

Oral History Interview
with
Linda Wade

Interview Conducted by
Juliana Nykolaiszyn
September 26, 2016

Cowboys in Every County

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
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Cowboys in Every County

Interview History

Interviewer: Juliana Nykolaiszyn
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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Project Detail

The purpose of Cowboys in Every County, a subseries of the O-STATE Stories Oral History Project, is to gather and preserve memories revolving around Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (OAMC) and Oklahoma State University (OSU).

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on October 5, 2006.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Linda Wade is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on September 26, 2016.

Cowboys in Every County

About Linda Wade...

Linda Wade was born in 1948 in Enid, Oklahoma, and grew up in Wakita, Oklahoma, where she worked with her three younger sisters on her family's hundred-year-old farm. She graduated from Wakita High School in 1966 and then enrolled at Oklahoma State University to study biological sciences, with a lifelong interest in science and medicine. Having some family members who were OSU alums, and having visited Stillwater on occasion, Linda already had a well-developed love for the school. She was a Woman of Willard, living in Willard Hall all four years of school, and spent a lot of time studying in the Library. In her spare time, she enjoyed eating pizza at Hideaway or going on dates at Willard Pond or Sonic Drive-In. She also built relationships with other students in the medical classes during her time at OSU, and still today keeps in touch with them when she can.

Linda graduated from OSU in 1970 and then spent one year at the University Hospital in Oklahoma City, becoming a medical technologist, registered with the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. From there she got married, and she and her husband moved to Europe where they lived and traveled for a year and a half. When they returned to the States, they moved back to Wakita where Linda continued her work in local hospitals, staying in the medical field for nearly forty years before retiring in 2011. Linda still lives in Wakita these days, where she manages the Twister Museum, which showcases memorabilia from the movie *Twister*, since part of it was filmed in town. During her visit with us, Linda shared memories of her time at OSU, as well as how Wakita was affected by its taste of Hollywood.

Cowboys in Every County

Linda Wade

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn
September 26, 2016
Wakita, Oklahoma



Nykolaiszyn *My name is Juliana Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma State University Library. Today is Monday, September 26, 2016. I'm in Wakita, Oklahoma, Grant County, Oklahoma, to interview Linda Wade as part of our Cowboys in Every County Oral History project. Linda, thank you for joining us today.*

Wade You're welcome.

Nykolaiszyn *Let's learn a little bit more about you. Could you tell me the year you were born, and where you were born?*

Wade I was born in 1948 in Enid, Oklahoma, which is just south of Grant County. Grant County does not have a hospital at this time, and so that was the closest.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me a little bit about your parents.*

Wade My parents were both raised in this area. My great-grandfather made the Cherokee Strip run in 1893. My father's family came shortly thereafter and settled in the Wakita-Manchester area of Grant County.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and when they came to this area, what was their occupation?*

Wade They were all farmers. They did some grocery business because of eggs and meat and things like that, but for the most part, they were farmers.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me the names of your parents.*

Wade Mary Jane and Leroy Miller are my parents.

Nykolaiszyn *Grandparents?*

Wade Edna and Guy Miller are my father's parents, and Mary Lee and Leonard Long are my mother's parents. My father is still living in Wakita and is ninety-six years old.

Nykolaiszyn *Oh, wow! Tell me how your parents met each other.*

Wade After the war, my dad was back, sitting in the barber shop, and my mother walked by outside the window. He said, "Oh, I like that lady," and it went from there. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *When you were born, where did your family live?*

Wade They lived here in the Wakita area.

