Learning on you." I actually told them that. I think it still hurts them. Casey Richards was in that class. He told me years later that he never forgot that moment. So for me, with my community background it was really important to teach that. I forget exactly what your question was. But … what was the question?

La Follette: No, I think you answered it. Yeah. What makes working with TV, Radio and how that relates -

[54:44] Levinson: Oh, okay, right. I sort of answered that before. For me it was important that my students understand this as creators of media. I think everybody in the world, when they are in the sixth grade, should have a strong introduction to media literacy. And it should be required in all elementary schools. Everybody should have an understanding of how they are being impacted by the media they see. Even more important, I thought it was important for my students as creators to understand the impact they are going to be having on people. You know, the images they create, the characters they create, the words they put in different people's voices, they needed to understand. And you know, Service Learning is very difficult. A lot of students are highly resistant. You know, as far as they're concerned it's slave labor, they are being forced to go sit at some soup handout place for whatever hours and ladle soup into bowls and they just think they are being forced to do work that has no impact on them. I tried to be really clear that it was serving multiple purposes, both on a values and on the skills basis. I mean they were becoming more community aware, more committed to the importance of community service. And also they were developing their skills as video people. You know, if you have to teach it you have to know it better. In

many cases the distribution was even clearer. So if you are doing a PSA for this organization and they're gonna put it on television, that's a real world application. So I would express to my students that they were getting much stronger real world experience than in most production classes. You know, in all of my classes I tried to be clear about distribution, but in the Service Learning structure they are getting lots of real world experience. A lot of video production students and film production students have never had to really deal with a client and all the complexities of that. Or deal with budget limitations. Or deal with lack of communication of your partner, all of these things, which are real problems for real world people after they graduate. I'm like, "You have the advantage of running into all these problems now. You should appreciate the fact that this person didn't answer their phone for three days and you're having trouble getting the script done because that's what's going to happen." So from a skills based level, from a real world application of media skills they are getting great experience. While simultaneously developing an understanding of inequity and social justice in media, of the impact of media imagery, and they're getting more time on the camera. And so there should be these two columns of sort of attitude and values development as well as skills development because you are working in a real world structure with real world distribution and that gives you a different commitment to the project.

La Follette: Well, like in terms of then developing like especially your early classes, not just Service Learning but your others like TV and production classes did you have a certain goal in mind in terms of what you wanted to impart to your students or active in your students? Like did you have some intention in that or…?

[58:26] Levinson: Well, in Service Learning there was certainly some strong clarity on that. It's a great question because at that point, and I think to some extent still, there was virtually no support for classroom development. I mean now when people are hired they have like five days of workshops and things and meetings with different people and Service Learning tours of the community. When I got here, you were

told what room to show up in, when and that was pretty much it. [pause] So I wonder how I developed my first class. [Chuckles] I mean I'd taught at Laney for a semester – but that was basically a studio class.

La Follette: Well, and it doesn't have to be exactly your first class but just kind of early, in the early days.

Levinson: There was virtually no support. I mean I got no introduction to the University. None whatsoever. Like four or five years later, I actually went to one of the introductory meetings just because I thought I'd missed out. I remember at that point it was a three hour meeting with Dell Felder who was then the Provost. And that was all incoming faculty got, was that meeting. Now I think there's – I don't know what you got. But.

La Follette: Yeah, I was hired like two weeks before the semester and I had to move from

Levinson: So you didn't have much time.

La Follette: I didn't get to go to the … any of the meetings -

Levinson: But there was something that had happened for other people.

La Follette: Yeah.

Levinson: When I got hired there was absolutely nothing. A couple of years later there was like a meeting with the Provost for three hours. And I remember, because I'd been there, I ended up just talking more than listening for that whole period of time. Dell would raise some issue and I would like explain it to everybody. But there was virtually no HR. There was no support. There was no syllabus structure. There was absolutely nothing. So in retrospect, I don't even know how I did it. I mean I'm not even sure we had syllabi for my first couple of classes. I mean that seriously. It's quite possible we didn't. Oh, we had a camera. [Chuckles] I take it back. For my first Television class we had a camera. We had no editing. I remember shooting at midnight in the cafeteria for something because you could do that kind of thing back then. But none of that footage ever ended up anywhere. So I think we had no syllabus. We had no editing. I mean … it's hard to believe that any education was happening. Except I really tried to implement some

structure. I mean a number of students told me that I was the first class that actually had information in it. You know, they'd had two semesters of just freewheeling conversations with actually no real structure or presentation. But I had at least had a semester at Laney College and somebody at Laney might have given me a syllabus that I sort of used to begin with. So I actually tried to introduce the camera and introduce editing and introduce basic sort of technical skills whereas I think the first two semesters had been pretty much just visionary conversations and there hadn't been a whole lot of education going on. The syllabus developed over time but I'd just come out of school. I sort of knew what a television class… I just TA'd. I think I may have used San Francisco State's syllabus actually, is probably what I used, because I had been TA'ing at San Francisco State for like a year in their sort of Introductory Production class. So I probably used that as the basic structure. But I really wanted them to be actual classes, you know, with actual information and actual goals and maybe even tests [Chuckles] which I think were kind of missing at that point.

[1:03:11] La Follette: To kind of jump over, you had mentioned that you wanted to talk about the Vision.

Levinson: Oh. Yeah.

La Follette: What did the Vision Statement mean to you?

Levinson: Well, let me talk about how I taught it.

La Follette: Sure.

Levinson: For a period of time I taught a First Year Seminar. One of the requirements in the First Year Seminar was that you teach the Vision. And there was no … [Chuckles] structure or suggestion as to what that means, "teach the Vision." I know some teachers just taught it as an example of really bad writing, which was valid. What I would do is, going back to my sort of … in my analysis of the military I saw how it was critical with them to build attitudes and values. So it was like this is what this Vision is trying to do. So when we read the Vision look at, you know, specifically what are the values and attitudes it implies it wants the students to learn. And then we would discuss how were structures created to respond to

that. So within the Vision it talks about working class. It talks about being members of the community. So those are values and attitudes within the Vision. Out of that then grew the structure of a Service Learning class. So Service Learning class is a clear attempt to develop the attitudes and values in the students that the Vision Statement says we want to create. So for me the, Vision Statement was an indication of who we want our students to be. I would have my First Year Seminar students look at that and go, okay, what are the values here. You know, let's read the Vision. You know, it talks about community involvement. What does that mean? What is the structure that will develop that? And then I would also have my students go, "Well what is a value that you think should be in students and what is a structure that you would create to learn that." It was often something like independence, you know, that kind of thing that's not specifically in the Vision. I think it was certainly in the first years of the University. [Chuckles] I mean as a faculty member or as a student you had to be highly self-driven and highly independent. So for me the Vision was sort of a statement of who are the people we want our students to be. And then the school hopefully was an implementation of a process of making that person happen. And now as I understand it, that Vision is … is in the process of reconstruction.

