The N W Ayer Archives

An interview for the Oral History Program, with Charles ("Chuck") Wilds, formerly of Ayer's Program Department, and Fred McClafferty, who served in that department and later, until the present time, in New York Account Management.

Significance of Interview to Oral History Program:

Mr. Wilds' employment dates back to 1947, when he worked under Hay McClinton. He knew intimately McClinton, James Hanna, the next department head, and Tom McDermott, who succeeded Hanna. He tells important and interesting stories of the early days of Ayer's television function, and of our clients'. Mr. McClafferty was witness to much of the same story, and here serves well in the role of reminder and former colleague of Wilds, and also as an authority on the telephone account. The part of Mr. Davis, the interviewer, is perhaps more than expected for the simple reason that he also was there for much of the period and events covered.

Place of Interview: 166 (260) Madison Avenue

Date: February-March 1, 1989

Interviewer: Howard Davis

McClafferty & Wilds
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Howard: Hi, this is Howard Davis with Chuck Wilds and Fred McClafferty of Ayer. Chuck, tell us just a little bit about your background and where you're from.

Chuck: I originally started working at Ruthrauf and Ryan Inc., at the time known as Riffraff and Ruin. And then I joined the Army Reserves and I didn't like to walk so I got in the Navy. I ~~started~~ was discharged as a full Lieutenant in 1945 or thereabouts, and went back to Ruthrauf and worked there for a while. I decided to take the offer made by N W Ayer (Tom McDermott, specifically).

Howard: Before any of that, you were born where and went to school with?

Chuck: I was born October 4, 1918. Went to Riverdale Country School and then to a school in Switzerland for a year, Then Hodgkins School, graduating in 1936. Graduated from Williams in 1940.

Howard: Fred, it might sound funny to you, being a current employee, but this is part of the oral history. Just do the same thing, if you don't mind.

Fred: I was born in Huntington, L.I., July 1, 1929. Went to school in a combination of places, New Canaan, CT for a while, grammar school for a while in New York, H.S. in New York City, University of Connecticut graduating in '50. I

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went in the work force at ABC Radio Network in the mailroom earning $30 per month, that was September 1950. It didn't last long because I was drafted during the Korean conflict, served in Germany. Went back to ABC in the mailroom for another three months and then moved into the Radio Network Sales Department and out of there after a couple of years to a small agency, now defunct, called Donahue and Co., while Walter Weir was there. Joined N W Ayer on February 6, 1956 as a time buyer for $120 a week. That takes it up to the start of Ayer.

Howard: Chuck, I missed the date of your hiring at Ayer.

Chuck: I guess it was either 1947 or 1948.

Howard: When did you get out of the service?

Chuck: 1945. I went back to Ruthrauf & Ryan a couple of years.

Howard: What was your capacity at Ruthrauf and Ryan?

Chuck: Time buyer.

Howard: And what was your capacity at Ayer?

Chuck: - Still a time buyer.

Howard: When you came aboard in '47, I don't have anybody who has described the set-up of New York Ayer at that time. Would you help me out a little bit? The office was already in the Rockefeller Center?

Chuck: 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

Howard: Did they have the space in the International Building too at that time?

Chuck: No, they just had 30 Rockefeller Plaza. They had two floors, as I recall at that time. Towards the back of the building though, they had that terrace.

Fred: Actually, it went from the front, the very front of the building, yeah, the executive offices and then it went back to what you would call about the middle.

Chuck: Actually Hanna's office and McClinton's office overlooked a door leading to the terrace. And when they went out to eat with the higher ups, we used to sneak out on the terrace and look at the sights.

Howard: Which was superior to the other in Ayer rank, Hanna or McClinton?

Chuck: McClinton was in charge of the whole thing.

Howard: Hanna succeeded then, excuse me, who was the head of the "service" in New York? You know that what we then called the "Service Department" is now Account Management. Fred, you want to help?

Fred: I think Upton was the head of it.

Howard: Hay McClinton, what was he called, head of Radio Department?

Chuck: Vice President in charge of Radio and Television Department. Radio first and TV came into being right after the war.

Howard: He was basically the program man?

Chuck: Yes.

Howard: And, how long had he been there, do you have any idea? He went back well before the war; he went back to the '30's.

Fred: This I don't know, I'm not too sure about.

Howard: Who else was in your department?

Fred: At that time, we had Tom McDermott, of course, who headed it up and there was Paul Kissenberger and Dick Bunbury and Jack Purvis. He was a time buyer, and he was there until the switch to Philadelphia, when he moved to CBS.

Howard: So, Programming Department was both a programming and media function? Nowadays, most of our employees would think of time buying as a Media Department function, wouldn't they?

Fred:? Later on, I know there were two sections of radio and TV. You had a Radio-TV Department and then under that you had a program group and a time buying group. But, they weren't the same. Separate. Two different functions. We had a chief time buyer, which Chuck was and Dick Bunbury was after Chuck, but then we had a programming thing which was reporting on up to whoever was in charge, McClinton, Hanna or McDermott or whoever, but there were two separate departments.

Howard: And, in New York, were there people identified as media...this was as close as New York office got to media, when the Media Department was in Philadelphia?

Chuck: No, the Radio and TV Department was a self-contained agency for making and placing radio and television.

