Making Documentary Film:

Frederick Wiseman and His Collaborators

by Thomas W. Benson and Carolyn Anderson

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Frederick Wiseman is one of the most original, consequential, and productive documentary filmmakers of the past century. Winner of a MacArthur genius award, an honorary Oscar, and many festival awards, and the honoree at more than seventy-five international retrospectives of his work, Wiseman has continued to make films into his nineties, starting as producer of *The Cool World* (1963), then commencing his career as director with *Titicut Follies* (1967) and continuing through more than fifty years to *Menus Plaisirs—Les Troisgros* (2023). So far.

Wiseman's films have been examined in scholarly books and many academic and journalistic essays, all of which note his depictions of life in a variety of institutions—prison, hospital, school, research lab, public housing, courtroom, dance troupe, theater, abattoir, military unit, missile silo, monastery, zoo, racetrack, police department, research university, welfare office, and more. The films bring an incisive, patient, and inquiring eye and ear to the structures of power in modern society. The films are typically long, with patient attention to meetings and conversations and processes. Taken one by one, Wiseman's documentaries are elegant artistic constructions and incisive reflections on the exercise of influence, the contingency of choice and circumstance, and the contradictions of institutional maintenance.

There can be no doubt that the controlling force and intelligence driving these films are Frederick Wiseman's. He chooses the subjects, organizes the search for funding, gains institutional permission to bring camera and sound recorder to the institution, participates in the filmmaking as the sound recordist on the spot, and edits the films—usually a much longer process than the actual shooting and recording. For decades the films have been distributed primarily from his own production and distribution company, Zipporah Films; in the 2010s the films became available through the streaming service Kanopy. Wiseman is justly celebrated as the presiding genius.

And yet, of course, Wiseman does not work entirely alone. On the typical Wiseman location, Wiseman operates a sound recorder and a boom microphone, and a single cinematographer operates a camera. A camera assistant is usually present to provide fresh reels or other assistance. Wiseman's films were shot on 16mm film until he moved, with some reluctance, to digital recording and editing, beginning with *Crazy Horse* (2011). Wiseman then edits the resulting forty or so hours of film and sound into a film of two or more hours, sometimes many more hours—the numbers in each case varying from one project to another, amounting to a large quantity of film being very selectively reduced to the finished film. With rare exceptions, the films are shot with a single camera, but the editing of a single sequence often employs cutaways and interpolated shots of reactions, for example, while a speaker established as a focal character continues to talk. Such editing is necessarily not strictly literal, though, following the grammar of

narrative films, it appears to be so, unobtrusively creating a dramatic space and time, allowing for narrative coherence and a range of thematic and ironic effects. The skill of the editor creates these complex effects in the finished film, but they are possible because an experienced cinematographer, who understands what Wiseman is going to need in the editing room and has taken care to supply a reservoir of such detail out of which an edited version can be created, with the illusion of continuity.

The films have been formally stable over the decades: institutional settings, lack of dominant temporal timeline in many cases, long takes, many extended conversations, single camera, primarily synchronous sound, available light, absence of authoritative offscreen narrators or onscreen talking heads. And yet there have been changes over the years. While working with John Davey, Wiseman began to use color, beginning with the visually stylized fiction feature *Seraphita's Diary* in 1982. Wiseman had often said that he preferred to shoot most of his documentaries in black and white, though for practical or aesthetic reasons he sometimes preferred color. His first color documentary, *The Store* (1983), filmed at Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, was filmed in color to emphasize the appeal of the expensive goods for sale. He said that he would have preferred to shoot *Ballet* (1995) in black and white but that the color stock then available was faster than the black and white and more suitable to the ambient light levels. Most of the films since 1982 have been shot in color.

Similarly, while many filmmakers were turning to video shooting and digital editing, Wiseman said that he preferred the tactility and pace of editing film stock and the quality of film compared to digital, though he did begin shooting in digital with *At Berkeley* (2013), owing largely to the increasing expense of shooting on film and the difficulty of finding film labs that would process 16mm film rushes quickly and the increasing necessity of conversion to digital for distribution.

Technological changes were occurring at the same time as ideological shifts that changed the cultural and historical contexts of the films. We have noted, as have some other critics, that over time Wiseman's films, which in the early days seemed scornful of the institutions he was observing, seemed in later years to be more mixed, and sometimes even celebratory in their attitude toward the institutions he was depicting. When Wiseman began his work in the late 1960s, his films, which were largely marketed on public television and university campuses, were produced and exhibited in the context of a country deep in the turmoil of the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the developing scandals of Watergate, and they spoke to the anti-institutional suspicions of many of the liberals in his audience. But even at the time, movement conservatism was gathering its forces, at first through the presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater and the advocacy of William Buckley's *National Review*. That movement soon brought forth the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the presidential articulation of an anti-government ideology. Anti-institutionalism became largely a right-wing development, from Reagan to Newt Gingrich to George W. Bush to Donald Trump. In this changing context, Wiseman's films, without losing their critical edge and contemplative irony, began to make the case for the role of major public and cultural institutions.

In his first forty-three documentaries, from *Titicut Follies* (1967) through *City Hall* (2020), Frederick Wiseman worked with just four cinematographers. Two of the cinematographers, John Marshall (*Titicut Follies*) and Richard Leiterman (*High School* [1968]), worked on one film each.[1] From 1968 through 2020, Wiseman worked with only two cinematographers on the documentaries: William Brayne (*Law and Order* [1969] through *Sinai Field Mission* [1978]) and John Davey (*Manoeuvre* [1980] through *City Hall* [2020]). James Bishop was cinematographer for *Menus Plaisirs—Les Troisgros* (2023).

The brevity of John Marshall's association with Wiseman, and its premature truncation when Marshall withdrew from the project, indicate how tenaciously Wiseman has held to his control of the shape of his films, as he has later with their distribution and his public reputation. Although that first relationship ended in misunderstanding and some ill feeling, it appears that Wiseman's work with his other cinematographers has been congenial on both sides. Each of them, starting with a grounded understanding of what is in general meant by "direct cinema" or *cinéma vérité*, working side by side during the filming, and seeing over a long association what Wiseman as editor was doing as he shaped the material, was able to provide Wiseman with consistently distinguished camera work. Each of the cinematographers had his own observational, technical, and artistic skills, and each helped shape the films that Frederick Wiseman made of the hours of material they recorded and adapted his own work to Wiseman's editing style.

In the end, perhaps, the films speak for themselves. Insofar as they are important artistic, sociological, and in the broadest sense political documents, inviting us to examine how we interact with each other and our institutions, they deserve close critical attention. But the films, and hence our responses, are partly shaped by other processes that in turn shaped the films. For this reason, we have thought it important, in our own work with Wiseman's films, to engage in close textual analysis from a critical and cultural perspective, and also to inquire into the forces that shaped the films—from the process of seeking funding to negotiating with subjects, securing institutional consent to film, and navigating the artistic collaboration that goes into actual production.

As part of our own work in collaboration, as we prepared *Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman* (1989, 2nd ed. 2002), *Documentary Dilemmas* (1991), and other works, we interviewed Frederick Wiseman's cinematographers, some of his subjects, and his sponsoring internal advocate at PBS, Robert Kotlowitz. We also attended some talks that Wiseman gave at university showings of his films, which we recorded and transcribed with his permission or in detailed notes. We included excerpts of the interviews in *Reality Fictions*. We have sometimes shared one or more of those interviews with other film scholars, and we have become convinced that the complete transcripts of these interviews are important enough to film and cultural history to merit stable publication, where they can be permanently accessible to interested students, scholars, journalists, and the public.

In the present work, we offer complete transcripts of our interviews with four of Wiseman's cinematographers and with Robert Kotlowitz. We have not interviewed Wiseman's most recent documentary cinematographer, Jim Bishop, whose assignment came after the completion of this

book. All of the interviews were recorded with the explicit understanding that we would use the transcripts in whole or in part in our published work.

The interviews open rich new avenues of research and criticism into the films of Frederick Wiseman, and, by extension, other documentary filmmakers: how collaboration is achieved before and during actual filming; the role of funding agencies and their interests in shaping the conception and execution of a film; how what amounts to authorial control is achieved (or not) in the editing process; the limits and affordances of film technologies, which are subject to ongoing change; the richly acute self-consciousness of experienced documentary cinematographers who are simultaneously taking into account their technical apparatus and the complex social world under their observation, any moment of which comes only once and must somehow be filmed so as to allow a finished film that is coherent, consistent with taken-for-granted rules of film grammar (without slavish adherence to those rules), and which allows for an honest view of the social drama they are filming. In these interviews, the cinematographers—John Marshall, Richard Leiterman, William Brayne, and John Davey—describe these processes with frankness, modesty, and generosity.

Among Frederick Wiseman's most important collaborators are his "subjects," the people we see in his films.[2] Our common language for documentary, and especially for *cinéma vérité*, is to see filmmakers as active agents and "subjects," those in front of the camera, as people simply being observed. It may well be true, as documentary filmmakers usually say, that people really are doing in front of the camera what they would be doing even if the camera were not there. Nevertheless, these are people who give their consent to be filmed, and to observe the fiction that the camera and microphone are not present. These actions are, in ethical and practical senses, acts of collaboration with the filmmaker.

The notion of collaboration is itself unstable, shifting, and uncertain. Frederick Wiseman's relation with his audiences is itself a sort of collaboration, as the films draw on shared, generic patterns of narrative and understandings of social power, and invite audiences to feel as if we are working out for ourselves what the films mean. A film, complete and of itself, is an inert object; only when it is seen does it come to life as a film on a screen and in the experience of an audience.

We have very lightly edited the interview transcripts to eliminate redundancies and irrelevancies, and to clean up the non-fluencies, hesitations, and repetitions that are characteristic of talk, but that make literal transcriptions difficult to follow. We occasionally insert paragraph breaks where they seem logical, to make the text more readable.

We are grateful to the Penn State University Libraries Open Publishing program for making such a publication possible. We especially thank Briana Ezray Wham of Penn State Libraries ScholarSphere and Ally Laird of the Penn State Open Publishing program for their generosity in helping get the publication process underway. Ally Laird saw the process through from our first proposal through publication. Sarah Bodnar provided essential technical and design support. Staff at the Penn State University Libraries department of Special Collections facilitated archival searches with dispatch amid ongoing threats of pandemic. Wiseman's cinematographers and

Wiseman's primary contact at PBS, Robert Kotlowitz, were candid and gracious in explaining their working relations with Wiseman. Wiseman declined our request to include in this project a transcript of a talk he delivered at Bucknell University on November 12, 1985, which Tom Benson recorded with Wiseman's permission, subject to his review to be sure we did not "garble" his words. When he reviewed our transcription soon afterwards, he made no assertion that we had garbled his words but said that he did not want us to use the transcript. In 2021 we renewed our request to use the material for this project; he denied the request and we have honored his preference.

Over many years, colleagues, students, editors, librarians, technical specialists, and readers have offered us valuable observations, questions, and encouragement, and we thank them all. Our universities, deans, and department heads often extended special help, for which we are grateful—Tom to the Department of Communication Arts & Sciences, The College of Liberal Arts, and the Arts and Humanities Institute at Penn State University, and Carolyn to the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

In this work, we present each of the interviews with the cinematographers in the order of their association with Wiseman, followed by an interview with Robert Kotlowitz. Each interview is preceded by a brief introduction with some biographical and critical details. We were both present at all the interviews, and we both asked questions. In the interests of simplicity and readability, we present all questions without identifying whether they came from one author or the other. We include a filmography of Wiseman's documentary films, with primary production credits, and a select bibliography of some easily accessible Wiseman writings and interviews and our own earlier work on Wiseman's films.

Notes

[1] Richard Leiterman told us that he and Wiseman had begun work on a film with the Los Angeles Police Department in 1968 but that the LAPD withdrew from the project midway; Leiterman was not available when Wiseman arranged to film a police department in Kansas City.
[2] We interviewed Judge Kenneth A. Turner of the Memphis Juvenile Court in his chambers on April 8, 1988, where Judge Turner shared his recollections—and some documents—related to the filming of *Juvenile Court* (1973). We discussed the film and his court over a catfish lunch in his chambers and we observed him in action in his courtroom.

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John Marshall

December 27, 1986
Peterborough, New Hampshire

John Marshall discovered filmmaking as a teenager in the early 1950s, when he and his family participated in a series of expeditions to study the !Kung San people of South West Africa. His first film, *The Hunters* (1958), is considered an ethnographic classic. In the 1960s Marshall studied anthropology at Harvard and Yale. While a graduate student, he shot and co-directed *Titicut Follies* (1967). During parts of 1968-1970 Marshall lived with and filmed the police in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From the Pittsburgh material he constructed eighteen "sequence films," ranging in length from 3 to 90 minutes. In 1978 Marshall returned to Africa and to his filming of the !Kung. Broadcast on PBS as part of its *Odyssey* series, the reflexive *N!ai, Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980) is Marshall's most accessible and most widely seen of more than two dozen !Kung films. In the 1980s Marshall became an advocate for the new nation of Namibia, helping draft its constitution, heading economic development projects, and forming the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia. His last shoot in Namibia coincided with the new millennium. Twenty-first century footage was included in Marshall's magnum opus: *A Kalahari Family* (2002). This five-part, six-hour series summarizes and concludes the Marshall family record of the Ju/'hoansi [!Kung] over five decades (1950-2000) and is distributed by DER (Documentary Educational Resources), a company Marshall co-founded in 1968 and directed for many years. Marshall died of lung cancer in April 2005.

When we talked with Marshall at the Marshall family home in Peterborough, New Hampshire on December 27, 1986, he was between trips to Namibia, where he continued his advocacy work on behalf of the San. As the interview began, Marshall addressed what to him was a central and personal concern about his engagement in the *Titicut Follies* venture: the conflict that arose between Marshall and Wiseman when Marshall and his wife, Heather, resigned as directors from the Bridgewater Film Corporation, during the period when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was initiating its attempts to prevent the film from being exhibited.

QUESTION: Why did you withdraw from your association with Frederick Wiseman?
MARSHALL: We can record this. The reason—should I just say it? Will you put it in?

QUESTION: Yes.
MARSHALL: The reason I resigned is in the deposition that I gave in the lawyer's office. And it was—what I said was that I didn't know what Fred had said to various people. I didn't know the obligations he'd undertaken, with respect to the film or with respect to the state, or the institution at Bridgewater, or Charlie Gaughan.[1] I didn't know what he'd said. And Heather and I were holding the bag on the corporation. We were the majority of this corporation and, in theory, if it was a real corporation, we would have to say "yea" or "nay" as to whether the film was to be released or how or what was to become of it, and I didn't want to be in that position not knowing all the facts. And I had, besides that, a personal reason—that I didn't know what would happen about some of the people who had been in the film. In these hearings with that guy Robey,[2] they are basically being evaluated to see if they're crazy, or sane enough to stand trial. And I thought, you know, what if it gets around and somebody who's going to be on the jury someday sees them in the film and thinks they're crazy or they make a bad impression on the juror and they go in the slammer when they shouldn't or the lawyers say, well, you know, we'll never get a fair trial in Massachusetts for these people and they just keep putting it off and putting it off—putting their trial off. In Bridgewater, you go there and stay there until you are adjudged competent to stand trial and it's a way of putting people away forever. It's one of the glaring loopholes, in our country anyway, in which you can be incarcerated, and you go to jail, basically to jail, without ever meeting your accusers, without every going before a court, before God and the people. And I thought, well, hell, if somebody has to spend another three years in Bridgewater because their trial keeps being postponed because of a film, that seems a little extreme. So the real reason was I just didn't know, and that was in my deposition. I think they didn't ask me to come to court because, on the one side, Fred's lawyers would be afraid I'd just tell the truth and, on the other side, because they knew I didn't have any—I thought the film was a good film. I thought it should not be changed or varied or censored.

QUESTION: How did you first get interested in film and get started as a filmmaker?
MARSHALL: Well, I started by default. When my dad retired from Raytheon, he wanted—it's an implausible story—but he wanted to get to know his son. He'd been very busy during the period of the Second World War, and he wanted to get to know his son. And I'd always wanted to go to Africa. I used to read books about Africa, exploring in Africa. A book called *Jock of the Bushveld* by Percy Fitzpatrick. So Dad bought a lot of Air Force maps of South [West] Africa. He'd been down in Cape Town the year before, in 1949, to see if he could sell a harbor guidance radar system to the Cape Town Port Authority and he'd met some people and one of the people he met was a guy named Van Zyl, a doctor, a surgeon in Tygerberg in Cape Town. He was going looking for the lost city of the Kalahari. You know, every empty

place, there's always a lost city and an excuse for taking a trip, having an expedition. So Dad asked him if we could join the expedition and Van Zyl said, "Sure." So we brought these maps out and Dad persuaded him that the thing to do was to go where the roads all end and that was in the Kalahari Desert, in the middle of southern Africa, the Kaokoveld. Dad wasn't too convinced about a lost city, but he was the kind of guy who wanted to accomplish something or find out something or do something. He was that kind of guy. And he went to the Peabody Museum[3] and we talked to a guy named J.O. Brew, who was head of the Peabody at the time, and Joe said, "Yeah, the thing that you can do, if you go down there, is to look for 'wild bushmen.'" Because there were these rumors and conjectures that in the Kalahari Desert you could still find people who lived by gathering and hunting and if you could find people who lived by gathering and hunting in the plains of Africa, you had a window on the Pleistocene that nobody had ever dreamed of. And so we went looking for "wild bushmen," with this expedition to find the lost city. We got to a place called Kai Kai and Van Zyl took a final assault in the morning to find the lost city and we all waited at Kai Kai while the doctor and his brother the senator went out to find the lost city. And they came back and said that the Herero had moved it during the night. So we didn't find the lost city, but Dad met two guys name /kwi !gumsi and a guy named //aon//oro. /kwi's dead, but //aon//oro is still alive. And Dad asked them, if he brought the family back, same time, same place next year, would you be here, would you take us to meet your families, who they explained lived by hunting and gathering purely. And that was the last thousand people in Africa who did. And that was in a place that came to be called Nyae Nyae. And so that's where we started these studies of Tschu-Khwe. And Dad gave the family various jobs. We tried to find an ethnographer who wanted to go, or a graduate student who wanted to go and study daily life of hunter-gatherers on the plains of Africa. We couldn't find one. Isn't that incredible? We went through Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, and a couple of other places that Dad called up and talked to people and said," Who wants to start this study?" Dad said he'd back them for a long time, for an in-depth, long-term study, because he thought that would be unique, and nobody responded. We got an archeologist for a few months. So the result was that Dad said, "Okay, Lorna, you're going to do the ethnography; Elizabeth,[4] you're going to write a book; John, you're going to do the movies." So that's how I got into film. And then I made films about the Tshu-Khwe. And the first film that we produced was a film that Mother edited in 1951 and it was called *Bushmen of the Kalahari.*[5] It really shows the Tshu-Khwe people, a thousand of them, in this Nyae Nyae area living the way they had lived for at least 20,000 years. Their direct ancestors are known to have been living there a thousand years ago. Human habitation is known to go back to 20,000 years and the presumption is that it's Tshu-Khwe and their ancestors with some environmental differences. The environment of wet-dry, wet-dry periods fluctuates. And they found poison, maybe 6,000 years ago, 4 to 6,000. That changed their technology. Little points with poison. They used big bows and big points for bleeding, without poison. When they had poison, they could use little

points and changed their strategy. But I mean those are the same people. And after that film, the next one was *The Hunters* [1957], and then I just went on.

And I went to graduate school in anthropology at Yale and then at Harvard. And then we got a big grant from the National Science Foundation, Educational Division, to make films. When you go to make a documentary film, you know, you arrive in a place and you have an experience, and you take pictures, and the film comes out of your experience. And I went twice in '50-'51, and then in '52 when we were shooting *The Hunters*. I didn't know very much about the Tshu-Kwe. I just began to speak Tshu-Kwe and spent all the time hunting, or most of it. And I was 18, 19 and wow, you know, you go off. I mean the best years of my life, the happiest I've ever been, without any question. It was a pretty wonderful experience for a kid of that age in a place like that with people like Tshu-Khwe, damned decent, good-to-be-with people.

QUESTION: Were you, in effect, making up ethnographic filmmaking for yourself at that point?

MARSHALL: I never studied film at all. I did *The Hunters*. And then, you know, I got to know people more. I went back and looked at the film and said, "Hey, that's romantic." That gives the impression of people spending enormous amounts of energy and time hunting, and the real economy is the other way around. The real economy is based on gathering. Not only the economy is based on gathering, but all concepts of land ownership, all the rules of land ownership, all the basis of the social organization of the people, groups, bands, all flow from gathering, and from stable, fixed, reliable sources of food and water.

QUESTION: But not visually dramatic?

MARSHALL: Well, I think it could be. It didn't seem to a kid of 18 who went off in the dawn of the Pleistocene that gathering was the same as hunting, you know.

If you make a distinction between images that you want and pictures that you get, this was images that you want, rather than pictures that you get from what people are really doing and saying. So I thought that the way to have Tshu-Kwe act and speak for themselves in the film was to do events, rather than a story line. *Hunters* is a story.

And so, I shot for event. We had a guy through 1955 named Daniel Blitz, who was a protégé really of Raytheon and then with Sanders Associates, a company which was at the cutting edge of electronics in the sixties. And Danny just figured out a way to do sync in the field. But it wasn't mobile. So we shot sync in 1955. You know the history of Ricky [Leacock] and Penny [D.A. Pennebaker] and [Robert] Drew and those people, and the history of the mobile Accutron, crystal sync system that you could put into an Auricon self-blimp camera. So we just shot sync without sync in '55, '56, '57, '58.

QUESTION: It wasn't mobile because it was big, or it was plugged in, or—

MARSHALL: Danny's system was the same principle that it laid a signal on the track. It was the same rate, the speed of the camera. The blimp we had to make it quiet. We had to devise a blimp, which is heavy. You could hold it, but it was cumbersome. So you mostly did it on a tripod. That was *Bitter Melons* [1971].

QUESTION: So you were working then on your ideas of sequence-event filming before 1966?

MARSHALL: Yeah, I was doing that in 1955. Yeah, off and on. I didn't think of myself as a filmmaker. I was going to be an anthropologist.

QUESTION: You worked for NBC for a time, as a cameraman. Did they train you on how network documentary worked?

MARSHALL: Well, I had this friend named Dean Brelis, who's a correspondent and he's a remarkable guy. He was one of I think three of four people who parachuted in to the Montagnard people. He parachuted into the Kuching region during the Second World War. This was against the Japanese. He wrote a manual that's I think still used by the military for organizing guerrilla war. He was a friend, and I was at loose ends at that point, and he said, "Well, why don't you come to work for NBC?" He was going to be in Cyprus, so I said, "Sure." And I filmed there. Those news stories are totally simple. I got a little lecture. Reuven Frank gave me a little lecture. He said, "John, I'll tell you how to shoot these films. They've got to have a beginning; they've got to have a middle; and they've got to have an end." So he just sent me off. I shot for Dean, but those were news stories, you know, not event films or in-depth films. You don't meet anyone in a news story.

QUESTION: And how long did that last?

MARSHALL: Oh, I don't know. About four months in Cyprus and then I worked for them again in Athens the next year. That was 1964, something like that.

I was kicked out of South Africa. I would have gone on with Tshu-Kwe in 1960. I was kicked out in 1958 and then was *persona non grata*. And, despite the fact that Dad had a farm down there, and in Namibia/South West and was known and was respected by people, he couldn't get me in. This was when apartheid was being imposed on Namibia. And they had a whole bunch of laws which added up to saying that white people can't have ordinary social relations with Black people. And, among the laws was a law that said that a white person can't have sex with a Black person. Everybody knew that I was an American. And they cooked up a story that I had a kid by a Tshu-Khwe woman; that didn't get straightened out until 1978. So I went back in 1978. That's when we did *N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman*[1980].

And so, I was into film and out of film during those years. I was thinking I was going to be an anthropologist and I did this job for NBC and so forth, but I hadn't thought of myself as a filmmaker. The one thing I did do to teach myself something, which wound up that I didn't teach myself much, because of the situation, was—I worked for Ricky.

QUESTION: Ricky Leacock?

MARSHALL: Ricky Leacock and Penny. I was in graduate school, and I used to travel down to New York for two days a week, but what I wound up doing was writing proposals for them, for a film on aging. They were doing a movie on aging.

QUESTION: So, rather than running camera, you were working on the pre-production?

MARSHALL: Yeah, because they didn't have work. It was after the Time-Life thing, that's when Ricky gave up on this Bob Drew Time-Life stuff and tried to do his own with Penny. 1962 or 1963 it would have been. Very soon after they started.

QUESTION: Could you tell us how you got hooked up with Fred Wiseman and the Bridgewater project?

MARSHALL: I don't know how. Fred just called me up one night.

QUESTION: But you didn't know him?

MARSHALL: No. I'd seen a film he'd made.[6] *The Cool World* [1963], which I liked. Shirley Clarke was a friend of Ricky's. And Penny. All that film group, they all knew each other; hung out together. So maybe through Shirley, or something, I don't know. But, anyway, Fred just called me up. He just said he was doing this film and he said, "Do you want to shoot it?" And I said, "Sure." He had what seemed to be full access to the institution and he had been there. When he was teaching, he used to take his class around to different institutions in the legal justice system. Taking his class down there [MCI-Bridgewater], he knew about "The Follies." And he met this neat guy, Eddie Pacheco. And Eddie told him about "The Follies" and Fred thought, "Hey, this is, this is a flick." He knew Eddie from his visits. That's what I gathered. He had an idea to make a film of the show. It was an annual thing, "The Titicut Follies." And then we went down and visited, and we went through with Eddie, the whole institution, and we began to think about the context of the show, how we could use the show as a kind of vehicle, as a kind of motif.

QUESTION: From the very beginning, then?

MARSHALL: Yeah. And then how would you put it into context? What kinds of things would you film that would put it into context? And what kind of structure would you give the motifs? And at some point, we came up with this idea of using these progressively worse wards.

You meet guys in the wards like that fellow, he'd been in since the Depression, since 1936 or 1937, maybe it was later than that. I don't really remember when he was incarcerated. He joined the ranks of the unemployed in Roxbury, I think. He had an ice cream cart with a little horse or a mule or a pony. And he painted the pony to look like a zebra. And the SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] got on him and he gave some kind of confused account. He wasn't the most articulate guy I ever met. He gave some kind of

confused account at the hearing, and they decided he was crazy and put him in Bridgewater. In the film, he's the guy who sings a song, "My Chinatown," with these two sisters or something in the background singing a pop folk thing on tv in the back. And that was him. He died after twenty years of that.

QUESTION: Could you tell us a little more about that shot? Was he singing that just for you? That's one of the shots in the film where it's hard to tell whether he was performing for some people, and you were just observing. How did the circumstances of that singing take place? Do you remember that?

MARSHALL: Well, the whole idea of the film is that the performance goes on all the time. I mean, that's how these people spend their time. I guess to alleviate the desperation of their boredom. They perform. They do their thing. They do it in the yard; they do it all the time. And—so that was what made "The Follies" deep. The deeper follies was that fact; that was the context we came up with. And we sort of half set up the shot and half didn't. You come in with a camera and people just start doing their thing. He started singing. He knew what we were doing and that we were doing "The Follies," and we had this idea that "The Follies" is the whole thing, the whole institution and everybody in it. And so, half and half. I got him to stand when he was doing it. I got him to stand in front of the tv because that seemed like an idea. But, no, I'd say it was half and half. A lot of that stuff is half and half. People would turn on. We'd come out there and, and they'd turn on, because you live in a place like that and this is what you can do. It's half mockery. It's half cynical.

I had an Auricon, one of Mitch Bogdanovitch's Auricons and a Nagra I.[7] It was early along. I had an Éclair NPR, the first Éclair camera. Mine was number 47. So, we had those cameras. Tim Asch shot some stuff during "The Follies."[8] I used the Auricon mostly.

QUESTION: Was that set up by Fred or by you, the fact that you had a second camera during "The Follies"?

MARSHALL: No. I said that we should try to get other shots; that's a big thing on a stage. It's hard to move around all the time and to cover it.

QUESTION: So when he [Asch] was there, you were as well, so you were shooting with two cameras simultaneously?

MARSHALL: Tim Asch helped us, yeah.

