

**American Meteorological Society  
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research**

**TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW PROJECT**

**Interview of Raymond Ban  
October 30, 2008**

**Interviewer: Robert Henson**

Begin Tape 1:

HENSON: Raymond Ban. It's October 30, 2008 and want to do a sound check?

BAN: Sure, I can do a sound check. And this is Ray Ban here with Bob on this thirtieth day of October, 2008.

HENSON: The recorder's not working.

BAN: I understand. Yeah, it wouldn't--yeah, a problem. You got to spend the next hour and, then, all of a sudden, "Oh no."

HENSON: Okay.

BAN: All right.

HENSON: Let's roll. And I have a few questions for you. Okay. And you will get a chance to see the transcript, just so you know. And, you know, anything that needs to be corrected, will. So, tell me, we'll start at the beginning. Where did you grow up and how did you get interested in weather?

BAN: Well, I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I was born in 1951 and--I was growing up I was spending a lot of time outside. I was one of those kind of guys that really abhorred spending any time inside and, even when the weather was inclement, which it was a, you know, a fair amount of time in Pittsburgh, you know, I would still always find myself wanting to be outside. And I think that being out of doors even at, you know, at an early age probably started my fascination with weather. You know, I recall, you know, being, you know, in literally baseball or playing midget football or, you know, just being outside working in the yard continually paying very close attention to what was going on with the weather. I spent my summers in high school working out at my Aunt's farm in a little community west of Pittsburgh called Burgettstown, Pennsylvania and, here again, the observation of weather and being fascinated by it started, probably, very early. The thing I do remember, though, and maybe you would get to this but I'll just continue to talk here--so it was that fascination with weather and the thrill of exciting weather, whether it be a snow storm, a thunderstorm, any type of active weather--so I started watching broadcast news and, particular, there was a gentlemen and, jeez, last--he may still be doing weather in the Pittsburgh market. His name's Joe DeNardo (sp?) and he was actually doing the weathercast for the ABC

affiliate in Pittsburgh, WTAE, so I started very closely following the predictions and being very critical of them when they were not correct, but it all began to just coalesce with a--with just a strong curiosity, fascination, and enjoying the excitement that weather provided.

HENSON: So, at what point did you decide, "Okay, I want to be a meteorologist when I grow up," or do you remember when that--

BAN: Yeah. I actually--I do. When I was finishing high school and making a decision to--as to what my college career was going to be like, I was considering a couple of different schools, I was fortunate enough to be offered a scholarship to Villanova University in Philadelphia and the curriculum at Penn State fascinated me because, at that time, I was not clear where I was going. There's a part of me that wanted to pursue Civil Engineering and another part of me was thinking about meteorology and the fact that Penn State had a program was very important and there was another side of me, even at that age, a little bit more of a fantasy, was, potentially, thinking about going on to medical school. So, I actually made my collegiate decision to go to Penn State, specifically because of the meteorology program that was being offered there and none of the other schools that I was considering at the time had a program. So, I went to school, went to Penn State, with the thought that I would be able to be exposed to course work in both civil engineering and meteorology and, since, they were pretty much the same for the first two years, I would be able to make a final decision on a major at the conclusion of my second year. So, it was right around that time of being, I guess, a senior in high school and reflecting more and more on what I wanted to do with my career that I think is when I had that first, sort of, light bulb go off and say, "You know what? Maybe a career in meteorology is really what I ought to be doing." And, then, when I went to Penn State, I did have the opportunity to take a few electives in meteorology and in civil engineering my first couple of years and it became very obvious, to me, at that point that the passion, the excitement, the fun of weather was far and away eclipsing my thoughts of being a civil engineer. And, so, that's when it all, sort of, firmed up for me.

HENSON: Was it a specific professor who [stabilized?] that or was it more, being in the apartment and general excitement from the course from the material?

BAN: You know, it would be hard for me to specifically point to an individual professor at that time because I really--I think the course that I was taking, actually, was a course that Rick Anthies (sp?) was teaching in tropical at that--it was a survey course and Rick was the instructor. And I'm not rapping on Rick, but, you know, it wasn't because of his dynamism as a professor that got me going. I mean, I enjoyed his course, but Rick was pretty low key in some ways. I think it was more that--the more I understood and learned, the more fascinated and energized I became and I contrasted that, probably, in a great sense, to--that wasn't happening with my engineering electives. So, you know, I found myself wanting to spend more and more time--so my free time, when I had free time to do some reading and continuing to give thought to what I wanted to do, I found myself always gravitating toward meteorological

reading as opposed to anything that had to do with engineering. So, that was when the decision was made.

HENSON: So, you went through your bachelors and, then, did you go directly to Accuweather and how did you make that decision of what to do after your bachelors?

BAN: That's--I did go directly to Accu and, so, that was an interesting situation because as I looked ahead toward graduation, there were a couple of opportunities that seemed to be surfacing. One was--I had spent a lot of time speaking with the Naval--the Navy recruiter at Penn State. So, one of the options that I was giving very serious thought to was going into the Navy and going to officer training school and, then, beginning a career as a meteorologist with the US Navy. The other option was to think about Grad school and, at that time, I, actually, was thinking more about looking at, not at a Masters in meteorology, but looking for a Masters in business administration because I thought that might give me a greater opportunity than digging more vertically at that point in time. And, then, the other option that began to surface was I was taking some forecasting courses and, remarkably, I was doing very well and in the forecast contest that we were having I was getting lucky and in both the--and back in the early Seventies, Penn State was on the quarter system, so, in the class I took both in my--in the winter term of my senior year and the spring term of my senior year, I actually wound up finishing first in both of those and, so, the thought of maybe moving right into operational weather forecasting, either in the public or private sector, was also on the docket. What actually made the decision (laughter), was probably nothing to do with a future career plan or any sort of logical thinking. The instructor of the two courses that I took in weather analysis and forecasting was Joel Myers, who was the President of Accuweather, and I think he was impressed with my success in the forecasting course and offered me the opportunity for me to come and work at Accuweather. At that time it was fun living in state college and I was seeing a young lady at that time that was also from that area and, so, the decision to actually begin work in operational weather forecasting was driven more by other aspects--social aspects of my life as opposed to the professional aspects. And, thinking that I could always after, you know, a few years there if it didn't work out, change direction and do something a little bit different. So the decision was made more socially than it was professionally.

HENSON: So this was 1972, correct?

BAN: This was Seventy-Three.

HENSON: Seventy-Three.

BAN: Seventy-Three.

HENSON: So you were at Accuweather from Seventy-Three to Eighty...

BAN: 'Til early Eighty-Two. So nine years, for the most part.

HENSON: So, tell me about Accuweather from the time you began to the time you left and what made the strongest impression upon you and how would you characterize the environment, the culture, the work there...