La Follette: And how do you feel about that?

[1:06:34] Levinson: I don't know the details not being at the school. My impression is there is a rejection of a lot of the community awareness and working class and socially aware issues that were in the original Vision. So I was very upset and worried at first, especially from what I hear about the process of how that was presented. They had a full day workshop where basically a bunch of faculty said, "Yeah, we love this Vision." At the end of it the President basically said, "Okay, thanks, we're writing a new one." Were you at that? Anyway, from my understanding that's pretty much what happened. I've talked to a number of people who were there. So that was a very bad sign. Fortunately, the University is so chaotic and dysfunctional that they haven't actually gotten around to doing it. [Chuckles] So they are unfortunately stuck with the original Vision. Now my understanding is the President wants to call it the Legacy Vision

and there was a creation of a committee that was going to write a new Vision which I had some respect for some of the people I heard were supposed to be on it. But as far as I can tell, I'm not even sure if it's met. They certainly haven't written anything. I mean the original Vision was very badly written. The sentences were incredibly awkward. But the intent was radical and amazing, you know, and it attracted that original group of people who created this world of CSUMB. So … my .. I mean at this point after 23 years or whatever it is, just leave it alone since nobody ever looks at it anyway. And I tend to find, when we have these long meetings about what is our mission statement they tend to be a complete waste of time. So there's no reason to change it. If it were going to be changed I would say leave the ideas and improve the language and make it shorter potentially. I'm certainly not thrilled with a complete rewrite by a group of people who primarily weren't here. originally. Now I know this is a faculty oral history but there are certainly other people you should be talking to. You know, if you could get Steve Arvizu or Steve Reed. Everybody was named Steve back then.

La Follette: [Laughs]

Levinson: I remember walking into a room, in what was then University Advancement, and saying to a Steve, "Where's Steve?" And he said, "Which one?" That's true. That actually happened. And it was real.

[1:09:23] La Follette: I guess in terms of the intent of the Vision Statement how did you feel about the intent of it? And was it something that was achievable?

Levinson: I wasn't around for the writing of it. I believe Steve Arvizu wrote it. Do you know that that's the case? I'm not sure.

La Follette: I'd have to look.

Levinson: It would be interesting to try and talk to him, if that would be allowed, if he is still alive. Do you know who Steve Arvizu is? He was the Founding Provost. I mean, I think the intent was to sort of try and take a fairly progressive attitude about the world and apply it to an academic structure. You know, a

lot of the founding personnel were primarily Latino/Latina activists who had some academic connection but were not primarily academics. Which led to many things. One of which was a Vision Statement that was not terribly academic. And a Vision for a University that was intended to be very community oriented, very understanding of diversity, inherently aware of issues of social inequity, none of which are primary academic issues. I think that led to the creation of Service Learning and an insane language requirement and all kinds of other things. It also led to us having twice as many requirements as were legally allowed. So the lack of time and to a certain extent the lack of academic background became a problem. You know, you had Luis Valdez and Steve Arvizu and Susanna [Judith] Baca and [Suzanne] Lacy and all these amazing creators, all these visionary people who neither knew nor cared what an academic structure was. And that had problems as well as advantages. I mean the fact that they had six months to throw this together is utterly insane. The next university I think had five years. Or at least two full years. Normally it's at least five. You know, they had something like six months to open this up. And the dorms didn't have locks on them when the students showed up. I'm sure you've heard that story. So that's an example. You know, that led to this amazing bonding campground experience because, well, "We can't put them in the dorms, there's no locks and paint in them. So send them on a camping trip for two weeks. What the hell else do we do with them? I mean there's a group of them standing in the field. Where the fuck do we send them? Go camping." Then for years every incoming group of students would have this sort of bonding experience at a campground. So that's an example of dysfunction leading to visionary implementation to a certain extent. But I think there was a serious problem of having a group of people who had very little academic – I don't even think they looked at the State regulations. I don't even know if they knew they existed. You know, they would just go, "Wouldn't it be awesome if every student had to go work in the community. Let's create a class." You know, "Wouldn't it be awesome if everybody had two full years of a language. Let's create a requirement." No awareness that this is going to cut into how much math they get, you know, or how much science they get or how much history requirement. I think after two

years [Chuckles] we would have these workshops of like, "Well, hey, we've got to get rid of something, what are we getting rid of?" And you know, we'd draw…we'd have paper on the table and we'd draw tombstones, I remember that clearly, of what had to go. So… the Vision Statement was part of that. You know. It was incredibly visionary, it was incredibly radical. It was attracting independent academics from all across the country. But it really wasn't helping set up a functioning academic institution either.

La Follette: [pause] I might be jumping back before I want to jump into some other things, but like in terms of what attracted you to wanting to come here was it part of like the Vision or was it because it was such a new kind of interesting …?

[1:14:14] Levinson: One, I needed a job. I don't think I actually read the Vision at that point, early. You know, having Luis Valdez here was a huge draw, even though he tried to fire me six months later. [Chuckles] Which we can talk about if you want to.

La Follette: Sure. Yeah.