QUESTION: Do you remember what film stock you used?

MARSHALL: Oh, God—I know I paid for it. I loaned the company 7,000 bucks to buy film.

QUESTION: Did you get it back?

MARSHALL: No, no. I think it was reversal film. I think Tri-X and Four-X. I think they had Four-X in those days [1966]. We used as fast as possible, because a lot of the wards and "The Follies" were dark. Sometimes we pushed two stops.

QUESTION: Did you ever use lights?
MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah, we used them.

QUESTION: You set up lights?
MARSHALL: Yeah, sometimes, yeah. Just for the performances of "The Follies."

QUESTION: Did you get rushes back and look at them together, you and Fred and David Eames[9] or—
MARSHALL: Yeah, from time to time, but we didn't see all the material. We shot a lot. That is characteristic of me. I just shoot flat out when I shoot; and so we had a lot of material. But we wanted that. We wanted at least the option of doing events. It was a story movie. Again, it was image that you want, like that guy singing, wiggling his ears in front of the tv. That's an image that you think about. That's an idea. You think it will be a good image to get. When you're shooting pictures of events, it's like playing ping pong. You're not thinking of the image you want. You're thinking about where you are; what you're getting and what you're missing, constantly. And the measure of your success in an event is to compare your pictures with your sound. Your sound is open and runs all the time. That was another thing I used to do, to run the sound all the time, so you know what you missed. And that's like playing ping pong. You don't think, "this is an image that I want to get" and then go out and get it. You're in the middle of an event and you're just responding. You're just following an event, like a—what's the anthropological term—participant observer or something. You're half part of it and you're half observing it.

QUESTION: Would you do a lot more close-ups?
MARSHALL: Well, the rule, the rule of thumb is the closer, the faster. In other words, if you want to speed up, you go close. When you've taken a long shot, it's hard to cut it. Close-ups give you shooting speed. They make events go faster. So when you're falling behind the actual event, when you're missing too many things which you should be getting, back up. But that's going to slow your film down, your cut down. When you're on, when you're with it, you have this feeling, "I'm on; I'm on." You know, "I'm getting it. It's happening; it's happening. I'm in the right place at the right time." You can go close and speed it up. But then you run the danger of falling behind, because you're on this guy and the real thing is happening over here. So you speed up your film with close-ups, but you run the danger of falling behind the event. Or you slow down by backing up, but then you have the problem of cutting in real time, which is slow.

QUESTION: Were you shooting cutaways? And was there a sense Fred was going to eventually edit this film or was it going to be you and Fred or—

MARSHALL: We were supposed to do it together, but that didn't work out.

QUESTION: So as you were shooting you had a sense that you were going to be involved in editing?

MARSHALL: Yes.

QUESTION: Is it like shooting for narrative editing or shooting for—

MARSHALL: Well, you do both. One is event. You shoot for event, in which you try to follow, to record. If you want to be a participant observer of an event, that's what is like playing ping pong. That's just a question of angles, am I getting the right thing? Can I speed it up? Can I go in and make it faster? Am I losing too much—back up and slow down.

QUESTION: So you're cutting in your head as you shoot?

MARSHALL: Well, when you're doing an event and translating an event into film in your head, you're thinking about angles and you're thinking about what's happening over here that I'm not getting and where can I be to keep up with the event. The rule you use, the fact of life that you use is that we're very redundant. We do things about five times; say things about five times, which means you can do it. That's the human thing that makes it possible.

But when you're doing a narrative, a story, then you're tying to do ideas. You're looking for images. You're trying to get images that are evocative or that do something when you see them, that say something.

QUESTION: Was there a real progression, a real change in the way you talked about what you were planning to do? Did you work things out even before you started shooting? Or did you just go there and shoot?

MARSHALL: We went down and visited. And then, you know, we hit it off real well, Fred and I. We clicked. And so it was exciting and fun. We just experienced things together and sometimes all we had to do was just look at each other and we just knew that that was something that we ought to do something with.

QUESTION: And this was even before you started filming?

MARSHALL: Yes. We took a couple of visits. And we just turned each other on. And so, who knows? It was a process of two people, you know, sharing something and very often hitting the same note, ringing the same bell at the same time. And so it was exciting. I couldn't analyze it now.

QUESTION: Did you ever get anything down on paper, for instance, here are some of the things we want to try to get?

MARSHALL: Just a few notes, like the idea of using the progression of the wards. The idea of "The Follies," that everybody is an actor in "The Follies," just leaped out at everybody. It was sort of the point of the movie. But we did make a few notes and we talked about making films about institutions, using the fact of an institution with a structure and so forth, and different things happening in different places as a way to go about it.

QUESTION: Rather than following a single person around?

MARSHALL: That's right.

QUESTION: You discarded that as a treatment? So you actually talked about it and discarded it as a choice as far as structure?

MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: Did you ever talk about using a narrator in the classical documentary style of having a voice-over?

MARSHALL: We both didn't like it.

QUESTION: So you knew from the beginning that you weren't going to use that?

MARSHALL: That's right.

QUESTION: Did you shoot interviews?

MARSHALL: Lots of interviews. We did that kind of like a safety net. If you couldn't hook things together with the pictures and the events and "The Follies" as a recurrent theme, if that didn't work, then you could always use an interview, but we didn't want to. We didn't want to make a talking-head movie. And then the other thing was that there are people expressing themselves in their own way. That was interesting, *per se*. But it was basically to make a movie with existing events, things happening, not trying to explain it. Not try to sit back and explain it. Or have somebody else explain it to you.

QUESTION: You wanted it to be experiential for the audience?

MARSHALL: Yes, like Ricky's stuff.

QUESTION: Did you talk about the Drew people as a kind of model?

MARSHALL: Yes, that it could be done. And you didn't have to have a narrator and set ups. Most documentaries were, and still are, just poor theater movies. They don't do anything. They're just acted movies with bad actors. You get the guy to say things five times beforehand and then he says it once and says it wrong, but that's all you have so you give up and you put a talking head in that explains it all to you. And we just didn't want to do that.

And the fact that you can see a film like *Primary* [1960] or *Happy Mother's Day* [1963], or something, and say, "Yeah, you can make a movie that is not a tv documentary." Make something exciting.

QUESTION: Were you pretty much on your own as you were photographing, as far as making the choices? Did you work out some kind of direction system between the two of you?

MARSHALL: We didn't need to. We clicked. We were in tune with each other; we hit it off. And, I mean, you sort of knew.

QUESTION: How does it begin? Were you just hanging out? Waiting? Does one of you gesture to the other, "Okay, let's get this," and then the sound goes on and the camera starts rolling? How do you decide when to turn the camera on and when to turn the sound on? Was it just either one of you?

MARSHALL: Well, the trip down in the morning, we'd talk about where were we going, what we were going to try to get that day. And we'd know that there were going to be these interviews with Dr. Robey, talking to the people, evaluating the people. And I want to say on the tape that that guy turned out to have done a hell of a good job. He got an awful lot of people out of there and back into the community. And God bless him for it, because that was a bad place to be, in Bridgewater State Pen. So, we'd know that that was going to happen that day. Or we'd think we should do more in the yard. And we began to know people, where they were; what they were likely to do; whether they were going to bathe Bulcock today. We'd chew these things over and then go.

QUESTION: Go find them?

MARSHALL: Yes, find them. Basically, Fred would just say, "Go ahead, shoot." Well, I mean, we didn't even say that. It was just obvious. I'd start to shoot. And we'd follow from there. One thing would lead to another.

QUESTION: Was he seeing rushes?

MARSHALL: We saw some, yes, but, as I say, there was an awful lot of film shot. I don't know whether anybody saw the whole thing, the whole rushes, while the film was being shot.

QUESTION: He was seeing the events, but he wasn't seeing the images in quite the same way that you were, because you were seeing it through the lens. I'm trying to get a sense of where he was at this point.

MARSHALL: We'd look at it. Is it good? Is it something exciting? Does it say something? Does it do something? Is it tedious? Is it boring? Is it shaky? Is it badly shot? Can you hear it? Fred's expression was, "We've got a goodie." Or, we don't. "How many goodies have we got today?"

QUESTION: Were you inclined to agree with him, from a photographer's and an ethnographer's point of view?

MARSHALL: We looked and got ideas while we were still shooting. I don't think we ever went back and did something deliberate to fit. You didn't need to in that film. The place itself had enough internal structure, so that you didn't need to say, "Oh, I've got to cut from here to here. Let's go and film it." A guy opening a door or going into a room or getting into a car and driving away. We just didn't need any of that crap. We did film the final "Follies," the performance, after we'd seen a lot of stuff. And we said we knew that we should wrap it up. But we'd have done that anyway.

QUESTION: So the timing just happened to work out that you had been filming for awhile before "The Follies" occurred?

MARSHALL: They were being rehearsed. The cast was being picked. Eddie Pacheco was stage managing and pulling it off.

QUESTION: When you had finished shooting, how did the editing proceed?

MARSHALL: Well, we looked at stuff and made roughs.

QUESTION: Was David Eames involved in this, too?

MARSHALL: Yes, he was there. We were all thinking about it, responding to the material together.

QUESTION: So, there was at that point no statement from Fred saying, "I'm in charge. I'm the editor." And you're advising him.

MARSHALL: No, no.

QUESTION: You were all editing?

MARSHALL: We were co-directing, in fact. I don't remember if that was ever formally—I think maybe it was. Maybe we did say that it was formally agreed. It didn't seem necessary to formally agree. It just seemed the obvious thing to do. I mean, he respected me as a filmmaker and a cameraman, and I respected him. And, in fact, I think it did work in that film, because after I was kicked out, he did show it to me a couple of times. And I had a thought, like "The Follies" is dropping out of the middle of the movie, pick it up again. Stuff like that. But I didn't cut it.

QUESTION: But you started in on that process?

MARSHALL: Yeah.

QUESTION: Generally organizing it or actually cutting scenes?

MARSHALL: Putting lumps of material together, like sequences together, in an order. Five hours of something. And you look at it and say, "that is going to work or that isn't going to work" or "that can go from here to here a lot faster." I have a knack at that. I have a talent for being able to look at material and say, "Hey, you can go from there to there."

QUESTION: This is in terms of large chunks?
MARSHALL: Well, large or small, I don't care. "This leads to that." We both knew how to do it.

QUESTION: He had learned to edit?
MARSHALL: Well, this isn't editing. This is organizing. This is looking at material, kind of rough. Just, you know, throw up a whole sequence. You get it synced up and throw it up and maybe it's half an hour long. And you look at it and you can say, "Well, yeah, that can come down to 3 or 4 or 5 minutes, because this is the part that says it, and if you put that there, that'll lead into the next event." You do it in your head. And then you keep cutting it down. I couldn't remember who said what can go where at any specific time.

QUESTION: So this proceeded co-operatively for—
MARSHALL: Yeah, for three or four months.

QUESTION: Can you tell us the story of what happened then?
MARSHALL: Well, he just decided that he wanted to make the movie and—

QUESTION: How was that presented?
MARSHALL: He just asked me to get out of the editing room. I was working for the company that he was working for, OSTI [Organization for Social and Technical Innovation].[10]

QUESTION: Had you worked for them before the filming started?
MARSHALL: No, no. I was at loose ends. I was out of work. And then Fred said, "Come work for OSTI." The longest thing I ever did with them was a labor mobility study.

QUESTION: Well, here you were, working for OSTI and the editing was going on. Was it as if he had reached a point where he didn't need you or did you have an argument, a difference over how it was to be edited?
MARSHALL: No.

QUESTION: This caught you by surprise?
MARSHALL: Well, yeah, a little, but it was his movie. I never thought it wasn't. This agreement about directing and so forth was informal, basically between friends. I wasn't

going to suddenly insist on some rights. It was his movie. He said, "We'd like to finish. We don't need you in the editing room anymore. I want to make this movie. I want to make it my way, however." And I said, "Fine."

QUESTION: You finished shooting in June?

MARSHALL: Yes. And then we were cutting. We cut that summer and a whole another year. It was being cut downstairs in the building where OSTI was. There was an editing room down there. And, yes, it was a year. It was in the spring of the next year that he said this to me.

QUESTION: But then you were called back to look at some rough cuts, and so there was still an amicable relationship?

MARSHALL: Oh, yeah, sure. I would look at it with a fresh eye.

QUESTION: So this wasn't really a break, at that point, between you.

MARSHALL: No. It was a little strained. I mean, I felt a little hurt. But, so what? Those things happen, in life and film.

QUESTION: Recalling the tone of the conversations about the film, this was not a soberly contrived social document about conditions at this particular place? It wasn't a kind of journalism?

MARSHALL: No, it wasn't supposed to be. It was black humor, black comedy. I don't think any of us involved in it felt that it should be stand-back tv documentary: This is terrible, now see how terrible it is; or this is funny, ha ha, now laugh. It was supposed to be, it was supposed to be on wings, not on flat feet.

I think there are places in it where he belabors the obvious. He could do it a little less. The film had a structure because of "The Follies," and we hung the big folly on the little folly. And when you do that, you get into narrative. It's automatic. Images that you want, rather than pictures that you're getting.

QUESTION: As in the scene where the force feeding is intercut with the preparation for burial?

MARSHALL: It's heavy; it's heavy. I think that it's a little heavy. But the idea of inter-cutting—I mean the guy died, you know, being force fed by that ex-Wehrmacht. The guy once told us where he practiced. Kiev, Rostov, Schoten, Tobruk. No, not Tobruk, he wasn't at Tobruk. But it was the course of the expansion and collapse of the German Third Reich. He hit most of the bases. And here this guy is shoveling this down this man Malinowski's throat and Malinowski wanted to die. He wanted out. And he did, he got out. The thing itself was kind of heavy. You've got to remember that, too. And it was really a bad news thing to do to a guy.

QUESTION: Did any good thing happen as a result of this film you can think of?

MARSHALL: Robey, for example. I didn't exactly know at the time when I saw Robey there. He went to Shady Hill School, which is where I went. Later, a mutual friend said that his mandate was to try to help people get out. Again, I don't know what happened to Vladimir. I don't know whether he got out.

Charlie Gaughan had that mandate, too, which was to change the place. It had become a dumping ground for an assortment of wretched, miserable, unhappy people, beyond the law. There was no way they could get out. They couldn't go to court and Charlie explained that to us, very early, that that was what they were trying to do, among other things, in the institution. To get people out. And that was what Robey was trying to do. And there were other people trying to do the same thing in other institutions in Massachusetts.

QUESTION: What was your impression of Gaughan?

MARSHALL: He was a good guy.

QUESTION: Do you think he felt as the film was going on that he was going to have the right of censorship?

MARSHALL: Look, I only met the guy twice. And when we talked that didn't come up. I'd like to think that what he thought was that the film, by showing the realities of, of Bridgewater, would help him and others interested in doing something to lance the cyst. And get people who shouldn't be there back in the community, back on the street. That's an impression. We never talked about it. I never had any official dealings with him. He seemed like a good guy to me. Sincere, at least, in his program of tying to open things up.

QUESTION: Were you there at the showing then when Gavin, the Commissioner of Correction, was shown the film in September? Did you go to that?

MARSHALL: Oh, that was the one. I'm sure, because I remember Fred saying, "That's Mr. Gavin."

QUESTION: So you didn't see the film with a group of people until September?

MARSHALL: Until September.

QUESTION: During the actual filming, was there a general assumption that consent had been given, institutionally? That is, you didn't lift up the camera and ask, or get a nod?

MARSHALL: Oh, no; oh, no. Open. Except for the Boston Strangler suspect [Albert DeSalvo]. He was always, as Fred said, "whisked away." That was purely for rights. People had a great deal of money riding on the story. And they had an excellent contract with him, together with people in his family, to tell the story and so the people who owned him didn't want anybody

else to have access to him, so they could have an exclusive splash on how he strangled all those people.

QUESTION: And the general sense was that permission had been granted from the top down? That is, the institution said to its employees, "These people are here making a film."

MARSHALL: That's certainly what we felt. Eddie was attached to us, as a kind of guide, but Eddie is Eddie. I mean, he was gung-ho on the film. And I had a feeling that he felt, "Show it," because, you know, it might shock people and wake people up. You know, and do some good.

QUESTION: Do you remember when people would refuse to be in the film? Guards or psychologists or other people?

MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah, some. We never filmed anybody who said no. And we were obvious. I mean, there was no hidden camera or any hanky-panky. It was right there. Big Auricon camera, big sound rolling, you know, Sennheiser mike, long, long-range mike. I mean, you can't hide it. You can't miss it. They knew they were being filmed.

QUESTION: How did you establish or regulate rapport with the people you were filming? Was there a practice of "no eye contact" or was it "establish rapport and be friendly"?

MARSHALL: Well, in the first place, and this was deliberate, the film would be the institution and, in this case, organized by these "Follies." That was a decision and that means that it's not about someone or about a small group of people and you don't get intimate with a small group of people. My own experience in America, for example, when I shot a lot of film about cops in Pittsburgh, well, we lived in the station. We had to know these guys and before I shot down there, we were beginning to be able to get into people's houses. It was going to be a film about people. A small group, two cars, six guys, alternating, basically only four guys. And that's a different thing. There you want to meet people. People are what's important and they provide the structure, the continuity. Getting to know them is what the film is about. We lived with them. Some of us became very fond of each other. I had a very good friend in that film. A strange guy, cop *extraordinaire.* He was a terrible cop and I'd tell him so and he'd argue with me. We'd go get drunk together. Tom was hit with a brick. The Pirates won the World Series and there was a tremendous explosion in Pittsburgh and, among the victims, was Tom's eye. Some guy threw a brick down and took his eye out. I heard about it through other friends on the force, so I went to see him in the hospital. He looked pretty bad, pretty blue, pretty down. And then, that winter, he smoked his .38. But I mean, those were friends. That was the purpose of that film.

This was different. This was an institution, an abstraction. What you show was what they were doing in relation to this image. Eddie was an exception, and even Eddie doesn't come off—you know, you never really get to know Eddie. You don't get to know anyone, basically, in that movie.

QUESTION: But behind the camera was different?

MARSHALL: Oh, yeah, we got pretty close to people. I have another quality, you know, which is part of the way I make movies. Very quickly when I come into a place, I don't know whether it's vibes or whether it's the way I handle myself or what I seem to be thinking; I don't know what it is, but I get into it very fast. I can walk into a domestic argument in somebody's home and start shooting and the whole thing just goes on and happens. I just have a knack at that. It's just a quality, I guess.

QUESTION: And the quality, if I understand you, is not, in your case, invisibility, but presenting yourself as a trustworthy person.

MARSHALL: Something like that.

QUESTION: Some critics have said that the later films get cooler, but that in *Titicut Follies* there is a passion and emotion, a closeness and immediacy. Deac Rossell attributes that to the camerawork.

MARSHALL: That's me. That's the way I am, the way I shoot.

QUESTION: And so you're kind of drawing them to the camera?

MARSHALL: Yeah. "Slick, hey, this is great; hey, this is—"

QUESTION: So you keep your other eye open then?

MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah, sure, all the time.

QUESTION: Do you have a sense of how Fred would behave in relation to that? Was he unobtrusive? Was he charming? Was he being invisible?

MARSHALL: I don't know. All I can say was when we were together, it just worked. I'd sort of barge into places and start shooting, and everything followed.

QUESTION: And you would, then, be in a position that you could converse with people before or after a scene? To be a person to them, not just a—

MARSHALL: Yes, yes. Not a camera coming and interfering with your private life.

QUESTION: Did you ever at that time have qualms about the questions that later arose as far as privacy?

MARSHALL: No, I never did. Because shooting is shooting. I never second guessed myself, you know: "I'll wait. I'd better not do this. Oh, I can't show that. Oh, I mustn't show this. Oh, this is an invasion or privacy. Oh, this is a—." That just gets in the way and makes it impossible. You shoot. You have a relationship with the person you're shooting. Unless somebody says, "No." I've never infringed on that.

QUESTION: Otherwise, you go forward?

MARSHALL: I've never shot anything hidden. I've never shot anything like spying—like when you're a mile away with a long lens and you're shooting somebody, and they don't know whether you're shooting them or the guy next to them. It is a personal relationship, and it is about what's happening; what they're doing and what you're doing and it's about making that film. So, unless somebody says, "No," you just go. Anything else is second guessing and that's the third rule of thumb to me in any kind of documentary filming. You're playing with yourself if you think, "I mustn't shoot this" or "I shouldn't do this" or "Can I get this?" or "Is this right?" or, you know, "Am I intruding?" or so forth and so on. You don't. If you do that, you stand a mile away and you, you simper and peek and you giggle and you titillate yourself and then you go home and say, "Wow, what have I got? Wow." You've got to be there *with* people while you're shooting. Anything else is just your own artifice, getting in your own way.

QUESTION: Was there a standard answer that you give when people asked, "What's this film about?" or "What are you doing?" Or does that arise much?

MARSHALL: Yeah, people ask, sure. You tell them what you're doing. Explain it. I explained it to people in Bridgewater. People who, I suppose, would be considered incompetent to give you consent, I talked to them and told them what the film was about. Just describe it. Say we were making this documentary about the place and the people in it and "The Follies" and—hope it will do some good."

QUESTION: That was always part of it, the "hope it'll do some good"?

MARSHALL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: The way you presented it, the way you thought about it?

MARSHALL: Well, at the time, I think all of us, David and Fred and I, and to the extent that he was involved, Tim, hoped that showing the place would make people think about it. But not, you know, not in a heavy-handed, "Now let's think about the problem of incarceration without trial." That would be another kind of film, a perfectly worthy kind of film, and a very important one to make and, if you had to think of what the most important thing in that institution was, that was it. There are an awful lot of people in that place that shouldn't be there. They've never been before the judge. They've never been before God and the people to tell their story and had somebody say yes or no.

QUESTION: Do you think looking at the film anybody would know that who didn't know it before?

MARSHALL: You mean the way the film finally came out?

QUESTION: The way the film finally came out.

MARSHALL: I think it could have been dropped in, in a felicitous way, a little more. I think that's one of the problems with it. Like Robey's sitting there and he turns to the camera and says, "What we're trying to do is to help see if we can get some of these people out of here, because a lot of them shouldn't be here and under the law they've never been sentenced." But he did that.

QUESTION: That was on film?

MARSHALL: Yeah. I remember him saying that. Sort of an aside, you know, as things were going on.

QUESTION: But that's a kind of camera recognition and observational film plays as if the camera's not there.

MARSHALL: Well, mine don't. My films don't. I mean, I don't think that bothers—You know, that's true. The other is sort of a pretense, that you're not there. You're a fly on the wall. And you're not a fly on the wall. I mean, there's no concealed camera. You're not looking through a one-way mirror. You're not bugging people when they don't know it. You're not setting up an Abscam or something like that. You're in there shooting.

A fourth rule of thumb for documentary is that if people are preoccupied in what they're doing, they are preoccupied in what they're doing. They're not putting on a show for you. They're involved in what's happening. And if the involvement is real, they're not checking over their shoulder or editing themselves in front of the camera. They're involved. It's a real thing. It's a real event. It's different than a media event where you put something up so that, like a lot of tv documentaries, you can tell the minute you see them: This is a media event. These people are set up and they're told to do this or say this, or they're brought together for some other purpose than their own. They're not there because they're involved in what they're doing; they're there because CBS says, "Be there and do it." And that's to me the distinction between documentary, which is people involved in their own lives, and news, news events.

QUESTION: Were you involved in distribution or other post-production arrangements after you left the editing?

MARSHALL: I was involved in none of it. I wasn't involved in that film after I was asked to leave the editing room. We had no say or decision in the film. And I thought of it as Fred's movie

QUESTION: What got you to the point to decide now is the time to write the resignation from Bridgewater Film Corporation?

MARSHALL: If this was a real corporation, if it's for real, then Heather and I are the majority of the corporation, then we ought to know. If we're not, if it isn't a real corporation, then we've been set up. We've been used.

QUESTION: Did you have any contact with Fred after you resigned?

MARSHALL: No. I think we did talk once. I was still working at OSTI and he said, "Take back your resignation." And I said, "Jesus, you know, I'd like to, but here's the problem: we're responsible for something we're not responsible for. I mean, I don't know what's been said to people." And he said, "Well—." He fired me.

QUESTION: At the time the Bridgewater Film Corporation was set up, did any of the three of you, you or Heather or David, question why he [Fred] wasn't part of the corporation?

MARSHALL: No, we knew. He had a problem with paying for another movie and he thought that if he set up a corporation, he'd have some protection for this one. I think he was paying for *The Cool World*, and this was a way to separate the two, so nobody could attach the film. If somebody could do that, it would stop him from doing other movies. How are you going to start off again? How's a guy going to start off again when everything he does is subject to some greedy soul on the other end of a settlement who says, "I won't take a dime on the dollar. I want my full measure." So that was the extent of it.

QUESTION: So the corporation was a convenience to isolate the film financially?

MARSHALL: Yeah, yeah. But the thing is, in a corporation, if it's real and you're a real director, you are supposed to know what you're doing. That's at least my understanding of the way the law looks at it. They don't say, "Hey, why did you do this?" And "Who are you helping here?" And "Who are you trying to protect here?" and so forth and so on. They say, "Hey, look, you did this and you're the director and you're supposed to know what you're doing."

QUESTION: There was a period there where there was speculation that there would be damage suits by participants in the film against the film. And, therefore, the corporation would have been legally, financially responsible for any damages.

MARSHALL: Yes, they would have been responsible. But it's more than the damage suit, it's your reputation. After all, somebody said something to some people in the state, in the institution. And if you're going to go against them, you'd like to know what you said.

QUESTION: Did you ask Fred if he would talk about this to you?

MARSHALL: Well, my mistake was not resigning earlier when I was kicked out of the editing room. At that point, I had no control over anything. My directorship became an empty word. I had no control over what the film said or over what happened to the film. And I just didn't think. The thought didn't occur to me. I was naïve.

QUESTION: Was he?

MARSHALL: You would have to ask him. I would not be surprised if he said, "Yeah, I just didn't know it was going to cause this kind of an explosion." We just didn't feel that.

QUESTION: What's your view of the outcome, that is, of the restrictions on the film?

MARSHALL: I don't know. The only qualm I have, the only thing that occurred to me that I guess I'd have liked something to have been done about, was this problem of these guys awaiting trial. You blast the film all over Massachusetts and those guys seem very vulnerable to me because, either a juror sees it and, even if he's asked, when he's challenged on a jury, he says, "No," but he forgets, it's there in his mind. And, later on in the trial, this guy comes up and the guy made a bad impression on him. Or, the other thing more likely it seemed to me that could happen is that lawyers, both the state and the defense lawyers, figure these guys, what would they get? A public defender is basically what it amounts to and a public defender would say, "Well, I don't think we can get a fair trial in this state." And the state would say, "That's true. This film has sort of come out and we've got to wait until the dust settles and then we'll try again," but sends the guy back for another two, three years in Bridgewater. I thought something might, might have been done about that: either don't show it—even if he didn't show it in Massachusetts. Ask the people. Take a few phone calls to find out who's in the movie. To call up and say, "What's the story on Vladimir?" I mean, "Is he, is he going to appear in the next six months?" Whatever. "What's the situation? Is he going before the court, or is he not?" Just sort out a few things like that, and time it accordingly. It didn't matter if it was shown anywhere else. But I don't even know if anything like that was done. I mean, I don't know if anybody called up anybody or asked anybody what's happening with these guys.

Later on, when I was shooting in Pittsburgh, I filmed a guy who was turning information. Somebody could say, "Hey, you know, we just saw you singing to the police." Passions were very high at that time. That was the period when Martin Luther King was killed, and passions were damned high. And I thought, "Well, hey, this could be bad for this guy," so I dropped it. I recut the film. I made another movie, just because of that. So, it's a serious thing. And I do think you have a responsibility at that level, in that way, to people who are in your movie. Not to shooting. You know, you don't have to do anything to the shooting. Not to cutting. You know, you cut it for yourself. But, ultimately, for example, you wouldn't, you may not show that in Pittsburgh. I never showed those movies ever—

QUESTION: Your Pittsburgh police films have not been shown in Pittsburgh?

MARSHALL: Oh, they've been shown to the cops. But not to the general public, no. Not until years and years later.

QUESTION: And you control the distribution through your company?