BAN: Well, I look back on my years at Accuweather with, I guess, a somewhat bifurcated point of view. On the positive side, and there are a ton of positives, I learned a lot. I thought I knew how to forecast the weather and when I got into an operational environment that required quick decisions, good decisions, without the luxury of studying the situation for, you know, an extended period of time, that that really demonstrated to me how much I still had to learn and as successful as I was in my undergraduate career, I quickly learned that all I had with my bachelors degree was really, now, a license to really be able to learn how to, you know, really understand and get in touch with the atmosphere. I also learned a lot about a--the dynamics of a small business. And in the early Seventies, Accuweather was a very small company. I think when I was hired in 1973, I was, I think, the eleventh forecaster on the staff so it was a very small business and I was fascinated by the dynamics of that. And having been really just focused on trying to be the best weather forecaster that I could be when I was in school, I was completely oblivious to other aspects of a small business. The entire sales and marketing side of what it took to make that business grow. The, sort of the personnel management, human resources side of it, and, so, when I had the opportunity after my first few years at Accuweather to participate in some of the sales and marketing initiatives, I did so with a lot of enthusiasm and that was a huge learning process for me. Then, also, I think that the culture of Accuweather is unique. It's, you know--it's an entrepreneurial, small business culture which is set, primarily, by the entrepreneur and that, you know, that always, because we're all human, there's always strengths and weaknesses associated with that. And, so, I began to really understand more of how the culture of the company was being set by the leader and the positives and the negatives associated with that. So I look back on the nine years--almost ten years that I spent at Accuweather as being highly pivotal in my career. The learning was outstanding. I learned much more about weather analysis and forecasting. I think I became much more--I gained much more insight into the atmosphere and developed a--it may have been, too, that I leveraged all of my years outside, but developing the artistic side of weather prediction, when you can just sort of feel what's going to happen with the weather, in addition to being able to do it from a more straightforward and rigorous scientific analysis process of data. Being able to merge the two, I think I finally accomplished that when I was at Accuweather. Understanding small business, understanding sales and marketing was a fantastic learning. Understanding how to motivate and get the best out of people and, unfortunately, maybe more what you want to avoid so as to be a barriers in that I learned as well. Because as many things as I think that were done at Accuweather, there were also things that were just not done very well at all. And, so, those learnings were critical. Also, during the time, I had the opportunity to begin doing radio work, so I developed the communication skills to deliver weather on the Accuweather radio client list. I, also, was doing weather on the Pennsylvania Public Television Network as a substitute at the time. I got the opportunity to do that quite regularly. Had the chance to do some weekend weather at

WJAC-TV in Johnstown, Pennsylvania at the time, so, that was just a hugely developmental time for me. And, you know, as I look back today, I probably hugely underestimated the amount of learning that I was able to achieve during that time and how important those learnings were to the rest of my career.

HENSON: Okay. I want to be sure we have enough time for the weather channel but if there's anything you'd like to follow up on in terms of the aspects of the management style at Accuweather that you found were positives or negatives or things that you emulated here versus things you've chosen not to. Is there anything along those lines you'd like to...

BAN: The management style at Accuweather was unique in so many ways. I think the motivation--how you get the best out of people and how you, you know, provide--how you provide an environment that enables people to grow and flourish, to learn from their mistakes, to be a coach, to be a mentor, I think that's all vitally important, you know, in optimizing any organization. The culture at Accuweather was really not in that vain. Management was more by intimidation. Mistakes were not looked upon as opportunities for learning, all the time, but more of an opportunity to be criticized and, in some cases, belittled. So the fear of screwing up became the primary motivator as opposed to the positive of wanting to be the best you could and taking intelligent risks made a lot sense as opposed to being afraid to take risk because of fear of failure. And I saw a sharp contrast in that type of an environment versus what I sort of saw when I was in high school and I did have the opportunity to play some sports in high school and, you know, more of a--we're going to learn from our mistakes and we're going to be better and, you know, you can't get better unless you screw up versus if you screw up you're an idiot--and I'm being a little harsh here, but that was a big big takeaway for me. And, so, when I left Accuweather I came away with one strong thought about all those things that I don't want to be as I move forward in my career. So that as much as positive as I learned, the big learning was also, so here's the things that I never really want to do or be. If that makes sense. So.

HENSON: All right. So, you came--when did you start the Weather Channel? Were you here [under Bill (inaudible)?]?

BAN: I was. I started here on March 1, 1982. The Weather Channel officially launched on May 2, 1982. So those of us assembled--who assembled here on March 1 of Eighty-Two were really the first employees. Now, there were a handful of folks who were here a couple of weeks earlier. Some people began to trickle in in the early part of February of that year and those were some of the people from landmark. Clearly John Colman, who was the first President and, really, the concept holder of a twenty-four hour weather network was here then, but, I think, except for--with the exception of about maybe a handful of people--half a dozen or ten people--the bulk of us, you know, did come on the first of March. And that was--well, I'll let you ask another question, Bob, but just to look back at that time, that was a fabulously fun time. The energy of a startup company is intoxicating because we were all

coming with, you know, various--varied backgrounds. Even all the meteorological compliment, you know, people coming from military, people coming from government, people coming from the private sector, people coming from the broadcast industry, so, even within the meteorology function, you had a very diverse group of people. We had nothing but a blank sheet of paper to start with. So there was no legacy, there was no history, there was no, "This is the way we always have done it," to have either as an aid or as an impediment. The job descriptions that we had were pretty much anything that needs to be done. You know, I found myself working in the control room, actually doing some writing for our PR team at the time, and getting ready to be on the air when we launched, so that was a real real real fun time back in the early and middle parts of 1982.

HENSON: What was your title when you began?

BAN: I was an on camera meteorologist. Yep. I was one of, I think, forty people who were hired to be on air. So that was another fun thing because now I had the chance to, on a regular basis, begin to go out and just have the chance to talk to people about something that I am excited about, that I am passionate about, and that I love and the prospects of being able to do that unconstrained in a twenty four by seven environment were just fabulously fantastic.

HENSON: So how did that experience of being an [OCM Revolve?] in those first few months and what was it like to get OCM with that amount of on air exposure? Was that unusual and unprecedented?

BAN: Oh it was. Somebody calculated that a year at the weather channel was equal to seven years of broadcast TV. Now, here again, I had had the opportunity to be doing the weather show on Pennsylvania Public Television Network, occasionally, which was called at the time, "The State of the Weather, the Shape of the World," and that was a fifteen minute program that aired every Monday through Friday evening from 6:00 to 6:15. The first eight minutes of it were weather and the second seven minutes were a member of the Penn State faculty being interviewed about their specialty but it was, you know, an eight minute weather program and having eight minutes to talk about the weather was, you know, in an of itself, a luxury and you only had to talk about the state of Pennsylvania. But, now, coming to a national network where you had the chance to cover the entire nation and all the exciting weather that was taking place and, at the same time, you were twenty four by seven. So it was as energizing as you can ever imagine. I was one happy camper. And, you know, I remember opportunities in those first--you know, in that first year where--we always worked in partnerships and it just so happened that, you know, because of, either, a scheduling quirk or because of illness my partner might be out, I was even worked enough to take the light in that because now I had, essentially, the ability to do three one hour shows all by myself. So I had three solid hours to just go out in front of a camera and talk about the weather. It was fabulous. And I just enjoyed the ever living daylights out of that.