Nykolaiszyn *Did they live in town or on the farm?*

Wade On the farm.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and kind of describe the farm to me, what you remember, what you can recall.*

Wade What can I recall? My father still lives in the second house that he built for the family. Once I was about five years old, they built a newer house because they had a couple more siblings after me. They needed a larger home, and so they built the final family home. The farm that my great-grandfather homesteaded is actually still in the family as a hundred-year-or-more farm.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me about the schools you attended growing up.*

Wade Okay, Wakita Grade School and High School is where I graduated in 1966. Then I went to OSU, graduated in 1970, and then I attended a one-year internship at the University Hospital in Oklahoma City and became a medical technologist. I am registered with the American Society of Clinical Pathologists as a registered medical technologist. I just retired about five years ago from working several hospitals, and now I have finally taken over the running of the Twister Museum in Wakita, Oklahoma, as my after-retirement job.

Nykolaiszyn *Let's take you all the way back to attending school here in Wakita. Was it a big school? Was it a small school? How many students?*

Wade Wakita is a relatively small school in the scope of things. My class was actually the largest in Wakita history, and we had forty-five students in our graduating class. We have just celebrated our fiftieth reunion this year, and about three-fourths of us were attending. We did celebrate here in Wakita.

Nykolaiszyn *Were you active in many activities in school?*

Wade Just a few, not a whole lot. I was more of the brainiac at that time, going into the science field, so I didn't do much in sports. I did do the plays and things like that, home ec.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you always wanted to attend college? Was it encouraged?*

Wade My family has a history of college attendance, so it was a given. I became interested in the medical field when I got a microscope for Christmas one year, and it just kind of went from there.

Nykolaiszyn *How did you choose Oklahoma State?*

Wade Family had gone to OSU prior to my attending. I had family at the time I was going to school, so it was the most comfortable choice, and it did offer the science classes that I needed.

Nykolaiszyn *Prior to attending OSU, did you spend any time in Stillwater?*

Wade Yes, I visited family there quite a bit.

Nykolaiszyn *What family did you have in Stillwater?*

Wade Mostly cousins that were attending the school. Of course, my father had been there many years ago. It was a little bit different after that. I was the oldest child in our family, so I got to break the ice for the rest of my siblings who went to OSU some parts of their lives. Some of them moved on. Two out of four girls graduated from OSU.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, so how did you get from Wakita to Stillwater when you were moving in for the first time as a freshman?*

Wade The family drove me the first year. I actually had Dad come get me to go home a lot. By the next year, he let me have a car because he farmed and didn't have the time to take off to come bring me home every week.

Nykolaiszyn *Where did you live on campus your first year?*

Wade I was in Willard for four years.

Nykolaiszyn *You were a Woman of Willard!*

Wade A Woman of Willard, and don't ask me for the cheer song. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Describe your dorm room for me.*

Wade Small room, two people. I don't know that it had any significance at all.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you know your roommate?*

Wade No, I had a new roommate every year.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and when you went to OSU did you have an idea of what you wanted to major in?*

Wade Yes, I was strictly a biological science major the whole way. I did want to get my degree just in case that I didn't like the medical profession once I got into it. I could come back and have a stepping stone to another profession if I needed it.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, you were very focused going into college.*

Wade Well, for a while, anyway. (Laughter) I won't say that my grade point was great when I ended, but yes, I knew where I was starting. I did branch out a little bit.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me a little bit about what you remember from your classes.*

Wade I had some very hard classes, some pretty easy classes. I had a Saturday class, which I didn't like. I did have one class that I had three different teachers in. You'd just get used to one teacher, and then another one comes in, and you have to get used to a new one.

Nykolaiszyn *Any professors stand out in your mind?*

Wade No, not particularly. (Laughter) Not in the good frame, anyway. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Did you work while you were on campus?*

Wade No, I had a Regents Scholarship my first year. I worked in the summers on the farm to earn the money to go back in the fall. Not while I was in school, but yes, I did work.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, now, tell me what you did for fun.*

Wade Mostly going out and dating and meeting people.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you always live in Willard?*

Wade Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, so you lived in Willard all four years?*

Wade All four years. It was the best dorm at that time. It had the best prestige at that time, if you were going to stay in a dorm. Of course, they built the new ones shortly after that, but while I was there, it was a good dorm.