Howard: I get the impression that the New York office was a self-contained agency in a lot of ways, wasn't it. I talked the other day to Steve De Baun. He told a story about Tom Hopkins who was working on Hamilton Watch, and one time he went to Philadelphia and introduced himself to the print people and they said they never heard of him, or something like that.

Chuck: I think that's really right. It was self-contained to a great degree in New York. We had a branch in Philadelphia.

Howard: Well, except you probably felt superior and inferior at the same time. They were a larger group and they were an old group, and I guess you thought they were rather stodgy.

Chuck: Stuffy was the word I was going to use. Correct.

Howard: How much contact did you have with the Philadelphia people? Let's say in the earlier stage before Fred came in on, say '47. Did you ever go down there?

Chuck: Yes, oh frequently. I would go down there to discuss various plans with the Philadelphia people. Generally speaking, early planning was more of a Philadelphia function. Somebody had to say what you were going to do.

Chuck: If we had any regular contact with anybody in Philadelphia, it was with the Plans guys.. They would say, we think we need television for this particular of business, so it would be that kind of planning. But we almost never worked with the people making print ads.

Howard: Chuck, going back, because you're a rich source here if we go back to the '40's, which we don't have too much of. What were some of the radio shows that we were involved with?

Chuck: Well, of course, the biggest one we were involved with was the Electric Companies Advertising Program, or ECAP, where we tried to get 100% of the TV stations in the country and I think we had all except two, if I recall. The show was an hour long and called "The Diamond Jubilee of Light."

Howard - an aside here - The Diamond Jubilee was carried simultaneously on all four TV nets. ABC, CBS, NBC and Dumont. I believe it was the first and last time that was ever done.

Howard: Radio?

Chuck: No, no, TV, and I also recall Hawkins Falls, on NBC, one of the first daytime soap operas for Lever Brothers.

Howard: Well, that would have been really in the late '40's.

Chuck: I would say the late '40's.

Howard: Chuck, I want to remind you that in 1948 the network was only New York, Philadelphia and Boston. Were you in that early in television, before it went even as far as Chicago, which was in '49?

Chuck: Yes, because at that time I was buying spots on the stations in most markets, but had not yet developed to a point where you were really buying programs as such because it was so limited.

Howard: But, you sent films of commercials out or you sent copy in some cases for local announcers.

Chuck: That's right. We were very big in sports at that time. I think you know that N W Ayer had televised the first football game.

Howard: Who was the client that you were working for in sports?

Chuck: Well, we had sports, especially for the Atlantic Refining Company, but we had different advertisers buying into that. We had the Red Sox from Boston. We had the Phillies and I think the Athletics also in Philadelphia at that time and the Pirates up in Pittsburgh. And we had the Yankees on radio only in the New York regional setup. These Atlantic broadcasts started in radio and went on to television.

Howard: Who was in charge of sports?

Fred: Les Qualey was the person who actually ran the telecast. He was a producer, not really in overall charge. Purvis was there a while, then a guy by the name of Jim McDonald. They were all in the Program Department.

Howard: I knew that Ayer was big in sports and I know the both of you worked on it. Fred, you had quite a bit to do with later on in the Qualey era?

Fred: Yes, we did. I kind of remember Chuck did the sports. And then there was a man by the name of Ray Girarden, who followed Chuck, and that didn't work, okay. That didn't work, so I at the time was working as assistant to Jim Hanna and Tom McDermott, and they dragged me from that job into the sports job. I did that for about 5-6 years, I guess. That's getting later now, we were by that time getting into the Time and Life Building, so I'm guessing...it would have been in 1959. That's my guess. I think we were there for 10 years.

Chuck: I came back there in '57 and that time we were split. Part was in 620 International Building and part was over on 30 Rock. For a while we were down on 47th Street. That was after Philadelphia moved back to New York.

Howard: Now listen, you knew Hay McClinton. I would just like to hear something about him. Remember, Fred and I don't know him and Steve De Baun didn't know him, so I would like to hear something about Hay McClinton, who headed this person for a long time.

Fred: (Chuck) I think I can put it best this way. There was a story going around that, if you went in to see McClinton for a raise, it came out you didn't get it, but you felt great about it. After that, when you went in to see Hanna for a raise, you got the raise, but felt lousy.

Howard: Now he, McClinton, of course, we know that he went ahead and formed his own agency. But in his days at Ayer, he was Mr. Broadcast, wasn't he?

Chuck: Yes.

Howard: And this goes way back into radio and I know in the Hower book, he probably goes back to the '20's. How much older than you would you think he was?

Chuck: I'd say he's about 85 or 90 now.

Howard: If he's alive, we don't know.

Chuck: He died.

Howard: Was he both a creative and a businessman?

Chuck: Yes, he originally, I believe, was a copywriter. And he was a very big, bluff and ~~hardy~~ hearty person that everybody loved on sight. And he had the gift of blarney. He was a very outgoing extrovert. He got people to work for him that could make twice as much money elsewhere and just liked to work for him.

Howard: Jim Hanna, when I interviewed him, spoke of him in god-like terms. In his interview, Mr. Hanna said that he was called in by Batten and told he was going to succeed McClinton so that goes more or less with what you're saying, Chuck. And Upton at that time, at least sometime in the '50's or 40's, he became head of the New York office. Now, this does mean that radio/television...the man in charge wasn't in charge of the office. It was already a service run company at that point, it sounds to me like.

