Dr. David Hollenback is one of the last remaining professors who was present during the student protests in the fall of 1988 at SUNY Cortland. He grew up in the state of Michigan and went from the University of Michigan to Syracuse University to finally taking a job at SUNY Cortland. For several years, Dr. Hollenback headed the communications department. For twenty years he served as faculty adviser of CSTV, and taught over fifteen different communications studies courses. These classes included communications history. He has also helped organize student-run films at SUNY Cortland. He retired in 2011 but came back in a semi-retired position to teach because he just wasn’t ready to leave the place he called home just yet.
FIELD NOTES - Dr. David Hollenback

Interviewee: Dr. David Hollenback
Interviewer: Mike Marsich
Interview Date: October 10, 2018
Location: SUNY Cortland, Cortland, New York
Length: 47:57

The Interviewee: Dr. David Hollenback is one of the longest current serving communications studies professors at SUNY Cortland. He earned his BA, MA, and his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. He then began his career at the University of Michigan, which lead to him next getting a job at Syracuse University before finally accepting a job at SUNY Cortland on January 1st, 1988. He has been semi-retired since 2011 but still teaches communications history and performance and cinema history.

The Interviewer: Mike Marsich is an undergraduate student at SUNY Cortland. He is a Senior who will be graduating in May 2019 with a degree in Communications and a minor in history. Partner, Moira Fayle, is also an undergraduate student at SUNY Cortland. She is a Junior who plans on graduating in May 2020 with a degree in Inclusive Childhood Education and a minor is Social Sciences. She was not present for this interview.

Description of the Interview: The interview took place in Dr. Hollenback’s office in Cornish Hall at SUNY Cortland in Cortland, New York. The office is surrounded by filing cabinets, books, and folders. It has one desk placed up against the left side of the wall with one chair right next to it. This is the second interview with Dr. Hollenback due to the first one not being recorded. The interview was part of Dr. Evan Faulkenbury’s oral history course in fall 2019.

Note on Recording: Recorded on a H4N recording device provided by Dr. Faulkenbury.
Mike M: So, my name is Mike Marsich and I am interviewing Dr. Hollenbeck with the purpose of this interview being to speak to him about the Comm department and his history here at SUNY Cortland.

Dr. Hollenbeck: Hmhm

MM: Okay so for the first question I would like to, could you tell me about your career before coming to Cortland, where you taught and what courses you taught?

DH: Before I came to Cortland immediately I was at Syracuse University acting as kind of a hybrid. I was on the faculty teaching classes in television production and working in lighting design and studio management and things like that. But I was also teaching courses in the radio, television, film department at the New House School of Public Communication up at Syracuse University. And I was doing that before I came here. I came here in 1988, and came in the middle of the year. And I looked upon this job as a step up simply because it meant that I could concentrate my efforts on teaching which is what I really wanted to do. So that’s why the transition took place.

MM: Okay so can you tell me what year you came to SUNY Cortland?
DH: 1988, January 14th.

MM: January 14th.

DH: That was my official beginning date at SUNY Cortland.

MM: Can you tell me about the Comm department early beginnings when you came here?

DH: Well as I mentioned to you before one good person to talk to about the beginning of the beginnings would be Sam Kelly because he was here four years or five years before I was. Basically all I know is that originally the communications studies department was combined with the theatre department and somewhere along the early 1980s, the mid 1980s they decided to split the department into two. So to have a theatre department separate and apart from the communications department and that created a communications studies department which had a different kind of mission. I think it was around that time that Sam Kelly was hired and there were a couple of other people basically building it into two departments. By the time I came here there were approximately seven full time faculty members in the department and then there were quite a number of people who taught as adjunct teachers and part time teachers teaching mostly public speaking and that kind of thing. Later on that expanded and our part time people now teach not only public speaking but also media writing because we found some good writers.
MM: What were some of the most popular programs in the Comm department when you first got here? I remember you mentioned it was a broad major but were there any where there were an excessive amount of students.