Nykolaiszyn *Were you involved in any on-campus activities while you were at OSU?*

Wade I'm sure I was. (Laughs) I was nominated for a dairy princess. One of a group I didn't win, but I was nominated. I don't know. Science, you kept pretty busy with labs and things. I did run around with a lot of medical students because we studied together a lot. Went to the Hideaway a lot. That's about all I remember. It's been fifty years; it's been a long time. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *A long time! Did you attend many sporting events?*

Wade Of course, all the football games, a few of the basketball or wrestling games, yeah. Depended on if you could get a date or not. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Can you tell me how the women dressed when you were in college?*

Wade Wool pleated skirts and sweaters was the main.... I remember freshman shopping to go to school.

Nykolaiszyn *This is going to sound a little odd, but how'd you get your laundry done?*

Wade The basement of Willard. You went down and did your own. Of course, wool skirts (I'm not sure) had to be dry cleaned, but I don't know. That's where we did laundry was the basement of Willard.

Nykolaiszyn *You lived in Willard. Did you have curfews?*

Wade Yes, we did, definitely.

Nykolaiszyn *At that point, did you still have housemothers?*

Wade Yes, we did.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me about your housemother. Did you have any run-ins with your housemother?*

Wade (Laughs) No, I was a good girl. I did date a few sorority boys, so I met the housemothers of the fraternities. I ended up marrying a fraternity boy that I met at Stillwater.

Nykolaiszyn *How'd you meet your husband?*

Wade He was actually working on the farm here in Wakita. He was from Little Rock, Arkansas, and is an OSU graduate, as well. We met here in Wakita and then dated once we got back to school.

Nykolaiszyn *It's a small world.*

Wade It is. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Do you recall any campus traditions?*

Wade Homecoming for sure. We all did everything we could for Homecoming.

Nykolaiszyn *Did Willard do decorations out front?*

Wade No, I don't think so. I didn't participate, anyway, if they did.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you attend the parade?*

Wade Yeah, the parade and viewing all the fraternity setups and everything. I guess we did have a revue, acting comedy revue, every year. We went to that. I hadn't really thought about school in a long time, so I don't really remember, not much.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, is there a place on campus that you loved to visit, hang out at?*

Wade We hung out at the Hideaway pretty much all the time. Sometimes Swim's, but mostly the Hideaway.

Nykolaiszyn *Was that the first time you had pizza?*

Wade No, but probably the best. Then again, my husband worked there, so that was an easy meeting place. He prepped for the morning pizza making. He made the dough. He did the cleanup of the place and stuff like that. Of course, we all liked the collages on the wall and everything.

Nykolaiszyn *You had a good in.*

Wade I did. (Laughter) It worked great.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you have a favorite pizza?*

Wade Everything. I liked the.... Eventually, oh gosh, in 2000 or so, Hideaway got the Volkswagens that they painted up, and that was cute. I followed that.

Nykolaiszyn *Were there other places in town you liked to eat? Did you visit the Strip?*

Wade We did. There was a place that had a fireplace. What was the name of that? I don't really remember. I know there was a dry cleaner on the Strip, so that's probably where I got my dry cleaning done. What was on the corner? I don't know. I'm not good at memory, not good at remembering. I was in class all the time...

Nykolaiszyn *That's a good thing.*

Wade ...yeah, and that's what you remember. Then the Willard Pond, we spent a lot of time sitting around Willard Pond...with guys, of course.

Nykolaiszyn *I see a theme.*

Wade Yeah. (Laughter) Okay, yeah, I didn't have a lot of free time unless I was on a date.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, it is college. What are your memories of the Student Union?*

Wade It was quite a bit smaller when I was there. The bookstore was your biggest memory. I did spend a lot of time on fourth floor in the.... There was a, not a lounge, but a place where everybody met to have sodas and stuff. I guess there was groups on fourth floor, and everybody had their own little group that they met. That's about it. There were some good shops down below. Some of it is going back afterwards, too. I remember from fifty years ago, maybe being sixty or seventy, not sixty or seventy, forty or thirty, (I was going the wrong way) when you went back afterwards, you notice things changing, and I'm not sure when it all happened.

