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## Interview with Brooke Jacobson, 1st Interview (audio)

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**Narrator:** Brooke Jacobson (**BJ**)

**Interviewer:** Heather O. Petrocelli (**HP**)

**Date:** June 1, 2011

**Place:** Brooke Jacobson's house in Portland, OR

*Transcribed by Heather Petrocelli, January 2012*

*Audited by Carolee Harrison, January 2014*

## **Semi-Verbatim Transcript**

Brooke Jacobson

June 1, 2011

**HP:** This is Heather Oriana Petrocelli, interviewing Brooke Jacobson on June 1, 2011 in Portland, Oregon in her home. Brooke, do I have permission to record you for the Center for the Moving Image Oral History Collection?

**BJ:** Yes. [pause] Yes.

**HP:** Could you please state your full name, date, and place of birth?

**BJ:** My name is Brooke Jacobson, but I was born Denise Jacobson in San Francisco on September 12, 1936.

**HP:** And I'm putting this on the record that there is an extensive life history with Brooke Jacobson held at the Oregon Historical Society completed by Carolyn Matthews in 2010. Also, I just want to [state] that Brooke is the foremost Andries Deinum scholar so the questions will be tailored a little differently than the other interviews. So, basically, Brooke, I wanted to start with talking about how your relationship to film developed.

**BJ:** Yes, I think that that is a very interesting aspect of all of this because I didn't see a lot of films growing up... and so it wasn't until I had moved to Portland... my husband and I had moved to Portland... and I heard through friends about this person who had come, this Andries Deinum, who had come to Portland and was doing a series of films and lectures on Russian history through film. And so a friend took me to the beginnings of one of those series that

Andries was running and I was just so enthralled really by the connections that this man was making between film and the history of Russia, the Soviet Union then, and seeing foreign films for the very first time and it just opened up the *world* to me in a way that never happened before. So I went back, and went back, and attended all of those screenings in that series and I think it was partly that experience that got me interested into going to college and led me to get a GED certificate because I hadn't graduated from high school and to begin taking classes and I took, I think, probably, the very first classes that Andries offered at Portland State and I guess they were through the extension center.

I remember that class, there were a couple of other people in the class, Bob Richter and Michael Munk. Munk, who was from Reed, and Richter may also have been from Reed and was... I think he was a newscaster then. Anyway, there were these other people in the class who were very sophisticated and asked a lot of questions. I was pretty young and naïve and was soaking everything up that I possibly could to learn about film and it just continued to draw me back again and again. You know Andries Deinum is a very charismatic figure; his way of speaking was so extraordinary, and this is what I've written about myself, is the impact that he had on Portland because here was a man who spoke about six different languages and had read extensively and he would quote literary figures, philosophers, all of his talk was sprinkled with references to an intellectual world that not many of us in the U.S. grow up becoming familiar with in our school experiences. So that was very exciting and I was in touch with a group of Reed students, the Reed College Focus Club, at that time, because they were politically active and they had a film series at Reed and I would go to some of those films and keep expanding what some people call, a repertoire of films that I had seen and then felt that I too wanted, you know, it had always been an aim of mine to be able to go to college and I hadn't had that possibility but now I saw that it might be possible and so I got my GED and entered college and I think it was in that first year that I managed to prove to myself that I could do that work and I applied for an Oregon State Scholarship and asked Andries Deinum for a letter of recommendation for that scholarship so I would be able to finish a program and so that's kind of where my interest began.

**HP:** So I'm just curious, do you have any recollections of the fact that... so your first exposure

to foreign film was a series that Deinum was doing about Soviet history through film *during* the Cold War...

**BJ:** [Overlapping] During the Cold War, yeah.

**HP:** Do you have memories of how that was received?

**BJ:** Well, interestingly enough, at the time I was not thinking about how the rest of the community was receiving this but it certainly was a kind of extraordinary happening having grown up with, or come through high school with the McCarthy period, the McCarthy-Army hearings and I was in touch with people in Portland who had been labeled by the House Un-American Activities Committee as subversives and so I was well aware of the political climate and aware that Deinum was something different. And I think that's part of what impressed me so much about him was that he was able to rise above that ideological, the prejudice, and the mindset of the time and to do, what seemed to me, to be a model of what education and intellectual growth should do and so I was very idealistic and this seemed to be the perfect example of how education could transform society and improve our quality of life generally.

**HP:** Do you remember what year that series was...?

**BJ:** I think it was 1961. It may have been earlier. My memory for dates is very bad. It's in the article that I've written.