DH: I think at that point in time it was the kind of the department didn’t really have any concentrations, you basically worked out a plan of attack for your academic life with your advisor on a consultancy type of basis, and chose classes, and they kind of grouped themselves together and a lot of the kids that were involved in journalism and interested in journalism were also people who volunteered and worked on the Dragon Chronicle and there were also a large number of people that were involved in television production and that got involved with CSTV and the radio station had been around since 1974. So there were quite a number of students involved in the radio area as well and then people taking general communications classes. There were courses taught in public relations and in advertising and in mass media and society, but there was not a concentration in those areas as there is now.

MM: Around what time would you say that students became more focused on concentrations and not just consulting with their advisors and kind of, like you said, figuring it out?

DH: Well most of the time I mean depends on how you're asking that question. There were no concentrations for them to subscribe to. The curriculum was not designed to have concentrations. Later on when we were retrenched in 1991 one of the things we did was we redesigned our curriculum as part of our retrenchment, we just did that naturally, it wasn’t something where we were mandated to do that. And that’s when we came up with the whole idea of having a general communications studies major and then also having concentrations in
journalism, media production, public relations, and advertising etc. stuff like that. So it was mostly journalism, public relations, media production, and public relations advertising.

MM: The entrenchment you were telling me about was I’m assuming after the student strikes regarding the comm department?

DH: No that was before, that’s what caused the student strikes.

MM: Oh okay.

DH: The uprisings were a result of the retrenchment. Basically the way this worked out was that in the, kind of near the end of August, before August 31st, three of us from the department were called in the dean’s office, the dean and the president, and we were told that they were retrenching our department and that our jobs would end a year from August 31st to the following August 31st we would be gone. Basically, the whole university was under strict cost, pressures, economic pressures, so they decided to target our department for some reason or another I still don’t know why that was. It didn’t make much sense to us because at that time we were one of the fastest growing departments in the school but I think that may have been part of it because we were new. It didn’t matter the student uprisings occurred, there were demonstrations. We worked with the administration after basically discovering the union was not going to help us at all. We decided to pretty much take it under our own wing to try and work this out so we struck up communications with the provost and the president and started to work out a plan to solve the problems and exactly two months later on October 31st they accepted a plan that we put forward, and the plan involved allowing the university to not replace this one person in our department named G. Bearbaum and when he was planning on retiring. We agree that when he retired they would not replace him as a cost saving measure. There were other
pieces to the cost saving puzzle but it allowed the university to accept the plan and reinstate the department and reinstate us as it was before. One of the people had already accepted a job at Syracuse University, Bob Thompson, so he had left at the end of that year anyway, and myself and Gene DaDario were the other two, the most recently hired faculty members. Gina eventually became chair of the department and then left and took another job elsewhere so I’m the only surviving member left over from that time. It did some very interesting things not only did it help us and motivate us in reconstructing the department curriculum but it also really energized the students. The students were just wonderful at that time and I still get emails from students back then and every once in a while one of them will drop in and see me who had participated at that time on our campus.

MM: Now initially after hearing about the potential downsizing, what was the atmosphere with you and your other professors and the students, can you go more in depth with the immediate reaction? With the atmosphere, was there anger, was there upset?

DH: Oh I think people were a little confused mostly. We really didn't understand why. It didn’t make any sense. You know, in terms of economics we were attracting students to the university, we were growing as a major, we literally were only about four or five years old because of the split. Our department had only been in existence since 1984, Sam again can give you more specifics. So we were mostly kind of confused and, I don’t know, it was interesting, we basically came together and worked on the proposal, the proposal we submitted and tried to find little things here, and little things there, things that they were responsive to, and eventually we worked it out but I don't remember being panicked. The students were panicked because they had invested in the curriculum and here were the teachers that were supposed to be teaching the classes that they were going to need next year or the year after in order to complete their
curriculum, and we weren't going to be there! So there was a quite a response from the students, that’s part of the reason why they were so up in arms, and they got their friends to be up in arms, so when we had demonstrations, we’re talking relatively substantial groups of five, six hundred students on the front lawn of Brockway for instance, or the front lawn of the administration building. The demonstrations were pretty serious and ongoing, they went on for a couple of weeks. I already mentioned to you, I don’t know if you have taken me up on this idea or not but going back to the Dragon Chronicle at that time, which incidentally was called The Press in those days. Only later did it change its name to Dragon Chronicle. And so if you go back and look in the archives you can see the issues of The Press that were printed right at the beginning of that school year so probably didn’t get started up until the middle of the month. It was probably one issue in September and then four issues in October before we finally reached that agreement. But yeah, it was a very intense time. I would be spending daytime teaching classes and then I’d go home at night and be on the phone with the other members of the department you know consulting about this, asking about that, and we’d be organizing and then it was a very heady time, since we were all kind of unified and brought together.