Fred: No, I don't think that's right. The reason I say that is that the representation on the Board actually was greater and was a very small Board coming from the Radio ~~and~~ TV Department than it was from a so-called Service Department. He was head of the service office here, but the other end of the floor had two Board members, Hanna and McDermott.

Howard: But, they weren't at the same time, though?

H— I'm still not clear on the timing here. The record may show Hanna & McDermott at the same time

Chuck: No, that's true.

Howard: To use the expression, could Upton bend Hanna's will?

Chuck: No, I don't think so. I truly think they were equal.

Howard: Well, that's interesting. I always thought that the office head was the boss, you know.

Fred: No, he was head of the New York service office. They shared office space.

Howard: Okay, so you they were co-equals?

Fred: I never thought anything different. There was no reporting, that's for sure.

Howard: There was no reporting to Hanna by either Hay McClinton or later Hanna?

Chuck: Right.

Howard: There was no reporting to Upton, yes. That's interesting. I'm going to go to Upton for a oral history report later on. I'm sure you're right. Now, the first of the creative people that you remember in New York, who was the head copywriter when you came, do you remember that?

Chuck: Helen Whitmore was one of them.

Howard: She was journeyman writer, she wasn't the boss.

Chuck: No. Jean Bouillier was there and then John Esau later on. And before Esau became head of broadcast copy there was John Caldwell.

Howard: Yes, Steve De Baun worked for him. He said that he was the most work-a-holic man he ever knew.

Chuck: Yes, he was a very good boss and a very affable person. He was well liked around the shop. And, a good writer. They had a couple of others. Marge Kerr was there.

Howard: I was corrected bluntly by De Baun when I said, as I recall, there weren't any art directors in television in those days and he said, oh yeah, they were. He said, they had a couple in New York. John McCullough was one. They weren't considered as vital to the team as today, but we had them.

Fred: I was much more aware of the two groups of broadcast production people that were considered vital members of the team. That was split as I remember. And you had a group who was in charge of live productions and another group that was in charge of film production. And Chuck, correct me,

but wasn't Dave Gudbrod the head of film production and Sam Zurich of live?

Howard: Ahead of Zurich, tell me about a man named Bill Radcliff, because Zurich succeeded him in that job.

Fred: That's right, I remember Radcliff, but I can't really tell you anything more than that.

Howard: He's a handsome guy and rather theatrical type of guy. Do you remember him, Chuck?

Chuck: I remember a fellow called Don Jones who worked on special projects. He made sort of a mini-career out of producing or helping being Ayer's producer on the AT&T Science Series.

Fred: That was Don Jones' contribution over a long span of time. He interfaced with the famous director, Frank Capra. Now, Frank Capra, those were among the great television shows in the history of television. Our Mr. Sun was one; Hemo the Magnificent another.

Chuck: Let's go back a bit. Wally McGill was in there working on the Bell Telephone Hour, and he got a lot of people in there, including the star of South Pacific, Pinza. Pinza

got off of the job in the South Pacific on the stage and wired McGill, what do you think? McGill said, what can you lose? That's how Pinza happened to join up with South Pacific.

Howard: Wally McGill was already kind of a folkloric character when I first knew him; everybody referred to Wally and we'll talk about what happened later 'cause he was replaced. Let me ask you this about him - where did he come from, Wally McGill, do you have any idea?

Chuck: No, he was there when I arrived. I haven't the slightest idea.

Howard: And, he was producing radio shows?

Chuck: Radio shows. Bell Telephone Hour was a big one. I think he had a Hollywood background. He knew all the stars and the names and so forth, and he could line them up real well.

Howard: Do you suppose he went back to the Ford Sunday Night Theater, which was our first big show?

Chuck: It wouldn't surprise me, 'cause he was around at that time. I'm surprised that Hanna didn't mention him. Did Hanna mention him?

Howard: I had to ask him about Wally. He didn't say too much about him. By the way, Upton respected him an awful lot and mentioned him. I recall that. Anyway, McGill is an interesting story. I wanted to ask if you remember about his finally being replaced after the show went to television. Do you remember who replaced him?

Chuck: Jack Rayle, I think was the first. Followed many years later by Jim Elson, and then followed by the fellow from Pittsburgh, Jules Green.

Howard: I want to tell you something that Hanna told us, a very interesting story. He thought that, if Wally would have agreed to a hearing aid, his career would have been longer, but he was such an ardent Christian Scientist that he wouldn't do that. I wonder if you know that?

Chuck: No, I did not know that.

Howard: Anyway, McGill was replaced as the top producer on the Bell Telephone Hour by Jack Rayle, and Hanna tells the story that he had to go to Mr. Batten because he came in at a higher salary than Hanna was making, and he had to ask permission to have an employee making more money than he had.

Chuck: It was sure kept quiet, I'll tell you that.

Fred: It probably would have caused a furor, and Ayer had the problem of keeping the AT&T business, and they just went through and put an entire new team together.

Howard: Oh, you're up to the time now when "somebody saved the business." Was that it? See, I think of that really in creative and account terms and I haven't thought about it having to do with the Program Department.