**HP:** Do you remember if it was a well-attended course?

**BJ:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, there was a large crowd of people there.

**HP:** So, just linking a few things you've said, you didn't finish high school, you got your GED, this experience, this Deinum "Soviet history through film" course kind of opened your world in a way, do you know, from just your knowing and understanding studies of Deinum, basically how he focused on continuing education and adult education and the importance of that?

**BJ:** I do believe that his ideas about education came through in the work that he was doing with through the Continuation Center for the state system and with the library and I didn't mention he was also doing a series of films at the library, at the public library, and, in fact, had been asked to take charge of building their collection of films for the library. So he was reaching out to the public on that level too. But I wasn't really aware so much of his, at that time, I wasn't so much aware of the fact that he was doing a lot of educating of the educators at the Continuation Center as well and seemed, from what I gather from the newspaper articles about him and internal publications that were done that he was holding seminars for the deans and the instructors who were involved in the Continuation Center and really he eventually... and I can't remember what year it was... but did publish a, managed to publish a little booklet of his essays that were written for his television shows about public education, and so he was recognized by figures nationally as somebody who was kind of visionary in the area of adult and public education; something that reached out to the community that was confined to the university.

As I think about it, I realize that those ideas were really inspiring to me, and as I think back now on activities that I became involved in at Portland State as a student, we had a student peace group for a time and then we created an organization called the Committee on Democratic Education and I think my ideas about that, my vision about that, had a lot to do with getting the University involved with the community and, of course, when I became running the Film Committee our screenings were always promoted and advertised to the broader community: Come to the University and see these films, see what the University brings to the city that's not available anyplace else. And to have arranged for lectures and other things that would engage the community or engage the University, try to engage students in what was going on in the community and world at large and to encourage cultural events and things like that. One of the things our group did, we managed to get what is now called the Browsing Lounge at Portland State to actually... you know, we were instrumental in getting that space set aside as a place for people to come and read or for lectures to happen and things of that sort.

**HP:** Was that the work with the Committee on Democratic Education?

**BJ:** Yeah; which was a group of about three or four people.

**HP:** Oh, a small committee.

**BJ:** A very small committee.

**HP:** So you basically attended that class, the Deinum “Soviet History through Film,” somewhere in the late 50’s and early 60’s and then you entered PSU?

**BJ:** Probably the fall of 1961 was when I was actually was admitted. Then I graduated in 1967.

**HP:** If I remember properly, when you entered PSU, you had been doing a lot of activist and community work, so you entered [PSU] to do social work?

**BJ:** I had the idea that I would study and get a degree in sociology and become a social worker. I definitely went into it with the idea that I needed to prepare myself to do work in the community and deal with social problems, but I did change my mind after about a year; I got interested in anthropology and moved into that field, partly because it seems to me there were anthropological films coming along and you know we showed some of those and I became interested in the idea of visual anthropology and also anthropology just seemed to me to be an all embracing field of study. I found sociology a little more limited and cultural anthropology seemed this vast field that was pertinent to our own society as well as other societies, so it kind of cemented my desires for what areas I would be interested in working in.

**HP:** During this time at PSU, did Deinum continue to teach courses? Did you take Deinum courses while at PSU?

**BJ:** I did, I think probably in that first year I took other semesters of his work; he taught a series of classes: Film as Art, Films and their Directors, where he focused on directors, and Film and Society, and it was probably that Film and Society class that kind of caught my interest and led me to change the emphasis of my own studies.

**HP:** While at PSU, how did you morph... there wasn't a film degree at that time... so how did you morph your emphasis with the influence of film?

**BJ:** Well I could always... I continued taking the film... I think I took all of his classes at least two times and then in 1965, he'd brought Tom Taylor to Portland to... actually I think his idea... he needed a cameraman to work with him on his television program and so he brought Tom. And got Tom a position in Continuing Education as well. So Tom could teach classes in film production, which had always, you know, that Andries had mentioned a number of times in his classes that they really should be augmented by some study of how to make films. In fact one of his often-repeated statements is that one should be literate in film, be able to write in film, as well as in language. He always saw that interest as being something of increasing importance, but the English department got huge budgets to teach language but nobody was teaching film production even though they were swimming in a sea of images in film and television. So literacy was a big emphasis of his.