MM: How long did this process go on? I know you mentioned the compromise, how long from hearing about the downsizing to the compromise being put into place? Was it several months?

DH: I just said it was exactly two months.

MM: Exactly two months okay.

DH: October 31st. We were told on August 31st that we would be leaving and losing our jobs the following August 31st and then exactly two months from that date on October 31st the
agreement was made. So it took us two months of intensive work and intensive demonstrations on the part of the students to kind of get the job done.

MM: Can you tell me a little bit more about CSTV? I remember you mentioned the sports, can you tell me kind of about its origins when you came here to right about now?

DH: Yeah when I came here in 1988 CSTV was almost defunct. There were fourteen students who were members of CSTV and that was in January of 1988. But at graduation that spring, twelve of them graduated. So literally I had two people that were CSTV and that was it. Luckily one of them was a guy named Michael Marks who the students called “Maytag.” Maytag and I basically came together and said, ‘Okay we got to develop a plan to attract people to join CSTV’. So he and I worked up this presentation, mostly it was him, he was really pushing for this, and he went around to various different classes and made presentations saying ‘We’re seeking people to help keep the television station alive’, you know, ‘Please join, we’re having a meeting’. We usually had our meetings on Tuesday nights and so we said we’d have it on Tuesday night down in Corey Union. Low and behold, more people started to show up and by the end of the semester we had nearly eighty people who were committed to CSTV. But that also meant of course, reconforming CSTV, and one of the things that a lot of the students wanted to do was sports. Now at that time, in terms of sports coverage, all we had available were portable cameras; just single camera portable things. You could go out and shoot and you could come back and edit things together, to create a game, or highlights, or you know, whatever else you wanted to do but that was all we had available. So slowly but surely over the next, oh several years, we started to evolve our program. We got an external switcher that we could take out so we could hook the cameras into a video switcher and then we would put a VHS recorder and hook that up to it so that we could record the game and switch back and forth between the
cameras. Then we had a camera on the sidelines for sideline interviews that we would edit in later and stuff like that. At that time the football games were at Chugger Davis Field, which was an outdoor field just like our current field is but it was kind of basically a track and a field and a bunch of bleachers and that was it. And there was nothing really like a stadium to it, it was just Chugger Davis Field! And the press box was very, very small, it had no windows, it was just basically an open… It had a roof to keep the rain off your head, and the equipment, but other than that it was basically a box at the top of the bleachers. I can remember many games because I went to virtually every one of them at that time. We’d be out there shooting the games and it would be like twenty five degrees and snow was coming down or snow and rain at one time. I remember one Cortaca Jug game it was raining and snowing at the same time, I was sitting in the bleachers with Judd Taylor, the president of the university at that time, and we were sitting there freezing to death while we were watching this crazy game. Those were the interesting days and then of course because of the fact we were interested in sports production, the kids decided, ‘Well let’s go indoors’. So we started doing hockey, we started doing basketball and other sports as well. Mostly football, hockey, and basketball. But occasionally we would do a soccer game, but almost never baseball because there wasn’t any power out at the baseball field so there was no way to kind of do that. And so, slowly but surely we built up CSTV, and as we got more people involved, more people wanted to do different things, so we did news programming, we did programming where they did skits, comedy skits and things like that. One semester the kids even decided to do a Cortland Real World. So they took over somebody's apartment and kind of made it into, you know, like a Real World show like on MTV or something. They thought, ‘Oh yeah we’re going to do one of these every week,’ and I said, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I said ‘It takes sixty or eighty people to produce one week’s worth of Real World and they get paid for