MARSHALL: Yes. But if somebody else is going to distribute it, you explain to them: "Look, let's not show this in Pittsburgh for three years." And, generally, a good distributor can see that. There are things you can do. It's not hopeless. And I think you do have a modicum of responsibility about that. But I have no idea what the discussions were regarding the *Follies* in that respect.

QUESTION: How do you place Fred Wiseman as a filmmaker?

MARSHALL: He's become sort of a cult figure. Who else has been successful in getting documentaries like that on the air? There aren't many people who do. It's not a beaten path. And I think that's a real achievement to just do that. And the only other films I've seen are [*The*] *Cool World*, and I don't know how much of that is Shirley or how much of that is Fred. I've never talked to either one of them about it, so I have no idea. And then what? *Law and Order* [1969]. And that seemed kind of distant, remote to me. I mean comparing stuff like I shot in Pittsburgh, it seems to me, yes, you can get intimate, and you can get close, and you can get real people doing real things. That seems very, very far away. Kind of a montage. And what else did I see? *Meat* [1976], which I thought was boring. This is just a personal preference—I like to meet somebody in a movie. I like to know people when I see a documentary. And I just don't feel that you know anybody in his films. See what I mean—voyeur. But, you know, *The Cool World* didn't seem voyeur to me. It seemed right in there. I haven't seen the others, so I don't know. But I think doing this kind of documentary and getting it shown is a real achievement. A major achievement.

Notes

[1] Charles Gaughan was Superintendent of Massachusetts Correctional Institution-Bridgewater at the time of *Titicut Follies.*
[2] Ames Robey, M.D., was a psychiatrist and Medical Director at MCI-Bridgewater in 1966.
[3] The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology is a Harvard Museum.
[4] Lorna McLean Marshall was Laurence Kennedy Marshall's wife. Elizabeth, later Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, was their daughter.
[5] The film was also known as *!Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari.* It is currently distributed by DER (Documentary Educational Resources) as *First Film.*
[6] Wiseman was the producer of *The Cool World*. Clarke was the director.
[7] "I have Mitch Bogdanovitch in New York putting together an Auricon that's been silenced and cut down and made lighter so we can shoot candidly so the characters don't hear the clicking and clanging and are not aware that we're shooting." Robert Drew in an interview with P. J. O'Connell. P. J. O'Connell, *Robert Drew and the Development of Cinema Verite in America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 63.
[8] In 1968 Tim Asch and John Marshall founded DER, a non-profit production and distribution company. Asch became a distinguished ethnographic filmmaker and the Director of the Center for Visual Anthropology at the University of Southern California.
[9] David Eames was a third man on the crew, changing magazines, etc.
[10] In a resume from 1973, Frederick Wiseman lists himself as Treasurer of OSTI, Inc., "a consulting company, 1966-70." Cited in U. S. Congress, Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Amendments of 1973, 1065.

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Richard Leiterman

August 17 and 18, 1986
Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, Canada

Richard Leiterman started his film career as a free-lance news cameraman in the mid-1950s. Within a few years, Leiterman, fellow Canadian Allan King, and several other colleagues were pioneering the form in Britain and Canada that would be later known as direct cinema. The year that Leiterman photographed *High School* (1968) with Wiseman he also shot *Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up?* for the BBC. In *Armies of the Night* Mailer describes the filming of his participation in anti-Vietnam War protests and recalls Leiterman's physical skill, his tenacity, and his encouraging smile, "which seemed part of his photographic technique."[1]

After a distinguished record as a documentary cinematographer and director, Leiterman turned his attention to feature-length fiction work, including the Universal biopic *Silence of the North* (1981), directed by his long-time colleague Allan King. Leiterman won a Canadian Oscar for his cinematography on the highly regarded *My American Cousin* (1985), written and directed by Sally Wilson. In the 1990s Leiterman shot a cluster of American made-for-tv movies, such as Stephen King's *It* (1990), and the Canadian television series *Cold Squad* (winning three Emmy awards). In his final active years Leiterman taught cinematography in the Advanced TV & Film Program and Media Arts Program at Sheridan College in Ontario. Leiterman died in July 2005, of complications from amyloidosis.

We interviewed Leiterman on August 17-18, 1986, in Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, where he was on location as director of photography for a feature comedy, eventually released as *State Park* (1988). In the interview we referred Leiterman to drawings of stills from *High School* that appear in our book, *Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman* (1989, 2002), 112-117.

QUESTION: No one to our knowledge has ever talked in any detail at all with any of the cameramen on these films.

LEITERMAN: No, Fred's been very secretive about that, you might say. It's always seemed to me, and I know Bill Brayne, who shot so many of his other ones—and as far as I know, the only credit Mr. Brayne has ever received has been the credits in the film itself.

QUESTION: It matters how that collaboration works.

LEITERMAN: Exactly. It's extremely important.

QUESTION: So, we'd like to reconstruct that to the extent that you can, for the making of *High School*. We can prompt your memory.

LEITERMAN: Yes, I hope so. It's been a long time since we made the film. It's been even longer since I've seen him. I'm trying to recall when we did it. 1968. Yes, I did it before *A Married Couple. A Married Couple* was 1968 [released in 1969].

QUESTION: You were with Allan King both before and after *High School*?

LEITERMAN: Oh, yeah, yeah. I started out my career basically with Allan King in London in 1962. It was with Allan I was learning what the business was all about. I was a stringer for CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] and just about anyone who would hire me. And as that progressed, I started doing documentaries both for Allan and for other people, NET [National Educational Television], CBS, BBC and what have you. I'm not sure how it came about. It came through Allan King's office, a job offer. Fred Wiseman was someone I had heard about, and *Titicut Follies*. I hadn't seen it; still haven't. But it was just a very vague name. I don't think it was Wiseman's name, as I recall, as much as *Titicut Follies*. We'd been experimenting a lot with direct cinema, hand-held cinema, in a lot of the films Allan and I had done. We had introduced it basically to England as the Leacocks and Pennebakers had done in America.

QUESTION: Had you worked on *Warrendale* [1967]?

LEITERMAN: I was not working on *Warrendale.* Bill Brayne shot *Warrendale* while I was off in New Guinea working with Margaret Meade. But at any rate, it came up that this guy, Fred Wiseman, wanted a film and he wanted it done in the Pennebaker-Leacock fashion. Why he didn't hire them, I don't know—maybe he should have. At any rate, he had seen some of the work out of Allan King's, primarily mine, I guess. Bill Brayne had just joined us. So I said, "Sure. Fine." And we went off to Philadelphia. I can't remember, I think I might have met him once before. Yes, before we went to Philadelphia. At any rate, we arrived in Philadelphia, I met this very strange guy. Very affable fellow, bouncing along, shirt tail usually hanging out the back of his trousers, or in front of it. Just a kind of guy you would never suspect would be a filmmaker or could be a filmmaker. Or would maybe—who knows what a filmmaker is or should look like, but all the ones I've seen, he looked least like a filmmaker. He kind of talked in a vagueness, but interestingly. I said I noticed you didn't order any lights or anything. He

said, "No, no. We'll do this straight." I said, "What about sound?" he said, "Oh, I do my own sound." I said, "Do you have an assistant? Someone who could at least change magazines?" You don't have time to stop and reload magazines. He said, "Oh, yeah." The fellow's name I was trying to remember—

QUESTION: David Eames?

LEITERMAN: Yes. And he showed up. And it was fine. David had worked with him in Boston, I guess, on the *Follies.* So I said, "Okay, that's fine. What do you want to do?" He said, "Well, we're going to go to this high school and we're just going to float." Float was his favorite—"we'll just float around." I said, "Fine. Do you have permissions?" He said, "Yes, we have permissions to go anywhere at any time. We can go and walk into somebody's classroom, walk out again, shoot or leave. We'll just see what makes a high school work and what they're churning out." It seemed to me, at that time anyway, it was an extremely exciting thing to do. I had done a number of social documentaries and it just seemed very important. I had already done high schools in Britain and U.S. and *Colour in Britain* [1964] was another one for NET years ago. It shows Americans going over and looking at the color problem in Great Britain in 1964, which was an interesting situation.

So, it was something completely unstructured, and completely floating. I asked him, "Do you have any kind of idea or schedule? Are we going to do Social Studies this day, or History another day, or English another?" He said, "No, we'll find out who the interesting people are. And when we do, that's something that we'll concentrate on." And that basically was it. You know, we started shooting the next day. We had a look at the high school the first day and we started shooting the next. We went into various classrooms and talked to various teachers. I don't think we talked with students. We talked with the principal; we talked with the guidance teacher, and, you know, various people along the way.

QUESTION: When you say you talked to them do you mean as far as getting consent?

LEITERMAN: Well, no, we already had consent. It seemed that we had full freedom to go where we wanted already. But at this point it was just a matter of coming in and introducing ourselves. He kind of said, "Well, this is my cameraman, blah, blah, blah, and we're going to be around," in a this very vague way. If I was a teacher, I would have slammed the door on him. He's not telling anybody anything. He has this marvelous way of waffling around and making them feel very, very important, but telling them absolutely dick. You know, nothing. I wish I had that gift, because it's a very, very good thing. And in his very amiable way, he said, "Fine, that's super." "Glad to have you." "Sure." You know. "We're really proud of our high school. We don't feel that there's anything to hide from you." And it was marvelous. So off we went.

We'd get there about nine o'clock in the morning when school's going on. A couple of mornings we got there a little early to get some outside activity. And that's exactly what we did. The first week, we floated around, nothing much, I don't think anything—maybe in Fred's mind there was some kind of logic—we go here first and we'd go to this class and then go to that class because he did have a schedule of what classes were in session at what times.

But the first week was mostly trying to find the teachers that he felt he could get the most out of in whichever way he wanted to use it. Which in hindsight was very, very interesting, because I think we went to a number of classrooms and some of them, after the first time there we just rejected them and said, "No, we're not going back there. Dull, dumb." And so, in a very strange way, a kind of schedule was evolving, a kind of direction was evolving in his mind: "This one is going to give us excellent material; this one is going to give us excellent material; this one is good; the gym class is going to be superb. The guidance teacher is going to be ace and now we'll have to watch and listen for when we may get a confrontation or that kind of thing—such as the fashion show and those sorts of things."

You know, I thought, "Fred, what are you doing?" Well, I knew what he was doing. After a week I said, "Hey—." We started to talk in the evening about various things that were happening to children going to school in the society of the 1960s, the mid-sixties. What they weren't being taught or what they were being taught and how dangerous this kind of educational system was; that this was exemplary of what U.S. education was about. Whew. And the more we talked and the more we saw this, it evolved; the more ridiculous it became watching these people doing well and not knowing that they may be made a mock of by a certain group of filmmakers who were there just reporting exactly—I mean we weren't doing anything except filming what was going on. The things that I guess, in our mind, we all felt about the educational system. I quit early because of the same things, except I was too dumb to realize it, because I wasn't educated enough to know why I quit.

QUESTION: Were you looking at rushes in the evenings as you were going through this process?

LEITERMAN: No, no. As I recall, I don't think I saw anything until afterwards when we went up to Boston.

QUESTION: So you were basically talking at the end of the day about what you had seen.

LEITERMAN: What we had seen, yes. The thing that impressed me very, very much about Fred was the confidence that he put in his cameraman, and Bill will corroborate this statement. I mean he's going off doing sound because he felt your mind was in sync with his and running on an exact parallel. Once we realized, I mean once I realized where the film was going, there was no problem.

QUESTION: He did not give you directions while shooting, or set-ups?

LEITERMAN: There were no set-ups at all.

QUESTION: Did he give you gestures, for example, when he wanted a close-up of something?

LEITERMAN: Seldom. In that type of shooting, you work very, very closely with the sound man and he was the sound man. Being the sound man and the director, he can dictate where your frame's going to be. See, if I'm talking to you, and he's got the microphone up there, and

I've got a camera here—it's that sort of thing. But indeed, that was not unlike the style of shooting that I had been doing anyway. And in this kind of shooting, you are your own director. *Married Couple* had no director as such. Allan King was watching rushes and we'd talk afterwards, but the same effect. Wiseman had a terrific memory on what had been shot and he would talk about so and so and would say, "I've got to know that you were that close on so and so." We'd go and get reactions—listen to her droning on, knowing that he is picking up the sound of that teacher. But, no, there's no actual direction given, or sometimes you get the odd motion to go in a little more and we're always watching each other for the most part anyway, just as a matter of course in that type of film, in that technique. It was starting to get exciting.

QUESTION: Did David Eames play much of a part in these discussions?

LEITERMAN: Very much in the discussions, very much. He was seldom around while we were shooting. He was around the corner, out in the corridor, changing magazines, running for more film, whatever. But in the evening discussions, yes. He was very active.

QUESTION: Did those discussions concern both the evolution of your sense of what was going on at the high school, what sorts of things needed to be shown, and also semi-technical matters? Did Fred say, for example, "I want long takes?" Or did he say, "I want a lot of close-ups," or "lots of cutaways"? Was there a sense of a visual style that was going to give him what he needed later, in the editing room?

LEITERMAN: I'm not sure that we ever discussed that. At the end of a class, for instance, I might make a mental note of wanting to shoot a certain person again, if it was available, a certain look, or a certain thing, that might enhance it. Or Fred might talk about it. But for most of it we would just roll the camera from the start to the finish of the roll, on the speaker, or on the reaction. I always picked my cut-aways to make sure that you had cut-aways depicting what the class was feeling back. That way we had more latitude.

QUESTION: There are several places in the film where the editing is done in the camera, where the point is made by uninterrupted camera movement.

LEITERMAN: That's what Fred wants, and I felt that was important. He felt that anytime I saw something in my eye, by all means, get it all. Any documentary filmmaker who has done direct cinema will be aware of those things and how they can work. Whether they can come back and be used as a cut-away if you need to or whether they can be used as one. And one always hopes that it works. You choose the right time, and it's very important in that kind of filmmaking. What I think works so well with Pennebaker, with Allan King, with Fred, is that his cameraman and the people that were using the camera listen as hard as anybody else does because it is more important to actually hear, for the cameraman to hear what is going on almost than the sound man because it directs them. You can anticipate if you can hear. If you're just watching, you miss the nuances as they break; you know, "The next few minutes he's going to pause, and I can do something. I can either get over there in time to pick up a

reaction or else I can do something, or I can pull focus, or do something else." You're watching a frame and moving and watching out of both of your eyes to see where you want to go next, because it can sometimes be very boring just staying in one place.

QUESTION: This happens in the scene with the parents and the counselor and the girl who did "marvelous, wonderful" work on the paper and who failed.

LEITERMAN: How could she fail? Marvelous girl! Yes. To me, they're all the players and each one is important. And who's doing the talking in that scene is important and who's doing the listening. And who does the talking when and the interjection. And I guess it's that sort of thing that can make those films successful or not. It's the anticipating.

QUESTION: The teacher [counselor] says to the father, "Sir, if you don't perform," and you come back to the father who's crushed, and you pan slowly to the right and get the wife—

LEITERMAN: You had enough of him to show his despair, you know, his feeling, but what's mum doing? I did feel pretty strongly, and mum was, in that shot, I felt that that was mum's scene. Was really mum's scene. I think I have read criticisms of *High School* where they say, "You don't have to hit us over the head anymore." When I saw a cut of the film I was quite pleased that he left the blatancy in there as well as some of those dramatic subtleties.

QUESTION: Were you surprised at the final cut?

LEITERMAN: I'm not sure what my reaction was.

QUESTION: You saw it before it was released?

LEITERMAN: I don't think that I did. No, I don't remember where I did see it.

QUESTION: Did you see any of the film before the final cut?

LEITERMAN: After the filming I went up to Boston and stopped by for a day, while he was editing, and he showed me some select pieces. He said, "What do you want to see?" And he ran it on the Moviola and we took a look. By that time, I was so up-to-here with *High School* that I didn't want to see it. When he came to the end I was quite happy indeed. I had a very odd feeling about Fred and I'm not sure I can put my finger on what exactly it was. But there was a feeling that he was exploiting these people and at the same time they needed to be exploited. But I wasn't sure whether he was being completely honest with them. But, being a lawyer, he was not telling them any lies. There's that lovely fine line. "Didn't tell you that I wasn't going to do it; I just didn't tell you what I was going to do." It's like going through customs. "I didn't tell you I had that stuff; but then you didn't ask me, either." It's that sort of thing.

Strangely, some years later, in 1972 or 1973 I was asked to do a film for the Ontario Board of Education on high schools. And the high school that had been chosen said, "Yes, that's fine." And then they heard that I was the cameraman that had worked on Wiseman's *High School,* and they had seen it and they were declining. They were saying, "Well, no, we thought we had better not. Why don't you go to another high school?" So we went to talk with them, the

director and myself, and we talked about *High School* and what they were doing in their school, and they said, "Well, we're all very frightened that we might be exploited the way the teachers were in *High School.* We all feel we are doing a good job, but it can be put together in such a sense that maybe it looks like we're doing a hatchet job on these kids." So, there was quite a lot of talk and they finally consented to let us film. And they wanted to see what the final film was going to be before it was released. They didn't have editorial privileges as such. Not, "We don't like that; we don't want it in," but they did say, "Would you consider?" I guess you could say they were allowed to express their feelings about it and if it was strong enough, we'd change it. With *High School*, the—not deception—but just not entire honesty, was something that I was curious about and questioned.

QUESTION: You questioned Fred about it?
LEITERMAN: On occasion, but not very much. I guess I questioned my own self. After I saw the film, I questioned myself even more. Was this entirely honest? It was, but when you condense how many ever thousands of feet we shot—

QUESTION: Do you feel that you had quite a bit of material of better teaching than you [Wiseman] used?
Leiterman: No.

QUESTION: So you feel that what Fred chose was fairly representative of what you shot?
LEITERMAN: What Fred chose was fairly representative of what was going on. Yes. At the same time, I think some of the editing might have made it stronger by condensing and also by the structure of his editing.

QUESTION: Some documentary filmmakers have commented unfavorably on the film's use of extreme close-ups of parts of faces, of mouths, and so on.
LEITERMAN: We got lots of that and it was done for a purpose. It was a long time ago, but I know I was enraptured by the close-up, the extreme close-up. Hands are expressive. Hand movements, motions. Eyes are always real expressive. Mouths, the set of a mouth—are expressive. And it was so new and refreshing and perhaps a little stylistic to go into something like that and to say, "Hey, I see a marvelous pair of hands, look what's happening over there: Why not just pick it up?" If it's in context, such as, that example where you're traveling up something, or go to a hand because that hand is expressing something that may be more expressive than what he's saying. He's pointing the finger at somebody. And what's coming out of his mouth I think is pretty exciting stuff. I certainly did then. Considering that that was twenty years ago, this was very, very new stuff, new material. And I think when you're on to something like that, there's no limit as to what you can get away with. You're looking for, I suppose, symbolism, all those things you learn are important in cinema. That's a long time ago.

QUESTION: Let me recall for you a couple of shots that seem to be framed by you for that sort of symbolism: The Dean of Discipline is framed in a close-up with a flag on his office wall. There's a case in which a woman is lecturing to the girls about sex, and you zoom out. There's a motto on the lectern—

LEITERMAN: "Whatever your hand does your mind follows," something like that. Yes, yes. Sure.

QUESTION: The gestures of the male gynecologist.

LEITERMAN: Yes, that's my business. At least I felt it was my business—to search for any clue.

QUESTION: The film is full of those jokes.

LEITERMAN: Yes, and Fred's mind was working like that, you know. When we'd have our recaps in the evening and things would come back, what I had done, and he'd say, "Did you get that shot?" "Yes." Or I'd miss it, and we'd go and get it again sometime.

QUESTION: The activity was that repetitive? If a teacher said something, and you miss it one day, you can go back another day and she might possibly be saying the same sorts of things?

LEITERMAN: That's exactly so. Saying the same sorts of things and be getting a different reaction. I'm not sure how many times we shot the male guidance teacher—boys' guidance teacher—in different circumstances until we got the right one that worked. There were always teachers or people saying, "Oh, you must come and see this," and "You must come and see that," or "I'm having a—" the teachers were extremely helpful— "and next week we're teaching so and so—"

QUESTION: Did you have refusals?

LEITERMAN: One, but I can't remember what it was. It seems to me we had one where we went in and the teacher said, "I don't like my classroom interrupted in this way." And that, in fact, there was a bigger interruption when we went out in the courtyard and talked about it, than if we went in and filmed.

QUESTION: You can't remember students who refused to be filmed?

LEITERMAN: No, I can't. In the morning the loudspeaker system—the things of the day—was that, "Boys and girls, there's a film crew—they're going to be in the school for a little while and we want you to give your full cooperation—" I think Fred had to get up at an assembly and talk.

QUESTION: Did you film that?

LEITERMAN: I can't remember. You might want to check with him. I have this picture in my mind of him up there in a kind of sloppy way and trying to explain what was going on. Now it may be just something I conjured in the mind, shirt kind of poking out—marvelous picture, I

can see him with that half-smile. Who wouldn't believe this guy? But I can't remember whether that's just something that's in my mind or whether it's a reality.

QUESTION: Did you bring your own equipment with you and specify the film stock and that sort of thing?

LEITERMAN: Yes. I shot it all on Double-X negative and pushed it all at least one stop and sometimes two stops. As I recall, the normal rating was 200 and we were pushing it to 400 and on occasion 800.

QUESTION: Did Fred discuss with you that choice or what that would mean in terms of the way the film would look?

LEITERMAN: Well, I think we talked about it, and I think we talked about his experience in *Titicut* and my experience in choosing Double-X rather than Tri-X. Tri-X is much faster film, but the grain size in Tri-X is something that I couldn't abide by, and you get much better quality and much better control of the grain by pushing Double-X. It had been our experience in England, at any rate. So, we chose to go that way because it was very smooth stock. Tri-X looks horrible. And, you know, even Double-X doesn't stand up very well. But it certainly was a way to go about it.

QUESTION: Wiseman had a Ford Foundation grant for *High School*?

LEITERMAN: He had a Ford; he had a grant from a church or some organization or outfit in New York. Amazing where he got them from, I felt. We had never tapped those resources. Two or three grant outfits.

QUESTION: Is there a certain standard way of hiring a cameraman in the business, for a wage or a piece of the film?

LEITERMAN: Oh, no, the rate is x number of dollars per day. It's a daily rate, or a weekly rate, or whatever you figure on, but it's mostly daily and it's five times that per week. No share of the royalties, but I've done that with some feature films.

QUESTION: And you filmed six weeks?

LEITERMAN: Filmed six weeks.

QUESTION: Would you have liked to have worked on the next film with him? Did you have other commitments?

LEITERMAN: I did go out on the next one. We went to LA to shoot it, LAPD, and they kicked us out after three weeks. Two and a half to three weeks. We were supposed to be out there for six weeks. And I guess they weren't so dumb as Fred might have thought they were. Because, all of a sudden, they said, "Well, listen, we don't feel like we want to cooperate. What you're demanding of us is too much and we'd just better call it quits while we're still ahead." You can cut your losses and so it was fine. I was to go to Kansas City. He said, "It will be a little while before I can find out where I'm going to shoot, but it'll be either Pittsburgh or Kansas

City or"—he couldn't go back to Philadelphia. I said, "That's great. I'd love to do it with you." But at that point Allan King was gearing up for *Married Couple* and I had made that commitment a long, long time ago. And I worked alongside of him on the project and when Fred called back and said, "Listen, we're going to Kansas City and these are the dates," I said, "I can't make it." So, I said, "I can't," and he said, "Who am I going to get?"

In Los Angeles we'd go around to the station for drill and for the meeting before they go out, the Sergeant gives them all a run-down and shakes them up and the locker room chit-chat and out in the patrol cars. I think that might have been the thing that turned it on us was they weren't really fond of us being in the patrol cars and they said, "Okay, you can put your camera in, but you can't put your sound man in," or vice versa. And we'd have to follow them and then they thought, "Well, if they're following us and we have to put on the lights and the sirens we are jeopardizing the people's lives." So, it got to be kind of confusing, but actually we started to get some very interesting stuff. I'm not sure whether it was straight old logistics, but I think that they were getting hot. There was one scene, one stabbing, that started out as what they call a domestic dispute, and it got a little nasty and I think one of the officers didn't conduct himself in a way that was proper. And they got a little upset. And then they brought in the idea of safety laws: "we don't want you guys to get hurt" and that sort of thing.

QUESTION: In *High School*, you seemed to be seeing kids who were brimming over with unfocused sexual energy, and teachers who contrasted with that, or delivered scoldings about the dangers of sex.

LEITERMAN: It's very strong, and I think you're very right, in bringing that up. Those are very formative years, you know, certain things—the gym baseball practice was something Fred would not let go. The fashion show and the sex education. That's very important in a teenager's life. And it's something that we all know goes on in school and it's time to talk about it. But I think, you know, Fred was very correct in bringing this out in the way he did. I don't feel bad about it.

QUESTION: Did you ever talk with him about it? Was he saying this is the kind of thing we're looking for?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, I said, "How come you want to go back to the gym again?" And he said, "Well, you know, it's good material and we should have more of it." For no specific reason except, again, it's something you noticed at the high school. There is an electricity between girls and guys and that you're walking by, and you watch them sitting in class and you watch their eyes looking over at Johnny and Johnny may make a look. Or you can point the camera at someone long enough—at a girl—and she'll do something. Fred is not oblivious to sex. I think Fred was onto that line, to a point, and not overblowing it, but he did use it, in some instances.

QUESTION: The long take permits him in a scene that, in which somebody is repeating themselves, to leave that in, and frequently he lets them—

LEITERMAN: Let's them muddle along.

QUESTION: There's a long scene in which a young woman is being criticized for the dress that she wore to the high school prom.

LEITERMAN: Yes, that's right and I think that is one of my favorite sequences—individuality was not allowed. And what about that lovely sequence of the English teacher? I felt very sorry for her. I felt she was trying to bring something to the class, and, for whatever reason, it wasn't working. It was kind of a nice idea, Lord knows, bringing in something they may have been able to work with, that was contemporary, and it was something that just wasn't working.

QUESTION: They look awfully bored. Those are actual cutaways that were from that event?

LEITERMAN: Those were. Believe me. Yeah. Oh, yeah, I'd dare say 90% is actual time and place. Yeah, I would say that. I couldn't be absolutely sure they're all that way, but I certainly feel very strongly—I may be wrong in a couple of instances.

And that is what is suspect about these kinds of films, and it makes me really angry when someone who knows nothing about the film and how it was made will make these allegations that you can't get that sort of thing. I get really quite upset. I'm sure they're made about Fred's films, and they're certainly made about Allan King's films and about various others that I've been involved with. Certainly, there have been filmmakers who will transpose material, go back to the same sequence, and put in a cutaway of something else and, Lord knows, that's the sort of dishonesty I don't think Fred used. And, like I say, I haven't worked on any of the others, so I'm not aware of whether he has kept that integrity. If it's going to work, it's got to be honest. If he's going to be interviewed or asked questions later, then he's got to be able to stand up and say, "Hey, this is the way it was." And if it was anything else but that, I'd feel badly in doing it.

QUESTION: It is occasionally said that Wiseman's films are not sympathetic to their subjects.

LEITERMAN: Yes, not sympathetic. "Why weren't you more sympathetic?" Oh, you know, you could perhaps cut the film in another way, using the same material. And maybe it might have been a little more sympathetic, but if he goes into a situation and has a very strong feeling about whatever it is, be it *Meat* [1976] or *Juvenile Court* [1973] or *Hospital* [1970] and he feels that his thesis in his mind is correct, then he's correct in making it look that way.

QUESTION: Wiseman speaks frequently about the discovery process in filming. Do you think he went into *High School* with a thesis that high school is regimented and boring, rather than discovering it while at Northeast?

LEITERMAN: I think he discovered that what he felt was absolutely right. That what he had preconceived was proved right there in front of his eyes.

QUESTION: Did you talk about that sort of thing those first weeks? About, "Oh, my God, it's as bad as I thought it would be"?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, this is really happening in front of our eyes. Yes, but couldn't you turn it around and take it a different way? Yes, you could do that, but let's look at it again and sometimes we would go back, it seems to me, go back to class again with a different group of students.

QUESTION: So you tried to give them an extra chance?