**HP:** Did you take Taylor's classes...?

**BJ:** And I took Taylor's classes. Probably three terms of those classes. Had a lot of experiences with trying to make film, which I feel I didn't take to as easily as I do to reading and writing. But the classes were fascinating and you learn so much more about the technology and the nature of the medium that you're working with. So it gave me a much deeper understanding of what it was all about. What can I say... I was still taking... by the time I graduated, I was doing a project in visual anthropology where I was volunteering as an assistant in a kindergarten class and filming the kids and their interactions with the teacher and looking, doing field work on the culture of the kindergarten classroom and how the teacher interacted with the students and what they seemed to be engaged in. Now one of those students who was in that class has a PhD in film and is teaching at Portland State.

**HP:** Which professor?

**BJ:** Sarah Barry Flint. Well, I guess it is just Sarah Barry now. She has gotten divorced.

**HP:** Did you graduate in 1967 with an anthropology degree?

**BJ:** I did.

**HP:** Just to go back for a second, how would you characterize both Deinum and Taylor as professors/instructors?

**BJ:** How would I characterize it? Well, Deinum was somebody whose lectures were... everything about him... he was such a wonderful, engaging speaker. He would always have note cards and quotations from people that would make you think a lot. So he just generated thought. Tom was a much more practical person and not a speaker, but he was so open to students' ideas about what they wanted to do, so able to guide them, try to make equipment available to them, to try to hustle projects for students to work on.

He helped me to do a film about economic education. The professional Association of Teachers of Economics was interested in having a film about a program they had developed for teaching economics at the elementary school level and so I filmed one of those projects and we edited it and I think I took that film with me to USC to try to show as an example that I had filmmaking experience to try to waive their requirement. They were not impressed. I struggled, I struggled for a long time with it...doing the... I can't even remember the name of it... you know you're editing sound and image... and anyway... multiple tracks of image and sound and I finally gave up and the project actually... I think Cathy Lambert finished the editing. I remember Tom showing [remembering] A and B roll, A and B roll editing... and he showed me carefully how to do that, and then I put this whole thing together and he came in and looked at it and said, you really didn't understand what I said. I was just crushed! You know, he just said, oh well, we can fix this, and so it got fixed.

Somewhere along the way there, Joe Uris said that I edited his film on Lair Hill. I kind of vaguely remember working on that but I think actually Carol Rubenstein finished that job as



well. Anyway, film editing was not my forte at all. [laughter] It was constant anguish and the whole idea of being locked in a dark room for hours on end never appealed to me. So that's why I don't make films. I decided I would rather show films and talk about them, so that's what I've done a lot.

**HP:** You mentioned that Deinum brought Taylor to PSU, to Portland I should say, in '65, could you talk a little bit about your memories of how Deinum got to Portland?

**BJ:** Yes, well, of course I had no idea how he got here back when I was in school. It was only through doing the research after his death that I really could appreciate how difficult it had been for him to have been fired by USC and to be essentially blacklisted. He had reached out... I don't know whether you want me to go into that story, but basically, he was teaching at USC and the House Un-American Activities Committee issued a subpoena to him and he, of course, consulted with lawyers and consulted with the administration of the University, of his department, about how he should deal with that subpoena. He felt given some assurance that he would be relatively safe, that he was going to talk about his own position, his own ideas, but was not going to name names of other people for the committee. So he did that in his testimony and was instantly fired almost before he was off the stand. His job was gone. So then, his students organized on his behalf; there was a lot of debate, a lot of action around the campus, and he was looking, I know he made appeals to the American Association of University Professors, and probably the ACLU, I'm a little foggy... my memory is not clear on that right now. But it stood, and he looked for jobs. He eventually in '57 was invited to be director of the Flaherty seminar. I think he felt that would be something ongoing that he would be able to do, but they only wanted a person for that one year. So he was head of the Flaherty seminar for that one year of 1957.

Meanwhile, his friend Lester Beck who, as I understand it, was a professor of psychology who was heading up the cinema department at USC and was also head of the Psychology department at Portland State. Now, in those years, the late 50's, Portland State itself was struggling to come into being, actually. But anyway, Lester Beck was a very good and loyal friend who managed to talk to people and to get them to offer a position to Andries to come to Portland with a joint appointment with the Continuation Center and the Multnomah County Library. So, as he

finished up his summer with the Flaherty seminar, he was then able to come to Portland, to move here and begin his work and to begin meeting people. And among the people he met in Portland was Rachel Griffin who was an assistant curator perhaps or curator at the art museum [Portland Art Museum], and Rachel invited him to lecture about the relationship between film and art at the Art Museum. So he began doing seminars and screenings and immediately generating some really outstanding programs. And then the Art Museum – this was a *very* important event—the art museum did an exhibit of Van Gogh and invited Andries to speak about Van Gogh. His talk was so riveting, so astounding, that the City Club picked it up and invited him to repeat that. It was also broadcast on KOIN, which was the outlet for educational broadcasting at the time, even though it was a commercial station. I think commercial stations in those days were still open and they didn't have their time all filled up. So anyway, it was broadcast, it was reprinted by the Continuation Center, and many copies of it were distributed. I think he also got some invitations from other groups to speak. Following that, he then continued to be a very popular speaker and would be invited by various groups in the community to come and talk. And one of his topics was the difference between movies and film.