Fred: I vividly remember the last line of that presentation at Sterling Forest, which they put on for us in the New York office afterwards and the last line was, "Gentlemen, we understand you are looking for a new advertising agency. Gentlemen, we are your new advertising agency." And, I've never forgotten it.

Howard: Do you recall who read that line? Was it Neal O'Connor?

Fred Chuck: It would have been Neal or Bobby Kingsbury - probably Neal.

Howard: Probably Neal, yes. Well, that's interesting 'cause we've got quite a bit of witness on that dangerous time, you know. And, personally I think of it as a creative thing because I was then a writer. From every place in Ayer, I suppose people had something to do with the 1967 saving of the account. And, as you know, the people who came out on

top were Naylor and Galli. Not on top, but as the managers. So, I suppose since Galli was copy and Naylor was service, I didn't usually think that those were the involvements first. Who was this lady named LaHay you talked about earlier? I loved her name. Wauhillau LaHay.

Howard: Okay, I'm going to read from the letter now. Helen Whitmore McDermott, who is the widow of Tom McDermott. And was a writer at Ayer and she says, "Wauhillau LaHay was head of the Publicity Department; in fact, she was the Publicity Department. She hired Dottie Duran later as her assistant. Wauhillau came to Ayer from Chicago, where she was radio editor of the Chicago paper that wasn't the Tribune. Was the News? Many called her 'Red Wing' since she was an authentic Indian princess in the hills of Oklahoma. She had a terrific personality. She knew everybody and everyone knew her." Fred told me that you knew Wauhillau LaHay and I couldn't believe the name. You know though, she says LaHay was the Publicity Department, where were your people in the Publicity Department like Oscar Leiding?

Chuck: No, she worked under - you should excuse the expression - Hay McClinton.

Fred:? - See, this was part of Radio TV broadcast publicity, separate from Oscar Leiding and Marvin Murphy, in the Ayer Public Relations Department.

Howard: This is the case, I believe, of the separation of broadcast and print taking place even in New York. Not necessarily Philadelphia and New York, but even in New York.

Chuck: Marvin Murphy was a department head. His department just happened to be for a purpose as efficiency, I assume, housed in the New York office. But she reported to McClinton.

Howard: We had two agencies, guys. What did we do in your memory for National Dairy, Chuck, do you remember?

Chuck: Well, we did a lot for them. Sealtest was our business and I remember very distinctly going all over the East putting in radio spots back in the old days. I went down with one of the people from Sealtest, all over the South. And then, incidentally, that's where I ran across my friend from Atlantic Refining, Cliff Owen. He was also involved in placing radio spots here and yonder and in Birmingham or some cow town down in the South, and placing spots for Atlantic and Sealtest at that time. I was traveling because we were trying to buy spots at the local rate, which is usually lower than the national rate. Glenn Gundell was trying to make his mark and trying to point out to his management that he could get things cheaper than on a national basis. When you brought in our transportation and so forth, I'm not sure he was right, but it made a good story for him.

Howard: Couldn't have done that by telephone? You had to make the fiction that you were there? That was the story?

Chuck: Right, right.

Howard: Now, Glenn Gundell, interesting, you know the funny thing is that we could go on much longer than we need to, but of course his account person was Neal O'Connor. I wrote on that for a little while.

Chuck: Well, we go back to that National Dairy. For a while we had a series of Sealtest spots about a minute in length. Sometimes two minutes in length, and we tried to get on various juke boxes around the South that are really catchy tunes. I'd get ahold of the Sealtest guy in charge of a district and he'd go around with us to the various ice cream parlors, or the ones that had juke boxes and try to get them to stick the records in.

Howard: Were they commercials?

Chuck: Oh, yeah.

Howard: I'd never knew that. I never heard of that.

Fred: Let me ask Chuck a question. In connection with Sealtest, I remember in 1956 and I think it may have gone away or was going away when I joined the company. It was the Sealtest Big Top with Jack Sterling.

Chuck: That was an hour-long show that we had on a very big network, and Jim Hanna was very instrumental in this one. This was his particular baby, as I recall.

Chuck: It was Saturday or Sunday morning, I can't remember, Saturday I think, made for the kid's audience to sell Sealtest Ice Cream. Sterling was the M.C., with various acts from Ringling Bros. around the country.

Howard: Actually, it was a good show. Now, I was hired by John Esau at the time of the famous move of Ayer people to Philadelphia in 1958. About John Esau, he died recently and we didn't make much of a fuss about it, and yet he was a very important person at Ayer and that he headed the Television Copy Department, and then later on was in Account Management. Do you remember him very well?

Fred: Yeah, I remember John as a very pleasant guy; I've never really worked with him, but I thought he was a delightful man to be around.

Chuck: I used to play cards with him during lunch and break. We started out playing Cribbage and then switched over to Gin Rummy. He was a submariner during the war on the USS Chivo.

Chuck: He got a couple of Cribbage boards with the USS Chivo at the top of them and he gave one to me, which I still have. And then later on Gorton Brain joined us and he was a Submariner with the Sea Robin, or Sea Wolf, or Sea something or another.

Howard: Chuck...Hanna says that the Hollywood office reported to New York. Glenn Taylor reported to him, not to Philadelphia.