doing it! So how are you going to do that with volunteers?’ It also turns out the guy who created Real World was a former student of mine, so I knew exactly what was going on in the production of Real World. So anyway, very, very luckily by the end of the semester they had one really good episode; they did a really nice job with it, but they could only really get one episode together. Had they known the kind of routine they might have been able two, or maybe three, but really there was only one. We also did _Cortland View_ which was a group of people sitting around sharing views on political ideas and stuff like that. We covered elections a couple of years where we set up a kind of election bureau thing, had interviews with local candidates who would stop by and stuff like that. We did a lot of coverage of politics in the city. We would bring mayoral debates for instance to the Cortland campus and record them and then get them on the campus cable system so people could watch. We did the same thing for student government stuff, we would have candidates who were running for student government office, and do debates that were then run over the campus cable system. Eventually with the help of the local cable company we would get stuff out into the city. We kind of wanted to do kind of all of our own thing and do repeats and stuff out in the city but the cable company was not terribly cooperative in terms of providing the kind of person power that it would take to do that. They were also afraid we were going to, I don’t know, say bad words on the air or do something. They wanted to censor everything that we had been doing so it didn’t really work out very well except on the occasional single program basis. So we would take a tape over to them that we had done of a game and they would rerun it. Particularly if it was an important game, because some of those years the Cortaca Jug game was not covered, except by CSTV. Nowadays it's getting a lot more truck so therefore they get some attention. We did cover away games so we would go to Ithaca and cover the game there and stuff like that. We created our own little truck that we could fit in
the backseat of any SUV or something like that. People would donate their cars and we’d drive them around and do things and it was fun, we had a really nice time, we had a really good time with it. A lot of the students got very, very much into it sports production. So much so that one of our students actually ended up getting an internship with the United States Olympics. This was for the Torino Olympics, the Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy. As it happens an opportunity popped up for him to apply for that internship program. They were extremely impressed when they saw that he had by that time he had done more than sixty athletic contest productions on our campus. I think he was a second semester junior. He started when he was a freshman and worked his way up so he was producing. He was calling the games on the air, in some cases he was directing. He did a lot of different sports, he did hockey and basketball and football as well as a couple other minor sports things. But he had done a lot of work on both sides of the camera either on camera or off. He got an internship to work at the Torino Olympics and he was there for five or six weeks, working with that. Basically because of the sports production that he had gotten an experience with here in Cortland, so it worked in a pretty good way to give him that. Now that was way before we had a sports management department. You know, we didn’t have a sports management department back then. Nowadays with the good graces of Ted Fey who just recently retired and a couple other people who were at the start of the sports management department, we had the creation of that major which grew very very quickly. It went from virtually no students in one year and within about a year and a half to two years it was like a hundred and fifty majors, so it grew very very fast. A lot of them as you might expect wanted to be involved in sports production. So they would join CSTV and Jim Forsheen who was the guy who did video production with the sports management department would come and work with CSTV and once in a while even loan us his truck since he was a part of a Cortland
Video Club. And they had kind of a full professional truck that they used to cover sports events. So yeah, it kind of took off from there and it went along. Meanwhile all the other aspects of CSTV were serving students well. We had students creating their own programs, everything from fashion shows, to news shows and talk shows and comedy shows and cooking shows, I mean you name it we did a whole bunch of different things. A lot of students used those programs that they did to apply for internships and get foot in the door jobs when they graduated. And a couple of them went on to start their own companies, their own production companies and so it's been pretty successful. There’s quite a number of alumni of the CSTV group who are still very very involved in video production.

MM: Can you tell me about how students viewed the CSTV productions when it first started to take off because I know you mentioned how you had the town showing some stuff, how would students watch CSTV productions back in the day?