**HP:** How would he characterize that?

**BJ:** Movies as a commercial venture of Hollywood that had severe limitations; film as being an art form that was more open to exploring ideas and the world at large.

**HP:** Jim Blashfield said something yesterday that Deinum said that if it were a movie or film about a flood, a movie would be about the catastrophe of the water coming in and all the destruction, and a film would be about the aftermath and the picking up of the pieces.

**BJ:** Yeah, that's a good example.

**HP:** Deinum was here, came in after Flaherty in '57, and then he started doing potentially those Windows on the World lecture series shortly after and getting invited... where [do] the two television shows, *Speaking For Myself* and *Urban Mosaic*, fit in?

**BJ:** *Speaking for Myself* came fairly early in 1960 [says questioningly]. 1960 I believe it was. It was very simple set with the eel net, the eel net from his grandfather that hung behind him as this kind of soft sculpture. And he would be sitting in a chair, smoking his pipe, and talking to people or having somebody with him, sometimes Lester Beck, and engaged in conversation with that person. So that was a fairly simple program to produce, but he was doing so many things – teaching, lecturing, and doing this show. Anyway, the show got a really high approval rating, but there was always friction between him and the station administration. They regarded him as a prima donna and too full of himself [laughs]. Also, he wanted some space to possibly do things differently, to not be fixed into a certain time slot and a certain format but to be open to different possibilities and that made the people at what was then... it was Educational Television still, it hadn't become Oregon Public Broadcasting, it was still Educational Television. He had these ideas about the role of television in public education and wanted to expand and develop those ideas and have something ongoing. So he was seen as sort of threatening to those who wanted to fix it in a certain way. He made a lot of inroads nonetheless.

So he did that show for a time... and I'm not altogether certain... I know there was one occasion when... oh what was he talking about – might have been talking about the Rose Festival and why he hated parades—or saw parades as not altogether positive. Anyway, he had produced the show and he was watching at home and this may have been a re-broadcast of an earlier show, and there were technical difficulties and he was very angry and called them and said it was just unforgivable that they hadn't taken care of these technical problems. He was very demanding. He is somebody who, in his classes, wanted really good projection and couldn't always get it. So that was always a frustrating point. That was a problem for us as students with the Film Committee screenings, that we were constantly battling the audiovisual department over the quality of the equipment and the people and their operation of the department. It was an ongoing source of frustration. So, let's see, where am I now? [laughs]

**HP:** Did you actually ever see *Speaking for Myself* when it originally aired?

**BJ:** I did, I did. That was a time... again, that was part of my getting interested in education, getting interest in going to college—that there were these programs and these discussions that

fascinated me. Television then, itself... there were other shows even like Camera Three that were so wonderful, you could actually get television that was enlightening. Anyway, so that was that. I don't think I watched a lot of the *Urban Mosaic*. I can't remember watching *Urban Mosaic*. I do remember watching some of the *Speaking for Myself* series as often as I was able to. *Urban Mosaic* I was aware of secondhand because that's when I was taking classes with Tom Taylor, and I knew he was working on these other things that were very involved with what the city was doing with land use and transportation and things of that was sort, and it was kind of beyond my immediate world.

**HP:** Can we pause for a moment while I change the...

**BJ:** Easily.

[Pause for tape change]

**HP:** Going back to when you first were involved, not worrying about the exact year, but from your involvement from the beginning to when you essentially graduated out of Portland State, was there a trackable growth in attendance for the Film Committee?

**BJ:** Yeah, I'm not sure exactly when that happened, but definitely there was growth and change. I did some programs of independent experimental film that Andries regarded as moving wallpaper. It drew students; not on the same scale actually, but we kind of diversified. In the mid 60's, around '65, and certainly into '67, it grew enormously. We would have to do two screenings, and bicycle the reels to another room or do things like that to fit everybody in. Huge support from the community. It was very exhilarating. I remember lugging prints around and talking about [laughs] that we seemed more like trained chimpanzees carrying these things around than anything else but that's beside the point. But it was fun. It was always fun to do. It was certainly the most exciting student group on campus.