HENSON: Now tell me your perspective on the events of [the now?], John Colman and the financial trouble that went around that. I think that was in Eighty-Three.

BAN: Yeah it was in Eighty-Three. Well, that--you know, that was a difficult time. So the, you know, the euphoria of the launch in Eighty-Two and the slow, but at least seemingly steady building of an audience, was really doused with cold water--the best way I could say is we moved into Eighty-Three, because at that point, you know, the realities of where we were as a business began to emerge to all of us and those realities were that the business was losing money at a fairly remarkable rate--about a million dollars a month. The reason why is because the advertising sales projections that we had based on ratings delivery and audience delivery were not materializing. Advertisers, at that point in the media landscape, cable television was very very raw--just new, I mean. CNN had launched in 1980. I think we were the fifth cable network to launch, so the industry was very young. Cable wasn't getting a lot of viewership. The main broadcast networks, the traditional broadcast networks, were still, really, the delivery of mass eyeballs. So, the advertising community was not really migrating to cable at the rate that it was hoped it would and that the business plan called for. And, also, the distribution of The Weather Channel was moving slower than had thought. We weren't getting cleared in cable systems because, at that time, cable systems in general were probably delivering only about a dozen or so channels and, so, the capacity of, you know, once you had the networks from a couple of different locations and, you know, in many places, you would have an ABC affiliate from two markets that might be, you know, relatively close by and when you combine that with a community access channel and a news channel and, then, some of the other networks, the [general?] capacity was scarce, so we weren't getting cleared as fast. So we had a lower distribution than anticipated and, therefore, not getting as much possible viewers and--you call that the audience universe.

(End of Side One)

BAN: --A very difficult year and the need for a strong business leader at The Weather Channel became more and more apparent and as, I think, as dedicated and as passionate person John Colman was for this business and for weather, I think what--it was becoming increasingly apparent that what the company needed was a person that had strong business acumen and who could chart a course for moving forward within the reality of what the marketplace was at that time. So I think, John and Landmark clearly became--you know, the relationship came under a lot of stress because of the realities of where the business was and where it was heading. Landmark was going to have to make some tough decisions. So, that put John in a very difficult situation because the decisions that they wanted to make would have put him out of direct managerial leadership and into more of a role of being a spokesperson or a persona for the network and I don't think that, given his commitment to the concept and that this was his--in his mind--his baby, you know, was going to be something that he would be able to tolerate. So, you know, the line in the sand was drawn and as been written in Frank's book is, is that John was given a certain amount of time to find another financial backer for the enterprise and

entered into an agreement that basically said that if he was not successful within that amount of time that then he would step down and leave The Weather Channel and fully release Landmark. And that's how it turned out. So, during that period of time, there was a great amount of apprehension. You know, I think as fundamentally still dedicated to the--you know, we all felt that The Weather Channel was going to be a success. Either we were, you know, stupid or we were drunk on our own excitement for it. So the thought of The Weather Channel failing and closing, quite frankly, never really entered my mind. But, I did become more realistic with regard to expectations of how fast the business would grow and what, you know, what that might mean for my own personal growth during that period of time.

HENSON: Okay. Is there anything else about the whole--that change in Eighty-Three that you feel hasn't been adequately written about or covered in Frank's book or in the television weather casting history or anywhere else. I mean, just, before we move on, is there anything else that--

BAN: Well, you know, for those of us who lived it, it was a highly emotional time. First of all, John Colman--I had a great relationship with John. I think we--for whatever reason, I think the chemistry between John and me was good. Now that wasn't the same for everybody. He had a, you know--he had a certain style about him that could be, I think, grating to some, but we always had a relationship where, I think, we both had a lot of respect for each other. So when John left in August of 1983, that was a particularly difficult time for me because I was probably one of the few employees--not the few, I mean, I was a minority. I was the one painted as being so stark. There were more folks who seemed to have a difficult relationship with him than had a good one. I was one of the people that had a good one. And, so, watching John depart was an unsettling time for those of us who had connected with him because he represented the, you know, the rock, if you will, of what the vision for The Weather Channel was. His departure left us, I think, feeling a little bit vulnerable. I think we had begun to know Landmark--we started to know Landmark a little better at that point but, still, it was only a little bit over a year into the whole thing and, so, it was--still not sure how, without Colman, that was going to play out. So there was a significant amount of motion. I remember that, you know, John's departing memo the day he left the company. That was one of those moments in time that I think, you know, I will always remember because I was very very sad that day to watch that happen.

HENSON: Okay. So, I have several questions that are fairly general about, [as you see?] The Weather Channel, but before we get to those, let's just briefly--very briefly--go through your series of career, you know, ladder climbs. In other words, what your titles have been and when you took those positions.

BAN: Well, I started, as was already said, I started as an on camera meteorologist when we launched in Eighty-Two. That remained the same until Eighty-Four. In early Eighty-Four I took the opportunity to become one of the supervisors of the group so, in addition to my on air responsibilities, I also had the responsibility for six or seven, I can't remember the number now, direct



reports of other on camera meteorologist who were working on my team and I think there were three of us, at the time, who reported to a director of the department.

HENSON: Who were those other people? The other two managers in the [branch?]

BAN: Bob, you're testing me. Who were the other supervisors at the time? Well, the director the department, and the person who was named the director early, was Bruce Edwards--Bruce Calinowski (sp?). And there was myself--this is sad that I can't remember who the other two people were.