Levinson: But, you know, his presence and then just the presence of … I mean you know there's me hearing about it and then coming down for an interview. And then there's me going through a year of getting to know people. The first guiding force was needing a job and you know, the presence of Luis, and what I thought he was trying to do which I don't think he entirely understood. You know, what did Teledramatics mean. But it was a place that involved a lot of my background. You know, I had a Theater background. I had studied Television. I'd done some radio work. I was interested in community. I mean I remember at one point. . . towards the end of my master's degree a student asked me what was my perfect job. I remember saying, "Teaching television and doing radio." And that was like my dream coming out of my graduate program. And to a certain extent that was kind of what I did. I mean to a certain extent I actually had my dream job. But then I ran into political walls. But, [Chuckles] structurally, I was doing what I wanted to do. You know, I was implementing my theater understanding as well as my knowledge of television production as well as my interest in community. CSUMB was a place that was sort of

implementing a lot of the things that I wanted to do. The fact that it was basically a blob of unformed clay was also exciting. You know, every day we were creating rules. Every day we were creating structures and processes to implement something because we just had no choice. It wasn't there. If we were going to have a class, if we were going to have a process, if we were going to eat lunch that day we had to create the structure to make that happen. There was nothing there. And it was fun! I mean it was really exciting. Now I miss talking to anybody, but even in the last few years, you know, there was sort of, "Oh, my God, what happened to like, you know, I don't see SBS people every day." Now I understand that they are all in the same building. But I got kicked out before that happened. So maybe some of that is happening again, I don't know. I mean part of the problem of being in Television is you are in a separate building with its separate needs and its separate expenses and its separate bunch of equipment. And it's very hard to interact. On the other hand, I was doing television and radio shows where I would go out and make sure I knew everybody on campus. So I would be doing television shows where we'd interview everybody from Amalia [Mesa Bains] to Leon Panetta. So I sort of consciously made sure I knew everybody and everybody knew me. Which has advantages and disadvantages.

La Follette: Did you want to talk about what happened with Luis?

[1:18:02] Levinson: [Chuckles] So Luis had come from a background of basically controlling his entire world. In San Juan Bautista he is the reigning king. So for him, structure was difficult. So when he came here and he had to report his budget to a white woman? "No thank you," as far as he was concerned. So he basically left after a year. Basically, because he couldn't handle a process by which he had to report to anybody. He couldn't take that. And in an academic structure it's inherent, you know? Then it became worse and worse over time. Back then, you know, I could call Peter Smith, the President on the phone. Or he'd call me, which happened. Now, you know, I've been told you talk to your Chair, the Chair talks to the Dean, the Dean talks to the Provost, the Provost talks to the President. You don't break up the totem pole. Part of my political difficulty was I always ignored the totem pole. Or I, you know, brought a ladder.

[Chuckles] Or something. But I knew everybody. And I was President of CFA [California Faculty Association] so, you know, I would talk to the President regularly anyway. But back then, everybody talked to everybody. But there was a reporting structure. And the budget processes back then were just nonexistent. You know, I know Jim May at one point as head [dean] of CST [Communications, Science and Technology], once put in a budget for twice the amount the entire school had. Seriously. He's like, "This is what we need," [Chuckles] and they're like, "Uh, we can buy like three percent of that. But you still had to report your budget to the dean and you had to get approval for things and that just was not who he was. So he left. I remember at one point I got called into his office and pretty much trashed because. . . he didn't know that much about media technology. Neither did Phil. Neither did Marilyn. None of these people did. So when they wanted to create a television studio they hired this other guy, a man named Mandy Mike Brown, out of the production facility in San Jose to sort of set up a studio. Which he did. For free. As a friend. And then he left because he wasn't getting paid for it. Then all of a sudden they had this list of requirements and they didn't know what it was. So when there were budgetary cuts they didn't really know how to work with it. So it was extremely difficult creating a studio because they just didn't really know the technology. So I had a conversation with him at one point and I sort of said that. You know, they didn't really know what they were talking about. And he, being a good friend, went back and reported me as trashing Luis because I said he didn't know everything about technology and Luis expects pretty much their complete loyalty. So my questioning any element of his existence was being disloyal. So I basically had to tell him how important he was and then I got to keep my job. That's more or less what happened. I mean I was honest, he *was* important, and I *respected* his history and tradition and what he meant to the existence of *obra* and Latino theater and everything else. So I wasn't dishonest but I just had to, you know, emphasize that and I was allowed to stay basically at that point. Although virtually every director at some point had some kind of an issue with me. But then, Luis, I think…I don't remember the exact timeline but I am pretty sure Luis was only here for two semesters. And then left. And from what I understand he did

some amazing actual teaching work in his first semester, especially. I think the second semester he kind of started to give up and he really wasn't around much. But some of the students from his first class were strongly influenced by what they learned from him and just the conversations they had and what it meant to be working with him. Then the second semester he pretty much just was like had started to give up and then he just left. Leaving us with this undefined Teledramatic Arts and Technology department and really no structure and no sense of if it were an umbrella organization or if we were focused or should we be offering all these different things. You know. So there were years of like, "What is the point? Can we teach everything? Are we trying to teach everything? Are we introducing everybody to everything? Do we need, you know, a theater class, a television class, a radio class?" And what Luis liked to call "cyberspace" which eventually became New Media. I actually brought the term New Media to TAT. I was like well, you know, the rest of the world calls it new media. And they were like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, we could use that." Because, "What the hell is cyberspace?" Well, "What the hell is teledramatics, Luis?" It was just a cool term. And I still like it and I think it meant something but it was confusing.

[1:24:01] La Follette: I wanted to make sure that we talked about how you got involved in like advocacy and like leadership roles on campus.

Levinson: Oof. Well, to a certain extent, given a complete lack of structure in the early days you just had to. And there was also not, you know, like my being a Lecturer on hiring committees for tenure track people, that's not supposed to happen. And it doesn't happen now. But back then everybody was sort of viewed equally just because they had to be. You know, I was teaching full time. I was on campus multiple hours, five days a week. So I just had a presence. So I was sort of accepted in a way that I don't think Lecturers are now, because you weren't defined by that at that point because there just wasn't the time for it? You know, if I showed up at a meeting, if I showed up in Senate people didn't go, "Oh, Steven's a Lecturer." They would just go, "Oh, Steven's here 10 hours every day." So I sort of was given kind of an equivalence, emotionally, by people who otherwise didn't think Lecturers deserved to be looked