LEITERMAN: Well, not an extra chance, but in our talks, there was a certain amount of talking in very broad terms, about the position the filmmaker is put in in regards to integrity and honesty. When you have a small group of a few people going for supper every night, you've got to talk about something. Can't be all sex and booze. And so these things crop up.

QUESTION: Would this be a fair restatement—that although perhaps Fred Wiseman, on the record, has not been generous about the contributions of his cameramen, that in working with cameramen, he is pretty open about letting them make their contributions?

LEITERMAN: I wouldn't dispute that at all. But he's very loath to give back. In none of his interviews that I've ever read has he ever mentioned who shot the films.

QUESTION: What is the film you're shooting now?

LEITERMAN: It's called *National Park* [released in 1988 as *State Park*]. It's kind of a more subtle *Meatballs* [1976].

I think Fred's a marvelous filmmaker; he's really great. When you're doing camerawork for a theatrical feature film, it's a whole different type of work. It's lighting; it's creating atmosphere, rather than creating a film. You're creating an atmosphere for a director to come and direct performances through film, to make a film, and your input obviously is important, but it's creating stuff with light. It's cinematography rather than being a filmmaker.

QUESTION: How did you get started? How did you learn the craft?

LEITERMAN: It was by accident, more than by design, I guess. I was 26 years old and didn't know what I wanted to do. I think I wanted to be a writer at one time, but nothing was coming together, and I was frittering more and more years away. I got married. I was a garbage collector, after being a beachcomber and a truck driver and a logger and a fisherman and a dock worker and this and that. We were in Vancouver. I'd left Europe, just finished 14 months in Spain, working on a charter boat and life was kind of dreary. We got married and she said, "Well, you can't be a garbage collector all your life. You'd better get your act together and do something." So there was an offer at the university extension course, a kind of Be-your-own-film-director-in-six-easy-weekends. It wasn't exactly called that, but that's what it was. This was in 1961. She said, "Get your ass out there and go and do something, learn something."

I had met Allan King again in Spain, although I had known Allan King for many, many years. He married a sister of mine. And he at one time in the late '50s in '58, '59, tried to make his

office out of Ibiza in Spain, where I was working, so I saw a lot of him and he'd gone off to Morocco to make a documentary and he was going off to Yugoslavia to make a documentary and I said, "This is okay. You can travel and somebody actually pays you for it." So I thought if I was going to do something, it was kind of okay. So I took this course and it seemed like when it was my turn to do the camera, that it was kind of neat. It was a little 16mm Beaulieu. I sold my car and bought a wind-up Bell and Howell camera, and nothing happened. I went back to beachcombing. I was back in the cottage we were living in. There was a big storm. We lived right on the ocean in a little shack. I got my Bell and Howell and two hundred-foot rolls of film, and I shot this storm that was pushing trees, and waves were bashing up against the sea wall and very soft windshield wipers going through puddles and all kinds of neat artistic stuff. And I shot these two hundred-foot rolls, rushed over to the CBC office and said, "I've got the most dramatic stuff you've ever seen on the storm. It just happened, only just one hour ago." So I gave it to them, I rushed home and I waited for the 7:00 o'clock news and sure enough, it was on for 43 seconds. And I phoned the next day and I said, "Thanks very much. Do I get my film replaced, or what?" And they said, "Oh, yes, we'll replace the film." And they gave me a check for $35. So I thought, "This is not bad."

So that was the beginning of it. Nothing, no more storms happened for another three or four months. The instructor at this course had given me a nice letter of recommendation, so I wrote to Allan, who had then moved to London, and I said, "If there is any opportunity at all, just moving your bags, or carrying equipment." Nothing happened until on into December. I was back to beachcombing. Beachcombing is not raking the beach with a rake, it's going off in small, very flat boats collecting logs during a storm. I was twenty miles up the coast and by an extremely good break I called home and Margaret said, "Allan King has called and says he wants you to be in London by Monday for his picture." And I said, "Sure, of course." [King said] "Well, we're going to film the Queen and you're going to travel through Europe." Here I am in a place called Alert Bay. It has no roads, no airplanes, and the only way back is by boat. I went to London and as it turned out, I was second camera. There was a series of documentaries about the Common Market. And we did travel all over; shoot and travel; shoot and travel, with Auricon cameras, which I had never heard of, let alone seen, had magazines on the top, ran on electricity. I made a number of mistakes, but, anyway, it worked out, so I stayed. Then, as I said, I started as a stringer; got into documentaries. CBC News.

QUESTION: When you were working with CBC was there an initiation process into a journalistic perspective, or a network perspective?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, you learned what you could and what you couldn't get away with.

QUESTION: So it wasn't a matter of attending a school of journalism?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, I guess there was nothing like that. You went out with a correspondent, and you shot what you thought was—in fact, the correspondent was indeed a sort of director, but at the same time there was very little directing, because the correspondent is not a film

director; he's not a film-oriented person. But he said, "Okay, these are the main points of the issue," whatever the issue may be. Whether it's Oswald Mosley speaking his lungs out in Trafalgar Square. "We've got Oswald Mosley, he's pro-Nazi; we've got a group of in-between people; we've got the cops. So, let's work on all of those things. Add as much excitement to it as you can." And you'd have something better than what you've been watching on prime time. Then *A Married Couple* in 1968. I felt that in those few years, from '62 to '68, was pretty short, but I'd done an awful lot of things. I'd been around the world a couple of times; I done some very interesting documentaries—I'd done Fred's; I'd done *A Married Couple*, which to me was one of the pinnacles in this type of filmmaking, and thought: There's two ways to go from here, either carry on documentary and produce and direct, or else maybe I should try something I've never tried before, a very creative, artistic form of cinema. And there's not much room for image creation in documentary, but a lot of room for it in the creation of atmosphere and using light in feature film work. In documentary you don't have the opportunity to use very much else but available light and that's exciting, too, but in a much different way. Here you're given all these tools.

QUESTION: How did you learn to use these tools?

LEITERMAN: Trial and error. And there were some very patient directors and producers, believe me.

QUESTION: When you became conscious of yourself as a documentary maker, were you in a group of people, or were you personally looking back on a kind of tradition started by [Robert] Flaherty and [John] Grierson?

LEITERMAN: I barely knew who Flaherty or Grierson were. The only people I was aware of were Pennebaker and Leacock, Allan King, a couple of guys in England, and later I began looking at the films of Grierson and said, you know, "That's terrific; that is really art." But it was not something I was aware of, I have to admit, and that's probably, I shouldn't say that, but that's how ignorant I was. That's as honest as I can be, because it was really—Allan King was at that time my mentor, really, and he'd start talking from time to time in London. We'd get films and we'd start talking about the aesthetics of film.

QUESTION: Do you see big differences between the U.S. and Canadian versions of direct cinema?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, I have some feeling of that. I looked at, for a long time, a lot of stuff that Pennebaker did. Pennebaker would choose a subject that has, inherent in it, action. And it was not a hit-or-miss situation. It was a surefire situation for a lot of the films. And I think that we didn't have that kind of opportunity in Canada. We had it in a much smaller way and there were some good ones made. There was not the kind of market for distribution in Canada.

QUESTION: Was the National Film Board [of Canada] supporting direct cinema?

LEITERMAN: National Film Board was doing their own thing. They tend, the same as any large organization, to take a couple more years to get caught up to whatever's happening and then, all of a sudden, there's a glut of hand-held material. But it's usually a couple of years beyond the time it takes to go through the bureaucracy, the quality control, "You can't use this. It's shaky—it wobbles all over the place. This is terrible." So you call it "wobbleyscope" and run it.

QUESTION: Not "broadcast quality."
LEITERMAN: That's exactly so. When we started in London, in England, they'd never heard of quarter-inch recording. We had the first quarter-inch sync recorder, that we had taken from the BBC. It was a windup machine, an adaptation of the Second World War correspondent's radio. We had the big Magnasync for location—it was 16mm—that was the best portable machine. I said, "Well, there's no reason you can't do it on quarter inch and reduce this huge machine that you had to tuck away in the back room because it clanked and clunked as the 16mm went through the sprockets and took up on the split reels." So we got one of these old Altons from the BBC and put a pulse on it and attached that pulse to a shutter mechanism on the old Arri—the Arri 2. Every time the shutter went by, it had an electrical pulse that went down the recorder head. "You can't do that!" "Oh, we can't? Look, we've got a sync recorder and tape." I guess three years after that [Stefan] Kudelski came out with a Nagra.

QUESTION: Did you have much connection with what was going on in France during this period, with the experimentations of Jean Rouch and his associates?
LEITERMAN: No. I guess we knew of them, but we were pretty busy doing what we were doing.

QUESTION: Is there a living in documentary filmmaking? Is it true that there really aren't many opportunities for the feature documentary?
LEITERMAN: I guess that's true. I'm not entirely sure anymore, because I've not been familiar as much as I might be, because of other work I'm doing. I know that there have been a number of ideas my colleagues in London who are still doing documentaries have submitted and they have more and more trouble in getting them made. There seems to be a thing about the networks saying nobody wants to know any more about documentaries. There's not a big market. If you're going to do it, then do a series of 13 or something. The one-off documentary is getting tougher and tougher to sell. There's a lot it depends on. The schools are still churning out filmmakers and some are terribly interested in documentary and social documentary. What are they doing? Fortunately, there are all these small tv stations, I guess, that take up so many of them shooting little bits of news, becoming studio directors and managers—it's a good thing. And some of them make bucks. I have a feeling that this is really what they want to do and it's amazing still the number of students going into schools and taking their BAs in film or going to a three-year film course who are determined that documentaries still have a place in the world.

QUESTION: Because so little is written about the actual craft of documentary camerawork, perhaps you could recall for us some of the specific shots in *High School* and the choice-making process of the shooting of some of these images. [Richard is handed figures 1-99 from Chapter 3 of *Reality Fictions.*]

LEITERMAN: There are no books that can tell you this. I'm not aware of books.

QUESTION: At the beginning of the film, there is a shot of a truck that says, "Penn Maid Products."

LEITERMAN: Yeah, it was there; it was there. We said, "Hey, did we luck out, or what?"

QUESTION: Figure 7 is the teacher reading the thought for the day. And then Figure 8 is this girl listening to him and then a shot of what she is looking at, the close-up of his mouth.

LEITERMAN: And out come these words. Words coming out, balloons. I saw it, not as a cartoon so much, but the words are as meaningless as the rest of that person's head. What is happening is his mouth is uttering something that's gone on in here that he's read somewhere that these are important things that you should know about. And out come words. And I think it's reflected in his students. "What?" I mean, they're not even listening for the most part, maybe one or two.

QUESTION: And then, Figure 12, we start "*existentialista."*

LEITERMAN: Oh, yes, that's it.

QUESTION: You tilt down from 13 to 14, then you pan across to—

LEITERMAN: But that's all one shot. Yes. I'm sure—or my feeling was—that amongst the teachers in the school, she was perhaps the most flamboyant of them all and she knew it. And she put this out and she put out a little for us. I believe that this—I'm sure that she did it if we weren't there, but this was the case. Again, you know, I guess if I was a student, listening to her talking about something—mmm—nice hips?

QUESTION: So some of these people are playing to you, and you're playing to each other?

LEITERMAN: Well, isn't this the problem of this kind of filmmaking? Are the people doing what people would normally do? Would people normally show you their innermost thoughts?

QUESTION: And you're kind of courting that a little bit, aren't you?

LEITERMAN: Be careful. I will court it on occasion if I see it as part of the situation. If I can substantiate it or feel right about it myself that, yes, this could be a student's point of view. Not my point of view. I'm not a dirty old man, but—I would not want to feel that I was putting something out that may not be there on a normal day. Now, it's true, and I guess this would be the biggest argument about this kind of film. Would they do that if the camera wasn't there? What is the answer? I don't know. I like to feel that in some films that the crew has indeed—those two people—have become a piece of furniture. Who knows? When I'm asked that question, I'll say, "Now, there's different attitudes you take with people when

you're doing that kind of film." One, such as in *High School*, I think we didn't put up any barrier with the teachers or the students, not that we wanted them on our side, but we were affable, friendly with them, answered questions, and talked.

In another situation, during *A Married Couple* more strongly than the other films, we never said, "Good morning"; we never said, "Good-bye." We never accepted a cup of tea or coffee or sat with them, except with the camera and sound recording, and put up an absolute barrier, and told them that this was going to be the case. They tried to break it and offer us coffee and say, "Hey, how are you?" To me, *A Married Couple* became the ultimate and that's why I've mentioned it a couple of times. I didn't want to do any more after that. I didn't want to be a piece of furniture. In this way, you become a piece of furniture, except that you have something to give to them because you want something back. There's an honesty in that. How can we give something back to them?

QUESTION: Were you aware of Fred, at any of those points, showing interest, encouraging?
LEITERMAN: To the people? Yes, yes, sure. Sure, he's a charming guy. There's no doubt about it. He obviously had them charmed. And it was very pleasant. And I don't think he—I don't know. Do you want to talk about the pictures?

QUESTION: In Frames 74 & 75, you do a very funny thing. It looks like a joke, and I wonder if you deliberately framed it that way. At the back of the room, in Figure 74, is a chart of the ascent of man. You start at the back of the room, and you go down the chart. You keep panning, right to left, from man, descending down to ape, and pan to the front of the room and stop on the Dean of Discipline. At the bottom of the evolutionary chain.
LEITERMAN: Yeah. And there he is. At the bottom, yes.

QUESTION: That's a "yes," is it?
LEITERMAN: That's a "yes." I don't think we had the school cased out. And I can't recall for a moment if I was in that room before or not. But there it was. It's listening. Listening and thinking and not just framing something up because that's where the action is. What else is happening in the room? What else is happening in there? And I suppose working on the same wavelength with Fred all along, in parallel, and that is what is absolutely necessary to make these films work, that the director and the cameraman are working in absolute parallel. And you talk to each other continually.

QUESTION: It's unusual, isn't it, for the director not to be the cameraman?
LEITERMAN: Well, no, I think it's very good. It is very good. He doesn't have a creative eye. He wants to be there and where else is he to be? Except there? There is no other place for anyone, the assistant, the director, and if the director's there—Fred was very good, because he was there and he knew what was going on and he could see and, as I said, he can control the frame to a certain extent with his microphone, like a conductor waving a baton. I mean, if it's there, you've got to frame it out. But if you're not actively involved in the process, then you

stick out. What are you doing? What *are* you doing? You can't hide. I can hide behind my camera and to me I'm not being seen. If I go out to do stills, I feel conspicuous as can be. And it's a very fine stills man who is not conspicuous. If I'm filming this or any other film of this nature, I feel I am not being seen. The sound man is not looking at them, but he's holding the microphone and he's watching his little needles. He's, you know, an extension of the camera.

QUESTION: And then looking at you sometimes to see what you're doing, but not so much looking at them?

LEITERMAN: Never. As soon as you make eye contact with someone, you're conspicuous. They are aware that you are there. On the other hand, in *Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up?* [1968], if I had not made some kind of contact with him, we'd have been out on our ear. And that's what I was talking about earlier, about this barrier. That it can work in one situation and can't work in another. In the situation here, I would never look with my open eye to a teacher or a student that I was filming. But many times, it seemed to be a matter of necessity.

QUESTION: Were there times you stopped filming because people looked at the camera and noticed it?

LEITERMAN: No, I'd just go away and shoot something else. I mean I would just pan off whoever's looking at me.

QUESTION: In Figure 80 we see a Black student, who starts to speak, and then is interrupted by the teacher we have seen in Figure 79. Instead of panning to frame her while she speaks, you stay on him as he copes with this interruption.

LEITERMAN: She was being terribly condescending to him. I think you stay on him to try and experience the humiliation. That's the thing to me. You can hear what's going on.

QUESTION: In Figure 28 there is a student in a French class, framed in the lower right-hand diagonal of the frame and then the teacher is framed in Figure 29 on the upper-left diagonal.

LEITERMAN: When one action opposes another, the action is equal to the reaction. I guess that sort of thing does come with visual images. If you can make sense, and this is further along into feature films or watching movies of this sort of thing. You can see a balanced cut that worked very well. And I guess you watch for those sorts of diagonals when you work so long. We work a lot of the time on a triangular situation. Because a lens shows who is big and who is small. It's an important thing to know. To have one be on one side and one be on the other side. Trying to be everywhere at the same time. To combine two people, to have the continuity of two people in the frame, one has got to be dominant; one has got to have the focus; mind you, you lose that domination, you need to rack focus. All of a sudden, the face is a blur. Back there is where your eyes are drawn immediately, because you can't see this blur anymore. I don't like to say that it's easy or that it is subconscious, but I'm oftentimes not aware until I look at the frame again and something says, "This is fine." Or else I've gone to

the wrong place, you know, this is a much stronger picture if I can get around somehow to another side and accomplish it without interrupting the scene. Particularly something with strong confrontation, you don't want to move. You don't want to break any concentration by movement or making people aware that, "Oh, he's filming." So it's again imagining where people are going to sit when they come in, and if the people are there already, say, "Okay, where do I have to be to get the best out of this picture without making a move? And if I've got to move, where am I going to move? And this is all right, but once I've started, what am I going to do? I can't stay here all the time. And when can I go? When is there a break? It's slacking off, but it may come on again, but I better get out of here and get to another shot, so I've got somewhere to go."

QUESTION: Wiseman's films feel as if they are shot with more than one camera, from a naïve viewer's point of view.

LEITERMAN: Yes. Most anyone, including filmmakers, think there are two cameras.

QUESTION: In *High School* people pretty much stay in their places—they are sitting in chairs or working in fairly confined physical spaces.

LEITERMAN: Yes, and those are ideal situations; they are absolutely ideal. Still, listening is so important. "Who is the antagonist? Or is there an antagonist? What is it we're trying to make out of this and by doing so, what is predominate?" When you talk about the film, you know, the crew, three people involved in this and what do you talk about, when you do have time to talk. So it's kind of embedded that it becomes instinctual. It's the same as working the camera; it's instinct and it becomes subconscious and, all of a sudden, you're focusing, and you've got your frame. "There, that's it"; rather than, "Oh, maybe it should be over there."

QUESTION: In the early days of direct cinema, one saw a lot of self-consciously nervous camerawork. A lot of zooming and groping and wandering and focusing. One sees little of that here.

LEITERMAN: The zoom was new. The zoom was very, very new.

QUESTION: In Figures 38, 39, 40, there is a teacher, the hall monitor, going down the corridor. We hear music, "Simple Simon Says," and he looks through a window. Then we cut to the girls in the gym, Figure 40. Do you recall, is that is literally what he was looking at?

LEITERMAN: That is what he was looking at. That is what was happening. I sincerely believe he was.

QUESTION: In the "Casey at the Bat" sequence, the teacher is reading, and the class seems to be daydreaming.

LEITERMAN: She's going on and on, and Casey came up to the bat, and it's two strikes and dah, dah, dah! What are the kids doing? Thinking about Saturday night dates, thinking about whatever. They're mostly not thinking about "Casey at the Bat." No way, I don't believe.

QUESTION: You've got this kid in 50, who's asleep or daydreaming.
LEITERMAN: Dreaming.

QUESTION: And then we see what he's dreaming of, presumably.
LEITERMAN: Well, yes. Something comes to mind.

QUESTION: It's a very funny sequence.
LEITERMAN: I can't believe that Fred did any more than depict it in the way the kids must have felt.

QUESTION: You mentioned earlier the question of point of view and that seems to be an instance of reconstructing what it's like to be sitting in these chairs.
LEITERMAN: Well, a certain amount of that was evident. You know, it was there, and it was talked about, too. "What is school about? What is education? What did you learn? What did you learn at school? Were you smart? Were you an A student? Were you a C student?"

QUESTION: Some people have complained that you make some of the teachers in the film look needlessly unattractive: the counselor talking about financing a college education—she is framed as if crouching behind a row of books; or the teacher with the coke-bottle glasses. Surely, you're not to blame for people's interpretations, but what do you tell a young filmmaker, 19 years old and just out of school, who asks, "Is it unfair to do that kind of stuff to people? After all, that's the way they look. And they were there." What do you do?
LEITERMAN: What can you say? I don't think it's unfair. You shoot what you see. You, I suppose, take advantage of what you see, sometimes. It's material. It's material that's been shot on a ratio of 20:1 to 30:1. Interpretation of the picture, I suppose, is interpretation of what the camera has in mind. It's not looking for unique qualities in terms of physical look, looking at what you feel the person in that frame is exuding. I'm not saying that people with thick glasses don't have trouble seeing, restricted broad vision that could be interpreted as such. The person behind the books may not see well.

QUESTION: And seems not to in that sequence.
LEITERMAN: You know, I think that, that one can, can kind of write in anything you want to write in about, about things. You can write in "unfair"; you can write in "taking advantage of a person's deformities"; or "setting up things to exaggerate the case." Sure, filmmakers do that. There's no doubt. Any film, among others, makes symbolism a great thing. [John] Huston is down and dirty in a lot of his movies and, because they are actors, does this make it any different, actors depicting people of the same narrow-mindedness or lack of vision or lack of consciousness or comprehension of what they're saying?

QUESTION: Would you be willing to be the subject of a documentary?

LEITERMAN: Not unless I knew the filmmaker very well. And then I think it'd be wrong. People like to see themselves on the screen. I think this whole idea of documentaries—the camera does something really wild to people. People that you've never known before, except for a half hour and you've sat in a sitting room and, all of a sudden, they're telling you their deepest things. They're crying and they're doing all kinds of things. "Why?" It's the thing that goes through our heads continually. "Why do people do this? Why?" It's not intimidation. If it was intimidation, they'd clam up, but very few people do that.

QUESTION: Do you feel that *High School* was ethnographic work?

LEITERMAN: No, no, I don't think so. I felt that he was trying to show America what's happening to their kids; what they could expect coming out at the other end. You've got to choose a place that is typical or representative, or else you go from one school to another. We talked about whether this is representative. It is middle America; it is middle class. And it was chosen because it represented a great chunk of the population of the U.S. that was in the same type of rut, as far as education was concerned.

QUESTION: Would you talk about some of the technical innovations that made this sort of filmmaking possible?

LEITERMAN: Yeah. Let's see, where can I start? First, the mere fact that the cameras became mobile. In fact, the first mobile camera was one that had been used considerably for years, but nobody had ever thought to put it on their shoulder. It required a certain amount of adaptation to the eye piece, and the magazine, and the weight distribution of the camera, called Auricon Cine-voice, which was one of the first sound cameras that was used in news shooting. For a portable news crew, they were very popular, because they were sound-blimped. They were self-blimped cameras; they didn't make a great racket. Well, then came the zoom lens, which enabled a cameraman to stay in one position and make various focal lengths, to get a close-up from standing in the same positions, without having to move the camera or stop and change lenses. They were developed, I guess, in the late '50s, '57, '58. The first zoom lenses, SOM-Berthiot, a French company, was the first one to develop them. And so this was a pretty big breakthrough, also being able to facilitate shooting. I guess Pennebaker and Leacock together were probably the first crew to do hand-held work extensively and use it as a mobile camera.[2] That came, I guess, through wanting to go where the action was, not having the action come to you.

A documentary was set up earlier in scenes and you had the worker, or the person come toward you in a close-up, or you'd stop and change lenses and have non-actors doing what actors do. And I think that was when a director was really a true director, because you'd go into a factory or into an office or into wherever he was making his film and with the use of non-actors make them perform for him. It was a stop-and-start situation in most cases. So I think the change was the fact that you could move the camera on your shoulder. There was no elaborate set-up necessary. The advent of faster lenses and faster film also helped. You could go into places and use available light much easier than previously. Tri-X had always been on the market. It was Plus-X and Tri-X. And they came out with the Double-X in 1958 or 1959.

And that was my favorite stock. I'm not sure what other people used, but you could push it and get a pretty fair quality picture out of it. The lenses became better. The quality of the glass or whatever they were using just seemed a lot better as the years progressed. Angenieux came out with a 10-1 zoom, another great coup. The first Berthiot lenses, as I recall, were 17mm to 57 and Angenieux came out with the 10-1, which was from 12mm to 120. I mean, this is fantastic; this is able to get a fantastic close-up seven or eight feet away from the subject. Full mouth, two eyes, that sort of thing. And they were, I guess, used extensively by people in any kind of film at that point, it seemed. And they still are extremely good lenses in 16 [mm] and 35 [mm].

The quarter-inch synchronous tape recorder became fully used, I guess, by 1963-64, during the advent of the perfect tone and Nagra tape recorder. Before this, it was 16mm magnetic sound or else you used strip film, sound-on-film, which was never very satisfactory. It would have holes in it, and you'd lose it, and the coating was never perfect. It was used mostly for single-system sound, which was used mostly on newscasts.

I think the biggest developments probably happened within a period of five or six years. Going from 16mm sound to quarter-inch sound, adapting cameras, and then, let's see, 1964 was the first change in the camera and that was with the Éclair NPR. And I guess we were one of the first countries to have one in Europe and certainly there had been none in the States when we got ours. And it had troubles that had to be ironed out and there were certain ideas we went back to.

QUESTION: "We" is Allan King Associates?

LEITERMAN: Well, yes, these were people shooting for Allan King Associates. We had trouble with camera jams. We had trouble with camera mounts, and the lens mount was very weak, and we went back to them and said, "This is why your camera's not working very well." One of our colleagues then [Jean-Pierre Beauviala] was very keen on cameras and he went on later to develop the Aaton and it's been very good for him, because the Aaton's become very, very popular.

But the Éclair and then Arri made a portable camera even lighter. And there was the ACL, also made by the Éclair people. Even the sound recorder, the Nagra, became lighter; you could get a different model which was lighter than a Nagra II, which I think was the first commercially used Nagra. And they made lighter models of that. But the system remains the same. The wireless system, wireless sync, was one of the real breakthroughs. It enabled the cameraman to go wherever he wanted and not have to tow the sound man with him. Up to this point, there was always an umbilical cord between the two. And if you're in a crowd situation, or anywhere, you were always aware that this damn soundman was at the end of this cable. And with crystal sync, there was a whole new freedom, absolute freedom. You could go wherever you wanted to go and still have perfect sync control.

QUESTION: In the early days of filmmaking, there were a lot of people involved on the artistic side who had scientific or technical backgrounds. Did a lot of cameramen at this time have technical backgrounds?

LEITERMAN: Yeah, and I think that certainly gave them an edge and it's kind of an interesting combination, someone who's had that kind of training and put it to use in the cinema. And they certainly were on the right track. How it happened, I have no idea. But you'd look around for someone who had some technical training and could adapt themselves to the problems that we had. One was working out of London and shooting a lot in the States on a different cycle. Here it's 60 cycle and in London it's 50 cycle. So, to transfer quarter-inch sound tape, it had to go through a generator, to generate the extra ten cycles. We found an electrician who was around, and I said, "Can this be done?" And he said, "Oh, I don't know. Let me think about this for a while." And he came back with a box of tricks with a big chain-drive thing that actually did what it was supposed to do. I'm afraid I'm not that technically involved and never have been, but we'd find somebody who could do it. It was, you know, kind of a bodkin. He fiddled around with this stuff, and he was able to overcome this problem. And again, I think we were the first in Great Britain to have this ability to transfer sound on a different cycle.

QUESTION: When you first began to get trained in this area, was it with a slightly older style equipment?

LEITERMAN: Yes.

QUESTION: So you can recall suddenly these new things were being put in your hands?

LEITERMAN: Oh, yes. It was, "Try this." I went to New York to an outfit called Magnasync. I was on my way to do *One More River* [1964]. And we heard of this guy who was making a tuning-fork wireless sync. It was a tuning-fork device. You tune up a little pack on the Nagra and also a battery pack that had a tuning-fork device in it, to run the camera and keep them both in sync through the fine tuning of the tuning fork. "Well, it sounds good to me. Does it work?" And he said, "Oh, yeah, it'll work." So I went out and tried this. Mind you, the battery pack was a little heavier, but, I mean, so who cared? It was what it was. Although if you got too close together, you could hear a very fine, high-pitched whine, just a very, very high, high frequency sound. But there it was. That was the first one that we had. And I was absolutely delighted about the freedom. And then that was replaced by a pulse generator in the Nagra itself, so there are no bits and pieces hanging off it. One's likely to stay together. And that system has remained since 1964, I guess, when Kudelski brought out the Nagra. They were expensive. The first tuning fork, I remember, cost over $1,900 and, to us, that was a lot of money, at that stage in the development as far as the company was concerned. But if it made something possible that wasn't possible before, then we'd go for it.