**HP:** Based on all the things you have been saying, and your intellectual experiences with Deinum and the use of film to create community dialogues, and you *just* said that your PSU Film

Committee was very well received in the greater community. At the time, would you have characterized it as a space creating communal dialogue through film?

**BJ:** Yeah, yeah I did see it that way. I certainly was continuing to be an activist. Also, we brought Nick Ray here and we had this huge session at channel 8 with him and whole group of filmmakers, a workshop. That was a really exciting experience. Somewhere along in that time, I remember also writing a letter to the editor about television, and how television should contribute to community dialogue in a way that would enhance the quality of life in the community. We were always trying to bring in public television. At least on one occasion, we did a workshop over at, what by then was, Oregon Public Broadcasting. It seemed like we were always germinating ideas and thinking about new ways to do things; and Dave Milholland, of course, with his interest in politics and using television in campaigns. Everybody... recording local history on film. Carol Rubenstein, now Sura Rubenstein, did a film on her grandfather who had a shop in old Portland. She got a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to do that film. [pause] I'm trying to remember where the shop was. Anyway, there were people out in the community making films about bits of history of how Portland grew. It all seemed very organic that Tom's work in training filmmakers and Andries's work in speaking to a wider community about film. It's all so interconnected and there was a feeling of that period I feel we have lost and everybody has become very fragmented at this point. Certainly around Portland State things have not really improved a whole lot.

**HP:** How would you compare the cohesiveness in the community, creative community then, to what you are saying now is more of a fragmented community?

**BJ:** As the economy has shifted, commercial enterprise has become an essential way of securing one's position professionally. People have become more isolated in what they do, and we don't have groups that come together for mutual support... that we did... when we [laughs]... when I grew up we were all poorer. Business wasn't such a dominant part of life. Now they're making the university more businesslike. We're all concerned with how many degrees we're cranking out every year rather than the quality of education that's being provided, and it's all costing more money and certainly the faculty aren't getting it. So those economic factors come in, and the

political factors, the continuing... In the '60's, we thought we had left the McCarthy years behind, but we've had this increasing growth of the military, and major corporations determining public policy. It has changed the way people relate to one another. There is more fear and more anxiety and more competitiveness that comes about. So we don't have ways of connecting. There was a Women in Media group that I was meeting with when I first came back to Portland from graduate school in L.A. and that has fallen apart, everybody has kind of gone their own way and we just don't have those means of coming together anymore. [pause] I'm taking you into this depressing...

**HP:** We'll shift back to the creative nexus of the mid-60's, early 70's Portland and this community that sounds like, from talking to you, that had these cross-reaches. So you are doing all this work with the PSU Film Committee, you graduate out in '67, and I know from documentation that you and Bob Summers founded the Northwest Film Studies Center in '71, so what were those interim years like for you?

**BJ:** I did a year of graduate work and that's when I was filming kids in the kindergarten, which turned out to be my preparation for a job that I got in 1969, teaching at Fruit and Flower daycare center. That job took up much of my time for two and a half years until I resigned in order to do the film center.

**HP:** So during those years, the latter part of '67, '68, '69, '70, how connected did you remain with that creative network that you had been enmeshed in?

**BJ:** Well, fairly connected because I was still in touch with the Film Committee and Dave Milholland lived around the corner. We continued to be in touch even as the make-up of the Film Committee changed. Sorting out the fragments of memory here is kind of complicated. I lived close to Portland State and I was transiting across the campus to and from work. The peace movement, of course, was in high gear at that point. Well, it's hard to talk about what all was going on but I know one of the things I tried to do was engage my kindergarten classes in making films. That led to the loss of the great soup movie that Jim Gilbert and I had made in Tom's class, because I showed it to my students in that class and I had these things in the

classroom and somehow when I packed up and left that film got lost. Many people have called me and contacted me and wanted to look at that because it was a movie about one of our favorite capers. We had a lot of fun at Portland State. One of the things was when Jim Gilbert finally got out of the service he came home with a 30-gallon soup pot and he had this idea that we could make soup and give away soup, so we did that. Eventually, we made a movie about it. How the soup was made in my kitchen over on College Street by Mrs. Nushen's pickle factory, and how we would haul it over to school and carry it around through the halls, and then take it out on the Park Blocks and serve it out the Park Blocks. Then one time we decided to serve it in the cafeteria and we got chased by the manager of the student center and took refuge in some faculty office with the soup pot. We were attacked and almost came to blows with the frat boys, who were very offended by this hippie activity. That's just a little sidelight but, again, the '60s and the early '70s, I was living in a huge house with a lot of other people, with thirteen other people, by the time we actually got the film center going. It was Portland; people were still maintaining a lot of connection through the movement, through constant demonstrations that were going on. People were starting various collectives: The Women's Health Collective, the Firewood Collective; Harry Dawson was involved in that, a cinematographer now. Anyway, so there was a lot of kind of collective activity evolving in those years.