at [Chuckles] in many cases, just because everybody knew I was there all the time. That led to a certain presence on campus. Now I was also sort of just doing media. So …you know, if you are doing a weekly television show that you need people to interview you end up talking to everybody on campus. So, I sort of was known. So for example, I was accepted as CFA President. It's very unusual for a Lecturer to be President. I think at that point there were only two Lecturers in the entire CSU system who were Presidents. I think there are still two. There may only be one now. Without going into names, right now there is a Lecturer who should be President. But probably won't be partially because of structural issues in the CFA and partially that person doesn't have the history and presence that I had. So tenure track people sort of accepted me as President because I'd been around so long and I'd such a presence everywhere on campus that I had a known history. So I was sort of more accepted in that position even though officially it's not structurally appropriate, for lots of reasons. But certainly as a representative of tenure track people and the CFA President, to a certain extent like all presidents are supposed to, you know, represent their entire constituency. I tried to do that. You know, and I often fought for things that I would never benefit from, because that was my role. But I was sort of allowed to do that because I had a known presence, unlike the person who should be President now but doesn't have that history. I ran into about a few months ago a tenured faculty member who is a member of CFA and we sort of had that conversation. He said, "Well, this person doesn't really have presence among tenured. . ." And I was like, "Well, neither did I." And he said, "Yeah, but you had history." I said, "Yeah." I'd been around longer than he was. I remember the day he was hired actually. [Laughs] But having been here from the beginning I sort of developed an attitude that I belonged to be here just as much as anybody else. I would often have conversations with tenure track people where I would basically. . . I was able to critique them and, whether or not I knew it at the time they all hated it. And now I know that they specifically hated it. But I was a Lecturer. I was constantly fighting for Lecturer rights as President and just a person who was in the room, which quite often wasn't the case with other lecturers. But, you know, just because who I am and my background and my extended time at

this University and my sort of emotional memory of a time when everybody just was equal because there weren't that many of us. You know, when I walk into Senate I don't feel that I am just the Lecturer in the room. "I've been here longer than you have, I remember when you were hired so shut the fuck up." Is this all gonna get written down at some point?

[1:29:35] La Follette: [Chuckles]

Levinson: Actually in reference to that form you handed me I almost answered one of the questions "WTF?" But I changed it to N/A because I figured that was more tactful. [Chuckle] In fact, I actually typed it in and I had to erase it. But in terms of having a leadership position you had no choice. You know, when there's only 40 faculty members on campus which is something like what there was back then, I didn't think of myself as the Lecturer. No, at that point there were a lot of tenure track people I think comparatively in terms of percentages. I mean that would be interesting to try and find out. In like 1997 how many Tenure Track versus Lecturers there were. I think there were a much higher percentage of Tenure Track versus Lecturers just if I remember the rooms. I mean now it's like 60% lecturer or higher. It's close to 70 I think. Back then I'll bet it was the other way around just because there weren't very many faculty. You know, so that would be really interesting to try and find out. Like in 1996-97 what was the percentage? Because I just – I didn't think of myself as a Lecturer. I'm not even sure at that point I understood the difference. It's quite possible I didn't. I certainly had no idea, you know, coming out of my graduate program what that meant. But here, I had to create classes, I had to create structures. I had to basically build departments, I had to hire people. I mean … there wasn't much difference. Part of that is just my historic growth in a family in a community in Berkeley which was all about equality anyway. So, I was sort of just unintentionally implementing what I had grown up with. I'm not even sure when I sort of realized I was a Lecturer. I mean that seriously. But at that point you had to create structure. You had to be in a leadership position because everybody was.

[1:32:17] La Follette: Well, yeah. Like as CFA President was there something that you felt was a big accomplishment that you were able to shepherd through?

Levinson: Well, on a local level … I mean there were lots of small accomplishments. I helped a lot of individual faculty members. You know, when Ernest Stromberg ran into his problem with the tax people, the Jarvis people out of San Jose because he allegedly sent an email that was politically defined, you know, I worked very closely with him. I went down and found him. I got the lawyers involved. I got the CFA involved. So there were a lot of sort of small victories like that. I was very involved in the process of -- I can't remember the language now --, there was some money available for tenure track people. I cannot remember the terminologies but I really fought to get as many of them money as possible and was quite successful. I almost doubled the amount of people that ended up getting money from that. And then I just tried to have a presence. You know. We built the CFA a lot during that time. There were a couple of near strikes. So I think I was relatively effective in terms of presenting both Lecturer and Tenure Track needs and building the strength of the union both locally and nationally. So I think I had some victories.

La Follette: Was there a particular challenge? Like challenge that you can think of?

Levinson: As CFA President?

La Follette: Um hmm.

[1:34:24] Levinson: I never wanted to be CFA President. I always thought it should be a tenure track position just because of the political vulnerability of it. And I fought for a long time *not* to be President. I got people involved and made them President to a certain extent before and tried to get people involved who wouldn't get involved because of the inherent fear of the tenure track faculty member, and what that means, which we can talk about if you want to. But once I accepted it, I just did it. One, you get buyouts. [Chuckles] I was getting units for just, you know, doing that. You know, I loved being in Senate and presenting in Senate as that person. But you know, the challenges were largely getting tenure track people to care, you know, which is very hard. They have this view that the union only represents – only cares

about Lecturers so just getting them to recognize that their paycheck was directly related to the strength of the union and more importantly getting tenure track people to recognize that they were in fact workers. That's the most difficult thing. You know, it's very hard for them to accept that they are essentially steel workers with syllabi. And that there are bosses determining a lot of their needs and structures and the union is just as important to them as it is to the steel worker in terms of stability and safety, and continuity and decent paycheck and decent benefits, and all those things that unions do for – quote – real working people, they do for academics. You know, many tenure track academics really view themselves as these professionals who aren't really workers, who have all the strength and independence, which they constantly prove they don't. So I think the biggest challenge for me was getting them to understand that. You know, I'd come from this political background where I just joined the union automatically. The day I showed up I joined the union. It wasn't an issue. So getting people to understand why that was important was difficult. Less so for Lecturers who recognized their vulnerability as more than tenure track people.