HENSON: If it comes to you when we do the transcript you can--

BAN: Yeah. And I have to go back and look at some of my notes. Yeah. So I started doing that in Eighty-Four. In early Eighty-Four. Bruce, I think, took over in something right around January or February of that year and, then, we had a new President that came on board because Colman left in August of Eighty-Three, then the chairman of Landmark came to be the--well it wasn't the chairman it was the President and chief operating officer of Landmark came over and became the temporary president. His name is Dubby Win (sp?)--John L. Win. So Dubby (sp?) came and one of the things that he did at that point was go out and convince the cable operators to begin paying a subscriber fee for The Weather Channel which was in [Frank's corporate?] secured the revenue that we needed to be able to continue on in business and not close down. So Dubby was here in the latter part of Eighty-Three searching for a new president. That new president came on board, I think, in late Eighty-Three, that was John Janis. So, John did some reorganization. At the time, we needed--we thought it was important to begin to separate the meteorologist from the on camera meteorologist. Bruce became the first director of the department and I started as a supervisor then. That lasted through Eighty-Four. In early Eighty-Five, by March or April of Eighty-Five, Bruce decided that being the director of the department was something he didn't really want to do anymore and wanted to go back and just be a full-time on camera meteorologist. So that opened up that position. So I said, "What the heck?" So I pitched it thinking, you know, there was probably no better than a fifty-fifty shot, but, was selected to do that job. So in May of Eighty-Five, I actually took over as the director of the department. That continued--I'm trying to think, now, until--for a couple years I was just doing that. I think in Eighty-Five and Eighty-Six. In Eighty-Seven, I think I took over some responsibility for parts of our production operation. And, then, in Eighty-Eight, I took over responsibility for the entire meteorology function including the behind-the-scenes as well as the on-air. Reorganized the group. That was in Eighty-Eight. Took on more responsibility, operationally, I think, in Ninety. Became the--I moved from director of meteorology to director of operations, I want to say, in the early Nineties, some point. Ninety or Ninety-One. And that's when I took over some more responsibilities in production, for some of our control room staff, as well as some of our traffic--our [Ad Sells?] trafficking operations. Then, I think, titles changed. Went from director to vice president sometime during that period. That took me up to about Ninety-Six. And in Ninety-Six we started looking at international

expansion and I was pretty excited about that opportunity so beginning in Ninety-Six I joined an international business development group and, for the next several years, spent a lot of time off line, so to speak. Still had the title of VP of operations but spent a significant amount of my time identifying, developing, and launching businesses internationally. Video businesses internationally. So that's when we launched our network from here into Latin America. That's when we launched our--our businesses in Europe. We launched--we had our facility in London, we had our facility in Düsseldorf, and, then, I was also pretty heavily involved in looking at opportunities in the far East in China and in Japan. So there was about a five year period between Ninety-Six and 2001 where I was really more immersed in international business development. Then, long story short there, those stories didn't turn out good. We wound up closing all of those businesses, eventually, for different reasons in each territory but, bottom line was they all closed and that was just another two hour saga we can talk about sometime. Tremendous amounts of learnings during that period, as well. So, then, came back. Because of my heavy focus on the international development side, some responsibilities were realigned here when I was focused on that and, so, when I sort of reentered, if you will, out of international in the early 2000s, a lot of the operational parts of the job had been taken over by others, so I just came back and sort of assumed the position, again, of being responsible more for all the meteorological aspects of the organization, still having quite a bit of input into the operations outside of meteorology. And, then, I guess, somewhere in the early to mid 2000s just, you know, continued. Went from the senior--hard for me to tell, you know, go from vice president to senior vice president to executive vice president and, essentially, just continue to work primarily with the video network side as opposed to--we launched Weather.com in Ninety-Five. I didn't have a whole lot of interaction there so my main focus was the video network although as, sort of the person responsible for all the meteorological aspects of the organization I, also, certainly interacted in that area with TWCI or Weather.com. And, then, earlier this year in 2008 I took over responsibility, in addition to meteorology, I took over responsibility, once again, for all of our programming and operations. So now I am back to being responsible for meteorology and programming and operations.

HENSON: Okay, so, then, you've been a vice president at one level or other since sometime in the Nineties, it sounds like.

BAN: I would guess that I became a vice president sometime in Ninety-Two ish or Three ish would be when I moved from director to VP and I've been a VP, senior VP, or executive VP since Ninety-Three.

HENSON: Okay. That's good to have for the record. All right, I don't know how much time we're going to have.

BAN: Well let's just keep--hold on--let's just keep--let me just check something here. Actually, my next meeting, Bob, is at 3:15 to 4:00 with Stu so, yeah, we can rob some of his time, so let's keep going.

HENSON: That would be fantastic. Okay. Once you get set up it's nice to--

BAN: Yeah. So let's just keep going.

HENSON: How would you characterize The Weather Channel's approach to weather casting and how that's evolved, and that's a large question, I know, but how would you summarize, kind of, the philosophy of weather casting and what are the principles if you were going to try to articulate them. What is important about weather casting?

BAN: Well, you know, looking back historically, when we launched in Eighty-Two, we--the value proposition of The Weather Channel was constant availability. So, you know, in 1982 weather was available on--first of all, all of the surveys that were performed, the marketing research that was done says that the population of The United States prefer to get their weather on TV and did get most of their weather on TV and, although radio was a player, it was nowhere near as much of a player as television and, then, newspaper was, you know, from a traditional media point of view, was far behind. So TV was the desired medium but weather on television was only available a couple of times a day. The cutting shows on the, you know, on the morning network programs. Usually there was an early newscast and an evening newscast and, so you got a couple of minutes in each of those. And that was it, right? Weekends were a little bit of a roll of the dice. Some networks had weekend newscasts and weathercasts, others didn't. So there were many markets in the United States where you can actually go, from a television point of view, from Friday evening until Monday evening without a local weather cast being available on TV back in the early eighties.

HENSON: Even in the early eighties.

BAN: Yep. Because there were many markets that didn't do weekend newscasts because the economics just weren't there. So, the value proposition was all the--you know, weather available on your schedule. We felt it was important to be a credible, professionally presented, dependable, accurate source of weather. So, the network launched in Eighty-Two under Colman's direction with, okay, we're not so much here to be entertainment--and I use that as a way to describe--because weather casting, as you know, developed in the United States in the Fifties and, then, on into the Sixties you had the weather being looked at as the light side of the news after, you know, muggings, murders, and, you know, whatever. You get to the weather and let's have some fun with it, so, you know, you had clowns, you had, you know, gimmicks, you had weather bunnies, you had, you know, a pretty much a less than, if you will, credible, scientific, professional presentation going on in some areas. So we started with the plan to capture that space and I think we did a great job of achieving that goal. So, if you came to The Weather Channel, what did you get? You got professionals, you know, no weird outfits, you got reliability, dependability, frequent updates, good forecast to start with, and a very straightforward, no unnecessary thrills, presentation of the weather. Not that personality wasn't a, you know, allowed or--it was encouraged. But it was encouraged within the context of those attributes and I think the brand developed from that. Now, as you go from the early Eighties to the mid-Nineties you have huge change because, during that period of time, other cable networks started and started putting on more regular