Nykolaiszyn *Was the bowling alley still in the Union, when you were going to school there, in the basement?*

Wade I don't know if it was or not. I didn't ever go bowling. We had to get our IDs on the second floor. I remember that.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you spend any time in the Library?*

Wade A lot of time in the Library. You learned how to use the card files. There wasn't any automation at that time, but yeah. Course, being in the medical, you had to look a lot up for your classes and things. Maybe not as much time as I should have, but I did.

Nykolaiszyn *When you think back on some of the classes you took, what buildings were your classes in? Any stand out for you?*

Wade I took a humanities class, but that was on the east side of the campus. Then most of them were in the science, in the center behind the Library. I don't remember the names of them, but.... What's the one they tore down? I had one class in it. Then my humanities was in a huge, big.... No, it wasn't humanities. It was Introduction to something where if you went every day, you got an A. I went every day and got a C. It was terrible. I said, "How could I do that? I think they got me mixed up with somebody else." Anyway, the Israeli War, the [Six]-Day War was when I was in that class. I remember that. That's all. I don't remember much about college. I'm sorry; you picked the wrong alumni. (Laughter) I got a good start. That's what happened.

Nykolaiszyn *You graduated in 1970, and so you're on campus during an interesting time period. We're at the tail end of the 1960s. What was the campus culture like while you were attending?*

Wade There was a lot of Vietnam War stuff going on, people not wanting to go or discussing it. That was a critical topic at that time.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you notice any protests happening on campus?*

Wade Not a lot. Mostly, people would not be encouraged by it, but they didn't really make any concrete, together protests. There was a lot of talking and discussions that were kind of protesting. I think it was mostly more of the, "I don't want to go over there and die" kind of protest. They weren't.... Most of ours were not anti-American at any point because Oklahoma was pretty patriotic. It was the fear of dying, I think, was a lot of it.

Nykolaiszyn *You mentioned that your father eventually got you a car. What did he get you?*

Wade An old, blue Chevy. I drove my grandmother's '55 Oldsmobile for a little while, and then I got a blue Chevy. Then I went to a red Chevy. I think I got, periodically, new, faster cars.

Nykolaiszyn *You mentioned that you went on many, many dates...*

Wade Well... (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *...several dates.*

Wade ...several dates!

Nykolaiszyn *Where would you go for a typical date, outside of the Hideaway or maybe Swim's?*

Wade The Sonic Drive-In and sit in the car. That was probably the most popular at that time. If you don't have money, which you didn't a lot when you were in college, that was the cheapest date you could go on was drive the car. A lot of times, it was my car. (Laughs) Guys didn't have cars, so we would go to Sonic.

Nykolaiszyn *As you were leading up to graduation, did you have an idea of what you wanted to do with your life?*

Wade At that point, I knew I was going to medical technology school. That was the whole focus of the four years of college, but I didn't know where exactly I would go. There were only three or four schools in Oklahoma that you could graduate with medical technology, so I chose the biggest and the closest and actually got in. Several of the people that I went to OSU with actually got into the same class as I did in school. There was about ten or eleven in our medical technology school at that point.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me about graduation day. What do you remember?*

Wade A lot of people graduated.

Nykolaiszyn *Your parents come up?*

Wade Yes, of course, yeah. You have the whole cap and gown thing. I got a little plastic whatever, booklet, with my diploma in it.

Nykolaiszyn *Where was the ceremony held?*

Wade In the stadium. I was already focused on my next step or getting out. It got harder. Each progressive year got harder and harder.

Nykolaiszyn *You finished up your schooling in Oklahoma City for your—it took you about a year?*

Wade Yes, took a year.