La Follette: Yeah, that was a question I had. Like as a Lecturer it's kind of you are always aware how … it's kind of a constant stress, right, you know, how tenuous are positioned as, like, was that something that you …

[1:37:30] Levinson: I should have would be my answer actually. I didn't really. It's quite possible that I'd still have a job if I was a little more aware of my vulnerability and a little more willing to let that control my mouth. You know, I never had a problem with asking questions in Senate. Tenure track people just don't. Even tenured people don't for the most part. And Lecturers shouldn't even be in the room let alone opening their mouth. But partially because of what I'd grown up with and partially it was just because in the early days I was just one among everybody, you know, I'd walk into Senate and I would question the President or I would question the Dean. And other people just weren't willing to. That's probably at least partially responsible for my not being on campus right now. But, just given the fact that I'd been there so long and I was just often willing to talk in those meetings because in the early days there was no difference.

Everybody talked because there weren't enough people to get everything done if we didn't. Then that sort of just became an expectation in my vocal cords, I guess. I would question the Dean and I would question Tenure Track faculty who said things that were not respectful of Lecturers. And I would, you know, often be the only person raising questions.

La Follette: [pause] I just have a couple more questions if that's okay.

Levinson: No. Ask as much as you want. I'm in no rush. Actually with my phone off I don't know if I have a meeting this afternoon.

[1:39:47] La Follette: Okay. So how would you say that you saw like the TAT department kind of evolve or change over time?

Levinson: Oh, God.

La Follette: [Laughs]

Levinson: That's an extremely complicated question.

La Follette: Yeah? Or you could just say, from the beginning as opposed to …?

Levinson: Well, the big question was, "What were we?" You know, what is teledramatic. Is it a umbrella under which you have these separate things that you teach or is it a concept that sort of encompasses a combination of these things. You know, do you have to have a theater class or do you recognize that the history of theater is important in the construction of a film. So there were long conversations about what that was. You know, is it possible for us with our limited resources and our limited number of years to give everybody an introduction to all of this. And if not, what do we focus on? Do we just do one of these things? Do we try and do all of them a little bit? Is it bad to do all of them a little bit instead of one of them well? And at the beginning, you know, I don't think Luis had answers to any of these questions. I know Luis didn't have answers to any of these questions. He thought it was a super cool phrase. He thought it somehow incorporated, and I think he was right, but it somehow incorporated a theater basis with a contemporary technological implementation. But what does that mean? You know,

what is the importance of Theater? Do you have to have a Theater program? We had Theater people back then. We had Theater productions. We had theater capstones. Some of which were fantastic, actually. But and then as we hired sort of more traditional people primarily from film programs and/or new media oriented sorts of programs, one of the big changes was is there Theater or not and do we need that. I remember at one point all of the faculty members in TAT had to fill out a piece of paper. And the piece of paper had two columns. Good things. Bad things. Basically. And then it had these different media. So you had Theater and Television and Film, Radio, New Media I guess would be the five. Is that right? And we were supposed to fill out what are the positive elements of this, what are the negative elements of this. I remember, for example, most of us tried to be reasonably fair. You know, there's positives and negatives to all of this. One of our faculty member, Caitlin Manning, I remember on theater she had like a page and a half of negatives and an absolutely empty column for positives of Theater. This is fact, this is history. **[1:43:21]** I mean not even the fact that it – the whole concept of a script came from there. Or there's the history of storytelling. Or story structure. Or narrative art came out of this. You know, no respect … it was empty. It was absolutely completely empty. [Chuckles] And so eventually Theater just disappeared. Now Theater disappeared partially because people like Caitlin had no respect for it. Partly because there sort of became a recognition that we just can't do everything so we should focus on the newer stuff. Partially because we hired some absolute idiot to teach Theater. So eventually Theater just disappeared as … certainly in sort of any academic structure and I'm not even sure they do plays in the World Theater anymore. And then there was the whole Will Shepherd catastrophe, who was hired to teach Theater. He was hired as a Director. He had a theater background. He was a blatant public alcoholic. And there was that whole problem. And then he sort of eventually ended up in MPA [Music and Performing Arts] with a Theater program and then the Theater program pretty much just died partially because there was no structural support for it and partly because he was an alcoholic idiot. Who we tried to get rid of. I don't know if you want that story really quick but we needed a Director. I guess, see we had Luis [Valdez], then

Marilyn [Abad Cardinale], then Shannon [Edwards], then Richard Hiramoto…we had basically a Director a year for the first ten years. Seriously. And we just needed a Director. So we … announced the job of Director of TAT. I was on the hiring committee. Everybody was on the hiring committee. We ended up with three people – there was a film person from San Francisco, somebody from New Mexico, and then there was this theater person, Will Shepherd from Portland, I think. Both of the other two people basically backed out for various reasons. And we did not want to hire Will Shepherd. He was like a distant third on absolutely everybody's list. I went over to his house later and we went through a six-pack. I had one beer. And we asked our then Dean, we wanted to open the search again. We did not want to hire this person. We were told by our Dean that we had to. We needed a Director. We needed to hire this person. And she told us that if we didn't like him we could make a change later on. That **[1:46:44]** turned out to be a lie. So we hired this person because we sort of weren't given a choice. He rapidly became obviously just an idiot and incompetent and incapable. And within a year every single faculty member, I remember this, every single faculty member signed a letter saying they weren't happy with this person. And we again met with that Dean and I reminded her, -- once again a case of where my mouth got in the way of my career --, that she had told us that we would be able to do whatever we wanted and she said, quote, "I may have misspoke," unquote. Direct words from that Dean who is no longer around. She retired finally. So we were stuck with Will Shepherd. I believe he stepped down as Director at that point, after getting that letter and going through that process. But he had retreat rights so he became a faculty member. He was so bad that he did a play at one point and everybody in the play told their friends not to show up. [Chuckles] So there were like ten people onstage and less people in the audience quite often. Seriously. The actors onstage told people not to come to it. And who came after Will. I think we had some interim people. I guess then Richard Harris, then Joe Larkin. And then we hired some other people. What was the question?

[1:48:30] La Follette: Just how you saw TAT kind of evolve?