**HP:** Just out of curiosity, this house of thirteen people, was it intentional communal living?

**BJ:** Mm-hmm.

**HP:** Were they mostly artists, or mostly activists, or activist artists?

**BJ:** All friends; just friends who came together. While I was still on College Street, my friends Dave and Carlin King, we were in a duplex and they lived downstairs and another couple was living in the basement. We would have meals together on alternate nights of the week. One or the other family would do the cooking. When I moved out of there, I did live over in Southeast with just my own family, my husband and kids. That was when the idea was really taking shape about the Film Center and about the same time my husband and I split up. He was working with a prison collective and was going to establish a halfway house for people. Again, it was this kind

of organic reaching out and getting projects going that would help various people in various ways. I began working on the idea for the Film Center.

After my husband left, I brought in some other people, a couple of other people, to help pay the rent. Barbara Bernstein, who's another prominent activist around town, cultural worker, that term came into being, lived in the house there. Then we moved to the bigger place in Northwest on Northwest Irving Street that became the much-expanded house because we had six bedrooms or maybe more. At least six bedrooms. So, Carlin came and I think, she had gone away for a time, and then came back, divorced, so she was divorced. I was separated, another friend of ours, Susan, was divorced, Jenny who had been divorced for a long time, and Madeline who had recently gotten divorced, and all of our children. So that made up the household. It was a really, really interesting time, very interesting time.

**HP:** Just out of curiosity, were you a part of the making of *Living Together*, the CMI film?

**BJ:** No, not specifically. Although, I was aware of it and supportive of... Again, there were a lot of things going on, more than any single individual could be involved with altogether. I think that Jill Nichols was involved in that project. She served as secretary to the Film Center when we got it going.

**HP:** So basically going back to this, you've graduated... did you meet Bob Summers from working with him within the PSU Film Committee?

**BJ:** In Tom Taylor's class.

**HP:** In Tom Taylor's class. I'm trying to understand how did the two of you reconnect in a way, where was the kernel... the "we need to do this for this community," for the Northwest Film Studies Center?

**BJ:** Well, like I say, we worked together on the Film Committee. Then I graduated but I was not far away, I remained very closely associated with it, and he was heading up the Film



Committee and we were friends. And [we] kind of emerged as two figures involved, two very recognizable figures, involved with the Film Committee. Jack Eyerly is another person who is important here because his wife was education director for the art museum, Polly Islow Eyerly. He had been organizing events; he was sort of nominal head of Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT). He is somebody who had connections with artists all over the place and this massive collection of work, and he was very interested in what we were doing and we were interested in what he was doing. He was a very good person at bringing folks together and connecting us with this other area of art and media that was around.

The other thing that happened somewhere along the way is that Sheldon Renan came from the Pacific Film Archive to Portland. Here again is this nexus of Rachel Griffin, and Jack Eyerly, and... I think that Sheldon was probably on the board of the National Endowment for the Arts at the time, or at least in close contact with them, and his association with the Pacific Film Archive was what he was bringing to us—was this idea that the Northwest should have a regional film center and that NEA was interested in funding regional film centers, and they were looking to find out who could do that—who could make that happen here. Bob and I were sort of pegged as the people to do that. I'm not, again, entirely certain how that came about, but I was certainly interested in doing it, willing to quit my job and take it on. And quitting my job meant putting my kids on welfare for 6 months. Sort of creating this thing out of nothing. Primarily, goodwill is what made that happen.

**HP:** Do you know why Sheldon Renan thought the Pacific Northwest needed it? What were his connections?

**BJ:** He had family connections here.

**HP:** So he actively sought to create this?

**BJ:** Yeah, I think so. I'm not sure entirely what his motivation was, but he did have connections here and enormous respect for Deinum and the fact that Deinum *was* here. Deinum was somebody who had a degree of international recognition. There wasn't the same kind of...

