

Interview with Bruce Turner 3/22/96 is now.

Interviewed by:

INT: what date did NMU come into being? I mean WNMU-TV I am sorry.

BT: Here again you do not want to know about the cable restrictions?

INT: No, just WNMU

BT: WNMU TV signed on the air officially December 28, 1972.

INT: Okay, when did you begin working here?

BT: 1963

INT: Why did the station come into being, formerly known as WNMU-TV?

BT: The University had developed a division called instructional communications and that began with WNMU FM the public radio station. And when Dr. Harden was president of the University, Edgar Al Harden, it was decided at that point, they were going to begin a television service, this was back in '62 or '63, they constructed studio's in the Lee Hall, it used to be a ball room, they converted it to TV studio's and began a cable distribution, cable microwave community antenna distribution throughout the Upper Peninsula, about 33 communities. As time went along, the cost of doing this seem to warrant to spending a little more money and broadcasting and thus be able to reach areas that did not have cable. So decision was made to apply for the license and we did and ended up getting Channel 13.

INT: Okay. Marquette was chosen to have a public TV station because it had the previous basis. Before WNMU TV came into being.

BT: I don't think that had anything to do with, you said chosen, we did the deciding. It had nothing to with us being chosen.

INT: okay. okay.

BT: The only choice we had, is the FCC allocated certain channels to this area and I believe channel 19 was the channel that was allocated to Marquette. We appealed and asked for a VHF channel. Because at the time, back in 1972, very few people could get UHF TV. In other words most people had the VHF channel 2 and 13. So we asked for the FCC for permission to use channel 13 and they granted that to us.

INT: Okay. Alright in '72, if you can remember, how much did it cost approximately to run the station annually.

BT: In ball park figures it would have to be about a third of what

it is now. You want to know what it is now.

INT: yes. Festival 1975 raised \$975.

BT: it is about a million six, according to our last fiscal year. and Northern contributes about 40 percent of that.

INT: I know the station receives donations from the public, but does it receive much money from the State and Federal Government during the year.

BT: From the State Government directly, no, we used to but that has been cut off in the last couple of years.

INT: what about the Federal?

BT: The Federal Government through the Corporation of Public Broadcasting we receive a community service grant. Which amounts to about 400,000 it varies from year to year.

INT: What is that money used for?

BT: The very name of the grant, community service indicates that we are to use it in some way to benefit the communities we serve. We have flexibility to use it, we use a lot of it to pay for staff that we could not get on state funds. So when we have expanded, many times we've expanded by taking money's from the grant. And hiring people. The down side of that is, when the grant dwindles, as it is starting to do, there comes a point where you have to look at people. Because you have been using money from that grant for that. We also use it for a paying for certain fees that the station has to pay for, for our attorney's in Washington, we use it sometimes for equipment, there is certain equipment we can buy out of there for equipment and on occasion we use it for programming, if we don't have enough of our regular program dollars.

INT: What do you use the public donations for?

BT: Almost all of our public money's will go for programs. And we spend about \$350,000 a year on programming.

INT: Basically all that comes from the public then?

BT: As I said some of it may end up having to come out of the community service grant if we fall short on the dollars, we have not always been able to make that money that we spend on programming come just from the viewers. When we appeal for their funds that is what we use those monies for. So as much as they give us we use for programming.

INT: Okay. Remember what kind of donations you got when you first began, like in '72 or '73.

BT: '75 is our first year. mal 6, the NBC affiliate has 35,000. So

INT: In '75 the first year.

BT: The Festival 1975 raised \$975.

INT: Compared to?

BT: Compared to our last fund raiser when we went off the air we were at \$67,000. But I need to explain something, so you don't misconstrue something, the 1975 that festival was the only thing we did, we didn't do a mail campaign, there was no such thing as telemarketing back then. That was going on the air and recording a pitch in English and we had Dr. John Watanen record one in Finish. With those two pitch's that we played several times, we got \$975. So from that point onward, we began to fund raise usually twice a year, a March drive and a December drive. The difference is that now we use a direct mail campaign, we use telemarketing, the month of August is a quiet campaign, where we are fund raising but were not going on the air with live pitch's, we have recorded announcements and send out letters and things like that.

INT: okay. Do you do that two times a year still, on the air?

BT: On the air twice and then the quiet campaign in August.

INT: I was reading an article in the archives and it said in '84 it was over \$100,000, in your fund raising. You were like the, you were referred as the number one spot television network in the state and 19th in the nation.

BT: I don't remember those figures. We are not a network first.

INT: you were the number one public television station, you were the number one in the state and

BT: I am not sure if you are stating what you read correctly. Number one, if only a tenth of the people who watched the public station in Detroit watched, there would still be more of them than there are of us. So I would find it hard to believe that statement was worded that we were the number one watched. More likely our according to the Nielsen statistics on the stations, there have been times, that might of been one of the years, where a greater percentage of our viewing area watched us than other stations in the city. If we only have 50,000 people that watch us or could watch us, and 35 percent or 50 percent of them watched us that is great. Detroit may have 2 million people only 50,000 watch, so the percentage there is quite a difference. We feel being a rural station more people watch us, because number one there is less to watch, in Detroit you have all kinds of things. Now in the meantime cable has somewhat changed that, we to have faced competition from Disney, ANE and all of those. Our viewing is still, our last Nielsen book showed that we had, in terms of households for the week, about 48,000. actually depending on which book your looking at, but our last one was 48 our previous one was 51, 48,000 households, channel 6, the NBC affiliate has 96,000. So

we have half as many viewers as Channel 6 and we think that is great.

INT: yes.

BT: Now that would not be true in Detroit, WPBS or Lansing WKAR, simply because there are other, too many other stations and a lot more people.