Levinson: Oh, changing. Changing. You know, so we lost that and then we just sort of became more traditional, as did the whole school. And then eventually there was a discussion as to whether or we need to even use the word Teledramatic which nobody really knew what it meant. It changed to Cinematic and it had sort of become more of a traditional film school with new media, graphics and that kind of thing. But I think what changed was just sort of the loss of a sense of the variety of Teledramatics from theater to television, film, radio and new media. And it became essentially pretty much a traditional film school. You know, not even really doing television. Not appreciating television as a method of distribution. But essentially just doing short films. From my sense that's pretty much what it is now. It doesn't have the radio, it doesn't have the theater, doesn't have the television. Arguably it has new media primarily in the sense of sort of technologies of film animation as a, quote, new media. But we sort of went from being this more umbrella understanding of developing students with a variety of skills and an appreciation for all these media -- and I know, you know, students were there then who appreciated that, who recognized that they were getting sort of a broader education than in a traditional film school. But we went from that sort of umbrella of all of these things to essentially a fairly traditional film school with kind of a primary focus. That would be the primary change. Is that reasonable?

[**1:50:39] La Follette:** Yes. I want to get into what you feel like your legacy is.

Levinson: Of what?

La Follette: You know, what you hope that your legacy has been?

Levinson: My what?

La Follette: Your legacy.

Levinson: My legacy?

La Follette: A-huh. Well, just like what your hope your lasting -

Levinson: I don't even know if anybody remembers I existed.

La Follette: I know it might be hard. It might be good for the record but it's up to you. Maybe if you wanted to talk about how you ended up not being at CSUMB anymore.

Levinson: I don't really know all of the history behind that and I'd really rather not get into it.

La Follette: Okay.

Levinson: I mean my memory of the early days I think are valid. My legacy? I have no idea. I really don't think I have any. Nobody there knows I existed. Basically I don't think anybody remembers I'm there or ever was.

La Follette: What about among former students?

Levinson: They're not there anymore. That's a different statement.

La Follette: Okay.

Levinson: I think they remember me.

La Follette: Yeah. So what do you think that would be among former students?

Levinson: I think I am remembered as somebody who really cared for students. Who cared for individual students. Who really tried to help them develop the ability to tell their own specific story as they saw it. I think as a faculty member and as just a person of support, students appreciated my knowledge of them as individuals, my respect for them as individuals. My fairness as a grader but my determined interest to help them tell whatever story they wanted to tell. You know, I was once asked by a Service Learning person, "Well, what do you think would be a good capstone for a student?" And I was like, "I'm not gonna answer that. It's up to them." I mean that was a specific conversation I had with a Service Learning person. You know, I was always very interested and I think I was good at helping a student determine what was their story and what was the best way to get that story. I didn't want to influence the story they told but I wanted to make sure they knew what resources were available, who they should talk to. I mean if they were doing a documentary about some issue I probably knew some faculty member who understood it. Because of, you know, my presence on campus for so long, just, you know, the fact that I'd done all these television

shows where I'd interviewed all these people. So if somebody wanted to do a particular issue I was like, "Oh, these are the three people you need to talk to." So I think I am remembered as somebody who cared for them as individuals, who knew them as individuals, who was fairly confirmed in my commitment to community service and to social awareness, but who more than anything just recognized each student as an individual and who appreciated that.

You know, when they were trying to get rid of me the first time, without going into all the details, but you know, there was an online petition started and something like in I think three days 300 students signed on with actual stories of what I had meant for them which says something about my legacy among alumni. I think on campus, I have no idea. You know, the school has changed so dramatically from its visionary origins that … I have no idea if I have any legacy. You know, the department certainly isn't what I would have wanted it to be. The school isn't what I would have wanted it to be. I think there are individual faculty members who appreciate what I meant in various moments but in terms of a legacy impact on the University the way I'm feeling right now, pretty much nothing. Does that answer the question?

[1:55:18] La Follette: Well, and then in terms of preserving Fort Ord history, I know that's something you are very passionate about. So what are your hopes for what you can do with your – because you have quite a collection of material.

Levinson: Yes. [pause] Do you want me to give a little background on that?

La Follette: Sure. Yeah.

Levinson: So when I got here it was this empty military base. This was 1996. The base had closed only two years previously. So there were still a lot of buildings left over. I started to just wander into buildings looking for things, and started to find stuff. I thought wouldn't it be cool to find a gun or something, which I never did find. But I fairly soon realized that that was the boring stuff, you know. But there were all these murals on the walls. And there were all these documents on the ground. So I just started to get very interested in the history behind those documents. So I started to collect them. Then I started to

go on eBay looking for Fort Ord stuff. And over 20 years I developed a fairly extensive collection of Fort Ord materials. My goal from the beginning had been to donate it to the University in some structured environment that would allow for research and information, and help students, and help the community, and maintain this history. Fort Ord was extremely important. It essentially created Seaside and Marina and large parts of the Tri County exist because of Fort Ord. Certainly the Black community in Seaside is essentially the result of Fort Ord. So I had always intended to just sort of donate stuff to the University. Much of that time the Library which is in many cases on many institutions sort of the center of the archival memory of the University, had no Archives. The then Director told us quite often that he had no Archivist therefore he had no Archives therefore figure something else out. [Sigh] I have to leave this space in about a year and a half. I have no choice. So what am I going to do with this collection ? I had two meetings yesterday actually, one of which with the new Director of the Library about a possible donation, which may happen. They do now have an Archives. They do now have almost an Archivist. They certainly are developing a documented memory of various things, including the University itself as well as local politicians, they have some UFW stuff, and they have some Fort Ord stuff. And apparently their Mission Statement actually does specifically refer to Fort Ord as one of their goals of collection. So they are **[1:58:49]** interested, to some extent, in my collection, in an element of it, in primarily the archival paper-based document photograph, post card, letter, newspaper side of my… of the Archives. That may happen. You know, there is the emotional problem of my donating a bunch of very valuable material to a school that basically tried to destroy me so emotionally I'm not sure. The first meeting I had with this guy I almost started to cry. It's not what you normally want to do with, you know, your administrative … it's almost as bad as the time I got stoned and then walked into a meeting with a Dean. I didn't know that there was anything in those cookies, okay, I did not know when I ate them. We can have that story offline. But that may happen. I'm still hoping that, and I am in conversation with a number of people about some kind of a museum. I mean Fort Ord was critically important and everybody, pretty much everybody thinks that there

should be some structured memory. Right now it just does not exist. I was hoping eventually that I would donate my materials to some sort of archival structure at the University so that those materials would be an in an objective, academic, aware institution that would then present them and/or have them available for research. And that there would also be, either connected or disconnected, some sort of a museum space for those materials. Right now that does not exist and is not funded in any way. The University now claims to care about the history of Fort Ord. Historically, they just sort of didn't as an institution. There were individuals, some before me, who were interested in that history and that material but the University, which on a couple of occasions has had a strong opportunity to become part of some sort of community-based museum environment, has pretty much always walked away from it. So now they're saying that the Provost cares, and that the Director of the Library cares, and they have this Archive that has Fort Ord as part of its Mission Statement. Now I may just run into a space issue. I mean I have to leave here. I'm going to have enough trouble figuring out where to put the table let alone where to put, you know, the boxes and boxes of Fort Ord history. So it's possible that I will overcome my emotional issues and just give what I can to the University, just because one, that was the original intent and two, I don't want to box it up and take it to Berkeley. So that may happen. Now simultaneously with that