Fred: It was a branch of the radio TV agency.

Chuck: Phil Cohan was there too. A great programming guy.

Howard: Remember Glenn Taylor; he was the first I remember.

Fred: He was succeeded by Roddy Rogers.

Howard: Roddy Rogers of Philadelphia. Glenn I knew quite well.

Chuck: And Roddy got the ax when O'Reilly was made Executive VP. They didn't like each other and the handwriting was on the wall; that's when Calhoun and Roddy Rogers both decided to go elsewhere. Forced out.

Howard: What do you think happened in the industry of the advertising business that caused a large important department like programming or broadcast to now be just a little function of the Media Department? Fred, I'd like to hear you on that. Was it good or bad?

Fred: Well, I think it's right, whether it's good or bad, I don't know. When you started, what you had was people, agencies and clients buying one hour or sometimes even longer shows. And these shows were very important to them. As the units of time being sold and bought got smaller and smaller, what you evolved into was a more numerical, mechanical process where the clients didn't take the day-to-day interest. If you go back to the days of Du Pont Cavalcade and the AT&T's Telephone Hour, the Voice of Firestone and things that that, you have a very deep contact with the client on a daily basis and everybody was involved with the program. And therefore, programming, as such, was an important project. Programming now at advertising agencies probably represents something like 5% of the total dollars. And 95% of it is participation which, as I say, is an numerical/mechanical process. I think that rightfully has changed the role.

Howard: I think you've explained it very well. I think to support it the only person that I considered a hero in my years at NBC, Pat Weaver, came from an advertising agency to NBC. But, that would never happen today.

Fred: Well, so did Lee Rich, who came out of an advertising agency, is now one of the major, major contributors. There would be no job at that level for Lee Rich if he was still in an agency.

Howard: Rexall, do you remember anything about Rexall?

Chuck: This was about the time I got here. Rexall was handled out of the West Coast or Chicago, I guess. But, we lost that business before we really got into it. Durante and McClinton were very good friends and that's one reason Durante agreed to work, I think, for N W Ayer.

Fred: Didn't Phil Cohan figure into that picture somewhere? Where did Phil Cohan come from before Ayer? Was he always in Hollywood or was he in New York?

Chuck: As far as I know, he was always in Hollywood.

Fred: Always in Hollywood, and for some reason the trio rattles around in my mind of Jackson, Cohan and Durante. And I can't tell you what that means exactly, but I think they may have been business partners.

Chuck: Yeah, Cohan was very well liked at that time.

Howard: A lovely man.

Chuck: And Glenn Taylor, too.

Howard: I'm going to tell you, Phil as far as I know is hale and well, isn't he?

Chuck/Fred: Good, I've heard nothing different. Last I heard.

Howard: I intend to interview him by telephone. I have the sports question now. Lee Qualey was the creative type really, who worked with the announcers of the programs, and the ball players I guess. What was the direction coming from?

Fred: Actually it was coming from Qualey. He was unique; I don't know that sports directors or sports people at any other agency had quite the ear and the confidence and series of announcers that Les had. He had on the contract to N W Ayer people like Bob Prince and Kurt Gowdy. We would hire them and determine their salaries here and negotiate with them. And it was Les' job to make sure that he got the best out of all of them. And he would work with them and he would go around during the Summertime and monitor their work. They never knew when he was coming to town or what town he was going to be listening to them in, because we had regional

networks for both radio and television, so he would go to say, Reading, Pennsylvania, and tune in the Phillies and listen from there. And then he traveled another 50 miles in another direction and tuned in the Pirates game. Or, maybe travel another 100 miles north and tune in the Yankees game. So he was always out there on the road with Chip, his wife, during the Summer checking these guys out and actually correcting them - he was a fairly ~~well~~ low keyed guy, except when he called you at 10 o'clock at night after a couple of pops - and then the phone would ring and ~~you sit~~ you'd find at the other end a normally mild-mannered who says, "QUALEY HERE!" And he would tell you what was going wrong that day. He was a part of N W Ayer that I don't think any other agency had. I think it's important in a thing like this to get that down and...

Howard: Les is gone, isn't he?

Fred: Les is gone, yes.

Howard: Good, I'm glad to have this on the Oral History, we're talking about Les Qualey. Jim Hanna said, I'm referring to the transcription. He said that after the war more attention began to focus on this concept of television and he talks about this '47/'48 period, Chuck, when you were there. He said it started very slowly, just as radio had started with local stations putting in equipment for

broadcasting. There were no networks at that time. Well, we know there was a small NBC and a small Dumont and no CBS until a year or so later. ABC was a result of the split-up of the Red and the Blue Network and I think that happened just before you went to work for ABC.

Fred: Some of the furniture still had little tags on it that said "Blue Network," even though I was working for ABC. As a matter of fact, when I went away into the Army in '51, they were talking about the, what was it called, the ABPT - the American Broadcasting Paramount Theater merger. I was in the service for two years, came back and they were still talking about it. So, it took that long to get it going. That was Ed Noble of Life Savers fame that was in the process of selling out to Goldenson.

Howard: Chuck, we were talking about Ayer's role. We've all, Hanna said and you've said, Ayer had some good and interesting business, but Ayer wasn't a leading factor in the radio television business in comparison to some other agencies. Is that something you agree with?