INT: Okay. I guess I will move on to the transmission of the signal, if you could give me an explanation of how the public can see Channel 13 in their houses, how is it transmitted from here.

BT: From our Learning Resources Center we have a microwave dish on top of the building, and that microwave goes to another microwave at Morgan Meadows, which is out to just about to Negaunee and from there it goes to microwave dish on ski hill, suicide hill. Then from there it goes to our transmitter which is located south and west of Ishpeming. So that gets the signal both from our live programs and from our taped programs and from the satellite, from the PBS satellite out to the transmitter. With our full powered transmitter, 316,000 watts of power, we transmit in an area that is shown on that coverage map, that circle being the primary coverage. From there were picked up by our cable company's. Cable company's within our primary carriage area have to carry us. They have no choice. One's that are outside of primary may carry us if they wish, most of them do, they are foolish if they don't because we are the closest public station. So I guess that is the way in describing how it gets out to them.

INT: Okay, I was going to ask you how far your broadcasted, but the map covers that. Do you remember how many different programs you originally had? On the station.

BT: When we first signed on we were basically a half a day. so in terms of how many itself, it would be a wild guess, I would think probably about 20.

INT: Compared to how many now?

BT: When I am talking program I am talking about series, like we talk about Sesame Street and that because in a given week we may have 100 single programs, but in terms of the programs you could count on day after day, week after week, I would think you probably have about 20 of them.

INT: okay

BT: And that was all by tapes that were shipped in, most of them flown in. There was no satellite at that time, there was no interconnection which meant that anytime we were expecting tapes we had to go out usually to the airport and Republic Airlines, is what Northwest is now, and we would bring in big boxes of tapes, because it used to be the standard format was a 2 inch tapes, now upstairs

we have one inch and we have half inch. If you can imagine a two inch, two hour tape came in a box about like that, and weighed tremendously, and then when you got it out of the airport in the winter time it was like carrying a block of ice. Times have changed.

INT: Did you have any live programs in '72?

BT: In '72? yes.

INT: yes, other than the fund raiser?

BT: yes

INT: What

BT: Remember Tim we had been doing everything a broadcast station did before that. So this network I had been telling you about, this microwave and cable, we had students doing public eye news before that.

INT: okay, I didn't know that.

BT: and we had did a couple of live specials. I am trying to remember if we had anything other than, the public eye was the only thing we were doing live on a regular basis. But we did some live specials. Now the public eye is, public eye and our call in's are the only live programs that we do on a regular basis. Commencement is live we do a few of those a year. For the most part everything is taped.

INT: Okay. How many employees originally worked here?

BT: Three.

INT: Compared to how many now?

BT: When I came to work here in 1963, with the expressed purpose of being hired, because Northern was going to go into television. There were two other people one was head of instructional communication and the other one was a technician and I was hired for production. So those were the three of us in 1963.

INT: Okay. Do you have a rough idea of how many work here now?

BT: If your counting full time staff just in TV, probably around 22.

INT: 22

BT: Yes, this is why it is a little strange Dennis because our engineers work the radio and the television. And lots of people work some for TV some for AV, so it is a little confusing. But when we report to the federal government for the grant we get each year

we have to break down which ones are TV and how many full time there are. And in fact before you leave I will verify with Jean what our current one is.

INT: Okay. Getting back to the grant, how often do you apply for those?

BT: The service grant? once a year.

INT: one time a year?

BT: yes. See the corporation for public broadcasting was set up in 1967 as part of the telecommunications bill by Lyndon Johnson during his administration. So when that organization came into affect, it is not really a government agency it is more like a quasi(?) government agency. Because the congress controls it, but it is not quote same as the CIA or any other organization like that. But when they came into existence one it's mandates was to cause the public TV and radio stations not only to have some stability, but to also provide some of the funds for expansion so these stations can come on board. Equipment could be replaced we applied for separate grant usually every other year for what they call and NTIA, National Telecommunications, I don't know what it is called, but it is for equipment. I am sure you, you have been in AV for how long?

INT: 2 years.

BT: Then you heard of some of the equipment that we have gotten on grants. And those are separate grants. Those are ones you apply for when number one, when the money is available for you to apply for and number two when you have got a need that you can get the money for. Sometimes you need the equipment, but they are not going to fund the kind of equipment you need. So we are in the process of applying for a grant for the radio to get a digital equipment so the station can be digital instead of the way it is. But the community service grant we have to apply for in the sense that we have to fill out forms and then after we get it we have to fill out reports, but it is there it's not like will there be one this year, won't there be one this year. I mean it is a fact of doing business. It is sort of like working through the university your budget every year.

INT: okay. What happens if you come short, short on the budget for the year.

BT: We haven't come up short. There have been times where we had to because of our different sources of funding, because of the corporations money, because of the publics money because of the University's money, one time because of the States money. We had different pools of money you could apply for. So usually we don't come up short, we haven't come up short to where it has crisis. Public Radio 90 now few years back went through a save public radio campaign because they were going in the hole. I mean they had some real problems and they were able to get a massive fund raising

canteen and were able to stabilize it.

INT: Where does the money come from through Northern.

BT: The State.

INT: The state. Well that was all the questions I had. Unless there is anything you would like to add. Why is it located so far south west?

BT: I could say because that serves the population center, it is the only place we could put the tower up because of the FAA. Through the ? agency, you have a eleven hundred foot tower and Channel 6 has about the same size tower one mile from us out there. We couldn't put it here in town because of the bypass to the Airport nor could Channel 6, because they are right at the airport. So the closest place we could get, we couldn't go south because of the airbase, so we went where they told us we could go. That is not really a problem because it gives us more coverage to the west and south. We lose a little to the east. But the population center is in the central and west. That is the one we had no say in.

INT: Okay.