[2:02:12] there may be some sort of a museum space. I am in conversations with a number of different organizations and possible spaces about where that might be. Again, funding is the major issue. But the University has put $6 million into a building in Reindollar and $3 million into a building in Salinas and it's not like they don't have money. But as with everything, you know, budgets are emotional documents. . . . But it doesn't look like the University is willing to put a lot of money into this at this point. But, you know, when I'm finally kicked out of the house as much as I'm kicked out of the University, I'm going to have to do something. So it's quite possible that I will donate some parts of it to the University. They do not want the collections element, the uniforms and the trophies and the medals and all that stuff. So I don't know what will happen with it. I think the University should be way more committed to this than they have

historically been. There's virtually no Museum Studies program now at the University. There's essentially – there's never really been a class about Fort Ord. There have been elements of classes which dealt with Ford Ord in some history classes and elsewhere. I've done a number of exhibits over the last two decades at various iterations of what was called the Library, and elsewhere. But the University has never structurally really presented a commitment to the – [End of Audio]

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Addendum to the Interview

This is Steven Levinson talking on January 16. This is an addendum to the oral history that Kristen La Follete did with me on January 10th. I specifically wanted to talk about the histories of KAZU and Otter Media. So, I guess Otter Media came first. So what happened was, in 1999, which was very early, I didn't know what streaming was. Really nobody anywhere knew what streaming was. I was told that there was this option. There was a meeting, I believe in my office, actually. It was a meeting of me, Phil Esparza, I can't remember if Chris Carpenter was there or not, and Ski Romagnoli. Ski Romagnoli was a student at CSUMB in the computer program, I think, but he had just proven himself to be very knowledgeable. He was hired by the University, he was doing some of the web stuff, and he told us that we could steam fairly easily. We already had the computer technology, so we should just get going. So we basically decided just to do it. I had a Radio class and we'd been doing various radio shows, some of which were with KAZU, which I'll come back to later. So I had a group of students interested in going on the air. Ski Romagnoli had computer knowledge and understanding of the developing Internet to make it happen, so we just started. And originally we just set up on the desk in my office, one of the desks in my office, we had a Radio Shack mixer which I had bought at a garage sale for $25 dollars, we had a boom box of some kind, and a walkman attached, and we had two microphones, and we basically went on the air in 1999. We did

not know at the time, I certainly didn't, that very few people were doing this. CSUMB is one of the longest, continuous, College radio streams anywhere, as far as I know. So we started with four hours, 12-4, I think it was. It was called "Bored on the Ord" or something like that. It went through various deans, and we called it at that time Otter Stream, which had all sorts of negative visual connotations, but is what we were doing. As we expanded into cable broadcasting and other things, we became "Otter Media which it is still called. But we originally started with just the four hours in my office. That expanded some hours, we'd add a couple of hours almost every semester. We then moved into an office in the TAT building, in what was then the Institute for Teledramatic Arts and Technology, now Cinematic Arts. We had a room behind the green screen. At that point, we were unfortunately limited by the time of the building. Since we were in the TAT building, overseen by the staff of that department, we had to close down at 5pm, when the building closed. I remember on at least one occasion, Nari, who had the show that ended at five, wanted to stay later so we actually hid under the desk when they came in trying to tell him it was time to leave. So clearly, being in that building was difficult. So after a semester or two, we moved into what's now the Dining Commons. We had essentially a closet in the back of it. I mean I could not stretch my arms and my fingers side to side without bending them to touch the walls of the space. We were in that space for a couple of semesters. That was basically given to us by the CSUMB Foundation, which oversaw that building. They had longer hours, so we were able stay in there, but it was an extremely small room and very difficult to do much in, although we did a lot, even in that time. I know on at least one occasion we had three guitarists playing live. I know of another occasion where there was a guitar and a conga drum, William Workman would do extended theater productions in there, live on the air, because we were, unlike a lot of other people, streaming audio and video from a very early time. Almost from the time that we moved into that room, we were streaming video as well as audio.

So technically, we were ahead of almost anybody but the room was extremely small very difficult and I eventually told the head of the foundation, Kevin Saunders, that we were going to run into problems with a

ADA compliance, American with Disabilities Act, because there was just no way to get a wheelchair in that space. So on the basis of that largely he gave us a much larger room in that same building. He just sort of did that on his own, without telling anybody. When I later talked to the to the staff person of CSUMB who's responsible for moving people in and out of spaces, she had no idea we were even there. So we were then in this fairly large room with a large map of the world, which led to me trying to sort of divide the room up into space because I didn't want any liquid or food near the technology. So there was always a big sign that said "No food or drink west of Africa." Looking at the map, you could have your food on one side of the big table, and the other side had to be clean. So then we started to stream and now we're starting to get a little bit of recognition because we're in a public space and we're sort of getting seen. I had numerous students run through at that time and we were doing numerous kinds of productions. Basically two-hour shifts of music, which is more or less what we've always done, hopefully with two people on a show and as much as possible trying to do talk and public information and public affairs as well. But essentially, it was primarily music. There are numerous stories and difficulties, students kind of acting up at that time, but we always had very strict rules: no swearing on the air, we were conscious about the music we were playing, the content of it, the language of it. We stayed on top of that. I think I had to fire people twice. Once because he was waving a lit candle over the audio board; another time because I had three guys taking their shirts off, all of which we responded to and ended. But we were still sort of in a hidden secondary space and there wasn't much we could do about it. So they then moved us into an actual sort of our own independent space. At that point we were calling it the bomb shelter, which started in a little closet. One of the students just randomly one night called it the bomb shelter and I really liked the idea because of the Fort Ord history. So for a long time after that we called it the bomb shelter. We had a phone number, 582-3888, which we used to refer t as 582-FUTV, which is a great phone number for an internet stream. But I don't believe they use that anymore. Then we moved into the larger space, where we actually had an office space for the station manager and sort of a public meeting space, they had a separate