Chuck: At the outset, we were the leader. From the beginning, no other agencies got into the act and they had more clients with more money perhaps, and they started taking over the lead. They were bigger agencies than Ayer was. I'm talking now J. Walter Thompson, Y&R and BBD&O.

Fred: I think it's interesting that all three of those that Chuck just mentions off of the top of his head were major factors in the New York market, which I think was a key as to why they grew and we with a fast start never grew quite as much.

Howard: Now, you say the New York market influenced it, but also do you think that the mindset of Ayer was a disadvantage? The Philadelphian origin location and the mindset might have been the same thing, I don't know.

Chuck: I think definitely. Yeah, I think so.

Fred: Mr. Batten was quoted when we disbanded the Radio TV Department as we had known it, and we moved the time buying function to ~~New York~~ Philadelphia, he was quoted at the time as saying that those sellers will go where the business is. As smart as he was in many things, that demonstrated a profound lack of knowledge as to what business is all about, because media buyers need media sellers. Not as much perhaps as the sellers need them, but when it comes to offering a good availability, the sellers are going to go where it's easier for him to go. And, if he's going to get on a train and go 90 miles to Philadelphia as opposed to going across the street to a New York agency, you know what he's going to do. Mr. Batten never understood that. He felt that they would come to him.

Chuck: He felt that the 90 miles apart by wire and they can pick up the phone and do it. Which never happened. This is hearsay, but Mr. Batten passed a man's office and he was brown-bagging it. This happened three or four times in a row and finally Harry called him in and says, "Now, son, I saw you drinking in the morning out of a brown bag. I'm sorry you got a problem, but we'll be glad to work with you." He said, "Mr. Batten, that was just coffee. You don't permit any coffee in the offices around here." At which point Mr. Batten said, "Coffee! You're fired!"

Howard: Well, that's a paradox, isn't it, that writing for Hills Bros., George Cecil is supposed to have mentioned "coffee break" for the first time and Ayer didn't allow it. I remember that I had to go out to the Little Den to get coffee. Fred, in addition to sports, we were into weather shows. I don't know how that worked. Were they the same people involved or different?

Fred: No, that was a different person, actually, I don't want to even call it a group. This again, was for Atlantic. As a matter of fact we have a couple of good things that really should go down in the books that we did for the old Atlantic Refining Company. On the weather side, we had a guy by the name of Mike Stevens who was part of the Program Department, and we went out and purchased locally through our buyers, weather shows and at one point we were in as many as 30

markets. And, we programmed them. I mean, you couldn't do that today, because the stations are in a much more sophisticated time and want to control their own air. But, it was an N W Ayer package weather show that we put on. Mike supervised it. We dressed the weathermen in little service station outfits with peaked caps and little leather bowties and they would stand up there and deliver the weather. And these shows were standardized across all 30 markets, so if he went from one market to the next, he would see the same symbols and the same format, and the guy would be wearing the Atlantic Refining or the Atlantic Service station outfit with the little patch on it.

Howard: Kind of like the Milton Berle Show with the Texaco people. They were in uniform too.

Chuck: Exactly. It was the fact that it was a regional marketer and we had to come up with things like baseball and like these weather shows and then we could tailor to their marketing area. I think we did marvelous work for that client. We put together for them the first in a citywide traffic reporting system, and it was called the Atlantic Go Patrol. And we were able to put into the air two helicopters and on the ground four land vehicles, all of them interconnected. And we convinced every major station in Philadelphia to carry these traffic reports. Philadelphia, as you know having worked there, is a great city for driving into work. The Atlantic Go Patrol became a major force and it was the pattern that was used in other markets by other advertisers and other marketers in terms of getting a citywide, all-station report going. You hear it now in New York which is a copy of the Atlantic Go Patrol.

Howard: Getting back to the other offices. In Detroit, what did we do for Plymouth in television, Chuck, as you remember it? Were they in it early?

Chuck: As I remember it, there were very, very opposed to television, and finally we got them to spring for five 1-minute commercials in X number of shows on a spot basis. I don't think we were ever a very heavy spot user. Usually during two or three spots of the year when the sales were on. Concerning early television, we had a producer by the name of Annette Backner, who I believe is still around. She used to wear a slave bracelet around her ankle and walk up and down the corridors, like she was chained or something.

Howard: I knew her at NBC before I came to Ayer.

Chuck: She was a very good person.

Howard: Annie Backner, everybody called her.

Chuck: Right, Annie Backner. She was a very good person and a very knowledgeable one.

Howard: I wonder if she was one of the first woman producers? I don't recall any others.

Chuck: Could very well be. That was the only one I recall at Ayer. She was one of the early ones.

Fred: There was another aspect of the Plymouth business that you asked about, Howard. I don't think many people would remember. Lou Hagopian probably would. And that is that N W Ayer was one of two agencies, and on behalf of Plymouth, Plymouth was one of three clients who actually put the PGA Golf Tour ~~out~~ on ~~in~~ television.

Howard: Lou, was he a client then, or was he at Ayer?

Fred: He was in Detroit, but Plymouth was one of three sponsors who actually bankrolled the PGA Tour when it first got off the ground. Up until that time, only the Masters and the U.S. Open were on television.