programming. Broadcast television began to expand the amount of weather programming. And, then, the granddaddy of all disruptions to the status quo came in 1995 with, really, the beginnings of the world wide web usage and the available--constant availability of information including weather. So, in order to remain competitive through that evolution of weather information availability, we had to begin to differentiate that somewhat straightforward meat and potatoes, no thrills positioning that we had the luxury of in the Eighties had to be--had to be rethought in the mid-Nineties because we had to come up with the value proposition that in an ever increasing commoditization of weather information, we're still going to compel people to come and spend time with the service. And, so, I think our presentations became more dimensionalized, you know, as they were confined primarily to, we can call it a man and a map back in the Eighties, we had to become a lot more, I think, interesting. We had to be a little bit more engaging. So we had to tune our presentations from a presenters standpoint to have people who could, in addition, be able to report good utility weather information, have to have some capability to attract an audience and engage an audience. We began to understand that weather was outside and not in a studio, so we began to incorporate more and more live shots from the field as well as just video actuality of what the weather is doing outside as opposed to showing the radar display or a satellite image. And we continue along that evolutionary, I think, path today because none of the dynamics have changed much in the past ten years or so. I mean, it's still a hugely populated category. Weather information is, in many ways, is ubiquitous, you know, we're surrounded by it and our--I think our challenge is to continuing to be able to provide an experience to our viewers and users that goes beyond utility. That, you know, I use my grocery store, now, as a--if you walk into a grocery store, you may have heard this before, and I use one of the local chains here in the Atlanta here as an example, it's Publics (sp?) is the grocery chain and I think they do a marvelous job because when you walk into the store, the first thing you notice is, okay, I'm coming because I'm picking up, I have a utility function. And, you know, I'm coming to pick up a case of beer for tonight. Well, so, I'm driven, right? I want to get in, get my beer, get out, get home, start drinking my beer. Well, the first thing I'm met with is when you walk into the door of Publics (sp?), the first thing, you know, your senses are attacked from a number of different perspectives. There's always a very nice display, they always have a very attractive person standing there, you know, standing out the specials of the day, right behind that attractive person is another attractive person with samples. There's some very pleasant music playing, and, then, the aroma hits you because they've got the deli over to their right when you walk in and the deli's always cooking up something really that just smells good and you know that they're pumping that right into that entrance way so the moment you walk in you're being assaulted by that. And, as you begin to progress your way back to the beer section, you continue to be bombarded with very colorful and engaging displays. You are--continue to be handed free samples of just really tasty stuff and the music is good, the aroma is good,

and all of a sudden you realize, wow, this is really a great experience I'm having here and most of the time I'll come out with more than just that case of beer. So I think The Weather Channel has to compete on that same level. When people come to us we have--you know, they're coming because they have a utility need. They're looking for weather, information of some sort, and we should never be in a position to impede them from achieving that utility and leaving if that's their goal because there will be those times where I am driven to get home and start drinking that beer and, so, I will go straight to the beer case, pick up my Dos Equis, turn around, walk right to the checkout line, buy it, and get out of there, right? Regardless of what's going on around me, as attractive as it may be, I don't have neither the time or the inclination to spend anything other than just getting it and getting out and I can do that, I can go right to it, it's there, it's accessible, put it in the cart, wheel it up, go to one of the express lines, check it out, and I'm out [at the door?]. So I think we have to be always able to provide our utility users with that kind of fast and responsive service. On the other hand, though, when they do have a little bit more time or when they are very captured by something and all of a sudden can broaden out beyond the utility, that's where we have to be constantly as engaging and connected as we can be because that experience at that moment in time, in my mind, creates the emotional tie and the bonding with the service that transcends the utility. Because now you move from a utilitarian function to one driven more by an emotional response to a series of stimulus around you which are attractive, which are engaging, which are connecting, which you give you depth, perspective, and insight that you're not going to get from potentially most other sources and the uniqueness of that--of that experience, is what has to drive us. So I want all of our on camera presenters to be able to have something of that analogy to that person with that pineapple and that tasty sausage on that toothpick or the little container of apple cider there who says, "Hey, you know, come taste this for a second," okay? "I know you've just come to get your beer, but listen, try this, because I think you're really going to like it." "Okay. I'll try it. Oh, yeah, that is good. How much does that cost?" "Oh, it only costs sixty-nine cents to buy a quarter of this thing. It's great. Here's the recipe." "Okay, yeah, great, put it in the cart," you know, and away you go. And I think that's where we have and we have to continue to evolve. So we're not providing information as much as we have to provide a total experience and The Weather Channel experience has, I think, become pretty well established. The anchor attribute is trust and it's reinforced to us. We own trust. Ike, Gustav, Fay this past year when this country needed to have the best weather information it could get, we hands down beat the competition. No other internet site, no other media outlet delivered the audiences that we did. And, why? Because at the end of the day we go out and we ask them, "Why?" "Because we trust you." And, so, building off of trust, which is really what we began to build in 1982, we have to continue to own trust and to own all of those utilitarian attributes that I discussed earlier. But, in addition, we have to go beyond. We have to provide that all encompassing weather experience. And as I think the population continues to

become more and more weather engaged, people are opening up to that weather experience. I think weather's becoming more cool to folks. Weather's becoming--you know, because of climate, climate change, because of just connectivities with parts of your life, I think that as a society, the United States and the world in general is moving more towards an appreciation of our environment, in general. I think there is--my own point of view is that there is a reality that we are going through a phase of change where weather is becoming more intense. And, you know, I think you now have the shock and awe of weather more as a connecting point than we ever have. And I think that there's--and the younger demographics, now, are coming into the primes of their careers with a much greater appreciation for that and for our planet and for our environment and understanding more about it. So we've got a great opportunity and we just have to be actualizing on it every second of every day.

HENSON: A couple of, sort of, more specific questions. So, I gather not all of Weather Channels on air people are meteorologists or come in as meteorologists so if you can clarify, kind of, how meteorological training plays into the [OCM?] and how that's evolved over time.

BAN: Well, so we have defined the criteria for meteorological experience as being eligible for full membership in the American Meteorological Society. Being eligible for full membership makes one eligible to obtain a certification. Either the--well, it used to be the seal of approval, but now it's the certified consulting meteorologist. So if you can qualify for full membership in the AMS, we consider you to be, by the definition of the society, a meteorologist. Now, since the beginning, we have had a variety of meteorological backgrounds. Some folks, even when we arrived here in Eighty-Two, some folks had formal degrees, either Bachelors or Masters, I don't think we had anybody with Ph.Ds in Eighty-Two, but we do today. We had people who came with military training only and never really had a formal degree. We had people who had no, either military or

(End of Tape 1)

Begin Tape 2:

HENSON: Just the weather channel.

BAN: So, yeah, the bottom line is we have quite a range. We have people who have always been to, at least a significant extent, involved with the weather. Formal degrees, Ph.Ds, Masters, Bachelors, all the way over to just that experiential set. Today, once again, as I said, you know, the criteria is qualification for full membership in the AMS and I think today we recognize that a differentiator, and probably an increasingly important differentiator, is for somebody to be able to provide, as a part of that experience that I just talked about, provide insight, depth, and perspective into the weather that is beyond just reading what's on a map or a graphic and, quote unquote, "Presenting it." I think we go from, not being weather presentation focused,

but I think we have to be weather engagement focused. It's an engagement of an experience as opposed to the presentation of a product.

HENSON: Let's see. So tell me about The Weather Channel attitudes and practices since Eighty-Two in terms of fostering both diversity in both gender and ethnicity and how you see The Weather Channel on a national level and, perhaps not so much role, but do you think that The Weather Channel has helped lead to more diversity in weather casting.