Seattle had a kind of powerful filmmaking... and some commercial development, but I think it was seen as more commercial, and Portland's potential lay in the fact that it was not a highly commercial film community but more an art-oriented kind of film community, which I think is due to the fact of Andries Deinum's presence here and the kind of influence that he had on *thousands* of people that, through the years that he was teaching, came through his classes. Many teachers who went back to their classrooms in the public schools and found ways of using film, building a culture that's very interested in film, and film art in particular.

[1:20] **HP:** Do you know specifically if Sheldon Renan had been a student of Deinum's?

**BJ:** I don't believe he had.

**HP:** Just that his reputation was... traveled through those circles. Did Sheldon Renan, did he know of your and Bob's work at the PSU Film Committee from your memory?

**BJ:** I think he did. I don't know.

**HP:** From my perspective, it seems clear that you guys were the figureheads that came out of the PSU Film Committee so then you become part of this dialogue. The Pacific Northwest needs a film center, so I'm just curious... basically when Sheldon probably packs up and goes back to his home somewhere in Berkeley, then you and Bob are in here in Portland, what do you do next?

**BJ:** Well, we made a trip up to Vancouver BC with Jack Eyerly. Met with some people who were doing video things up there, and we talked with people at the art museum, and very soon after that Bob left Portland to go to graduate school in NYU. So I continued working with Jack, working with Nina Lowry, who had been an advisor to the Film Committee at Portland State. We had this idea that Portland State and the Art Museum together should foster this idea of a regional film center. It didn't have a real home yet, but the guidelines put out by the National Endowment for the Arts was that they wanted these centers to be associated with art museums or existing institutions that were already tax exempt and things like that, that had some permanence

in the community. I think Bob was a little more interested in developing something more independent, but I could certainly see the wisdom of attaching it to an existing institution or institutions. So we tried to, in writing the grant proposal, to link Portland State and the Museum. There was, of course, a lot of work. I contacted people, again working closely with Jack Eyerly but I did some initial programs. There was a group of teachers, public school teachers, who had taken Deinum's classes and were all interested in teaching film. I set up a workshop with them. I put together some other programs, other screening events to begin defining what we would be and what we wanted to become. Of course, forging those ideas, working with Bob and with Jack, outlining a plan for what the Center would be, what its mission should be, and putting that together. Nina was very helpful in writing the grant proposal. We got the funding. Part of the preparation for that involved my going to New York and working for six weeks at an internship at the Museum of Modern Art and becoming familiar with the operation of the kind of study center, and we did see it as a study center, that we were trying to create. That we would do public screenings and also have resources for film study.

**HP:** When you were developing the mission, how would you characterize the NEA guidelines as helping sculpt what the ultimate mission was for the Northwest Film Studies Center?

**BJ:** I don't think... we didn't have a really firm set of guidelines it was, as I recall, sort of understood in terms of whatever guidelines they had put out. As I'd say, they did want it to be connected with an institution and involved in outreach to the public about film, but beyond that we were pretty free to develop it as we saw fit. For years, this idea, and I'm sure part of this came from... you know Andries was very interested in documentary; he was very interested in films that were connected with the reality of a place. I don't know whether it was explicitly his idea or something that came out of our discussions with filmmakers like Jim [Blashfield], Jack Sanders... this idea that films coming out of the Northwest, films grounded in this reality, were important. That we should be trying to foster that, not simply disseminating Hollywood product because they are very able to do that themselves. It was fostering, the idea of fostering regional filmmaking, really.

**HP:** Did you do that internship in New York in 1971?

**BJ:** I think that was it.

**HP:** Was Bob there at that point also?

**BJ:** Yeah, he was, he was there. [laughs] I didn't have very much contact, a little, we would do things. I was staying with Bill Plympton and I had twenty dollars a week to live on, [laughs] and all I did was go back and forth to the museum. Occasionally I think we would get together with Bob or go to screenings at the Bleeker Street Cinema. He would introduce me to people; a lot of people.

**HP:** From your time of that internship, how would you characterize the kernels of information you brought back that you did actually implement to this new institution that you were creating?

**BJ:** The Museum of Modern Art's film department is a pretty massive organization. What we had on our agenda: film preservation, the creation of a library, files... One of the things I was doing there was going through tons of newspapers and clipping articles related to films that would go into their files. They had files on everything ever made virtually. Clipping files, files of photographs, and stills from various movies. It's an enormous resource, then of course their screening program, it was a big order to take on. Bob, of course, when he came back to Portland, brought all of his vast library. I remember packing up and shipping all those books. Then the two of us drove back across the country in a driveaway car, and unpacked all those books.