Howard: I didn't know Lou was interested in golf.

Fred: You didn't? Howard, you're not very observant.

Howard: I didn't know that we put that together.

Fred: We did, we put it together. And with the help of Dick Bailey, who was running ~~the~~ ~~S~~sports ~~n~~Network, which he later sold to Howard Hughes, we had as many as 16 tournaments on for Plymouth a year. And it was pretty basic stuff by today's standards. I mean, we televised only the last four holes, starting in black and white. This was the start of the PGA Tour on TV.

Howard: I've got to correct you, though, That had to be in Detroit. Because by the time Lou came to New York, we didn't have Plymouth.

Fred: Yeah, that's right. This was when Lou was in Detroit and this was in my days as Sports Director.

Howard: Okay, this might have even been when he was the client and O'Reilly was the head of the office. We're going to give Lou credit in any case, but...

Fred: I know you will, Howard.

Howard: We'll ask him how. We'll ask him about that. You know, Brad and I are determined to get Lou in this oral history program one of these days.

Chuck: You'd better put somewhere that he was one of the few people that could stand on his head and have a drink.

Howard: He could do what, Chuck?

Chuck: When he had a few drinks and in yonder, he would stand on his head and have a drink upside down.

Howard: Lou!

Chuck: Big Lou!

Howard: I knew he was talented, and I never heard of that.

Chuck: McDermott used to break up.

Fred: I think we got a lot of tobacco business over the years and I'm sure you're going to hear a lot about dancing cigarette packs for Lucky Strike and that kind of stuff. And then, for a while we had Carlton and whatever, but in between we had Philip Morris. And not a hell of a lot of people remember that, but I think probably fewer people remember that N W Ayer put on a very, very controversial show in the late '50's for Philip Morris. And it raised quite a furor. And it was a show featuring a guy who was then known or still known as Mike Wallace.

Howard: Really, what was the name of the show?

Fred: It was a half-hour Mike Wallace Show. And it was probably the first show of investigative reporting, which is very hot right now in television. And was probably the first of that genre to come down the pipe. And as a matter of fact it was so hot that they really didn't stay with it as long as they should have. It was a great rating getter and got a lot of attention and was cheap to produce.

Howard: When was it on?

Fred: I'd have to say, we were still in 30 Rock, so I'd probably have to say '57/'58.

Howard: No, I meant the time of week and night.

Fred: Oh, I don't remember, Howard. Those things do fade.

Howard: I''m afraid you're getting old. No, I do not remember that.

Chuck: Very few people would.

Howard: I think he was still married to Buff Cobb.

Chuck: Oh, I didn't remember that! Can you top this?

Howard: No, I remember the name and I don't remember the person, Don McClure?

Chuck: He was one of the first people in the Television Department at Ayer. He was the so-called genius on how to position people in front of cameras and so forth, and what colors to use. I remember one time, I believe, Annie Backner came up in a red dress and in those days, you couldn't pick up red on TV and it looked like she didn't have a damn thing on.

Howard: Listen, I wanted to ask you about Dorothy Zimmer. She was a writer. De Baun was very fond of her, but I didn't know her.

Chuck: Zimmer was one of the early writers and she was a very, very good writer. She was one of the original staff of about 6 of the radio writers that moved into television. They were a very, very good group and they split up when we moved to Philadelphia. Aside from that, I can't tell you very much about her.

Howard: When the move to Philadelphia went on, Ayer moved about 50 people, meaning, in maybe 30 cases, families. It was a tremendous move made a very strange time when Philadelphia increasingly looked like the place not to be and the reason given by Hanna and others was that, belatedly, we knew those two...there ought to be one agency instead of two.

Chuck: That was correct when I say that the people moved to Philadelphia mainly because of Harry Batten; he wanted to be the focal point of everything. And he was, by God,, going to do it from Philadelphia and not from New York.

Howard: It has even been suggested that help is cheaper in Philadelphia than New York.

Chuck: Possibly it was a contributing factor, but I don't think it was the main reason.

Fred: I went down when they were going to ~~hold~~ move the Time Buying Department. I went down to Philadelphia to look around at the suggestion of the company. They wanted me to move there, and my wife and I did a tour of all of the suburbs over three days, and didn't really...we were looking at the time for a house in Connecticut and we didn't see anything that looked at all like...although, I must admit that out beyond Paoli, it was very nice and I will always remember coming into the office on Monday morning after spending these three days touring the suburbs and saying to Les ~~Farnith~~ Farnath, who would have been my boss if I had chosen to go down there, that we had looked around, but hadn't anything except that little spot out beyond Paoli. And his eyes got very big, and he said, "Don't you realize that's a 25-minute commute?" Ha, ha. Which was horrible in his book.

Howard: For that reason, it was a nice place to live. The suburbs were so close.

Fred: I'll tell you a secret, Howard, and it's no longer going to be a secret, since we're sitting here at 260 Madison Avenue. I came back the next day on Tuesday and went into Tom McDermott's office and resigned, because they had not offered me another job in New York. I was able to do that

because Newman McEvoy was the Media Director of Cunningham & Walsh in this building in which we are now sitting...had a standing offer to me of a job here at C&W. And, so I was going to take that. It was on Tuesday. On Wednesday, McDermott called me back into his office and rehired me as assistant to him and Jim Hanna. So, I guess if you really want to be technical, I was not employed by Ayer for 24 hours.