Nykolaiszyn *Where did you go after that?*

Wade I stayed in University Hospital in Oklahoma City for a couple of years. Then I got married, and we spent a year and a half in Europe, working and traveling over there. Then I came home to Little Rock, Arkansas, in the bicentennial year and spent a couple of years there. Then we moved back to Oklahoma to start farming. I worked in Enid, Cherokee, Wakita, Enid, all the different hospitals.

Nykolaiszyn *You were commuting out of Wakita?*

Wade Most of the time, yeah. It was about an hour any direction you go, but it's pretty easy. Pretty light traffic.

Nykolaiszyn *In general, tell me what your career entailed. What was your role? What did you do?*

Wade As a medical technologist, you would basically draw blood from any patients or outpatients. Then you run all the testing on them, and you advise doctors on the results that you obtained. My very first job in OU Medical Center, or University Hospital, was not computerized. They got a computer the first year I was there. They got a brand new computer. It was about a room-sized computer, and it was underneath the main lab. They had to run wires up from the computer room to the lab to run our instruments with. That was quite a new challenge was learning how to use a computer on medical instruments. I had a computer course at OSU, but at that time you were still using punch cards. It took a whole year to make one program at OSU. Then to jump right into University and get their first automated machines was pretty interesting.

Nykolaiszyn *You were right there with the change of technology, wow.*

Wade Yes, it was amazing. It was really the first step in automating all the labs. Now every instrument that you run is automated to a certain degree. It's almost a paperless system now in hospitals. Every couple of years, you had to learn a new system, and that was quite a challenge, too. To not grow up with computers and then to have it the main focus of your job, it was quite a bit of learning.

Nykolaiszyn *Was the ultimate goal to move back to this area?*

Wade No, at the time, I didn't have any preferences to moving back to this area. It just...what came around. Knowing my husband farmed when I met him was probably a pretty good indicator, but I enjoyed spending a few years overseas, too. We still travel a lot, so that's a good benefit.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you have time to help out on the farm in between your day job?*

Wade No, I tried not to. (Laughter) Once I became a full-time medical technologist, I tried not to help too much. You still, "Take me to this field and chauffer me back to this place," or whatever. I still understood everything that was going on, but I didn't work as much as I did growing up. I drove tractor and combine and trucks and pickups, the whole shebang. Indoors, air-conditioning was a lot better than outdoors on the farm.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you have children?*

Wade No, no kids.

Nykolaiszyn *So you had no extra help for the farm. (Laughs)*

Wade No extra help for the farm, right. Just this last weekend we had a celebration in Wakita. I was in charge of the bounce house, and I learned why I didn't regret not having kids. (Laughs) Now, grandkids, I would like grandkids. I don't mind pampering my nieces and nephews and great-nieces and -nephews now. I didn't miss having kids. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *You moved back to this area, and I want you to tell me how Wakita has changed over the years.*

Wade When I was in high school and living here, there was a farmhouse on every other quarter or so, so quite a few of the farm community was here. As we have progressed over the years, the farms have gotten larger and larger, and the families.... Once the older generation passes away, fewer people are able to farm because of the economy. It's quite an expensive profession, actually. You put everything you make back into the farm, so the farm community became smaller and smaller. Wakita still is a major farming town. It's just we have big family farms now that has taken over as each family left. The families that are still here incorporate the farms that were there. There's a farm every five or six miles, miles now rather than quarters. It has gotten smaller.

Nykolaiszyn *How has downtown changed over the years?*

Wade Not a whole lot of change. We've lost a few stores that we had, but we still have the newspaper and the grocery store and a post office and bank and city office. That's the major businesses, the co-ops. We once had a movie theater, and we once had a laundromat. We actually had a clothing store at one time. We had two grocery stores at some point, and they've consolidated down. The grocery store now incorporates what used to be the drug store, also, so they combined the two stores. We have the basic amenities. We still have to go out of town to get the entertainment and the clothes, things like that, but you can survive in Wakita pretty easily.