on-air studio space, so that was much more effective. At that point it [the radio station] was primarily run through a class in the Department of Teledramatic Arts and Technology, but we were also getting money from Materials and Reserves, I forget exactly what it's called, but some money run through the Associated Students. That actually got us a budget and I had a paid station manager, a paid music director, we were trying to report on a regular basis to College Music Journal. We weren't always very good about it but we were trying to follow reasonably clear standards of college radio. We then moved into the bigger space, and that's where we were when my dismissal occurred. At that point, TAT [Teledramatic Arts and Technology] – it might have already been Cinematic Arts at that point --, basically gave Otter Media to Associated Students, who really didn't know what to do with it and it was very complicated. They weren't even sure why they had it or what it was going, or what my involvement was. So it that became sort of problematic. Just before that, I had applied for an FCC LPFM license. LPFM is Low-Power Frequency Modulation, which is very inexpensive, low-power community media, meaning it was less than 100 watts. So that you could basically broadcast from a reasonable height to roughly a city. So we had actually applied for an LPFM license. We actually got the rights to KBMP, which would have been our call letters, and the FCC approved us to actually have a low-power license. Then, when I left none of that happened. Which was a loss because their may never again be an opportunity for LPFM stations. So, it's too bad that the University let that fall apart. That's more or less the history of Otter Media.

While I'd had my students in Radio, I'd found this local community radio station which was called KAZU, that had its office in Pacific Grove. They were doing basically extremely random community media stuff. Everybody had a little two and four hour shows and doing whatever they wanted. My students did a series of radio shows there we did one about toxics at Fort Ord, which is a whole story of itself. Really quickly, it was 1998. I'd just showed up or maybe this is even earlier 96 or 97. It might've in my second semester. I had a radio class and I asked the students what they want to do a show about and they were like "toxics at Fort Ord," because that's where they lived. So I was like, "That's what you want to do? That's what we'll

do." I knew that might be controversial to the University, so I informed the University that my students were working on this. In fact, they even did an interview with President Peter Smith of the University. They did an interview with the Mayors of the local cities and the Army and sort of Kurt Kandy who was sort of the guy complaining about the toxics. And we did the show which was supposed to air on Kazu on some given day, I don't remember. But the day before we hadn't completed it. So all night long, I basically was in my room compiling these pieces, these separate sections that had been done by different people. And then I had to get it to the radio station, basically, on tape. And on the way there, I get a call that the University is concerned about this. Or the day before. I made two copies of it and then I was supposed to give it to Steve Reed, who I think at that point was Director of Human Relations for the University. So I head over to the two to Building One, where the President, Stevem and everybody are. I pull into the only parking space available, because I needed to run in and deliver this tape so I can bring the tape down to KAZU. And Steve is friendly and we're chatting and I'm trying to get out and then Peter Smith, the President, sticks his head in the office and says, "Is that your car in my parking space?" I was like, "Oh, sorry Peter, I was just leaving." And I took off. We ran the tape over to KAZU. I think within half an hour after that, they put it on the air, which could happen at community radio back then. None of that happens anymore. Steve Reed listened to it and his analysis was that it was an extremely fair and objective discussion of the topic. At one point, we had CSUMB students on the air at KAZU from midnight to 6 a.m., in like three different blocks. I remember one night, I actually stayed there all night just to join every single show. So I was at KAZU from midnight to six, joining a whole series of students on the air. And then, basically, that format went bankrupt. At KAZU they'd had a fire in their previous building. They got U.S. money for this and they rented a new fancy building, which they couldn't quite afford, and the university community wasn't really continually supplying the money they needed. So basically, they decided to sell it. Since I was over there a lot, I knew everybody. I heard about this and I sent an email to the University, to Steve and the President, -- this must have been I don't know mid year 2000 something

like that --, and I just said, “Look, this is gonna be really cheap. I think the University should buy it.” I think the license was up. Well, the deadline first for applying to buy was like that December or something. Anyway they they ignored my email for months and then in something like October, or November, there's like, “Oh, we need to learn about this.” So they hired some group of people, paid them god knows how much money, and after they did all their analysis they sent out a multi-page analysis saying “This is cheap. You should probably buy it” Now, I had sort of been the face of CSUMB to KAZU. I was always going to the meetings, and I was the one that people recognized. And always a big question was what would CSUMB do with it? I being a community radio person myself, was hoping that that would be the primary intent. But I also understood, as I said to the people at KAZU at that time that, “Our intent is to do community radio. But when we own it we can do what we want with it.” And so they eventually decided to sell to CSUMB, even though there were a couple of other options. It was like a merger with KUSP at Santa Cruz, which probably would have left a lot of the KAZU employees in the dust anyway, because they would have kept all the music producers from Santa Cruz. So anyway, CSUMB bought KAZU. There was another fire which burned down the studio, caused, from our understanding, from a candle in the massage parlor up above on the second floor. There'd always been sort of a plan to move KAZU onto the campus anyway, to sort of save money in rent. So KAZU eventually moved onto campus. Now, the University had promised the KAZU people originally that we would keep the same format for, I believe, two years. At the end of that two year period, the University had basically decided that from a financial basis they needed something that would bring in more money, and all the community music shows weren't doing that. So they went to an all NPR [National Public Radio] news format. They basically did this overnight, which they had been told is the safest, most secure way to do it. But it was kind of a bloodbath. They sent out a message to everybody one night that the next day they're going full NPR. Nobody needed to show up. Not everybody got the message. Some people showed up expecting to do a show and not being able to, and essentially being led out of the building. So the University sort of got rid of all the

community programming and went to a full NPR status, which it essentially still has, even though they now have the office on campus, wherein they do very little related to the campus. I mean there's a couple local shows but it's essentially an NPR feed. So that, essentially, is the story of Otter Media and CSUMB's relationship with the radio station.

[END OF ADDENDUM]