DH: Basically there was a campus channel that they could watch on in their dorm rooms and stuff like that, so we would kind of simulcast the videotapes of the games or whatever else they were showing on the campus channel particularly when we were doing something that was also going to be run by the cable company in town. We would basically display them on the channel and once we made the move from our original CSTV studios which were over in the Van Hosen building down by that area where the help desk is now and we moved to the basement of Corey Union. We were wired into the studio at Corey Union was the capability to do more of that stuff. We were able to get stuff directly out into the city through the cable system. Eventually they were able to put it over the internet which was really fun. One year I think I told you this story before but one year we actually broadcasted the Cortaca Jug game over the internet and we got some feedback from some guy who had been watching it live in Beijing
and it was so fun to get this internet communication from this person who was so excited because here was this little Red Dragon holding his own out there in Beijing, China and all of a sudden he sees the Cortaca Jug game coming on! And he went crazy and sent us these raving emails and after that we actually a couple more games we put on the internet so we had quite a number of people who watched the game over the internet and got excited by it

MM: Do you know what year that was? Around what time?

DH: The years just went flying by, you’ve got to remember I started this in 1988 and I only stopped in 2010 so we’re talking more than twenty years that I did CSTV. I can’t- the exact year that this happened, boy I’d have to have a context. I know it was after we built the stadium. So I don’t know which year it was that we built the stadium, but it was after that that we worked that out. The original idea with the switching system that we had was to be able to switch back and forth from the TV studio to the football stadium. So we accomplished this a couple of times and that was do the game for the first half and then cut back to the studio for the halftime show. We had people at the halftime collecting scores from other games around the country and around the state and the region with games that were being played by teams we were going to eventually play, stuff like that. Then there were people there to talk about what went on in the first half, who was good, who was not so good, what were stakes, what were wonderful plays, all sorts of stuff. Eventually one of the things that happened after we moved into the stadium was we were able to garner enough money to get an instant replay, an instant replay player. It was a simple one but it still worked and we were able to do instant replays on certain plays of the game, which was kind of cool and the students liked that. So we did that and then after the end of the halftime show we’d cut back to the stadium to give the people at the stadium a bit of a break and it would also give the people who’d rather work in the studio; the nice, warm, toasty studio,
because the stadium is still raining out there and snowing so they were able to have something really fun to work on and we accomplished that two or three times. We later had some problems with the we kept it going and mostly because of students kept it going and figured it out and did a good job of it, and I did as much as I could.

MM: Do they still do the Cortaca halftime shows with how you describe it cutting back and forth between the game and studio or not so much?

DH: Not so much…. To be honest with you, I don’t even know. Once I passed the mantle over to Sam Avery as the advisor for CSTV, Sam rightfully so, gave kids the option to do other things and stuff and for some reason or another the enthusiasm for sports dwindled a little bit and a lot of people interested in sports went directly to the sports management department, and Jim Forsheen got involved with the crews he was using for the shows. I don’t really know how much of a half time program they actually do now, back then we did that like three or four times.

MM: Do you feel it’s more beneficial for CSTV to work with sports management or do you think it’s better that they are branching off in terms of not using CSTV?

DH: Oh no, we still share studio space and equipment they’re building their own areas as well. So down the line it might actually separate a little bit more like that, but basically CSTV was the place where sports management people would come to get that video production experience. That’s why Jim was very very helpful- Jim Forsheen- who had been basically hired to do sports production at the sports management department and basically he realized that CSTV was the perfect place for people to get started while he was building stuff up over there.

[Minor interruption]
DH: (cont.): So anyway that went on, it is what it is, the thing I have always regretted is not pushing that we do more sports coverage on radio. Basically I think what happened was the university signed a contract or signed an agreement with a local radio station to cover the games, so there was a radio room down the hall from the press box of CSTV and there was a person in there from the local commercial radio station who was covering the games and calling the games and he was doing an okay job. I just didn’t understand and I’ve never understood why we didn’t allow students to have that experience. I mean that's what we should be doing I think, is giving students the experience doing that kind of coverage. And that’s just a real challenge and a tremendous learning experience, to be responsible for going to a game, preparing yourself to call the game, knowing all the players, knowing all the different plays, knowing the structure behind it, knowing who had been injured two weeks ago, who was a star and who was setting records and who was kicking field goals and all these different things and being able to weave that into a really nice radio broadcast which is totally different from television, because you have no picture so you have to paint mind pictures with your words. It’s a very, very different thing to do and it is a very, very valuable skill for somebody to have. And I know, I mean that’s one of the main states for Syracuse University for instance, one of the reasons why there are so many great announcers that are out in the world now are alumni of Syracuse University’s program because they still have students do all of the coverage that they do; the radio coverage that they do with WAER. So they go there and for two or three years they get all that experience before they get out on their own.