BAN: I'd like to hope we have. Now, I can't say that in the early Eighties diversity was a key driver, but I think we've realized in the past decade or so that if you want to engage and connect with your audience, you have to represent the makeup of that audience and as difficult as it is to find really effective diverse talent, it's an imperative. So we have the business case for diversity as our driver. You know, whether or not you believe diversity, morally, is the correct thing to do or not, and most of us happen to believe it is--even putting that beside for a moment, the business case is unrefutable. So we absolutely look to provide our customers with the kind of connection points that we believe that they need in order to have that experience that we want them to have so we are constantly looking for the overall experience to consist of as much gender and age and racial and ethnic diversity as we possibly can because we feel that that's really going to be a huge part of that experience. Have we had an impact? Like I said, I like to think we have. I, you know, I just think that when I look at people on our air today that the passion and the intensity of Jim Cantori (sp?) to the vivaciousness and just the over the top excitement of Stephanie Abrams (sp?), you know, I always want that mix. The somewhat professorial Mike Bettis (sp?), the highly professorial Doctor Greg Forbes, the sort of the surfer dude Steve Lyons. You know, these are all part and parcel of what the experience in weather has to be. So, yeah, I think it's vitally important.

HENSON: So tell me what you think--well first of all, do you think weather casting has changed--local weather casting has changed since The Weather Channel has began and what changes do you see? You mentioned the lightheartedness of the Sixties--Fifties, Sixties, Seventies. I mean, what--how do you see the landscape of TV weather nationally versus when you started. I'm talking about [weather??].

BAN: Yeah. I think, and generally it has continued to become more professional and that's due to so many things. And has The Weather Channel had an impact on that? Probably, although I would be reluctant to say that we were a main driver of it. Although, it's interesting because I've heard it said--I have done no study on it--but I've heard it said that The Weather Channel launched in 1982 and it just so happens that the weather page of The USA Today launched at the same time, you may have had this conversation, but it's been pointed out to me that the combination of what happened on The USA Today with the weather page and The Weather Channel have profoundly impacted the consumption of weather in The United States, but putting that aside, I think that weather information in general has, you know, we've gotten better. You know, as a science, we've evolved. Meteorology has become a more

precise science than it was twenty-seven years ago. I think that, clearly the technical horsepower now to drive the, you know, the NWP processes that we need to--in order to get a better prediction is constantly increasing. And, so, I think weather has gradually evolved from a somewhat skeptical--and from the eyes of the consumer--while that's just a guess and it's kind of fun and unique to see how it works out, to one where significant decisions are being based on those weather predictions, now. So I think, in and of itself, the evolution of the science has created an evolution of the presentation of weather information because it's moved out of the realm of, if you will, somewhat speculative gamesmanship into a more, you know, concrete and economically impactful set of information, so that, I think, has probably--I would estimate--in my hunches that would be the most significant driver. I don't think you--you know, of presentation, style--I travel a lot and I can't now think of any situation--that doesn't mean that doesn't exist--where weather in a local newscast is treated as a joke. I think the standard around the nation has evolved to one of a certainly--maybe not all the times--a scientific map discussion, but at the very--and I know [maybe no one?] really wants that experience--but, it's gone into a solid zone of very straightforward, credible presentation of information that is being used for decision support.

HENSON: So, I think a couple more, really meaty issues here and, then, anything else you want to add. So how do you see the next ten years in terms of The Weather Channel and weather casting or in general. What comes to mind as far as challenges and opportunities?

BAN: Well, I think, you know, was it--"that forecasting can be hazardous, particularly when it involves the future." My hunch is that the convergence of the digital landscape is going to be the driver and, although, I think that there will continue to be a difference between what folks expect coming from a screen in their living room or their family room and what folks expect from a screen coming from their home office or their den or, you know, whatever--their workroom. I think there's always going to be that experiential division but not--you know, but that aside, the fact of the matter is that the content is going to be achievable on both simultaneously through--I mean, we know we have television being delivered today through IP and new television--I mean, I would--Panasonic's come out with it, I think Pioneer has it right now where--Apple has it--you plug in an internet--you know, high speed internet connection into the back of the TV and away you go. Right? You don't need cable, you don't need satellite--just do a--you know, it's all being delivered by IP. Mobile is going to continue to expand and grow so I think, at some point, over the course of the next decade, the technological evolution is going to drive consumption in different ways. I don't know exactly how it will play out but the mass convergence of the digital media landscape is going to have impacts. The other thing that I think is going to be very impactful is the reality that the population today in the age demographics, say, from eighteen to thirty, those individuals are much more technologically savvy than we as aging bloomers are right now. And as they move into control--command and control positions in the sweet spots of their careers over the course of the next



decade or more, they are going to change how information, including weather, is presented and consumed. So, my prediction would be that there's going to be change--significant change--and that a decade from now I would think that mobile presentation will have evolved to the point where we're watching on mobile technology everything today that we're watching either on our desktop screen or on our television screens in our living room. You know, how that takes over from a personalization point of view--so, maybe the viewing experience that has once been a family experience will become just, you know, a family of four sitting in the same room each looking at their own personal screen with their own earphones in, you know, communing in the sense that they're all in the same room together but each having their own personal and individualized media experience with their personal device and that's going to be customizable so going out and quickly grabbing the latest weathercast for my local area or for some other part of the world, having that become customized with the data that I want. I'm going to be able to create--who, you know, whether I want a human weathercaster, weather I want a, you know, an avatar, where I want it from, how I want it presented, what do I want, you know, I will be able to personalize and customize that in my own personalized little, you know, high definition device that's going to give me that experience.

HENSON: Wow. What a world.

BAN: Yeah, but I think--you know, just as I watch--I have my twenty-two year old son, I marvel at him because he is able to look me in the eye, carry on a absolutely coherent, engaged conversation with me while, at the same time, his thumb is moving across a keyboard and he is carrying on a text conversation with somebody else. And he is truly multitasking. Now, obviously, his brain is moving at microseconds between the two because it can't be split, but he is able to achieve that kind of separation effectively so when he and his peers move into the mid forties and early fifties of their careers and they're sitting in positions of the media industry and at the technology industry, the curve is going to go up. Their rate of absorption and their rate of output is going to dwarf what we've been able to achieve up until now because they--they nursed on this stuff and we haven't.

HENSON: It would be interesting to look back in a hundred years to whoever's looking at this interview.

BAN: Yeah, say, yeah, "Okay, this guy was bullshit." (laughter) "Boy, he was wrong." But I think it's going to be--I think it's going to be fun. I really do and, you know, we're getting there. I mean, interactive TV is just beginning to start to grow. I mean, personalization, customization is where we're going. It's all about me, now, here. Boom. Boom, boom. I'm going to go out and I'm going to decide--I'm going to control, you know, who's presenting that newscast to me, when I get that newscast, what kind of news I get, and how I'm going to configure that and construct that and how there's never going to be--never more than just seconds old. It's going to be constantly refreshed. I think we're going to have all of that at our fingertips.