QUESTION: How many people were involved with the Alan King Associates at that time?

LEITERMAN: Originally, we were seven. And we were seven, I guess, up until about 1966 or 1967 and then we started bringing in more associates and then later we expanded to an office in New York and one in Canada, both of which closed in 1968-69.

QUESTION: Who were the seven?
LEITERMAN: Allan King, myself, Chris Wangler, Peter Moseley, Bill Brayne—I guess it was five we started with. I'm trying to think of who came later. And then there was Mike Dodds, who was English. There were four of us Canadians: Bill, myself, Allan, and Christian were Canadian. And I don't know how we all found ourselves in London at the same time, but it was one of those meetings. It seemed to be right.

QUESTION: Was there a division of responsibilities or interests?
LEITERMAN: Well, I think like any group at that time, we thought of ourselves as basically filmmakers, but we all knew each other's craft pretty well. Or we knew what the craft was all about. I knew how to sync, how to transfer sound from quarter inch to 16. And when you're on the road, everyone pitched in, carrying things, and it was a group of filmmakers. Although I may do the camera and Christian may do the sound and Allan was the producer-director, that was it. It was a nice feeling that everyone was involved in one way or another. When we'd get back from a job, we'd all pitch in together and sync rushes or do that sort of thing. It wasn't just, "All right, my job's finished, because I'm a cameraman, then I quit." You know, "I'll wait until the next job comes." But you'd go back down to the office and spend the evenings transferring sound or syncing up rushes or screening material. I think it was the same sort of situation with Leacock and Pennebaker.

QUESTION: Was Drew Associates comparable as far as their organization and their aims?
LEITERMAN: Oh, I would think so, yeah. I went down to their offices one time and introduced myself and was shown around. We had heard of each other through one thing or another. And it was a nice feeling. They had, you know, it was the same office I'd left in London, or much the same. The same kind of feeling; young people involved in something that was really, really exciting at the time. So I do, you know, I feel quite strongly that there was this thing going on.

Now I didn't know what was going on in France or anywhere else. Although they had the *cinéma vérité* and all, I don't know who was involved. Rouch I never met. I didn't have much association with what was going on in France. Not through any design, but just because it never happened, I guess. Strangely enough, I think that the Americans had more connection with the French. And I'm not sure why that is. Maybe our films weren't getting the same distribution and the same international acclaim as some of theirs and, consequently, we kind of took a back seat to it.

QUESTION: Did you feel as if you were part of some other context? Or were you a group of independent people?

LEITERMAN: Mavericks. In a way, when I say that all of a sudden, there were four Canadians involved in the same thing, who came together for a common end, I think that indicates something in its own self. Well, what the hell were we doing there, anyway? You know, Allan had gone there to make films and it felt exciting there. I had gone to Europe for a completely different reason. Chris Wangler, the sound man, had equally kind of bummed around and wasn't sure. He'd gone to film school for half a year and got into theater. I asked him if he wanted to be a soundman and he said, "What's that mean?" And I said, "I don't know, but come down and we'll give you a lesson and we'll go out and shoot some stuff tomorrow." Because I was still picking up the odd sound job and I had met him and he became a very good friend, so why not get involved and, you know, he's been involved ever since.

It was that sort of feeling. And I think we all look back at those days as something special; that we were a group of people that some fate had brought us together and it worked extremely well, as long as it worked. When it stopped working, as far as the company was concerned, there was not a great deal of animosity anywhere and it was time for that group to split and try other things. I went off and started features and they continued doing what they were doing. And we still worked together. I had Christian come over on numerous occasions and do sound on something I was doing. And I've been back on numerous occasions doing projects of theirs. I think that kind of excitement is gone and there hasn't been anything else to take its place. Or maybe we just got older. And things aren't exciting anymore.

I don't know what else I can say about that period. The sixties were an exciting time for a lot of people. Pennebaker came to Canada to shoot a rock-and-roll revival called *Sweet Toronto* [1971]. And immediately when he got there, he came to Allan King Associates and said, "Listen, I want five of your best cameramen." I happened to be there, and he said, "Well, listen, why don't you come and do some shooting?" And it was just good give-and-take. There was no feeling that we were enemies. We were all in it commonly for something. We made good films; they made good films. He made bad films; we made some bad ones.

QUESTION: So there was plenty of room for people?

LEITERMAN: Yes. It was, "What new innovation have you found?" And there was no secrecy or hiding of things. No, "We've got this, and they haven't got it yet." I don't think they ever thought: "Oh, watch out for this; we don't want anybody to know what we've developed."

QUESTION: And where would you place Wiseman within that context?

LEITERMAN: I don't know. I have no idea because he didn't develop anything in those terms. I'm sure I asked him when we were down in Philadelphia, "What's your background?" He said he was a lawyer. "What are you doing making films?" "Liked it." He thought it was something to be done that he wanted to do. I think Fred himself was not a developer, but he made terrific use of what was developed. When he found out what was available to us, "This is going to be terrific; this is really going to be super." The easier it was for him to do his work, the happier he'd be, of course.

QUESTION: So, in a sense, he was a second generation, an inheritor of all those technical innovations?
LEITERMAN: I would say, "Yeah."

QUESTION: And he worked with some of the best people who'd been involved—
LEITERMAN: He used some very good people. Absolutely, yeah.

QUESTION: I'm trying to think of a way of asking this without being unfair or judgmental about Fred, but, in comparison to those early AKA [Allan King Associates] days, his method is different. He keeps his privacy during the editing process. He hasn't drawn a group of people around him. He doesn't train a lot of young people. It sounds like a somewhat different working style.
LEITERMAN: Yeah, yeah, for sure. I was surprised when I went to Boston after *High School* and I expected to find an organization, again like AKA in London or Pennebaker's in New York, except there it was: it was a cutting room and Fred was there. And that was, you know, pretty much it. He maybe had a secretary.

QUESTION: In your work, you have treated an enormous range of subjects.
LEITERMAN: Yes. The most interest, I think, was in ordinary people doing ordinary things. That's why I think all of Wiseman's films are important because they are not taking a special thing, such as Pennebaker, who chose subjects for his films very, very well. They were going to be active people or else they were celebrity people or people who had a name or people who did things or, or a situation where action was inherent anyway. And I think that's fine. I have nothing against it. They're sure-fire. You hedge your bets pretty nicely. Whereas Wiseman took things that we all take for granted. They're there; the institutions are there. How they're run or whether they're run well or badly we seldom take into consideration. But they are institutions. And, bingo, we've accepted them. And when somebody starts taking a look at these, I think that's extremely important and when I hear he gets good distribution on a lot of the subjects, I think that's great. And the fact that he does them well, I think that's extremely important, too. And I think people have to know these things. A lot of times, we're under the misapprehension of what goes on in our society—those everyday things that we take for granted. It was obviously in his mind.

Notes

[1] Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night* (New York: New American Library, 1968), 155.
[2] In addition to Pennebaker and Leacock, Albert Maysles and Terence Macartney-Filgate were also cameramen on the film *Primary* (1960), produced by Robert Drew.

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William Brayne

October 11, 1986
London, England

William Brayne worked his way from teenage errand boy through various technical apprenticeships at the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) while the network was rapidly expanding in the 1950s. In 1961 he joined Richard Leiterman, Allan King, and several others in forming Allan King Associates (AKA) in Britain. Brayne won his first international acclaim as cinematographer for the direct cinema classic *Warrendale* (1967), an AKA production about a home in Toronto for disturbed children. While associated with AKA, Brayne also worked freelance for BBC, PBS, and CBC. He photographed ten documentaries in Wiseman's institutional series, from *Law and Order* (1969) through *Sinai Field Mission* (1978).

A Canadian citizen resident in the United Kingdom after 1963, Brayne began directing dramas for British television in 1972, most notably the series *Special Branch* (Thames, 1969-1974) and *The Professionals* (LWT, 1977-1983). Known for his no-nonsense attitude and ability to bring projects in on time, Brayne was hired to direct popular British programs throughout the 1980s. In the early 1990s, Brayne shot action-oriented dramas in Germany; then his career returned to its beginnings, when he accepted Allan King's offer of directing television assignments in Canada. Brayne spent his final years in his native Vancouver. He died of cancer in April 2014.

We interviewed Brayne in London on October 11, 1986, during a weekend break from his duties as director of a television series on location in Manchester.

QUESTION: Fred Wiseman has made no secret of the fact that he doesn't do his own camerawork, but he hasn't had a whole lot to say about his cameramen.

BRAYNE: No, no, not to my knowledge, anyway. No, that's true.

QUESTION: Many people think that your work is at the core of Wiseman's work: that it's his best period and that camerawork had a lot to do with that.

BRAYNE: Well, my favorite is *Hospital* [1970]. I think that's the most successful. Out of all the films, I think that it was the best. I mean, that's a subjective view at least.

QUESTION: You've seen all the films, have you?

BRAYNE: I've seen them all, but I haven't seen some of them since they've been made. Channel 4 had a limited season a couple of months ago, that's one of the independent networks here. They ran four of the films a couple of months ago. They went out at about 11 at night or something, if my memory serves me correctly. It wasn't before 11 at night. They showed *Hospital, Essene* [1972], *Basic Training* [1971], and *Law and Order* [1969]. It was their first U.K. exposure, other than the London Film Festival.

Well, you must remember, I've been out of it for a long time, and I wasn't really involved in anything other than during the actual shooting. I mean, that was my involvement—purely and simply during the shooting period. But you probably know that anyway.

QUESTION: Can you tell us how you got recruited and especially how you were briefed when you started out?

BRAYNE: Well, that's a one-sentence answer. Fred saw a film that I'd worked on as a cameraman, made by a producer-director in Canada, called *Warrendale* [1967]. In the world of documentaries at that time, *Warrendale* was relatively successful. In fact, it was more than relatively successful. And I was the cameraman on that film. And I believe that the reason that I started to work with Wiseman was through the work that he saw on the screen from *Warrendale.*

QUESTION: And so he just called you up one day and said, "I'm doing a film called *Law and Order*"?

BRAYNE: As simple as that.

QUESTION: Do you recall whether he said, "Shoot it like *Warrendale*," or "Shoot it this different way?"

BRAYNE: No. I think you have to go back to the '60s, to Kansas City, where *Law and Order* was shot, '67, something like that. [The film was shot in the fall of 1968.] There was a style during the '60s and *Warrendale* was part of that style; it was a classic example. It was considered probably one of the best examples. There were a couple of other examples at that

time; Pennebaker's and that sort of thing, and Fred wanted to make that kind of movie. I was experienced at making that kind of movie. Wiseman had worked with Leiterman before on *High School* [1968] so, therefore, he knew the school that Leiterman and I had come from and I was told it was a film on the Kansas City Police Department, in which we would try to capture the experience of the Admiral Street Precinct. And from that point, we started filming.

QUESTION: So you just arrived and walked in and—
BRAYNE: Started to film.

QUESTION: Did he say things to you, like, "I want lots of close-ups" or "Do lots of wide-angle work" or "Don't turn the camera off until the reel is over" or "Long takes"?
BRAYNE: Well, I understood the type of film he wanted to produce. It was a natural response to the situation one is confronted with. If you're walking into a police precinct, or within a squad car, or in a hospital emergency room, or out with the squaddies in basic training—since nothing is set up, you have to, I think, basically become part of that environment. But you might not shoot very much for the first few days or the first week. It's very much a sociological and psychological adaptation to the environment you are within. And from that point, I think the crew and the cameraman start to experience the same sort of response that the staff and patients are experiencing within their world, because I, hopefully, have become part of that world. That's basically the essence of the exercise—to adapt to the environment.

And, genuinely, there's not that much to say. Like Wiseman says, I basically believe what he says: "It's up to the audience to see if you've been successful or not successful." I mean, it's the ultimate goal, I think, of any filmmaker. The primary responsibility and the primary goal is to fit into the environment. I mean, let's face it, it's the same with a reporter, novelist, social worker, anything. You have to fit into the environment before you're going to get an accurate response.

QUESTION: There are two very different ways that filmmakers have tried to handle that: one of them is to chat up the people, to talk to them a lot and to become invisible by constantly interacting. The others try to become invisible by just being absolutely silent, by being a walking camera. With Fred doing sound and you doing camera, there's a question of who is leading as you go along. How would that have occurred, or did it evolve as you went along?
BRAYNE: Well, Fred and I struck it off right from the beginning, I think, and, therefore, we understood between us, just through gestures, looks, and basically understanding of what we wanted to accomplish on the screen. It really was a matter of letting the subject lead the camera. There was no manipulation *whatsoever* at any time between the subject and the camera. So, it was a matter of following the action, whatever that might be. And sometimes you got it; and sometimes you didn't. That is the nature of *cinéma vérité* filmmaking, if you like, actuality filmmaking.

QUESTION: When you were filming, did you keep an eye on Fred as he was doing sound?
BRAYNE: We kept an eye on each other.

QUESTION: Was there a set of signals?
BRAYNE: Very simple signals: "Mic down" or "I'm going around that way." There's a basic grammar in film and even this type of filmmaking—*cinéma vérité*, hand-held camera, available lights—you have to adhere to a certain degree to that elementary grammar or you attempt to follow an elementary grammar and it's not that different from just drama shooting. You know you have to establish a scene. You know you have to find out what the scene is about and come to some sort of resolution. It's quite, quite simple. I mean, if you leave out those parts, the chances are you don't have a successful scene.

Of course, it's a terrible problem. It's an absolutely horrendous problem, because even though you're using fast film and available lights and everything, when a principal form of action takes place—when I say action, I don't mean action for action's sake. Action is anything that develops a plot—you have to anticipate what's going to happen. It's anticipation.

QUESTION: And not even knowing who the principal players are going to be?
BRAYNE: You don't necessarily know that until you've been involved with your subjects for some weeks. You have to know them. You have to fit into the environment.

QUESTION: Did you look at rushes as you were going along?
BRAYNE: We looked at rushes under most cases, yes.

QUESTION: Were you ever involved in the editing of the films?
BRAYNE: Never been involved with the edits.

QUESTION: Did looking at the rushes involve quite a lot of conversation about certain emerging themes and that sort of thing, as you recall?
BRAYNE: I think that would be wrong to say, because the films were never complete until the last foot was shot and then Fred took over, totally on his own, during the editing process, and he's very meticulous in what—by looking at the rushes and putting together various versions, I think, but, again, I really have not been involved in any way with what happens to the material after we finish shooting.

QUESTION: So there wasn't much of a sense, then, during the shooting, say three weeks in, of "I think I know what this film is about," and starting to go after such and such a kind of thing?
BRAYNE: I wouldn't say there was any specific thing one went after. You would find certain directions which you thought were telling a more accurate story than you had thought last week, but it was very much an evolutionary process within a single subject.

QUESTION: And then you would see the films once completed in some sort of public environment?

BRAYNE: Yes. I usually saw them at a public screening. I usually saw them at the London Film Festival if I was in town. You see, I was working—I always worked on a wide variety of films and this was only one type of film I worked on, so this took up a couple of months during a year.

You have to adapt. I was shooting feature films at this time. And documentaries, everything from *60 Minutes* [CBS] to BBC, so I was going through a period of styles of film, but the situation in Wiseman films required a specific style, because of the nature of the subject and how you attempted to tell the story, so you have to adapt your style to the subject matter.

QUESTION: In *Primate* [1974] one of the things that comes out in the editing of the film is that there are more shots in that film than many of the others. There are a lot of brief shots that lend themselves to the way the story's being told. There are close-ups of the objects of dissection, close-ups of scientific apparatus, and that sort of thing. It helps to give the film its tone. Seeing that film, one thinks, "Bill Brayne knew he wanted to have all those shots. Wiseman told him he wanted to have all those shots of the needles and dials and the gauges and the locks and all those things." Was that the case? Did you say, at some point, "We're going to need a lot of that kind of material"?

BRAYNE: Fred always wanted an awful lot of material. He always wanted an awful lot of material on every subject, because again, you don't know the end result of the film until you've completed your inquiry, if you like, completed your research. And it's a research process. It's been said that *cinéma vérité* camera work, directing, whatever, is the equivalent of a reporter with his note pad. Our note pad is the celluloid, and you write your story, the reporter writes his story after gathering his material. The *cinéma vérité* director assembles his story from the celluloid. Same process: nothing's really changed.

QUESTION: So, you try not to tie the editor's hands, in effect, from what you have left at the end of the shooting?

BRAYNE: Well, you have to be able to put the acquired material together to tell the story you think depicts the institution in an accurate and honest way. There was no prior editorial policy. There's naturally an emerging one, because you start to get what you think is an honest reflection of that institution and the principal goal of that institution and the principal goal within *Primate* was doing research and because of that type of research which they were doing, it required medical treatment of various primates.

QUESTION: The reporter's analogy is helpful, but reporters do have to select and there's a point at which you can't get everything—

BRAYNE: Of course, that's the case. The selection process is very often dictated by purely technical reasons. I can't shoot in the dark, so there's one element of the story.

QUESTION: How do you choose, in a complex institution, from among activities going on simultaneously, assuming they are of equal interest, but would give different pictures of the institution, depending on what you decide to shoot?

BRAYNE: After a period of time, you will find the focus that tells you what you consider to be an honest and accurate version of that institution.

QUESTION: May we take an example? There's a long shot in *Basic Training* that appears fairly early in the film, as it's finally edited—the general's orientation scene. We're in a big hall. There's a band over on your left and the troops are all in front. As your shot starts, your camera is on the band leader: he's got his baton poised and he starts the band. You step a little to the right and catch the general and his crew coming up the aisle. They pass you by on your right and you pan with them as they go up on the stage. The music is still playing. You pan back again and catch the conductor and then look at the band again. It's a very interesting shot, appearing uncut in the film. Why would a cameraman—what's the professional urgency that says, "Instead of turning the camera off now, and instead of staying on the stage, I'll go back and pick up that other scene again, where I've just been"?

BRAYNE: It's basic film grammar, if you like. If it was scripted, you could do one thing: you could incorporate dialogue and you can manipulate in drama. You can manipulate actors, script, and everything to get the natural transitions and progressions of time. In documentaries, it's a much more difficult process and that shot is a classic case, I think, in which you're trying to tell a story. You're setting a scene. The band plays "Ruffles and Flourishes" or whatever it's called and the general walks in, so, therefore, you've seen the troops; you've seen the element the troops are being presented with. The general is, therefore, solidly identified as the commanding officer. And I don't know what is happening next. I've got no idea what's happening next as such, but I have a very good idea that "Ruffles and Flourishes" lasts about x number of seconds, so I can tell by looking out of my left eye or listening to the music, that that should stop at that time. So, when the music stops, I've got a natural transition flimicly to take me into stage two. That shot in itself has told basically an elementary story and it's also given a transition.

QUESTION: So, it's a narrative technique.

BRAYNE: It's narrative. And that's all it is. One tries to incorporate that in any documentary film or any feature film or series or serial. It's basically the same thing, and that's *all* it is as far as I'm concerned, but I think it's a case in point which is basically successful and it depends on the number of those kind of successes that you can acquire in the course of filmmaking that gives you, I think, a better story.

QUESTION: Is it typical that once you start a shot, you would keep shooting, keep following the action, rather than taking shot, shot, shot? That you are thinking how an editor would cut up the material? Would it be typical that you're editing in the camera that way?

BRAYNE: I'm very conscious of editing in the camera. I'm very conscious of editing in the camera, or at least how I would edit in the camera. And once I felt that part of the story had been accomplished, I will try to acquire the next stage in the development of that story.

QUESTION: Do you think being trained as an editor gives you an unusual sensitivity to the editing process that a lot of camera operators might not have?

BRAYNE: Oh, I think being an editor is invaluable. Yes, it all depends on your training. I mean to me editing was an invaluable instruction. I started in this business in the cutting room, as an assistant film editor and then became an editor and then a cameraman and now a director.

QUESTION: Did you have a lot of editing discussions with Wiseman, in the sense of talking about styles of editing and patterns of editing? Are these things that people discuss?

BRAYNE: I think it very much depends on the individual. Fred and I, and I think it's apparent because we made ten or eleven films [10], had a rapport and when people have rapport, they don't discuss specific things along those lines particularly. He might say, "I think we should do x," and I'd say, "Why don't we do y?" But basically, we were in agreement and my responsibility ended when we finished shooting.

QUESTION: Did the completed films come out pretty much as you had expected?

BRAYNE: The best completed film is the film you've shot the day you finished. That's the terrific film. Everybody's terrific film is that film.

QUESTION: What sort of equipment and film stock did you use?

BRAYNE: At that time, I thought the best film was Double-X, Double-X Kodak. I used it all the time—interior, exterior, used it for everything, sometimes pushing it. I had an ASA of 200, that was what Kodak recommended, so I would shoot it under ideal conditions at 200 ASA and would be quite happy to push it. Nearly everything inside was shot at 400 and then shot as high as 1200 under dodgy conditions. The question of color was often discussed. But I wasn't making a scientifically technical cinematic film. I knew that. We were recording experiences and, therefore, in my mind and Fred's mind, or Fred's mind and my mind, the question of whether we shot it in color or black and white never came into it. I liked shooting those in black and white, because I thought we would have a much better film doing them in black and white, because color has more limitations, because of the speed and the color balance. Color film, if it's not shot in the correct balance, it all goes blue or green. Fluorescent tubes are absolute pigs that flicker. One minute it will all be green; the next minute pink; the next minute blue. You have to take a lot more care to get color film correct. It's better today than it was then, but nevertheless—. And we weren't making films that the color balance was necessary. It's the subjects—that was the primary goal. Fred wanted it black and white. I totally concurred with that decision. It would have been a terrible mistake to shoot in color, and there was always pressure to shoot in color.

QUESTION: From television?
BRAYNE: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: Same camera during that whole period?
BRAYNE: Used an Éclair, NPR Éclair, 12-120 zoom lens. At that time, it was the best. It's no longer the best; there are better cameras today. The Acton superseded the Éclair and it's a much better camera. There are better zoom lenses, the Zeiss. I have used Angénieux. And the Zeiss 10-100 is a vastly superior lens, but that wasn't around in those days.

QUESTION: And you had crystal-sync, so you weren't wired together for any of those?
BRAYNE: No, that's right. They were all done on crystal-sync.

QUESTION: How did you keep the mic out of the frame? Did you have a set of warnings about that? Or was Fred just always very aware of where you were on the zoom?
BRAYNE: It was done with signals. I signaling him.

QUESTION: Did you ever use a second camera operator on any of the films that you shot?
BRAYNE: No, no.

QUESTION: So, the person's who's listed as camera assistant is just helping change magazines, running errands?
BRAYNE: That's correct.

QUESTION: Did you shoot any that were unreleased? Once you got going, they all went through?
BRAYNE: They all went through.

QUESTION: Were you ever involved in negotiations for funding, or coming up with some of the ideas for subjects for the films?
BRAYNE: No, I had no involvement in the subject matter at all.

QUESTION: So, he would call you up and say, "How about a juvenile court in Tennessee" and—
BRAYNE: Yeah, and I'd say, "Well, I'm available in three months, Fred, but I can't do it for three months, or four months" and we'd try to slot in a mutually agreeable time, and I'd give him a guarantee of a number of weeks and—there was always a minimum—and off we went.

QUESTION: What would the minimum be, typically?
BRAYNE: Typically six weeks.

QUESTION: Were they all arranged one at a time? You didn't both say, "Let's work together for the next five years"?

BRAYNE: No, it was done on a one-off basis. I wouldn't have tied myself down.

QUESTION: But you found it interesting enough to keep going back and—

BRAYNE: Oh, I enjoyed doing them. I mean, it was an interesting experience; I was always interested in the subjects. I'm interested in sociology, psychology, whatever, and I think that's the basis of understanding our environment. So, therefore, yes, it was a rich and rewarding experience. How many people have the opportunity to become involved in the various subjects that have been filmed by Wiseman?

QUESTION: Why did you stop?

BRAYNE: Well, my career was going in other directions, and I could no longer—spend the time.

QUESTION: *Sinai Field Mission* [1978] was the last?

BRAYNE: That was the last film. I thought that I had done enough. My career was going in other directions long before *Sinai* and I felt that I should stop. I found it very interesting, but I thought a time had come for a stop doing *cinéma vérité* and I couldn't commit myself in the necessary time I had. I might miss an interesting project, which I hoped to pursue, if I locked myself down, and it wasn't fair on Fred.

QUESTION: Brian Winston has written that by the early 1980s direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* had come to a standstill, having either deviated from or exhausted the original form.

BRAYNE: I would concur with that, yeah. But I'm still a viewer of documentary. You can't beat reality.

QUESTION: With *Hospital* it's very clear that you kept watching things. You weren't shy; you didn't turn the camera off and not watch things that were difficult. You watched that young man with the drug overdose through the whole strange experience. Early in the film, there's a man who's in terrible trouble and there's a moment when a priest comes up, and you just keep rolling. It's a moment, in the edited film, of real dread that things are getting very serious and there's a very strong sense of not turning away.

BRAYNE: Well, I really firmly believe that, if you're successful, you become part of that institution and the closer you can become part of that institution, the more honest and accurate the film will be. So, there's nobody else in that room turning away at a moment of dread, as you say. I didn't see it as a moment of dread at all. I'm not an M.D.; I'm not a nurse; but I became part of that institution. Wiseman was part of that institution for that period of time. So what happens in front of the lens is just a reflection of the reality we see around us. That's our goal. No pre-conceived ideas. And it's how successful we are as filmmakers to record exactly

what the staff at that hospital or that institution is experiencing. And if we can get close to that, I think we're—not doing too bad. And the technical aspects of how to do it, in terms of lighting and color film and all that sort of thing is not important.

QUESTION: How do you avoid, as they say, going native? There must be a danger on the other side of becoming, in a sense, overly sympathetic with the staff of an institution and seeing what they see, blinking when they blink.

BRAYNE: Well, I hope I'm enough of a realist to realize that I am still an outsider and always will be. They've gone through 200 drug overdoses in the last six months. I've experienced maybe 20, but it is amazing, if you're confronted with a situation how readily you as an individual, any individual, or most individuals, adapt to the reality they're experiencing.

QUESTION: As a cameraman, you must get very sensitive to people who are acting for you, once you point the camera at them.

BRAYNE: I have a thing in the camera called a "bullshit meter."

QUESTION: You just turn off? Turn away? There's a moment in *Law and Order*, and it seems to happen very rarely in Wiseman's films, when some police break down the door of a room, a prostitute's room, and they go in, and one of the policemen is choking this woman. And I know there's a danger of over-reading this, but it looks as if the policeman turns her around as he's talking to her, so that she'll be facing the camera. It's a hard moment to watch, partly because there's a sense that if the camera went off, some of that might stop.

BRAYNE: There's always a danger. I think that what you're questioning is a matter of interpretation, but the basic rule of thumb was always to turn off and, if in doubt, it would be sorted out in the editing process. There are many instances, usually when you were first with a person, or sometimes people would over-respond to the camera, before you became part of the scene.

QUESTION: So you saw a change sometimes in the behaviors, that they became less eager to perform, the longer you were there? There were real changes?

BRAYNE: Oh, sure, oh, sure. I mean that's part of the whole thing of "hanging in there" as Fred used to like to say, and probably still says. "You've got to hang in there." And he's absolutely correct: You've got to hang in. For instance, if you present a camera to a bunch of squaddies, an infantry company in basic training, or something like that, for the first day, it's "Gee, whiz." But if I sit in the corner there for a week, it's no longer "Gee, whiz," is it?

QUESTION: On the question of consent.

BRAYNE: I'm not going to—I can't answer that. I can't answer that.

QUESTION: So Fred handles all the consent situations while filming?

BRAYNE: Yeah.

QUESTION: And you would never have anything to do with it?
BRAYNE: Nothing to do with it.

QUESTION: So you pretty much assumed, if it was there, it was okay to film it—
BRAYNE: No, no, no. I've given you the accurate answer. If there was ever an indication that somebody didn't want filming, it wasn't filmed. But, basically, the consent question was totally the prerogative of Fred.