MM: Now speaking of, can you tell me a little bit more about the Cortland radio station from when you got here to the present? Switching over?
DH: The radio station was pretty well going when I got here in 1988. I believe it was founded in 1974, and it was founded, and this was before there was a communications studies department, okay, so this basically was a group of students who were interested in radio and decided to pick it up and do it. You know, and you could still do that today; if you have an idea and want to create a club, all you got to do is go to the SGA and you can get the forms to fill out to try to get yourself declared a club and if it’s passed through the Senate, you get accepted as a club and they give you seed money to get started and do things a club does and you know, that kind of thing. And that’s what happened back then, was that people decided they wanted to do a radio station and so there’s a group, some of whom are still around here, I can’t remember the guy’s name, Fission or something like that. Joe Fission I think it is, at any rate there were like two or three people that got their start in radio and got their start on campus radio and are now in the local area still doing radio. The one I’m thinking about is up in Syracuse at 194 or something like that, and then there are other alums like Candy Altman. Candy Altman is like vice president of ABC News for an ABC affiliate in Boston. She got her start doing radio in Cortland and she’s a wonderful alumnus and so are a number of different people who were a part of that original gang, I don’t know, like gang of four or something. (Laughter). I don’t know what they were because I wasn’t around then but by the time I got here in 1988, the radio station was really solid and well established. And they basically, the main mantra, the main thing about the station was it completely run by students. So the students did all the on-air talent, students did all the managerial stuff, everything that was done at the station was done by a student. So there were a good I don’t know 70, 80, maybe 90 people that donated time at the radio station in some capacity or another to keep the station going and it was very, very strong. It was a good station, still is!
MM: And as you mentioned before you- as a radio program just like in Syracuse you wish students took more control over sporting events because you feel like that would benefit them more in the long run-

DH: Specifically in radio, I just thought that there should be more radio sports done than we were. The radio station has other faults, and I also think we should be doing more radio news than we are doing. We don’t cover non-fiction issues okay? Once in a while, I mean now that Dr. Kay is doing her program with the Digital Divide and stuff like that we do have occasionally things that go on the radio that are non-fiction but I just think we should be doing more radio news and more radio sports than we are. I don’t know the logistics of how you would go about doing that, but I just feel like if we’re a student station, students should be getting the experience and being able to take advantage of that experience.

MM: Now I have a quick question about “Spring Fling”, you mentioned how CSTV got involved in sports and radio a tiny bit in the beginning; was there any involvement between CSTV and “Spring Fling” over the years or is that two separate departments?

DH: I mean we might have had occasionally kids go into Spring Fling with single cameras just to interview people and get some reactions. We used to do a CSTV video yearbook where we had people collecting little interviews and little clips all year long and then at the end of the year they would put all of them together into a yearbook and we would sell it at graduation to pay the cost and stuff like that. So we did that for about 3 or 4 years. I believe there were clips
from that in the Spring Fling that were added on at the last but other than that not too much, no special thing that I can remember.

MM: So no special performers that you enjoyed that came or just no one that stood out?

DH: Not for me.

MM: Okay, because I remember I was at the bicentennial and they were talking about a bunch of old artists like Grateful Dead in 1971 and-

DH: Oh yeah, a long ago. Billy Joel played on the front lawn of Moffet, stuff like that.

MM: Was that around the time Old Main burned down? Do you know what time that was?

DH: There was a fire in Old Main, I don’t know. There is a very, very well written and beautiful Cortland history book. The history of Cortland college book done by one of the former faculty members from the history department that has a lot of that detail stuff in it. But I don’t know anything about that.

MM: Okay, another question; in the communications department in your years of teaching can you tell me about some of the classes you taught?