HENSON: Okay. So, to wrap up, I would like to actually go back because we had to zoom over some of the time between first days at The Weather Channel and now and I'd just like to give you a chance to go back and look back at that whole period of twenty-six years and just tell me some key periods or key points or even key incidents that really shape your career and your development as a professional and if there's just--at least a couple that you have that jump out at you that you could talk a little bit about, that would be great. And I know we've gone from history to future but if we could go back a little bit and see if anything jumps out.

BAN: Well, I would like to at least have, you know, somebody who's listening 100 years from now understand that my career has been an utter fairytale. I could not, in my wildest imagination, dialing back thirty five years ago when my career started, I could not have written a story for me that would be anywhere close to as great to of a career as I have had. I am truly blessed and I am truly lucky to be able to have what I have had. The almost ten years I spent at Accuweather, as I shared, were just absolutely pivotal in my learning process and I look back with so much fondness. Sure there were some negatives but, on balance it was a fabulous experience and I, you know, look back now and I just think how much I loved every moment. I wish I would have appreciated it more when I was doing it and focus more on the positives and not so much on the negatives. My twenty--almost twenty-seven years at the weather channels have just been phenomenal. I could never have imagined that I would have had the opportunities to do what I have done. To be able, you know--I thought, "Hey. I'm going to go and I'm going to talk about the weather on television." Having had the chance to do that, fabulous. Being able to, then, move into a situation where I could influence how we as an organization evolve. Our products and our services. Be able to travel the world, learn about cultures--new cultures--and have the chance to be part of international business developments. Being able to now, in 2008, put my direct fingerprints, on a daily basis, on what this service provides, what this brand provides to the country. It's just beyond fantasy. So I've been one lucky person and I just have to put that down for the folks who may ever listen to this. So along the way, I mean, you know, things that changed my career--yeah, okay, making the decision to first come out and start at Accuweather. I mean, Accuweather was great. Making the decision to leave and come to The Weather Channel, to a startup, to, you know--now that I'm less foolish than I was back then--but still foolish--probably had no conception of the risk that I was taking. But, no, I was impregnable. I was going to be fine no matter what happened. Well, yeah, I don't know if I would think that way today. So having the chance to be here at the beginning. Having the chance to do what I have done. You know, along the way, taking advantage of the growth that this business was achieving and that our network was achieving to fuel my own growth and, I think, reciprocally. My growth helping to fuel the growth of this business. You know, I have connected with this organization in a way that goes beyond anything, you know, of an employer, employee relationship. What is that? Is that your phone?

HENSON: Oh. I'm really sorry. I usually have it off.

BAN: It's okay. I guess, you know, and along the way of The Weather Channel, you know, there have been countless points where I would say, you know, it has impacted my growth and my learning and, you know, to be able to recount them all would probably be a fruitless attempt. The people along the way, you know, having the chance to be mentored and tutored by just some extremely effective leaders. Frank Batton Senior, probably one of the most influential people--when I look back on my career, having the opportunity to have gotten to know him as a person. To have connected with him, shared his visions--outstanding opportunities. Being connected with Landmark for twenty-six years and understanding, kind of, the special company that Landmark has--is, and has been now that it's actually dissolving. Now with new ownership with, you know, a much stronger connection, now, to a major media organization. What, you know, new opportunities will that bring. What new challenges will that bring? You know, that chapters still, I guess, is to be written. So, yeah--so those are just some of the things that I would mention. I'm not sure that's concrete enough.

HENSON: I think we're in good shape. I don't want to take too much more of your time.

BAN: Is there anything we left out? Is there anything you want to touch upon?

HENSON: Well, if we can go back--I know it's a little hard to go back after we jumped forward chronologically, but the period around--I remember now--the long form programming--I wanted to ask you about the tension between the long form programming and the regularity of weather on the eights and when you first started to vary that and how--it was late eighties I guess I recall?

BAN: No, it was probably later than that. I don't know, when did we launch storm stories. I should know the answer to that. The storm stories was our first foray into long form.

HENSON: I guess you had specials before that, right?

BAN: Yeah we did some specials. Yeah, we did the drought symposium in 1988. That was an all day coverage of talking heads talking about the drought of Eighty-Eight.

HENSON: Did you get flack when you did that for the [accents?] of the regular--

BAN: Well, what we saw was ratings just evaporate.

HENSON: Dried up, as it were.

BAN: Dried up, yes. Good point. No pun intended.

HENSON: Okay, but storm stories, then, was...

BAN: Well, so, when you--so when you come back and you talk about what is the experience? What is the experience that you're looking for on The Weather Channel when you come to The Weather Channel. I think the answer to that, in my simplistic point of view, is you're looking for relevancy. And what is relevant to you as an individual consumer in that point in time, has a decent chance of being remarkably different from what is relevant to somebody else at that particular point in time. So how can we be relevant? So, for a viewer who is cruising and looking for just an engaging experience, and not seeking utility weather information, you know, you're surfing one night, you know, you're not necessarily, you know, a fan of the sports channels, none of the

entertainment program on any of the nets, you know, cable and broadcast, is exciting you so you're just sort of moving around looking for something to catch you, right? Who's to suggest that a storm story isn't an appropriate weather experience? It's not real time utility weather information, but it is an experience on the weather. I think what we are--what we are still attempting to achieve is that relevancy point where, when somebody comes to us, given the likely demographic--the likelihood of looking for a certain kind of experience at a certain time of the day, that the optimization of providing that experience becomes a real programming challenge. I think it's vitally important that we never ever withhold utility weather information. And, so, one of the things that we're going to be doing in the next couple of years ahead is providing the opportunities either through the lower display line or through some other configuration on the screen real estate and the high depth real estate gives you more geography to work with, certainly, making sure that we're always providing a connectivity to a utility weather experience regardless of whether we're in live weather programming at that point or whether we're in some sort of preproduced, somewhat more dimensionalized weather experience. So, looking back at that--you know, we're still in that zone. I would look back and say, you know, the questions and the opportunities that we were facing back in the early nineties, when I think it was when we launched storm stories, are not very much different than those we face today. And is there a tension between the two? Yeah. Is that a good or a bad tension? I don't know. I think sometimes it crosses the line and it can be destructive. But, on the other hand, does there have to be that tension at all and can we create an experience, particularly as the media landscape moves solidly to high depth and the new screen real estate that that provides us, said earlier--can we be achieving multiple dimensions of relevancy within the context of a single screen, but mapping that screen carefully. And I think those are the challenges and I think those were the challenges we faced, you know, ten or more years ago when we first believed--you know, we felt it was important--as a meteorologist, but as the person--as a programmer, right now, I think it's absolutely vitally important that we provide a dimensionalized experience. And by that I mean, you know, absolutely utility weather information must be there and all the attributes of the brand that surround that have to be there--it has to be reliable, trusting. It has to be accurate, it has to be complete, it has to be updated. All of those attributes apply and they apply, not only to the utility weather information but they apply to all the other dimensional experienced we have. And now we're looking at--you know, I just saw [Ugruntsvest?], there, being interviewed about the flood in [border?], right? So, I mean, this is a relative experience. You know? Now, if I'm getting everything I need at the bottom of the screen right now, it may not be as quite as--nobody on the tape is seeing this, but--so we should stop, but.