QUESTION: May we return to the issue of trying to retain your narrative sense as you are shooting, to anticipate how something would lend itself to telling a story. One wants to be clear and to tell the story, but since it's unscripted, you don't want to give a sense that you know what's going to happen.
BRAYNE: In *Basic Training* the general's address is a set performance. It's well known in advance that at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning, the general is going to address the new intakes. They've been doing it for twenty-five years probably in a not too different way, so, in that case, I could ask, or we can ask, "What's going to happen? He comes down here; goes up on the dais; gives an address." But only on very formal occasions like that. After that, I've got no idea what's going to happen, but you've got to be able to follow the action, whatever that action may be.

QUESTION: Without always being behind people. That's the curious paradox from the camera point of view. How do you get in front of people without seeming omniscient? You can't always just be walking down the corridor behind people.
BRAYNE: Hopefully not, but it's a question of attempting to understand human behavior and I think that's one of the necessities of being a documentary cameraman. Nothing is rehearsed. You have no idea what is going to happen, but if you have an understanding of human behavior in a psychological, sociological manner, you are very often able to anticipate what's going to happen next.

QUESTION: But you don't want to give a sense that you've anticipated too much, right?
BRAYNE: No, no, no, no. I don't mean it, I don't mean it in that way at all. That would be absolutely wrong. But I—if you look through a camera for any length of time, there are all kinds of subjects. People are more likely to go from A to B if situation C is part of the scenario. You ask a question, for example, to a patient. You should be able to tell, from the nature of your question, you have some kind of an indication of the response of the patient. I mean, that's why you asked the question. Now, if I understand the question, I am going to feel exactly the same way as you, that I expect that kind of response, because of what has happened before. So if I have a sense that this is the crux of that particular situation, I'm

going to get the camera off you right away, because I already—halfway through your question, or a quarter a way through your question—I'm anticipating where your brain is going, and, therefore, if I'm going to understand the significance of this encounter, I'd better bloody well get the camera around the other side, because that's where you're going, too, so to understand you, I've got to know where you're going. And it's no use me being on your face and not being able to see the central ingredient within our situation. I've got to get around.

QUESTION: And do it in a way that's true both to the psychology and to the narrative needs, so that your timing is right—

BRAYNE: I'm not sure that there's any difference in there. I mean I cannot destroy the relationship between the two people. I can't put my heavy boots on. Then we're all lost. That is a pre-requisite to this type of filming, if you're going to do it honestly to all concerned.

QUESTION: There's a long shot in *Welfare* [1975] where an older man, who says that he's a marine, he's been injured, and he's talking to a security guard in uniform who's Black. And this former marine gives a long speech, abusive to Blacks, to the security guard. One of the things that is very interesting about the shot is that you reveal, in a two-shot in the beginning of it, that he is talking to a Black person, but then you go to a one-shot of the speaker and for some time don't include the guard's reaction, so there's an added tension in the shot, because we're not watching the reaction of the listener. We know he's there, but—

BRAYNE: Yeah, yeah. I can't remember that shot, but that's because we goofed.

QUESTION: You think that would be a goof to do it that way? It works on the screen.

BRAYNE: Yeah, it might work, but I probably considered that a goof at the time.

QUESTION: Because you want to keep the reaction there?

BRAYNE: I think it's very elementary. It's still the same principle, and that's the terrible dilemma when shooting, when shooting documentaries. You have to get both sides in any argument and that's very difficult. Other than sticking a camera way in the back and just shooting a wide shot, which the sound man won't be able to record. And you won't actually be able to see the central dilemma of the situation. On film and television, basically the one essential ingredient is close-ups of the human face.

QUESTION: Which in single-camera documentary on a conversation is extraordinarily difficult to do.

BRAYNE: It's extraordinarily difficult and you have to make a lot of sacrifices.

QUESTION: Because the cutting is done in such a way to make it appear seamless?

BRAYNE: Well, Fred doesn't cut very much. He cuts very little. I believe he doesn't cut very much to try to continue to be honest.

Sometimes, speaking filmicly only, sometimes you're lucky. It depends on the room. No one is going to dictate where anyone sits, because that's kind of against the ground rules. I can set up shots in which you'll get the best of both worlds, but that would be making the environment more suitable to the filmmakers than to the actual participants, so that's part of the ground rules. We do not impinge in any way, shape, or form on the natural occurrences within any situation, so sometimes their natural seating positions are more conducive to filming than others.

QUESTION: And when people are directly face-to-face, that's a difficult situation.
BRAYNE: It's one of the more difficult situations. Depends a bit on the size of the room, too.

QUESTION: In *Juvenile Court* you had some difficult scenes where in one room four or five different people would be discussing a case, in the courtroom or the judge's chambers. When you're in a situation like that, do you just assume you're invisible and move between people?
BRAYNE: No, no. I think that that would be counterproductive. Yes, you have to move and it's a game, trying to make yourself a part of that particular environment. I wouldn't have thought I moved very much, as such, because that would be disruptive and, therefore, counterproductive. But it's a question of instant decisions. You see something. I mean, you're talking about within seconds, of saying, "Well, the best angle to cover this, which I think will be a developing scene." People come together. In a game like this, it's a question of saying you think they are more likely to stay basically in that kind of configuration. And the best way I can get both sides of that configuration would be from point A, so I might actually take an extra five or ten seconds to get to point A. That would be that instant decision's optimum position and then, hopefully, within that position A, I can cover X, Y, and Zed.

QUESTION: So you develop a kind of intuition for how people move—
BRAYNE: Yeah, this is part of photography. It's part of your instinctive eye, that that's the best angle and, as directors or cameramen, you seize upon that angle very quickly and make the assessment that that should tell the essence of this scene and that's not that different from drama or documentary. You can do it much better in drama, naturally.

QUESTION: Because you can set it up?
BRAYNE: Yeah. You walk into the judge's chambers. I mean you've got to be basically three-quarter angle on the judge. And you know where the judge is.

QUESTION: And the rest of it, you get as you can?

BRAYNE: Yeah. And if the principal participant sits on the left, you better be on the right. It's no use being on the left, because you're only going to get the back of heads, so your options go pretty quick. So if he moves from the left to the right, and sits in a high-backed chair, I've got to move.

QUESTION: You may remember the scene in *Essene* [1972] in which Brother Wilfred and the abbot are talking about first names and Wilfred is complaining that he doesn't like to be called by his first name—
BRAYNE: Yeah, yeah. I remember he's got the fly swatter.

QUESTION: Mostly the scene stays on Wilfred, and most of it in a medium close-up as I recall, although you start with an establishing shot. Back in a two-shot, you have come in on him and you zoom out just in time. When he dips for the fly swatter, you're in close-up and you zoom out, so he doesn't completely lose the frame—Your timing is wonderful.
BRAYNE: Most of the time I shoot with my left eye open.

QUESTION: So you can see what's going to be happening?
BRAYNE: Part of the anticipation. If you don't constantly keep your left eye open, you've half lost the story.

QUESTION: How do you keep your left eye open and not sometimes make eye contact with the subject? Does that bother them, then, if they see you looking at them through one eye?
BRAYNE: No, because they basically—well, look at the films.

QUESTION: How much has to be thrown away, that can't be used if that happens?
BRAYNE: If the subject starts to look at the camera, I'm afraid it's not very realistic. One, it's not very realistic in filmic terms and B, it wouldn't be a very realistic situation, so, therefore, you might as well walk away from it.

QUESTION: Does Fred usually not look, too, during filming? Or is he watching the subject?
BRAYNE: He's watching the subject, and he's watching me.

QUESTION: On the one hand, in film terms, it wouldn't be realistic if the people looked at the camera, but in many ways that would be the most realistic thing. For people who are not performers to be curious and bothered by cameras and sound men crawling around within several feet—
BRAYNE: But that's part of your job—to become part of the environment.

QUESTION: Yes, the films all depend on the possibility of that happening and certainly, as you say, your films are proof that it can happen. But some audiences seem to doubt it. People who see these films for the first time and are not familiar with this style of filmmaking ask: "How could this happen? How could it really be the way it presents itself?" A kind of incredulity—

BRAYNE: Yes, well, I know what you're saying, but the reality is very often contrary to that, isn't it?

QUESTION: Would you let your life be filmed?

BRAYNE: No, no, I wouldn't, no.

QUESTION: Did you ever run into a situation when there were a lot of people not co-operative?

BRAYNE: No.

QUESTION: So, across these ten situations, the great majority have been co-operative and have been willing to participate?

BRAYNE: Oh, it's more than that. Yes, it's the great majority.

QUESTION: Fred says that he finds Americans to be especially co-operative and unbothered by cameras.

BRAYNE: I think that's true; I think that's true. I mean, the camera, television, film are parts of one's environment.

QUESTION: It seems that in some of your situations there's a hierarchical chain of command, where someone at the top would say "Yes" and then there's a directive down: "There's going to be a film; you're expected to co-operate."

BRAYNE: I don't think that would be an accurate thing to say.

QUESTION: You don't think that sort of thing happens?

BRAYNE: No. That's not accurate.

QUESTION: So, it's each person for himself? You were never in a situation where people were told by their superiors that they were to co-operate with the filmmaking?

BRAYNE: Never.

QUESTION: And so, for example, in the Kansas City police situation—

BRAYNE: I don't know how we ended up on Kansas City and I don't know how we ended up on Admiral Street, Boulevard, or whatever the precinct house was called. I have no idea how we ended up there. I do know that everyone was very co-operative once we arrived. And if anybody didn't want to be filmed there, as far as I know, they weren't.

QUESTION: So, it wasn't authorized by the department?

BRAYNE: No. I don't think there was anybody that didn't want to be filmed. I was never made aware of it. And it's, I think, right to say that if you're in an institution for six weeks or seven weeks, sure there are secrets you don't find out, but I think you understand the lay of the land quite well. We wouldn't have been able to film those films if we didn't understand the lay of the land.

QUESTION: There's a shot in *Law and Order* of Richard Nixon giving a speech about law and order, about the attorney general. Was that filmed during that period from television locally broadcast, or—

BRAYNE: No, I shot that when we were there.

QUESTION: So he came to Kansas City as part of the campaign? Was this a campaign rally then?

BRAYNE: Campaign rally, yeah. We covered the campaign rally because the Kansas City Police Department was covering the rally. You must understand that in these films you are following your subject. And your subject that night in Kansas City, when President Nixon is making an address at a convention of one form or another, that's probably the biggest news for the KCPD. Where do we go? We go with our subject, which is the KCPD. We had no idea that Nixon was going to talk about law and order, at least that's my memory and I'm sure we didn't, but he spoke about law and order. Now, what would you put in the film?

QUESTION: Good luck, eh?

BRAYNE: Yeah, I'm just one cameraman out of probably fifty below the stage, so he certainly wasn't doing it for Fred Wiseman.

[At this point there is a gap in the recording while the interviewer changes tapes in the recorder.]

BRAYNE: Yes, I'm amazed. Channel 4 had a screening of four of these films that went out around midnight, and I was amazed at bumping into people who had seen them and commented on them and asked if I was the same Bill Brayne. I was amazed that so many people that saw them and seemed to appreciate the films. I looked at them as—that was a long time ago, and all those, all those faces looked so young.

I think they're provocative probably because they're reasonably accurate and how often does one have an opportunity to really see behind the scenes?

QUESTION: Fred often says that it's a complete waste of time to go to film school, that the technical parts come fairly easily, he says, and that you should learn something about life in general.

BRAYNE: Well, it's like everything. You need the tools to do the job, but it's how to communicate with those tools and that's really of the primary importance. Yes, I will agree with Fred, the basic, once you have the basic grammar, then it's life itself.

QUESTION: Do you agree with him that the basic grammar is pretty easy to get?

BRAYNE: I think a lot of it is intuitive and to be able to understand what you are communicating. It's life, yes, that's the principal thing. It's understanding life. But I've still got to know how to get a mid-shot.

QUESTION: Did you go to a film institute?

BRAYNE: No, I started at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in the editing rooms, and went on from there. Just out of school. I was one of the fortunate ones. Because of the development of television, there was a shortage of people. There was that tremendous explosion of television stations, production houses, during the time I started. You know, if you were 17, you became an assistant in the film editing and if you were 25, you became a director; and if you were 35, you became a producer; and if you were 40, you became the Director General. It was a pretty simple process.

Well, there was a tremendous drive at that time and, to go back to Fred, it's to learn about life. Yes, I started to be a film editor at 17, but I left that to, shall we say, further my experiences of life and hopefully acquire the education necessary to understand what life was all about, so that was part of the process, too.

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John Davey
October 14, 1986
London, England

John Davey, born in 1947, studied medicine in Wales before turning to the study of cinematography in Cardiff. In the late 1960s, Davey relocated to London where he trained with the NCB (The National Coal Board) film unit and joined the film union, ACTT. His credits include promos for entertainers (such as Nick Heyward, Elvis Costello, and Wings); commercials (for BMW, Royal Mail, and the *Daily Mirror*); news documentaries for British and United States television networks; documentaries for National Geographic, Discovery, and various NGOs; ethnographic films; and dramas for television and theatrical distribution. Much of Davey's work takes him away from his native Britain; he has filmed in more than one hundred countries. A second-generation associate of Allan King Films, Davey began his collaboration with Frederick Wiseman on *Manoeuvre* (1980) and continued as Wiseman's cinematographer on every Wiseman documentary, through *City Hall* (2020). Scheduling conflicts made it impossible for Davey to serve as cinematographer on Wiseman's *Menus Plaisirs—Les Troisgros* (2023), a documentary about a Michelin three-star restaurant in Ouches, France. In an interview with Shawn Glinis and Arlin Golden of the *Wiseman Podcast* (May 18, 2023), Davey described the situation as "one of the biggest dilemmas" of his life and a "traumatic" decision for both men. Davey suggested that Wiseman use Jim Bishop, who had been Davey's camera assistant on documentaries for fifteen years, a suggestion accepted by Wiseman. Davey assured Glinis and Golden that he and Wiseman had not "fallen out," and were talking about collaborating on another project.

In shooting thirty-three films over four decades with Wiseman, Davey was involved in Wiseman's transition from black and white to color, and then from 16mm to digital filmmaking.

Davey had just returned from shooting a film on Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan when we interviewed him in London on October 14, 1986.

QUESTION: *The Store* [1983] was the first Wiseman documentary you shot in color, wasn't it? Which brings up a whole set of problems when you're shooting on fast stock and moving around a place that one hasn't worked out before. I mean, that's the whole essence of the cameraman's problem. You never know where you're going to be one minute to the next. So that makes black-and-white shooting a lot easier technically?

DAVEY: Yeah, that's right.

QUESTION: How did you deal with color problems in *The Store*, with all the color-balance problems?

DAVEY: There was daylight; there was tungsten; there was fluorescent—different types of fluorescent light—and what I tried to do was to separate the rolls. In other words, I tried not to include—it was virtually impossible—but I tried as little as possible to include several types of lighting on the same roll of film and I shot a couple of tests that I sent to the labs, the main branch, of rushes coming in, and they looked at the material and gave me their comments. I talked to them a lot about the color.

QUESTION: Did you continue to use DuArt?

DAVEY: Yes, DuArt.

QUESTION: So it was the development of the color negative that they made some of the corrections to bring back the—

DAVEY: Mostly printing, I think, in the end. It was the new Eastman color film that had just come out at that time, which is 400 ASA, so that allowed a lot of—in fact, it was quite nicely lit, the store. I'd sort of nip in, you know, and I'd sort of tweak a few lights and—you just try. It's very, very difficult to explain what we do, because so much of it comes instinctively. When you see a shot and you see if somebody's not lit, you maneuver yourself into a position where they're silhouetted against the light area in the background, so you can see what's going on and these things become very instinctive and automatic. It's very difficult, though. It's very, very difficult, because I have a light meter here and I'm filming and at the same time bringing the light meter up and looking and just thinking.

I mean, a lot of it I can judge fairly well just looking through the lens and seeing the brightness of the image and closing the iris down and, as a matter of fact, I had this job that I've just done in Sudan—the first day's filming I knew there was something wrong with the camera, very difficult to pinpoint. And, in fact, in transit, the iris had become damaged, and it wasn't closing down all the way. By looking through the camera you can see whether something is bright sunshine and it was too bright and it was about a stop or two out and, luckily, I noticed, so after that I had to shoot the rest of the film just using neutral density, and that kind of thing.

QUESTION: Did you use your own camera?

DAVEY: Well, I'm a partner of AKA, so I use the same camera always, the Arriflex. Although the first film I did with Fred Wiseman, which was *Manoeuvre* [1980], that was on the Éclair, which was a good camera in those days, but terribly bulky when you're sitting on a tank for four weeks. *Manoeuvre* was my first introduction to working with Wiseman.

QUESTION: Had you seen some of the other Wiseman films?

DAVEY: I'd seen a couple of the other films at the London Film Festival, yes. And Bill Brayne is a friend and colleague of mine. It was through him that I got my introduction to Fred.

QUESTION: How did that come about? Could you tell us how you were recruited and briefed?

DAVEY: He didn't brief me at all. In fact—first of all, the way that I got it, the reason I got it was being recommended by Bill Brayne and also, perhaps, he'd seen some of my films, because I've shot a number of documentaries that have been shown on PBS, as well as having worked on other documentaries for NBC, CBS, ABC. I'd done a lot of anthropological documentaries and that type of thing, so I guess he thought I'd be a good one to try out.

QUESTION: You would describe his work as anthropological?

DAVEY: No, no, I'm just talking about the type of approach. No, no, they're documentaries.

QUESTION: It would be interesting to hear your sense of how your camera work for Fred differs from the kind of shooting you would do for anthropological work.

DAVEY: Well, not a lot, really, because you have to have the same approach in that you're observing and that's the whole idea. You know, it's a little bit like sitting in a doctor's waiting room and you look around. You see people and you look at their eyes and see what they're fiddling with and you listen to the conversation between the receptionist and the patient and it's a bit like that. Ninety-eight percent of his films are handheld, so there's no tripod. You keep the equipment down to a minimum.

Obviously, people are going to be aware of you, sitting there with a camera on your shoulder, but you try and cut down this element as much as possible. It's the same as not having lighting and not jumping up and taking light meter readings in front of their faces at all. I use a spot meter a lot. And not having too much direct eye contact and just sitting around and letting—. It depends on who you're filming, but it's amazing how quickly people become oblivious to your being there, if you've been sitting around for a long time and they know you're there and maybe you chat for awhile and sort of put them at ease, but, you know, instead of jumping up and saying, "Hold it a minute. We want to get a reverse angle."

Nothing is ever, ever set up and that's one of the reasons I like working with Wiseman. I've shot dozens and dozens of documentaries, and I think working on Wiseman's films is the nearest to the truth that one can ever get. Who knows what the truth is anyway? You just go along, and you try as hard as possible to record what's going on. And it's fascinating,

particularly for an Englishman. That's the other thing, I mean, initially I found it quite difficult, not difficult, but my approach was slightly different, having filmed Europeans and Asians, Africans.

QUESTION: In what way?

DAVEY: You have to hold back, and you shoot from afar. But with Americans, with North Americans, it's a lot easier.

QUESTION: To get close?

DAVEY: Yeah, they're less conscious or they become less conscious quicker than other people who are very self-conscious and you can always, always tell when you're filming someone whether they're saying it for the benefit of the camera and they're going to play a role.

QUESTION: You feel you can?

DAVEY: Oh, God, yeah. Every time, every time. It's a strange phenomenon, but you can just detect that element in their behavior.

QUESTION: And you just stop shooting when you feel that, or do you say something later to Fred that you had that feeling? How do you handle that?

DAVEY: No, we hardly say anything at all. If I become aware of people playing up to the camera or reacting in an unnatural way, we just quietly turn off, until it gets right. You might shoot that footage, but, you know, we'll have a discussion afterwards. You say, you were talking earlier about the brief—what brief did he give me? I mean, he didn't really give me a brief. What we did, in fact, was to shoot and then we'd look at the rushes and we'd comment on what we were getting, whether we were getting the type of material he wanted. This was with all the films, really. We do the same things with all the films. We shoot—we start shooting the first day usually, send the rushes off to New York to get developed and get them back and look at them. Luckily, I've got on quite well with him and we've never had any problems from a technical point of view. I guess we're sort of in the same sympathy with each other as far as the way that you can film something. With a lot of tv companies, they want you to stay on the person who's talking all the time. But with Fred, I mean, if he was filming our conversation, it might well be that he'd be watching your reactions, as well as recording my voice, but recording your reactions as to what I'm saying and that's fine with me and that's what I enjoy doing. Most of the takes are ten-minutes long, a roll. And then another one goes on.

QUESTION: Does he let you then make your decisions or does he give you hand signals about when to go in tight or—

DAVEY: No, never. He never gives—

QUESTION: You decide that yourself?

DAVEY: Yes, yes, always. He's aware of what I'm shooting as well as being involved in recording sound, as well as being involved in what people say and what's going on. He's watching me as well and as long as we're in sympathy with each other and it's going well—. If I'm not aware of something that's happening behind me or on the other side of the room, he'll sort of— [Davey rolls his eyes and gestures with his head, as if to say, "Over there"]. It's really eye contact. You say very few words when you're shooting. In fact, practically nothing at all and that's fine with me.

QUESTION: When you're viewing the rushes, do you talk primarily about technical matters?

DAVEY: No—

QUESTION: Or are you also noticing themes that you—

DAVEY: Oh, yes, we notice things that we didn't notice when we were shooting, as well. It's always a great surprise when you watch rushes. I'm obviously very aware of the technical aspects of the shooting as well as the content and a lot of situations that I've filmed have been very, very dark and I've been worried whether they'll come out and I'll tell Fred this and say, "I'm terrified." Every technician wants his films to be perfectly exposed and I say, "It's not going to be any good; it won't be any good" and he'll say, "Let's just give it a go and see what it's like and try," and we'll try and, you can see, from a technical point of view, it's not very good at all, but he'll just say, "That's fantastic. That's great. What's the problem with that?" He gives a great deal of encouragement and is very enthusiastic. He's filled with enthusiasm all the time and he's quite manic about his—manic may be an unkind word, but I don't mean it to be unkind, but—. Of course, he only goes out filming once a year on his films, so he's very enthusiastic naturally, while I might have got back just a week before from Khartoum. He spends a lot of time in the cutting room, and I think a lot of time is spent raising money. A great deal of time is spent raising the money to make the films.

QUESTION: Have you ever had an input in the editing?

DAVEY: No, no.

QUESTION: Does the editing style change your camerawork? *Manoeuvre* is nearer than some of the other films to narrative film because you're following a group of people, and there's a time line going through it, of the people starting out in the States, flying over to Germany, going through war games, and so on, whereas with some of the films the chronology would make no particular difference say in *Model* [1980] or in *The Store.*

DAVEY: That's right; that's right. Well, I guess with *Manoeuvre* Fred wanted to see where they came from and they came from Fort Polk in Louisiana and I guess it was a good way of getting to know the people as well, traveling with them. I mean, they didn't know who we were, so we were very much part of the team and that's the idea, is to become part of the

furniture, if you like, so that they're not aware that you're in the way. There are all those shots of them sleeping. Every time they saw me, I had a camera on my shoulder. When they woke up in the morning, there I was with the camera.

QUESTION: It also means, from a camera point of view, doesn't it, that you have to provide Fred, in his role as editor, with the kinds of materials to keep coming back to particular people, so that the time line isn't destroyed as it goes through, so that you have to keep in mind, you know, "here I need shots of this face or this face or this face" as they come into the story, so that we don't lose that person for 40 minutes during the rest of the film. Is that part of the shooting?

DAVEY: No. I mean, these things happen by chance. You can't work out beforehand whether somebody's going to be a major star in the film. It might well be that their personality shines later on, and they're always involved in things while you're filming, but you don't begin with knowing that. It's just really, just purely observational and nothing, nothing preconceived is worked out at all.

QUESTION: When you shot *Model,* did Wiseman decide at that time that Apples [model Appolonia Van Ravenstein] was going to be in *Seraphita's Diary* [1982]? Would you talk a little about the connection between *Model* and *Seraphita's Diary*?

DAVEY: The connection between *Model* and *Seraphita's Diary* is, as you say, Appolonia Van Ravenstein, who was a person who was one of the models in the film and she was an interesting personality. She'd written a lot herself. She was interested in the arts, and she featured in a lot of the sequences that we filmed, although they weren't all shown in the film. Obviously, Fred had built up a friendship with a number of the people whom he'd been working with at Zoli's, including Zoli[1] himself, who's dead now. He died a couple of years after the film was made. And, as you probably know, Fred has been involved with fiction as well as documentaries. He produced *The Cool World* and I believe he's working in the theater now, isn't he?

QUESTION: Are the films that you worked on released in the order that they were shot?

DAVEY: I think *Racetrack* [shot in 1981; released in 1985] was shown a couple of years after it was shot. Well, in fact *Seraphita's Diary* was his only release that year [1982], certainly at the London Film Festival anyway, I think. Yes, *Racetrack* was two or three years in the making. Well, he edited it and then became involved in other projects.

QUESTION: Watching *Seraphita's Diary,* many of the diary episodes seem spontaneous. Were those scripted or did she just improvise?

DAVEY: Oh, they were very spontaneous.

QUESTION: She improvised a lot of the diary passages?

DAVEY: Yes, a lot of it was. I mean, there was a general theme, a general idea, but, yes, a lot of it was improvised. Quite a bit of it was improvised. There was a script before, but it changed radically as the film progressed.

QUESTION: And she had a lot to do with that?
DAVEY: Oh, yes.

QUESTION: Did she have a lot of input?
DAVEY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, definitely. You should talk to Fred about all of this, really. I really don't want to talk too much about *Seraphita's Diary.* A friend of mine came with me to work on the film, David John, who's a sound recordist and I think it's the first time that Fred's ever used a sound recorder.

QUESTION: So he didn't do his own sound?
DAVEY: No, no, it was impossible. I mean it was very, very hard. We used to work 20-hour stretches sometimes, once we started going, because the make-up took a long time. Sometimes six hours. Very elaborate costumes and make-up. We were shooting in fairly confined areas, confined spaces. It was a hard, hard job.

QUESTION: Can you tell us about the film stocks you used for the black-and-white films?
DAVEY: I used 4-X and Plus-X. I used Plus-X and 4-X, the slow and the fast, the fine grain and the fast film.

QUESTION: *Model* looks very different. It frequently has a still photographic quality. Could you talk a bit about how you achieved that?
DAVEY: I wanted to get as much contrast as possible. New York's a great place to shoot black and white. It's a black-and-white city, isn't it? We had talked about shooting color, but at that time Kodak has only just brought out the fast color film and it was a problem in getting it started, so we decided to shoot in black and white. And it was great fun, very enjoyable, again a crazy schedule.

Model was when we were shooting a commercial that was being shot in the street. We were sort of the documentary crew, the poor relation, which was fine with us, because we just wanted to be in the background and to be ignored. And we shot for half a day and got a lot of very good material, and they just didn't notice us at all. They completely ignored us and then someone recognized Fred and came up to me and said, "Is that Fred Wiseman?" and I said, "Yes, it is" and she sort of scurried off and told the director and the producer and their attitude *completely* changed, completely changed, because he was a well-known filmmaker. It was towards the end of the day anyway and we'd shot most of the material, but it was amazing. I

mean, yeah, if they had hit upon him in the morning, "This is Fred Wiseman, the documentary maker. We want to film you," it would have been completely different.

QUESTION: How did he handle setting up consent at the beginning of the shooting, so as not to tip his hand?

DAVEY: Well, he met Zoli before we started shooting, a couple of months before, and then spent a day just sort of having a look around. He obviously had the idea—it's the same with all the films he shoots. He has an idea, but he doesn't go in and do in-depth research, as I'm sure you know. He just goes in. The research, really, is the shooting of the film. But he had permission to film the models and film on the premises at the agency where they do all the bookings and, where possible, to accompany the models on their assignments and each time, or most times anyway, the models went on an assignment, a "go see" or runway work or whatever, because there was the line of fashion shows going on. The booking agency would just say, "A documentary is being made about the models here. Do you mind—there's a couple of guys—do you mind if they come along? They haven't any lights; they won't be in the way." People say, "Fine, fine with us." And they, it's their own world anyway, so it was no problem.

QUESTION: How did it work with the Andy Warhol situation? Was that different?

DAVEY: No, Andy Warhol just happened to be there.

QUESTION: He didn't recognize Fred?