Howard: When I was in charge of house promotion, we got mileage out of the fact that we were so good at predicting the ratings of television shows and we had a specialist. Who was that?

Chuck: A fellow named James Cornell. James Cornell who had one set speech, and once he gave that speech for clients they didn't bother to ever attend again, because they knew it was the same speech all over again. Jim used to get all the ratings and used to sit in his office and fuss around with them. When computers were invented, he was on there fussing with the computers. Every year he had the Ayer/Cornell predictions. It used to come out every Fall in Broadcasting Magazine and that went on for a while and I guess his track record got pretty bad one year and they never asked him again.

Howard: Really.

Chuck: That's what I recall. Maybe Fred can tell you more about that one.

Fred: Yeah, and also I think Chuck mentioned the computer. A lot of what Cornell did was massage numbers, and as computer technology improved and number massaging became less of an arcane sport, the mystery went out of the process. And every agency was capable of doing it. (Howard: makes sense.)

Howard: I remember an Ayer-related network show called "Shirley Temple's Storybook." Who sponsored that?

Fred: That was an interesting thing that we put together on a regional basis. We put Hills Bros. together with Sealtest. And, Hills Bros. took the West Coast and Sealtest took the East Coast. It was a logistical nightmare, but again, something that N W Ayer did that no other agency had done before. (Howard: that's good.) It probably ought to go down in the record somewhere.

Chuck: Back in the old days you used to have to buy a minute of commercial time in the various programs. It got a little expensive and finally, as I recall, for DuPont we persuaded one of the networks to split the commercial, putting one at the top of the program for :30 and one at the end of the program for :30. At that time, they had to be the same client, the same brand, but about a year later you could

twist the brands around and then finally you could take two clients and put :30 for one client provided it was an Ayer client, and :30 for another Ayer client in the program.

Howard: And that led to the :30 commercial.

Chuck: Then it led to :15 commercials or the :05 commercials.

Howard: Chuck, when I was an account person, I think you may remember that on AT&T Long Lines I had a lot of latitude there. Sometimes Dan Hutchins would let us just make quick opportunistic buys, and I remember our relationship you, Sully and I. Roy wasn't on broadcast yet at that time. I was broadcast and Roy Robinson was print and that's the way we started out for two or three years. And you used to come to me or to Sully with an idea. You would say I've got a great spot is open on such-and-such. How did that usually work?

Chuck: Well, a network would find they didn't have all the time sold in the program, so they'd call and say we had some last minute money. We have a very, very good buy for you instead of say $50,000 for a spot, maybe they get it for $15,000 or $20,000, so AT&T was very good for holding money out for something like that, as was Du Pont. Those were the two I remember. Du Pont for Teflon.

Howard: That would be rather unusual today, wouldn't it? I'll tell you for a fact that I would sometimes not even check the client. I would say, Chuck, if you think it's that good, I know they got the money and we would actually do it. Then if it were too much money or if I didn't agree with Chuck, I'd call the client, you know.

Fred: I would hope that it still goes on. It requires pre-selling. The client has to have confidence in the agency and then the agency, in turn, has to develop a relationship with the network, but I would expect that it still goes on.

Howard: Would you? I'm just out of it.

Chuck: So am I. I haven't bought a piece of television in years.

Howard: After a number of years ago, how long was it?

Chuck: About 15 years ago.

Howard: Fifteen years ago, and for the record, you left...why? Was it time to go?

Chuck: No, I got tired of working on the same clients all the time. I figured I'd get out while the getting was good and retired back to Connecticut and figured I'd get into the securities business. All of a sudden, I found myself in the travel agency business.

Howard: I thought you went into that immediately. No? You were a stock broker first?

Chuck: No, I planned to do that, but I ended up with a bum back and was out for about three or four months and when I got back in, one of my friends said that, see this guy whose got a travel agency and you might be interested in it. Pretty soon I found myself in the travel business.

Howard: Now, I want to ask you this finally then, because I appreciate your coming in from Connecticut for this. Fred and I were in Manhattan, at least. How do you look back on your years at Ayer?

Chuck: I've always had a very good time at Ayer. I enjoyed Ayer very much. I don't regret anything about leaving here either. Time to leave was there and I went to something else. But I really had very happy years at Ayer. In fact, most of the people outside of Cornell and some of those, but basically.

Howard: Well, we have that on the record, that you didn't like Cornell. Ha, ha, and no regrets.

Fred: That puts him in a large group. Ha, ha.

Howard: I think I'm going to have to talk to the person who types this. Ha, ha. No, we'll leave it in.

Chuck: It was a very gentlemanly agency, especially in the beginning. It was a Tiffany of agencies, if you want to use that expression.

Howard: And, it had integrity.

Chuck: Right, yes, until certain things happened.

Howard: Well, I hope we've regained...I don't think I'll go into those certain things right now. Thank you very much for coming, Chuck. You were a part of Ayer in New York for an interesting period of years--soon after the Second World War until the seventies. And, Fred, though you're still here, you shared a lot of Chuck's period and did things that are now part of our permanent record. Thank you both for coming today.

End