HENSON: Okay. I think we're in good shape. Thank you so so much for your time and--

BAN: Let's look at the transcript. If there's some gaps we can go try back and fill them. You know we didn't get a chance to talk at all, and maybe--

(Break in Recording)

HENSON: Go ahead. It's on tape.

BAN: Sure. Yeah. I still am frustrated by what I perceive as a lack of synergy or a lack of coordination--we'll even go to that more simplistic level--amongst the various components of the weather enterprise in the United States. I still think that we have duplication of effort, we have redundant cost structures, and that the value proposition that this community provides to the nation is substantial, for sure, but it's still not optimized. I still don't believe that the right mechanisms are in place for a truly collaborative, synergistic effort to optimize that value proposition exists between the public sector today, between the industry sector today, and between the research and education community today. I still believe we have left too much on the table and still are, in terms of lost opportunities, in terms of more efficient operations, and a greater, if you will, marshalling of the precious resources that we have into a better value proposition back to the country.

HENSON: For some reason I caught myself thinking of health insurance. I don't know why I never made that analogy before, but thinking about how there's so much expertise out there and resource and, yet, it's allocated in ways that can seem very inefficient.

BAN: Well, I have to think about that, but, you know, on the surface there may be a lot of connection points there and I think that, you know, as I look now to, you know--I don't want to sound, you know, like I'm wrapping up anything here, but, you know--as I approach the sixty year mile marker, I think about, you know, how I'm going to start to think about, you know, the last phases of my professional career and one of the areas that I still believe is left undone for my own personal goals is to help to achieve a greater synergistic interdependence between the components of this weather enterprise in the United States. We have something unique here, we don't leverage it. We don't move it forward in the value chain. We take it for granted, we don't optimize it. And, you know, it's not that there's--the drive is not so much that it's hurting, but it's just that we're--it's lost opportunity. You know? I mean, we're good but we could be great, you know, and it's not getting from poor to good because we're not poor, we're good, but, boy, it would be so easy to go way way up in terms of the value, but, yet, you know, territorialism, you know, whatever--

HENSON: I was going to ask you what you think are the obstacles.

BAN: I think it's, well--I think it's legacy. I think, you know, there are root guards in every organization and in every system, right? People who protect the status quo and I think we have a lot of root guards in all parts--

(End of Side One, Tape 2)

BAN: --Is more prone to those legacy, root guard mentalities where, you know, "Well, I sort of--I got to protect--" it's a protectionist kind of thing. It's "Let's just not screw up. Let's not make mistakes. Let's--whoa that's risky." Okay? And risk is bad. Well, the fact of the matter is that there is no growth in comfort and there is no comfort in growth. You got to get out on the edge.

You know what? If you don't push yourself to run a seven minute mile, you're never run a seven minute mile and, you know what, you'll never grow. You know, add a couple more pounds to the bar, you don't get stronger, right? You got to get out of the comfort zone. You just can't go through the motions and I think many parts of the enterprise are locked into going through the motions. It's a self preservation--not of any individual, per se, but as of the entire--you know, the bureaucracy. And it exists in all aspects of the enterprise and I don't want to, you know, single out the public sector, but I think it's particularly easy to see it in that sector because of the inherent operational procedures and processes of governmental agencies. So, you know, I say I'm not taking a shot, but I guess I am, but I think what we have to do is begin to break those legacies down and begin processes and put in place mechanisms where we as a community can begin to do things. You know, I saw today, you know, as an example, that there's a significant mobile effort being launched by the National Weather Service. Now, do I have a fundamental problem with, you know, my public weather service going out and providing all sorts of mobile applications? No. On the surface, I don't. But as an insider in the community I happen to know there are at least a dozen companies in the weather industry that are heavily engaged in providing mobile apps and mobile weather information and, you know what, they're absolutely fabulous. They're cheap, they're working, the nation's consuming them. It's a great value proposition back. I would suspect that we would be better off taking the money that's been invested in developing mobile applications in our public weather service and take that--and I don't know what it aggregates up to, maybe it's tens of thousands, maybe it's hundreds of thousands, maybe it's millions, I don't know when you look at it all. But whatever it is, take it and move it over to fund research into understand hurricane intensification. That's a much bigger issue that I would rather see my public weather service investing in right now than providing mobile apps when I've got an industry out here that's doing just fine doing that. And, then, you know, the complaints of wanting more funding, well, yeah, we need more funding, I totally believe that, you know, more funds are needed. You know, I sit on the NOVA advisory committee and I know, you know, NOVA runs a, you know, a eight billion dollar agency with, you know, four billion bucks. I mean, you know, they're probably funded about fifty percent of what they need to be. But, gracious, let's take the money that we have and let's apply it in areas that we're really--we as a community, then, optimize the value proposition back to the country. So I get frustrated by that. And there's why I think we can make some progress. So outside--in my life outside of The Weather Channel, my, you know, my opportunity to really, in addition to providing, you know, some service through The Weather Channel to the value proposition, my other sort of pet project is to see if, you know, sometime within the next five to ten years, if we really can't move the ball further into providing some sort of a strategic planning mechanism where the enterprise convenes and says, "Whoa, wait, why is spending money there, you know? Let's figure out how we're going to divvy this thing up." And it's not collusion,

it's not antitrust, it's not price fixing, it's just, let's just have a plan at the very high levels, given all the social trends, the technological trends, the political trends, international issues, over the course of the next five to ten years, in a high level way, let's just decide, so over the next five years, where do we really want to see investments made at the federal level. What research is really fundamentally imperative for us now in the next five years and how are we, as a community, going to be beating the ever living daylights out of our policy makers to fund that research. And, at the same time, what are we going to do, operationally, that translates that research into operational realities of value back to the country on a daily basis? And then tell the story more effectively than we've ever been able to tell that story. Because if you walk up into, you know, into any of the senate office buildings or the house office buildings and you start talking about what this community provides, people are clueless. They don't know what the value proposition is. Every day we do something that helps life and property, and by "we," I don't mean The Weather Channel, I mean our entire community. But we never get credit for it. There should be somebody who's shouting that message out loud and clear on a daily basis so this country what huge huge service that they're getting from this community and how much it can still provide with the right managerial structures or the right coordination structures and the right amount of funding. So, I've preached enough there.

HENSON: Okay. Thanks.

(End of Tape 2; End of Interview)