DAVEY: Well, if he did, I mean he didn't leap up and shake hands with him or anything like that. Again, it was low profile, and we were most of the time in the other room and Andy Warhol was watching what was going on on a monitor in another room and I just slipped in there. One time I was filming Andy Warhol and Andy Warhol was taking pictures of me, but that was really the only contact that we had. And that's the best way.

QUESTION: Have you noticed big differences in an environment like that when people are so used to being photographed, models? You mentioned that Americans in general—

DAVEY: They're lots easier to film, yeah.

QUESTION: With the institute in Alabama, where you shot *Deaf and Blind* [1986][2], did you run into problems with parents?

DAVEY: No, all the parents had been informed. Something I feel very strongly about is not infringing people's rights and privacy, particularly when you're dealing with blind people. We never crept into a room and started filming the blind kids, or the adults, because we filmed at the adult institute as well, without letting them know beforehand that there was a film crew around and that we would be filming during the daytime in a lot of the classrooms and a lot of the activities, and we both felt very strongly about people being aware.

QUESTION: So the parents were contacted, and then the children were also asked?

DAVEY: Oh, yes, oh, yes. All the parents were asked. Oh, yes, everybody was asked. And when you're filming with kids, like any kids, they become curious. The difference here was that with the blind kids I was getting their hands and letting them touch the camera and putting it on their shoulder, and trying, as best I could, to explain exactly how the camera worked and what a zoom lens was and where the film went and we rode around with them a bit and there were some kids who—we went to Talladega Raceway, which was, for me it was this amazing, amazing scene. And the kid sitting next to me was the drummer in the school band and he, I think he had been blind since birth and I was just trying to explain, just trying to describe my feelings, more than actually what was going on and saying, "We don't have anything like this back at home."

There was another situation where there was one kid from Birmingham who'd been at the Institute for a long time. He was about eighteen, nineteen, and he was totally deaf and blind, and I think one of the teachers had, through sign language on his hand, on the palm of his hand, had said there was an Englishman here. There was an Englishman as a cameraman, and he wanted to ask me questions: What was the name of the ship that I came over on and—he was a nice kid. It was an education to work with people like that. He wanted to know what type of car we had. I guess they get terribly institutionalized, and they get bused around and—what type of car did we have? We had a Chevrolet. And of the campus, there were lots of roads around the campus and I let him sit in the driver's seat and started the car up and he felt the dashboard and felt the vibrations and we just slowly drove off and I was really driving, but he felt, felt the wheel. He was a nice kid. It was an education to work with people like that. It was nice to get on with the kids as well as that. I enjoy filming children anyway. I've got a 13-year-old son of my own.

QUESTION: Are you going to be continuing to work with Wiseman then?

DAVEY: It's up to him.

QUESTION: But you'd like to?

DAVEY: Oh, yes, yes. I've worked on dozens of documentaries for the BBC, for British television companies, as well as American networks and I think his films get nearer to the truth than anything else I've ever worked on and whatever I've seen. I go to the British Film Theater and see the films for the first time—although I see rushes, that will be it. I don't see rough cuts, unless I happen to be in Boston—and it really does sort of take me back and it reminds me of exactly how it was, and I've never had that feeling with any of the other films I've worked on.

QUESTION: In recent years, Wiseman's films seem to have turned increasingly to cultural subjects, with fewer instances of institutions where people are blatantly victimizing one another. And your camerawork seems to be consistent with that. The camerawork in *Model* is

so effective, partly because it refers to, but doesn't buy into, a commercial look. That's a very subtle thing, that you're responsible for, that at the surface of that film it is aware of fashion photography. It's not just plain old grainy documentary photography.

DAVEY: Right, right.

QUESTION: And similarly in *The Store*, there's a sense of moving through and looking at that store and sort of catching the glitter—

DAVEY: Well, you're influenced by your surroundings always when you come to shoot it and the way that I decide where I'm going to sit or stand or film in terms of framing, but, as I said before, it really is terribly instinctive. I don't consciously go in and say, "Well, I'm going to make it look like this."

QUESTION: Did you find yourself, after working on so many network documentaries, as you worked with Wiseman, taking longer takes, knowing that they might be used in a way that they wouldn't on commercial television? One example that comes to mind in *The Store* is the singing birthday, the chicken scene. The scene changes in tone very much as the song continues. The very long take makes it possible to show this. If you had stopped the camera, the point of the scene could not have emerged later from the editor's decision to run the whole scene, which gets a little less funny as it just keeps going.

DAVEY: I know, embarrassing. Absolutely, absolutely. Well, it's something we try to do all of the time. If people go out of the room, then we stop the camera running or if things are beginning to get repetitive or, I mean in an ideal world, it would be best to just turn the camera on in the morning and turn it off at nighttime and just disappear. But one tries to capture as much as possible any dialogue, as you say, as things develop. We didn't know about that thing happening at all. Literally the telegram person walked in, and I could see that it was a singing telegram. It was lit, so we just sort of turned the camera on as the person walked in. We had no prior knowledge of the words or anything. It was quite funny to begin with, then it got perfectly embarrassing, but that's just a personal opinion. I mean, you don't turn the camera off because it's embarrassing.

A number of reviews that I've read say that sometimes the films become a little bit academic or they're too long, and boring. I mean there were parts of *Model* where there's nothing much happening, but, you know, it's reflecting what's happening. Being a model is very tedious and very boring and it's not sort of wonderful, glamorous Studio 54 every night. It's monotonous; it's boring. For the majority of models, it's being turned down. There's just a few that succeed. I'd done commercials before and I'd shot models before, but—you were saying earlier that I guess I know what it's like, the model industry, but you don't. You have no idea what it's like. You have no idea the number of times that they don't get the job and they're turned away.

QUESTION: There's a wonderful scene in *Manoeuvre* in which a man's arguing with an umpire about the outcome and you keep the camera rolling and all they're doing is repeating themselves. So much talk is just that way, but few filmmakers show it.

DAVEY: Yeah, that's right. That was something Fred did have to teach me, to keep running, because I'm so used to budget-conscious productions. That's something I found difficult, because working on television productions, you become very aware of the budget and how much stock they have allocated to shoot and it's terribly restricted. In Wiseman's films you might shoot a lot of material the first week and not use any of it, because it doesn't reflect the true picture of what's going on and then week two or week three, then you really start to get the stuff. When people become relaxed, they become oblivious to your being there and then you can really report on what's going on, and the truth.

But with other productions I've worked on, like this thing I've just done in the Sudan, it was a low, a very low budget production. Not much stock to shoot and it was difficult to go in and film people from an entirely different culture, let alone the problems of language. And, in fact, we filmed one meeting between—there were about 200 Sudanese men in this village who were talking about desertification, which is the subject of the film, and this meeting happens periodically, and we went there to film it and we filmed for about half an hour, so we shot three or four rolls of film and the interpreter came up to me later and said, "You know, they've just been welcoming you the first half hour, sort of welcoming the film crew from England." So, of course, that was wasted.

QUESTION: At the beginning of *Racetrack,* there's the birth of a foal and we actually never quite see the exact moment.

DAVEY: That's because I didn't film it.

QUESTION: Ten and a half hours, it just finally got to be too much?

DAVEY: No, it wasn't that at all. The camera kept jamming and the battery kept going down. I was only able to shoot 20 feet at a time. There was something mechanically wrong with the camera. The magazine was losing its loop, so I'd put a magazine on, I'd shoot 20 feet and, of course, the birth of the foal, it's over a long period. But when it pops out, it's like a pea out of a pod. It happens very quickly. I'd shot rolls and rolls of this mare in labor, thinking it was going to pop out any minute and then, later, just as I turned around and changed one magazine to the other, I turned around and there it was. It's always the case; it's always the case. That's why you should never turn the camera off, if there's any likelihood of anything happening.

That's the other thing, is that a lot of programs I'm working on now, they're shown and that's it. They go out on the telly, and you work, you know you hide yourself for three or four months in Afghanistan or here or wherever and then, you know, the credits come up at the end and that's it and everyone's forgotten about it. But at least with Fred's films, they're going to be around for a long time and people are going to look at them, hopefully, in the years to

come and say, “Well, that’s what it was like at a racetrack in Belmont” or “That’s what it was like following a platoon of GIs on a NATO exercise.”

Perhaps initially there were a few things, matters of approach, that I found a little bit difficult—because, you know, being an Englishman—and one tends to stand back a little bit. You’ve got to be right there to get the material. But that might be a matter of personality as well.

QUESTION: Do you find Fred saying to you “More close-ups,” and that sort of thing? Is it moving in physically close or moving—

DAVEY: No, no, not physically close, because we use a zoom lens and I now use a 15 to 1 zoom, or at least on the last couple of films I’ve done, I used a 15 to 1, 10mm to 150mm Angenieux. In a conversation between four people at that table over there I can go in and I can just film one of those people, sitting down there, and Fred might well be sitting over there, just recording the sound—. But I also use a Varokinetal 9 to 50, which is a fast lens and it’s very good quality and it means that I could film someone next to me in a car, very, very close, if necessary. With the Angenieux 10 to 150, you can’t really film anything closer than five or six feet without getting vignetting on the wide end of the lens, which means that you see a little circle around the edge of the frame.

QUESTION: He was asking you, “Get more close-ups” then? Did you have that sort of feeling?

DAVEY: Not so much more close-ups as just sort of “hang in there.” I mean, it’s like with *Manoeuvre,* a slight embarrassment at an argument going on. I mean, my instinct as a person, as an individual, would be “how embarrassing” and look the other way, but, you know, we hung in there and they were completely oblivious, and they didn’t mind anyway being filmed. They were debating a point about whether this tank had been knocked out or not and I was just a few feet away and there were a lot of other people around as well. I don’t know if there are any other shots of cutaways of other people, but there were maybe a half dozen other people, sort of grinning and walking around. In fact, there was a branch in between me and the guys and there was a big gully and there was a tank on my left and I was desperately trying to be able to see these people and you could hear what they were talking about from a long way away. At the time, they weren’t aware of us. They were just concerned about their conversation. I didn’t say, “Oh, excuse me, before you carry on any further, do you mind if we film this?” because that always destroys it.

But there have perhaps been one or two instances where people have said, “Oh, were you filming me then? I discussed something that was rather private” and, if we had, then Fred would always, always respect people’s wishes and say, “We won’t use it.” We take the film out, take the film and tape out, and perhaps give it to them or just say, “This will not be used.” And he knows how I feel about these things, and I respect him anyway and there’s never any problem there, because there is no way that I’ve ever filmed a conversation or filmed people

when they're not aware of it or they wouldn't want to be in the film and, as I said earlier, invading people's privacy, particularly with the directional microphones and zoom lenses—. It's happened once or twice with films that I've done with British companies. We've filmed something and I've felt it's either been manipulated or taken advantage of people that perhaps are not aware of how something's going to be portrayed and usually I just get my name taken off. That's all you can do; just to get your name taken off the credits and say, "I'll have nothing to do with this film." But it's only happened I think twice in fifteen years. You don't shoot it, so you have ultimate control with the cameraman.

Yeah. I must say, at the end of most of the films that I work with him, I think, "God, I don't need this. I'm getting too old for this."

QUESTION: It must be exhausting.

DAVEY: It is, physically and mentally, because you become so involved with the people. You don't go back to the Hilton Hotel every night and you don't have one in every five days off. If there's something happening, you just get there and if it means getting up at four o'clock in the morning, then you do it. I have a completely different feeling working on Wiseman films than working on anything else. I have a lot of friends who I work with, a lot of friends who are film directors, and I work on their films, but it's a strange, unique, difficult-to-put-your-finger-on-the-button feeling that I have, but—it's very satisfying. It's fascinating, interesting, rewarding.

Fred only makes approximately one film a year, so he's very enthusiastic and very keen to shoot and that, really, I think is what he enjoys more than anything about his films. He obviously enjoys getting into the cutting room and looking at all the material, breaking it down, and I guess he gets slightly different views of what we've just done over the last four or five weeks, but there's a great deal of fun and enjoyment and we were both brought up in entirely different cultures, Fred and myself, but we share the same jokes and sense of humor. We get a lot of fun, and they are fun, and very, very funny at times. We share a lot of private jokes amongst us, different things we've seen or different things that have happened.

QUESTION: One question an interviewer should ask is, for a professional cameraman, is the pay at a comparable level with other work that one does? Are there sacrifices that one makes to work with a Wiseman?

DAVEY: Yes, I'm very satisfied with the financial reward I get from Wiseman films.

QUESTION: Are you ever surprised, when you see the final cut, at what has been kept and what left out, or what has been connected with what?

DAVEY: I went to Boston earlier this year to see a rough cut of *Deaf and Blind*. Of course, there are four films now. Originally, the idea was just to make one movie about the whole campus, but it became so intriguing and so fascinating and also, to be fair to each school, to

each college, it was much better to make a separate film about each one. This was decided in the editing. We were sort of joking, "This is going to be a six-hour movie," because we were getting such a lot of interesting material and it was so fascinating, so interesting.

I make a habit of reading reviews and I'm always interested to see what other people think of his films, perhaps more than I do when I've been working for major networks, you know. I take a greater interest. And that's the other thing that I like about the films is that you work on something and when you see it, you don't say, "Well, that doesn't bear any resemblance to anything, to how I remember it," because there's no narration, there's no interviews, no commentary at all in his films. That's why people say, "God, this is boring." Well, it was boring at the time. I mean, it's like the sequence in *Model* when Apollonia is bringing her leg up and down. In fact, the film's not long enough to tell you exactly how boring and monotonous the whole exercise was. It just went on for hours and hours and hours.

So the only reaction that I have later is, "Well, why isn't that sequence in?" and "Why isn't that scene in?" And I say to Fred, "Why didn't you include that? It was fascinating" and he says, "Well, I know. I have a terrible time deciding what to put in." I mean he has rough cuts—ten hours. But very often there'll be one sequence he doesn't use, because it's fairly similar to another sequence, perhaps we'll have the same characters, but you just have to, or at least Fred has to, decide what is representative, in his mind anyway, truly representative of what goes on and you only come to that conclusion by looking, by putting them all together and looking at them all and saying, "Well, those three or four sequences represent the fifteen that we did as near as possible." None of them are exactly the same. But, yes, perhaps at times I look at it more from a photographic point of view and there'll be a sequence that I know technically I have captured much better than another one that perhaps he uses and that photographically I think it's nice, nice steady shots, perfect exposure, perfect focus, interesting visuals, but he won't use it at all.

QUESTION: There's a shot in *Racetrack* in which you're watching a woman walking a horse towards the camera and you watch both of them in a two-shot of the horse and the girl and it's sort of like girl-watching. There are these two creatures moving gracefully towards the camera and as they get close, you pan to the left and you follow the horse and not the girl. And then, a moment later, as they walk a little further away, the girl comes back into the frame. It's a wonderful piece of photography, because there's a sense in which in most films what we do is watch girls go by.

DAVEY: Yes, that's right. Things like that do work out like that sometimes, I think. In some ways you have to exercise personal discipline, but in other ways it's not a good idea, because, after all, you're the audience. There's no way when you're filming that sort of thing that Fred can say, "Stay on the girl; stay on the horse." It's just instinctive and you follow one or the other. It's the sitting-in-the-waiting-room sort of thing, isn't it? And you just look around and you choose things to look at that are interesting. It's enjoyable. I love doing it. I consider

myself very lucky that I'm put in these positions where I'm able to have these interesting experiences.

Did you find it interesting talking to the other cameramen? Because I know Richard Leiterman vaguely and I know Bill Brayne, obviously, and we're all different personalities. Bill Brayne directs now and doesn't do any shooting at all, but I saw *Hospital* [1970] and I thought it was such an interesting film. And there's one sequence where he's in the room with the junkie, with the drug addict. "Oh, my God, I'm going to—." I mean, the poor guy. I mean, I kind of know how he felt, but I laughed. I mean, it was so funny. The guy throws up on the floor and it's right down there, whereas I know that I can't—I don't know where I would be, but I probably would have been out the door looking through the door at all this happening. I thought it was a wonderful piece of camerawork. Very, very good. And there again, I noticed, as a cameraman, a different approach with the way Bill shoots. He really is sort of standing in front of them and moving around, whereas being English, I tend to—the feeling that I have is that it's going to affect people's behavior, if you're standing directly in front of them, pointing a camera at them, so I'll be sort of over there, leaning against that pillar, just, you know, just casually filming. That's the difference.

QUESTION: And that changes the tone a little bit.

DAVEY: Oh, yeah. Of course it does, yes, yes. I mean, you're there, it's there staring you in the face, whereas I might be back a little bit shooting on the zoom lens, which gives a slight telephoto effect, so you're not there in a big, wide cinemascope a foot away from a guy who's throwing up.

Personally, I feel the *Deaf and Blind* series is going to be the most interesting that I've worked on in terms of the subject matter. I always feel the last one that I've just done is the best thing I've done. I always try to feel the film that I'm working on is going to be better than the previous one, but I really feel the footage, the material I got at that place was so incredible. It taught me a lot and it taught me a lot about—my nephew is blind and having worked at the school environment, to see the interaction, to see how they coped with the problems they had, made me so much more aware. I think we all tend to be, or at least I tended to be a little patronizing toward disabled people before, but you learn to treat them with much more respect. One boy, Jim Bob, was from Birmingham, and he sat in the car with me. He wanted to know the name of the ship that I came over on and what was the name of my wife and did I have any children.

At the blind school, they weren't all totally blind. Some of them were partially sighted, but they knew that there was this English guy around and they were very good. We've got lots of sequences. They ignored us completely, but then when we finished filming, the blind teacher came up and said, "They want to ask you a few questions. Do you mind?" And I said, "Of course not." And they wanted to know if I was around when the Beatles were around and had I seen any punk rockers and, apart from that, they were also asking about the political system

that we have, our House of Parliament, and did I understand the American system? And, at that time, I think the primaries were going on, so politics were quite a big thing at that time and they wanted to know my opinions of the political system.

Notes

[1] Hungarian designer Zoltan "Zoli" Rendessy established Zoli Management, Inc. in New York City in 1971. Zoli's modeling agency was the institution featured in *Model.*
[2] The material recorded at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in the fall of 1984 was eventually released as four separate films: *Deaf, Blind, Multi-handicapped,* and *Work and Readjustment* in 1986.

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Robert Kotlowitz

June 13, 1985
WNET-TV, New York City

Robert Kotlowitz came to his position as Vice-President and Director of Programming at WNET-TV, New York's Channel 13, from a background in print magazines. Kotlowitz was drafted into the Army in World War II while he was a student at Johns Hopkins University. He served in the infantry, and then in intelligence, in Europe. After the war he returned to Johns Hopkins to finish his undergraduate degree and then studied at the Peabody Conservatory of Music. He then became a book and magazine editor. Before taking on the job at WNET, Kotlowitz had been managing editor of *Harper's* magazine.

Robert Kotlowitz was the author of four novels, and a memoir of his World War II experience, *Before Their Time* (1997). His novels—*Somewhere Else* (1972), *The Boardwalk* (1977), *Sea Changes* (1986), and *His Master's Voice* (1992)—chronicle Jewish life and assimilation from Poland to America. Kotlowitz retired from WNET in 1990.

After his death from prostate cancer in 2012, a *New York Times* obituary noted his role in building key programming for public television, such as *Live at the Met*, *Dance in America*, and *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, now the *PBS NewsHour*, which began during Watergate and then developed into a nightly news broadcast.[1] The *Times* obituary does not mention Kotlowitz's work with Frederick Wiseman, which began in the early 1970s and lasted beyond 1990, when Kotlowitz continued to serve as a PBS editorial advisor.

Robert Kotlowitz's close association with Frederick Wiseman has been almost invisible outside PBS circles. Kotlowitz was a strong advocate for Wiseman within public television, contributing to the extraordinary freedom and access that Wiseman has enjoyed there for fifty years. We interviewed Kotlowitz in his office at WNET/13 in New York on June 13, 1985.

QUESTION: We'd like you to fill in some of the process through which Wiseman has had to go to secure funding and approval of his projects.

KOTLOWITZ: Right, right. I have to extract all this material out of my head because it's part of so much other material that's accumulated in here over the years, all of which tends to be different because the nature of every venture is different and the way we have to raise funds for them is always different. I have a very special relationship with Fred, both personally and professionally, and the personal relationship emerged from the professional relationship. When I became program and broadcasting director of WNET there was already a contract in effect with Fred which I inherited.

QUESTION: When was that?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, I joined the station in the summer of 1971, and I think I took over all those jobs within a year, just about over a twelve-month period. I think Wiseman had already made one film against a five-film contract. I admired Fred's work a lot, mainly because I found that it always took me by surprise, that it was never what I expected to see. I didn't know him, and we must have had a few lunches. We discovered mutual friends and mutual concerns and established a mode of operation which was really very much like that of an editor and a writer. My history was all print. I was managing editor of *Harper's* magazine before I came here and that was a very comfortable way for me to operate, and it's not the way I operated with most producers. Fred seemed to me so unique in his approach, and so unique in what he had already achieved, that anything that I might have to say conceptually would be absolutely gratuitous. What do you say to a man like Fred Wiseman when he decides he's going to do *High School* [1968]*, Hospital* [1970]*,* or *Sinai Field Mission* [1978], or whatever? Every idea seemed to me absolutely valid in the context of his over-all hope, which was to do a study of American institutions of one kind or another. And what is not an American institution when we start thinking that way?

So the agreement was that we would provide him with a certain amount of production money every year which came out of our discretionary funds, of which we had greater sums then than now, because we had Ford Foundation money, and we were able to dip into that in a way that we no longer can do. I mean, every penny now must be raised in some way or another. So, the funding was assured, and Fred would call. The pattern generally was that Fred would call from Cambridge and say, "I want to do a juvenile court," or "I want to do a study of welfare" and I would say, "Terrific." And there was no clearance. I mean, I didn't have to go to anybody, and I did not have Fred report in to any of our executive producers here, because it just seemed to me that he was just too special and, besides, it interested me professionally and personally, so I sort of retained it for myself. And then Fred would go out and shoot for six weeks or seven or whatever it was, and he would come back and say, "I've got all this footage." It was more or less the same experience each time, except substantively when we got to the film itself and he said, "I'm going to start working and I'll call you when there's something you can really—you can come up for a day." So, the pattern was that I would wait

for his call. He would then pick up the phone and say, "Come to Cambridge," and we would go up and I would spend a day looking at footage, which he would have in some kind of order.

QUESTION: And about how long would the cut be at that point? Did it vary a great deal?
KOTLOWITZ: Hours and hours.

QUESTION: Six, eight, ten hours?
KOTLOWITZ: I would look at five or six hours. I'd take the early morning shuttle and leave late in the afternoon and in between we'd have a yogurt and sit overlooking Boston Harbor and look at this stuff. There would be no chronology to it, but I was sympathetic enough to what Fred was doing to be able to get some idea of what he was up to. I was always wrong. I mean I always assumed there would be much more, a much more strong judgment placed upon the material by Fred, because I was used to working with writers who were very passionate that way and believed that that's what really counted.

It was always interesting for me to come back then from Cambridge and then Fred would either come to New York with a, not final cut, but a rough cut, more or less what the film was to be, and I would see an absolutely detached piece of work. Of course, infused by his choices of what to shoot and what to retain and what to cut, but a work that did not really fit my stereotypes. I mean, I thought *Hospital* was an absolute stunner. I had made the assumption that he would go into a mid-town hospital and find a chamber of horrors, bedlam, and that's not what he found at all. And that's what made me even more interested in Fred's work, year by year. I was always eager to see what he was going to do with some of these subjects. Some he did much more with and some he did much less with, and I don't know whether it's because of the footage he shot or what he missed when he was there or what. But it has certainly been one of the more interesting relationships and rewarding relationships I have had in my time here. And then just filling out the last of what became a second five-year contract—a *Racetrack* [1985] on Belmont which will be broadcast next season. And I have seen that pretty much in rough cut and I have seen a lot of the footage from the Alabama institute.

QUESTION: Is this the institute for the blind and deaf children?
KOTLOWITZ: Yeah, which is going to be, I think, one of the most powerful of Fred's works.

QUESTION: And he's editing these simultaneously then?
KOTLOWITZ: *Racetrack* is finished, and the Alabama work is being edited now. In fact, I thought it would be great for Fred to go out and do the Belmont Stakes. I thought it would be just great for Fred to go out there for one day and do the Belmont Stakes and I had not had time to get up to the phone and call him when he called. He said, "You know, I want to do a racetrack." So I said, "That's funny, I was just going to call." And I rarely did that. I almost

never picked up the phone and said, "Why don't you do—, why don't you think about that," because he had enough ideas.

And that is pretty much the story of our relationship. I'm not sure that we are really a natural couple, but somehow, we work very, very well together and are very close friends now. I mean, on a whole other level. I did almost no interfering when I saw a rough cut, in terms of length.

QUESTION: Was it more like a progress report, rather than any sort of editorial judgment?

KOTLOWITZ: It was a progress report; it was a check point. If there was anything to me really seriously amiss, I would speak up and say something, but if Fred said this was going to be two-and-one-half hours and I really felt it would be better at two hours, I didn't have enough faith that the two-hour thing was going to mean a damn thing more than the two-and-a-half-hour thing. I just never battled those things through, because I had no grounds to argue it on, except scheduling problems. That was the only way it could be talked about in any serious terms. Two-and-a-half-hours is difficult for many stations, obviously. But I really fought for that in the system all the way through. That was fairly tough; it was a tough road.

QUESTION: Did you then become his advocate in the system?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, you know, Fred was a pretty strong advocate for himself. He loves to speak up and he did speak up. But I was his advocate with PBS, yes. And there was a certain amount of falling away of support of Fred. You know, how long can you retain hold in this country when you find a form that works and then just—and that was a minor disappointment. But this is a system that you have to understand—we did the *Ring of the Nibelung* in collaboration with the BBC and German broadcasting and when I went out to our program fair—we have a program fair every year—to present it, I discovered that half the program managers had never heard of *The Ring.* This was in public television, and I was stunned. And this was fairly recently, I mean, this was only three years ago, and I realized that I was just going to have to spell my name for everybody every year for the rest of my life, unless I change my life in public television. So, I decided to do that and stick to it. I just don't go out there and do those presentations. It's too disheartening.

But, in any case, Fred had a lot of powerful initial support. I mean, nobody had done work like that. He's *sui generis.* And then it didn't suit everybody after a while. Some people began to turn on him and Fred has had to fight very hard to maintain his rights. It doesn't matter, anybody who's a MacArthur Fellow and all that stuff. He's been honored and he's somehow knitted this thing together himself. And it has to have been very, very hard. In any case, that's the story in general. Some projects were tougher than others, but not in any serious degree.

QUESTION: When he would call you with a project, were there times when he would say, "I've got three ideas; let's talk them over," or did he present an idea and say—

KOTLOWITZ: No. Generally, by the time he got to the phone, he would have thought them through himself.

QUESTION: And it would be a topic and a place, or—

KOTLOWITZ: It would be either the Sinai—he knew he wanted to do the Sinai Peninsula or the American forces in Germany, American forces abroad, and he would pick West Germany. He wanted to do a juvenile court and by the time he called me, he had the court; but not always. But he knew what he wanted; he knew the subject he wanted to do.

QUESTION: Did you ever act as an intermediary in order to—

KOTLOWITZ: Yes, sometimes I would have to write a letter saying, you know, "Fred Wiseman makes films. He's reputable, clean," all the rest. And that had to be done occasionally, but not very often. And I never, I don't remember an instance when I said to Fred, "I don't think that's such a great idea." Because that, too, is arbitrary to argue. I mean, I know that Fred knows what his mind is. It just seemed to be pointless for me to get on the phone and say, "Why do you want to do Sinai?" I mean, I sort of knew why he wanted to do Sinai. And there didn't have to be a lot of discussion or rationalizing.

And now that may have been a disservice for all I know to Fred, but it was the way it was and it's the way I chose to act and it's really my style anyway and unless I am so sure that I am right, and the producer isn't. The producer has to go out and make the film, and to start whittling away at the original impulse seems to me not a very productive way of operating.

QUESTION: Were there ever aborted films?

KOTLOWITZ: Yes, let me think. Not in my memory, but my memory is not 100% intact. I don't think so. I don't remember an aborted effort. I mean, he may have spent months dealing with an idea, and maybe even filming himself—I don't know—and then decided it won't do and I never had heard about it, that's possible. But I don't think that ever happened either, though.