Nykolaiszyn *When you go to town, what town do you go to?*

Wade Generally Enid because that's where I worked, so you did all your shopping while you were there before you came home.

Nykolaiszyn

I can't have a discussion with you about Wakita without talking about the movie Twister, especially since we're in the Twister Museum. (Laughter) Could you talk to me about how the movie Twister impacted the town?

Wade

It was a great impact on the town. A couple of years prior to the movie coming, Wakita was hit with a big hailstorm, like softball-size hail. We lost all our roofs, our cars, everything. It also happened in June, so we lost our harvest income, as well. At that point, the town was pretty down. We had a lot of buildings at that point that were empty, and being empty, they were uninsurable. With that loss of income, and buildings that were uninsurable, they didn't get repaired. The town, a couple of years later, was in the process of urban renewal, so to speak, tearing down some of these buildings that hadn't been fixed. The movie came in and said, "Let us do it for you." They did a hundred thousand dollars' worth of demolition work for the town, used it in their movie, and then cleaned it up for us.

That was a major benefit to the town. Then, of course, the inflow of people at that point, they bought things from our grocery stores, our filling stations. They rented facilities; they leased property. After two years of low income, then to have all this come in, it was a great benefit to the town. Pretty much everyone was okay with it. There were a few people that were depressed about the tear-down of the buildings. Course, it was going to happen anyway, but it's sad to see some of your older buildings torn down. That was probably the most adverse part of the movie coming. They let everyone in town become extras in the movie. They fed us and paid us, and we got to meet all the stars and everything. Everybody enjoyed that.

Anyone in town had the opportunity to have some benefit from the movie if they wanted to. If they didn't, it was their own decision at that point. They were in Wakita from April through August, so quite a lengthy amount of time. You got to know people from Hollywood. It was interesting, talking taxes and houses and cars and all the usual stuff growing up. It's been twenty years now, so it's still amazing the number of people, a lot of Oklahoma people especially, that the movie made an impact on. We get visitors here in Wakita. The museum's open April through August, and we have daily visitors, which is still amazing. After twenty years, you wouldn't think that. Visitors to the museum come from all over the world.

We'd have visitors from every continent. Even Antarctica, we've had someone visit. Wakita is more or less out of the way for visitors. You don't come to Wakita unless you're intending to come to Wakita, so to have them come here is really super. Of course, that impacts the economy a little bit, as well, and for twenty years. We had no idea that it would last this long. Even in making the museum, Warner Brothers said, "You'll have this just for a couple of years, and that's the normal movie impact." I'm sure they were

thinking thousands of visitors. (Laughs) Nevertheless, I get a dozen or more every day, and that's 100 percent more than we had before-movie.

Nykolaiszyn *How did the idea for the museum come about?*

Wade The Garden Club of the town started it because Warner Brothers said, "You'll have visitors for a couple of years." We put up a walking trail and a museum. We felt like if they came all the way to Wakita, it would be nice for them to have something to see and visit. We were counting on the two years, but now, twenty years later, there's a lot fewer volunteers to the museum. There's a lot fewer people that actually lived through the movie to volunteer, so it's a challenge now to keep it open.

Nykolaiszyn *This is your post-retirement?*

Wade My post-retirement job, myself and another lady. The post mistress of town retired a few years ago, also, so the two of us keep it running April through August. Then we kick back and relax in the wintertime. We still make appointments and things during the winter. We just don't keep it open because the utilities get a little high in the wintertime for sure because there's tall ceilings. We have, actually, lots of storm chasers. I think the movie has really elevated the profession of meteorology to the point where they have trouble getting into meteorology school. You really have to fight for your class position to get into meteorology, and a large part of that is because of the movie. It's the best tornado movie ever made. I'm sure of that. The storm chasers all tell me that. I mean *Sharknado*, go figure. (Laughter)

They did try to make the movie as accurate as they could. It's still a movie, but it is a great movie. Storm chasers, especially the ones that take people on vacations to find storms, they come here a lot. If the weather's fair, then they come here. If there's a tornado somewhere, then they're out there, but they do visit here a lot. That's where I get a lot of my foreign visitors, China, Japan, Australia, a lot of those. They have little tastes of tornadoes in their countries, but they don't get the big tornadoes and the number of tornadoes that we have in the United States. I guess because there's (I don't know) smaller countries, different heating and cooling. I'm not sure why. They do like to come to the US and chase.