And just started talking with people and this is where we were making contacts with the [Oregon] Historical Society and talking to Lew Cook, and Jack Eyerly was constantly coming up with ideas and people, so it was just a time when we were constantly at work, generating ideas, programs of how to do everything, how to make it all happen and happen in a very big way. We did a screening of King Kong that was just an enormous event at the Art Museum. Not one that I was extremely interested in myself because it seemed to me to be going in a different direction. But it was like that: *Oh, yeah, we should have a regional film festival. Oh yeah, there is a thing we can do with public broadcasting about a children's film festival.* So you know, it was just

getting down and putting those ideas together and being open to suggestions. Again, a lot of things were... the independent video action was taking hold in these storefront access centers and debates in city hall and the county about cable television and what could happen there. So trying to be in touch with all of those things and run a program of regular films, and do the program notes for those films. There was always a lot going on.

**HP:** Considering the intellectual exposure both you and Bob Summers had to Deinum and, production wise, to Taylor, what level of involvement did either Deinum or Taylor have at [the] early stages of the Northwest Film Studies Center?

**BJ:** Hardly any.

**HP:** Was there a specific reason for that?

**BJ:** Deinum was happy to see it happening but he was involved with his own teaching and did not want to be actively part of that. He did not see that as his role. Tom, again... Tom was extremely... you know, both of them, *both of them* were extremely busy struggling trying to keep CMI alive. It had only come into being in '69. I think Deinum was very concerned about what kind of shape it might take, and in some sense had kind of despaired of it becoming... because he wasn't getting the support he needed from the administration. He never got a lot of support—the interdepartmental rivalry was such that it would have been very difficult. So he was struggling to hang on to something there. His vision of this center had to do with connecting the various disciplines in the university, not in becoming consolidated as a department. Ultimately, that couldn't hold, it just couldn't. The university is not that kind of animal, it seems, so he had very strong ideals about teaching and the potential of film as a means of teaching. I guess the main point there is that he had his hands full just maintaining his own presence in the university, and Tom as well. They were constantly struggling for funds and support. Having a secretary, equipment...[laughs]

**HP:** From your perspective, they were busy trying to sculpt and keep CMI afloat, but they were supportive of your endeavor?

**BJ:** Yeah. Yeah.

**HP:** When you were in the process of co-founding the Northwest Film Studies Center, who were some of the filmmakers you were really engaged with at that time?

**BJ:** I think [Jim] Blashfield and Jack Sanders, probably. There were other filmmakers in Tom's classes. There were other student filmmakers. I'd say that Jim Blashfield and Jack Sanders were the people that came and Dave Milholland, I think, was involved at that point. It's hard to keep track, again, of who was involved when.

**HP:** Let's flip it and in the bigger picture of film as a medium, who were some of the filmmakers that you were really interested in at that time? I know you had mentioned that you were specifically doing a lot of experimental programming, so who were some of the filmmakers?

**BJ:** Oh, I was showing things from the Canyon Film Co-op and from Anthology Film Archives, so that was something else entirely, that wasn't regional filmmakers. [pause] There were people coming out of Tom's classes that were active then and who are not so active now, but Sura Rubenstein again, Sandy Smith – now Walt Smith. People who would come out of Tom's classes, basically were the people we were working probably most closely with. George Hood was around. Harry Dawson. Will Vinton.

**HP:** For the non-regional influences at that time, who are some of the worldwide directors or filmmakers or films that were very influential at that time for you?

**BJ:** I don't really know... foreign films were really flooding into America, of course, so Godard was probably, for me, a primary influence and interest. I was looking at so many things I'm pretty eclectic in my interest in film. So I would say people like Jim Blue were also interesting to me. He had come to one of Deinum's classes. He was teaching at Rice University, but he's a Portland person, grew up here, I think, and is now dead. He made documentary films. Other

people like George Stoney, who had been a major influence on Deinum. So, there were just so many things. I could give you a long list of people if I really sat and thought about it. But I guess I'm gonna just leave it at that for now.

**HP:** Do you have any other, to end for today, any strong memories that are flooding back about your time with Bob, of co-founding the Northwest Film Studies Center, your time at Portland State, the community at large during the late '60s and '70s in Portland, your activism, anything like that you want to add?

**BJ:** [Pause] Almost too many things [laughing]. I think we had always so many visions for what could be, and so much energy to put into all of them; I wish I had that energy back.

**HP:** Thank You!