DH: Let’s see, personally I’ve taught probably somewhere close to 12 or 14 different classes. Right now for instance, I’m teaching communication history and I’m also teaching a course in radio television performance. And before that I did Studio Television Production and before that we had a news program where we produced a news show. And Issues in Television News for instance. I’ve done Mass Media in Society and taught that as a course before. I taught Public Speaking for a couple of semesters and basically everything that I’ve done has either been
in the history area or in the kind of video production area. I’ve done lots of independent studies and that’s one not very well known fact that in the last 10 years we’ve had 7 feature length films shot on this campus by students. Because from a curriculum standpoint, after you finish taking the field video production class, there was nowhere else to go. So once you finished that class, there wasn’t another class you could go to, to get experience. So we basically took the structure of independent study and designed that so if a student could come up with a good script and bring it to me or to Sam [Avery] or to other people that were involved- this is before Sam Avery got here actually, and we accepted the script, then we could sign them up for an independent study and they could get three hours of credit for producing their film. And in some cases this was like a couple of people, so we would have one person who wrote the script and one that would direct and someone else who would want to produce and edit or something like that. So we would say, ‘Okay we’ll give you both three, to do the project’. And it was a big, big deal and they would shoot all semester long, like the first two thirds of the semester and then they would edit it all together and then we would have a big premiere usually the week before graduation. We would have a big red carpet opening down in Brown Auditorium and they could all invite their friends and we had 200 to 300 people in the auditorium and we’d show the film for the first time. So it was very, very fun and a lot of the people who did that are now working in the film industry. So it was a good stepping stone for them, it gave them a big project to work on which was unusual for a lot of the other colleges and universities which stopped after the first production class.

MM: Can you tell me about some of your favorite courses you taught or have they all been unique in their own way?
DH: Well I love doing the two classes I’m teaching right now, Communication History which I’ve built up over the years into being something I really enjoy teaching because I really enjoy that area of the History of Communication. Going way, way back, you know, starting at the beginning of the beginnings and coming all the way to the present day so that’s a big course for me. And then the performance class that I teach, I’ve been a performer, kind of freelancing on my own for quite a long time now and it started out when I was just trying to earn extra money to put in a pot to put my daughter through college. But she’s now graduated and well and grown and having a great career. So she got me started doing that so I sold my voice to a number of different companies to do voices for cartoons, voices for advertisements, and eventually the guys liked my voice for a couple of different corporate videos and things like that so I get hired to do those. Once in a while I get hired to do a big job doing a series of different ads for one thing or another. So anyway, I’ve done a lot of that professionally so I bring that to the classroom and in the Performance class we do an introduction first to basic voice and presentation and then after that we get into projects. We get into radio talk shows and radio news and that kind of stuff. Then we move to the TV studio and do TV interviews, we learn how to read a teleprompter and do a variety of different things in that class. It’s a lot of fun and I really enjoy teaching that class as well. I enjoyed teaching both Issues in News and Mass Media in Society when I taught those classes. I haven’t taught either one of them in more than five years now but when I did teach them I really enjoyed teaching those classes. Anything that’s issue oriented I really like to teach because I like classes where we can get discussions going between people who have different points of view on things.

MM: Now you mention that you lended your voice, are there any projects in particular that you enjoyed doing or were you just happy to have the work?
DH: Oh I enjoyed doing them all, but the variety of things that I did, I did everything from being hired to do the voice of a little workshop guy named “Paco” who was the lead character in a series of advertisements for Carrier Corporations. They were introducing new air conditioner into Latin America and so they wanted to have a little character that repeated in their animated ads they did and so I did the voiceover for that in Spanish. Which I’m not a fluent Spanish speaker but I knew enough Spanish to be able to work it out and make it work. And so I’ve done that but then I’ve done some very weird things too. I always tell the story in my Production class where I walked into the studio and this guy Ron I used to work with, called me up and said he had kind of a strange job but something I might be able to do it. And so I said ‘Okay’ and I went to the studio and walked in and said ‘So what are we doing today?’ And he said, ‘Well today, you’re going to do the voice of a one pound tub of cottage cheese’,

MM: So how did you approach that?