Nykolaiszyn *What's your favorite piece in the museum?*

Wade I have the Dorothy from the movie, the one that got beat up. It has character. There are other Dorothys out there, but they're all pretty. Mine's the one with character. Going through making a movie like this gives you a whole new perspective of the movie industry, to see how much work they have to go through to make each detail correct. Now the computer, here again, they

do CGI a lot more than they did twenty years ago. I'm sure it's all different than what it was then, but it sure did open your eyes to go through one and see everything they had to do. We were only one area of five in Oklahoma used for filming, as well as Iowa and Hollywood.

Wakita's ambulance actually got to go to Hollywood for retakes. We're the star; Wakita water tower is the star. Now, Bill Paxton was actually our favorite movie star while he was here. He's from Texas originally, so Oklahoma was pretty much at home for him. He showed up in boots and jeans and brought a football and played catch with everybody, signed autographs, took pictures and things. He donated a pinball machine to the museum. He donated the football to the museum. We have lots of his autographs. Everybody else was nice, but he was particularly outstanding.

Nykolaiszyn *When you're watching the movie, can you see where you were an extra? Can you tell where?*

Wade Most of my parts were off-screen. Here they are, walking down the street, and I would be in the next scene that was cut. One of my scenes is actually on there, but pretty much we're a little dot in the background. They were filming in Wakita for a month and a half for about fifteen minutes of the movie, so they did cut a lot of stuff. We were fortunate, being twenty years ago, they let us take home movies. We have a big DVD of about three different people's home videos, mostly schoolteachers who were off for the summer. We do have pictures of all the stuff they built and tore down that didn't end up in the movie. For the movie, we were actually five blocks of sidewalk-to-sidewalk, head-high debris for a while. It was like a real tornado. They had armed guards around the town to keep people from coming in and getting hurt. It was the real thing at that point. They were trying very hard to make it realistic.

Nykolaiszyn *Who knew it would have such an impact twenty years later.*

Wade It's amazing. Still, we get phone calls all the time to make appointments while we're closed. I had someone from San Antonio yesterday, no, day before yesterday. Have someone from Canada coming tomorrow. Those are appointments since I'm closed.

Nykolaiszyn *Thinking back at your time at OSU, how did attending college in Stillwater impact your life?*

Wade Coming from a small town, the fact that I went to a larger university broadened my view of people and of the world. When you're growing up, you really don't have much knowledge of what's going on out in the real world, and so attending a college is definitely a plus in that aspect. It helps you meet people, makes you open up. I was pretty shy growing up, and so it

helped me converse with people. You have to learn a lot of different cultures, different professions, all this stuff when you go to college. You learn a whole lot more.

Nykolaiszyn *Have you kept in touch with any of your classmates, roommates, fellow medical school students?*

Wade Mostly I've kept in touch with people from Wakita that went to school with me. There were several Wakita students that went to OSU, and so we were pretty close. We would ride home together, share rides and everything, so that definitely kept us closer together. As far as people I met, not too many of them. There's a few, but it seems like life keeps you from doing anything more than Christmas cards. Now internet, Facebook, has made it a lot easier to connect with people that you knew then.