QUESTION: Has he come to you with requests for funds for *Celestial Navigation*? Are you involved with that project?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, I'm a novelist, too, so Fred and I've always been talking if he's interested in doing a fictional film and I had just read *Celestial Navigation* [a 1974 novel by Anne Tyler] when Fred got interested in it and I felt a lot of the book was lovely, but I thought the ending was a cop-out, so we had this argument. And Fred loved the book and still does. But he didn't come to us for money. I mean, it was a commercial venture and he's been going elsewhere on his own to try and raise those monies.

QUESTION: One has the sense that very often he himself doesn't know what the point of the film is going to be until it's very close to being done.

KOTLOWITZ: I think that's true in every instance. I think that's the main value of his works, that he goes out like an absolute, a clean blackboard, I mean, with the usual baggage that everybody who is cultivated carries and makes his discoveries while he's filming. The fun of working with Fred was I was always being surprised that way. It was never, ever, quite the way I thought it was going to be.

Somehow, I assumed *Racetrack* was going to be a very fast-paced film, horses racing and all that. Well, it isn't like that at all. I mean the style of it is not—I wasn't even able to predict that to myself. So that keeps it very fresh for me. And I think the body of work is absolutely amazing, and permanent, and whatever the vicissitudes of one season to the next in the scheduling and all that struggle goes on. I mean, I just think he's made an absolutely major contribution to a form that can hardly be defined.

QUESTION: When you mention the falling away of support, have fewer of your PBS stations picked up the option of showing his films, as opposed to—

KOTLOWITZ: No, as you know, everybody needs good programming.

QUESTION: So that has not changed.

KOTLOWITZ: That hasn't changed. The fact is, Fred's programs get considerable ratings, you know, relatively speaking, on the air. They go on and there's an audience. The audience turns on and it's still there two-and-a-half-hours later. There is nothing else like it on television. It looks very different on the screen than it does on a Steenbeck [editing system] and it looks very different at home from what it looks like here in my office. You know you are looking at something authentic. And my own secret belief has always been that everybody is dying for authenticity on the television screen, something real to latch on to, to hold on to, and look at.

QUESTION: Fred has mentioned in public once or twice, in interviews, that with *The Store* [1983] someone—and he says this with real anger—said to him, "Don't do Neiman-Marcus; do Macy's or Gimbel's. They're more typical." And there's a sense that he's growing impatient, in general, with some of the apparatus—

KOTLOWITZ: It was said by somebody, I think, at PBS. "Why do Neiman-Marcus? Do the thing that attracts the big audience." Well, it's such a stupid remark and suggestion to make. If Fred wants to do Neiman-Marcus, you just have to know there's a good reason for it, and for him to be interested in Neiman-Marcus seemed to me itself sufficient. And he made a very amusing, witty program, I think, which was also surprising. It is not in any way a—you know, it wasn't full of all kinds of obvious revelations about conspicuous consumption. It was just terrifically amusing. But suggestions like that are made to him all the time.

QUESTION: Is he in a situation where, increasingly, he needs to make a pitch to people who then have had an opportunity to get back—

KOTLOWITZ: Well, we don't—those monies have to be raised film by film now and we don't have the resources and as people grow familiar with your work, they feel they can say anything. Everybody feels they can tell you what you should be doing. And they do. "You should be making them shorter; you should not be doing Neiman-Marcus; you should do Macy's."

QUESTION: And *Racetrack* [filmed before, but released after, *The Store*] is in black and white again?

KOTLOWITZ: Yeah.

QUESTION: And is the institute in Alabama also black-and-white?

KOTLOWITZ: That's an interesting question. I don't remember. [The four films shot at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind are in color.]

QUESTION: I would think there'd be pressure for him to move to color.

KOTLOWITZ: And it's not so long ago that I saw it, too. There is pressure from the system to go to color, but that's another thing that seems to be silly. I mean everything on the screen is in color.

QUESTION: I get the impression from you that there really aren't offices full of people here, that really you're the connection and that there isn't a huge file of data—

KOTLOWITZ: There's no correspondence, to my knowledge. It's all pick-up-the-telephone and get-on-the-plane and when Fred comes to New York, we always spend an hour, two hours, whatever. But we do it now on another basis. It took me a while to learn how to feel confident in myself with Fred, because he's full of temperament, full of anger, and wants his fair share. So, when it comes time for broadcasts, there was always a lot of confrontation with publicity people, promotion people, and advertising, and all those questions. But that seems to be standard with all this kind of stuff and we would go through that and after about three years, I began to feel very comfortable.

QUESTION: There is a story that a few years ago, WNET [Channel 13, NYC], instead of offering Wiseman films to other stations, began charging.

KOTLOWITZ: Well, we made the attempt. What was called the Station Program Co-operative was established, if that's the word, and it's an attempt really to have stations pay for programs that other stations made, to some degree at least. And we thought since we were putting $150,000 a year—I think this is the figure—in our discretionary funds into the program and not getting one penny back, that the stations should help us share the burden. Well, there are limited funds out there, as you know, and a lot of programs being offered that were more

urgent to those stations in terms of the time that they filled on the air, like *Sesame Street, MacNeil-Lehrer, Great Performances,* all that stuff, and public affairs material does not bring much money to the stations anyway. Yeah, sure, we made the attempt.

QUESTION: How do the economics of that work?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, each station is pro-rated on the basis of the size of its market. I think that's what it is. Naturally, we're always paying the biggest price for any program, and we would have had to have bought the Wiseman from ourselves with the way this thing is set up. Then, every year, there is a Program Fair at which the stations gather and screen programs that all the stations are offering. There may be a hundred million dollars' worth of programs for perhaps thirty million dollars in actual funds. So it's very competitive and it's sort of hustle and flash. And it's horrible.

QUESTION: Is a Wiseman film at that stage finished, or is it sort of—

KOTLOWITZ: I don't remember that we showed any footage. We don't do it anymore.

QUESTION: How would that be done?

KOTLOWITZ: We may have shown, what we would have done—and I'm almost sure that in one instance we did it—is that we take a seven-minute excerpt and show it to the stations. The whole Program Fair is structured so that each station has a room to itself, each major production center, and they show a memo reel.

QUESTION: So, it's just a seven-minute excerpt? It's nothing like a trailer? He has never prepared trailers of any sort?

KOTLOWITZ: No, no, no, he hasn't, although we have for a series. The *Great Performances* material we put together in an attempt to excerpt as many programs coming up that season as possible, so the stations get a sense of the variety. But it would be too expensive for Fred to sit down and put together a real trailer. That's another ten or fifteen thousand. So, we just take some few minutes out of it.

QUESTION: Then how long before a broadcast would you know? What kind of commitment would they have to make?

KOTLOWITZ: The Program Fair for the '86-'87 season will take place in October in Philadelphia. That ought to keep them off the streets and then there's a long voting process that will continue until about January or February. There are a lot of voting rounds, in which programs get eliminated, when they don't get enough votes. It's enormously complicated. But by February we will all know what has been bought for the following season.

QUESTION: So those who would buy *Racetrack* have already—

KOTLOWITZ: Well, nobody bought *Racetrack.* We didn't sell *Racetrack.* We committed monies to it and it's going out.

QUESTION: So, they can just have that, if they're willing to make time for it?
KOTLOWITZ: They'll get it. Right. Yeah.

QUESTION: And is it three hours long?
KOTLOWITZ: You know, that's a good question. I don't think it's three hours at all. I think it's two and a half, but I forget, I forget. [*Racetrack* is 119 minutes long]. I think, ultimately, the length of Fred's films would be an almost undiscussed question. It will be irrelevant almost, but now you know that the stations that have—

QUESTION: A programmer looks at those things differently.
KOTLOWITZ: And justifiably. Sometimes Fred would say "It's three-and-a-half hours" or whatever and my heart would turn over and I would—this is going to be a battle. But I didn't really want to be involved in those battles. If I had known in the beginning that Fred likes to fight so much, so feisty, I would have—

QUESTION: So you weren't involved in the *Law and Order* [1969] battle about the language? That was before you came?
KOTLOWITZ: The first hassle I had was *Juvenile Court* [1973]. It was a question of clearances. That was the first one that I had a problem. Then there were others that we had language problems. In those years, between '71 and '76, they had a problem with almost everything and anything.

QUESTION: You were there for the *Primate* [1974] problem?
KOTLOWITZ: That's right. I was there for *Primate.* It's almost impossible now to raise any kind of controversy over anything anymore. You can put anything on the air, and it just doesn't matter. So we haven't been picketed in years, you know how quiet it is.

QUESTION: Is Wiseman partly responsible for that? Or is he just sort of riding along with—
KOTLOWITZ: No, just riding along. I think that what happened is that the so-called revolution that was going on in the sixties and seventies really did have a permanent effect, or at least permanent enough to last our lifetimes, in various areas. Many, many things are absolutely acceptable. And then the minority groups in this country no longer see us, public television, as politically useful, viable, so they're not taking over the station, as they were. We had to fight some terrific battles. That's all gone. We haven't had a confrontation with a Latino group, a Black group, a woman's group, a gender group, or whatever, in so long. And that used to be an absolutely normal part of my life around here, daily. You just put anything on the air, and that's it.

QUESTION: As you say, Wiseman's films are unique. From a programming point of view, do you have any sense that his films have attracted other filmmakers or even attracted counter-movements in documentary? There's little enough documentary on television, public or otherwise.

KOTLOWITZ: Well, you do get youngish documentarians who make a point of saying, "I'm not going to do Wiseman stuff," you know. "You're going to get a documentary from me that really has something to say, that really has a point of view." And, you know, an endless voice-over—words. And there's usually a political content of some kind of another, mainly leftist in origin. But it exists in a whole other universe, a whole other realm from Fred's work. It has nothing to do—we broadcast that work on Thursday night. It's dead on Friday, usually.

QUESTION: Hard work to imitate.

KOTLOWITZ: Well, you know, you can't imitate Fred. You can't outdo him in that particular way and a certain number of young documentarians are angry at him that he doesn't pick up young filmmakers and stroke them and all the rest of that. They've got to find their way, too.

QUESTION: Is he still working with John Davey as cinematographer?

KOTLOWITZ: You know, I don't—I've seen some of Fred's crew, but I don't know.

QUESTION: So those are all his choices, and you have nothing to do with that?

KOTLOWITZ: No. Fred makes; we give. We would give the money to Fred and then he made it and would deliver us the program, the film that would be broadcast.

QUESTION: You're speaking of it in the past tense?

KOTLOWITZ: That's because we've been doing it on a year-to-year basis now. I don't know whether we can go on raising money, or whether Fred himself can raise money.

QUESTION: You're trying to raise money now for the Alabama film?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, for the Alabama thing, Fred had gone down to CPB [Corporation for Public Broadcasting] and made impassioned speeches to that board for independents, while I would say that he spoke for all independents, not just for himself, and for the process that he had to go through in making application to CPB. Talking about spelling your name. It was ludicrous. But, in fact, I don't cash my chips in at CPB very often and I don't like to—I don't enjoy that particular kind of manipulation—but I told Fred that I would call, and I picked up the phone and called the head of program fund and said, "I want you to know that the footage on this material is wonderful. It's going to be one of the most moving and powerful programs." And Fred got a lot of money the next day, at the board meeting, surprising me. I'll tell you, I felt very powerful.

QUESTION: Is that typically where the funds would then come from on the year-to-year basis, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting?
KOTLOWITZ: CPB or PBS, yes.

QUESTION: So it's not common to go outside [for] foundation support?
KOTLOWITZ: We've tried, but it's just desperately slim pickings. There are no corporations, no foundations, and you've got to have somebody who cares, or is embarrassed into giving you the money.

QUESTION: You mentioned that with *Juvenile Court* you ran into problems with the releases of minors. How exactly was that worked out? There were objections from the parents of the minors or from others who spoke for the minors and thought maybe there'd later be objections?
KOTLOWITZ: There were objections from a set of parents in the film.

QUESTION: Whose child went before the juvenile court?
KOTLOWITZ: Whose child appeared in the film. I'm trying to get it right.

QUESTION: This objection came before the broadcast?
KOTLOWITZ: This is pre-broadcast. We dealt with it right up until broadcast time. That was the first kind of hassle like that, that I remember in broadcasting one of Fred's films. The *Primate* thing was different. That was on different grounds.

QUESTION: Could you talk a little about that?
KOTLOWITZ: Well, as I say, there was so much activity here between '71 and '79 and '80 that it's all kind of a blur. I mean, everything was confrontation. You know that was the style of the times. I just remember a lot of groups out there coming in on [a] moral basis, objecting to his film in which I didn't see anything to object to at all. I mean, you deal with everybody; take calls; see them; meet them. But that was on moral grounds on how these poor animals were being treated, as though if the film hadn't been made and broadcast, it wasn't happening to the animals.

QUESTION: Didn't Yerkes [the research site where *Primate* was filmed] also lodge complaints against PBS and WNET?
KOTLOWITZ: I think that's possible. I think that rings a faint bell. In fact, yes.

QUESTION: Many of the scientists themselves were objecting to his treatment of them, rather than the treatment of the animals.

KOTLOWITZ: Yeah, I think there was some of that, but that was not something we—that was just an annoyance. I think Fred was more disappointed that that was directed at Fred personally.

QUESTION: And there was even a discussion on a PBS station—
KOTLOWITZ: Yes, that's right. We used to do that all the time and we were always doing follow-ups.

QUESTION: Does Fred then come down when the film is about to be released and brief your station people?
KOTLOWITZ: He comes down when we see the commercial advertisers, and interviews are being set up. Fred's very effective and very aware of all of the benefits it—I'm sure it's all a circle. The contract with Fred was very good for Fred.

QUESTION: To have a five-film contract is really a luxury for a documentary filmmaker.
KOTLOWITZ: We have public television rights and Fred has the film. Fred has established some kind of business for himself [Zipporah Films, Inc.], that has its ups and downs, of course. But it's all his. He ended up owning it all and I'm glad. I'm glad that it worked out that way.

QUESTION: Is Fred the kind of filmmaker that you have to ever call him and say, "When are we going to see it?" Do you get nervous about deadlines?
KOTLOWITZ: No, I don't.

QUESTION: Because there hasn't been a documentary now for two years.
KOTLOWITZ: That's right. We don't set a broadcast date until I've seen something. And so we always, Fred and I, always assume there's going to be at least a six-month lapse between my viewing and the earliest broadcast date, so you're not actually meeting a deadline. The *Racetrack* thing is late because it cost more than the budget, I think, and Fred's been trying to raise money and shooting the Alabama thing. And we did not push him on that. It's a new year and we really didn't push him. We were aware of it, but we didn't push him.

QUESTION: Do you see a completed print before you actually make a final commitment?
KOTLOWITZ: I see it very close. Well, on the Alabama thing, I picked up the phone to CPB on the basis of just, I just felt very strongly about it.

QUESTION: Do you think he's going to run into release problems, consent problems, with this film?
KOTLOWITZ: My assumption is that, based on Fred's experience—and the man knows that he can't fool around with that kind of thing—and I've asked him about the release question, and

it's all taken care of. And that's the first thing that occurs to you when you look at this program.

QUESTION: Does he simply make a contractual guarantee to you and the station that he's settled all those problems?

KOTLOWITZ: I don't know whether it exists in the contract. I'm not even sure that I've ever read that contract word for word. It's like death reading those things. But it's not a very long contract. It's just an agreement.

QUESTION: It's not the sort of situation where your people go over his releases and that sort of thing?

KOTLOWITZ: Well, if there's a problem; however, if we think there might be a problem, our legal people screen it and then there's a phone call with Fred and it's very simply resolved.

QUESTION: And so, he doesn't file his correspondence with those institutions with you?

KOTLOWITZ: Not with me, no. The only other person is the legal counsel, and I don't think he files it with legal counsel, either. I'm virtually sure of that.

QUESTION: How lucky he is to have found you. All of us are very lucky he found you—to have been granted the time.

KOTLOWITZ: It would have happened the same way, except he would have had, I think, more anguish, that's all. I think the films, the problems, would have been the same. I think there might have been a little more hesitation in his second five-year contract, but, you know, it's Fred's work and there's no two ways about that. And it would have been anyway, that's the kind of filmmaker he is.

Notes

[1] "Robert Kotlowitz, a Shaper of Channel 13, Dies at 87." Obituary, *New York Times* (August 28, 2012).

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Frederick Wiseman

Frederick Wiseman is the central figure in this account of the making of his films. His hand is everywhere in the processes of pre-production, filmmaking, and distribution. Wiseman has often participated in interviews, and he has made part of his living by visiting college campuses to show his films and tell his story. Wiseman has been fiercely protective of his personal privacy, of his financial success, of his artistic work, and of his public reputation.

The basic story of his life is one that he has told in talks, interviews, and writings over a period of more than fifty years. Wiseman was born on January 1, 1930. He is the only child of a Boston lawyer and the administrative head of a childcare center. Wiseman attended elite schools—Rivers Country Day School, Boston Latin, then Williams College, which he recalls as marked by antisemitism, and from which he graduated in 1951. Wanting to avoid being drafted into the Army during the Korean War, he enrolled at Yale Law School, though he had no particular interest in the law. Wiseman says that after the first semester, he stopped attending law school classes, instead reading novels in the Yale Library, and managing to get through the exams by arguing the questions with the skills of close reading he had learned in college. At Yale, he met Zipporah Batshaw, a French Canadian and one of the few women students at Yale Law School. They married in 1955 and had two sons. Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman, who had a distinguished career as an attorney and law professor, died in January 2021.

After Yale, Wiseman served in the Army, at least part of the time as a court reporter. Upon discharge, Wiseman went to Paris to study under the GI Bill. He says he spent most of the time hanging out and watching films.

Wiseman returned to Cambridge, Massachusetts after the Army, finding part time work at local colleges and eventually serving as treasurer of a consulting company, OSTI (Organization for Social and Technical Innovation), that bid on government social research contracts; he has referred to that work as a "boondoggle." He has typically said he was as bored with the law and with teaching as he was with law school, so he cast around for something more interesting. In 1960, Wiseman bought the film rights to Warren Miller's novel, *The Cool World* (1959), which was released as a film in 1964. Wiseman was the producer; Shirley Clarke directed. Wiseman says that he later formed his own distribution company, Zipporah Films, to control distribution of his films when he realized that the distributor of *The Cool World* was taking all the profits off the top.

While teaching law part time, Wiseman sometimes took his students on field trips to local institutions where their clients might wind up. Among those institutions was Massachusetts Correctional Institution, Bridgewater, the state's prison hospital for the criminally insane. He thought it would make a film, and enlisted John Marshall to run the camera while he recorded sound. They used equipment and techniques that had been developed by the American direct

cinema filmmakers, and by the French originators of *cinéma vérité*—lightweight equipment, small crew, long takes, situational lighting, hand-held camera. After the filming, Wiseman assumed control of the editing process. The resulting film, *Titicut Follies* (1967), was a scandal and a success, its public exhibition banned by court order in Massachusetts. Wiseman had found his interest.

The career and the reputation now began to take shape. Wiseman followed with a long series of documentaries about American institutions. The crew and the company stayed very small. The early films typically adopted a tone of critical irony about the institutions under scrutiny—a high school, a hospital, a police department, a welfare office. The critical point of view, never directly argued but often emergent, helped to build Wiseman's early reputation as having both journalistic and artistic missions.

Wiseman found early recognition in the literary press and among film critics, and crucially among sources of funding and exhibition. He had early backing from the Ford Foundation for his films, a large grant from a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award, and a contract with PBS, which assured wide exposure in public television stations around the country, after which distribution rights returned to Wiseman. The pattern was established. About one film a year. Find an institution, seek permission to film, find funding and at least tentative pre-approval from PBS. Six weeks of filming, followed by up to a year of editing, control of which was entirely in Wiseman's hands. Exhibition on public television. Then distribution from Zipporah Films—very steep rental and lease terms for classroom use only, no outright print sales. Wiseman became available for lectures at universities, for a considerable fee and stipulating that the school would also rent some of the films to be shown in the days before the talk.

After experiencing the rare security of two five-year funding contracts with WNET early in his career, Wiseman then had to secure funding film by film; however, he received consistent financial support from The Public Television Service, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and The Independent Television Service, along with occasional funding from the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities and from various private foundations. The four documentaries made in France received additional financial support from various French governmental agencies and from private French companies and individuals.

This pattern has continued for more than fifty years. There have been several fiction films over the years (*Seraphita's Diary* [1982]; *The Last Letter* [2002]; *A Couple* [2022]), but the main pattern is set—long-form documentaries about institutions, broadly defined. Some of the technology has changed. The films, formerly black and white, are now in color. Film stock has given way to digital technology. The tone of the films has broadened and in recent years is less combatively ironic and more generous in a conception of the capacity of public and private institutions to do their work.

Wiseman has for many years been emphatic that his films represent his own point of view, emerging from months of assembling a film of two to four hours or more out of more than a hundred hours of film. His films are enabled by, constrained by, and comprehensible in terms of an inherited tradition and prestige of documentary films and the grammar of both documentary

and fiction films. He claims the privileges of journalistic freedom and the freedom from constraint of an independent art creator.

Wiseman has also suggested, mostly by omission, that he works more or less alone, or otherwise in complete control. This may be very nearly true, but especially in the case of the cinematographers is a more mixed situation. We have also suggested that Wiseman's films, though perhaps not directly shaped by, are certainly possible only because of talented and experienced cinematographers and a supporting structure of institutions, funding agencies, a willing television network, cooperative subjects, and an appreciative critical and public audience. The existence of these networks makes possible the films, Wiseman's reputation, and his prosperity. At the same time, of course, Wiseman's films set in motion waves of economic activity that contribute to the support of critics, television programmers, educators, and others involved in the reception of the films.

Wiseman's firm grip on his reputation remains unrelaxed and tightly controlled. The networks of funding, broadcast exhibition, critical support, and audience respect are somehow maintained. Wiseman's collaborators are still mostly unmentioned in his own accounts of himself as the sole author of the works. The films, astonishingly, seem to keep coming. In recent years, Wiseman appears to be relying increasingly on help in pre-production, production, and post-production.

The primary story of Wiseman's work is, of course, in the films themselves, now available on the streaming service Kanopy, available to many holders of public library cards and to students and faculty at many universities and colleges. In 2023 work was completed on the restoration and color grading of the 32 films shot on 16mm and one shot on 35mm. The films are being preserved on 35mm by the Library of Congress National Audio Visual Conservation Center from the original camera negatives in the Zipporah Films Collection.

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Documentary Filmography

This filmography is intended as a quick reference to the primary credit information for each of Frederick Wiseman's documentaries. The information compiled here comes from our own earlier research and publication into the film credits, from end credits on the films, and other sources. We have not included lists of donors and funding agencies, people, or institutions in lists of thanks, or various subordinate technical contributors. Wiseman's own credits are inconsistent over the years; sometimes Wiseman is credited not only as Director, Producer, and Editor, but also as "Sound." Sometimes "Sound" is left out of the credits. And yet in many talks and interviews, Wiseman describes himself as always being present and running a sound recorder while participating in the choice of the primary subject of attention. Wiseman does not operate the camera. Wiseman did not operate the sound recorder in *Menus-Plaisirs*, owing to health issues, and in recent films has often shared credits for sound or producer. The credits we list are partial only. More complete credits may be found at Internet Movie Database and other databases. All show Wiseman beginning to share credit for production and sound.

Titicut Follies

Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Co-director and photographer: John Marshall
Shown at the New York Film Festival, September 28, 1967
First PBS broadcast: September 4, 1992
Running time: 89 minutes; black and white; 16mm

High School

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: Richard Leiterman
First WNET/13 New York broadcast: October 1968
Running time: 75 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Law and Order

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First NET broadcast: March 2, 1969
Running time: 81 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Hospital

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First NET broadcast: February 2, 1970
Running time: 84 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Basic Training

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: October 4, 1971
Running time: 89 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Essene

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: November 13, 1972
Running time: 86 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Juvenile Court

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: October 1, 1973
Running time: 144 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Primate

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: December 5, 1974
Running time: 105 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Welfare

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: September 24, 1975
Running time: 167 minutes: black and white; 16mm

Meat

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: November 17, 1976
Running time: 113 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Canal Zone

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: October 8, 1977
Running time: 174 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Sinai Field Mission

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: William Brayne
First PBS broadcast: October 17, 1978
Running time: 127 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Manoeuvre

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: March 20, 1980
Running time: 115 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Model

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the London Film Festival, November 1980
First PBS broadcast: September 16, 1981
Running time: 129 minutes; black and white; 16mm

The Store

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: December 14, 1983
Running time: 118 minutes; color; 16mm

Racetrack

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Boston Film Festival, August 13, 1985
First PBS broadcast: June 4, 1986
Running time: 114 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Deaf; Blind; Multi-handicapped; Adjustment and Work

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the London Film Festival, November 1986
First PBS broadcast: June 1988, as the mini-series *Deaf and Blind*
Running times: 164 minutes; 132 minutes; 126 minutes; and 120 minutes; color; 16mm

Missile

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the U.S. Film Festival, Park City, Utah, January 1988
First PBS broadcast: August 31, 1988
Running time: 118 minutes; color; 16mm

Near Death

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the New York Film Festival, October 1989
First PBS broadcast: January 21, 1990
Running time: 358 minutes; black and white; 16mm

Central Park

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: April 23, 1990
Running time: 176 minutes; color; 16mm

Aspen

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: December 30, 1991
Running time: 146 minutes; color; 16mm

Zoo

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: June 2, 1993
Running time: 130 minutes; color; 16mm

High School II

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: September 7, 1994
Running time: 220 minutes; color; 16mm

Ballet

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
First PBS broadcast: June 26, 1995
Running time: 170 minutes; color; 16mm

La Comédie-Française ou L'Amour Joué

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, November 28, 1996
First PBS broadcast: September 1, 1996
Running time: 223 minutes; color; 16mm; in French, with English subtitles

Public Housing

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the New York Film Festival, October 4, 1997
First PBS broadcast: December 1, 1997
Running time: 195 minutes; color; 16mm

Belfast, Maine

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 1999
First PBS broadcast: February 4, 2000
Running time: 248 minutes; color; 16mm

The Garden

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Unreleased as of 2024
Running time: 196 minutes; color; 16mm

Domestic Violence

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 4, 2001
First PBS broadcast: March 18, 2003
Running time: 196 minutes; color; 16mm

Domestic Violence 2

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Wellington (NZ) Film Festival, July 25, 2002
First PBS broadcast: March 19, 2003
Running time: 160 minutes (USA); 178 minutes (Buenos Aires International Film Festival); color; 16mm

State Legislature

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Berlin Film Festival, February 15, 2007
First PBS broadcast: June 13, 2007
Running time: 217 minutes, color, 16mm

La Danse: Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 11, 2009
First PBS broadcast: June 16, 2010
Running time: 159 minutes; color; 16mm; in French with English subtitles

Boxing Gym

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Cannes Film Festival, May 20, 2010
First PBS broadcast: June 16, 2011
Running time: 91 minutes; color; 16mm

Crazy Horse

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, August 31, 2011
Running time: 128 minutes; color; digital; in French, with English subtitles

At Berkeley

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 2, 2013
First PBS broadcast: January 13, 2014
Running time: 244 minutes; color; digital

National Gallery

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Cannes Film Festival, May 17, 2014
First PBS broadcast: August 21, 2015
Running time: 180 minutes; color; digital

In Jackson Heights

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 4, 2015
First PBS broadcast: January 6, 2017
Running time: 190 minutes; color; digital; partially in Spanish and Arabic, with English subtitles

Ex Libris: The New York Public Library

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 4, 2017
First PBS broadcast: September 4, 2018
Running time: 197 minutes; color; digital

Monrovia, Indiana

Director/Producer/Editor/Sound: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 4, 2018
First PBS broadcast: May 31, 2019
Running time: 143 minutes; color; digital

City Hall

Director/Producer/Editor: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: John Davey
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 8, 2020
First PBS broadcast: December 22, 2020
Running time: 272 minutes; color; digital

Menus-Plaisirs—Les Troisgros

Director/Editor: Frederick Wiseman
Photographer: James Bishop
Shown at the Venice Film Festival, September 9, 2023
Running time: 240 minutes; color; digital

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