DH: So I said, ‘Well, okay, show me the tub of cottage cheese’. So he showed me the little animation drawings of this tub of cottage cheese and we looked at it and he showed me how it was going to move and do this because it was all animation you know, and I said ‘Alright, well let’s go through the script, and I’ll give you 2 to 3 different versions of it and you can decide which one you think works best with the cottage cheese’. So I gave them a couple different versions and he really liked one of them so that became the voice of the River Valley Cottage Cheese or something like that for at least the next couple of weeks, I don’t know how long the ad aired. But I did a bunch of those kind of things.

MM: Now you mention that students came to you for scripts so they could make films on campus; were there any scripts that stood out to you in particular?
DH: No, they wrote their own scripts so if they were going to do something on campus they had to write their own.

MM: Oh, okay.

DH: So they had to do all the work to prepare their script. They weren’t doing other people’s scripts, they were doing their own. But in my experience, I felt like and still feel like if you don’t have a good script to start out with, you’re going to be doing a lot of spinning your wheels. And it’s going to be a big waste of time for a lot of people. So basically I said, ‘If you really want to do this, you need to come up with an acceptable script. Once you've come up with an acceptable script and I’ve read it and/or Sam’s read it- this was Sam Kelley, or someone else in the department who might want to sponsor them- If I’ve read it and said, ‘Okay, I’ll support this’ then I would sign the line for their independent study. And then they could do it as an independent study. So these were quite long ago and so none of the scripts that I can remember really stand out. A couple of them were meant to be comedy, and comedy is extremely hard to do and quite honestly one of them was really not very funny at all. But it was a good try! It was very ambitious but not very funny at all. A couple of them tried to do mystery things and stuff like that; dead bodies, things that could be made up with like with blood and all that kind of stuff. But it was fun, they had a fun time with it and learned a lot doing it because you learn something by doing a lot of just that scope. When you have 7 or 10 characters to cast in a script- because you’ve got to go through the whole thing. Once we get the ‘go’ on the script, then they have to advertise to get people to audition to be actors, and they would do auditions and sometimes they were going to use a friend of theirs and I would say ‘Okay well do that but at least listen to other people read that role too so you’ve got something to choose from’. And so they would go through the whole process of casting and then have to live with the decisions they made.
Sometimes people would look really, really good but then they don’t show up because ‘Oh I just forgot’, or ‘I need to go home for the weekend’ or just other things that could screw up the schedule. And so they dealt with all the problems they had to deal with when producing from that scope. And that’s an experience, that’s a real experience in and of itself. And so they would cast the thing and then they would have a period of time when they were shooting and they had to check in with me every couple of weeks so I could do updates- where they were, any problems they were having, seeing if there was anything I could do to help doing whatever. And then they would get to the point where they would have a particular date like if they were in the fall; It was usually around Halloween but they would want to be done with all of their shooting. They would want to cast in the first week or two and then shoot for about a month, off and on, off and on for about a month and so by the time they go to November 1st, they can devote a whole month to editing and getting the whole thing done so that they can premiere it in the first week of December. So yeah, it was all done by the students, for the students and it was all their own work.

MM: Do students still come to you to review scripts before they film or is that someone else’s responsibility?

DH: No I’m not very much involved in that anymore. I mean, it’s not that I wouldn’t do that for somebody if they wanted to propose a script I wouldn’t mind being a faculty advisor for one of them and if I was impressed by the script. But nowadays they go through Sam Avery and that’s just fine because Sam is a great, great person for that.

MM: Just a couple more questions, going back to SUNY Cortland, what does SUNY Cortland mean to you?
DH: Hmm, well I mean I just really like the school. The reason I came here in the first place was that I really liked the students here and so from my standpoint that was the final attraction because that’s what gets me involved in teaching anyway, is the students. And I really enjoy the students, so for me, SUNY Cortland is the students that make up the campus and the spirit that this campus is made up of. Very friendly and welcoming place and very helpful place and I think that it’s a great, great, great, great small school.

MM: And last before we turn off the audio recording, is there anything else you’d like to talk about or add?

DH: No I don’t think so, I think we pretty much covered everything I can think of with regards to... Any of the other… No I think I’m done.

MM: Alright perfect, thank you very much for your time, I really appreciate it.

DH: Okay, good enough, okay.