Nykolaiszyn *Have you been back to Stillwater much since you graduated?*

Wade After I came back to Oklahoma, we went quite a bit. Now that I've gotten older, I don't do as much as I used to. We do go to Eskimo Joe's often, and I do get my t-shirts from Eskimo Joe's. We go back to Stillwater some but not as much as we did when we were younger. Now, if I'd had kids, probably they would've gone to school there, so I would be back more, but since I didn't... I do have a niece that went to school there, actually two nieces, and I have a great-nephew going to school there now. Yeah, we go back a little more now than we did. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *It's a good excuse for cheese fries.*

Wade Yes, exactly. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *What advice would you give students today?*

Wade Gosh, go to school, pay attention but have a good time, I suppose. Get your degree. I think going to college is pretty important. Take advantage of doors that you need to open once in a while. It's not always what you know but who you know. Make some friends.

Nykolaiszyn *It seems that many OSU alums feel very loyal to the school. What is it about Oklahoma State that sparks such loyalty?*

Wade That's a tough one. I don't know, I guess. I'm pretty sure every college student is pretty loyal to their alum. It'd be nice if the football team really got better, I guess. I think we beat OU a couple of years while I was in school, and that probably really helped make the loyalty, I guess you'd say. A lot of my fellow classmates went to OU, also, and so we kept up a rivalry

going all the time. I don't know. OSU was a good school, gave me a good education, so you're just loyal.

Nykolaiszyn *You mentioned that there are several OSU alums in Grant County. Do you find that a lot of folks in this part of the state go to OSU, or maybe more Alva, or NOC-Enid?*

Wade In my growing up, my era, we did. More of us went to OSU because it was farming related in this area. Now that farms have become larger, it's not quite as important for the younger kids to go to OSU because they're not going to be involved in farming. Anyone who is in farming definitely needs the college education because everything is computer operated. You have to understand all the government programs, and it takes a good, intelligent mind to do farming in today's generation. Most of the farmers that I know have gone to OSU now. The college has definitely helped the state of Oklahoma as far as farming has gone. They've helped organic farmers. They've helped in the setting up corporations and businesses, and learning how to do bar codes and how to promote your industry and everything. It's definitely been an impact on the farming community.

Nykolaiszyn *That's definitely still a big part of Wakita.*

Wade Almost all of Wakita. If you're farming, you're.... Yeah, if you live in Wakita and your parents are here, you're a farm family.

Nykolaiszyn *I noticed you still have your post office. Are your schools still in operation here?*

Wade We lost our school about five years ago; we consolidated with Medford, which is about fifteen miles away. That is not quite as big farming, but a large part of it is also farming community.

Nykolaiszyn *How many grain elevators do y'all have in town?*

Wade We have two. We have a farmers co-op, and then a commercial, Johnston's Grain out of Enid.

Nykolaiszyn *Looking back on everything, you're still in Wakita. You're here at the museum. What keeps you here in this part of Oklahoma doing this post-retirement work?*

Wade I get to meet a lot of fun people, and so that's probably the most enjoyable part of running the museum. The fact that my father is still in the area, so I'm here for him a lot. I don't know how much longer I will keep the museum open. I'm looking for someone else to help me out, but as long as I'm here, I'll have it. Someday I'd really like to retire, I think. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Linda, it's been great talking with you today. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't covered today? What have I missed? (Laughter)*

Wade My memory isn't very good anymore, but when you hit almost seventy, it's like, "Okay, you remember...." I can remember twenty years; fifty years is another story. I enjoyed....

Nykolaiszyn *We appreciate your time.*

Wade Thank you. I enjoyed growing up on a farm. It was quite an experience to be outdoors all the time and have siblings to play with all the time, learning how to run equipment. I learned to drive in the middle of a field. It's a whole new, different life than growing up in a city. That's for sure.

Nykolaiszyn *Very different.*

Wade It's a good benefit in this day and age. There's very little crime in Wakita. We don't have excellent healthcare, but we do have a nursing home that is very good, and we have all the basic amenities. It's a good place to live, Grant County.

Nykolaiszyn *There we go! That's a good way to end. Thank you, Linda.*

Wade You bet.

----- End of interview -----